



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

A report by the Stanford Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian
Communities Committee

May 2024

With Gratitude:

This report would not have been possible without the time, insights, and care of so many Stanford community members. We are deeply grateful for and humbled by every single person who participated in listening sessions and meetings, who responded to emails and phone calls, who provided edits and said “How can I help?” During what has been a harrowing time, you generously shared your knowledge and your guidance, your vulnerability and your strength. It has been our privilege and honor to be in community with you. Thank you for being candles in the dark.

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وأنت تحرّرتُ نفسك بالاستعارات، فكّر بغيرك
مَنْ فقدوا حقّهم في الكلام
وأنت تفكّر بالآخرين البعيدين، فكّر بنفسك
قُل: ليبتني شمعة في الظلام

مقتبس من "فكّر بغيرك" لمحمود درويش

While you are writing your metaphors, think of others
who have lost their right to speak.

When you think of others far away, think of yourself
Say: "If only I were a candle in the dark".

-from "Think of Others" by Mahmoud Darwish



“I don’t really have a home right now other than this dorm room.”
Undergraduate from Gaza

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Executive Summary

This report details a substantial rupture of trust between students, staff, and faculty in the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian (MAP) communities and Stanford in academic year 2023-24. These communities have felt afraid for their safety, unseen and unheard by university leadership, and silenced through a variety of formal and informal means when they assert the rights and humanity of Palestinians. This rupture has been compounded by a longer history of Islamophobia, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian sentiment that stretches through and beyond Stanford.

In spring 2024, the question of Palestine remains one of the most pressing political issues of the day, both in our university and on the global stage. A core [mission](#) of Stanford is to “educate tomorrow’s global citizens” by enabling students to “engage with big ideas, to cross conceptual and disciplinary boundaries, and to become global citizens who embrace diversity of thought and experience.” This past year, numerous Stanford staff, faculty, and administrators have devoted significant time and effort to honoring these values despite extraordinary scrutiny from Congress, national media, alumni, and others.

Yet the findings of this committee indicate that Stanford has not lived up to this mission. The university has undermined speech, teaching, and research on Palestine. For Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian community members, Stanford’s decisions have diminished their sense of equality, inclusion, and belonging on campus. These decisions have also sent a message to the whole university that Palestine is an exception to Stanford’s stated mission: a topic that one cannot study, discuss, or teach without potentially damaging one’s future.

In this report, we detail, based on hundreds of hours of listening sessions with students, staff, faculty, and alumni, the challenges of being a member of Muslim, Arab, and/or Palestinian communities at Stanford. In many cases, these challenges extend to students, staff, and faculty of any identity who align themselves with or engage the rights of Palestinians. We show how these challenges are linked to persistent suppression of speech on Palestine;

underrepresentation of community members in conversations that matter; a scarcity of scholarly expertise in Palestinian and Arab studies; and institutional discomfort with the diversity of opinion and expertise that does exist on campus.

The report makes the following core findings:

- Students from MAP communities experienced dozens of incidents that undermined their sense of safety and belonging, including physical assaults, threats, and harassment. Although Stanford responded appropriately to some of these incidents and provided security in response to student requests, on many occasions students felt that the institutional response was insufficient given the severity and persistence of incidents.
- Speech suppression occurred through a variety of formal and informal means. In some cases, administrators explicitly targeted speech supportive of Palestine on the basis of its viewpoint in violation of the university's obligations to protect freedom of speech and principles of academic freedom. Administrators leveraged existing time, place, and manner restrictions on speech—and created new ones—to limit discourse around Palestine.
- Staff felt especially vulnerable, with little clarity regarding the scope of academic freedom and speech protections available to them and inconsistencies in the application of norms and policies.
- Stanford has not called in riot police or invited mass arrests to forcibly clear student encampments; in that respect, it is doing better than many other universities that created spectacles of punishment to placate external pressure. University leaders permitted the Sit-In to Stop Genocide to remain in White Plaza for nearly four months, enabling students to learn and teach one another in what became the longest sit-in in Stanford history. However, Stanford criminalized peaceful student protests when it facilitated the arrest of 18 students who disrupted an event during Family Weekend and who were then charged with misdemeanors.
- Students, staff, and faculty who engaged in Palestine activism feared the administration's own surveillance and its implementation of disciplinary measures, which exacerbated their sense of insecurity.
- Calls for “civil discourse” on university campuses often reflect a suspicion of student activism, a distrust of speech outside the boundaries of institutional orthodoxy, and opposition to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Stanford needs a paradigm of vibrant discourse, not civil discourse. Our proposed framework fosters skills-building for disagreement, expands and enriches university conversations, and honors students' own discourse and activism.

- Stanford lacks scholarly depth in Palestinian and Arab studies. While it has made substantial progress in hiring faculty in recent years who study Islam, there are exceedingly few tenured or tenure-track faculty who focus on the Arab world. This gap not only puts Stanford behind its peer institutions in producing research and knowledge, but also leaves the university with few tenured—and therefore protected—faculty who can lead difficult conversations on Palestine.
- While Stanford has diversified its student population significantly, members of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities remain scarce among faculty, staff, and institutional leadership. This lack of representation often leads to “unforced errors” in decisions that have implications for these communities.
- Stanford has done well in establishing some institutional structures—such as the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies and the Markaz Resource Center—that support MAP communities. Without these units, students, staff, and faculty would have had an even more challenging year. However, these units remain understaffed and overextended, highlighting the need for permanent and reliable financial investment.
- MAP community members consistently noted that Stanford’s official communications since October 2023 were asymmetric with respect to Palestine despite the university’s stated commitment to institutional neutrality and restraint. Moreover, these communications often presented lopsided coverage of this historical moment and sometimes conflated or collapsed MAP identities, such as assuming that all Palestinians are Muslim.

Stanford took an important step forward in creating this committee and was, to the best of our knowledge, the first university to do so after October 2023. In accordance with our [charge](#), **this report aims to uplift, honor, and learn from the lived experiences and words of community members. It also highlights that, even as they feel that Stanford does not always treat them as integral to the work of the university, they see themselves as part of Stanford and are invested in the institution.** With that in mind, we recommend substantial reciprocal investment from Stanford to move toward repair: in policies and decisions to protect and expand speech; in faculty to teach and research; and in structures to support and empower.

But most importantly we use this report to recommend that Stanford live up to its stated values. In theory, the university has [committed](#) to the principle that its **“central functions of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship depend upon an atmosphere in which freedom of inquiry, thought, expression, publication and peaceable assembly are given the fullest protection. Expression of the widest range of viewpoints should be encouraged, free from institutional orthodoxy and from internal or external coercion.”**

But when challenged by some of the most difficult moments for universities in North America, and buffeted by national political pressures, Stanford chose what one senior leader we spoke to described as a new “McCarthyism.”

The Palestine exception illuminates the gap between Stanford’s stated values and its actual practices. This is a moment for the university to take a hard look at *who* makes the policies, *what* values the policies are conveying to its students, faculty, and staff, *where* these policies are being levied inconsistently, *why* these policies are harming certain members of the university, and *how* these policies can be reimagined. We believe this will make the university better not just for MAP communities but for people across all corners of Stanford.

This report provides detailed recommendations on safety, freedom of speech, vibrant discourse, scholarship and knowledge production, representation and structural support, and communications. We provide [one-year, five-year, and ten-year goals](#) to guide the university as it implements these five core tasks:

- 1. Eliminate the Palestine exception to free speech and expression throughout the university.**
- 2. Broaden opportunities for speech and engagement by revising time, place, and manner restrictions curtailing student speech and by expanding freedom of speech and academic freedom for all community members, not just tenured faculty.**
- 3. Cultivate vibrant discourse even on controversial topics by recruiting a diversity of representation, experience, and knowledge among students, staff, and faculty. Continue to invest in structures that support this diversity.**
- 4. Invest in new tenured faculty and units engaging Palestine and Arab Studies for the long term, and in the short term leverage existing expertise and create exchange programs to bring greater scholarship to Stanford.**
- 5. Listen to and honor in-house expertise and community leaders when working on decisions and communications that affect the campus and its diverse communities, particularly during moments of crisis.**

Methodology

Our data collection took place over a period of seven months between November 15, 2023 and May 15, 2024. Our analysis is based on qualitative interviews, analyses of relevant reports and documentation, and archival examination. We conducted listening sessions with close to 200 Stanford community members, including students, staff, and faculty across all schools and units, as well as alumni and parents. A few of these sessions were group meetings, while the majority were 1:1 interviews, each lasting between 60-120 minutes. We also conducted a close textual analysis of university communications during this time period, delved into Stanford archives for the legacy of protest at our university, and read hundreds of news articles that focused on this moment in relation to higher education in order to contextualize Stanford within the national conversation.

We released an [interim report](#) in February 2024, and incorporated extensive feedback on our initial recommendations. We met with university committees and units representing other communities and working on related issues, including Stanford's Subcommittee on Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias and the Ad Hoc Committee on University Speech. We also shared drafts and sections of this current report with stakeholders throughout the process of writing. Incidents of concern have continued to occur after the end of our data collection period and will be addressed by the committee going forward.

“You don’t hear us saying that we don’t feel safe because we are constantly in a state of actionable unsafety. We get threatened. We get hit by cars. We get shot in this country. We get shot in our country. We fled our country. Feelings in general are something that you don’t talk about all the time if you come from a war zone, not just Palestine.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“How do I make myself small enough—to make people comfortable? What if I make someone else uncomfortable? What if I get shot for what I’m wearing?”
MAP Graduate Student

“The safety of our students means divesting. The reason why they are in psychological pain is because of the genocide Palestinians are dying from. There is a direct link to what the university is doing and the mass slaughter of students’ families.” **Alum**

“I am afraid. I can’t say anything. I don’t want to get kicked out of this place.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“I was afraid to leave the house, honestly.” **MAP Staff**

Safety

According to a December 2023 report by [CAIR National](#), more than 2,000 incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian hate have been reported in the United States since October 7, 2023, a **172 percent increase** from the same time period the year before. A [Pew Research Center poll](#) in February 2024 also found that 70% of American Muslims feel that discrimination against them has increased since October 2023, and [53% say](#) that today's events make them feel afraid. In addition, a recent poll by the [Institute for Social Policy & Understanding](#) (ISPU) found similarly increased levels of discrimination against Muslims, with Muslim students in higher education especially impacted. Some of the most egregious incidents of anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian hate and Islamophobia have happened to students on or around college campuses. At our own campus on [November 3, 2023](#), an Arab Muslim student reported being struck by a car whose driver shouted “F--- you and your people” as he sped away. That incident caused widespread fear on and off campus. Not too long after, [three Palestinian students were shot](#) in Vermont on November 25, 2023.

The national context and the climate are symptomatic, as we noted in our [interim report](#), of the fact that Islamophobia persists in the United States and here at Stanford, with varying manifestations. In the current context, it has intersected sharply with anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian bias, with [Islamophobic tropes deployed in the Israel-Palestine discourse](#) to suppress pro-Palestinian speech and activism. Moreover, in this intersection, Islamophobia has ironically become the “low-hanging fruit” whereby some institutions, legislative bodies, and politicians are able to easily support Muslims while neglecting anti-Palestinian or anti-Arab bias. **For this reason, it is key to [disaggregate Islamophobia from anti-Palestinian sentiment](#) when thinking through the discussions in this report.**

At Stanford, too, MAP students, staff, and faculty highlight bias and hate in the form of both Islamophobia and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian bias. As we noted in the interim report, Stanford has much work to do if we want to meet our goals on inclusion and belonging, diversity of thought, and access to the opportunities the university offers.

INCIDENTS OF BIAS AND HARM


For as long as there have been Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian members at Stanford, there have been anti-Palestinian/anti-Arab or Islamophobic incidents experienced by this community. While the committee could not undertake a comprehensive audit of this history, students, staff, and faculty gave us many examples of this harm across many decades:

- Sitting through asymmetric course material that orientalizes and trivializes the Middle East or Islam or that teaches Palestine only in the context of terrorism
- Absorbing microaggressive comments such as a first-year student asking his new roommate on move-in day, upon learning that he is Muslim, “If you convert, will they kill you?” or a faculty member telling a student in her research group that, “Islam is a religion for stupid people because doing Ramadan starves and shrinks your brain”
- Navigating a relentless low thrum of hostility and prejudice against MAP community members, as evidenced by articles as old as a 1928 article in the *Stanford Daily* entitled “[Must Understand Desert to Know Arab Says Hulme,](#)” all the way to a recent [Stanford Review piece](#) framing humanities professors, graduate student unions, and student activists as radical extremists who are behind a “recent flourishing of terror fetishism”
- Being doxxed as a result of pro-Palestinian activism, leading to threats on career opportunities, sexual violence, or death, and to termination of employment
- Being doxxed for standing up against Islamophobic speakers being invited to the university, such as when several students [questioned Stanford’s decision to host the widely known anti-Islam extremist Robert Spencer in 2017](#), only for Spencer to post photos and videos of those students on his blog, labeling them as fascists.

Returning to our current moment, [Stanford’s Protected Identity Harm \(PIH\)](#) system recorded more than 50 incidents of anti-Palestinian/anti-Arab bias or Islamophobia between October 2023 and May 2024, ranging from assault to battery to theft. This indicates at least a **900% increase** from the combined total incidents reported in two prior academic years (one in 2022-23 and four in 2021-22).

Moreover, the committee has good reason to believe that the real number of incidents in 2023-24 is actually much higher: in cross-referencing the PIH reports with incidents we learned of during our listening sessions, it became clear that many were not reported. Many MAP students never bothered using the PIH system to file grievances on harm because they already had no trust in the system and thought it would be pointless. Others believed filing a report would make them a target and raise their profile with the administration. Those students who initially did take the time to file PIH reports gradually stopped doing so because they felt the system offered no accountability or recourse.

The Stanford Daily



STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1928

BLOCK "S" GIVEN PETE DESJARDINS BY EX COMMITTEE

Pete Desjardins, who won first place in spring-board diving and in high and fancy diving at the 1928 Olympics, was awarded a Block "S" by the Executive Committee at its meeting last night. Desjardins also won the international diving championship for the 1924 Olympics, and many national records. He is a member of the class of 1931, and was from Miami, Florida.

Dr. Harris was appointed Junior basketball manager in the place of Mr. Hare who did not return to school, and Dean Sweeney was chosen golf manager in the stead of Louis Erwin who is not enrolled this year. Both these men were alternates in case of the absence of the men chosen, and were recommended by the Committee by Al Masters.

Distribution of the loose-leaf addresses on the campus was ordered, according to Article III, Section 3, Paragraph (e) of the By-Laws of the Constitution to which attention was called in the Daily editorial, "The 'dex' Affair," published yesterday morning.

INJURED TROJAN GRIDMEN HOBBLE ON S. C. CAMPUS

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 16. (AP)—A more serious injury, and Coach Howard says will have to hire a hospital to take his Trojan football team

Must Understand Desert To Know Arab Says Hulme

Heat Stimulates Mind, Body, But Nature Does Not Stir Imagination

"To understand the Arab it is necessary to understand the desert," declared Professor Edward Maslin Hulme in his lecture on "Life Among the Arabs of French North Africa" last night in the Assembly Hall.

"Heat of the desert stimulates the mind and body of man rather than depresses him," he said, "but gives him nothing to think of in nature. There are no trees, no pools, no clouds or human associations, and unqualified light everywhere. It falls to nourish the emotions and imagination, and as a result the Arab cannot think logically and consecutively.

"No good social qualities are found among these desert men. They are individualists and realists, looking at life objectively and lacking in imagination and social solidarity. But many of their personal qualities are fine. They are artists in manners, courteous, and with a marked poetic strain, while at the same time the desert has made them courageous, wary, and alert. They love the desert, and none are so homesick separated from their homeland as these people.

"Desert sands are constantly threatening to swallow the oases, as they are sifted by the winds. So in the same way the Arabs are destructive, impulsive, and moved by whims. The Arab never acts on the basis of ethi-

QUALIFYING ROUND OF MURAL GOLF IS WON BY FRED OLSEN

First Round of Championship Scheduled To Be Held Tomorrow Afternoon

Fred Olsen of Kappa Sigma ran away with first place honors in the qualifying round of the intramural golf tournament, which came to a close yesterday afternoon, when he turned in a card of 78, two strokes lower than his closest opponent, R. T. Paine, of Alpha Tau Omega, who scored 80. Olsen shot the last 9 holes in par.

Following are the teams which qualified, with their total medal score: First flight — Beta Theta Pi, 156; Kappa Sigma, 168; Breakers, 169; Phi Gamma Delta, 170; Theta Chi and Alpha Tau Omega, 173 each; Epsilon 2W, 174; and Los Arcos, 177. Second flight—Alpha Sigma, 178; Delta Chi and Phi Kappa Psi, 179 each; Sigma Nu, 180; Epsilon 2, 182; Chi Psi, 186; Theta Xi, 189; Delta Tau Delta, 196.

Thursday the first round of the championship flight will be played. Monday of next week the semi-finals, and the finals Tuesday. The winners of the first four places in the first flight will receive 15, 10, 5, and 3 points respectively, a special round being played to decide the winners of third and fourth places. The winner of the second flight will receive one

Stanford Hoover Club Will Meet In Union Tonight

Littler of Republican State Central Committee to Be Chief Speaker

Stanford Hoover supporters will be given an opportunity to pledge their support and actively participate in the Hoover campaign at a Stanford-Hoover Club meeting to be held at 7:20 o'clock tonight in the lobby of the Old Union. All Stanford students who are in sympathy with the Hoover movement are urged to attend and a special invitation is extended to the women.

Robert Littler, member of the California Republican State Central Committee, will be the principal speaker of the evening. Herbert Wenig will also speak, and the meeting will be presided over by Philip Cavalero, president of the A.S.S.U.

According to Littler the purposes of this meeting are to bring the Hoover supporters on the campus into closer association and by an active campaign to show that the majority of Stanford students are Hoover supporters.

"The formation of the Smith and Thomas groups on the campus is a direct challenge to Stanford men and women who favor Herbert Hoover's candidacy," said Littler.

At tonight's meeting the actual vote-getting campaign will be started. Pledge cards, Hoover stickers, and pins will be distributed, and committees will be appointed. A committee

SMITH DIS OF ECO

DAVIS CUTS OF PLAY 7

Sixty-one aspirants in the Cheese," still r participation in the third matic trouts tonight : the Assembly Hall, as Gordon Davis.

He requests all those appear below to meet that time, for he is to the nine leads, but all friends, girl friends, herds, a few cannibal servants, and a gorilla

The four women to trouts are: Louise E Ewing, Julia Merritt Thompson.

Fifty-seven men are pear. They are: Leo Robert Burns, William Camp, Wayland Capw rington, Robert Cathen Lyle Cook, H. W. Da Laird Doyle, H. Fox Felize, Donald Fletcher Gaillard Fryer, Burnel las Gregg, Milton Hansamen, Bertrand H. Henry, Arthur Hurt.

Leo Kibby, Robin K Kirkwood, Henry Kle Leonhardt, Robert Lev Ben Maddox, George



REPORTED HARM INCIDENTS

A snapshot of some of the reported harm incidents experienced by MAP community members since October 2023. This list represents types of incidents reported to PIH, as well as those shared in listening sessions but not reported to PIH.

Physical Assault

On November 3, 2023, an Arab Muslim student reports being struck by a car whose driver shouted “F--- you and your people” as he sped away. That incident causes widespread fear on and off campus.

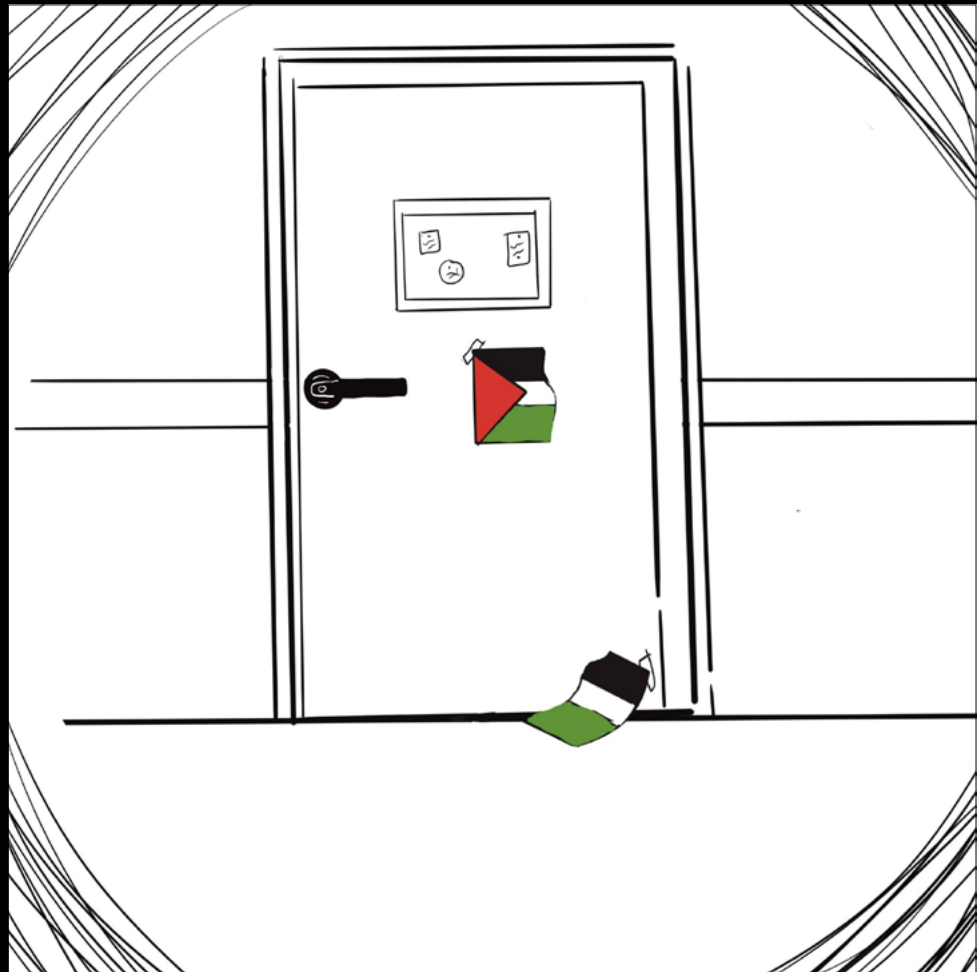


Physical Assault

Two students who identify as members of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities report being followed and shoved by an undergraduate when they were attempting to remove and add posters around White Plaza.

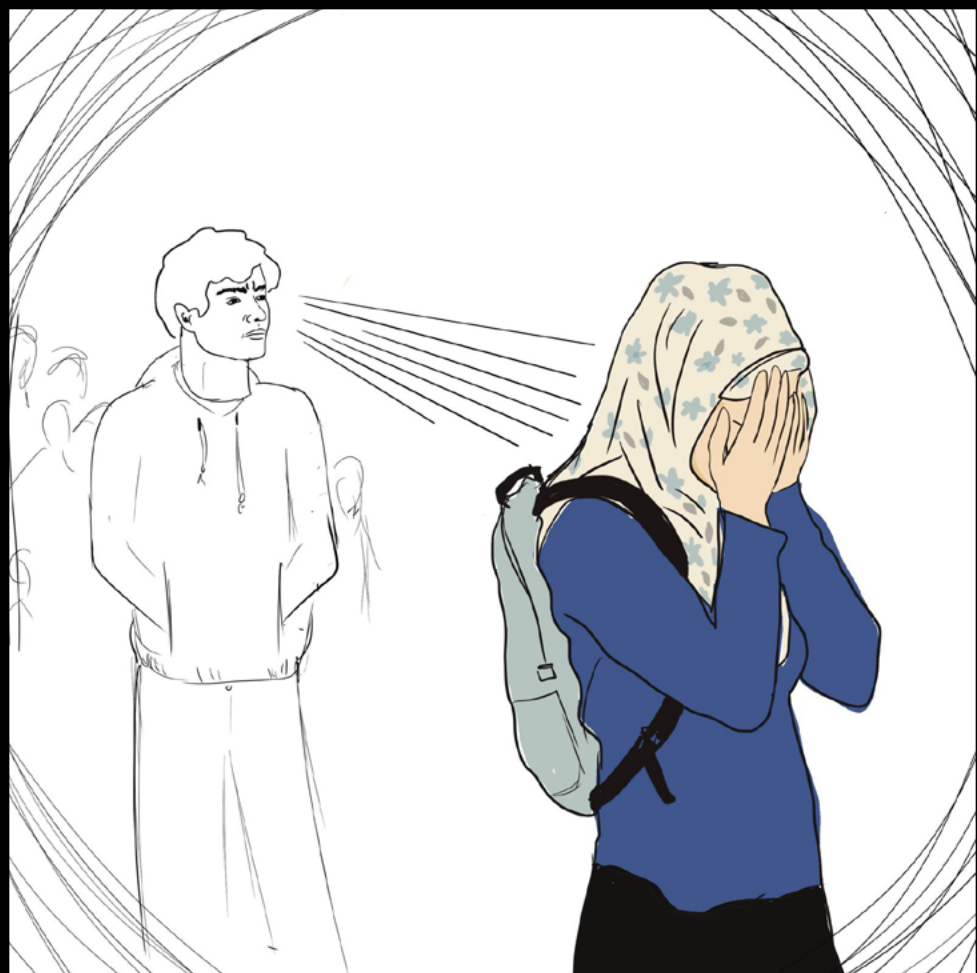
Destruction of Property

A printed-out Palestinian flag is taken off a graduate student's campus residence door and ripped in half.

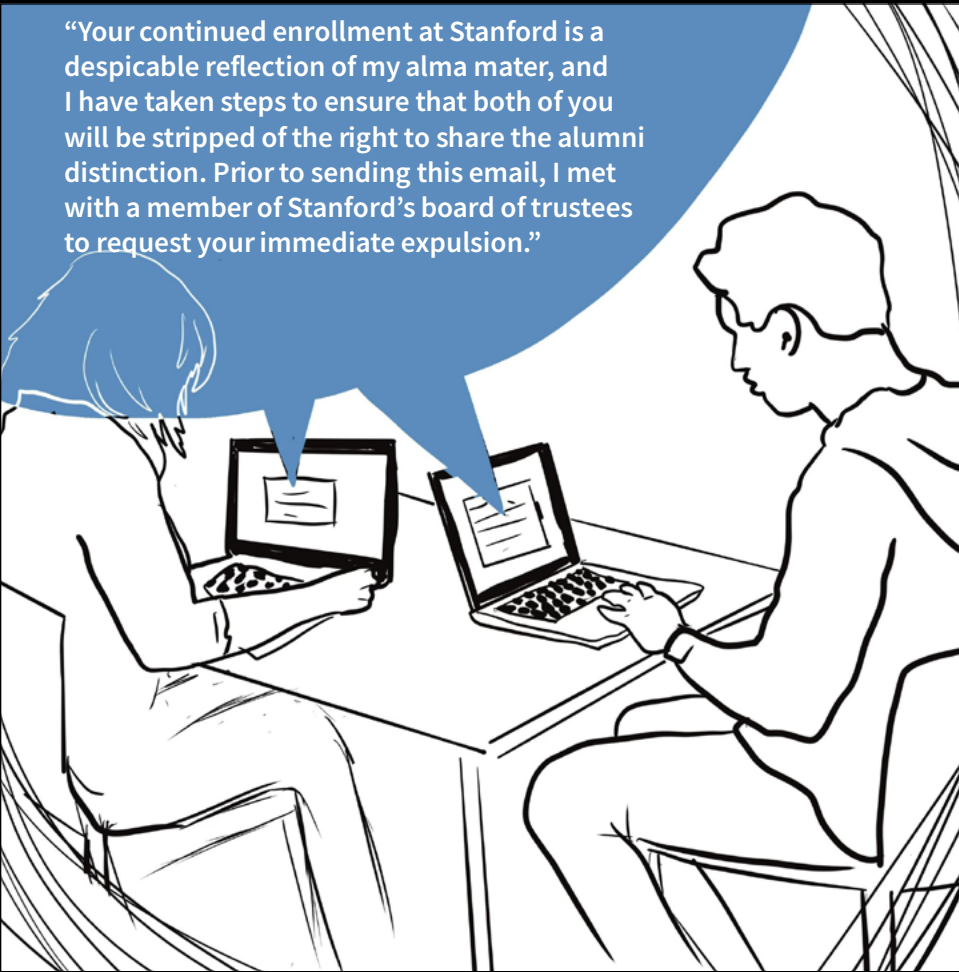


Intimidation

A female hijabi student reports being followed twice by two different male-identified people on campus.

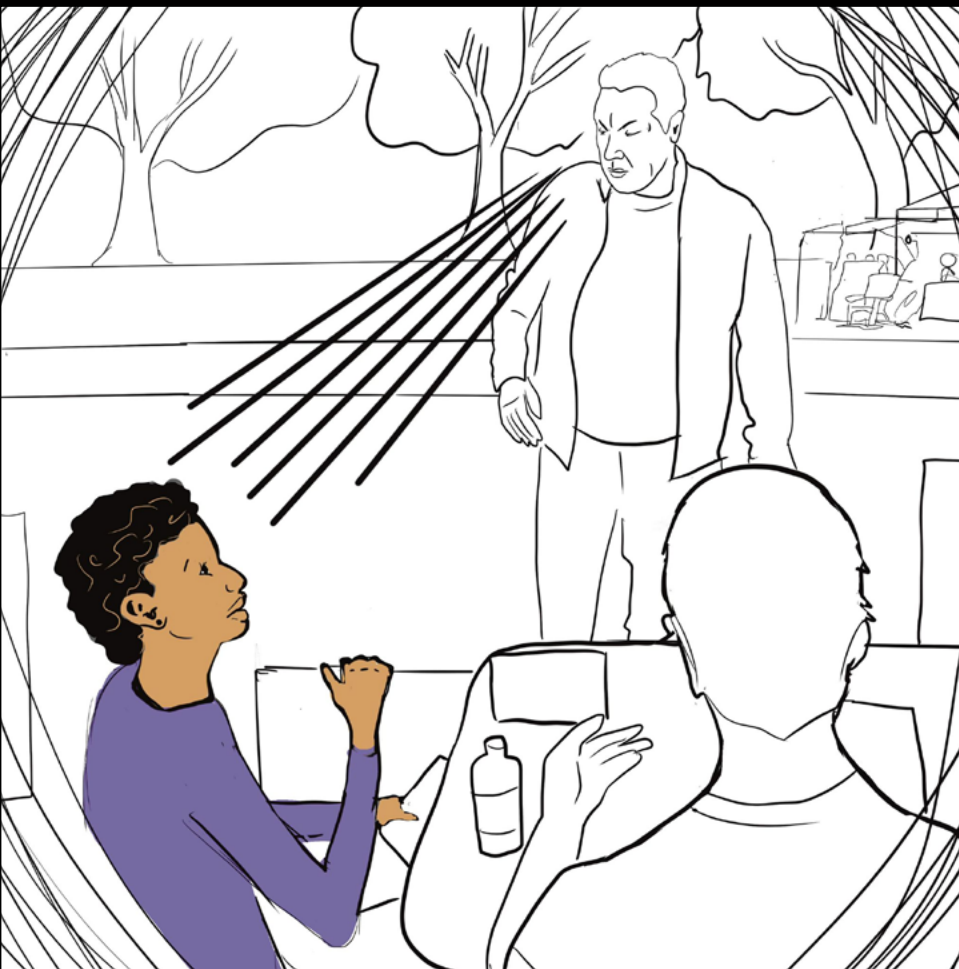


“Your continued enrollment at Stanford is a despicable reflection of my alma mater, and I have taken steps to ensure that both of you will be stripped of the right to share the alumni distinction. Prior to sending this email, I met with a member of Stanford’s board of trustees to request your immediate expulsion.”



