

HQ

Hands Off Toolkit

Campus Vigils for Abducted Students and Colleagues



Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Sample Blurb for Outreach](#)
- [Photos for Download](#)
- [Logistics Checklist](#)
- [Draft Social Media Content](#)

Introduction

A group of us at Columbia have banded together to resist the Trump regime's attacks on higher education and on democracy, and this includes insisting that if our university won't speak up to protect members of our community who have been abducted by ICE, we will. In the tradition of collective protest against state violence that includes Las

Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, on May 5th faculty at **Columbia, Tufts, Georgetown, Boston University, and Harvard** held silent vigils to protest the ICE abduction of our students and colleagues. We will come together every Monday until they are all freed, and we urge you to join us. This toolkit and the templates it contains can support you to organize your own similar action. You can read our [press release about the May 5 vigils here](#).

If you are planning a vigil on your campus, we invite you to join [this Signal group](#) for cross-campus sharing of resources and mutual support.

Sample Blurb for Outreach

Here is the language Columbia faculty are using to invite our community to join us:

It has been two months since Mahmoud Khalil's abduction. In the tradition of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the many other Mothers'/People's movements protesting political abduction and disappearance across the globe, faculty and staff at Columbia, Tufts and Georgetown universities are initiating a weekly vigil, holding photos of students, colleagues, and alumni – Mahmoud Khalil, Alireza Dourodi, Badar Kan Suri and Ranjani Srinivasan – who have been abducted by ICE or been forced by threat of abduction to flee the country. We demand their immediate release and return, and call for accountability and justice. At Columbia, we are no longer able to endure the silence of our leadership in the face of open assault on our institution and community members. If Claire Shipman and our Board of Trustees won't speak out to protect students, we will.

Everyone in our Columbia community is invited to join on MONDAY MAY 12, at NOON at the Sundial (Morningside) and Haven Plaza (CUIMC). Please wear black for this one-hour silent vigil.

Suggestion: have a conversation with colleagues about **message discipline** before sending out your invitation. At Columbia, we asked people **not to bring or hold signs** except for the photographs of detainees, and to keep a tight focus on **political detentions in our communities** when discussing the event. This brought out a wide crowd of colleagues including some who do not regularly attend campus protests, made it easy for people to participate, and generated **powerful visuals**.

Photos for Download

Photos of detained students and colleagues for download can be accessed [in this folder](#) within the images folder. Images have been formatted as pdf. Files marked 'Poster' are sized at 8 ½ " by 11" for grayscale printing while files marked "LargePoster" are sized at 24" by 36" for grayscale printing. The archive folder contains images of the individuals who are no longer being detained.

The labels folder contains labels that you can print out and stick on the back of posters - we have found that passersby are interested in learning about them and this is a good way to share that information while remaining silent.

Logistics Checklist

Depending on how you set up your coordination systems, these tasks could be divided up in many different ways - this is just meant to be as comprehensive a list as possible.

VISUALS

- ☐ Print photos of students and colleagues
- ☐ Get zip lock bags or other materials (you can cover the photos with clear tape) to protect photos in case of rain
- ☐ Remind participants to wear all black - the visual uniformity is powerful
- ☐ Standing solemnly rather than chatting can add to the impact of the action

TACTICAL

- ☐ Secure a permit
- ☐ Invite people
- ☐ Chairs if seating not available
- ☐ Confirm attendance by a handful at least of people in your university community
- ☐ Designate someone to be attentive to staging and location - what building is in the backdrop, how densely are people gathered
- ☐ Designate someone to collect photos after the vigil to distribute the following week
- ☐ Consider "absorption" - use these events to build a list of faculty/staff/students to participate in future vigils by creating a QR code that people can scan to fill out a form (but also think about where that information is held, for security purposes)

DISSEMINATION

- ☐ Invite local or campus press to cover your participation in a multi-campus/nationwide movement (here is the [press advisory](#) we used)
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Livestream
- ☐ Social media (suggested hashtags: #CampusVigils #HandsOff #RiseUpHigherEd)

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ Remind participants of the risks of being photographed
- ☐ Designate someone to liaise with campus security if this is likely to be an issue

Draft Social Media Content

Of course feel free to create your own!

Instagram:

Today at XXX we held vigils concurrently with schools across the country to bear witness to the ongoing detention of Mahmoud Khalil and Alireza Dourodi and absence of other scholars forced to flee the country. *[photo credit]*. See you all out there again next Monday, until everyone comes home. #CampusVigils #HandsOff #RiseUpHigherEd

Bluesky, X/Twitter:

Today, faculty and staff here at XXX and across the country held simultaneous #CampusVigils to protest the ongoing political detention of Mahmoud Khalil and Alireza Dourodi, and the termination of Ranjani Srinivasan's student visa.

These vigils will continue until every abductee comes home and every student can learn. Join us every Monday 12 pm ET. Here's our toolkit for holding your own vigil:
<https://tinyurl.com/VigilsToolkit> #HandsOff #RiseUpHigherEd

PARTIAL LIST OF STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS SUBJECT TO ICE PERSECUTION

Rümeysa Öztürk, Tufts University
Mahmoud Khalil, Columbia University
Mohsen Mahdawi, Columbia University
Yunseo Chung, Columbia University
Badar Khan Suri, Georgetown
Alireza Dourodi, University of Alabama
Rasha Alawieh, Brown University
Xiaotian Liu, Dartmouth
Ximena Arias-Cristobal, University of Georgia
Momodou Taal, Cornell University