

**Notre Dame Faculty & Staff for Justice in Palestine**  
**Statement on Notre Dame's Cancellation of Dr. Eman Abdelhadi Keynote**  
April 10, 2025

This week, the University of Notre Dame's upper administration canceled a keynote address by Professor Eman Abdelhadi, which was scheduled to be delivered at the annual Student Peace Conference organized by undergraduates in the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. **We encourage the entire Notre Dame community to [carefully read Professor Abdelhadi's letter](#)** to Keough School Dean Mary Gallagher, who was tasked with informing Professor Abdelhadi that she had been disinvited.

**We write in support of Professor Abdelhadi and her statement, of the students who invited her to speak, of free speech and intellectual openness on our campus and beyond, and of an end to the longstanding racist "[Palestine exception](#)" that excludes Palestinian people, ideas, and history from public and intellectual life.**

We call on the administration to **1) Publicly apologize** to Professor Abdelhadi, **2) Re-invite Professor Abdelhadi** to deliver her keynote on campus before the end of this academic year, **3) Clarify and revise its security policy** to end the Palestine exception to free speech and halt unnecessary policing and surveillance of campus life, and **4) Unite with other educational institutions** to collectively fight against the suppression of free speech and human rights on our campuses.

Eman Abdelhadi is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. Her award-winning scholarship has been widely published, and she is a celebrated public intellectual who frequently speaks on campuses across the US. In 2023–24, Professor Abdelhadi was a Faculty Fellow at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study. By canceling her address, Notre Dame robs our students, staff, and faculty of a vital opportunity to engage with her work and expertise.

Dean Gallagher informed Professor Abdelhadi that "the University of Notre Dame requires that all events or lectures related to Israel/Palestine have ND police security and planning. We were unaware of your planned lecture, and ... we cannot provide security at short notice." As Professor Abdelhadi emphasizes in her letter, Israel's current [genocide](#) in Gaza kills, on average, [at least 250 people](#) each day, including [dozens of children](#). Conservative estimates count more than [61,000](#) Palestinians in Gaza killed by the Israeli Occupation Forces' bombs and bullets, with [hundreds of thousands more](#) killed by the slow deaths of forced starvation and the targeted, systematic destruction of medical, water, and sewage infrastructure. Israel has simultaneously increased violent [ethnic cleansing](#) in the West Bank, the subject of the 2025 Academy Award-winning documentary *No Other Land*, which screened at Notre Dame to a sold-out Browning Cinema. A global student movement has emerged to oppose this US-funded genocide and to support Palestinian liberation, and universities in the US—including Notre Dame—have responded by mobilizing state violence against their own students. It is ludicrous

in this context for administrators to claim they were surprised to learn that a student conference on peace, which they approved months ago, would address topics related to Palestine.

More importantly, **it is offensive to suggest that our students require police presence to engage with a scholar simply because she is Palestinian and/or is speaking about Palestine.** Notre Dame academic units and student organizations have sponsored dozens of lectures, film screenings, teach-ins, and workshops on Palestine and Israel. None of these events has been disrupted or disruptive in ways that warrant police involvement. On the other hand, ND policing has itself endangered Notre Dame students who exercise their right to speak in support of Palestinian liberation, most egregiously by violently [arresting 17 of them](#) for peaceful protest and exposing them to vicious doxxing and harassment campaigns, as well as criminal charges and government surveillance. Student activists across the country are now being [abducted](#) and [disappeared](#) by the Department of Homeland Security, based on their pro-Palestine [beliefs](#). When Notre Dame police are called to “secure” a campus event “related to Israel/Palestine,” who are the police protecting, and from whom?

In her response, Professor Abdelhadi immediately recognizes the administration’s story about security as a “flimsy excuse” to cancel her address. Far from being isolated, this incident continues the university’s pattern of both canceling Palestine events after they are scheduled and denying approval for student events that seek to foster critical inquiry around Palestine/Israel. Furthermore, the university leadership now demands that all Palestine-related academic events acquire preauthorization from the Provost. Ironically, the list of cancelled and forbidden events includes a campus screening and discussion of the documentary film [The Palestine Exception](#). Like the canard of security, this is censorship at the highest level. **It is difficult to see this instance, these policies, and this pattern, as anything but anti-Palestinian racism.**

The University of Notre Dame was recently named as a target in a [Trump-led anti-DEI investigation](#). In this context, we must interrogate why **our university administration is mirroring the priorities and behaviors of a presidential administration that is explicitly using pro-Palestine student activism as a wedge to attack higher education itself.** Self-censorship will not save Notre Dame nor any institution from being dismantled by an authoritarian regime [openly committed](#) to the destruction of higher education, nor will it protect our students who are being targeted by state violence. Some [institutions](#), [organizations](#), and academic [workers](#) are challenging these actions; we encourage Notre Dame to [follow](#) their lead.

The current political and cultural landscape can make all of us feel lost when navigating what appear to be new territories. In these moments, Notre Dame administration must not be led by myopic and toxic political expediency. Instead, it must adhere to the course set by its Mission Statement that “insists upon academic freedom that makes open discussion and inquiry possible.” That Mission Statement doesn’t include an asterisk for Palestine; its policies should follow suit.