Online Harrassment

Two Students for Justice in Palestine undergraduate members receive a threatening email from a Stanford alum. The subject of the email reads “College Terror List - You Made It!” The alum writes, “You are complicit in the rape, murder, decapitation, and execution of Jewish civilians. Religious extremism has no place in this world, let alone in the United States of America.”



Verbal Assault

1) A Stanford professor gets close to students at the sit-in until security intervenes, loudly stating things like, “I think you do the work of Islamic jihad and Hamas and Iran—people that murder and torture gays and women, and you are their useful idiot.”

2) A student of color is tabling at a display for Palestinian liberation at White Plaza when a person walks by, says “disgusting,” and attempts to spit on the student.

Intimidation

While preparing for a vigil, students at the sit in spot a suspicious truck driving around campus in central locations. The Truck has skulls and crossbones, and banners that read “UNITED STATES CAVALRY.” Additionally, it has caution tape and a message in Arabic on the back that, when translated, reads: “stay 100 feet away or prepare to be shot.” On its sides, the truck has a picture from a nonprofit in Los Altos called S.U.A.S. Veteran Crisis.



Deliberate Provocation

After the Sit-in To Stop Genocide begins, a Jewish community member chalked hateful antisemitic messages in White Plaza, attempting to implicate students at the sit-in. Images of those messages are circulated online with more than 2.3 million views and calls for expulsion of the sit-in participants. Students write to the administration asking them to publicly clarify the matter. While the president addressed it in his remarks at the faculty senate, no public clarification was made.



THE CONCEPT OF SAFETY

Even before October 2023, “safety” has been a contested concept in higher education, configuring centrally within tensions between [DEI and academic freedom](#), or between free speech/expression and harm. For instance, some commentators draw distinctions [between](#) being safe and feeling safe, or between [“dignity safety” and “intellectual safety.”](#) While we do not offer a precise definition of the term, we do reject conceptions of safety that equate exposure to difficult or challenging ideas with a lack of safety.

We start from the premise that safety is a state of being and feeling that is shaped by many forces. We believe all students deserve to thrive on campus in a safe institutional context that cultivates their belonging, while also fostering a vibrant intellectual discourse with diversity of thought and disagreement. As the examples above reflect, many members of MAP communities on campus have shared experiences of both being unsafe and feeling unsafe. While a basic sense of safety is a precondition for almost anything else that the university aspires to do, it has eluded many in these communities.

Holistically understood, safety cannot be fully achieved without a university achieving a range of other objectives: **members of a community must feel that they belong, communication must be consistent and transparent, people must feel free to speak, institutional structures must be in place to support intellectual and emotional well-being, and there must be a scholarly environment that reinforces respectful and open exchange.** Above all, community members, particularly students, must feel that they can trust the university and that the university cares about them. For this reason, we address safety explicitly in this chapter, but every other chapter (Freedom of Speech, Vibrant Discourse, Scholarship and Knowledge Production, Representation and Structural Support, and Communications) speaks just as much to this issue for MAP communities on campus.

MAP SAFETY AT STANFORD

In a post-October 2023 national and Stanford context, MAP students and community members consistently conveyed to us a lack of safety, attributing it to a number of factors: bias and hate incidents on campus, delegitimization and disciplinary action, and surveillance, all working together to make MAP communities feel harmed and unsafe, impair their trust in the institution, and ultimately result in a decreased sense of belonging at Stanford.

Stanford has stated on [multiple occasions](#) that its paramount concern is the safety of its students and campus communities—including MAP communities specifically. Unfortunately, our listening sessions with MAP students, staff, faculty, and alumni repeatedly conveyed that these groups did not believe that the university’s decisions reflected that value.

They felt the institution was either using safety as an excuse to shut down speech or it was not giving enough weight to MAP students' own experience of the causes of lack of safety and the kind of institutional responses that might help alleviate harm. They also noted a tendency toward "both-sides-ism" and asymmetry in communication that we detail in the relevant chapters to follow.

We repeatedly heard that Stanford leadership did not take steps that community members believed would protect their safety, and that leadership's claims to prioritize safety thus struck them as disingenuous. The committee does not doubt the genuine commitment of Stanford's leadership to keeping all its students safe and well. However, our inquiries revealed a long series of institutional decisions about safety measures that did not improve the safety of the MAP community. MAP students, staff, and faculty often point to unsatisfactory responses to their concerns over safety, especially in comparison to more public and proactive responses to genuinely concerning incidents of [antisemitism](#) on campus. According to them, Stanford claims to support all of its students on an equal basis, but has failed to be symmetrical in its support for MAP students.

“Their [Stanford’s] support for pro-Israeli Jewish students is public and institutional, and for us it is private and individual.” MAP Undergraduate

DELEGITIMIZATION AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

In addition to active and explicit harm and lack of safety students experienced through hateful incidents and bias perpetrated by other Stanford students, faculty, and community members, MAP students and allies also told us that specific action (or lack thereof) undertaken by Stanford administrators also led to them feeling unsafe on campus.

Students who began the Sit-In to Stop Genocide in October 2023 noted that the president and provost initially refused to meet with them until December 2023. They felt that this was the first signal from the Stanford administration devaluing their activism and protest, despite a long and storied history of Stanford students mounting sit-ins and other peaceful protests in support of various political causes. As a senior administrator told us, “The delay in the president and provost meeting the students was really damaging.” Additionally, students noted that their protest was further delegitimated when they were notified of disciplinary action if they did not end their overnight camping by November 6, a threat that was later retracted.

Students were then permitted to stay until February 2024, when the university cited [safety concerns after a storm](#) to announce that the sit-in would have to disband within hours of the announcement or face disciplinary sanctions and potential trespass charges.

Sit-in to Stop Genocide



Students, staff, and faculty told us that they appreciated the president and provost allowing the sit-in to persist and engage in free expression on White Plaza for as long as it did; **the sit-in became the longest ever in Stanford history, continuing for 120 days until it ended.**

But the end of the sit-in was not well managed. The students had [committed to end overnight camping](#) per their agreement after a week of negotiations. Due to a reported shooting threat on campus, they asked for additional time from administrators to be able to clear the sit-in themselves and archive their documentation. According to them, administrators agreed to this over a phone call, and based on this students believed that they had until late morning or afternoon the following day to clear all structures and possessions. However, workers were sent before dawn to clear the encampment, which resulted in substantial distress and reinforced distrust. This administrative misstep was avoidable.

In the absence of the sit-in as a form of protest and with continued devastation and attacks in Gaza, student activists protested on Family Weekend in late February during a welcome session with the president and provost. Eighteen students were escorted out of the auditorium by the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and doubly penalized by subsequent citations through Santa Clara County as well as Office of Community Standards (OCS) proceedings.

In April 2024, during Admit Weekend, a group of pro-Palestinian students organized a rally that then resulted in a second sit-in known as the People's University for Palestine. This occurred as similar encampments across the nation (and later globally) were erected to draw attention to the devastation in Gaza. At Stanford, 60 students at the encampment were given a warning letter that any violation of university policies could result in disciplinary action or arrest. The following day, at least nine students were issued letters notifying them that they were in violation of university policy and had been referred to OCS. Over the next few days, more students were given OCS letters.

Office of Community Standards (OCS) Processes

In the past and especially after Stanford student Katie Meyer's [tragic death](#), calls have been made to revisit the [OCS process and its impact](#) on students. The process was, in fact, [updated in May 2023](#) with a new [Student Conduct Charter](#) put in effect for cases filed after May 2, 2023. Based on the initiation and proceedings of OCS in the current moment, we contend that the process needs another good look, especially around identification, [transparency](#), and timeliness. Without adjudicating the decision to issue the OCS letters, here we want to address the how and why: that is, the process of identifying students who were given those letters and the motivations behind it.

On Friday, April 26, the first round of issuance of OCS letters stemming from the new encampment resulted in immense confusion and distress. **Students were unclear—and, as of this writing, some of them continue to be unclear—about what specific policy they violated, if any at all.** They knew the encampment was a violation of policy, but could not understand why that particular group of students had been selected to receive OCS letters. They sought advice from staff at the [Markaz Resource Center](#) and indeed from this committee to determine how to proceed, noting that there was a significant range of involvement among those issued letters; some had actively participated in the encampment, while others had limited or even no involvement at all. One student who was issued an OCS letter was not even on campus and, in fact, out of town during the rally and encampment set-up. Their case was later withdrawn, but the damage had been done, as they had a particularly difficult time conveying the information to their parents, who were already mourning the loss of family in Gaza:

“The call I made to my parents to tell them I was in disciplinary trouble with the university was awful and will stay with me forever. Talking to grieving parents about it and adding to their already overflowing plate was a particularly low moment, to be honest. It didn't really help when the OCS office contacted me the next week to say my case had been withdrawn; they didn't tell me why. I feel like they targeted me in the first place because I had been active in student organizing in the past.”

As a faculty member remarked: “They just rounded up the usual suspects, it's an old technique.”

This is some of the other student feedback we heard:

- “I don't know what the [OCS] logic and decision making process was. Is picking up a box and moving from point A to B 'establishing an encampment'? What about adjusting tape? Setting up a tent? How is what I'm specifically doing disrupting the university's specific function? You need to tell me what I did.”

- “I knew Katie [Meyer]...I know how it feels.”
- “This ‘due process’ is a veil. The true punishment is the obfuscation of everything and the waiting and frankly the psychological torture that this is unfolding and knowing that I’m at the mercy of this institution. The lengthiness of the process, the lack of transparency...I know they just want to make an example of a few people.”
- “They’re just penalizing me because I was part of the previous sit-in. I had nothing to do with this one.”

The committee was informed that camera footage, eyewitness testimonies, and social media posts were used to identify the students. But as more than one senior administrator told us, “one mistake is one too many.”

The misidentification of at least one student along with the lack of clarity around specific violations of other identified students created significant distress. The way this process played out, combined with a general climate of institutional distrust and marginalization, led students to conclude that Stanford identified and issued OCS letters based on racial or religious identity or past activism for Palestine or other marginalized groups. This conclusion was shared by a coalition of external civil rights groups that [wrote to university leadership](#) expressing their concern on May 20, 2024. The confusion also spoke to the general lack of clarity about the OCS process, voiced by ASSU leadership as recently as November 2023.

Perhaps more troubling, several of the senior leaders and administrators to whom we spoke connected the decision to press OCS charges against students to continued pressure from members of the broader Stanford community on and off campus. Political pressure should never be a motivating factor in penalizing students, given that the penalties, the length of the process, and lack of clarity around it can have devastating implications for students. Policy enforcement systems and conduct processes must not only be careful, transparent, and fair, but also triggered solely by an assessment that their deployment is warranted on the merits of a case, not based on appeasement of external pressure.

Concern over the OCS process is compounded by the fact that OCS inquiries have not been pursued at certain times over seeming policy violations involving actual threats to safety. For example, a Palestinian student was asked by another student who had served in the Israeli military which village their family was from in Palestine. The student did not share the information, but the former IDF soldier said that he recognized their last name from a particular village and told them that “if I look up this last name when I’m back in Israel... just know...”, indicating something threatening.

“I feel so incredibly policed and watched and monitored by this university. And I hate feeling like that in a place that I’m supposed to be calling this home. I’m 3k miles away from home, and I’m supposed to feel safe here. I hate that I don’t feel safe expressing and fighting for what I believe in. I hate that administrators who used to show up at the sit-in trying to convince us that they were once on our side are the same people hurting us now.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“At the bare minimum: Why is Stanford not openly talking about indefensible acts of hate on our campus? [...] Currently people get their concern about campus climate from anonymous apps and it feels very isolating to not have our school to say that there is hate on this campus to us specifically.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“We reported it to report it, but you’re still getting the death threats and phone calls. They lasted a week.”
MAP Undergraduate (Immediately after October 7)

“I think there’s a specific kind of psychological distrust that results from Stanford not making it clear to us when stuff happens that campus could be an unsafe place.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“This is going to lead to more silence, more MAP staff saying this is not the place for me, I’m scared to be here, I don’t feel supported, maybe I need to go elsewhere with my skills.” **MAP Staff**

When the Palestinian student told administrators what had happened, they asked if the Israeli student had pulled out a gun. As he had not, they told the Palestinian student that there was nothing administrators could do.

A substantive OCS process initiated by administrators may have been appropriate in this case, but to our knowledge, no such process was initiated. “True threats” of violence are outside the scope of First Amendment-protected speech, and investigating them does not violate Stanford’s obligations to protect speech. [True threats](#) involve “‘serious expression[s]’ conveying that a speaker means to ‘commit an act of unlawful violence’” and require that a speaker was at least “aware ‘that others could regard his statements as’ threatening violence and ‘deliver[ed] them anyway.’” In context, the student’s statement could have met this standard. It is probable that, if determined to do so, an IDF reservist enrolled at Stanford could inflict serious harm on a fellow student’s family members upon returning to active service in Israel. We are concerned that, to the best of our knowledge, members of the Stanford community with relevant knowledge and expertise were not consulted before this case was closed. Once again, the committee notes an asymmetry in the process that correlates with identity and viewpoint.

SURVEILLANCE

“This has been a heavily surveilled institution; [Stanford] should wonder whether or not they are overdoing it.” –Law student

Closely related to the OCS process and the question of safety is the issue of surveillance of MAP students and allies: being constantly watched, questioned about their activities, or having their activism disproportionately monitored made them feel especially vulnerable and under threat. MAP students and allies conveyed that they felt surveilled both by the campus police (DPS) and by Stanford administrators and staffers. In almost every single conversation with undergraduate students, they mentioned people photographing them and the installation of new cameras.

Even prior to October 2023, MAP communities, like many marginalized communities, have had a cautious relationship with DPS at Stanford. Keeping in mind the criminalization and surveillance of these communities post 9/11, students have generally opted for minimum DPS engagement and presence around their gathering spaces (such as at the Markaz or at student events) unless absolutely necessary.

In the very beginning of October 2023, this trend continued. Students opted not to have DPS presence in or around the Markaz or at their events. Following an increase in harm incidents in October 2023, such as the assault of Arab and Palestinian students and threatening emails and messages, MAP students agreed to a level of DPS or security presence around the Markaz, at the sit-in,

and at their events. Given prior concern about DPS, this willingness to accept some level of police presence itself indicates how unsafe many MAP students felt on campus.

In November 2023, the Markaz helped facilitate a meeting between DPS and students to address issues related to safety, such as how AlertSU notifications are sent out and how DPS responds to PIH reports that are referred to them for possible safety issues. This communication helped build a measure of trust between some community members and DPS. Many students also came to appreciate the presence of Apex Security, a private contractor Stanford utilizes, around the sit-in, especially after the establishment of the [Blue and White Tent](#) and in light of the steady harassment of sit-in students with anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic slurs.

However, students continued to be cautious about police presence, which was augmented by the fact that [new cameras were installed in White Plaza](#). It also did not escape their attention that there was a disproportionate police and administrator presence and response when MAP students were involved in organizing rallies or protests. This was affirmed by several administrators who noted that Stanford's application of policies operates in different ways for different identity groups, with one observing:

“With Jewish student events the tone is, ‘How can we protect (from Muslims, protesters, etc.)?’; with MAP events, it’s ‘How can we stop them from rioting?’ They are presumed dangerous, even when outside Jewish groups have incited violence and caused harm.”

Relatedly and perhaps more importantly, the students also conveyed that they felt heavily surveilled by administrators. A student involved with the original sit-in told us that a senior staffer “one time walked up in front of us and had her phone out and was taking video of us.” Another student noted that administrators would often walk up to the students and ask questions like, “Do you have any activism planned?” or “Are you doing any safety marshaling soon?”

In the months following October 2023, MAP students and allies had initially trustworthy and relatively strong relationships with staff from the Vice Provost for Student Affairs (VPSA) division and the Office for Religious & Spiritual Life (ORSL). As a result of surveillance and policing, some of these relationships gradually turned sour, ultimately resulting in a breach of trust. Much of the distrust appears to have stemmed from larger institutional forces rather than the actions of individuals. Some staff directly referenced being caught in an inequitable system that treats MAP students as unequal and pro-Palestinian advocacy as illegitimate.

“I’m being trained by spending time at Stanford to speak in ways that do not center MAP students, who are often the most vulnerable. I have to perform some kind of internal mental Olympics to speak to their needs while not offending anyone.” Staff Member

Administrators told us that Student Affairs divisions at other campuses typically have a much smaller role in enforcing policies, which allows them to fulfill their primary mission of supporting the education and development of students. At Stanford, too, [VPSA’s mission](#) is exactly that. However, in recent times, VPSA has been told to lean into a policing and enforcement role, which has been confirmed by our conversations with DPS. As a high-level administrator told us, “That’s one way to look at it and do it but it also means **the circle of people students trust gets smaller and smaller, and the distance between students and administration, leadership, and the university gets bigger and bigger.**”

The implications of this point cannot be overstated. When students feel surveilled by the very staff they are meant to trust and lean on for support, this is a problem not just for the students or staff involved but for the institution overall. It is even more of a problem when the student perception is that staff members of specific identities are leveraged by the institution to build trust, only to break it. As one student noted, “Why are you bringing someone who looks like me to police me?”

The question of who should enforce university policy, and how, remains a perpetual structural problem that ends up confusing and ultimately harming students. The DPS Chief of Police told us that DPS’s job is to enforce the law, not university policy, and that DPS cannot detain anyone until a violation of university policy becomes a legal violation. At the same time, VPSA staff felt that their roles in policy enforcement and surveillance have interfered with their ability to support students. Compounding this problem is a lack of transparency around the Fundamental Standard and OCS. Clarity is needed in all directions: **students need to know who will support them and who will surveil or police them under what parameters and according to which policies.**

STAFF AND FACULTY SAFETY

In addition to the safety of students, the safety of Stanford’s other core members—faculty, staff, postdocs, fellows, and so on—is also of vital concern. For these groups, as we heard in our listening sessions, safety encompasses their physical safety, mental and emotional wellbeing, and economic security—that is, their ability to feel secure in their employment.

With regard to physical safety, those who are easily identifiable as members of MAP communities often expressed particular fear. Many Muslim women who wear a hijab have noted concern for their safety since October 2023.

“When I arrived at Stanford I kept completely quiet about Palestine, despite having lived and worked there for a number of years before academia. I worried about those jobs appearing on my LinkedIn page and did not teach, research, or sign protest letters about Palestine for seven years. When students asked me to talk to SJP [before I had tenure], I declined out of concern for my career.”

Faculty

“Staff as a broad population have felt repeatedly dismissed by the university.” **Staff Member**

“At the very least, if Stanford wants to both sides it, then they need to be actually clear about what happens when it happens. I think that they need to create an environment where we feel like they are going to take us seriously so that we can go to them when somebody harasses us.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“I don’t feel like if I reported this, something would actually happen....” **Staff Members**

“I have not experienced bias. But being ignored is also bias. Having nobody ask you how you are doing is also bias—if something was happening in Ireland, I would talk to the Irish guy.” **MAP Staff**

Multiple staff members mentioned that they feel scared walking around campus alone, especially in the dark, and ask for others to accompany them or to leave before the sun goes down (particularly in the fall and winter quarters).

But the safety concerns we heard from MAP staff and faculty only began with physical safety. **Many report feelings of professional unsafety and unease that are rooted not in a fear of external actors but of actions their colleagues may take within university structures.** In other words, they are afraid of their senior faculty, their supervisors, and of the systems that determine their career advancement. Simply put, they are afraid of Stanford.

Long before October 2023, untenured faculty have largely viewed speaking up about Palestine as a significant risk with long-term consequences. At a time when even university presidents are losing their jobs due to issues surrounding Palestine, and many scholars are being fired or punished for their pro-Palestinian stance, that risk has only become more salient. As a result, many faculty choose not to align themselves publicly in any way with pro-Palestinian causes until after they have secured their future at the university. Manifestations of this self-censorship include not attending events in support of Palestine, not signing petitions or signing anonymously, not posting anything related to the issue on social media, and purposely sidestepping any related issues in their courses.

That strong feeling of vulnerability extends to staff, who feel they have no job security no matter how long they've been working at Stanford, and who, as a group, often feel like they are the university's lowest priority no matter how much they invest in their work and Stanford community. As more than one staff member told us, "I have been told that staff have no protections or rights here."

Staff from the MAP community pervasively express that they need to [self-censor](#) and stay silent, to "keep their head down and just do the work." Here are just a few examples of how this manifests:

- Feeling they cannot answer "How are you?" in a genuine way because everybody at work is acting like "things are normal"
- Listening to superiors make offensive or insensitive comments about their identity groups and not feeling like they can respond
- Choosing not to report instances of workplace harassment
- No longer wearing their keffiyeh or clothes with any cultural identifiers

As a result, many MAP community members feel they are constantly engaged in an exhausting mental gymnastics of masking themselves in every sense of the term. Multiple staff members mentioned that they try to leave work as early as possible now and have even started to work from home more often because they feel so alienated in their workplace.

DOXXING

Although conceptions of doxxing vary, one common [definition](#) involves “publicly identifying or publishing an individual’s private information as a form of punishment or revenge.” A fear of being doxxed looms large for the MAP community and for anyone who publicly supports Palestine. This has long been used as an intimidation method for punishing Palestine activists and has only amplified in rate, severity, and consequences since fall 2023.

This is often how doxxing plays out: An individual shares something in class, makes a comment in what they think is a private conversation, posts something on their social media feed, writes an op-ed, or attends a protest, just to name a few examples. Then a different individual, or group of individuals, takes umbrage with their action and begins the naming and shaming. A targeted campaign of malicious tweets, sometimes from anonymous accounts, is posted against the individual on X, or their information is shared with a site like Canary Mission. [Canary Mission](#), established in 2014, is a blacklisting website that purportedly “documents individuals and organizations that promote hatred of the US, Israel and Jews on North American college campuses.” The website compiles a detailed and slanderous dossier on each student activist, professor, or organization it targets, with [the intention of humiliating them and damaging their future employability](#).

Often these campaigns lead to a deluge of emails, messages, or calls into the doxxed individual’s life. These messages can often include hateful language and threats of sexual violence, death threats, and threats against one’s family. While some doxxing campaigns are short-lived, the subsequent damage is rarely fleeting.

The fear of being doxxed forces many faculty—particularly untenured faculty—as well as students and staff in and allied with the MAP community to be strategic about how they express themselves on campus, even in more private settings. Many feel that they have to sacrifice their activism or some strands of their core identity or beliefs in order to stay safe or protect their current and future employment. They note the pain of living against their values, of harboring what can feel like a double life, of literally and figuratively masking.

In 2021, after the Stanford College Republicans publicly attacked her in social media posts for her involvement in Palestinian activism, Stanford alum Emily Wilder was [fired from the Associated Press](#). Janeen Zacharia, a former journalist and current lecturer in the Stanford Department of Communication who was one of Wilder’s teachers, wrote, “It bore all the classic marks of a disinformation campaign. Pushing the Wilder story refocused attention from Israel’s bombing of the AP bureau to a junior news associate who had just started in Arizona.”

Over the years, other Stanford faculty, students, and alumni have been doxxed for their pro-Palestinian activism whether in this moment or in the past.

This includes being listed on Canary Mission, receiving hundreds of threatening emails, and being smeared on social media.

Many times doxxing of members of Stanford originates within the university community itself. In 2018, a senior faculty member [was sent death threats](#) after two students [wrote an article in The Stanford Review that called him an “antifa thug.”](#)

In October 2023, two Palestinian undergraduates were doxxed by a Stanford alum because of their involvement with Students for Justice in Palestine. The alum tweeted about them, posting their emails and phone numbers and saying he had reported them to the FBI. He also emailed them directly, writing, “Your continued enrollment at Stanford is a despicable reflection of my alma mater, and I have taken steps to ensure that both of you will be stripped of the right to share the alumni distinction. Prior to sending this email, I met with a member of Stanford’s board of trustees to request your immediate expulsion.”

In a listening session this spring, an alum noted that she had to shut down her work website due to the constant rape and death threats she receives as a result of her very public advocacy for Palestinian rights.

In addition to these specific incidents, we note that nearly every MAP community member we spoke to in listening sessions wanted to remain anonymous and that individuals turned down invitations to join the MAP Committee itself for fear of being doxxed.

Although Stanford does have a [policy](#) that makes doxxing a [violation of the Fundamental Standard](#), it defines doxxing narrowly, modeled on a California criminal law. In spring and fall 2024, Stanford law professor Evelyn Douek is leading a [policy lab](#) on anti-doxxing policies that will “advise the Stanford Provost’s Office on the legal and policy issues raised by the doxxing of or by members of the Stanford community or otherwise related to activities on campus, and develop recommendations for how the university should respond.” That policy lab will confront the complicated questions presented both in defining doxxing and in mitigating harm without violating First Amendment principles. We look forward to engaging with these recommendations.

“I never felt safe being either Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian in many of the spaces I entered in. MSU, Arab student association, SJP, Markaz: Those were the spaces where I felt like I could identify myself and there wasn’t anybody who would antagonize my identity. In classes or other communities, I had to walk on eggshells and protect their feelings.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“The doxxing really has to stop, because it creates all these second-order effects that ultimately ruin the campus climate for everyone, whether you’re pro-Palestinian or not. Because of doxxing, students retreat to anonymous social media platforms like Fizz, because that’s the only outlet where they feel they can fully express themselves. But when everyone is anonymous, that just ultimately leads to more toxicity on these platforms between the students. The same thing happens in real life: every student at the encampment wears a mask because they’re afraid of being doxxed; it’s a reasonable decision for them to make. But, if everyone wears a mask, no one can tell who’s a student and who’s an ‘outside agitator’. The pervasive anonymity just ends up destroying any semblance of community. If the students weren’t being doxxed, the campus would be a lot safer—for everyone.” **MAP Alum**

“I don’t feel like if I reported this, something would actually happen....” **Staff**

“My entire dream of serving in government...I’ve eliminated that as an option for however many years. For many of us, public service and high profile opportunities in finance, in venture capital, and in law are no longer options for careers. There are a big number of Stanford alums who are getting caught up in this in ways that are very insidious because they are behind closed doors.” **MAP Alum**

RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated above, the sense of safety for MAP community members is shaped by many forces and threads, including but not limited to institutional structural support, representation, robust scholarship and knowledge production, and transparency around disciplinary processes and policy enforcement. If even one of these threads is missing, safety begins to erode.

Safety and Policy Enforcement

Campus Security/DPS

- Clarify the process for issuing timely campus-wide emails that provide information about a potential security threat. These emails should follow consistent standards, in response to the same types of incidents, so that the onus is not on particular communities to notify their members about possible ongoing threats. The university should audit its own process for issuing campus-wide emails to avoid the appearance of viewpoint or identity discrimination.
- Maintain robust and regular communication with directly affected campus communities in making decisions regarding the presence of DPS officials to ensure that security presence is beneficial and not counterproductive. For instance, with community feedback, continue to provide campus security at events such as large demonstrations where groups with differing opinions are likely to engage with each other.
- Ensure a swift and appropriate institutional response to serious harm incidents. For example, on Friday, May 3, 2024, a [physical assault](#) occurred during a vigil for those who died in Gaza. DPS arrested the non-Stanford affiliate who created the disturbance and refused to leave. However, the assault occurred on a Friday evening, and it took until Tuesday, May 7, for the university to make any mention of this incident, [burying it in a lengthy White Plaza Policy update](#) that was only sent to students.

OCS/Policy

- Improve administrative processes around enforcement, including establishing a clear vetting process to ensure that OCS charges are not brought without reason, such as based on students' past involvement in campus activities or misidentifications, or due to external pressure.
- Determine responsibility for enforcing rules in a manner that does not increase DPS' role in enforcing violations of university policy, but that also does not cause student-facing staff to lose trust with students.

Because of the interconnected nature of safety, many of the recommendations that would address it can actually be found throughout this report. That said, we offer a few recommendations here that specifically address community safety issues:

- Place a moratorium on serious disciplinary sanctions for violations of the university's time, place, and manner policies until those policies are reviewed and reconstituted with input from students, staff and faculty.
- Increase the transparency of student disciplinary processes. Expedite information sharing during the OCS process, keeping in mind the impact on students' mental health if issued a letter. At the time a student receives a letter, they should have all the information they need, in easily accessible and digestible format, about what they are accused of and what they can do.
- Ensure that OCS processes do not lead to onerous penalties such as suspension or holds on diplomas for peaceful political speech.

Doxxing Prevention

Until the more formal recommendations emerge from the policy lab mentioned above, the committee puts forward these suggestions:

- Allow anyone on campus to opt in to anti-doxxing services such as DeleteMe, which help remove personal information from the Internet. This should be covered by the university without question and on a preventive basis. By the time an individual is asking for anti-doxxing support, it is usually too late and their information has already been shared across the Internet. Individuals who choose to engage in activism—or even to voice opinions in a classroom or other campus settings—should not have to plead for this support after the fact.
- Make legal counsel or legal support services potentially available for community members when doxxing occurs. When a person has been placed on a site such as Canary Mission, online services such as DeleteMe are not sufficient to address the harm. At that point, legal support may be required to issue a cease and desist letter or take other steps.

“It feels like I’m censoring my identity.” **MAP Staff**

“In this moment, where a marginalized group and its allies have used voiced speech and expression to push back against powerful interests, the university has in some way seemed to change tactics. And I think they’ve given their game away.” **Faculty**

“The sit-in was beautiful. I felt very safe there, I felt happy there, I felt seen in a way that was very precious to me at the time, at a time where I felt invisible beyond words.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“Now I have to worry that I might not pass a class if the professor knows I’m Palestinian” **MAP Student**

Freedom of Speech

“There is temptation to a system in which people holding views perceived by some as harmful or offensive are not allowed to speak, to avoid giving legitimacy to their views or upsetting members of the community, but history teaches us that this is a temptation to be avoided. I can think of no circumstance in which giving those in authority the right to decide what is and is not acceptable content for speech has ended well. Indeed, the power to suppress speech is often very quickly directed towards suppressing the views of marginalized groups.”

