



February 6, 2024

Re: Retaliation against UCSF community members for their advocacy for Palestinian life

Dear President Drake, Chancellor Hawgood, Vice Chancellor Lucey, and Dean King:

We write as community and civil rights organizations to support the UCSF faculty, staff, and students who have [already expressed](#) their grave concern about your attacks on freedom of speech and academic freedom at UCSF.

Your actions to suppress and punish members of the UCSF community who oppose the genocide against Palestinians creates an anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and Islamophobic hostile environment for faculty, staff, learners and patients at UCSF. Your actions also punish employees for speaking up against violations of the US and international human rights laws and discriminate based on political opinion.

On January 6, UCSF retaliated against your own internationally renowned professor of medicine Rupa Marya for her inquiry into the health impacts of Zionism as a supremacist ideology. Dr. Marya is an [expert](#) on [health equity, colonialism and health, and the health impacts of racism](#). As a global expert, it is her role to critique institutional discrimination and violence against people of color and other marginalized groups in healthcare systems. Dr. Marya was engaged in this role when she asked the public to consider how Zionism as an ideology of supremacy presents in healthcare institutions and how it impacts patient safety, as other ideologies of supremacy do, such as anti-Black racism and patriarchy.

In retaliation against Dr. Marya for expressing her concern about racial and ethnic discrimination in medicine, on January 6, UCSF launched a coordinated social media attack, making malicious and false accusations of antisemitism. UCSF issued a statement which, while it did not name Dr. Marya explicitly, nonetheless was a clear reference to Dr. Marya and a dog whistle inciting trolls across social media to threaten and harass her and call for her firing. We are alarmed that UCSF did this when their leadership was already aware of death threats and other racist harassment she had received in November because of her vocal advocacy to stop Israel from bombing Gaza's hospitals.

The UCSF statement erased Dr. Marya's clear motivation to protect the lives of Arabs, Palestinians and other people of color and instead concluded with no basis that her inquiry must be a conspiracy theory against Jews. In fact, Dr. Marya's inquiries are one example of a long career dedicated to ending systemic racism. Dr. Marya's critiques are plainly contextualized in the ongoing [genocide](#) committed by Israel [with US complicity](#). Dr. Marya followed her inquiry about supremacist ideology in medicine with a clear statement making a principled distinction between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. It is a malicious distortion to equate her criticism of state-sponsored genocide or her criticism of the Zionist ideology with criticism of Jewish doctors or Jews as a religion or people.

Once UCSF publicized the false allegation against Dr. Marya across multiple social media platforms (X, LinkedIn, Instagram), it was shared at the same moment by Medicine Department Chair Bob Wachter and Vice Chancellor Catherine Lucey. California State Senator Scott Wiener reposted Dr. Marya's statement, [misrepresenting her views](#), and naming her and her employer as UCSF. An account associated with the [Canary Mission](#) shared it, sending their trolls after her as well. [Canary Mission](#) is a blacklisting website with ties to Israel that targets, discredits and destroys the careers of US academics who are critical of Israel and supportive of Palestinian rights, by framing them as antisemitic. Canary Mission has been broadly [condemned](#) as a hate website and has been funded by UCSF's major donor, the [Helen Diller Foundation](#). We are concerned about the excessive influence of right-wing pro-Israel politicians and donors on a

public institution that is supposed to be protecting the civil rights of its faculty and students, not protecting the interests of a foreign government.

We are also alarmed but not surprised to hear the testimony from UCSF faculty reporting:

*students, staff and faculty who have expressed support for Palestinians and criticism of Israel's violence have been silenced, have been told to take off their cultural clothing at work, have been doxxed with delayed support from UCSF's leadership and have received hateful emails into their work inboxes. The emails Marya received through her UCSF email—which Vice Chancellor Lucey was alerted to—included phrases like “kill yourself you retarded grifting n*gger,” “jew baiting c*nt” “White people are the greatest people on Earth. You know this.”*

In spite of UCSF leadership being aware of these attacks, they participated in online harassment that drove more attacks against Dr. Marya.

This climate of retaliation against people who criticize Israel's targeted violence against Palestinians and Gaza's healthcare system not only targets Dr. Marya herself. The retaliation sends a clear message to the many other anti-racist students, faculty, and patients at UCSF who may wish to speak out for Palestinian humanity, or generally speak out against supremacist ideologies in health care. They hear a clear warning message from UCSF that they will be threatened and punished for calling out systematic racism. It is the responsibility of UCSF under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to address the hostile anti-Palestinian climate it has created.

The actions of UCSF described herein also violate the California Fair Employment and Housing Act's requirement to provide a workplace free of discrimination and harassment, and the retaliatory actions violate the California Labor Code provisions prohibiting retaliation for an employee's political opinion or opposition to unlawful activity.

We support the demands of UCSF faculty and urge UCSF to immediately cease further unlawful retaliation against UCSF community members for their advocacy for Palestinian life, to immediately take measures to address the anti-Palestinian hostile climate on campus, and to promptly share documentation regarding the influence on the university from donors who fund Israeli violence and are pushing for the erosion of civil rights protections at our public institutions in order to shield Israel from criticism.

Sincerely,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Center for Constitutional Rights

Civil Liberties Defense Center
Council on American Islamic Relations, San Francisco Bay Area (CAIR-SFBA)
Defending Rights and Dissent
Jewish Voice for Peace
Jewish Voice for Peace Bay Area
Muslim Advocates
Oaklaw Cooperative
Palestine Legal
Partnership for Civil Justice Fund
Project South