



*Copy of letter sent on April 27 by Penn FJP to President J. Larry Jameson, Provost John L. Jackson, Jr., and Senior Executive Vice President Craig R. Carnaroli, with all names and identifying titles redacted.*

April 27, 2024

Dear Interim President J. Larry Jameson, Provost John L. Jackson, Jr., and Senior Executive Vice President Craig R. Carnaroli,

We are reaching out to you as professors and staff, as student mentors, and as members of Penn Faculty for Justice in Palestine. We are relying on your long experience as university leaders, and on the email President Jameson sent out the morning of April 26, 2024, which underlined his support of the peaceful protest encampment established by the students on College Green:

“Penn has and will continue to support the rights of our community members to protest peacefully and in keeping with University policy. At Penn, we will stand up for free speech and the productive exchange of ideas, even when we disagree.”

The about-face letter issued the evening of April 26, however, reneges on this pledge and contains many troubling contradictions and inaccuracies. You write that “Representatives from Open Expression, University Life, and faculty leadership have engaged with some of the protestors, with limited access to the broader group.” You also write that you have “notified the protestors of their legal and policy violations.” Neither of these statements is true. Due process has not been observed.

The morning of April 26 at approximately 10 am, [NAME REDACTED] and members of Penn Police spoke to Legal Observers and two faculty liaisons; around 11 am [A SENIOR POLICE OFFICIAL–DESIGNATION REDACTED] plus Philadelphia Civil Affairs police officers and [NAME OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATOR REDACTED], spoke again with Legal Observers and a faculty liaison. In the afternoon, [NAME REDACTED] and [NAME REDACTED], representing the Committee on Open Expression, the Faculty Senate, and University Task Force on Antisemitism requested that [NAME REDACTED] set up a meeting with student protestors. Faculty liaisons and Legal Observers spoke with them and invited them to join the audience for student programming happening at the encampment, which they did. They did *not* actually speak with students. This evening, a Legal Observer and a few faculty members were approached by [NAME REDACTED] again, who asked if we would be willing to step out of the encampment area to speak with [NAME REDACTED]. We in turn

invited [NAME REDACTED] to join us in the area. He did so, and shared with us that the students in the encampment were in violation of university policy because they had not reserved the space. He wanted us to inform the students of this, yet left our questions repeatedly unanswered about what would happen to the students if they did not remove the tents, except to say that CSA would have to question them and ask for their IDs. We asked him to clarify his message, and after making a call to you, presumably, he assured us that the students would not be asked to disperse the evening of April 26 and that he would pass along our strong plea that you abide by your morning pledge and let this peaceful protest continue. Again, the students were not given notification by [NAME REDACTED] of any violations.

Only a few years ago, Penn undergrads created another encampment in the same area (some of them are seniors now) to raise awareness about fossil fuel usage and Penn's investment in companies that exacerbated global warming. These students, always peaceful, were allowed to stay on the College Green for weeks. Penn respected their right to academic free speech. We pointed this out to [NAME REDACTED], but he responded that he did not know about that encampment; we urged him to review that precedent. The [Open Expression Guidelines](#) clearly allow for demonstrations outside of designated indoor areas, and defines demonstration as "the presence of one or more persons in a University location with the intent to express a particular point of view in a manner that attracts attention, as in protest, rallies, sit-ins, vigils, or similar forms of expression." Clearly, the Gaza Solidarity Encampment is a principled and peaceful demonstration.

We bear witness that students have not violated any policies or contributed to a hostile environment. They have a right to demonstrate. They have kept noise down at night; they have de-escalated the aggressive behavior of counterprotestors who have intimidated them by calling them names, threatening to kill them, filming and doxxing them, throwing rocks at them, and kicking their tents at night. The counterprotestors violated Penn's Guidelines on Open Expression by attempting to use "hecklers' veto" to drown out speakers. While speakers persisted in spite of this, university officials took no action in response to these violations, again reflecting the university's long-demonstrated viewpoint bias on the matter of Israel-Palestine. As you write, "All members of our community deserve to access our facilities without fear of harassment or being subjected to discriminatory comments or threats." This also applies to the pro-Palestinian student protestors. Historically, over the past six months, and especially now, the University seems to care principally about the fears of Zionist students and faculty on this campus. When pro-Palestinian community members, including Jewish faculty and students who are critical of the Israeli government, are harassed—as has been the case repeatedly—it has been ignored. Yesterday when faculty asked the Penn police for help in response to counterprotestors who were clearly using photography to menace speakers, the police laughed and responded that counterprotestors "could be photographing a bird." This double-standard is discriminatory.

Regarding your citation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, we remind you that, per the ACLU [Open Letter to College and University Presidents on Student Protests](#) (April 26, 2024), "Speech that is *not* targeted at an individual or individuals because of their ethnicity or national origin but merely expresses impassioned views about Israel or Palestine is not discrimination and should be protected."

