



Dear Dr. Mahoney,

First, we would like to thank you for meeting with us yesterday. We appreciate you taking the time to hear directly how Jewish students and our allies are feeling about the upcoming lecture hosting Leila Khaled. We're writing you this letter to name the actionable steps we discussed and with which we expect the university to move forward.

As we articulated in the meeting, we agree with you that it is important for universities to ensure academic freedom and viewpoint diversity. As you know, our community has experienced viewpoint discrimination in recent years – our speakers have been interrupted, our peers have been alienated in courses, and our views have been discriminated against and excluded. We all directly benefit when we can learn with and from individuals who see the world differently. And, SF State can protect our learning environment while upholding our mission to “require students to engage in open-minded inquiry and reflection”, and “become productive, ethical, active citizens with a global perspective.” This is not achieved through academic freedom alone; we also expect academic responsibility and are still deeply distressed by this blatant violation of that responsibility.

As we shared with you, we are worried about the normalization of violent rhetoric. We live in a world with rising violent hate crime rates against Jews and other minority communities, where divisive rhetoric emboldens teenagers to take up arms and threaten acts of violence. Seeing someone who engaged in terror be held up as a role model, we are worried about the potential for hateful or dangerous backlash. We are upset to hear from some of our friends that they are “grateful to be home” right now with distanced learning, where they are at least physically safe. But as you also believe, everyone on our campus deserves to feel psychologically safe. Inviting an individual who used violence against innocent civilians and who regularly endorses antisemitism does not make us feel safe and does not create a healthy learning environment.

We are saddened that so many in our campus community, and the broader Jewish world, are not surprised to see this happening at SF State. Our university made a commitment to address the systemic antisemitism and anti-Zionism on our campus; students should not expect these occurrences. This endless cycle needs to stop, and we have the mechanisms in place to do so.

So where do we go from here?

In our meeting, we discussed what can happen. We acknowledge campus professionals are already moving forward on some of these pieces. Our intention in naming what we agreed to here is to hold the university accountable to these action items:

Board President: Rick Lenat

Executive Director: Rachel Nilson Ralston

SF Hillel is a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Foundation of San Francisco, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Koret Foundation, Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund, Nancy and Stephen Grand, and the John Pritzker Family Fund

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1. Work in partnership with student leaders from SF Hillel and our allies, and commit university funds to host a speaker series, educating our campus about non-violent activism, peace-building efforts in Israel and Palestine, antisemitism, and the many different forms and expressions of Zionism.
2. To address and track the incidents that don't meet the threshold for the current student complaint process, create and publicize bias-incident reporting procedures for students who experience marginalization because of their Jewish identity or relationship to Israel. This process can also serve any individual or community on campus experiencing exclusion and/or identity-based discrimination.
3. Provide training for all staff in the Division of Equity & Community Inclusion around rising rates of antisemitism, its intersections with anti-Zionism, and the diversity of Jewish identities.
4. Engage in ongoing learning and training to ensure the university is improving its ability to respond to these divisive events on our campus, as part of our ongoing dismantling of systemic antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

We did not discuss it directly in our meeting, but another piece that came up in conversation with our peers is that we were promised by the university a full-time Jewish Student Life Coordinator. In order to move forward in these action steps, our community feels it is necessary to speedily fill this position with a qualified, dedicated leader.

We are grateful to be students on a campus that protects academic freedom and welcomes diverse viewpoints and identities. And, we are hopeful that you and the university will uphold and protect the values of a safe, inclusive, and academically engaged campus environment.

Sincerely,

Ocean Noah, Class of 2021
Student President, SF Hillel

Zachary Weinstein, Class of 2022
Student President, I-Team and SF Hillel Design Tribe leader

Connor MacLennan, Class of 2022
StandWithUs Emerson Fellow and SF Hillel Design Tribe leader

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