



April 5, 2019

VIA EMAIL

President Claire E. Sterk
Emory University
408 Administration Building
201 Dowman Drive
Atlanta, GA 30322

Dear President Sterk:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest and one of the largest pro-Israel organizations in the U.S. The ZOA has been a leader in protecting Jewish students and in fighting anti-Semitic harassment and intimidation in schools and on college campuses. We filed the first case of campus anti-Semitism that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) ever agreed to investigate under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The ZOA led the fight to secure legal protection under Title VI for Jewish students facing anti-Semitic harassment and intimidation at federally-funded schools. Our work triggered an independent investigation of anti-Semitism at The City University of New York. And our Title VI action against Rutgers University led to OCR's determination that it will now be using the U.S. State Department's definition of anti-Semitism when it considers and decides anti-Semitism cases under Title VI – a definition that accurately recognizes that anti-Israelism can be a manifestation of anti-Semitism.

SJP's Fake Eviction Notices Threatened and Intimidated Jewish Students

We received several troubling reports that, in violation of Emory University rules and policies, a student group that calls itself "Students for Justice in Palestine" (SJP) posted fake eviction notices on students' doors and in other areas of the campus on April 2, 2019. Although it is not clear whether SJP targeted Jewish students only, students observed that the eviction notices were posted on the doors of rooms with mezuzahs, and that there were doors without mezuzahs that did not have the notices. The eviction notices contained false information calculated to incite hatred of Jews and Israel – including that Israel "routinely" gives eviction notices to Palestinian Arabs "for no other reason than their ethnicity," and that Israel is trying to "ethnically cleanse the region of its Arab inhabitants and maintain an exclusively 'Jewish' character of the state."

As SJP no doubt intended, the group's actions unnerved Jewish students and caused them to feel threatened and harassed in their own homes. Making matters worse, the eviction notices appeared to be endorsed by Emory University. The notices bore the university's official seal,

together with a stamp and a signature reflecting that the eviction notices received “Office of Residence & Housing Approval.”

The University’s Inadequate Response

Paul Marthers, Interim Vice President for Campus Life and Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, issued a community message about the eviction notices, but members of the Emory community found it inadequate and even offensive. Mr. Marthers described SJP as “a student organization concerned with human rights in the Middle East” -- a description that could not be further from the truth. As the SJP’s schedule of events for its ongoing “Israeli Apartheid Week” program makes clear, SJP’s focus is on denying the right of the Jewish people to live in their ancestral homeland, and on bashing Israel with factual distortions and outright lies.

In 2017, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs issued a [study about SJP](#), and described this group as a “terror-affiliated anti-Semitic network” that “incites hatred and violence against Jewish students, and rejects the existence of the state of Israel in any borders.” Yet Mr. Marthers’ message whitewashed this group’s motives and goals, portraying SJP as a benevolent group with compassionate intentions. He did not criticize, let alone acknowledge, that the eviction notices contained lies to incite hatred of Jews and Israel. He did not acknowledge or condemn SJP for causing Jewish students to feel threatened and intimidated. Demonizing Israel, denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and denying Israel’s right to exist are manifestations of anti-Semitism according to U.S. government standards. But Mr. Marthers did not even mention the word anti-Semitism in his community message.

Mr. Marthers’ message also failed to acknowledge that SJP and its allies may have violated numerous university rules and policies, and to confirm that if they did, they will be held accountable – as any student or student group would and should be if they engaged in wrongdoing. Emory’s [Housing Policies](#) specifically prohibit posting flyers on doors, a prohibition that SJP flagrantly violated. The [Undergraduate Code of Conduct](#) specifically prohibits (1) “disrupting the normal operations of the university”; (2) engaging in conduct that is likely to cause . . . emotional distress”; and (3) “threatening [or] intimidating any person.” Mr. Marthers should have made it clear that the university is investigating whether any of these rules and policies were violated, and if they were, that the wrongdoers will be punished.

Requested Relief

Emory University’s [policies](#) provide that all students are expected to “act honorably,” to “behave *respectfully*,” and to “provid[e] particular *consideration* for other people” [italics in original]. As SJP’s behavior illustrates, this group does not conform to these expectations. In addition to posting the fake and hate-inciting eviction notices and sponsoring a week of attacks on Jews and Israel, SJP members staged a “die-in” on April 3, laying on the ground and obstructing the walkway.

If the university’s expectations are to have meaning, and if Emory is truly committed to a learning environment that is safe and welcoming for Jewish and other students, then we respectfully urge you to take the following steps:

- Conduct a full and fair investigation of the posting of the eviction notices and the “die-in” to determine whether SJP and its allies violated the Undergraduate Code of Conduct and/or the Housing Policy;
- If SJP and its allies violated any policies, punish the wrongdoers;
- Discontinue the practice of placing the university seal on SJP and other student group flyers, because it wrongly sends the message that Emory University endorses the contents of the flyers.
- Issue another community message which addresses the concerns we raised in this letter, including condemning SJP by name for causing Jewish students to feel harassed and intimidated. SJP and the rest of the community must get the message that Emory makes student safety and well-being a top priority, that violations of the university’s rules and policies will not be tolerated, and that those who harass, threaten and intimidate others will be sanctioned.

We thank you for considering our concerns and look forward to hearing from you.

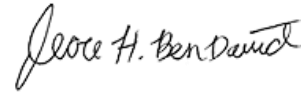
Very truly yours,



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