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September 27, 2021

**Via Email**

██████████  
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
██████████

Re: Students for Justice in Palestine UIC

Dear Provost ██████████,

I represent Students for Justice in Palestine UIC (SJP”). The purpose of this letter is to ensure that the group and its members are not retaliated against for their political, speech, and associational activities, and that the university take appropriate action to protect them from discrimination and harassment. If I should follow up with any other office within the University, please let me know. Otherwise, I will assume that your position gives you sufficient authority to honor our demand.

As you should know, last year UIC student ██████████ used UIC’s internal procedures and on behalf of Students for Justice in Palestine UIC and its members filed: (1) a discrimination complaint through your bias reporting tool on May 17 and (2) a complaint with your Office for Access and Equity on May 26. The filings complained of discrimination on the basis of national origin, political affiliation, and race/ethnicity. The complaint was based on the treatment of SJP members, many Palestinian, at a virtual public lecture at the School of Public Health about Israel’s healthcare system during the pandemic. Several students were immediately kicked out of the lecture when they raised questions about vaccine apartheid against Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. The complaint also raised the problem of broader anti-Arab racism on campus.

SJP requests that you: (1) respond to their complaints alleging violations of their First Amendment rights and UIC policies, as well as discrimination on the basis of national origin and race/ethnicity, (2) protect– to the fullest extent – its members from any retaliation in connection with their association, speech, and complaints, and (3) ensure that their First Amendment rights and their right to be free from further discrimination and political targeting are protected going forward.

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Of particular concern, in response to SJP's political, speech, and associational activities last spring, Canary Mission prepared and published a "Report on SJP University of Illinois, Chicago" in August of this year.<sup>1</sup> That "report" appears to be a concerted attack on SJP and its members in response to their attendance at and critique of the School of Public Health event last spring. The "report" goes on to identify by name and picture 32 SJP members or past members, publicizing personal information, making racialized false accusations and decontextualizing social media posts in order to present them in an unfavorable manner and encourage doxing by Canary Mission followers. The majority of these past and present SJP members are young Palestinian, Arab, and/or Muslim women. Canary Mission's tweets about [REDACTED] UIC SJP's President, generated responses with threats against her of sexual assault.

Canary Mission presents itself as "documenting individuals and organizations that promote hatred of the USA, Israel, and Jews on North American college campuses."<sup>2</sup> In reality, it is an anonymously run website whose purpose is to dox and blacklist individuals who support Palestinian human rights. The website has been widely condemned as a defamatory intimidation tactic to undermine lawful advocacy for Palestinian rights.<sup>3</sup> SJP and its members engage in standard political speech activities on campus to advocate for the freedom and rights of Palestinians. Accusations that it is a hate group are part of concerted efforts to undermine the human rights movement, of which SJP is a part.<sup>4</sup>

We trust that UIC will not tolerate any retaliation against SJP students for their political, speech and associational activities, and that it will take appropriate action against UIC-affiliated persons who do, including by working with Canary Mission in connection with its "report."

Further we ask that you provide SJP a letter condemning the preparation and publication of the Canary Mission "report" that targets UIC students for harassment in order to ruin their reputations and career prospects, condemn Canary Mission's tactics of inciting harassment and violence against Arab and Muslim students of color in particular, and committing to protect SJP's free speech and refusing to take any action against SJP or its members because of their political activities, speech, and associative activities. We urge you to follow the lead of other

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://canarymission.org/campaign/SJP\\_University\\_of\\_Illinois\\_Chicago](https://canarymission.org/campaign/SJP_University_of_Illinois_Chicago).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://canarymission.org/about>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2018/04/18/exposing-canary-mission/>; <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/against-canary-mission/>; <http://againstcanarymission.org/what-is-canary-mission/>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://ccrjustice.org/the-palestine-exception>.

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academic institutions in protecting students and academics who advocate for Palestinian rights from such political attacks.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, it is our understanding that the right-wing pro-Israel group, StandWithUs, known for its attacks against even pro-Israel groups that don't sufficiently support Israel's actions,<sup>6</sup> has used Canary Mission's report as the basis of a complaint to the University, calling on you to take retaliatory action against SJP or its members in connection with their political viewpoint, speech, and associations. We demand that you in no uncertain terms denounce any such request as being unlawful for you to act upon and contrary to UIC policies, that you refuse to make any statements that would chill First Amendment protected speech, including by implying that critiquing Zionism is antisemitic and that you reject and condemn the harassment and doxing of your students by outside political groups.

Please let me know by close of business October 8 if you will meet these demands.

Truly,

s/ Michael P. Persoon

Michael P. Persoon

Cc SJP



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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., [https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/\\_files/reports/rm-jn-canary-mission.pdf](https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/reports/rm-jn-canary-mission.pdf); [https://www.law.cuny.edu/newsroom\\_post/statement-on-palestinian-activism/](https://www.law.cuny.edu/newsroom_post/statement-on-palestinian-activism/); <https://equity.ucla.edu/crosscheck/dialogue-over-demagoguery/>.

<sup>6</sup> SWU works with the Israeli government to smear and demonize Palestinian activists, and to undermine BDS movements. See <https://forward.com/news/146821/standwithus-draws-line-on-israel/>. They have published false claims of antisemitic statements from Palestinian activists (see <https://mondoweiss.net/2011/12/right-wing-attack-group-caught-fabricating-quotes-in-effort-to-smear-critics-of-israel/>), threatened companies and colleges with lawsuits for endorsing a boycott (see <https://electronicintifada.net/content/uncovered-israels-role-planned-us-lawsuit-fight-bds/10350>); held demonstrations at which Palestinians and people of color were called pigs and kapos (see <https://muzzlewatch.org/2010/06/07/stand-with-us-members-shout-pigs-for-palestine-threaten-activists-in-san-francisco/>), and produced a racist comic book, which features "Captain Israel" and depicts Palestinians as vermin (see [v https://mondoweiss.net/2011/01/out-of-answers-on-how-to-confront-bds-standwithus-comic-book-portrays-palestinians-and-allies-as-vermin-reminiscent-of-nazi-propaganda/](https://mondoweiss.net/2011/01/out-of-answers-on-how-to-confront-bds-standwithus-comic-book-portrays-palestinians-and-allies-as-vermin-reminiscent-of-nazi-propaganda/)).