



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

Letter of Support for Student Leaders and Student Groups, and Transparency

Date: December 7, 2023

To: NYU Senior Leadership

Linda Mills, *President*

Jason Pina, *Vice President for University Life and Global Engagement*

Troy McKenzie, *Dean, School of Law*

Jelena Kovačević, *Dean, Tandon School of Engineering, Chair of Deans Council*

Rafael Rodriguez, *Dean of Students*

Lindsay Kendrick, *Dean of Students, School of Law*

Subject: Letter of Support for Student Leaders, Student Groups, and Transparency

Dear NYU Senior Leadership

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the recent threats directed towards student leaders and organizations on our campus, particularly the repeated targeting of members associated with the New York University Students for Justice in Palestine (NYU SJP). As representatives of the Student Government Assembly (SGA), we believe it is crucial to reaffirm the university's commitment to the safety, well-being, and freedom of speech and expression of all students.

The essence of a university is to foster an environment that encourages open discourse, critical thinking, and the free exchange of ideas. [Recent events](#) have raised concerns about the safety and security of students involved in advocating for justice in Palestine, particularly those affiliated with NYU SJP. It is imperative that our institution takes a firm stand against any form of intimidation, harassment, or threats directed at student leaders and organizations.

An entire school council, the Student Bar Association, SBA, resigned from their positions. As the representative body for all students, we want to ensure that law students have a voice with SGA as well as with university leadership on pressing issues. Given that we do not have either a president or a senator, SGA would like greater transparency on what that process looks like for filling those positions.

[Many of the SBA members received significant targeted harassment and death threats](#), and despite that, there has yet to be a [public statement](#) from NYU Senior Leadership acknowledging and denouncing the death threats and targeted harassment that students received.



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As student leaders, we are elected by our peers and our classmates, not administrators. Student leaders must have the ability to voice their opinions to represent their constituents. The power must be up to the student body for who represents them, not with administrators when they disagree with a statement.

Following past precedent, the University stated that people should be able to express their political views without fear of intimidation or harm on our campus and in our society. Regardless of how strong any disagreement may be, there is no place in civil dialogue for menacing or directing hate at others. SGA stands by our student leaders to express their political views.

The burden does not belong on the shoulders of the student body. It is essential that NYU Senior Leadership listens and hears concerns from all students and works to address them. It is our responsibility to demand consistent treatment from leadership to all parties affiliated with NYU, and anything less is unacceptable. This University prides itself on creating leaders of tomorrow, but it is impossible to become those leaders if we as students are not given the space and support to learn how to lead and organize, all of which are essential skills to make a difference in the world, and one for the better.

We appreciate the diverse perspectives present within our university community and understand discussions on sensitivity regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, it is of utmost importance that we emphasize the University's unwavering commitment and demonstration of the principles of free speech, academic freedom, and the right of students to express their views without fear of reprisal. Any limiting of those rights, in unofficial or official capacities, whether it be the removal of common spaces under the guise of safety or the unequal distribution of punishment to one side or the other is entirely unacceptable.

Regarding NYU SJP and its members, as well as any other members of groups who have recently felt that they have been targeted, we, on behalf of the student body, urge the university to launch a thorough investigation into the legitimacy of these threats. Given that NYU is enforcing zero tolerance, we want to ensure students are not being punished disproportionately for acts. Furthermore, SGA would like further clarity on zero tolerance and how restorative justice practices can be implemented in student conduct decisions. It is crucial that these investigations be conducted with the utmost transparency and impartiality, ensuring that no biases against any particular group, whether Palestinian or Israeli, influence the outcome. Following the investigation's conclusion, we ask that students involved be informed of any immediate actions they can take or should take for their protection—including mental health services and other University resources.



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Furthermore, we ask the University to take proactive measures to enhance the safety and security of all students on campus, particularly those engaged in activities related to social justice and advocacy. **In this regard, we ask that each school and its Deans send out similar communications emphasizing the positions that the Office of the Dean of Students, Rafael Rodriguez, and his team, take for student response.** At the very least, we ask that each school provide similar resources for student rights for demonstration and protest, as well as a heavy discouragement of fellow students conducting doxxing and harassment campaigns. By doing so, the University can send a clear message that it stands firmly against any attempts to suppress or undermine the legitimate activities of student groups.

SGA opposes, in the strongest terms, all forms of hate speech and any form of targeted harassment, including, but not limited to: the sharing of personal information, doxxing, parody accounts, individual attacks, and death threats directed toward fellow students. We also oppose anyone who would try to silence or stop other students from educating themselves about the conflict. Students should feel safe to attend protests and rallies without wearing masks out of fear of retaliation, not just from peers but from their University. Whether it is within the classroom or outside, it is the University's responsibility to foster a safe space built on communication and active listening. The university shall not suspend or expel any student or university-sanctioned club for speaking out in support of Pro-Palestinian or Pro-Israeli redirect as long as it doesn't infer direct harm towards others.

In reaffirming the University's commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment, we believe it is essential to uphold the principles of justice, fairness, and open dialogue. To that point, if you are interested in being a part of these in conversations, we encourage NYU Senior Leadership to organize and work alongside student leaders and groups on specialized pop-ups and other direct programming, whether that be in a representative capacity or one of our committees like the Diversity Committee, which is dedicated to holding our university's leaders accountable and keeping student voices at the forefront of the conversations. We trust that the administration will take swift and effective action to address these concerns and ensure the well-being of all members of our university community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to seeing the university continue to be a beacon of academic excellence, diversity, and free expression, and we promise to continue aspiring to be the leaders you all deserve.

Sincerely,

Student Government Assembly



SGA Diversity Committee

Cameron Grant, *Senator at Large for Black Students*

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