

CCSU IJC & CCSU SJP

Open Letter Regarding CCSU's Response to the Ongoing Palestinian Genocide

April 11th, 2024

**To the Central Connecticut State University Office of the President, and Other
Administration,**

INTRODUCTION:

We, the undersigned student organizations at Central Connecticut State University, feel incredibly disappointed, disheartened, and neglected by the administration's response to the atrocities in Gaza and Occupied Palestine. As we advocate for justice, human rights, and solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide, we find it deeply troubling that the administration has failed to address the ongoing human rights crisis and systemic violations of international law in Palestine. Students have expressed their concerns with CCSU's complicity both publicly and behind closed doors, yet the administration has reaffirmed and furthered their complicity. We urge the administration to listen to the voices of its students, stand on the right side of history, and take concrete steps towards promoting justice and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom and self-determination. While we have outlined in this letter the growing list of demands for Palestinian justice on campus, we most importantly would like to see the administration:

1. Call for a permanent ceasefire and reject the conflation between Zionism and Judaism, in a public written and verbal statement, recognizing its urgent importance in promoting a safe campus environment.
2. Continue to improve the need for diverse professorship that mirror student demographics, and publicly report on the progress towards that goal.
3. Publicize the details of CCSU's endowment and divest from companies that supply to and profit off of Palestinian genocide and Israeli apartheid.
4. Make any proclaimed safety procedures for "controversial" club events optional, empowering clubs to determine what's best for the safety and well-being of their community.
5. Publicly release past and future annual reports from the President's Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion along with follow-up reports.
6. Create a President's Commission on Islamophobia and Palestinian Education.

I. ACKNOWLEDGING THE ONGOING GENOCIDE AND REVERSING INSTITUTIONAL "NEUTRALITY"

The language consistently used by CCSU can be characterized as an ostensible commitment to neutrality and false sensitivity towards "all sides." This behavior perpetuates a broader

dehumanizing, normative, and colonialist discourse that marginalizes, undermines, and neglects the experiences of communities globally, including, but not limited to, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Black, Jewish, and anti-Zionist students.

CCSU's neutrality is symptomatic of years of insufficient social and academic support for such students on campus. It is imperative that the administration's support is proactive and substantive, as opposed to empty, reactive messages. Instead, such support should be a continuous goal integrated into all aspects of campus life, actively promoting students' safety and well-being.

Advocacy for Palestinian liberation is undoubtedly in line with the university's own core values which include commitments "to social responsibility to promote the public good" and to collaboration "with our legislators, industry, and community partners." CCSU has a responsibility to advocate for our legislators funding things like higher education, housing, and public transportation to benefit our students, rather than funding genocide.

As such, we demand that the administration:

- Issue a public statement acknowledging and condemning the ongoing actions of the Israeli government in Gaza as genocidal.
 - Acknowledge the numerous international and federal law violations the United States is committing, according to [Veterans for Peace](#) (including The Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, The Foreign Assistance Act, Arms Export Control Act, The U.S. War Crimes Act, The Leahy Law, The Genocide Convention Implementation Act).
 - Call on our Connecticut legislators to support H.Res. 786, Ceasefire Now Resolution, and legislation that ends funding for this genocide.
- Retract the University's stance of neutrality, as evident in all of the communications released thus far, and reject the conflation of Judaism with Zionism. (Re: "Recent tragedies in the Middle East," Oct. 10th, 2023; "Community Update re: Task Force Committee on Anti-Semitism and Education," Nov. 6th, 2023; "My Team and I are listening," Nov. 22nd, 2023)
- Create a President's Commission on Islamophobia and Palestinian Education, and require all members to read and address the [Rutgers Report](#).
- Make any proclaimed safety procedures for club events optional, with approval required from the associated club. (E.g. Police presence, sign-in sheet, moving event location, etc.).
 - Propose any such precautions clearly with various options, including an option to reject the precautions, the option to take any or all proposed precautions, and alternatives to the safety precautions (such as faculty support, club-run safety procedures, de-escalation advice, etc.).

