



COUNCIL OF  
**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS

1270 Farragut Circle  
Davis, CA 95618  
888-826-3623  
info@cucfa.org

November 16, 2023

President Michael V. Drake  
Office of the President  
University of California  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

And

UC Regents  
Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents  
1111 Franklin St., 12th floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Delivered via Email to: president@ucop.edu and regentsoffice@ucop.edu

Dear President Drake and UC Regents,

The Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) is an umbrella organization for the Faculty Associations at each of the ten UC campuses, which advocates for the economic and employment conditions of UC faculty and faculty rights of academic freedom and political speech. We are deeply alarmed at the chilling climate across the United States, and increasingly on UC campuses that undermines the academic freedom and the free speech rights of instructional faculty and students to express support for the Palestinian people and/or criticize the Israeli government's well-documented ongoing settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, and potentially genocide in Palestine.

We firmly reject the characterization of pro-Palestinian speech or critiques of Israeli state policy as inherently anti-Semitic and the use of the discredited IHRA definition of anti-Semitism to do so. We echo faculty and students' denunciation of doxxing, the creation of blacklists, and the culture of intimidation that has been used to silence people who speak in solidarity with Palestine. A recent open letter from several legal organizations, including the National Lawyers Guild and the Center for Constitutional Rights, noted that attacks on speech critical of Israeli policy "draw from a very old and dirty well of tactics aimed at weaponizing so-called terrorism laws and frameworks to repress dissent and protest protected squarely by the First Amendment." As the ACLU was compelled to remind university leaders last week, the right to speak on these topics without fear of retaliation or punishment is a cornerstone of constitutionally protected speech on our campuses.

We affirm the AAUP's statement, "College and university officials are obligated to defend academic freedom; they must resist demands from politicians, trustees, donors, students and their parents, alumni, or other parties to punish faculty members for exercising that freedom." Statements issued by the UC Regents, the UC President, and senior leadership at all campuses have already obstructed the ability of faculty who wish to teach about the events unfolding in Gaza to do so freely. Faculty, instructors, staff, and students who speak out against what leading experts on international humanitarian law, human rights scholars, UN officials, and activists have described as violations of the

laws of war and as genocide have been targeted by outside groups and by powerful actors within the system for intimidation, harassment, threats, and worse. In many cases, these actions have prevented them from being able to safely speak, teach, and write about these issues, even on their own campuses.

Academic freedom is meaningless if it is selectively applied or repressed in times of conflict and tension. At this moment, Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, and anti-Zionist Jewish faculty are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this intimidation.

On November 10, 2023, President Drake and the ten UC Chancellors issued a “Joint Statement on Intolerance of Campus Bigotry” condemning Islamophobia and anti-Semitism as antithetical to UC values. We demand assurances that President Drake’s promised initiatives to address the current campus climate will be developed transparently and in consultation with the Academic Senate. This is how we ensure respect for the academic freedom of all faculty and equal protection from harassment and intimidation by forces seeking to undermine UC’s mission to serve the common good through open, searching, critical pedagogy and scholarship.

Sincerely,

Constance Penley, CUCFA President and Professor of Film and Media Studies UC Santa Barbara  
Wendy Matsumura, CUCFA Vice President and Associate Professor of History UC San Diego  
On behalf of the Council of UC Faculty Associations