–[Stanford Law School Letter from the Dean](#) Jenny S. Martinez, spring 2023

Around the country, universities’ responses to political speech on Palestine, especially since October 2023, illuminate a longstanding [“Palestine exception” to free speech](#). From the disbanding of student organizations advocating for Palestinians, to the cancellation of political events and film screenings, to the violent police response to protests around the country, we have seen university administrators around the nation squelch speech—time and again—when it champions Palestinian rights or challenges Israeli state violence. Sometimes, administrators justify these restrictions as an effort to spare other students from discomfort; sometimes, they justify them as regulating the [time, place, and manner](#) of speech on campus; sometimes, they assert they are protecting campus safety.

But speech should not be suppressed simply because it makes other people uncomfortable; regulations on the time, place, and manner of speech must be broad enough to permit robust discourse and cannot be applied in a targeted fashion; and assertions of campus safety should be supported by specific

factual evidence of actual threats, rather than reliance on all-too-common tropes of Palestinian or Muslim violence.

To some of us, it seemed that Stanford might do better than other institutions because California state law extends First Amendment protections to student speech on campus, and because university leaders regularly reaffirm the values of freedom of speech and academic freedom. In certain respects, it did, as in permitting the Sit-In to Stop Genocide to continue on White Plaza for four months. But our listening sessions also revealed explicit viewpoint-based discrimination targeting pro-Palestinian speech, the leveraging of time, place, and manner restrictions to repress Palestine activism, and the policing and criminalization of our students for peaceful protest.

This section begins with a brief description of principles of free speech and academic freedom, and then addresses three core concerns: **1) the explicit suppression of pro-Palestine speech on campus based on the viewpoint expressed; 2) the overuse and misuse of time, place, and manner restrictions on speech; and 3) the policing and criminalization of student speech and activism on campus.** While we focus on examples of speech suppression that we were able to document in detail, these examples do not capture all the incidents we learned of, let alone all the incidents we believe occurred this past year. Our listening sessions confirmed that the Palestine exception applies everywhere but presents in different modes: explicit statements and administrative decisions in the School of Medicine; informal nudges, hallway chats, and hiring/tenure decision rumors in the School of Humanities and Sciences; silences and absences in other professional schools; and persistent self-censorship by staff across all university units.

PRINCIPLES OF FREE SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Stanford celebrates principles of free speech and academic freedom. The university has frequently championed the importance of free inquiry for the pursuit of knowledge. A 2017 statement by Stanford's past president and provost [declared](#) free expression to be "absolutely central to the academic life of the university." As dean of the law school, Provost Jenny Martinez in 2023 [rejected](#) calls to curtail speech that some find offensive or upsetting, deeming strong protections for free speech "a bedrock principle that ultimately supports diversity, equity, and inclusion." Moreover, Stanford's [statement](#) on academic freedom declares that the pursuit of teaching, learning, and scholarship at the university depends on the "fullest protection" of freedom of inquiry and expression. That statement [applies](#) to tenure line and non-tenure line faculty and to [other](#) "members of the Academic Staff in a manner appropriate to their role and responsibilities."

Beyond these statements of values, specific legal protections for student speech apply to Stanford. Most significantly, the state’s [Leonard Law](#) prohibits even private universities from disciplining students solely on the basis of speech that would be protected from governmental restriction by the First Amendment.

“Stanford University’s central functions of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship depend upon an atmosphere in which freedom of inquiry, thought, expression, publication and peaceable assembly are given the fullest protection. Expression of the widest range of viewpoints should be encouraged, free from institutional orthodoxy and from internal or external coercion.”

—Preamble, Stanford Statement on Academic Freedom (1974)

EXPLICIT SUPPRESSION BASED ON VIEWPOINT

Bedrock First Amendment principles [forbid](#) the government—and therefore Stanford on account of the Leonard Law—from discriminating against speech based on its viewpoint or message. These principles recognize that it is precisely speech that is controversial, challenging, or unpleasant to some audiences that is most in need of protection. However, Stanford administrators on multiple occasions have suppressed speech on Palestinian human rights based on its political content or language. Importantly, the incidents we describe below presented no conflict between free expression and “hate speech,” nor involved speech that risked anyone’s physical safety. Rather, the criticism of Israeli state violence—often, a specific labeling of such violence as apartheid or genocide—appears to have triggered the suppression.

School of Medicine Incidents

A number of these incidents of speech suppression took place at Stanford School of Medicine. During winter and spring 2024, members of the MAP Committee spent significant time meeting with medical school students and administrators, as well as university leadership outside the medical school, to address these concerns. Efforts to suppress pro-Palestinian speech and expressions of Palestinian identity took a heavy toll on the students and faculty organizing these events and those of Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian identity. We recount below our understanding of these events.

1. Organization for Global Health (OGH) Event

In January 2024, students leading the Organization for Global Health at Stanford—an official medical school student organization fully registered with the university’s Office of Student Engagement—wished to hold a webinar with University of California San Francisco clinical psychologist Jess Ghannam titled, “Medical Apartheid in Palestine.” Students circulated an event flyer that expressly identified its sponsor—the medical school student organization—and noted that it was “independent of Stanford Medical School and Stanford Medicine.” Nonetheless, faculty and administrators at the medical school attempted to prevent the event from happening and denied the standard institutional support provided to student organizations for their events, including the use of a Stanford Zoom account.



The medical school had issued new policies on December 18, 2023, for holding events and using resources “for activities outside of official Stanford Medicine business,” apparently in response to student speech related to Palestine and Israel. This policy provides that officially registered student organizations that have faculty sponsors can reserve space to host events. The policy does not require that faculty sponsors pre-approve the content of events that registered student organizations can host. This is for good reason; a rule that required advance faculty approval of student events, based on their content, would be a prior restraint that would violate freedom of speech because of the broad discretion it gives administrators to determine which speech gets to be heard.

In this case, however, apparently at the direction of medical school leadership, the faculty sponsor told students that their registered student organization could not use any Stanford resources to host the medical apartheid event, forcing the students to buy an independent Zoom account to hold the webinar. In discussing the denial, the faculty member told the primary student organizer, who is Black, that the use of the word “apartheid” in the event title “triggered people like the N-word.”

The student later shared how offended she felt at being told that the use of the word “apartheid” to describe a country’s discriminatory policies was comparable to using an actual racial slur against Black people. The term

“apartheid” originated as a description of South Africa’s historically discriminatory legal regime and refers to the systematic domination of one racial group by another; it is considered a “crime against humanity” in international law and [defined](#) by international conventions including the Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court. Leading human rights advocates in the United States and Israel, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, [have concluded](#) that the Israeli state’s subordination of Palestinians constitutes apartheid. While some may disagree with that conclusion, or feel hurt or challenged by the comparison to South Africa’s apartheid regime, views on this issue should be debated, not suppressed by those in power.

The faculty member’s emails to the student organizer were explicit both in barring the use of Stanford resources and in attributing the decision to higher-level leadership at the medical school. (Students made clear that they otherwise had a strong relationship with the faculty sponsor, who had generally been very supportive of the student group.) One email stated, “We need to ask you to remove the Stanford name and logos [from the flyer] and we cannot permit use of any Stanford resources including space or Stanford zoom links. I can’t sponsor an event that will be hurtful to a large portion of our community. I hope you understand that this event can trigger strong emotions.” That email was copied to the dean of the medical school and the senior associate dean for medical education, among others. In another email, also copied to the senior associate dean for medical education, the faculty member told the student, “As this is not a university sanctioned event a personal zoom must be used.” In yet another email, the faculty member told the student, “The zoom issue was dictated from leadership at the school.”

Further, an email sent to the Stanford medical community on January 16, 2024, disassociated Stanford Medicine from this event and emphasized that they had “contacted the organizers to ensure that the webinar and its promotion fully align with Stanford Medicine’s policies and procedures and that this independently organized effort does not use institutional resources.” That email came from the medical school’s “task force”—a new unit composed of Stanford Medicine’s chief equity, diversity, and inclusion officer, a senior associate dean, and an associate dean of diversity in medical education. Students expressed to us their profound disappointment that the medical school had attempted to cancel this student event at the very moment that hospitals and the health care system in Gaza were being destroyed.

2. Muslim Mental Health Conference

Moreover, just weeks after students were prohibited from using a Stanford Zoom account to host the medical apartheid webinar, administrators sought to censor events on Palestine being held as part of the [16th Annual Muslim Mental Health Conference](#) at Stanford School of Medicine. The conference was hosted by Stanford's [Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab](#), a unique research lab founded and directed by Dr. Rania Awaad, clinical professor of psychiatry at the School of Medicine, and sponsored by the Stanford Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Michigan State University Department of Psychiatry. This year, the Muslim Mental Health lab hosted the annual conference in celebration of the lab's tenth anniversary. Over the past decade, the research lab has received significant support from Stanford School of Medicine and remains the only such research lab facility dedicated to Muslim mental health in the country—a credit to leadership within the Department of Psychiatry and the medical school at large.

The conference, however, did not receive that same level of support when it became clear that several events related to Palestine would be part of the conference. Planned for more than a year, the conference centered on the relationship between Muslims, technology, and mental health. In light of the mental health toll of the ongoing violence in Gaza and the West Bank, and its repercussions within the United States, the conference organizers decided to invite [Dr. Samah Jabr](#), head of the mental health unit at the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the West Bank, to deliver a keynote address at the conference. A renowned Palestinian psychiatrist, Dr. Jabr had co-authored a [piece](#) on the collapse of the mental health care system in Gaza in *Lancet*, a leading peer-reviewed medical journal, in November 2023.

Two days before the conference was set to begin, a senior faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry expressed concern about the conference being “too political.” This faculty member had long supported the Muslim Mental Health lab, and it appeared to Dr. Awaad that these concerns came from other, still more senior, people within the medical school. In multiple meetings that day, this faculty member reviewed the conference program line by line and asked to adjust the titles of panel sessions. Most significantly, the faculty member told Dr. Awaad to remove the word “genocide” from the title of Dr. Jabr's keynote, “The Power of Technology to Promote Palestinian Resilience in the Midst of a Genocide.” **The faculty member also said that Dr. Jabr could not call for a ceasefire in Gaza during the conference, as she had in her *Lancet* article.** (The *Lancet* piece argued that “mass medication is not the answer to war” and concluded that “the overwhelming need now is not mental health but ceasefire.”).

That same day, other people and institutions appeared to pull support from the conference. The medical school's Continuing Medical Education (CME) office, which had already approved CME credits for the conference, objected

that speakers hadn't signed confidentiality agreements before the event—an issue that commonly arises in conferences and that is generally quite easily remedied. The CME office requested a range of materials about the conference at the eleventh hour, including slides from an event by [Dr. Alice Rothchild](#), a retired physician and progressive activist, on the “health and human rights consequences of the war in Gaza.” Senior medical school leaders pulled their pictures, names, or pre-recorded messages of support from the conference.

In addition, medical school administrators asked for the email addresses of all 600 conference participants. When the conference leaders objected to this scrutiny, the medical school asked them to send out a message to all the attendees sharing the December 18, 2023, medical school policy on the use of Stanford resources—a particularly odd request given that the policy applies to Stanford affiliates, not to conference attendees. Faced with such last-minute pressure, the conference organizers complied with many of these requests and adjusted the program titles, including omitting the word “genocide” from the keynote. **In an especially difficult conversation, conference organizers also relayed the message to Dr. Jabr that she could not call for a ceasefire during the conference.**

The conference itself took place under surveillance, intimidating organizers and participants. For instance, a CME officer attended the conference, apparently to audit the event. Attendees told Dr. Awaad that this person entered and exited panel breakout sessions without introducing himself and obtrusively recorded the panelists. Several graduate students presenting at the conference came out of their panels in tears because they felt they had been under constant scrutiny—akin to the chilling surveillance many American Muslims have faced throughout the post-9/11 period—in a conference that was meant to be uplifting and restorative. Several other staff from the medical school, who had not previously expressed an interest in attending, also appeared to be there to monitor the conference.

While the conference went forward, and Dr. Jabr gave her keynote address, the censorship and surveillance took a serious toll on the organizers. A psychologist from another institution who helped develop the program shared in a [blog post](#) that the conference was “beautiful, surreal, and healing,” but also challenging due to the “relentless requests that came from various offices within our host

“The utter lack of research on Muslim healthcare issues helps make the conference stand out as a beacon of hope. I always hear about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at Stanford Med in every one of my classes and as one of the defining features of the curriculum and approach here. So it’s incredibly disheartening that when my community—the Muslim community here and in Gaza—is experiencing one of their most challenging moments, one that undoubtedly affects their health, the school decides to meet it with surveillance, silencing, and intimidation.” – Student at Stanford

During and after these events, students and faculty at the medical school, as well as the MAP Committee, met a number of times with administrators to enable future events on the devastating health crisis in Gaza. Medical students were ultimately able to host other events related to the conflict, including an event with Dr. Mohammad Subeh, a local emergency room physician and Stanford alum who described the trauma he had witnessed during his emergency medical mission in Gaza. These events went forward, although students still perceived that they faced inordinate scrutiny, including the requirement that students share the School of Medicine’s guidelines with all speakers and participants.

3. Admitted Students Recruitment Video

In April 2024, students at the School of Medicine shared that they were being told not to show the Arabic portion of a parody music video they had produced for newly admitted medical students, because it was deemed too political. As we understand it, each year, a group of Stanford medical students produces a lighthearted music video featuring popular songs with new lyrics and dance numbers adapted to their medical school experience. The music video is customarily shown during the first day of “Discovery Days,” an event for admitted students. This year, the video was to include a multicultural segment with songs in Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic. The students producing the Arabic portion chose to write lyrics about their medical school life to be played against the backtrack of a popular song by the 2013 Arab Idol winner from Gaza, Mohammad Assaf’s [Dammi Falastini](#) (“My Blood is Palestinian”). The original lyrics express sentiments of national and cultural pride equivalent to “God Bless America.”

These are the students’ new lyrics parodying their medical school life:

*I took an oath I made a promise
In the healing space you’ll find me
The people I serve, I will heal
My goal is to listen to them, console them, and treat them
My goal is to heal them.
We study hard for the degree
Fueled by our parents’ prayers
Stanford has tired us out
The voice of my parents is forcing me
(sponsor me, support me)
And my loan is driving me crazy*

Apparently, despite these light-hearted, medical school-focused lyrics, the inclusion of the song attracted attention because the credits to the music video, listed at the end, named the original song, “My Blood is Palestinian.”

We understand that, two days before the completed video was to be shown, medical school administrators viewed it and expressed concern to the students heading the music video project as a whole.

Students who created the Arabic segment reported that the administration conveyed, through the student producers of the video project, that they would not be allowed to show the music video with the Arabic portion as is. Rather, they had the following options: either delete the Arabic portion, use a different song (which would require creating new lyrics and recording a new dance in less than 48 hours), delete the multilingual portion in its entirety, or record an entirely new multicultural video after Discovery Days to be posted on YouTube. (An administrator later characterized these requests as “suggestions to promote greater inclusivity,” but the students who produced the Arabic segment understood changing the video to be a requirement, not a suggestion.)

Faced with choices that they believed silenced the expression of their identity, concerned students polled the first-year medical school class to determine their preferences. A majority of students voted to show the video in its entirety, as intended, or not to show any of the video if it meant leaving out any of the groups involved. Ultimately, after this vote, the full video was shown to the admitted students and first-year class. But the damage had already been done. Students described how gutted they felt to spend weeks laboring to promote diversity at the medical school, only to be targeted because they expressed their authentic identities. “We felt like our identities were being tokenized,” one student shared. “They didn’t want to include us in the video but had no problem asking us to talk to students and recruit them on the basis of student affinity groups.”

“Due to the nature of occupation and injustices inflicted upon Palestinians, especially in the last 7 months, the mere mention of the identity is contested. To say ‘my blood is Palestinian’ is to effectively say ‘my blood is Venezuelan’ or ‘my blood is American.’ It is to say that one belongs to the nationality that they belong to. ... We (the majority of students involved in the multilingual segment of the video) don’t want to be complicit in the silencing and misrepresentation of the student body and diversity at Stanford School of Medicine.”

Message sent by students to first-year medical school class

4. Political Attire

We include one last incident to show how pervasive the climate of speech suppression appears to have been. On January 26, 2024, a second-year medical student wore a black sign on the back of her white coat reading, “Healthcare Workers Demand: Stop Bombing Hospitals,” as she entered Li Ka Shing Center, the medical school’s primary instructional building. According to the student, a security guard stopped her at the elevator and told her that she could not wear the sign because it could upset some students. He refused to allow her to enter



the building wearing the sign, or even to remove the white coat and keep it with her as she went upstairs to drop off some materials. She was forced to leave the coat with the guard until she returned.

While Stanford Medicine may place some limits on employees and students displaying political statements when they treat patients in clinical environments, suppressing expression on students' clothing in educational spaces merely because it is controversial violates principles of free speech. Indeed, in one of its most famous free speech [decisions](#), the Supreme Court upheld the right of middle and high school students to wear black armbands to school in protest of the Vietnam War, declaring that school officials could not justify prohibiting such expression based on the "mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint." And Stanford's own [policy guidance](#) on freedom of speech notes that "wearing controversial political attire, buttons, or insignia" is protected, including "anything from a Black Lives Matter shirt to a Make America Great Again Hat."

Law School Incident

Law student groups have held several events on Gaza, international law, and human rights in Palestine this academic year. Unlike students at the School of Medicine, they generally received the kinds of support the law school customarily provides to student-sponsored events, such as the use of space and funding for food. But there was one important exception, where the content of their expression shaped the law school's response.

In January 2024, members of Stanford Law Students for Justice in Palestine (SLSJP) sought to screen the International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearings for the case brought by South Africa alleging that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. Students wanted to ensure that the law school community at large was aware of this important development in international law. They intended to screen both days of the hearings, first South Africa's argument on January 11, and then Israel's response on January 12.

On the morning of January 11, SLSJP members set up a projector in Crocker Garden facing one of the walls of the classroom building of the law school. Because of the sunlight, the projection was not clear, and a student member asked administrators about other options for screening the hearings in a public, visible space at the law school. In response, an administrator booked Russo Commons, the indoor student common area, for the students. Students screened the hearings on the TV in Russo for about two hours before being told that they would have to move the screening because of complaints received about showing it "in a public meeting space in which all should feel welcome."

We understand that, in a subsequent conversation, the administrator told students both that Russo Commons was a space where everyone should feel comfortable, and that student groups could not use the screens during the hours the Russo Law Café remained open. The students noted that the same space had been used to screen the confirmation hearings of Justice Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, a judicial proceeding that also engendered controversy and likely made some students uncomfortable. The dean of the law school apparently had approved that screening.

After two hours, following further consultation, administrators returned and asked students to relocate to a classroom. Students explained that the purpose of the screening was to ensure their law school classmates encountered the proceedings, and that tucking the screening away into a classroom would defeat the purpose of the event. Administrators told students that it was important even to SLSJP members' own mental health to be able to step away from some of this work. Students countered that, for many members, stepping away from the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza was not possible, and doing something to publicize the situation improved their well-being.

After some negotiations, students agreed to move the screening back outside to Crocker Garden. An administrator reportedly told the students that they did not realize that students planned to screen Israel's ICJ response as well, and that had they realized this fact, they might have supported students in continuing to screen the events in Russo. Students screened the proceedings for a few more hours outside on Thursday, January 11, but ultimately needed to stop because of the weather. For the same reason, students did not screen the proceedings on Friday, January 12.

SLSJP members held several conversations with administrators about what they saw as disparate enforcement of the rules around use of Russo Commons. They noted that the student organization [handbook](#) only restricted the serving of food before 3 p.m. in that space, not the use of screens. They objected to the idea that student complaints about facing challenging subjects should be grounds for relocating the screening of a significant international legal proceeding.

Administrators later apologized for the manner in which the January events unfolded, and they cited a need to clarify the rules regarding use of Russo Commons. **While a viewpoint-neutral policy for use of common space is important, limitations on the time, place, and manner of student activities should not be enacted specifically out of fear of Palestine advocacy—a subject we return to below.**

Law students also noted that, even when they did not experience actual restrictions on speech, they experienced regular disparities in the kinds of events the university would officially sponsor.

For instance, in fall 2023, they could not find a law school center willing to sponsor a stand-alone event with Omar Shakir, a Stanford Law School alumnus and Israel and Palestine director at Human Rights Watch, who had spoken multiple times at Stanford in the past. Stanford faculty-run centers and institutes could—and did—host programs that fall quarter with speakers supportive of the Israeli government’s position, but students had to host the Omar Shakir event on their own, notwithstanding his status as a prominent human rights advocate from a leading U.S. human rights organization.

Staff Communications

In addition to restrictions on student speech, we have heard from staff members who have faced scrutiny or disapproval for their comments related to Palestine and Israel—including, once again, use of the term “genocide” to characterize the military offensive in Gaza.

In fall 2023, a Stanford staff member posted a short message on an employee Slack channel inviting others to connect who were concerned about the “genocide of the Palestinian people” and Stanford’s response. Other employees had earlier posted messages on the same Slack channel describing “the atrocities that are going on in southern Israel,” their family members’ efforts to support the war in Gaza, and suggestions for providing support to Israelis. But soon after the staff member posted the message about Palestinians, a human resources officer called her to request that she edit the message to omit the word “genocide.” The human resources officer told her that the language upset some people, who felt “targeted” by it, and suggested that she use other words to make her point. The staff member explained that she intended only to show support to colleagues who felt unheard and afraid to say anything at work. The conversation concluded with the human resources officer telling her that “you can pretend this conversation never happened” and that the incident would not “impact her career.” These statements seemed to indicate that the human resources officer might have realized that the conversation was inappropriate, and also flagged the possibility of career consequences even while purporting to alleviate any such concern.

That incident exemplifies a broader concern expressed by numerous staff at Stanford: many do not feel they have any ability to speak out about the Palestine and Israel issue. Some staff expressed concern about heightened surveillance around community center events after students made a pro-Palestinian statement at one event which was then reported to other offices at the university. Others questioned whether they would be disciplined for attending a protest on campus, even in a purely personal capacity. While the university professes free speech rights for faculty and students, and it [applies](#) the university’s statement on academic freedom to “members of the Academic Staff in a manner appropriate to their role and responsibilities,” there is little clarity on the extent to which staff enjoy speech protections or academic freedom in the various roles they serve.

TIME, PLACE, AND MANNER RESTRICTIONS

Like the government, Stanford can legitimately restrict the how, when, and where of speech on campus in ways that are consistent with the First Amendment. Reasonable limitations on the “time, place, or manner of protected speech” are [permitted](#) as long as they are justified without regard to the content of the expression in question, “narrowly tailored” to serve a significant interest, and “leave open ample alternative channels for communication.” Unfortunately, we have seen Stanford invoke time, place, and manner restrictions in several problematic ways. Some of these applications may infringe on the Leonard Law/First Amendment; others may not, but nonetheless challenge the university’s stated commitment to cultivating an environment where people learn from one another through free expression, disagreement, and debate.

First, our listening sessions have surfaced examples of Stanford officials applying time, place, and manner restrictions in a selective or inconsistent manner. This issue has arisen in multiple contexts, including the placement of flags or banners related to the war in Gaza in various locations. **For example, a faculty member within the School of Humanities and Sciences was told to remove a Palestinian flag hanging outside their office window.** At the same time, an Israeli flag hung outside an office window at the Graduate School of Business; when a student at the GSB objected, they were told that there was nothing to be done. While this example may reflect different policies and decision makers across university units, the inconsistent approach sends the message that expressions of solidarity with Palestinians are specifically unwelcome.



In another incident, a faculty member living in Stanford housing informed us that the Homeowners Association for their neighborhood called an emergency meeting about a Palestinian flag they had hung at their home, despite the fact that they had previously hung a Ukrainian flag in the same location for two years without incident. When they first mounted the Palestinian flag, it was stolen; after they replaced it, someone smeared dog feces on the garage door below the flag, and two days later, someone left dog feces below the flag. The faculty member then added written messages to the flag, including “Resist Genocide Now” and “Solidarity with Stanford Students”—after which they were called “aggressive,” “antisemitic,” and “Nazi” by other residents. The faculty member does not recall any other emergency meeting being called by the homeowners’ association to respond to a resident’s political expression. After encountering such hostility, the faculty member removed the flag.

Students have also expressed concern over inconsistent responses to banners hung at their residences. In February 2024, after students placed a banner outside one student residence that read “Zionism is genocide,” they were apparently told that they had to remove the banner within the hour, because of a signage rule requiring building managers to pre-approve banners. The students noted that multiple banners had been hung over the past several years at the same residence without objection. Later, they were told that all banners and flags hanging outside windows or balconies had to be removed, in keeping with a residential agreement rule that such items could only be posted on bulletin boards. Students were told that, if they did not comply, a “group accountability process” would be initiated in the residence, with additional processes for students deemed individually responsible. While reasonable restrictions on the circumstances in which students can hang flags, banners, or flyers in common areas or shared spaces in dorms may be justified, such restrictions must be enforced neutrally. Unfortunately, it seems that many such restrictions are routinely ignored, and then invoked and enforced for the first time in response to pro-Palestine expression. This creates problems not just for students, but for staff in Residential Education who recognize they are being asked to enforce rules that were not previously enforced, and who do not want to be in the position of deciding which banners can be hung.

Second, we have heard repeatedly from students concerned about administrators enacting *new* restrictions on the time, place, and manner of expression in response to advocacy for Palestinians. The university adopted [new guidelines](#) for tabling in White Plaza after disbanding the Sit-In to Stop Genocide in February 2024. The Knight-Hennessy Scholars program eliminated a student Slack channel after vigorous exchanges between students about the war in Gaza. The medical school issued a new set of policy guidelines in December 2023 on the use of institutional resources, like meeting rooms and listservs, apparently prompted by student expression related to the conflict. While these new rules may not discriminate against the content of speech on their face, the timing and circumstances of their enactment raise concern about a possible intent to restrict pro-Palestinian speech.

Third, regardless of intent, some of Stanford’s time, place, and manner restrictions threaten the ability of students and others on campus to engage in robust discussion of contemporary issues. To be clear, narrowly tailored rules that preserve learning environments from disruption, such as rules preventing the use of bullhorns near classes in session, are appropriate. But in combination, a variety of current and impending restrictions shrink the space for students to engage with one another and the campus at large about their ideas. Despite the oft repeated statement along the lines of “the university needs more speech, not less,” Stanford appears to be limiting and confining student speech in a variety of ways.

Consider, for instance, the law school’s impending change to posting policies. For many years, students have been allowed to post flyers outside of law school buildings that are visible to students and others passing by. This past year, students used those spaces to promote events and express views on a wide spectrum of legal issues, including the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Some posted flyers with the names of those killed in Gaza, for example, and the text of an [article](#) censored from the Harvard Law Review for equating the Israeli military offensive to genocide. Others posted the “Kidnapped” posters featuring Israelis taken hostage and flyers for events supportive of Israel.

Beginning in 2024-25, however, the law school has [announced](#) that posters will only be allowed on designated bulletin boards inside the law school. While we understand this change to have been made before October 2023, to conform to existing university policies outside the law school, these existing policies severely restrict students’ opportunities to communicate with each other. By eliminating the most natural spaces for public, outdoor messages, the university leaves it to students to find out about events only through more limited channels, such as indoor bulletin boards within specific departments or opt-in listservs or social media. Stanford should be encouraging learning across disciplines, schools, and perspectives, not confining student speech and publicity to self-selected echo chambers or school-specific informational channels.

Similar issues arise with Stanford policies on student organizations. A host of Stanford policies, such as those concerning [reserving or tabling in White Plaza](#), require that student groups be officially registered. Registration policies of some kind make sense as a precondition for student groups to access limited university funding. But among other limits, current policies make it difficult for new student organizations to form and hold events in response to current events. For instance, students this year apparently could submit applications for new student organizations only within a [three-week window](#) early in the winter quarter. Students must follow a lengthy and detailed [application process](#) to register new groups. When Stanford [instructed](#) the Sit-in to Stop Genocide to disband in February 2024, and in later [messages](#) threatened disciplinary sanctions against those who established new tents in White Plaza in April, the university touted the ability of students to engage in speech on White Plaza in a manner “consistent with university policies.” It is not clear, however, that at the time of these communications, any new student group—like the new groups formed to protest the Israeli military onslaught in Gaza—could have registered in accordance with this policy, given that the three-week window had already closed.

This exemplifies a more general problem: time, place, and manner restrictions are pervasive across the university, not always enforced, but available to limit student expression when administrators decide they wish to do so. Very few people at the university understand these restrictions, including students and university staff supporting them.

The policies can be long, complex, and inaccessible. In our experience, most Stanford staff are eager to support student expression and activities. But when so many complex and cross-referenced policies exist that can be invoked to suppress speech—and sanction students who violate them—it places enormous power and discretion at the hands of university leadership. The question raised is: are there sufficient avenues for students to engage in speech without violating university policy?

This problem may be especially acute when it comes to protests. It is hard to imagine how any large student protest might occur, even in Stanford's celebrated "free speech zone" (White Plaza), without violating Stanford [policies](#). Only registered student organizations may book space in White Plaza, precluding new groups from doing so if they miss the three-week window. Events that involve "use of much of the White Plaza space" may require informing the university three weeks ahead of time, or even longer, if they are "large-scale events or activities outside the normal 12:00 p.m. (noon) to 1:00 p.m. time slot." The political events that trigger student protests, however, rarely are predictable weeks in advance. The use of amplified sound is only permitted for one hour during the daytime, and with advance approval. Further restrictions apply to posters, banners, and flyers. While universities have legitimate interests in limiting disruption to university functions, maintaining equitable processes for various student groups to use space, and managing costs, the rules should not be so restrictive as to preclude demonstrations and wield the threat of disciplinary violations for failures to comply.

POLICING AND CRIMINALIZATION OF STUDENT PROTEST

History of Student Protest Movements at Stanford

Stanford students have a long history of engaging in protest, including through sit-ins, disruption of official events, and other forms of civil disobedience. Despite the vilification it now receives, today's Palestine anti-war activism is not an aberration or departure from university discourse and campus engagement. In fact, Stanford commemorates many past student protests in prominent displays in university buildings and on its websites.

