



May 20, 2024

Offices of President Saller and Provost Martinez
450 Jane Stanford Way, Building 10
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Re: Office of Community Standards Action Against Students Advocating for Palestine

Dear President Saller and Provost Martinez:

We, the undersigned legal, civil rights, and community organizations, write to express our concern regarding your Office of Community Standards (OCS) investigations into protests on campus, specifically the White Plaza encampment known as the People’s University for Palestine. We understand that Stanford administrators have filed “Concerns” against at least 13 students, and that these Concerns will be subject to “mid-level review,” which could result in a mark on students’ disciplinary records, and probation or suspension. **We urge you to dismiss all of the Concerns against students** alleged to have participated in the White Plaza encampment.

We are troubled that these investigations appear unsupported by any specific allegations of student wrongdoing. All 13 students received identical letters from OCS, summarily stating that “a Concern has been filed . . . in regards to a possible violation of the Fundamental Standard and policies identified in the Concern.” Students were given access to a Google Drive folder that, according to OCS, would contain a copy of the Concern and any supporting documentation submitted with it. But for all the students who received an OCS letter, this drive was empty apart from a copy of the letter itself. OCS has not provided adequate notice of the specific factual allegation against these students, nor has it provided any evidence supporting allegations of student misconduct.

We are further concerned that the investigations appear to target, with no legitimate basis, students known for participation in prior pro-Palestinian campus activism. Two of the 13 students were heavily involved in prior negotiations with the administration surrounding the now-disbanded Sit-in to Stop Genocide, and another spoke at a rally promoting solidarity between Indigenous communities and Palestinian people. None of these three has had any involvement in organizing, nor staying overnight at the current encampment; yet OCS is

investigating all of them. Without clear allegations or evidence of current misconduct, the OCS investigations into these students appear unfounded.

Troublingly, 6 of the 13 students identify as Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and/or Muslim, even though these groups represent a minority of student protestors. One Palestinian student received an OCS letter despite having been out of town, and therefore not participating in campus activity, at the time of the purported violation. Although the administration eventually withdrew that Concern, the mistake suggests that the administration proceeded based upon the student's national origin and assumed protest involvement or prior activism, rather than any real evidence of his participation in the encampment. At the very least, this incident indicates carelessness on the part of Stanford's administration and OCS.

Subjecting students to disciplinary proceedings is a severe punishment, *even if charges are later withdrawn*. The stress and stigma caused by the proceedings negatively impact academic performance, social relationships, and mental health. Furthermore, the fear of disciplinary investigation, with all its associated harms, chills students' free speech and discourages them from civic engagement on campus.

Universities should foster environments where students can freely voice their opinions and advocate for what they think is right. Student activism has an important legacy in this country. Students have spearheaded some of the most important social movements in our history, including the civil rights, anti-war, and anti-South African apartheid movements. Yet students have also historically endured suppression, punishment, and violence at the hands of university administration and the state. Today, rising tensions on university campuses call to mind violent images of the Vietnam-war era: many remember the Kent State Massacre in which four unarmed college students were murdered by national guardsmen and nine wounded. May 4th was the 54th anniversary of this tragedy.

We ask that Stanford continue to resist the disturbing trend of universities inviting violent police crackdowns on peaceful student protestors. Stanford should not join the outdated rhetoric of universities in the news lately that are mischaracterizing peaceful student protests. Nor should Stanford engage in disciplinary proceedings against students peacefully speaking out for justice and an end to violence.

The apparently arbitrary process by which Stanford has initiated these OCS investigations warrants dismissal of all the Concerns against students alleged to have participated in the White Plaza encampment in support of Palestine. Indeed, the Concerns appear to lack a sound basis in evidence of student misconduct, which is reason enough to dismiss them.

You can contact Caroline Marks, Staff Attorney at Asian Law Caucus, at carolinem@advancingjustice-alc.org, with any response.

Sincerely,

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus, Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) California, National Lawyers Guild (NLG)-SF Bay Area (SFBA) Chapter, Palestine Legal and the 34 other organizations listed below.

Adalah Justice Project
American Muslim Voice Foundation
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL)
Asian Prisoner Support Committee
California Immigrant Policy Center
Central American Resource Center - CARECEN- of California
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
Comunidades Aliadas Tomando Accion
Islamophobia Studies Center
Kern Welcoming and Extending Solidarity to Immigrants
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
Media Alliance
MSA West
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
Muslims for Just Futures
No Separate Justice
Northern California Islamic Council
Orange County Equality Coalition
Orange County Justice Fund
Palestinian American Bar Association
Project South
SABACENTER
San Francisco Public Defender's Office
Secure Justice
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
South Asian Network
South Bay Islamic Association
South Bay People Power

Support Life Foundation
UndocuBlack Network
Youth Justice Coalition L.A.