- Propose such precautions with at least 24 hours in advance of the associated event, with the option to change the decision at any point including during the event.
- Include along with proposing such precautions or procedures the exact reasoning for doing so and which department/administrator is responsible for the proposal.
- Prioritize public support for vulnerable groups as an effective proactive safety measure, particularly in light of potential risks such as doxxing and targeted harassment from Zionist organizations such as the Canary Mission

II. INSTITUTIONALIZING ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

To counteract the pervasive tendency to whitewash the teaching of history and race, it is paramount for CCSU to ensure proper academic representation. CCSU has officially recognized the need to improve the diversity of faculty and has been making many Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion changes between the Office of Equity and Inclusion and the President's Commission on DEI. Despite these efforts, there remains a critical need for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of our institution to better reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of our student body. It is essential that CCSU continues to prioritize these efforts and remains committed to fostering an environment where all students feel represented, valued, and empowered in their pursuit for higher education. Most importantly, CCSU must remain open about these efforts and accountable for their progress.

Therefore, we also demand that the administration:

- Organize more events aimed at educating the campus community on Palestine, including the historical context of settler colonialism and apartheid, and the impact of western imperialism today, with responsible consultation from relevant student organizations and faculty.
- Publish a comprehensive report each year outlining the measures undertaken to foster a diverse professorship that reflects the demographic of our student body, including an assessment of progress.
- Hire more Middle Eastern and Palestinian professors who have contextual knowledge and expertise for courses taught in Middle Eastern studies.
- Recognize and highlight the achievements and contributions of students and faculty of color beyond heritage recognition months.
- Publicly release to the campus community all previous and future annual reports from the President's Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as well as annual follow-up reports on what recommendations were or weren't implemented and details on specific actions taken.
- Teach through academic curriculum about the impact of colonization by Western imperialists on the oppressive occupation of Palestine over the last 100 years in Middle Eastern studies courses.

- Encourage every academic department to include diverse topics that highlight the underrepresented contributions of people of color.

III. CONFRONTING FINANCIAL COMPLICITY

CCSU's complicity with the ongoing genocide is rooted in the status quo of settler colonialism and reinforced through financial policy. Thus, it is imperative that CCSU actively confronts and be cognizant of the institutional impact of such dispositions. As concerned students, we demand transparency to gain insight into how all sources of university funding are allocated. We request that the university conduct a thorough public investigation into its investments to ascertain any potential complicity in actions such as genocide and apartheid. This call for transparency is essential for us to understand our financial contributions' impact and ensure alignment with ethical and moral standards.

Finally, we demand that the administration:

- Make fully transparent the sources that fund CCSU's endowment, along with the associated amounts.
- Publish a complete list of all CCSU endowment portfolio holdings, and divest from corporations supplying and profiting off of Palestinian genocide.
- Adhere to the targeted boycott and divestment calls set forth by the Palestinian BDS National Committee:
 - End and reject any contracts with Hewlett Packard (HP), [which helps run the biometric ID system that Israel uses to restrict Palestinian movement](#).
 - Remove Sabra products, an Israeli food company that provides financial support to the Israeli Occupation Forces, from campus, including Devil's Den.
 - Refrain from establishing any affiliations or partnerships with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) given their history, which includes advocacy for Zionism and a track record of undermining social justice organizations like the Movement for Black Lives.

Respectfully,

CCSU Students for Justice in Palestine and CCSU Intersectional Justice Coalition

THIS LETTER IS ADDITIONALLY ENDORSED BY THE FOLLOWING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS:

Anthropology Club
 Arab Student Council
 Black Student Union
 Cybersecurity Club
 Helix Literary Magazine
 The Omicron Chapter of Lambda Alpha Upsilon Fraternity Inc.

PRIDE Club

Schlock Improv Club

Social Work Club

Sociology Club

Sustainability Club

Tabletop Gaming Club