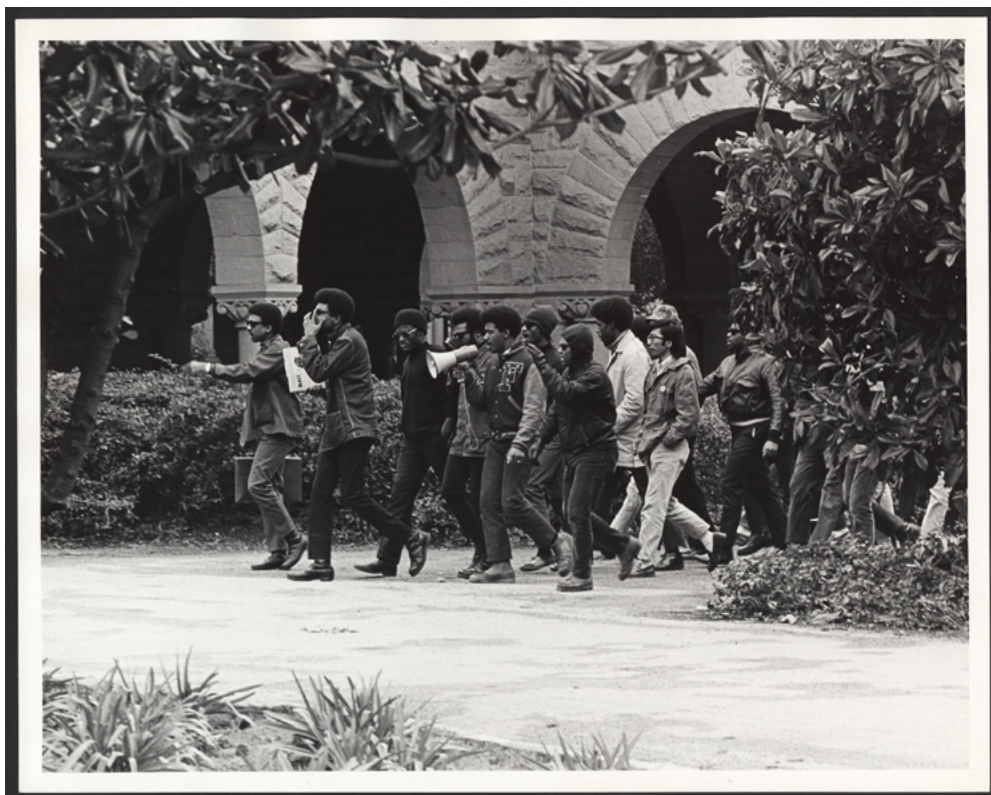
Historically, some of these protests led the university to agree to student demands or to amnesty for rule violations, despite greater levels of disruption to campus activities. For instance, in 1968, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 70 Black students and community members walked onto the stage at a campus-wide event, grabbed the mic from Stanford Provost Richard Lyman, and [presented](#) 10 demands. Lyman later described the administration's response to these demands as "enthusiastic," and Stanford [agreed](#) to double the enrollment of minority students by the following year.

The Black Community Services Center in 2018 [honored](#) “these organizers, activists, educators, and risk-takers for their bravery, tenacity, grit, and ingenuity as they single-handedly shifted the campus culture and ultimately, the trajectory of Stanford University.”

In 1969, a peaceful sit-in at Stanford’s Applied Electronics Laboratory protesting the lab’s contribution to classified military research [shut down](#) the lab and all its work for nine days. According to the [Stanford Magazine](#), in the “next few days, the Faculty Senate debated and eventually banned classified research.” This peaceful—but disruptive—event is now celebrated. Then-provost Richard Lyman described the sit-in in a 2009 Stanford Historical Society essay as “[legendary](#)” and “peaceful.” Stanford Law School’s classroom building has a panel commemorating this event, which notes that a “strong” majority of Stanford’s faculty voted to grant amnesty to the students if they voluntarily ended the sit-in (which they did).

Members of the April 3 Movement (A3M) that organized many of that era’s anti-war protests went on to become “journalists, lawyers, professors, organizers and government officials,” who would later [hold](#) reunions to honor their past activism and connect with today’s Stanford activists. Lenny Siegel, one organizer of the A3M demonstrations who came to campus this May to connect with “those fighting climate change and genocide in Gaza,” [told](#) the Stanford Daily, “Attending Stanford was a great learning experience for us, but it wasn’t just what we learned in the classroom.”

On Feb. 20, 1969, members of the Black Student Union led a march to the bookstore and the president’s office to present demands for supporting African American students, faculty, and community members, including requests for more Black faculty and staff.



Jose Mercato/Stanford News Service



On May 6, 1968, 1500 students gathered in Old Union Courtyard to protest the proposed suspension of students who demonstrated against Central Intelligence Agency recruiting. In the evening, 1,500 students gathered in the Old Union courtyard. A vote passed by a wide margin in favor of amnesty for the seven students and the formation of a student-dominated judicial review procedure.

Chuck Painter / Stanford News Service



Chuck Painter / Stanford News Service

On April 9, 1969, several hundred April Third Movement (A3M) protesters occupied the Applied Electronics Laboratory, where much of the classified Department of Defense research at Stanford took place. Administrators tried to dislodge the students without force. Threatened with suspension, the students voted to end their nine-day occupation, and the faculty voted in favor of amnesty.

May 9 through May 10, 1977 marked the largest display of civil disobedience in Stanford's history until that date. Students gathered in Old Union to protest against apartheid, U.S. corporate involvement in South Africa, and the Board of Trustee's refusal to urge Ford Motor Co. to close its South African operations.

Jose Mercato/ Stanford News Service



In 1966, students held a counter-demonstration against their peers' anti-Vietnam War draft sit-in at the President's Office, reflecting the diversity of views on campus at the time.

Chuck Painter / Stanford News Service

In 1969, when Stanford called in the police to campus for the first time, to clear a sit-in at Encina Hall, which housed the university's financial documents, the provost [explained](#) to the Academic Council why the university had overcome its "deep reluctance" to involve police. He attributed the decision partly to the violence that had taken place, including physical assaults of students and the breaking open of locked doors. Even then, the provost specifically noted that the intention was not to arrest students, and that, indeed, [no arrests](#) were made. The provost told faculty that, any time the university had to bring in police, "a defeat has taken place."

In the early 1970s, Stanford experienced [violence](#) of a kind entirely absent from campus in today's organizing around Palestine and Israel. In 1970, someone threw a bottle full of red paint and several rocks through the windows of the president's house, while others set fire to two wings of the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, destroying 10 offices and precious archives. Hundreds of police deputies [battled](#) student protesters for hours one night; they unleashed tear gas, while protesters hit them with a "barrage of rocks" that led to injuries. In 1972, [a bomb exploded](#) in the president's office, causing thousands of dollars in structural damage, and the same year an enormous fire thought by many to be arson caused [\\$1 million in damage to Encina Hall](#), which was the university's main administrative building at the time. These are just a few of the events Lyman detailed in his book [Stanford in Turmoil, Campus Unrest 1968-1972](#).

These shocking incidents are a reminder that Stanford today is nowhere near the height of conflict that characterized this earlier period. Today's student protesters have maintained a commitment to nonviolence despite a political context reminiscent of what Provost Lyman [observed](#) in 1969: a "brutal and senseless war abroad; brutal and senseless oppression at home; a feeling of desperation among the young and their powerlessness to remedy these things."

After that especially tense period, peaceful protests continued at Stanford throughout the next several decades. In 1977, hundreds of students [refused](#) to leave Old Union until Stanford divested from South African apartheid. After hundreds of students were arrested, hundreds more reoccupied the building the next day. In April 2006, students clashed with police and three were arrested when more than a thousand protesters blocked President George W. Bush's motorcade as it headed toward the Hoover Tower, thwarting his ability to visit campus.

Despite vilifying students for [violating](#) rules and traditions at the time of some protests, Stanford now commemorates this legacy of peaceful student protest. A Stanford website on "[Activism at Stanford](#)" celebrates the "flourishing" of student activism in the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, and other initiatives.

The “Together We Rise” display at Cecil H. Green Library memorializes the many student efforts, from hunger strikes to office takeovers, which increased hiring of faculty of color and support for underrepresented students and community centers on campus; the display even features Stanford’s history of protests for Palestinian rights since 2014. Additionally, Stanford’s law school classroom building features a historical timeline with several panels on student civil disobedience, including one on the arrests of law students who blocked the entrance of the draft board to slow down the “war machine.” **Through its actions and memorials, Stanford tells today’s student activists that, even if they are arrested, disciplined, and harangued for their protests now, Stanford will not hesitate to use their stories in the future if it proves expedient to do so.**

On the national level, the political and social movement that started with Occupy Wall Street in 2011 received significant scholarly attention at Stanford and from Stanford scholars, much of it positive. There was a litany of events, teach-ins, email blasts, and even official university websites advertising and elevating the “Occupy the Future effort at Stanford University.” In December 2012, philosophy professor Debra Satz, now dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences, spoke on [a C-SPAN](#) panel: “Something began. There was a wedge. Sometimes it’s just important that something begins. Part of the importance of Occupy, and I’ll come back to that, is that something began. A group of faculty decided to add force to the wedge by turning to their various expertise, and we were a group of political scientists, economists, sociologists, philosophers, artists, and literature professors to add force to the web by developing a narrative that would undergird the concerns of the occupiers.” Boston Review Books later published an edited anthology of essays by Stanford faculty entitled [Occupy the Future](#).

The disparity in treatment between certain past protests and today’s pro-Palestine protests is striking. In 2015, Stanford students [staged](#) a sit-in at President John Hennessy’s Main Quad office to urge divestment from fossil fuel. The [Stanford Report](#) stated that “participating students have been notified that they are violating university policies about use of the Main Quad,” and that the university “urged the group to relocate to White Plaza, the university’s free speech zone, where the university has said it will make a special accommodation for the demonstrators to allow for overnight camping.” But in 2023-24, the university said that the White Plaza encampment “violates our policy on overnight camping, which is in place for the safety of our community members.” In [2015](#), the Stanford Report stated that: “Faculty members have discretion to determine how to handle missed classes, assignments or exams of demonstrating students,” and that, “in conjunction with the demonstration, members of the Stanford faculty are offering teach-ins today through Thursday on subjects ranging from environmental practices to the history of dissent to climate change.”

In [2024](#), the university sounded a different note, telling university units that “the use of funds or other resources provided by the university to support the violation of university policies is not allowed. Such actions ... may subject university units to review for violation of the Code of Conduct.”

The conclusion we draw from this disparity of both approaches and tone fits our analysis throughout this report: Palestine is a more divisive topic than climate change, so speech about Palestine is silenced or restricted where speech about climate was affirmed. The university has simply treated some viewpoints differently than others. This is not just inimical to the intellectual purpose of the university, but also sends a damaging message to students about parameters within which they can speak, discuss, and debate.

Occupy the Future

OCUPY THE FUTURE

- » [Events](#)
- » [News Release](#)

Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.
— John Dewey

Overview

The Occupy protests have accomplished a great deal. They have raised awareness of the glaring inequalities that now characterize American society and galvanized many forms of public response. We are in sympathy with those protests. In the end, though, it isn't this or that park or public space that we aspire to occupy. It is nothing less than the future of this country that is at stake and that we hope to help shape—to occupy—through our actions.


For this broader Occupy movement to grow, it will require other groups outside encampments to mobilize other constituencies, by other means, around other issues. That is what we, a coalition of faculty, staff, undergraduate, and graduate students operating under the name of Occupy the Future, intend to do at Stanford. We call on the entire Stanford community to come together with a host of groups from our surrounding community for a rally in **White Plaza on Friday, December 9 between 1:30-3:00 pm**. We do not, however, mean for this to be a one-time event. Instead we mean to embed the rally in a sustained series of activities that point to the future.

[Read the full Occupy the Future statement](#) .

Attend Occupy the Future Events

Attend the Teach-In, Rally and Public Forum on December 9

[See full schedule of events.](#)

- » Noon–1:15 pm: Concurrent teach-in sessions addressing specific issues raised by the Occupy movement, to be held in central campus area. [See the flyer.](#) 
- » 1:30–3:00 pm: Rally in White Plaza. [See the flyer.](#)
- » 3–5 pm: Public Forum Discussion at the Oak Room, Tresidder Student Union

[Watch a live stream of the rally.](#)

Film Screenings, Arts and Discussion

A series of teach-in style events and discussions, some organized around films that touch on issues related to the inequalities, are described below.

- » December 3 - Screening of *Inside Job* at 3 pm. The film will be followed by a discussion with the director, Charles Ferguson, in Cubberley Auditorium. [See the flyer](#)
- » December 5 - Screening of *GrowthBusters: Hooked on Growth* from noon–2 pm at Herrin Hall T-175

Stanford Promotes the Occupy Movement in 2011-12

SIT IN TO STOP GENOCIDE TIMELINE

October 20, 2023

Undergraduate Stanford students start a sit-in and camp overnight to protest against Israel's war crimes in Gaza. At first, the sit-in starts with just a few students, but by the end of the month, the sit-in grows into a place where students can present their positions, advocate, engage across differences, and be in conversation with each other. Conversation norms and regular training sessions help to guide these conversations.



October 27, 2023

Students screen *Jenin, Jenin*, a documentary on the Battle of Jenin in 2002. Students host events, such as movie nights, where their peers can come to learn more about the history of Palestine.

Students work to gather signatures on a petition demanding that Stanford end its complicity in the war against Palestinians in Gaza. Students engage with passers-by in White Plaza, educating their peers and visitors to Stanford about the history of the region and current events in context. By the end of the sit-in four months later, this petition garners more than **2,800 signatures**.

November 2, 2023

Two individuals attempt to defame the Sit-In to Stop Genocide by [writing messages in chalk](#) next to the sit-in in a way that attributed those messages to the protesting students. These messages include statements such as: “Come Chat About How Jewish Babies Should Be Burned Alive,” and “Boycott Divest Sanction Includes Israeli Arabs - Ask Us About It :)” Students engage those who wrote the messages and ask them to erase what they had written. They also clarify that the messages are “Not Endorsed By The Sit-In and Other Pro-Palestine Advocates.” Later that day, Stanford Hillel clarifies that the chalking was done by a Jewish community member “who was trying to use irony/sarcasm to draw negative attention to a pro-Palestinian protest on campus.”

Sit-in organizers continue to utilize the sit-in as a space of community building and political mobilization. Students regularly hold call-a-thons where community members could be trained on how to call their representatives and urge them to support a ceasefire in Gaza. Undergraduates, graduate students, and other Stanford affiliates joined these call-a-thons and shared scripts with their communities to build political momentum.

November 13, 2023

As the sit-in students continue in their protest, other members of the Stanford community erect the [Blue and White Tent](#) across from the Sit-in to Stop Genocide.

As Thanksgiving break approaches: Students from the sit-in continue their protest, and release a guide for students who are worried about approaching the topic of Palestine during their time at home with their families. The guide addresses both the content and framing of discussions, as well as strategies to take in order to remain calm and have productive conversations. Students start the guide by urging people to “take a deep breath,” “listen first,” “ground yourself in facts,” and “refer to human rights officials,” and then discuss how key talking points could be addressed or rebutted. Students build on this guide for an updated Winter Edition as Winter Break approaches.

The end of fall quarter: Students used the sit-in as a space to uplift and create student art reflecting on the on-going war in Gaza. One such artwork is the short film [As I Witness](#).



A 3-D computer-generated image of the Sit-In to Stop Genocide made by two undergraduates for their final project in CS 148: Introduction to Graphics.

- Students continue hosting movie nights and reflections to follow, hosting screenings of films including *Tantura*, *Gaza Fights For Freedom*, *Israelism*, *Divine Intervention*, and *Tears of Gaza*.
- Students also exchange scholarly resources with students participating in the Blue & White Tent, including annotating each others' articles and book chapters.**
- January 2024** ● Sit-in organizers join broader calls by student advocates for Stanford to divest its holdings from Hewlett-Packard, as well as efforts to raise awareness of the violence in Gaza.
- February 1, 2024** ● [A letter in the Stanford Daily](#) signed by more than 200 Stanford alumni commends the sit-in, writing “We as alumni stand beside them and offer our endless solidarity.”
- February 4, 2024** ● A heavy rain storm with strong gusts of wind blows across Stanford’s campus. Members of the Sit-in to Stop Genocide rally students and community members to ensure the sit-in’s structure remains intact. [The storm knocks down the Blue and White Tent](#).
- February 5, 2024** ● Muslim student erects a small Sit-In to Stop Islamophobia in the lawn across from the Sit-In to Stop Genocide where the Blue and White Tent had been.
- February 8, 2024** ● Stanford administrators inform student organizers that they would be removing the Sit-In to Stop Genocide. Sit-in Students rally the Stanford community and request support to resist the administration’s efforts. More than 400 members of the community [show up to support the sit-in that night](#). *The Stanford Review* publishes [an article entitled “Save the Tents,”](#) writing “All students have a right to free expression, and the University’s recent letter is a cookie-cutter example of wielding safetyism to quash students’ right to free expression.”
- February 9, 2024** ● Members of the sit-in extend an offer to the university to voluntarily end the sit-in in exchange for progress on the sit-in’s demands and assurances that the administration would not take disciplinary action against student protesters.



February 11, 2024

The sit-in hosts its first Palestine Book Club, where they read *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* by Rashid Khalidi.

February 12, 2024

Stanford administrators sign a letter agreeing not to take disciplinary action against students who were involved in the sit-in, or mobilize police against student protesters who agreed to dismantle the sit-in voluntarily at 120 days.

February 17, 2024

Students hold a vigil marking 120 days of the Sit-in to Stop Genocide. Service workers [dismantle the sit-in between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. and remove everybody's belongings](#). This surprises and distresses the students, who had thought they were negotiating the removal of their belongings.

Students from the sit-in and the broader campus community continue to raise political awareness on campus through rallies, die-ins, and teach-ins, even after they have lost their physical space on campus.

PEOPLE’S UNIVERSITY FOR PALESTINE

On April 25, 2024, students establish the People’s University for Palestine, an encampment in White Plaza to urge the university to divest its holdings from corporations that supply weapons and surveillance technology to the Israeli government.

The People’s University continues to host daily programming including daily prayers, demonstrations, presentations on Palestine’s intersection with other causes, and film screenings. Students also seek, organize, and receive extensive “know your rights” and safety/de-escalation training in order to foster a peaceful protest environment.

The People’s University raises awareness on the Palestinian issue by embracing intersectionality and connected struggles. The encampment regularly hosts programming with affinity organizations to shed light on how the ongoing war in Gaza is part of and intertwined with larger global oppressions against indigeneity, Muslim identity, the environment, and the Global South. The encampment addresses these interconnected oppressions by welcoming Stanford affiliates and community members to contribute to and shape programming that might not otherwise find a place on campus. Examples of such events include, “From Vietnam to Falastin: Intertwined Histories and Futures,” “Bringing Indigenous Revolution to Campus: Lessons from Palestine, Kurdistan, and Wallmapu,” “Asian American Organizing and Solidarity with Palestine,” “Spirituality, Buddhism, and Non-Violence,” “Lunch & Learn: Bridging West Oakland and Gaza,” and “‘The Palestine Problem’: Black & Palestine Solidarity Teach-in.”



The People’s University
Take BAC’s Black Curriculum | May 10, 2024

9:30AM - 11AM	Free Breakfast Program + Black Panther Party Teach-In
12PM - 1PM	Lunch & Learn: Bridging West Oakland and Gaza
1:15PM-2:30PM	Friday Jumu’ah Prayer
3PM - 4:30PM	The Black Lives’ Houseless Matter: Care Package Making
5PM - 6PM	Art is Political: A Cyanotype and Artivism Workshop
6PM-7:30PM	“The Palestine Problem”: Black & Palestine Solidarity Teach-In
8:30PM-10PM	Little Nairobi Screening and Discussion w/ Director Justice4Tyranny

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY MAY 2ND

12 PM
ANALYZING PALESTINIAN PLAYS AND SCHOLARSHIP W/
DAVID PALUMBO LIU

4 PM - 5 PM
HOW TO SUPPORT CAMP 101: ONBOARDING OFFICE HOURS

6:00 PM
CHILDREN'S THEATER: THE GAZA MONOLOGUES

7:00 PM
DABKE AS RESISTANCE: AL JUTHOOR DABKE

8:15 PM
SAAAC TEACH-IN: TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZING

9:30 PM
STUDY HALL + ISHA PRAYER

@STANFORD

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024

5:15AM Fajr Prayer

12PM *International Law on Trial: Genocide and Palestine from the Perspective of the Global South*

2PM Spirituality, Buddhism, and Non-Violence

8PM SAAAC "Lunch n' Learn" Translational Organizing

9PM *Returning to Haifa: Screening + Talkback*

Community-led programming on White Plaza lawn!
@SIT_IN_TO_STOP_GENOCIDE

teach-in:

From Việt Nam to Falastin

Intertwined Histories and Futures

thursday, 05/09
12 - 1 PM
@ The People's University of Palestine

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

WHITE PLAZA | MONDAY, MAY 6, 2024

5:30AM Fajr Prayer

9:30AM Community Breakfast

11AM-12PM Land of Palestine, Seeds of Palestine, and Liberation Talk

12PM-3PM Somatic Offering: Grounding, Releasing Tension, Caring for Bodies and becoming comfortable with touching and moving together for barricading and locking arms

6-7PM Asian American Organizing and Solidarity with Palestine with Chinese Progressive Association of San Francisco and SAAAC

7PM Performance by Everyday People

7:30-8:00PM Dua/Prayer Circle

9:30-9:50PM Isha Prayer

10PM DJ Set

BRINGING INDIGENOUS REVOLUTION TO CAMPUS

LESSONS FROM PALESTINE, KURDISTAN AND WALLMAPU

THURSDAY MAY 9 - 6PM

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY
WHITE PLAZA
STANFORD

SPONSORED BY INTERWOVEN LIBERATIONS

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY 5.3

5:30 AM Fajr prayer

Stanford community and beyond, join us at White Plaza!

10:30-11:50AM Tribal food sovereignty

12-1PM Teach-in on Palestinian Theater by Samer Jumuah

1:30PM

3PM Informal visit with Fady Jouadah

4PM No Tech for Apartheid

5-6PM Solmaz Sharif event

6:30PM Vigil for Palestine

9:30-9:45PM Isha Prayer

9:45PM Film screening: 300 Meters

@SIT_IN_TO_STOP_GENOCIDE

CRIMINALIZATION AND POLICING OF PROTESTS

We have yet to see [scenes](#) at Stanford of police in riot gear forcibly dismantling student encampments or thrusting protesters into police vans—as we have unfortunately seen at other university campuses across the country. The Sit-In to Stop Genocide persisted peacefully on White Plaza for four months, across from the Blue and White Tent that emerged in response, and it ultimately disbanded without arrests. So far, the new encampment featuring a People’s University for Palestine is also continuing in White Plaza without violent police removal. While Stanford’s approach shows commendable restraint relative to some other universities, it has fallen short of the university’s own declared principles for public safety. Stanford has, in fact, directed the arrest of peaceful protesters, during the Family Weekend disruption in February 2024. Moreover, the excessive force used against student activists elsewhere should not be the standard against which we judge our own university’s conduct. Stanford should decide policy according to the best interest of its students and community, no matter how loud the punitive calls from members of Congress, alumni, or donors to conform to repression elsewhere.

Weeks after the killing of George Floyd by police in 2020, Stanford [created](#) a Community Board on Public Safety to “reimagine” policing on campus. In its first report, the Board adopted a set of core principles, beginning with the idea that, “Armed policing, particularly of student-centered areas of the community, should be reduced to the greatest extent possible.” Interpreting this principle, the second [report](#) of the Board in fall 2023 advised the use of “lower touch, non-enforcement policing strategies” to deter crime and solve problems, while reducing “perceived community harm.”

Family Weekend

Despite these principles, Stanford has instructed police to arrest our students for peaceful protest, blurring the line between violations of university rules and the criminal law. Eighteen students [face](#) criminal misdemeanor charges of disturbing the peace after they disrupted a welcome event during Family Weekend hosted by the President and Provost. Though disruptive, the protest was [nonviolent](#); some students chanted slogans like “Free Palestine,” while others unfolded a banner near the stage reading: “Stanford funds apartheid and genocide,” and still others dropped pieces of paper from the balcony reading: “29,000+ Gazans killed.” The university’s Department of Public Safety (DPS) detained and [issued citations](#) to 18 students, who were also referred to OCS for disciplinary proceedings.

Stanford’s DPS coordinates closely with university leadership; [President Saller explained to the Academic Council](#) on May 9, 2024, that he and the provost meet on a daily basis with DPS, general counsel, and other administrators on matters of campus safety. The university chose to respond to the disruptions not only with disciplinary sanctions for violating university rules, but with

police action leading to criminal charges. As we understand it, the students were cited with a violation of California Penal Code 415.2, applicable to a person who “maliciously and willfully disturbs another person by loud and unreasonable noise.” The charge is a misdemeanor and can lead to jail for up to 90 days or a fine, or can be reduced to an infraction, and is potentially eligible for diversion before the formal arraignment (the court appearance in which a formal charge is brought). Even if the charge is dropped through a diversion program after a defendant completes remedial measures, the arrest remains on a person’s record unless and until sealed.

While disrupting events violates university rules, arrests leading to criminal charges amount to an unnecessary punitive escalation. We understand from Stanford administrators that the university decided to arrest these students at least in part because university staff cannot force students to identify themselves on their own, and the university needed to identify them to initiate disciplinary proceedings. But this is an astounding reason for involving the police. Arrests should be used as a last resort when necessary to protect public safety; DPS should not arrest students on campus as a mechanism to obtain their names for OCS proceedings. Nor should violations of university policy be treated as criminal offenses simply because a plausible offense—such as disrupting a person by “loud and unreasonable noise”—can be found somewhere in the state’s sprawling criminal code.

Although, to our knowledge, these are the only arrests that have resulted so far from student protests, Stanford has threatened to arrest students for peaceful protests on other occasions. On February 8, 2024, after the Sit-In to Stop Genocide had spent more than 100 days on White Plaza educating the community about the Israeli occupation and the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, administrators abruptly announced that overnight camping would end as of 8 p.m. that night, with potential trespass charges against those in violation. Delivered only hours before the deadline to clear the tents that had become a vital community space for many students, this ultimatum motivated hundreds of community members to show up at White Plaza, many linking arms around the sit-in to protect it from the threat of police removal. While students ultimately negotiated an end to the sit-in 10 days later, the threat of sudden removal and criminal charges that night, and on subsequent nights, created significant fear and anxiety.

Reports of arriving police officers or police cars triggered tension, even panic, when they quickly spread on social media. Abrupt threats of police enforcement and criminal charges against students who had peacefully protested in a space for four months with little incident seriously undermined trust.

Engagement with Security Agencies

Just as Stanford should maintain a very high bar for criminalizing students, it should likewise maintain strict protocols for engaging with federal law enforcement, immigration, and security agencies. Like other Americans of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and African origin, many Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian students have lived their entire lives in the shadow of repressive post-9/11 surveillance in their communities. They have seen members of their communities racially profiled, placed on terrorist watchlists, interrogated at airports, detained by immigration authorities, and otherwise subjected to [deeply racialized security enforcement](#) in the name of counterterrorism. Stanford students have faced intimidating FBI questioning based on their nationality, such as when the FBI arranged “voluntary interviews” with Iranian students on campus in 2004. Based on these past experiences, the law school’s Immigrants’ Rights Clinic worked with the Bechtel International Center and other university offices to establish a protocol to advise Stanford community members contacted by the FBI for questioning and to refer them to local civil rights groups for legal assistance.

It is in light of that history that Stanford’s [announcement](#) on April 30, 2024, that it had **reported a person sitting in White Plaza to the FBI, because he appeared to be wearing a headband similar to that of Hamas members, struck many as exposing the community to national security profiling.** The identity of the person sitting in White Plaza was unknown; he was photographed seated at a table looking down at his phone, not inside the encampment nor interacting with anyone around him. Apparently responding to hundreds of emails about the photo, Stanford announced that it sent the photo to the FBI. Seeing a headband on campus that resembled one worn by Hamas shocked many people and undoubtedly alarmed members of the Jewish community. But there should be a very high bar for calling the FBI, such as a requirement that someone be acting in a manner that poses a threat, rather than wearing insignia alone, which is protected by the First Amendment no matter how offensive. And university messages meant to reassure one community of their safety should not simultaneously send the message to another community that university administrators will report people to a federal law enforcement agency notorious for profiling and investigating communities. The chilling effects of this public announcement are obvious, and inconsistent with Stanford’s professed commitment to free speech. Stanford should not use referrals to law enforcement to chill speech it itself cannot punish.

One former FBI agent who surveilled students in the Bay Area, as part of counterterrorism profiling efforts that he later regretted, has [noted](#), “There is this mythology surrounding the war on terrorism, and the F.B.I., that has given agents the power to ruin the lives of completely innocent people based solely on what part of the world they came from, or what religion they practice, or the color of their skin. And I did that. I helped destroy people. For 17 years.” Stanford should not treat its community members as criminal or security threats for engaging in speech.

“They tell us we totally have freedom of speech... as long as it’s not outside Li Ka Shing Center [the main medical school building] or in any of the rooms.”

Medical Student

“This has never been just about speech. It’s about power and maintaining the hierarchy and status quo that suffer when speech is truly democratized. It is the appearance of democracy without its full organization. In the past few months if there has been any silver lining in the discourse on college campuses and the like, it’s been the very clear rendering of this dispute. But it is hard to look at the past few months, the beating of faculty and students and allies across the country, and leave with an argument that these institutions have any absolute commitment to free speech and free expression. It’s always been about maintaining power and a restriction not expansion of democracy. It’s not surprising how these administrators are staffed by people who don’t know quite it means to be disempowered.” **Faculty**

“How the university dealt with the sit- in is very cowardly and not surprising in any way. They leveraged their power in really unfair ways against students who were really vulnerable. I don’t think that’s OK from administration, but it’s not surprising.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“If you say the wrong thing, even if the wrong thing is ‘stop killing Palestinians’ that can very clearly and very quickly turn into a reason for blacklisting you.” **MAP Faculty**

The Palestine Exception

- Eliminate the Palestine exception to free speech and ensure that content-neutral rules are indeed enforced in an unbiased manner.
- Commit to protecting the speech and associational rights of students, student organizations, and others advocating on the Palestinian issue to hold events and access university support on the same terms as other students and student organizations.
- Commit to consulting with Palestine-focused and/or Islam/Muslim-focused Stanford scholars and experts in any context that requires understanding the interpretation of Palestinian/Muslim slogans, expressions, or advocacy.
- Reject the adoption of definitions of antisemitism, Islamophobia, or other terms that purport to set norms, standards, or disciplinary policy for the university.

Expansion and Clarification of Opportunities for Speech

- Clarify the protection for speech that applies to different sections of the Stanford community and in which capacities: faculty with tenure/tenure-track, academic staff-teaching, other staff, post-doctoral researchers, and students. With respect to staff: 1) protect the academic freedom of all staff serving in teaching or research roles without regard to formal distinctions in hierarchy or status; and 2) reaffirm broad support for the free speech rights of staff acting in a personal capacity.
- Revise existing time, place, and manner restrictions, including those applicable to student organizations, the use of White Plaza, and poster policies, to expand rather than restrict opportunities for student speech. Time, place, and manner rules are legitimate to the extent they genuinely protect the effective functioning of the university or its educational mission, or ensure the equitable use of shared spaces on campus, but should not otherwise be used to restrict or minimize student activism and expression, even if or when done in a content-neutral way.
- Reject attempts to revise university policy in any unit to limit opportunities for speech expression in response to Palestinian advocacy.

- Consult with the MAP committee in the appointment of any individuals or committees to implement the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on University Speech.