Regarding your statement that, "The vandalism of the statue in front of College Hall with antisemitic graffiti was especially reprehensible and will be investigated as a hate crime," we and the

students encourage an investigation, as the students do not know who did this graffiti and strongly condemn it. And even though they were not responsible for it, they were fully compliant with law enforcement and groundskeepers to help get it cleaned. In fact, protestors immediately covered the vandalism once they became aware of it and stood in front of it for hours while waiting for groundskeepers to arrive, to hide it from sight so as not to cause harm or offense to anyone. Moreover, desecration of the space is expressly prohibited by the community guidelines set in place by the protestors, which all protestors must follow in order to participate in the encampment. You are welcome to come by and read these guidelines and see for yourself how disciplined and principled these student protestors are.

While encampment students protest genocide and state violence, counterprotestors have hung inflammatory Nazi reference signs on posts on Locust Walk. These offensive signs were intended as willful slurs meant to denigrate the humanitarian nature of the encampment in support of innocent Palestinian victims of this cruel war. These antisemitic signs violently and cynically instrumentalized Hitler's "Mein Kampf" to the distress of all members of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment, some of whom are experiencing direct losses as a result of the genocide in process, and many of whom are Jewish. Again, this antisemitic behavior by counterprotestors, behavior in violation of the Guidelines on Open Expression and traumatizing in its impact, has been left unchecked. Later in the evening, counterprotestors set up a screen and projected footage from October 7, 2023 in a blatant and irresponsible instrumentalization of traumatic images designed to trigger and distress all those impacted by this violent conflict. Members of the Penn community were given no choice about whether or not to be bombarded with images of violence, and this action was protected by Penn police. Counterprotestors seemed to be working to instigate the kind of "hostile environment" that the President had announced would lead to the encampment's dismantling; their actions, ironically, have created a hostile environment for their pro-Palestinian peers.

You speak of your commitment to "uphold free speech and the productive exchange of ideas" on this campus. What could be more productive an exchange of ideas than the serious and thoughtful teach-ins the students, faculty, and staff have been conducting at the encampment and since October 7, 2023 on this campus? They, as we, have also had an extremely difficult time making room reservations for any event about Palestine, Gaza, the Middle East, or related topics. The very fact that no University-wide commission was established to explore the racism and anti-Middle Eastern hostility that these students have faced, heightened since October 7, compounds our frustration with yesterday's sudden announcement to "disband the encampment immediately". The students in the encampment, and the faculty who support them, have been denied the rights of citizenship as outlined in the [Rights of Student Citizenship](#) in the university:

"Membership in the University of Pennsylvania community affords every student certain rights that are essential to the University's educational mission and its character as a community:

The right to have access to and participate in the academic and non-academic opportunities afforded by the University, subject to applicable standards or requirements.

The right to freedom of thought and expression.

The right to be free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or status as a disabled or Vietnam Era veteran.

The right to fair University judicial process in the determination of accountability for conduct.”

Student and faculty access to and participation in academic and non-academic opportunities has been repeatedly blocked, and the use of the university’s judicial process has lacked university accountability. While some students and faculty have unencumbered access to physical spaces on this campus, both private and university-governed, where they can openly express the most singular of viewpoints, other students, staff, and faculty have been continuously blocked from booking rooms to enable planned educational activities such as musical performances and poetry readings that involve Palestinian content. Organizers of such academic and cultural events have been told that their event, because of its content, has been deemed a “demonstration.” This suggests a variable use of this term and an instrumental use of our Guidelines on Open Expression for the purpose of viewpoint suppression.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the email you sent on April 25, 2024 was a rare instance—only the second time—a senior administrator has used the word “Palestine” after nearly seven months of the ongoing war in Gaza and the continued harassment of Palestinian students and faculty. This silence and omission, needless to say, has compounded the harm experienced by our Palestinian students, colleagues, and their allies.

The Gaza Solidarity Encampment students have conducted trainings in de-escalation practices; have held Shabbat on site and supported a Muslim community prayer held by MSA nearby; and have held poetry readings and teach-ins on antisemitism by eminent scholars of Holocaust and genocide studies, [NAME REDACTED] and [NAME REDACTED]. Elected representatives [NAME REDACTED], [NAME REDACTED], and [NAME REDACTED] each visited the encampment to offer their full support and encouragement. The students are urgently mindful of the importance of keeping the encampment educational, peaceful, and clean. They have posted safety guidelines for the space and exhibited admirable care for each other, the community, and the environment. These young adults are passionate; they are intelligent, thoughtful and committed. They courageously stand up for the over 40,000 Palestinians who have been killed, and for countless others who continue to suffer grave injustices at the hands of the Israeli government. Our students’ compassion and activism inspire courage and give us all hope for a more just and peaceful world.

Let Penn lead not only its peer institutions but all campuses across the nation in abiding by its stated commitment to open expression and allowing its students to speak their truth.

Respectfully, on behalf of the Penn Faculty for Justice in Palestine (noting that many members of Penn FJP cannot sign due to concerns about their professional and personal safety),

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