Consistency and Application

- Require units that show a particular pattern of speech suppression to train senior leadership, administrators, and faculty on free speech principles, including the Leonard Law, and provide such training to all units upon request.
- Conduct regular audits and reviews of the enforcement of time, place, and manner rules and other student disciplinary procedures to ensure they are enforced in an unbiased manner.

Law Enforcement

- Do not authorize either DPS or external police arrests of peaceful protesters. Prohibit the use of police to enforce disciplinary violations where there is not a threat to safety. Prohibit the use of police for the purpose of identifying students for disciplinary proceedings.
- Establish and update Stanford protocols restricting communicating with federal law enforcement, immigration, and security agencies and providing support to students who are contacted for questioning by federal agencies.
- See also [OCS recommendations](#).

“I wish there was a way to make people understand that me talking about my Palestinian experience is not silencing the other side.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“On April 30, 2024 I found myself in an interesting conversation with multiple students about the visit of Salam Fayyad to the “Democracy and Disagreement” one-unit class. This was a good example of the kind of knowledge exchange that should happen, even on controversial topics, on a university campus. The conversation was substantive and detailed, took place over several weeks, and included discussion of advocacy techniques and the university’s educational goals. But the conversation took place on Signal, an encrypted messaging app, and all but three of the 20 or so student participants were using pseudonyms to guard their identities because of their fear of the OCS cases that had been launched against their peers that week for participation in the sit-in. When I met some of the students later, they were masked to conceal their identities from the cameras in White Plaza and in fear of disciplinary action.” **Faculty Member**

“I haven’t even posted anything in Slack. I wanted to post this [cool initiative] to see if anybody is interested in doing more of this or getting involved, since it’s related to our work, but I was too afraid to post. Honestly I am worried about job safety. Because the head of my team can hire and fire you at will. There are no repercussions.” **MAP Staff**

“I remember the day after [the sit-in] was gone, going into White Plaza and seeing it was gone. They didn’t leave anything. I remember crying. It felt like we had lost something huge. It was a place for everything. I remember in the final days before it got taken down, how me and others were building pipes, gutter system. For a place that we poured so much love into, afterwards it felt like socially speaking, we had all scattered like birds. I remember feeling terrified that after that space was gone, our community was going to be gone, that activism was going to be gone. I didn’t know where to physically meet people from different parts of campus. I felt a lot less safe after that—I felt like I had less of a home to go to.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“I don’t really talk much about it, because to me, I’m not sure where that will have me end up.” **MAP Staff**

“We have heard multiple reports of teaching assistants and faculty at levels who have been subject to complaints and reprimands for allowing students to walk out of class for protest, or changing class times. This is new. There is a sense that this time there are undue and unprecedented rules for activities that otherwise would be seen as productive community engagement.” **Faculty Member**

“Imagine if [instead of scolding students] the university said that ‘we are keenly aware of what’s happening at other universities and we refuse to engage in any act or behavior that would quell speech even if that’s desired by outside interests.’” **Faculty Member**

“For me, the ongoing student sit-in at Stanford is a language unto itself, a collaborative practice that makes visible a presence of resistance, education and outrage in the face of such silence. These brave students of conscience have sacrificed their comfort in order to call us into dialogue at a time when so many are afraid to speak. It seems theirs is a vision of effortful togetherness, a patchwork of tents, tables and resources — an evolving grammar of grappling and disruption.” ***Faculty member in a Stanford Daily Op-Ed***

“We need to understand that somebody being uncomfortable is not the same as being threatened.” ***Alum***

“How do universities think about the person for whom these topics are not merely abstract? How has it accounted for differences of power among members in our community and how does it deal with the reality of these issues of consequence and what they really bear in real time on members of its marginalized members? ***Faculty***

Vibrant Discourse

***“What if the goal is not civil discourse? What if instead it’s engagement with difficult ideas in a precarious world? We are experiencing existential crises—the current state of political economies is going to lead to our extinction. Why do we keep reverting to civil discourse as a mode of engaging each other?”
—Faculty Member***

“We used to want students who would change the world. Now we want students who can politely disagree.” - Staff Member

Over the past year, Stanford administrators and select faculty have increasingly called for a return to “civil discourse” on campus. The annual meeting of the Academic Council in May 2024 [featured](#) a panel discussion led by the provost on building students’ capacity for civil discourse. A [conference](#) convened in the winter quarter explored how to restore “inclusive critical discourse” on campus. A new law school application optional question asked students to demonstrate their ability to engage with different viewpoints; now the university is [contemplating](#) asking something similar of prospective undergraduates.

The MAP Committee has a different diagnosis of the problem at Stanford, and a different set of prescriptions. The primary challenge we face as a university is to cultivate vibrant discourse, not civil discourse. The project of fostering the ability to disagree across differences in a university community is vital, and many members of MAP communities at Stanford are already engaged in doing so, as noted throughout the report. We also recognize that cultivating “civil discourse” means different things to different people, and there is no singular definition of the term. But we reject several premises that appear to underlie certain common invocations of “civil discourse.” We offer alternative recommendations towards the ideal of vibrant discourse on campus.

REJECTING THE PREMISE

First, calls for “civil discourse” often appear to come from a particular diagnosis of our students, the activism they engage in, and the movements they support. For some, these calls appear motivated in part by skepticism of younger generations as unable to engage in disagreement across differences—as being more interested in talking “at” each other than “with” each other. Proponents of civil discourse often seem to value the rarefied intellectual conversation of a classroom or an event hall stage where authority figures and anointed experts politely disagree, over the activism and organizing that students often engage in.

And the suspicion also stems from fears of the particular movements students are engaged in: pro-Palestine and Black Lives Matter movements are especially stigmatized as uncivil, unruly, anti-intellectual, mob-like, violent, or otherwise bad for university campuses. Students advocating for Palestinian rights have been described as “[the mob](#)” in testimony before Congress, and in countless news headlines they are accused of “[spinning campuses into chaos](#),” cast as “[terrorists](#)” who “[broke higher education](#),” and discussed as dangerous liabilities that need to be “[handled](#).” Articles published in the *New York Times* and *The Stanford Review* argued that both speech on Palestine not in accordance with Israel’s political position and speech that invokes concepts such as settler-colonialism is dangerous because it is antisemitic, supports terrorism, and is antithetical to “our” values. An article in *Telos* located “anti-Americanism” in student activism, and an *Atlantic* article titled “[The War at Stanford](#)” rewrote the war on Gaza as a campus “war.” This all drew attention away from the intellectual and cultural work the students were actually doing.

Second, in certain quarters, the civil discourse conversation appears to be shaped by an apparent preference for a discourse around which the university itself can set the boundaries of legitimacy. This fails to recognize that the borders of reasonable views are usually not fixed or objective but rather themselves a product of past and present arrangements of power.

And third, some calls for civil discourse appear to see it as a more suitable or politically acceptable—replacement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). A [range of voices](#) on the faculty and in leadership have expressed [dissatisfaction](#) with DEI as a framework, [in accord](#) with broader changes in the national [political](#) discourse and the law, all of which has been subject to [analysis at Stanford](#) and [elsewhere](#). Some see DEI as an “institutional orthodoxy” that should be [replaced](#) with a focus on civil discourse and debate: “DEI-sponsored ‘trainings’ ... inculcat[e] particular theories of social justice and privileg[e] the “oppression” of some groups to the exclusion of others.” Thus, in some accounts, the civil discourse frame is an effort to replace a discourse centered on group-based oppression with one more focused on individual belonging.

We reject these premises. For one, we prefer to think of the university as a place where multiple discourse framings are engaged and evaluated, not imposed from above. But more fundamentally, we view our students differently. We celebrate that the student body in the U.S. is the most diverse in history, and we recognize that these students have inherited a difficult world with existential challenges around climate change, racial injustice, economic inequalities, and global violence. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many [Gen Z students](#) are serious-minded and innovative about addressing these challenges. They value and embody empathy, authenticity, and collaboration, and “are fighting for our humanity.”

We recognize that the inclusion of more diverse students who are directly affected by social justice issues will lead to increased disagreement and debate, including passionate and heated debate, because there are more people on campus and in the classroom whose existence is at stake in the issues being debated. We believe Stanford should welcome this.

We also celebrate student activism—as Stanford itself does in many of its memorials to past student activism, described above. We believe that activism, including at times civil disobedience, is fundamental to student learning and to the [university’s core mission](#) of preparing students for lives of active citizenship. Speech in rallies, protests, and student teach-ins is part of the vibrant discourse we should want on campus, not competition for attention about which to be concerned.

In addition, we do not believe that the ideal academic conversation is always between “both sides” of an issue as defined by those in authority. Activists and academics alike often choose to highlight an underrepresented position or advocate for human rights. In those contexts, there may be good reason not to “balance” one position with an “opposite” position, just as we do not expect events with Ukrainian human rights advocates to invite supporters of the Russian government’s invasion as a condition of their academic legitimacy.

Moreover, we reject the continuing attempts we see at Stanford to set the bounds of legitimate debate in a way that silences expression on Palestine. As a university that seeks to exercise global leadership, we cannot allow ourselves to be hampered by adherence to a particular set of political beliefs about either North American culture or a violent conflict on the other side of the world. Groupthink degrades both education and research; but that is where we are when it comes to Palestine on campus, a state of affairs that produces anger, suffering, harassment, censorship, and most importantly, an ignorance incompatible with our purpose as a university.

As we noted in our interim report and documented at length above, speech on Palestine at campus is suppressed through “a variety of formal and informal means.” Formally, there is speech suppression at all levels and repression of civil disobedience. Informally, there is a well-established culture of silence around Palestine that has only increased during the lifetime of the committee. The examples documented in this report show how the culture of silence is created and maintained—how Palestine remains the third rail at Stanford.

The 120-day Sit-In to Stop Genocide in fall and winter 2023-24, the People’s University encampment that began in April 2024, and the university’s responses to both are arguably the most visible instances of this phenomenon. In both cases, the university chose for a period of time not to remove the student protests with internal discipline or external police. The committee commends this decision. But these student voices were not embraced or celebrated. They were instead [described](#) as inimical to the university: “The encampment, with its rope lines and perimeter of tents, is physically set up not to invite discussion but to shut out those who disagree,” wrote the president and provost. It is hard to see how this is compatible with the People’s University’s daily publication of its activity and event schedule with [open invitations](#) to all to attend. Ironically enough, one of the first scholars that the students invited was [Berkeley professor Hatem Bazian](#), who had been applauded by our leadership across campus for his [message](#) of respectful disagreement in October 2023.

Stanford is now sending the message to students that activism is bad, that getting engaged with the issues they care about, that the country is in uproar about, is bad. We are sending the message that they shouldn’t share or learn; they should keep their ideas to themselves and watch out for their careers. We are sending the message that, of all the issues that are in the air, the most controversial are the most dangerous and the most deserving of suppression and silence. We are teaching our students that Palestine and Israel are too hot to touch; too difficult to think about; too hard to learn. We are reinforcing this lesson with every action we take.

Many at the university have advocated for “civil discourse” as a way to meet current challenges. We agree that discourse is our purpose, but we also think that “civility” has a specific history of being used to draw boundaries around some ideas while leaving others outside. Our understanding of discourse is that it is inclusive—the job of the university is to bring ideas into the discourse in order to research and teach them.

We also believe that DEI and the expansion of diverse voices at the university continues to be key. Diversity creates debate and improves knowledge production: it is part of the work of the university. And the focus within DEI on understanding historical oppression is appropriate; attempts to foster the inclusion and belonging of traditionally marginalized communities cannot be pursued at the level of individuals without recognizing the historical and structural forces that have treated groups as unequal on the basis of identity.

Fortunately, as of now, Stanford [remains committed](#) to DEI, but we fear that the new paradigm of civil discourse will edge out this commitment.

DISAGREEING ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Our concerns over the new push for “civil discourse” does not mean that we dispute the basic project of building skills for disagreement and persuasion. Faculty already value and teach the critical thinking skills vital to every academic discipline. We support the development of basic skills-building around active listening, negotiation, and using facts and evidence to assess positions. We welcome efforts to cultivate the core intellectual habits of questioning assumptions, adjusting beliefs based on facts, and appreciating the cognitive illiberalism that shapes beliefs about our own groups and those of others. We support media literacy efforts, including attempts to expand awareness of online disinformation and social media dynamics that amplify emotional exchanges. We also believe in teaching skills of persuasion; convincing others of one’s position often starts from active listening and deep understanding of another’s position.

Efforts to set norms of respectful disagreement in classroom settings are especially welcome. **For instance, we note the following principles for an inclusive classroom recommended by Stanford Law School’s 2018 Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion, chaired by now-Provost Jenny Martinez:**

1. Respect the speaker, even when you do not agree with or respect the point the speaker is making.
2. Listen carefully; do not interrupt, even when you are excited to respond.
3. When you disagree, make sure that you use arguments to criticize the idea, not the person.
4. Try not to generalize about groups (even groups with which you identify) and do not ask another person to speak as a representative of a group.
5. Keep an open mind. Enter the classroom dialogue with the expectation of learning something new. Look forward to learning about—and being challenged by—ideas, questions, and points of view that are different from your own.
6. Do not monopolize the conversation; give others a chance to contribute to the discussion.
7. Bring out ideas, perspectives, or solutions that you think are not yet represented or haven’t yet been adequately discussed.
8. If you are nervous about speaking in class, remember that your perspective is valid and the class deserves to hear it.

9. If a statement is made that offends you or you think might offend others, speak up and challenge it but always show respect for the person who made it.

10. Private conversations during class are not appropriate, especially when others are speaking.

11. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses. They can be as disrespectful as words.

12. Participate to the fullest of your ability. Community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.

But creating the conditions for respectful disagreement in a classroom setting is only the beginning. The challenge of vibrant discourse requires far more—and not just of our students, but of the university leadership, faculty, and staff who hold power.

Recommendations

- Foster freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus, in line with the recommendations in the previous chapter, to create the conditions and reality of vibrant discourse.
- Build scholarship and knowledge production on campus, as discussed in the next chapter, to expand the research-based conversation between permanent faculty with a diversity of views on topics including the postcolonial, Palestine, antisemitism, indigeneity, settler-colonialism, violence, diversity, representation, and contested history.
- Reject all litmus tests premised on students performing their capacity for “civil discourse” as a condition of admission. Ensure any new essay question for undergraduate applicants does not threaten to screen out activists and those with strong value commitments. At a minimum, before incorporating any new question for undergraduate applicants modeled on the law school’s new application question, do a rigorous evaluation of the results of that question being included, rather than relying on anecdotal impressions of its value.
- Increase course offerings throughout the university that address students’ desire to understand the conditions and channels for social and political change, such as courses for undergraduates on the political process and social movements or for law students on the relationship between law, organizing, and social movements. Consider the SWOPSI model discussed in the Scholarship chapter below.

“University administrators don’t seem to recognize that their own policies are reflective of their identities—that whiteness IS an identity. They seem to have a belief that they are speaking from a position of reason and everyone else from a position of mere passion. A long time ago people critiqued the notion that the public square was open to all, noting that power and difference mattered here, too. I wish that my colleagues at the university would show an awareness and understanding of how their own positionality and place in the social hierarchy shape the kind of speech rules they so frequently insist upon.

It is easy to say “calm down” when one has rarely had to defend one’s own basic humanity. For some, the university is the first time they’ve engaged some of these hard topics; for others of us, we’ve been having these hard conversations our whole lives and have been forced to demand dignity at every turn. Many of us are simply tired. I wish my colleagues could empathize more with this reality, too.”

Faculty

“The role of race and ethnic studies is to hold institutions accountable and refuse the knowledge projects that have made populations disposable.” **Faculty**

“You’ve been talking about creating a space for discourse and conversation for decades, since you started as a university, and it took us two signs and a tent to do that.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“We’re an educational institution, we should be about educating. We are missing the education boat altogether. This gives fertile ground for offensive speech, antagonizing, othering, dehumanizing.” **MAP Staff**

“I almost chose not to attend Stanford because of the lack of Islamic Studies and Arab Studies. I remember as a high school student getting advice from various mentors encouraging me to go to Princeton, because they had much stronger faculty in both categories. I ultimately didn’t heed their advice, obviously, and I’m so glad I did—Stanford has shaped my life in so many wonderful ways, and I’m grateful for it. But this is a major gap in Stanford’s academic offerings, and it needs to be addressed; we end up losing a lot of incredibly talented students because of this.” **MAP Alum**

“There’s a lot of teaching on this topic by guys like me, it would be great to have other voices no doubt. We’re so far from a place where we would have both voices at the same table doing events. I wish.” **Postdoc**

“Students and alumni have noticed a dearth of scholars, faculty (both tenured and junior), and academic scholarship on Palestine and the broader Middle East. Stanford is lagging behind our peer institutions in these areas. Courses and research aren’t going to bring my family back but humanizing Palestinians is an antidote to the hatred going on right now.” **MAP Alum**

Scholarship and Knowledge Production

“...expanding Middle Eastern Studies, you guys could have done this 20 years ago - why didn't you?” – MAP Undergraduate

For the most part, Stanford's faculty neither address the substantive matter of Palestine in their research nor come close to approaching the diversity of experience and expertise found in the field internationally. This is part of a bigger problem: Stanford lacks scholarly expertise on the Arab world.

Stanford has a structural reliance on tenured professors that can produce bad outcomes. The failure to hire, and then to retain and tenure, scholars in these fields has meant that scholarly expertise (for example, [on contemporary Arabic culture](#)) can only be found among overburdened [non-professorial Academic Staff](#) with insecure positions. While there are exceptional scholar-practitioners with diverse and relevant expertise in a variety of area-specific administrative leadership positions, their status as non-professorial Academic Staff, or as staff with [quarter-specific instructor roles](#) restricts their impact on campus knowledge production and climate.

When an issue is controversial, as Palestine has long been within the U.S. academy, the burden of representation and teaching cannot be borne by the instructors with the fewest protections and resources. When students and leadership clamor for academic programming, including in response to geopolitical events, units turn to the tenured faculty. But they quickly find that there are exceedingly few of those faculty at Stanford to provide the expertise or programming they need. And because there is a well-established climate of fear, self-censorship, and silence when it comes to discussion of Palestine on campus, few people outside the faculty can speak to the issue with both credibility and security.

The absence of faculty—and subsequent absence of departments or programs—contribute to a self-reinforcing doom loop that leads existing faculty to leave and makes it harder to recruit new faculty. In 2024, Stanford may fail to retain its [only scholar of Palestine](#), who also happens to be Palestinian. The fear and the absence of networks of support makes it harder for scholars to obtain tenure. There are so few scholars of the Arab world at Stanford that people can recall the names of those who left, even decades later. For example, Arabic and Islamic studies scholar [Ahmad Dallal](#) left Stanford in 2003, yet in 2024 people still remember his positive contributions to university discourse on the Arab world in the aftermath of 9/11.

Stanford recruits scholars through its departments and schools. The kind of investment in scholarship and knowledge production that the MAP Committee recommends can only come from the efforts of the current faculty, with the support of their deans, and the involvement of the Office of Development. For this reason, the analyses and recommendations of the faculty take center stage in this section. We consulted extensively with the faculty of the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies and many other units in developing these recommendations. We have talked to 42 members of the Stanford faculty from at least 24 departments and units. They provided much of the content below, often in written submissions to the committee.

Faculty are also concerned that Middle Eastern and North African students do not see their voices represented, and therefore respected, among the faculty. This inhibits students' growth, their future imaginations, and their access to wider networks. The absence of experts in these fields and regions diminishes Stanford's ability to recruit and retain scholars who have many options and demands upon their energies. It also creates network tightness and discriminatory pressure: there are so few faculty in these areas that when Stanford does recruit, the resulting (usually junior) faculty are in demand to an unsustainable extent and this makes it harder for them to devote necessary time to their scholarship and achieve tenure.

Current faculty rightly ask why Palestine and other Middle East experts would want to join a university when they can see that: a) it does not value junior scholars from and of the region; b) it lacks the supporting networks in other disciplines to attract and retain graduate students and other faculty; c) they would be constantly called upon to be “the voice” of the region since there are so few (or no) others with whom to share the podium; and d) they would have few colleagues with whom to share and build community.

Faculty reported an overwhelming sense of professional vulnerability at Stanford, and said that the closer their scholarship gets to the issue of Palestine, the more uncertain their position becomes. They told the committee that if there was ever an argument for the tenure system, they see it now in the ways in which junior and contingent faculty are acutely aware of their precarious position in the university.

Current faculty are also aware of the broader national pattern in which Palestinians and scholars of Palestine are disproportionately unable to secure tenure or face professional discrimination because of their scholarship on Palestine. In the North American higher education discourse, the names of non-Stanford individuals such as [Nadia Abu El Haj](#), [Valentina Azarova](#), and many more reverberate.

“There is a clear sign of disregard on the part of our leadership [that] has greatly increased this community’s experience of vulnerability at Stanford.”--Faculty Member

SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN TENURED FACULTY

Stanford has, over the last two [decades](#), developed significant strength in Islamic Studies. The university now has excellent scholars in anthropology, religious studies, history, literature, the arts, and more who work on Islam, [broadly defined](#). We do not have such [capacity](#) in Arab or Palestinian Studies—capacious fields not limited to those two labels. Stanford has been innovative and flexible in hiring in Islam-related fields, and we have learned lessons that can be applied to hiring in Palestine Studies and Arab Studies. Stanford excels in building teams of tenured and tenure-track faculty working across multiple disciplines and does not need to replicate the structures at peer institutions. Instead, it can lead the way in these fields: our Palestine, Arab, and Middle Eastern Studies programs can be the reason students choose Stanford.

This is an exciting opportunity for Stanford to establish a long-term scholarly legacy in the study of the Arab World and the Middle East. Ten new tenured faculty lines in Palestine Studies, Arab Studies, and other fields of Middle Eastern Studies is the scale of intervention required to address the problems and gaps identified in this report. It would bring us close to parity with our [peer institutions](#). It is what our current faculty told us they want. The search for a postdoctoral fellow in Palestine Studies, approved by President Saller in April 2024, will be a useful opportunity to test the field in one subset of the planned investment.

Hiring postdocs is important, but the only long-term meaningful measure is to hire and commit to retain tenured faculty. This will increase faculty and graduate student representation in these fields, create opportunities to liaise with leadership, and provide guidance and mentorship to junior faculty, postdocs, and other affiliates. These multiplication effects are why Stanford needs to invest at scale: to ensure we can retain and support the scholars we hire. The university will also need to be very careful with any pre-tenure hires we make.

New faculty members doing innovative work in fields without a deep history at Stanford will need to be empowered to expand curricula and graduate student recruitment, research profiles, and viewpoints. This is why we recommend bringing faculty in groups, with a preference for scholars who are already tenured. Done well, this investment will enable Stanford to create new undergraduate majors and coordinated interdisciplinary PhDs in these areas.

The rationale for such scholars is evident in the absence of their voices in the conversations that have dominated the campus since the beginning of this latest and most overwhelming escalation in Gaza. But this is not the first moment in which existing faculty have been called upon to respond, for humanists and social scientists are the first to be asked to help make sense of events that appear to others as opaque. Senior faculty told us that they often find themselves relying on junior or contingent faculty to perform service in these moments, a mode of delegation that is inappropriate with respect to workload and involvement in work that attracts political attention. Senior faculty know that they should not, for example, be asking their untenured colleagues to offer additional teaching on Palestine in 2023-24 (or on race in 2020-21) - but there is no one else to do the work.

NO MORE STALE MODELS

What fields, what search rubrics, should Stanford use across this decade of investment? The university's recent history in Islamic Studies, not to mention in many other new fields of knowledge across all schools of the university, gives us the confidence to recommend innovation. There is no need to replicate the stale models of the past. We need fresh, out-of-the-box perspectives on present and persistent issues that are nevertheless grounded in the sociocultural and historical fabric of the communities under consideration in Palestine and beyond.

The conflict between Palestine and Israel has taken up a great deal of space in Middle Eastern Studies and related fields in recent decades, but Palestine itself has not been the subject of sufficient and rigorous research. Investment in Palestine Studies will therefore have an outsized positive impact on our investments in broader Middle Eastern Studies, and vice versa. These investments will also ride the wave of developments in the field, where both our own faculty and the Stanford University Press "[Middle East Studies](#)" list are leading the way.

“They are not teaching about Palestine in Stanford. That’s not where you’re going to get an education about Palestine. In the classroom? No way.” *Alum*

“Stanford might need to ask the question: what constitutes a legitimate, distinct academic field? Palestine has at least 100 years of unique history that is disambiguated from the Arab region and Arab history. Because there’s more than enough scholarship to be done that needs to be done, and that’s ongoing. As [Edward] Said says, the question of Palestine is not a discrete thing.” *Alum*

The graphic on the next two pages represents how Stanford faculty think about potential investments in these areas, and it shows how “Palestine and Arab Studies” are capacious, flexible, and open-ended areas of knowledge production. These are starting points for departmental conversations; this graphic is a snapshot of multiple Stanford scholars’ thoughts-in-process and not comprehensive, representative, or close to complete. Each label can connect in any direction on the 360 degrees of the other two circles.

These are not narrow areas of scholarship in which we seek to hire, but rather a reflection of the latest cutting-edge trends in Southwest Asia and North Africa studies in the humanities and social sciences. They speak to a region of vast complexity and deep history, diasporas in all corners of the globe, and political, cultural, and social currents that are taking center stage in North America today.

“Palestine and Arab Studies”

WHERE

HOW

WHAT

Africa

Critical Theory
and Anthropology
of Artistic Practice

Christian and Assyrian
communities in the
Middle East

Anthropology,
Political Science,
Religious Studies

Race, Ethnicity, Identity,
Enslavement, Conversion

Kurdistan, its
contestations, and
Kurdish diasporas

Art, Art History,
Architecture, Theater,
Performance,
Film Studies

Shia/Iranian/Persianate
Interactions with Arabic

Structural adjustment
programs and
economic development.

The Sahara, Indian Ocean,
and Mediterranean

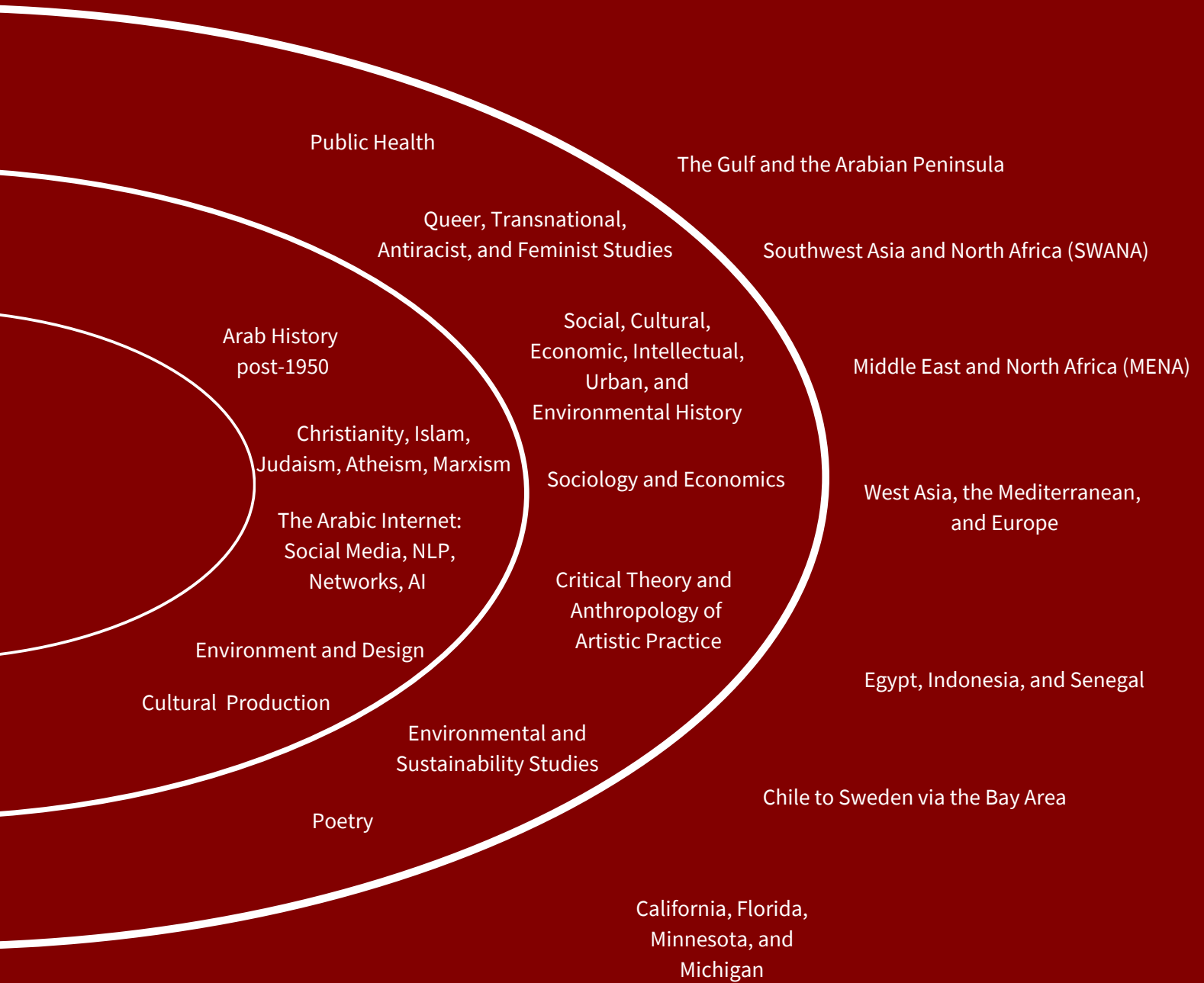
Postcolonial,
Anticolonial,
and Global Studies

Borders and
military-society relations

Palestinian refugees and
communities in the
Arabic-speaking world

Literature and
Culture Studies

Gaza, Egypt,
and North Africa



STRONG UNITS WITH CAPACITY

The committee recommends investment in centers and administrative support commensurate with the investment in faculty. The existing [Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies](#), the [Stanford Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab](#), the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages's (DLCL) Focal Group "[PATH+](#)," and the Middle Eastern Studies Forum in [Stanford Global Studies](#), are natural places to start. As the committee noted in its interim recommendations: "Administrative resources are critically important. They are expensive in the Bay Area context, but in our conversations it has become clear that lean units are ineffective units that lack the capacity to connect with students and empower faculty and staff expertise."

We all appreciate the role of centers, programs, and units in facilitating the kind of ideas and connections that produce high quality scholarship. Some note that the university might consider additional institutional models to capture and amplify the collective energy of the new hires. New structures in Stanford Global Studies (SGS) should come out of a holistic vision for investment with a clear mandate to enhance the study of the contemporary politics, society, and cultures of the region and its diasporas, looking towards models such as [The Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia \(TRI\)](#) at Princeton, or transforming the Middle Eastern Studies Forum into a separately funded center in SGS.

STRONG UNITS THAT CONNECT AND EMPOWER EXISTING EXPERTISE

Tenure is good because it gives scholars the freedom they need to work unconstrained by the political controversies of the moment. At the same time, tenure is bad because it is a hierarchical structure that downplays and constrains the contributions of scholars and experts not on the tenure track. Stanford, and indeed North American academia, is constrained by this antiquated structure. Reform of the system is beyond the scope of the committee, but we recognize that is the context in which we operate and we make our recommendations accordingly.

The best way to ameliorate our inefficiencies and inequalities is with sufficiently resourced units that have the capacity to provide opportunities to all experts employed on campus, regardless of faculty status. This is a different problem, and a different solution, from that addressed in the section above focused on faculty hiring. We are talking here about benefiting from the intellectual contributions of our existing colleagues, rather than just supporting them in their administrative or strictly pedagogical roles. Stanford has made progress in this regard in some units, and both the [Provost's Committee on Lecturers in 2018](#) and the [3rd Committee on the Professoriate in 2020](#) made substantive recommendations in this direction: "Stanford relies on core academic teaching staff for the execution of the teaching mission of the university."

Core academic teaching staff include lecturers, senior lecturers and other non-academic council appointments that may involve a teaching role such as Adjunct Professors at Stanford. Given the importance of this group to our teaching mission, we believe it is important to clarify their roles within the university, as well as identify and implement guidelines for career definition, development, and advancement in this line.”

The benefits of these centralized initiatives have not extended to all scholars and teachers with expertise in MAP areas of study. This is a matter of resources, as well as an issue for leadership decisions. When a unit is already lean and attempting to cover a great deal, there is no space for development and advancement. This wastes our existing resources and contributes to the problems identified in this report.

Almost all the faculty the committee spoke with highlighted the need to support existing faculty and staff working in the areas of Palestine and Arab studies, especially untenured affiliates, who make up the vast majority. These members are not only structurally vulnerable in American academic institutions, in general, but have also suffered greatly in the past year while providing elevated levels of pastoral care for students, organizing and hosting additional events, and modifying their courses. Palestinian language teachers, who are full-time faculty and scholars with decades of experience at Stanford, went into class on October 9 to teach Arabic to students of all backgrounds and did so with success. They did the critical work of the university under pressure, but they lack sabbaticals, research support, and sufficient opportunities for promotion—all factors that prevent them from realizing their potential contributing to campus discourse. Faculty also noted with appreciation the Abbasi Program staff’s increased work on Palestine-related programming, despite very limited capacity. We suggest practical investment in these colleagues’ career development and research opportunities, as well as substantive remunerative responses to the extra work these colleagues had to do in a time of crisis.

“The work of untenured language instructors, who make up the majority of our Palestinian faculty at present, should be highlighted in particular. Their increased labor supporting students and their tireless work throughout the genocide should be recognized and rewarded.” - Faculty

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING STRUCTURES

Over the last several years, Stanford has developed the [COLLEGE program](#), which is compulsory for the majority of frosh. Its spring [Global Quarter](#) has the potential to be a space where—contingent on the investment in tenured faculty recommended above—we teach undergraduates how to deal with conversations about Palestine, the Arab world, the “War on Terror” with which our students have grown up, and the controversies about the postcolonial that continue to roil the Anglosphere.

It should also be anticipated that the investments that the committee is recommending would help staff the “Why College? Your Education and the Good Life” and “Citizenship in the 21st Century” COLLEGE courses in fall and winter. The stakes are high in these courses, and questions of political identity are at stake for our youngest students. They deserve additional empowered and secure faculty with diverse experiences.

COLLEGE lecturer Ameer Loggins’ [suspension](#) from Stanford after initial accusations of “identity-based targeting” shows the human cost at stake in these teaching structures and curricula. In addition to being suspended, Loggins received a barrage of racist messages and death threats after the media reported that he had singled out Jewish students in his classroom on October 11, 2023. Loggins’ [lawsuit](#) alleging defamation and discrimination presented a very different account of his classroom teaching that day. It also referenced a March 2024 letter from Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education Lanier Anderson reporting that Stanford’s neutral investigation into Loggins’ teaching showed that, while he made “unwise” pedagogical choices that indeed upset some students, “the evidence did not support a finding that [Loggins] intentionally or objectively discriminated against any of the students.” Not only does the incident reveal the high stakes for Loggins, whose contract at Stanford was not renewed and whose reputation remained sullied despite being cleared of the discrimination allegation, but it also underscores the inherent tension in designing an undergraduate teaching program that addresses critical identity and political questions with a staff of many unprotected lecturers.

While structures like COLLEGE are crucial for undergraduate education, it is equally important that the university supports students taking responsibility for teaching and learning—even and especially when they press the faculty to expand the conversation. The Committee shares the view recently articulated by the president and provost in a [message](#) to students: “The true work of the university is the search for knowledge, which involves engaging deeply with those who disagree, grappling with complexity and nuance, and searching for answers together.”

But when universities recruit a student body with diverse experiences and beliefs, especially during a period of generational shifts in politics, there will be a tension between the choices that leadership makes to curate certain debates and the choices students make when they seek to have the debates they want. Undergraduate education is at the core of Stanford’s mission, but it does not just consist of the curated curriculum and conversations that faculty provide. It also happens among students themselves.

In the current political moment in North America, the People’s University for Palestine encampment created in April 2024 in White Plaza and in coordination with peers across North America, represents important voices that contribute to campus discourse. It is led by undergraduates and has been at risk of being silenced by the university.

The time, place, and manner restrictions on speech will nearly always silence specific groups with specific beliefs and ideas: by definition the ideas outside the classroom will be those not permitted in the classroom. A university—especially a campus university—has to be able to listen to excluded voices and bring them into the conversation.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Stanford students developed [Stanford Workshops on Political and Social Issues \(SWOPSI\)](#) “to study issues of local and national concern directly.” At the time, the tough topics dividing the nation included feminism, Marxism, and homosexuality. Almost all SWOPSI courses were offered for full academic credit. They were a gesture in favor of knowledge production parallel to the People’s University created this spring by Stanford students. The difference is that whereas in 1969, the university recognized the intellectual initiative of their students, in 2024, under substantial outside pressure, the university responded to the People’s University of Palestine with disciplinary proceedings. The police were not brought in to remove the students’ encampment, but the decision to initiate OCS proceedings against 15-20 students with varying degrees of involvement in the encampment had a chilling effect on knowledge production—quite the opposite of SWOPSI in 1969.

The committee recommends that the university take the events of 2023-24—what one senior faculty member described as the “defining moment of this generation”—as a test for the university’s work in undergraduate teaching, and particularly those aspects of undergraduate curricular programming that are required for all students. A required core curriculum is a great thing, and a weighty responsibility. If it cannot cope with international tragedy and national turmoil, it has failed.

CONNECT AND COLLABORATE INTERNATIONALLY —WITH PALESTINIAN SCHOLARS

The committee heard strong support for programs that allow Stanford faculty and units to connect with students, colleagues, and universities at risk, particularly in Palestine. Many of the faculty and students to whom we spoke felt uneasy about advocating for increased investment in MAP communities at Stanford when colleagues and students at universities in Palestine are suffering [ongoing scholasticide](#). This is a reason to invest in exchange and collaboration with scholars at universities in Palestine through residency/rescue programs such as [Stanford’s Scholar Rescue Fund](#).

Given the particular challenges Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim immigrants and visitors face due to discrimination in the U.S. immigration system, Stanford should ensure staff are resourced—including with legal expertise—to assist international scholars to navigate those challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim to make Palestine and Arab Studies the reason students and faculty choose to come to Stanford.

- Make substantial investment in tenured faculty at a scale equivalent to 10 new lines over a decade.
- Run a series of at least three well-resourced searches across three years, starting with Palestine Studies in 2025-26. Each search should guarantee a minimum of two campus visits for each participating department. Include target-of-opportunity hires and offer departments the chance to run single-department searches.
- Invest in administrative support, centers, and units commensurate with the investment in faculty. Develop a holistic vision for a Center in Stanford Global Studies with a clear mandate to enhance the study of the contemporary politics, society, and cultures of the region and its diasporas.

Support existing untenured faculty and staff working in the areas of Palestine and Arab studies.

- Empower and invest in the untenured language instructors who make up the majority of our Palestinian faculty.
- Provide increased vacation time, relevant benefits or pay raises, research support, and/or course releases in appreciation of the additional work done by relevant staff and untenured faculty on Palestine-related programming in 2023-24.

Connect and collaborate with Palestinian institutions of higher learning.

- Invest in a pilot program to bring three faculty members or graduate students from Palestinian universities to Stanford for a period of several months each year, along the lines of the Stanford Humanities Center Fellowship for International Visitors, but open across the humanities and social sciences.
- Draw the initial cohort from the universities that remain operational in the West Bank, and then open up the program to scholars and students from institutions serving Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria, universities in Gaza, and Palestinian scholars inside Israel.
- Endow this program and make it permanent, alongside permanent status for the Palestine Studies Postdoctoral Scholarship approved by President Saller in 2024, which currently has a six-year lifetime.

“When I was looking to study Arabic, I never thought of Stanford to be honest.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“You have to build these structures and fora during the relatively peaceful times. You can’t build anything when @#!% hits the fan. When @#!% hits the fan, people just revert to tribalism. It’s a sociological instinct. That’s not the time to build bridges. When @#!% hits the fan, everyone goes to their tents, literally. When things are relatively peaceful, that’s when you have to build these institutional things, you have to create these structures. It can’t just be a quick response to a conflict. You have to build these institutions, these fora for dialogues in the classroom or outside, you have to set it up and have it running for YEARS so when @#!% hits the fan, you have this institution you’ve already built that’s already there.”

Postdoc and Graduate Alum

“There’s definitely under-representation in faculty. [...] Lack of representation just means you don’t have these people who think a certain way, who have these experiences. This is important for DEI—representation is the biggest thing. When you have more representation you get less extreme views, more from the middle. Particularly in faculty.” **MAP Alum**

“I don’t even know what it looks like to be supported. I’m so used to having to go through these things alone—that has become my benchmark. I don’t know what that feels like. We were also taught not to expect it. Let me make sure others are not uncomfortable because I’m Palestinian.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“The academic support we get is very individualized and very request based. The academic support Israeli students get is institutionalized and identity-based. It’s not for us.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“But if you never experience support, you don’t know you’re lacking it. It felt like my problem and it was for me to deal with it and keep going.”
MAP Undergraduate

“I think it’s a really undignified thing to be begging for care from an administration who is supposed to be taking care of you and tout themselves as having these unique resources ‘just for medical students.’ Everything was from the student side, us taking care of each other.” **MAP Student**

Representation and Structural Support

In numerous conversations the MAP committee has had, the lack of Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian faculty, staff, and students across Stanford emerges as a core problem. The void is palpable: insufficient or nonexistent course offerings, a dearth of visible thought leaders and advocates with intellectual authority and standing, a smaller number of events being offered around MAP issues, too much pressure on too few people to educate and support the campus community, and perpetual collapsing/conflation of MAP identities. This may take the form of conflating Arab and Palestinian identities—which are diverse and not all “religious”—with Muslim identity, thereby making Christian and other identities invisible. It can also take the form of referencing Palestinian identity as simply “Arab” in a way that erases Palestinians’ national identity and the distinct forms of targeting they experience.

In this section, we highlight faculty, staff, and student representation at Stanford, as well as existing institutional structures at Stanford and how they support MAP communities, and follow that with our recommendations on strengthening representation and improving structures.

FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

“Most of the previous conversations have been on an identity that we already collect numbers on. We don’t have counts of representation here; this is new uncharted territory.” –Staff Member

A glaring issue with understanding MAP representation is the lack of demographic data on these communities. With the exception of self-reporting by students or faculty in some IDEAL surveys, the university has not collected actual numbers on MAP and MAP-adjacent identities. Many of these identities are subsumed within other categories (such as “White” or “Asian”). Some exit surveys of PhD, masters, and undergraduate students have recently had a “Middle East/North African” (MENA) category added, though publicly available demographic data does not yet reflect this category. (We note that the MENA and MAP categories are not identical; the MENA category includes people from the Middle East and North Africa who do not identify as Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian, and the MAP category includes people from regions outside the Middle East and North Africa.) We hope to be involved in further strengthening such survey efforts as well as extending them to publicly available entry surveys of matriculated students.

Faculty

In 2016, the student group Who’s Teaching Us presented their [list of demands](#) to the university. [Their substantive complaint](#) was that Stanford’s faculty, at 70% white and 70% male, was not able to deliver a sufficient quality of education to a student body that was substantially more diverse. In an [IDEAL survey](#) in 2021, 23 faculty out of 869 who completed the survey [self-identified](#) as Middle Eastern or North African, whether or not in combination with other racial or ethnic categories. In 2024, Stanford may fail to retain its only [scholar of Palestine](#), who is also Palestinian.

Despite the genuine commitment of university leadership to redressing the imbalance through the IDEAL initiative, the Stanford Academic Council faculty remains in pretty much the same place as it was in 2016: 68% male and 64% white [according to the IDEAL dashboard](#). Faculty diversity has not substantially increased despite the existence of initiatives like the Faculty Incentive Fund, which “helps make it possible for departments and schools to make incremental appointments of qualified individuals who would bring diversity to the faculty.”

Staff

In [2021](#), 193 staff out of 7,972 who completed the IDEAL [survey](#) self-reported identification with the MENA category, whether alone or in combination with other racial or ethnic identities.

Anecdotally and through our listening sessions, it is clear that there are MAP staff scattered across the university in various units with considerable experience, expertise, and investment in the institution. It is also clear that MAP staff are somewhat under-represented in senior positions. To begin to remedy this, Stanford can do a better job of tracking this data by including identity categories such as MENA, with opportunities for more granular reporting so that staff can self-identify through IDEAL or similar future surveys.

Stanford should also continue to recruit diverse pools of applicants for staff positions and dismantle traditional barriers to racial, ethnic, and religious diversification in hiring processes. Most importantly, Stanford can leverage the expertise and representation we do have, especially in moments of crises that directly impact relevant communities.

To some extent, Stanford has done this by setting up the MAP Committee, and we address the [merits and challenges of that structure below](#). But throughout this crisis, the committee has observed that staff representation from MAP communities is often negligible in the conversations that matter. For instance, President Saller [noted](#) in his remarks to the Academic Council on May 9, 2024: “A team from the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Affairs, the Office for Religious and Spiritual Life, the Department of Public Safety, the Office of General Counsel, and Building 10 have met daily, morning and night, including weekends, to monitor the situation and to discuss the best approach to avoid violence and to minimize disruption.” To the best of our knowledge, no staff representing MAP communities or with expertise in MAP issues have been invited to participate in these meetings—despite the MAP communities being at the center of the “situation” being monitored. While it may not be possible to represent all communities in decision making in acute moments of crisis, diversifying the perspectives in the room can improve decisions and reduce distrust between communities and leadership.

Students

Incoming undergraduates are asked about ethnicity each year, but as recently as [the survey of the Class of 2027](#), there was no MENA or related option. The 2021 IDEAL [survey](#) reports 75 undergraduates and 127 graduate students who self-identify as MENA alone or in combination.

Undergraduate Admissions Office staff told the committee that they “don’t see a lot of Palestinian kids” and would “be curious to learn from the Markaz” about student demographics and who is being served, which only affirms the need for better data and longitudinal tracking. Recent federal guidance, in revised [OMB Statistical Policy Directive 15 \(SPD 15\)](#), updates federal standards to include Middle Eastern or North African as a new minimum category to collect information on race and ethnicity. While universities take steps to comply with this latest SPD 15 revision, they can implement many of its changes more rapidly for internal surveying purposes.

EXISTING STANFORD STRUCTURES FOR MAP COMMUNITIES

Stanford has established some institutional structures and staffing positions that support MAP communities on campus and have proved to be critical especially in this moment. In the absence of these structures, the committee believes the MAP experience would have been much worse. Many students especially noted the importance of places like the Markaz for providing a safe space and resources, or initiatives like the Abbasi Program for attempting to fill the academic gap on discourse about Palestine.

Even so, these structures and their resources continue to be exhausted both in financial and staffing capacity. The committee describes each one below and follows with recommendations on how Stanford can strengthen these structures so they can deploy resources, leverage networks, and provide robust and reliable support especially in times of crises.

The Sohaib and Sara Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies

In 2003, the [Sohaib and Sara Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies](#) was endowed and established as the central hub at Stanford University for the study of Islam and Islamicate societies and communities. The Abbasi Program's successes in developing Islamic Studies are discussed in the preceding chapter.

The Markaz Resource Center

In 2013, the [Markaz Resource Center](#) was established after years of advocacy by students, staff, and faculty. The center supports Muslim and Muslim-adjacent students: that is, those who identify as Muslim on a diverse and broad spectrum, or those who are Muslim-adjacent in the sense that they come from cultural, social, familial, political, regional, ethnic, or national contexts tied to Islam and Muslim communities. The center also supports students who are not Muslim but interested in a wide variety of issues related to these communities.

Although "Muslim" is an umbrella term used here to capture a diverse set of identities, it must be noted that ethnic or national identities such as Arab and Palestinian cannot be subsumed under the label "Muslim." (The same principle applies for other groups, like Turks, Iranians, or North Africans.) Making these distinctions is critical, because 1) not everyone with these ethnic or national identities is Muslim (Palestinian Christians are only the most obvious example, even setting aside Palestine's storied history of atheist and Marxist political movements); 2) racism and bias against people from these communities isn't always rooted in Islamophobia but sometimes in ethnic hatred such as anti-Arab or anti-Palestinian bias; and 3) especially relevant to this moment, the issue of Palestine is not a "Muslim" versus "Jewish" issue although it is often framed as such.

The Markaz, thus, has supported and continues to support a wide range of identities across the years and at no time has it been clearer than in a post-October 2023 Stanford, when students with diverse and intersecting identities involved in pro-Palestine advocacy have found safety and community at the center.

The Markaz began on a pilot basis in the 2013-14 academic year, followed by fixed-term Director and Associate Director positions and an annually renewable operating budget for almost a decade. It is only as recently as March 2022 that Stanford granted the Markaz permanent base funding, and as recently as March 2023 that the university made permanent the Director and Associate Director positions. A new Assistant Director position was approved in December 2023 as a two-year fixed position after the MAP committee was formed and the current Markaz Director began serving as co-chair. The Program Coordinator position—funded by The Stanford Fund (TSF) allocation provided to the Centers for Equity, Community, and Leadership (CECL) for five years—began in August 2023 and ends in August 2025.

Despite its uncertain status through much of its history, the [center has built stellar programs](#) within the decade in the areas of mental health and wellness, culture and arts, social and community building, alumni engagement and mentorship, and academic fellowships. In particular, [partnerships with academic units](#) such as the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, the Center for South Asia, and the Center for Comparative Studies in Race & Ethnicity (CCSRE) have been pivotal in providing MAP students opportunities to explore academically disciplines, issues, and regions that matter to them and that they would otherwise be unable to explore because of the lack of academic offerings. For example, in the absence of any established institutional pathway for students to specifically research or explore Palestine, the CCSRE-Markaz Palestine Fellowship, set up in spring 2023 and launched in fall 2023, is the first (and so far the only) institutional opportunity focused solely on Palestine. The value of this very modest fellowship being in place already before October 2023 cannot be overstated.

In our listening sessions, students, staff, and faculty repeatedly emphasized the significance of the Markaz especially in the current political and campus moment. In the early aftermath of October 2023, Markaz professional staff mobilized to support not only students but also staff, faculty, and alumni who became engaged in campus events. The Markaz absorbed everything: supporting students who were doxxed, threatened, or harmed; connecting those directly impacted by the war in Gaza with relevant campus administrators and resources; helping students with event organizing in a climate of fear; brokering meetings with student activists and the administration; advising faculty, staff, and alumni on how to support students. As of this writing, this work continues at an unrelenting pace, in addition to regular Markaz programming, which is also critical for student community and belonging.

“The Markaz Center for me has been a great place of coping and safety and I remember in the initial weeks of all of this people coming there and being very defeated. People sleeping there. You could sense tension. You could sense people felt sad and safe in that space but that it didn’t extend to other space.” MAP Undergraduate Student

“One fond memory that I’ve been talking a lot about as my time at Stanford winds down, I lived in FloMo which was super close to the Markaz. My friends would always ask where are you always going. “The Markaz.” One day my friends said, “It’s so nice that you have somewhere you can go to so frequently.” MAP Undergraduate Student

“I guess the Markaz is the closest thing to the university providing us a sense of safety and a sense of trust which is really important and I appreciate that.” MAP Undergraduate Student

Stanford has made some investments in the Markaz that have been generative. MAP students, staff, faculty, and allies continue to express appreciation for this. At the same time, this moment has underscored constraints around human resources, longevity, strategic planning, and space. In order for the Markaz to be a strong and reliable structure at Stanford with campus-wide impact, the university can do more to solidify its permanency and potential, especially as MAP communities grow on campus.

Stanford Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab (SMMHIPL)

In 2014, Dr. Rania Awaad, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the School of Medicine, established the [Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab \(SMMHIPL\)](#). The lab is the first and only one of its kind and “serves as an academic home for the study of mental health and psychology in the context of the Islamic faith and Muslim populations. The Lab aims to provide intellectual resources to clinicians, researchers, trainees, educators, community, and religious leaders working with or studying Muslims.” Additionally, the lab serves as a pillar of Muslim life at Stanford as it exemplifies an organization with a track record of meaningful and impactful research that affects Muslim communities around the world.

In the last decade, research from the SMMHIPL has resulted in numerous publications and awards, as it tackles a range of critical and diverse healthcare and related issues facing Muslim communities across the United States and the world. The lab’s work ranges from Islamically grounded and culturally appropriate suicide prevention and response trainings to research on taboo topics like substance abuse and addiction.

The SMMHIPL has also helped curate and conduct critical trainings about Islam, Muslim mental health, and Islamophobia for institutions and their leadership and staff across the country, including at Stanford.

The SMMHIPL has also helped advance mental health services for Muslim students at Stanford. [Research conducted](#) by two of the lab's students, under Dr. Awaad's guidance and advocacy, led to the establishment of the [Muslim Mental Health Initiative](#) (MMHI) at Stanford in partnership with [Maristan](#). This partnership was approved in spring 2022 for a pilot year and allowed renewed funding for one more year in fall 2023. That this initiative was already in place before October 2023 allowed students in both acute and chronic crises during this time to access critical 1:1 therapy services and attend bi-weekly support groups. MMHI funding, however, continues to be uncertain, which makes it difficult to plan for services for subsequent years.

Advisor for Muslim Life

In 2017, the [Office for Religious and Spiritual Life](#) (ORSL) established an Associate Dean for Religious Life and Advisor for Muslim Life full-time position. This position is understood by students to serve functionally as the "Muslim chaplain" role more commonly found at other institutions, which typically centers pastoral care for students. At Stanford, religious life is structured differently than at other campuses. Here ORSL tends to the religious and spiritual needs of the campus in non-sectarian ways as outlined in Stanford's founding grant and charter, a document that reinforces Christian hegemony and establishes a Protestant secular ethos for the university.

While ORSL staff come from diverse religious backgrounds, the role of a religious advisor is often fulfilled by Stanford Associated Religion (SAR) advisors, who are religious professionals that work with Volunteer Student Organizations (VSOs). Some VSOs have professional staff and off-campus organizations that support them. Outside of University Public Worship, ORSL does not provide any religious services for students. Rather, it facilitates the SAR groups in managing that. Institutionally, that means ORSL relies on outside organizations to provide for the particular religious needs of diverse groups.

Most Protestant SARs, along with the Catholic and Jewish SARs, have religious staff that play this role of chaplain for their communities. However, the Muslim Student Union (MSU) is entirely student-led and run and does not have an outside sponsoring agency like the Catholic Diocese or Hillel that provides religious professionals to guide student religious life.

In the last two years, the current Associate Dean for Religious Life and Advisor for Muslim Life has successfully served in the ORSL role as structured at Stanford, while also offering consistent study circles and pastoral care to students on top of the formal expectations for the role.

In addition, this Associate Dean ends up serving as a de facto advisor to the MSU and collaborates extensively on securing space for weekly Friday prayers, planning month-long Ramadan programming (such as nightly iftars and prayers), as well as Eid prayer and festivals twice a year. As the community has grown, finding space and resources to accommodate these needs has become challenging. Friday prayer attendees average 250 per week during the academic year and 150 per week during the summer depending on summer programming.

Moreover, there is a large global Muslim community on campus resulting in tremendous intra-Muslim diversity and a range of ideological and identity-related issues that require pastoral care. As global and national crises continue to have local impact on a growing Muslim community at Stanford, the need for consistent and reliable pastoral care is even more evident. Finally, in terms of Muslim life at Stanford, the university in general has made considerable progress in accounting for religious needs of students, from various prayer spaces to dietary needs to religious celebrations. There is still a need, however, to standardize some of these accommodations across campus.

MAP Committee

In 2023, as a result of increased harm incidents due to anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab bias and Islamophobia, Stanford [established](#) this committee to provide recommendations on improving the experience of MAP contingents at Stanford and on education around these communities and related issues. The committee formation and member recruiting process was an early preview and affirmation of the fact that MAP representation at Stanford is lacking and that working on issues related to Palestine continues to be risky on both personal and professional levels.

The committee is currently composed of six official members and four student consultants and researchers. Since its formation, the committee has completed an [interim report](#) and this final report to evaluate MAP community needs and offer recommendations, in keeping with its primary mandate, while also performing a significant secondary role in triaging frequent crises and responding to institutional communications or decision-making vis-a-vis MAP communities.

Moreover, the MAP Committee itself represents expertise and experience among the faculty and staff not only concerning Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities but also on other issues pertaining to Stanford specifically and higher education broadly. That Stanford has created and regularly confers with this committee is a step in the right direction for the institution.

However, the serious underrepresentation of MAP community members in other important decision making channels persists. Committees and fora on significant university issues, like the Ad Hoc Committee on University Speech,

PIH reform committee, and the Vice Provost for Student Affairs search committee continue to lack MAP representation. The one entity which has actual representation of MAP communities is the MAP Committee itself. This means that when relevant university committees interact on matters of shared concern such as free speech or antisemitism or residential education, MAP community members are only able to engage from inside an identity-specific box—not as scholars or members of the university community. Committee members have to advocate for the communities we are tasked to represent because no one else is doing it. At the same time, membership on this identity-centered committee and the tremendous work it entails limits participation of these committee members in the broader work of the university. The answer cannot be to ask the same handful of people representing MAP communities or perspectives to serve on every committee; it is to expand representation as a whole so that diversity is organically present across institutional structures.

Other Stanford Units

It is critical that Stanford invest more in existing structures that serve MAP communities specifically, but it is also essential that students, staff, and faculty from MAP communities are embedded in the broader institution and its substructures, including (but not limited to) the Centers for Equity, Community, and Leadership (CECL), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), ResX, Career Services, and the Bechtel International Center.

Centers for Equity, Community, and Leadership (CECL)

Many MAP students have intersecting identities and have found community and safety at the community centers, known as [CECL](#), a collective of cultural, community, and resource centers at Stanford, which includes the Markaz. Additionally, pro-Palestinian advocacy on campus—from campus teach-ins to the sit-in—has motivated students of diverse backgrounds and identities, often those who do not identify with any of the MAP identities, and who also find themselves represented and supported at CECL.

During our listening sessions, students, staff, and faculty noted the value of CECL as a form of structural support, while also pointing out that CECL's expression and speech was surveilled in ways that hindered that very support. As one CECL member noted, "Nobody should be silenced. I would like Stanford to really think about what their original mission was versus what it is today and what that means. For a space to come out and say with their full chest in 2020, "Black Lives Matter!" but for them to do their best to silence folks now with issues going on with Palestine and genocide, it doesn't make sense, and it feels like it's in contradiction of each other. Why is it ok to stand up for Black folks in America but not for Palestinians and Palestinian Americans?"

The institution-wide silence on Palestine across the board is felt deeply by students, but the silence from CECL is especially palpable, not least because of the centers' social justice mission and their structural positionality to support the students involved in advocacy, but also because a comparison is often made between the community centers and Hillel or between the Markaz and Hillel.

There is a widespread misperception among MAP communities and other campus communities that Hillel is a Stanford unit and therefore bound by the same set of policies and oversight that other units—such as CECL—would be. This misperception is a result of many factors: [Hillel at Stanford](#) is located centrally on campus and functions similarly as a community/resource center. More importantly, Stanford presents Hillel as parallel to the Markaz in [official communications](#), and [refers to it as a Stanford resource](#) in communications with external audiences. In reality, Hillel is not a Stanford entity, nor is it part of the CECL or VPSA or ORSL structures, and therefore does not report to the President's or Provost's Offices.

However, because of aforementioned factors, MAP communities, MAP allies advocating for Palestine, and indeed all Stanford communities experience Hillel in the same way as they do other community centers, and the idea that Hillel is a Stanford unit persists. This perception has become especially salient at this moment in time on the issue of permissible speech. For example, staff at the Black Community Services Center were notified of heightened surveillance after supporting their students' pro-Palestine speech, and the Markaz and other centers were discouraged from similar communications. At the same time, Hillel shared [definitive political positions](#) and issued calls for political action, and Chabad, another non-Stanford entity, funded student advocacy through the Blue and White Tent. When juxtaposed with CECL speech surveillance and the prohibition of units' [support for the sit-in](#), many community members perceived these differences as asymmetric and inequitable. In this critical moment, when MAP communities and allies already feel unsupported in the university at large, CECL is a structure they have looked to for support. However, limitations on CECL and the perception that different standards are applied to Hillel has both undermined CECL's potential and led to further institutional distrust among MAP communities and allies.

We defer to the recommendation made by the [Task Force on Jewish Admissions](#) that “the university clarify its relationship with Hillel.” On CECL, however, we note unequivocally that heightened surveillance and restrictions on what the centers can say on Palestine have impeded their ability to fully support the student communities they are meant to serve. We also note that such restrictions are likely to have a chilling effect down the road on other issues in which CECL and its communities have even deeper stakes.

ANTI-ZIONIST JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND ANTISEMITISM

While our focus in this chapter is MAP faculty, staff, and students, we are choosing to briefly discuss anti-Zionist Jewish communities at Stanford, because so many faculty, students, and alumni who identified as such opted to participate in listening sessions with us. Antisemitism and the Jewish community at Stanford are not part of the charge of our committee. Nevertheless, in this particular context and moment, both have become part of our work.

Our vision of Stanford is one in which all Jewish students and community members thrive just as MAP students and community members thrive. We recognize that antisemitism is a problem at Stanford and always has been, from the Protestant founding of the university, to antisemitic admissions policies in the 1950s and decades of subsequent willful denial, to contemporary incidents detailed in the work of the Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias subcommittee and its reports. When Jewish students report not feeling safe on campus, or express that they cannot be their authentic selves in their classrooms or dorm rooms, we have all failed. All Jewish students deserve to thrive, supported by a range of diverse community institutions with variant political positions—all of which are equally part of our university community.

During MAP Committee listening sessions, anti-Zionist Jewish students told us they participated in the pro-Palestinian sit-in, rallies, and the encampment, and felt connected with MAP members across campus. These are some of the comments we heard:

“Every time I hear ‘Jews don’t feel safe in XYZ climate, usually pro-Palestinian climate’ I think of all the Jews wearing kippahs at these pro-Palestinian rallies who are running security. They are visible in their Judaism and are fundamental to the pro-Palestinian movement. Somebody reconcile that for me.” *Alum*

“There is a significant group of Jewish students here [at the sit-in], and this is the first Jewish community in which I have felt welcomed at Stanford.” *Jewish Student*

“My Judaism is very personal to me; I don’t make a point of looking out for anti-Zionist Jewish faculty. I identify more with Palestinian lecturers, there is a cultural affinity.” *Faculty*

We also heard from these community members a need for specific structural support from Stanford. As one student said, “I am Jewish, but [existing spaces on campus] alienate you the moment you criticize Israeli crimes.” They also specifically noted needs around mental health, and even faculty expressed a fear of being doxxed for supporting the pro-Palestinian cause: “I do fear. I don’t want to be doxxed. I don’t want to be attacked unfairly. We’re all just living in this fear.”

Staff from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) affirmed this need, noting that several anti-Zionist Jewish students were conveying a lack of belonging. Many Jewish students came to the Muslim Mental Health Initiative (MMHI) support groups that the Markaz organized, but the question of structural and community support for these students remains outstanding.

Inevitably, we also heard from them the importance of disaggregating antisemitism and anti-Zionism, a position critical to their pro-Palestinian advocacy and their divergence from other Jewish or pro-Israeli voices. As one alum said, “I think we have to be very careful and slow in untangling the discursive components in the way that antisemitism is claimed and deployed by a political movement.”

We support these community members’ conceptual separation between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and we understand that the Jewish community, like the MAP community, is not a monolith. We also think that the identification of “good Jews” is an antisemitic trope, and we believe our recommendations on speech, safety, and academic programming will serve Jewish members of the Stanford community as much as they serve anyone else.

CAPS

Over the last year, many MAP students have relied primarily on the Muslim Mental Health Initiative (MMHI) services, noted above, for mental health support. However, some MAP and non-MAP students affected by the crisis and campus climate, and disillusioned with the university and their departments, have also opted for therapy sessions through CAPS.

CAPS staff told us that students questioned the very utility of therapy at this time. Students are asking, “What even is therapy except a bandaid for an hour while the university and its structure/systems gaslight me and ignore reality?”

A faculty member made a similar comment about their mental health needs: “The root cause was also systemic and structural racism and discrimination. My therapist has offered to provide me with a recommendation for medical leave after years of telling me that Stanford is the problem, not me ... This is a place that doesn’t believe or respect people like me.”

According to CAPS staff, this lack of institutional trust has extended to CAPS, and many students have also been hesitant to avail these services, which has adversely impacted mental health. “This isn’t an identity issue, it’s a humanitarian issue, and we haven’t even gotten to processing the trauma and grief.” Some CAPS staff have built trust by attending the MMHI support groups and, more recently, holding their own.

ResX

In the dorms, MAP students report that when in distress, their Residential Assistants (RAs) are the first point of contact. In some instances, students have found their RAs to be responsive and helpful in directing them to appropriate resources. In other instances, students report being fearful of communicating with their RAs due to the general silence on Palestine and/or specific real or perceived political misalignment. And when MAP community members are themselves RAs, they have found themselves caught between being genuine and their fear of being punished, with one noting that she tried to keep her activism separate from her role in the dorm and said, “I felt very othered in a position where I was supposed to help people not feel othered and it’s hard to do that. I felt it was unclear what could get me fired. As I look back I realize what lengths I went to to dehumanize parts of my identity because I didn’t want to get fired.”

In general, students report silence on Palestine among students, RAs, and Resident Fellows (RFs): “There is a level of disconnection between RFs and what campus climate is actually like.” They also report being asked to remove expressions of pro-Palestinian support from their doors, or worse, being discriminated against because of those displays.

The committee contends that dorms are shared residences where all students should feel welcomed and safe. As we note in the Freedom of Speech chapter, any policies on the circumstances in which students can hang flags, banners, or flyers on their doors, other individual spaces, or in common/shared areas should be enforced neutrally and not only with respect to expressions of pro-Palestinian support. From our conversations with ResX staff, we feel the problem is twofold: 1) students, including RAs, are unclear about policies in the residences around speech and expression, often because they are complicated; and 2) the policies that do exist are applied inconsistently.

ResX staff affirmed that congressional scrutiny, shifting national policies, and public attention are prompting a reassessment of residential policies. While reassessment is welcome, we believe that any changes to these policies should take into consideration the experiences and grievances of MAP students, and that implementation of any new residential education programs—such as the [ePluribus Project](#)—should proceed only after a serious interrogation of the framing of these initiatives.

“For the main part, coping has not come from the dorm community but from outside communities that support Palestine. Sometimes I’d fantasize that my dorm had Arab students in it so that I could have something to talk about; so that I could say ‘Hey guys stuff is happening and we need to support such and such person. We need to keep this person in mind.’ I remember hearing about a resident in another dorm who had a bunch of Palestine stuff up in their room getting their door lock glued [and] jammed so they couldn’t get in. I would prefer to be in a dorm with people who are politically engaged even if I don’t agree than with people who are completely silent and pretending as if things aren’t happening. At least I wouldn’t feel crazy.” MAP Undergraduate

Career Services

Students told the committee that they fear that employers will not hire them because they have advocated for Palestinian rights through campus activities or on social media—or even because of their mere identity as members of Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian communities. These fears pre-date October 2023. As mentioned in the Doxxing section, several years ago Stanford graduate Emily Wilder, who had been a [member](#) of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) while at Stanford, was [fired](#) from her job as a reporter with the Associated Press after the Stanford College Republicans launched an online campaign against her for her pro-Palestine tweets.

This year, students at Stanford Law School report being warned by law firm partners not to issue statements on the conflict between Palestine and Israel because it would threaten their careers. A Palestinian student on campus reported hiding any reference to her identity in her application materials, for fear of discrimination.

PhD students told us they were advised by faculty not to work on Palestine, because of challenges they would face landing academic positions with that profile. A faculty member told us, “Two students who attended my Ottoman Palestine colloquium expressed that their peers were taken aback by their choice of class. They mentioned concerns about potential repercussions on their transcripts, particularly regarding the inclusion of “Palestine’ in the course title and its perceived impact on their job prospects. One of them even remarked, ‘How will you secure a job in Silicon Valley with that on your record?’”

These fears are not unjustified. Numerous [reports](#) of employment sanctions against students and employees based on their pro-Palestine speech have already surfaced around the country. In one recent [example](#), a New York hedge fund reportedly told a Palestinian student at the University of Chicago that he would not receive a job offer because of “symbols” he displayed on social media, which he suspected was a Palestinian flag he included in his Instagram profile. Law firms have recently undertaken unprecedented steps to vet students for their campus activism. For instance, the law firm Sullivan & Cromwell [announced](#) that it will conduct background checks on applicants, including asking them to list all student organizations they participated in, reviewing these campus activities, and investigating the students’ social media posts. Given how often criticism of Israel is [conflated](#) with antisemitism, these efforts purportedly aimed at hate speech can easily become inquisitions into students’ human rights activism and peaceful advocacy—and even cross the line into outright discrimination when students’ actual or perceived identities trigger heightened scrutiny.

In our [interim report](#), the committee made two relevant recommendations on this issue:

- Organize a convening of all campus career services offices to address these concerns around discrimination
- Send a reminder to employers participating in campus programs about their non-discrimination obligations under federal and state law, including certain state legal protections for employees’ political speech

In spring 2024, the MAP committee met with Stanford career services offices, which expressed a willingness to address these concerns. As we shared with them, although there is no blanket federal protection for employee political speech, under anti-discrimination law, employers cannot respond to speech or protests differently based on the race, national origin, or religion of the speaker, or in a way that reflects an invidious stereotype. Moreover, state law in California, among other states, offers [additional protection](#) for the political speech of employees, and prohibits employers from making or enforcing rules “controlling or directing...the political activities or affiliations of employees” and/or coercing their employees with respect to their political activities using threats of discharge.

Bechtel International Center

In 2017, after the Muslim Ban, Bechtel worked closely with the [Office of General Counsel](#) (OGC) and the [Stanford Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic](#) (IRC) to create a plan for affected students. Much of this work continues to be appreciated by MAP and MAP-adjacent communities who remember Stanford units mobilizing in support of Muslim students impacted by the ban. There is, however, both a pressing need to plan now for new travel bans or other immigration measures that may especially affect international students, and room for improvement on structural support via Bechtel for Palestinian students.

Muslim Bans

In 2024, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has [pledged](#), if reelected, to renew and [expand](#) travel bans targeting majority-Muslim countries, to revoke the visas of “radical anti-American and antisemitic foreigners at our colleges and universities,” to ban refugees from Gaza, and to implement ideological screening measures related to views on Israel and Hamas. He also [seeks](#) to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that benefits undocumented students, to create mass detention camps, to severely restrict asylum, and to “carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.” In the face of these potentially sweeping immigration changes, Stanford should be preparing now to protect students and uphold its core university values should these policy changes come to pass.

Reviewing Stanford’s response to immigration measures during the Trump administration is instructive, including to appreciate the successes. During that time, a slew of speedily enacted immigration restrictions seriously affected university students nationwide. Just after taking office, President Trump [issued](#) an executive order banning entry from seven predominantly Muslim countries, following a campaign promise to enact a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” The travel ban [immediately affected](#) Stanford students: a Sudanese graduate student returning to the United States was handcuffed and detained at JFK Airport; Iranian students caught abroad feared they would not be able to return to complete their studies; a Yemeni student faced the prospect of separation from her husband in Yemen, now barred from entering the United States to join her.

Though Bechtel had begun preparing for possible travel bans before Trump was inaugurated, the center was not prepared for the sheer influx of requests for support from students, faculty, and staff that poured in after the first travel ban went into effect. International students were concerned about their ability to stay at Stanford or to return home during breaks, and their families’ ability to see them graduate. Department heads were concerned that admitted students would be unable to matriculate.

Student Affairs staff were concerned for their directly affected students. All were reaching out to Bechtel to understand how to proceed.

In response to these new demands for information and legal support, the [Stanford Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic](#) (IRC) provided direct support and often advised administrators on the ramifications of new immigration policies for Stanford community members. IRC attorneys also worked to ensure that students who were traveling to Stanford from outside the country had the necessary information and support to navigate entry. Stanford staff created an attorney referral system and IRC faculty helped to identify immigration attorneys who could provide their services to students pro bono or for a limited fee provided by the Provost's office. Faculty and staff worked to address the problem of students being contacted by the FBI for investigative interviews. Bechtel staff members would advise students not to speak with the FBI without an attorney, and staff members would give the targeted student Know Your Rights material developed by local legal nonprofits. Experiencing some of this support, some faculty, staff, and students expressed that they "felt the university had their back as Muslims."

Palestinian Students at Bechtel

Post October 2023, Palestinian students have struggled, especially those coming from Gaza and/or with families in the region. International students told us Stanford can provide more support to incoming international MAP students, especially those from war-torn countries. These students often experience an extreme level of isolation; we heard that they receive little support from Bechtel and often are forced to go through bureaucratic processes that make their experience even more difficult.

Some students also pointed out that they were taken aback and frustrated when they received support emails misidentifying them (e.g., receiving an email about resources for Israeli students when the student actually identifies as Palestinian) simply because of how their passport is classified in the system. We also heard that students want better systems in place for many of the frustrating tasks that Palestinians and students from conflict zones need to navigate certain needs such as traveling home.

"They offer us a ticket to go home and make us book it four weeks in advance—but I don't know if I will have a permit [from the authorities controlling my home area] by then. I have to call, bargain, interface with the Financial Aid Office, etc." MAP undergraduate

“Can there be an orientation for international students, [helping them] understand the concept that student government represents students: these are your channels to the administration. I wasn’t aware of any of that, and understanding the governance structure of the university is important. Students, when they arrive on campus, especially for international students in orientation, could have a session on that.” *MAP Graduate Alum*

“If Stanford has accepted me as a student with a certain identity they have a certain responsibility to understand and give me resources when I need them. As an International student on an F1 visa, Bechtel would ideally be the first resource to me, but they haven’t been. They don’t have the resources. Please—Stanford, when you accept International students, you and especially Bechtel, where I spent my first two weeks doing all the orientations, you have a very big responsibility in educating yourself on who the student population is, what their needs are—and I’m sure this applies to students from other minority countries. If they don’t, there is no shame in not knowing, but maybe invite these students to educate you, and share with you.” *MAP Graduate Student*

“For being a center that’s supposed to serve international students, they don’t seem particularly nuanced [sometimes]. Some of us have a passport from one place, [but are] born in another place. It’s complicated when you’ve been through wars. We can’t just change things to fit your categories. They need to be in conversations with people who understand the intricacies of these things. What’s your protocol? Who is your informant for this part of the world when things get dire? It’s ok not to know everything but they should have regional specialists or something.” *MAP Graduate Student*

“They are way behind as an academic institution when it comes to their IDEAL initiatives. Personally it feels like they created a department that does nothing and was set up to do nothing. [...] Why aren’t managers checking in and not making a more positive work environment where you feel recognized as a person and included at the same time?” **MAP Staff**

“I never told anyone I was Palestinian.” **MAP Alum**

“When I got here, I felt like everyone here really understood what it meant to be Muslim. Now I am really struck by how much people don’t know and don’t care.” **MAP Student**

“Hiring practices have led to the absence of Arab and Arabic-speaking tenured and tenure-track faculty members in these areas of research, more pronounced when compared with Persian, Hebrew, and Turkish-speaking faculty in the field, and even more so when considering Arabic-speaking populations in the Middle East as compared to other languages. This leads people to think that Stanford does not recognize Arabs as a category worthy of humanistic inquiry as it does with adjacent ethnicities such as Jewish and parallel categories such as Chican@ and Latin@ studies.” **Faculty**

Data Collection

- Maximize opportunities to self-report race, ethnicity, ancestry, nationality, linguistic identities for accuracy and also to measure progress toward greater diversity.
- Offer a large number of race, ethnicity subcategories while additionally providing a write-in response area, as the 2024 Revised OMB SPD15 envisions for federal reporting.
- Conduct a new IDEAL survey that more appropriately takes into account the demographics and gaps around MAP communities. Integrate the MENA category into data collection.

Faculty

- Invest in tenured and tenure-track faculty who will enjoy the protections afforded by the hierarchical structure of North American academia. Specific recommendations around faculty are detailed in the Scholarship and Knowledge Production chapter. Existing avenues for implementing the above could be the IDEAL Faculty Incentive Fund or IDEAL Provostial Fellows Program.
- Empower existing [Academic Staff-Teaching](#) who have expertise and experience in Palestine and the Arab world with research support, sabbaticals, and network support to ensure they are able to contribute to campus discourse.
- Recruit and retain faculty who represent a diversity of racial, ethnic, religious, and other identities. Promote the creation of diverse applicant pools in hiring for new positions and remove traditional barriers to the hiring of diverse faculty, such as subjective hiring criteria that privilege applicants who come from particular social networks.

Staff

- Explore possible initiatives under IDEAL to recruit staff with diverse backgrounds and expertise.
- Leverage expertise of staff from MAP communities, especially in times of crisis, to aid in micro and macro decision-making.
- Expedite the creation of a MAP/MAP-adjacent [staff affinity group](#).

Students

- Work with underrepresented minority student groups to develop methods both of expanding and improving options to self-report race and ethnicity, as well as best practices for communicating the reasons for such questions and maximizing student privacy. Increasingly, and likely for a variety of different reasons, people report “decline to state” in response to questions about race, ethnicity, nationality and religion.
- Offer five scholarships to Palestinian undergraduates living in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as Palestinian citizens of Israel. Inviting these students and facilitating their access to world-class education at Stanford would inevitably enhance representation as well as academic discourse and engagement around Palestine and the Middle East.
- Work with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to conduct outreach to MAP students (locally and globally) and help reviewers better understand MAP communities as they review applications and answer students’ questions before they commit.
- Work with the Markaz, MAP staff, and alumni to offer workshops for both undergraduates and graduate students who want to learn how they can enact change at the university and have a seat at the table (how to join committees, how student government works, how to engage alumni, etc.). This will encourage their critical participation in the systems they want to change, and also provide much-needed professionalization resources by helping prepare them for future leadership in whatever field they pursue.

Board of Trustees

- Appoint an [ad hoc or special committee](#) to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on both its diversity of expertise and experience and its racial and ethnic diversity. We are not aware of any of the 31 members of the Board who identify as Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian.

Existing Stanford Structures

The Markaz Resource Center

- Within the next fiscal year (2024-25), approve permanent funding for the Assistant Director and Program Coordinator positions (full-time, exempt), so that neither of those positions has to sunset and the center can continue to function at a sustainable work load and reasonable capacity.
- Within the next academic year (2024-25), officially allocate Nitory 206, 209, 210 to the Markaz and provide financial and logistical support to develop this space for optimal use into a welcoming and culturally relevant community space.
- Within the following academic year (2025-26), officially allocate the rest of the Nitory 2nd floor to the Markaz (some of which was previously assigned to Markaz staff and students and then subsequently allocated to other VPSA units) to be used for:
 - Private MMHI 1:1 therapy or consultation appointments
 - Office space for Markaz professional staff and student staff
 - Bookable study spaces
 - Community hubs for advocacy and organizing

Muslim Life Recommendations

- Make available adequate space that is regularly accessible for Muslim religious services, such as jummah (Friday) prayer, Ramadan iftars, and Eid celebrations. Provide facilities in these venues for wudu (required washing before prayer).
- Provide funding for additional staffing, including a Muslim chaplain whose role it is specifically to offer religious and spiritual care for students, especially for graduate and professional school students.
- Standardize religious accommodations across Stanford:
 - Make halal food options available at cafes in all professional and graduate schools, such as the medical school, the hospital, the law school.
 - Mandate that all units offer two days off a year for major religious holidays without the need for negotiation or management

- Accommodate Friday prayer times (1:30-2:00 p.m.) for first year medical school students by avoiding scheduling mandatory classes or meetings on Fridays during that time.

The Advisory Council

In 2024-25, convert the MAP Committee into a permanent Advisory Council, similar to the [Black Community Council](#) or the [Jewish Advisory Committee](#), to address matters relevant to both MAP community members and to scholars and community members working on and interested in these issues and areas of scholarly inquiry. The Advisory Council will:

Structurally:

- Report directly to the President, Provost, and the Vice Provost for Institutional Equity, Access and Community.
- Meet monthly and as required without producing formal reports, and issue updates and statements as required.
- Expand its membership of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Functionally:

- Enable and support the university as it implements recommendations made by the MAP Committee in this May 2024 report.
- Continue the work of the MAP Committee in dialog with other committees and communities.
- Serve as an entity that can offer or direct to expertise in emergencies.
- Form subcommittees or task forces as needed to address issues directly impacting MAP and MAP-adjacent communities, such as the Muslim Ban, etc.

Structural Support Within Other Units

Mental Health Recommendations

- **MMHI**
 - Provide \$50,000 per year in permanent funding for the MMHI for sustainable and consistent planning for 1:1 therapy sessions and support groups.
 - Expand the purview of these services to include faculty, staff, and post docs.
- **SMMHIP**
 - Leverage existing expertise in the Department of Psychiatry and the School of Medicine, such as the SMMHIP lab and Dr. Rania Awaad, to plan for robust services for these communities.
 - Allocate a minimum of \$5,000 annually for lab research specific to MMHI, particularly for assessment and evaluation of the program, for better long-term planning.
- **CAPS**
 - Relaunch the search for a staff psychologist at CAPS who has had experience offering care to MAP communities.
 - Create increased FTE positions for clinicians who can provide culturally relevant and trauma-informed care.
 - Create specific positions offering such care at graduate and professional schools such as the GSB, SLS, GSE, etc.
 - Provide mental health services and support for anti-Zionist Jewish students, who have repeatedly indicated feeling neglected and unsupported on campus.
 - Offer compensation for staff or faculty who run mental health support groups for staff, and funding for those groups.
 - Expedite through VPUE and OAE the process of academic accommodations for students in crisis.

- **ResX**

Institutionalize training on anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab bias and Islamophobia, as well as mental health training related to these communities. These training sessions should be conducted by experts or in consultation with experts, for all ResX staff - Residence Deans (RDs), Resident Fellows (RFs), Resident Assistants (RAs), and Neighborhood Program Directors (NPDs).

Clarify policies around student rights to political expression: detailing specifically the hanging of banners, flyers, etc. in rooms, doors, shared spaces, etc. and ensure all residential staff (RFs and RAs along with professional staff) have adequate training around those policies and their application.

Ensure the consistent application of those policies across political issues and not just with respect to pro-Palestine support.

Reevaluate the institutionalization of educational initiatives such as the ePluribus Project, in consultation with MAP.

- **Career Services**

- Remind all employers who recruit on campus of Stanford's anti-discrimination policy and make clear that Stanford will take seriously any allegations of discrimination or harassment.
- Educate career services staff about the governing law, so they can better protect students against possible discrimination.
- Counsel students about their legal rights and navigating these concerns in this political context.
- Request that students promptly report all incidents of suspected discrimination and harassment to career services and commit to responding to those reports with appropriate gravity.
- Direct all career services offices to take these steps and convene additional meetings with these units in fall 2024 to protect students from employment harassment and discrimination.

- **Bechtel International Center**

- Provide more support to incoming students, especially those coming from war-torn countries. Student orientation and support systems, specifically for these students, should be revisited and significantly redesigned. This will require investment in Bechtel and increased training and resources for its staff.
- Decide on an immigration representation system for students ahead of time that provides funding from Stanford for high-quality outside representation from a firm that has both the expertise and community trust on sensitive immigration matters and that can handle both intakes and actual representation. IRC faculty identified Van Der Haut LLP as one such firm.
- Establish or update protocols for responding to the presence of federal law enforcement agencies on campus or for responding to federal outreach to students, including guidance on how university staff should respond.
- Identify someone outside the IRC with the relevant expertise and community trust who can assist the university in understanding and interpreting immigration policy changes and advising on how to support and advocate for students.
- Make clear to Stanford community members that efforts to exile members of the Stanford community based on their nationality, religion, immigration status, and other such grounds violate the university's core values and that Stanford will defend community members against such measures.
- Support advocacy and litigation efforts being undertaken by national immigration advocacy organizations to resist discriminatory and draconian immigration measures and expand sanctuary zones to university campuses.

“The cost of mental health, even when it is copay on insurance, adds up. My therapist has offered to provide me with a recommendation for medical leave after years of telling me that Stanford is the problem, not me. I did not accept that option because I knew that Stanford and everyone I worked with would treat me as an abuser of the system. This is a place that doesn’t believe or respect people like me. I’d rather work elsewhere.” **MAP Faculty**

“The administration lacks understanding about the mental toll that students are under. During our second meeting with the provost, the group was more composed. She said something like, “Thank you for being so composed. Last time it was a little too much.” You only gave us one opportunity—and you expected us to be composed when we were in the middle of all of it.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“This fall is the most stressed I’ve ever been in my life. I felt like there was bubbling in the middle of my head.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“I think on some level that Stanford expects [student] staff to be supportive robots who don’t struggle with their own stuff and are just supporting students through their stuff. There’s no acknowledgment that what’s happening could impact my ability to do my job. There’s a kind of silent damage that happens when there is a crisis on campus and staff teams don’t talk about it.” **MAP Undergraduate**

“I’m so tired of getting emails in which the university and various offices speak about student protesters as if they are outsiders, ‘threats’ or at worst, terrorists. ‘See something, say something,’ is a dangerous and damaging framing for thinking about Stanford’s own students.” **MAP Staff**

“I can’t shake the idea that the university’s silence at the start resulted in acts of violence towards Muslim and Arab students. And that those are two very different groups, there are overlaps but they are different groups. Had it not been for that hit and run and the rapid mobilization of alums and students on campus, I just wonder if these things would have been tolerated. And that hurts.” **MAP Alum**

“I [constantly] felt like I was spoken for instead of asked to speak.” **MAP Graduate Student**

“This email is so painfully typical of Stanford. ‘There’s a problem. Here’s a solution we’ve decided on without any input from those affected that conveniently aligns with our agenda.’” **MAP Alum**

COMMUNICATIONS

The language that a university chooses to use in its communications not only conveys its public face to the world but also shapes the relationship that each member of its community has with the place they call home, the place they work, the place they go to live and learn daily. Whether on a website, in a news article, or within an internal memo, these words are often experienced as a reflection of the university's values and character, of what it believes and what it espouses.

As we have noted many times throughout this report, and as this pivotal moment in history has made us each so aware, **words matter**. At a time when [university leaders are being questioned before Congress](#) over a turn of phrase or when editors at major newspapers are circulating memos instructing their journalists to [restrict the use of certain terms](#), language is being treated not merely as representative of harm but as a harm itself.

And indeed, the language Stanford has or has not used—particularly in university-wide announcements—has consistently emerged as a deeply-felt pain point. In listening session after listening session, the committee heard that the way that Stanford has communicated has made members of MAP communities feel that nobody is “in the room” to represent them when the university makes decisions that directly affect them. The communications make them feel invisible, underrepresented, and disempowered—which contributes to their fear and their loss of trust in the university.

This kind of communication gives fertile ground for external media coverage such as [“The War Comes to Stanford,”](#) published in the *New York Times*, and [“The War at Stanford,”](#) published in *The Atlantic*, to conjure up a presiding narrative of the university and its students that is in fact asymmetrical and distorted.

What follows is a brief discussion of the inconsistencies, asymmetry, and inaccuracies within and across this administration’s statements and actions during the 2023-24 academic year.

INITIAL STATEMENTS: NEUTRALITY WITH CONDEMNATION

On October 9, 2023, the new interim President Richard Saller and Provost Jenny Martinez issued a [succinct message](#) in response to the events of October 7. While many members of the MAP community found this lacking and vague at the time, it was evident that the new administration was still working out their communication stance and trying to avoid taking sides.

OCTOBER 9, 2023

President Saller and Provost Martinez on the Middle East conflict



[Read an additional message from President Saller and Provost Martinez posted on October 11, 2023.](#)

Many members of the campus community have been affected by the devastating events in Israel and Gaza, especially those who have family and friends in the region. We are deeply saddened and horrified by the death and human suffering. We also know that many on campus are afraid of what the future holds for them and their communities, and are feeling extremely vulnerable.

We continue working as a university to provide for the support and safety of those in our community. Campus leaders have prepared additional information on support and security resources, as well as answers to questions from students, and that information can be found in the document linked [here](#).

Although this is a moment of intense emotion and grief, in the weeks and months ahead, consistent with our institutional mission of teaching and research, and drawing upon the expertise of many on campus, we hope to encourage thoughtful opportunities for sharing knowledge about the situation, anchored in care for one another as members of a common intellectual community.

Richard Saller, President
Jenny Martinez, Provost

Office Of The President

Office Of The Provost



On October 11, 2023, the President and Provost issued a [longer, more comprehensive message](#). The letter began by describing Hamas' attack as "horrifying" and as "intolerable atrocities," before moving to campus safety and an explanation of their stance of neutrality, [rooted in the Kalven report](#), that would come to characterize their administration. "We believe it is important that the university, as an institution, generally refrain from taking institutional positions on complex political or geopolitical matters that extend beyond our immediate purview, which is the operations of the university itself," they stated.

We want to be clear that we do not hold the president and provost to standards set by the university's previous administration, which was known for sending a considerable number of statements in reaction to current events. With appropriate exceptions for events that directly affect the university or its mission, **a stance of institutional neutrality is justifiable—if applied consistently.**

OCTOBER 11, 2023

An update for the Stanford community

Dear Stanford community,

Our news and social media feeds have been filled over the last few days with horrifying new details about the Hamas attack in Israel last weekend, which involved intolerable atrocities including murder of civilians and kidnapping. The likelihood of a lengthy and violent continued conflict in the region has become clearer. Our focus as university leaders is on supporting the members of our Stanford community in this difficult moment. We hear the deeply felt concerns, fears, and grief that have been expressed by students, faculty, and staff. We want to address several issues that have arisen on our campus in the past few days.

- We have heard many expressions of concern regarding student safety. We have heard from Jewish students, faculty, and staff concerned about rising antisemitism. We have heard from Palestinian students who have received threatening emails and phone calls. We want to make clear that Stanford stands unequivocally against hatred on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, national origin, and other categories. The expression of political views, in appropriate times and places, is important. Thoughtful, reasoned discussion of current issues is central to the life of the university. Our commitment to academic freedom means that latitude for expression of controversial and even offensive views is necessary to avoid chilling freedom of thought and ideas. But harassment and abuse have no place here. We are committed to working with affected communities to provide support and resources, and also to ensuring the physical safety of those on campus.
- We have received a report of a class in which a non-faculty instructor is reported to have addressed the Middle East conflict in a manner that called out individual students in class based on their backgrounds and identities. Without prejudging the matter, this report is a cause for serious concern. Academic freedom does not permit the identity-based targeting of students. The instructor in this course is not currently teaching while the university works to ascertain the facts of the situation.
- We have received complaints about banners, signs, and chalking on campus that express views that many find offensive. Again, it is important to remember that controversial and even offensive speech is allowed except when it crosses the line into certain illegal categories such as threats or harassment for which the threshold is quite high. Unlawful threats and harassment will not be tolerated. Stanford also has content- and viewpoint-neutral time, place, and manner rules that limit locations for banners and signs. Thus, many

of the banners and signs have been removed, because they were in places where they are not allowed.

Moreover, it is worth remembering that while a climate of free expression requires breathing room, our aspiration as a community is for respectful and substantive discourse.

Here and across the nation this week, there also has been discussion of the role of university leaders in commenting on global events. This provides an opportunity for the two of us, who are new in our current roles at Stanford, to share some further thoughts on this topic, and on the place and purpose of universities.

Stanford University is a community of scholars. We believe it is important that the university, as an institution, generally refrain from taking institutional positions on complex political or global matters that extend beyond our immediate purview, which is the operations of the university itself. Maintaining university neutrality allows for our individual scholars to explore them freely. In recent years, many universities have gotten into the habit of issuing frequent statements about news events. This creates a number of difficulties. The decision to take a position about one event or issue yields implications for silence with regard to other issues; given that different subsets of a campus community may be more or less affected by particular issues, this inconsistency is felt acutely. It can enmesh universities in politics and create a sense of institutional orthodoxy that chills academic freedom. In addition, crafting each message is challenging, from gathering facts and context on complex issues at the speed of online media and the news cycle while also walking a line between platitudes and overly political positions.

As a moral matter, we condemn all terrorism and mass atrocities. This includes the deliberate attack on civilians this weekend by Hamas. One of the advances in international law in the 20th century following the horrors of the Holocaust was the development of international humanitarian law prohibiting war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Such crimes are never justified. Sadly, they occur regularly throughout the world; the International Criminal Court website lists seventeen different country situations for which it has launched investigations, all of which involve mass atrocities. And that court's docket does not even reflect the full range of situations. We point this out not to in any way diminish the shocking severity of the events in Israel and Gaza this week, but to highlight the pervasive problem that humankind faces in conquering hate.

The events in Israel and Gaza this week have affected and engaged large numbers of students on our campus in ways that many other events have not. This is why we feel compelled to both address the impact of these events on our campus and to explain why our general policy of not issuing statements about news events not directly connected to campus has limited the breadth of our comments thus far, and why you should not expect frequent commentary from us in the future.

The fighting in the Middle East is likely to continue in the coming weeks, with casualties on both sides, and the overall situation has a deep and complex history. Stanford has community members who are themselves from the region or who have friends and family there. We recognize the deeply felt impacts across our community. We encourage you to approach one another with a spirit of compassion and respect for our shared humanity.

Sincerely,

Richard Saller, President

Jenny Martinez, Provost

The letter went on to state that, “As a moral matter, we condemn all terrorism and mass atrocities. This includes the deliberate attack on civilians this weekend by Hamas.” This was followed by a short discussion on international humanitarian law prohibiting war crimes.

By the time this statement was issued to the Stanford community, Israel had already formally declared a state of war in Gaza. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant had announced a “total” blockade of the Gaza Strip that would cut electricity and block the entry of food and fuel, stating, “We are fighting human animals and are acting accordingly.” Hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza were being killed by airstrikes and Palestinians were being killed in various areas around the West Bank. The main buildings of the first higher education institution in the Gaza Strip, the Islamic University of Gaza, were destroyed by airstrikes, and the Rafah Border Crossing had been bombed.

This is not an exhaustive list by any measure, but includes examples of what could be considered “mass atrocities,” and what could be considered a war crime under the Article 8 of [the Rome Statute](#) of the International Criminal Court (e.g., bombing a university). **When the President and the Provost chose to issue a condemnation *directly* after stating that they would refrain from taking positions, what they chose *not* to condemn reverberated across the MAP community, with students, faculty, and staff alike.**

“I saw how the university’s communication had an effect on my friends. They sent two emails back to back that condemned things and ignored Palestinians and I saw how that made my friends feel,” said one of the MAP students who helped create the sit-in. This student in fact cited these messages as one of the main reasons for starting the sit-in.

“ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR”

The framing of the last eight months as the “Israel-Hamas War” has been problematic for many community members because it implies that the fighting and the dying taking place are between Israel on one side and Hamas on the other side. Many of them see this as an inaccurate representation of what is happening on the ground, which has manifested as a military campaign in opposition to every civilian of Gaza, not just Hamas. This framing erases the people who are actually being harmed by the thousands—the Palestinians of Gaza. “The war in Gaza” would be a more appropriate label.

While some mainstream publications such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, NPR, CNN, and the *Guardian* have followed the [Associated Press Style Guide](#)’s recommendation to use the phrase “Israel-Hamas War,” Stanford has an obligation as an institute of higher knowledge to not simply accept the media status quo. Although leadership has listened to this feedback from the MAP Committee and has altered this language in some broader university communications contexts, using phrases such as “the violence in Israel and Gaza” in its messages to students, the “Israel-Hamas War” framing is still being used across units at Stanford, and community members are taking note.

A CONSISTENT AFTERTHOUGHT AND CONFLATION

In the university-wide communications that Stanford has issued since October 7, the committee and MAP communities have observed that antisemitism almost always precedes mention of Islamophobia or anti-Palestinian sentiment as a matter of course. As one faculty member noted, “These are minor and small pennies compared to bigger issues, and yet very symbolic and emblematic of the larger issues in terms of messaging. If it varies from email to email, great—but it just never does.”

This distinction is not trivial. When MAP communities already feel like an afterthought and that they hold relatively little power in the university and broader landscape, the consistent naming as second reinforces these feelings.

The committee and communities have also noted, as referenced in other sections of this report, that in both written and spoken communication there is too often a conflation of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian bias or a tendency to treat MAP communities as a monolith (such as assuming all members are Muslim). This tendency is reductive, ahistorical, incorrect, and harmful, and leads to both an oversimplification of the issues and layered identities at hand and an inaccurate staging of the ongoing conflict as a battle between Jews and Muslims.

NOVEMBER 13, 2023

New steps to support campus communities

Dear Stanford community,

The last several weeks have been challenging as our community has witnessed and responded to the Israel-Hamas war. For many, it has been a time of anguish, fear, worry, and anger.

The two of us, and others on Stanford's leadership team, have been listening carefully to the members of multiple communities at Stanford to understand their experiences and concerns. We have worked to extend support for immediate needs and to provide for the physical safety of our campus community.

Today we are announcing additional steps to respond to the needs of our communities and to support their well-being. Two new groups will be focusing intently on strengthening support in an ongoing manner for **our Jewish community and for our Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities**. Please open the following page to read more about these initiatives (<https://news.stanford.edu/report/2023/11/13/stanford-announces-next-steps-support-campus-communities/>).

In these difficult times, we hope you'll join us in supporting one another as members of one Stanford community; **in rejecting antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bias, anti-Palestinian bias, anti-Israeli bias, and all forms of hatred and discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, or national origin; and in fostering the atmosphere of civil, reasoned, deeply informed discussion that advances our mission of learning.**

DECEMBER 15, 2023

Update on new committees to support campus communities

Members have been appointed and work is progressing on two Stanford committees **created to help combat antisemitism and anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim bias.**

Members have been appointed and work is progressing on two new Stanford committees **established to develop recommendations** (<https://news.stanford.edu/report/2023/11/13/stanford-announces-next-steps-support-campus-communities/>) **for combating antisemitism and anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim bias on campus, and to support communities on campus that have been deeply affected by the Israel-Hamas war.**

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Resources for campus events, safety, and well-being

October 30, 2023

In a time of heightened anxiety and concern in light of the events in Israel and Gaza, President Saller and Provost Martinez have emphasized their commitment to providing for the safety and well-being of the campus community – and have encouraged thoughtful, reasoned discussion across differing viewpoints “with a spirit of compassion and respect for our shared humanity.” **Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, and national origin are contrary to Stanford's values.**

This page provides information and resources for students, as well as for other members of the Stanford community. Also read the [October 11 message](#) to the community from President Saller and Provost Martinez, a [further message](#) on community safety and well-being, and Provost Martinez's [remarks to the Faculty Senate](#), and an announcement about [new efforts to support](#) Stanford's campus communities.

If you are not feeling safe, you are encouraged to reach out for help

- For **emergency assistance**, call 911 or 9-911 from a campus phone
- Report a **non-emergency** crime or potential hazard to law enforcement at (650) 329-2413
- To request a threat assessment for a concerning **situation that does not present an imminent threat of harm**, contact the Threat Assessment Team at <http://safety.stanford.edu>
- To report an act of **Antisemitism** occurring outside academic engagement (academic engagement includes any pedagogical, research and/or educational activities), file a [Protected Identity Harm](#) report
- To report an act of **Islamophobia** occurring outside academic engagement (academic engagement includes any pedagogical, research and/or educational activities), file a [Protected Identity Harm](#) report

ANOTHER INCONSISTENT CONDEMNATION

On December 5, 2023, Harvard University president Claudine Gay, MIT president Sally Kornbluth, and University of Pennsylvania president Elizabeth Magill appeared before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, where they were asked to defend their responses to incidents of antisemitism on their campuses and were subsequently hammered for their responses.

On the night of December 7, 2023, Stanford issued a [Facebook post](#), [Instagram post](#), and [Tweet on X](#) that read, “In the context of the national discourse, Stanford unequivocally condemns calls for the genocide of Jews or any peoples. That statement would clearly violate Stanford’s Fundamental Standard, the code of conduct for all students at the university.”

On December 8, 2023, in a Stanford Alumni Association Town Hall with Richard Saller and members of Stanford’s Muslim Alumni Association community, alumni raised their concerns with this statement. They noted that, not only did it conflict with the administration’s stance on not issuing statements, but it failed to name Palestinians. This point was made by community members many times in the weeks to come: “How could they say ‘Jews or any peoples’ when it is Jews and Palestinians that are dying?” At this point in time, the mass killing and displacement of people was well underway in Gaza, and it was later that same month that South Africa would launch its case in the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of “genocidal acts” in Gaza.

The president responded in the town hall session by calling the statement a “prophylactic” to protect the kind of debate that he wanted to foster at Stanford, in the context of congressional focus on elite universities. In the aforementioned *Atlantic* story “[The War at Stanford](#),” the author also expressed surprise about this social media post given Stanford’s no statement policy, and asked the president about it. The author notes: “‘Liz Magill is a good friend,’ Saller told me, adding, ‘Having watched what happened at Harvard and Penn, it seemed prudent’ to publicly state that Stanford rejected calls for genocide.”

This was not the first nor the last time that the MAP communities observed what they felt was the university responding to external pressures rather than to the internal needs of its own community. While members of MAP communities have stated in listening sessions that they agree wholeheartedly with the condemnation of genocide against Jews, they also stated that they once again felt unnamed, unseen, unheard, and erased at a time when they were witnessing and experiencing mass atrocities committed against Palestinians.



Stanford University ✓
@Stanford



In the context of the national discourse, Stanford unequivocally condemns calls for the genocide of Jews or any peoples. That statement would clearly violate Stanford's Fundamental Standard, the code of conduct for all students at the university.

10:29 PM · Dec 7, 2023 · **4.4M** Views



↻ 2.2K

♥ 7K

📖 360



In the context of the national discourse, Stanford unequivocally condemns calls for the genocide of Jews or any peoples. That statement would clearly violate Stanford's Fundamental Standard, the code of conduct for all students at the university.



stanford ✓



No comments yet.
Start the conversation.



👍 Liked by stanfordalumni and 9,457 others
December 7, 2023



WHAT STORY DOES STANFORD TELL?

In December of 2023, the university [posted a page](#) that aggregated news stories about the “Israel-Hamas War” that had been written in or featured in the Stanford Report up until that point. At the top of the page, the president is quoted, “Educational events exploring the history and complexity of this conflict are an important way to encourage deep reflection and meaningful dialogue. I am pleased that these events are taking place.”

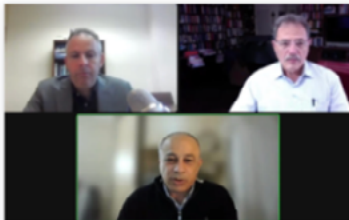
Stanford educational events about Israel-Hamas war



Stanford University has hosted various educational events, both on campus and online, featuring experts to discuss the Israel-Hamas war from multiple perspectives.

“As our community witnesses and responds to the Israel-Hamas war, we continue to urge productive and respectful dialogue on our campus. Stanford is a community of scholars, and we have the opportunity to share knowledge and promote reasoned discussion around this set of challenges,” said Stanford President Richard Saller. “Educational events exploring the history and complexity of this conflict are an important way to encourage deep reflection and meaningful dialogue. I am pleased that these events are taking place.”

News stories about some of the events are below.



CAMPUS EVENTS

How an Israeli Arab scholar finds 'pieces of peace'

In a webinar for the Stanford community, an expert on Jewish-Arab relations in Israel shared what he and other scholars have found works – and doesn't – in advancing peace between the two communities.



CAMPUS EVENTS

Navigating the fog of war: Stanford's discussion on media coverage of the Israel-Hamas war

Journalism lecturer Janine Zacharia discussed the challenges news media face when reporting on the Middle East conflict.



CAMPUS EVENTS

Understanding the rules of war in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict

Scott Sagan and Allen Weiner explain the principles that govern the laws of armed conflict and the current war between Israel and Hamas.



CAMPUS EVENTS

Middle East experts explore deep-rooted challenges in Israel-Hamas war

A dialogue with Dennis Ross and Ghaith al-Omari examined the historical intricacies and resolution challenges of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.



CAMPUS EVENTS

The 1973 Yom Kippur War and lessons for the Israel-Hamas conflict

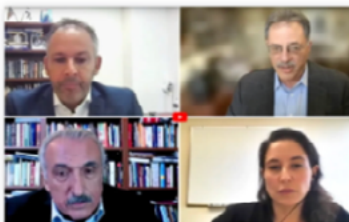
Scholars of Israel and the Middle East discussed the strategic takeaways of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and their relevance to the region's current security crisis.



CAMPUS EVENTS

Survey offers a window into Palestinians' views ahead of the Hamas attack

Principal investigators from the nonpartisan research network Arab Barometer shared insights from their latest public opinion survey at an event hosted by Stanford's Program on Arab Reform and Democracy.



CAMPUS EVENTS

FSI scholars analyze implications of Hamas' terror attack on Israel

Larry Diamond moderated a discussion between Ori Rabinowitz, Amichai Magen and Abbas Milani on the

ANOTHER INCONSISTENT CONDEMNATION

The committee notes the asymmetry and lopsided coverage in the seven articles aggregated on this page:

Word	Number of times it appeared
Israel	100
Israeli	44
Palestine	8
Palestinian	44 (More than half of which were in an article about a public opinion survey of Palestinians)
Gaza	26
Hamas	76

While “the history and complexity of this conflict” are in fact being explored in some areas of campus, the university has not decided to uplift those stories. Since aggregating the page mentioned above, countless events have been hosted by units and groups across Stanford such as the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies and Stanford Global Studies ranging from a talk on [Palestinian Transnational Politics in the United States](#), to a book talk for a Stanford University Press work on [lives and military participation](#) in Palestine, to a presentation on [Latin America and the War on Gaza](#).

In March, a packed room in Margaret Jacks Hall listened to a reading by the Palestinian poet from Gaza, [Yahya Ashour](#), and then at the Stanford Humanities Center, a reading by Palestinian American poet [Fady Joudah](#). There has been no coverage of any of these events, and the only coverage of events featuring Palestinian speakers highlighted either thinkers or scholars of the region who are less representative of modal opinions in Palestinian culture and politics, or events that made an explicit political gesture to include “both sides.” **Therefore, when the general public pursues the Stanford News site, someone might navigate to this curated page and observe, “This is what Stanford thinks about Palestine.”**

In spring 2024, the Stanford Report covered only two events related to the war in Gaza. The first was a [conversation](#), as part of the [Democracy and Disagreement](#) course, between Former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Israeli Professor Alon Tal, “which explored the complexities and potential of a two-state solution through a model of civil discourse.” The second event was [a conversation featuring peace activists](#) from Israel and Palestine who “are committed to the view that a peaceful future for the Israeli and Palestinian people, two peoples living side by side, in two states, is possible” and who are mostly part of OneVoice, an organization which even a quick Google search would reveal is historically problematic in addressing Palestinian rights. We are in favor of all such events, but the selective reporting appears to reflect a desire to tilt the balance of coverage towards particular political positions that are highly contested within the discourses in question and that primarily feature problematic “kumbaya moments.”

Israeli Envoy Event

On January 23, 2024, the president and provost participated in an event hosted by the [Blue and White Tent](#) entitled “Combating Antisemitism at Stanford Symposium.” One of the speakers at the event served as a member of the Knesset for the Blue and White alliance from 2020 to 2021 and is currently a special envoy for combating antisemitism for Israel.

This event elicited much confusion and consternation in the MAP community. Once again, these actions seemed at odds with the administration’s statement on university neutrality. The frustration was not in reaction to leadership choosing to speak about combating antisemitism, which is commendable and without reproach, but because of a) their willingness to speak at and be advertised with an event alongside a political actor of a government [called before the International Court of Justice](#) for punishment of the crime of genocide (South Africa v. Israel), and b) their willingness to participate in a public event hosted by a student-led tent, alongside their unwillingness to publicly visit the Sit-In to Stop Genocide and, in the early stages, to meet with the students at all.

While the university leadership attested that they were not initially aware of the shape of the event when they agreed to participate in it, they nevertheless chose to participate even after being made aware of the envoy’s presence a week in advance of the event. In addition to the event being covered in a Stanford Report article, several photos of their participation in this event can be found in the [Blue and White Tent’s photo gallery](#). The committee wishes to make clear that the issue here is not that a student organizer invited a political actor to speak on campus: we continue to stand by the “more speech, not less” position we have taken (see chapter on Freedom of Speech).

Nor does the committee object to the participation of the president and provost in a political event. The issue here is about university-level communications: the president and provost participating in this event and allowing their images and names to be used in its advertisement and coverage were read by MAP communities and allies as a public endorsement of support for one community. This becomes an issue when there is no such embodied support for the MAP communities except in what one community member called “empty words.” However, the MAP committee and communities did appreciate that during the event, as recounted in the [Stanford Report](#), “When asked whether Stanford should adopt the definition of antisemitism as set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Saller said he believed ordering such an action was beyond the limits of his authority” and that it is not his role to “issue an official definition that’s binding on the campus.”

When the MAP community raised concern about the event with the president and provost, they said they would speak at an analogous event if it was planned, for example, by this committee. However, it is not the role of this committee to create the conditions for the president and provost to serve the communities they should be serving as leaders during a fraught time. The Combating Antisemitism event consumed unit and university resources on a substantial scale simply not available to any unit that might have hosted an analogous event connected to the MAP community.

THE BLUE AND WHITE TENT PRESENTS

COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM AT STANFORD SYMPOSIUM



RICHARD SALLER
PRESIDENT OF
STANFORD UNIVERSITY



JENNY MARTINEZ
PROVOST OF
STANFORD UNIVERSITY



MICHAL COTLER-WUNSH
SPECIAL ISRAELI ENVOY
FOR ANTISEMITISM



LARRY DIAMOND
SENIOR FELLOW AT
STANFORD FSI



JAFI LIPSON
CLINICAL ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR OF RADIOLOGY



KEVIN FEIGELIS
PHD STUDENT
BLUE & WHITE TENT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24

4 PM	5 PM	6 PM
<p>RECEPTION WITH HORS D'OEUVRES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📍 Blue & White Tent, White Plaza 🗣️ Special Guest: Michal Cotler-Wunsh 	<p>COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📍 Tressider Union, Oak Lounge 🗣️ Speakers: Michal Cotler-Wunsh 🗣️ Introduction: 	<p>PANEL WITH THE PRESIDENT & PROVOST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📍 Tressider Union, Oak Lounge 🗣️ Speakers: President Saller, Provost Martinez, Michal Cotler-Wunsh, Jafi Lipson, Kevin Feigelis

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO




“TO SHUT OUT THOSE WHO DISAGREE”

Since students began the People’s University for Palestine encampment on April 25, Stanford has posted or emailed a series of “White Plaza Updates.” While the committee cannot engage in a close reading of all of the university’s communications around the encampment— or of the subsequent internal emails from individual schools and units—one leadership message in particular is worth discussing, as it is indicative of systemic issues discussed throughout this report.

In the “Update to students regarding White Plaza, issued on May 17, 2024” the president and provost wrote:

“Last week, for example, in the Democracy and Disagreement course led by Deans Paul Brest and Debra Satz, Alon Tal (a visiting fellow in the Israeli Studies Program who is a former member of the Israeli parliament) and Salam Fayyad (former prime minister of the Palestinian Authority) participated together in a class session. They discussed issues related to the conflict in front of an engaged, passionate, and peaceful audience of more than 500 students and others. While in the last several months there have certainly been examples of hateful and intolerant speech on campus, we are heartened by the participation of students in these meaningful conversations.

We want to encourage the continued focus of our community on critical inquiry and constructive dialogue across disagreements. Everyone has a part to play in that. The encampment, with its rope lines and perimeter of tents, is physically set up not to invite discussion but to shut out those who disagree.”

With this message, university leadership is explicitly, negatively positioning an inclusive and intersectional protest that could instead be seen as an “engaged, passionate, and peaceful” mode of dialogue, like the course they celebrated above.

A faculty member, upon reading this White Plaza update, reacted with the following remarks:

“I think that [the description of the encampment as shutting out disagreement is] factually untrue. For example, I stopped by yesterday, and chatted with a kidlet who politely came up while I was reading and said hello, and there is a clear path from the perimeter to the center of the encampment. It’s also not that big an encampment to begin with. I also noticed that the adjoining lawn was a protest action re: the hostages. That is unaddressed by the letter, but it seems like it would also be not designed to encourage discussion by those who disagree, according to this letter? Is there a mandate now for protests to have an explicit discussion component for disagreements within itself, rather than the protest sparking discussion, like the encampment did and does? [...] I was also struck by the example given of the Israeli and Palestinian politicians talking to each other while students watched. While I think it’s great that they talked to each other, and we invited them, and students watched, having elite authority figures speaking while our students are their audience is not the only way to model learning, but I think it’s telling that it’s used as the positive example in this letter criticizing a space where students and others are coming together to hash out knotty issues of violence, politics, and accountability in public view.”

COMMUNICATION AS CATALYST

In a conversation with the MAP committee about messaging from the university at this time, senior leadership of University Communications noted that many people see communications as the starting point of a story; whereas in reality, communications often come at the tail end, when there is something to tell a story about.

The committee empathizes with this perspective and understands the difficult position of university communicators. Communications are indeed at the tail end of many of the systemic institutional failures described in this report. If communications mirror what’s happening at the university, their words cannot reflect back things that are not actually there.

However, we push back on the notion that communications are a passive culmination and not a catalyst. The committee believes that university communications can be aspirational as well as reflective and can chart a better, more equitable path forward that does not further institutionalize asymmetry or perpetuate insensitivity. We believe Stanford can put forth communications that are not just an end but a beginning; that are not just a mirror but a light.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be consistent, between both words and words (e.g. if stating neutrality, refrain from publishing multiple statements that indicate otherwise) and between words and actions (e.g. if stating neutrality, refrain from supporting politically charged events in a lopsided manner during a sensitive time).
- Refrain from intentionally or inadvertently suppressing content about Palestine and avoid the impression that only “both sides” stories are published when Palestine is concerned.
- Listen to and leverage community leaders while working on university-wide or large-audience communications, particularly if they are about sensitive issues during a sensitive time. We understand that not every decision-making room can be representative, and yet believe that university leadership can enlist and leverage and trust their faculty and staff to support them in this process. The last eight months have illuminated the myriad ways the university itself could be spared a world of pain if it simply spoke to committees such as this one before issuing messages that the community found unsympathetic, insensitive, or inaccurate.
- Consider different standards for covering events, talks, etc. in the Stanford Report so that news stories feature the variety of perspectives that already exist at Stanford (despite the gaps identified in this report). This will necessitate reporting on complex global issues as they are engaged by Stanford humanities scholars, social scientists, writers, historians, and the like—and avoiding a reliance on narrowly policy-focused events.
- Avoid participating in the levels of erasure seen in mainstream media, which follows press books such as the Associated Press Style Guidelines that state, “Use Palestine only in the context of Palestine’s activities in international bodies to which it has been admitted. Do not use Palestine or the state of Palestine in other situations, since it is not a fully independent, unified state.” As a locus—and generator—of research and knowledge, the university should be mindful of the language it uses to refer to the region and its people across all its communications.

“In all these communications, they think for some reason that whether the violence happens by the state or a non-state armed group is a distinction that somehow matters. We’re condemning the violence, which is a violation of international law, even if the state does it. There’s nothing about the fact that the violence comes from an “official government” that makes it immune to criticism.” **MAP Graduate Alum**

“They never stick to their promises. Richard Saller himself said they’re not going to make statements, and 24 hours later they did the genocide statement.”
MAP Undergraduate

“Institutional neutrality, I get it and I kind of like that. I get that you can’t necessarily condemn one side and not the other, so therefore you have to be more nuanced in what you do publicly—I accept that and am ok with that. But then you need to be consistent.” **MAP Alum**

“They say ‘Islamophobia’ when a quarter of their undergrads coming from Palestine are Christian.” **MAP Undergraduate**

Repair the Rupture, Reimagine the Future

In a [Stanford Daily interview published September 26, 2001](#), then-president John L. Hennessy said, “This [the events of 9/11] has sent a message to all educational institutions... that we are woefully ignorant about not only the Islamic faith and culture, but of much of the Middle East. That part of the world is too important to ignore.”

While Stanford has certainly made great strides in Islamic Studies since then, it has, as the last eight months have made painfully clear, missed the mark on “much of the Middle East.” For this reason, unlike during other global crises, the university has not been able to [sustain excellence in its core mission of teaching and research](#) on one of the most pressing issues of today.

In 2023-24, undergraduate and graduate students created what were, in effect, their own units for learning and programming: the sit-in and the encampment. These two structures offered readings and events on Palestine in a tried and tested protest format. Under pressure from political advocacy that disagreed with the students’ ideas, the university chose to respond to these initiatives with gradual and attritional enforcement of time, place, and manner restrictions.

The committee believes that, on the contrary, the student protest framework should be understood as an effort to create and share knowledge, to speak and protest, to invite expertise, and to generate dialogue. The students even called their spring 2024 encampment a “university.” When our own students set up a university inside the university because our university isn’t doing the work it needs to, something is not right. It is not too late. Our university can still rise to meet the challenge of this moment without fear or favor. Stanford’s founding purpose demands it.

This committee report details a general chilling of speech, and specific actions to suppress speech, on one particular political topic: **Palestine**. On October 1, 2023, [Provost Jenny Martinez](#) said: “You can’t generate knowledge and find truth in an environment where people aren’t free to try out ideas and challenge orthodoxy.” Whether a professor is instructed to take the word “genocide” out of a guest’s conference presentation, or a student told their speech about apartheid is equivalent to a racial slur, or “McCarthyism” identified in the recruitment and retention of faculty, we write our final report with speech on campus less free than it was on October 1. Indeed, much of the harm that Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities have experienced at Stanford relates to speech: their restricted ability to “try out ideas and challenge orthodoxy;” the hateful and discriminatory speech they suffer, and the statements the university chooses to make—or not make—about issues concerning them.

We believe this “Palestine exception” runs contrary to the stated values of the university and its leaders and is counterproductive. We simply will not be able to “[contribute to the world by educating students for lives of leadership and contribution with integrity](#)” if we teach them through our actions and our choices that there are some topics that are off limits. If Stanford signals in its admissions applications that protest is unwelcome, if teams or units engage in viewpoint discrimination, and if we have no relevant senior scholars on campus, then students will get the message: either enroll and keep quiet about Palestine, or choose somewhere else to pursue truth.

Our students need us to do better. We all need this university to do better. And indeed Stanford can do better. Current university leadership rose to the occasion by implementing and empowering this committee so we could understand and document the rupture that has taken place between MAP communities and the university. It is now our hope that this report and its many recommendations, coupled with the support of Stanford, can provide a way forward for the necessary repair needed to reimagine thriving Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian scholarly and social communities on campus. We do not need to wait for another geopolitical crisis or contentious election to once again realize that we are behind on scholarship and representation from these regions. With significant investment, Stanford can generate critical knowledge and research, foster a thriving campus for Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities and teach all students to help shape a more equitable world.

RECOMMENDATIONS TIMELINE

1 YEAR

<p>REPRESENTATION AND STRUCTURAL SUPPORT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any new essay question for undergraduate applicants does not threaten to screen out activists • Provide more support to incoming students, especially those coming from war-torn countries. • Offer five scholarships to admitted Palestinian undergraduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert the MAP Committee into a permanent Advisory Council • Provide funding and space for growth and stability of the Markaz • Expedite through VPUE and OAE the academic accommodations process for students in crisis, especially those from war-torn countries.
<p>SAFETY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify a swift process for issuing timely campus-wide emails and responses to serious harm incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow anyone on campus to opt in to DeleteMe, and make legal services available when doxxing occurs.
<p>FREEDOM OF SPEECH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with MAP experts on interpretation of Palestinian/Muslim expressions and advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not authorize either DPS or external police arrests of peaceful
<p>VIBRANT DISCOURSE</p> <p>SCHOLARSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower existing untenured faculty and staff working in the areas of Palestine and Arab studies and teaching Arabic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring three faculty members or graduate students from Palestinian universities to Stanford each year on fellowships.
<p>COMMUNICATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be consistent in communications. 	

The following table is a synthesis of our recommendations split up into one-year, five-year, and ten-year goals. In our chapters, we offer substantive details on how Stanford can accomplish each of these tasks. Our goal in presenting them as follows is to underscore that a significant investment is necessary and possible early on - within one year - and that this initial investment will enable the university to do the work required across the next decade.

- Standardize religious accommodations and spaces for Muslim students
 - Provide funding for improved and more robust mental health services through MMHI, SMMHIP, and CAPS
 - Prepare Bechtel and Immigrants Rights Clinic (IRC) in advance for another potential Muslim Ban
 - Provide funding for improved and more robust mental health services through MMHI, SMMHIP, and CAPS.
 - Direct all career services offices to take steps to protect students from employment harassment and discrimination.
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- Place a moratorium on serious disciplinary sanctions for time, place, and manner violations.
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- Eliminate viewpoint-based suppression of pro-Palestine speech.
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- Implement first year of program to bring three faculty members or graduate students from Palestinian universities to Stanford on fellowships.
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RECOMMENDATIONS TIMELINE

5 YEARS

<p>REPRESENTATION AND STRUCTURAL SUPPORT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve MAP experience in the residences by working with the Markaz to institutionalize training, policy clarification, and application, etc. • Prioritize local and global outreach to MAP students through Office of Admissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedite the creation of a MAP/ MAP-adjacent staff affinity group • Explore possible initiatives under IDEAL to recruit staff with diverse backgrounds and expertise and leverage expertise of staff from MAP communities.
<p>SAFETY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve administrative enforcement processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the transparency of student disciplinary processes
<p>FREEDOM OF SPEECH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify speech protection for all different sections of the Stanford community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise existing time, place, and manner restrictions to expand opportunities for speech.
<p>VIBRANT DISCOURSE SCHOLARSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run three well-resourced searches across three years - starting with Palestine Studies in 2025-26. • Invest in administrative support, centers, units, and academic-teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a holistic vision for a Center in Stanford Global Studies.
<p>COMMUNICATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and leverage community leaders on university-wide communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a better way of using the Stanford Report for MAP events.

The following table is a synthesis of our recommendations split up into one-year, five-year, and ten-year goals. In our chapters, we offer substantive details on how Stanford can accomplish each of these tasks. Our goal in presenting them as follows is to underscore that a significant investment is necessary and possible early on—within one year—and that this initial investment will enable the university to do the work required across the next decade.

	10 YEARS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint an ad hoc or special committee to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on both its diversity of expertise and experience and its racial and ethnic diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve data collection instruments and opportunities for more accurate demographic data on MAP communities at Stanford. • Work with the Markaz, MAP staff, and alumni to offer workshops for students who want to learn how they can enact change at the university and have a seat at the table.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish protocols restricting communicating with federal law enforcement, immigration, and security agencies. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate the Palestine exception to free speech. • Train and audit units encountering speech suppression. • Endow the fellowship program for scholars from Palestinian universities. • Make Palestine and Arab Studies the reason people come to Stanford by investing at a scale equivalent to 10 new tenured lines over a decade.

