

4/3/2019

Mail - Urgent: Security Fees for Black-Palestinian Solidarity Event Tonight at 8pm



Urgent: Security Fees for Black-Palestinian Solidarity Event Tonight at 8pm

Radhika Sainath [REDACTED]
To: deankhurana@fas.harvard.edu
Cc: kodair@fas.harvard.edu

Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 2:13 PM

Dear Dean Khurana,

I'm writing on behalf of Harvard College's Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) to express concerns about a \$300 security fee being charged to PSC for [an event](#) on Black-Palestinian solidarity featuring Marc Lamont Hill, Dr. Cornell West and Dima Khalidi after Harvard determined the panel to be "controversial." The event, which was approved on March 26, is scheduled to take place **tonight at 8pm**.

Yesterday, at 5:22 pm, Associate Director of Student Services and Resources JonRobert Bagley emailed PSC stating that, "[i]n light of some recent news," he would attend the event and "sit in the audience as an observer." The email stated:

If there is a disruption that I feel violates someone's free speech, I will warn the individual and hope the conversation continues. If the disruption continues I will ask the person to leave. With this, we will be required to have an HUPD [Harvard University Police Department] presence on sight. This will be billed to the organization.

In a follow-up conversation, a student with PSC asked what Harvard specifically believed was controversial about the event. Bagley mentioned that certain speakers were deemed controversial, including Marc Lamont Hill and Omar Barghouti, a founder of the boycott movement for Palestinian rights, who was scheduled to speak at a PSC event via Skype on April 6. (The event is currently being rescheduled for other reasons.) When the student asked if PSC had an option not to pay, Bagley stated that PSC was obligated to pay.

It appears that Bagley's statements were made as a result of a campaign, over the weekend, by Harvard Hillel to pressure Harvard's Undergraduate Council (UC) to deny funding to PSC for its [Israel Apartheid Week events](#), which are scheduled to take place this week. In its letter to UC members, Hillel complained that the word apartheid was "inflammatory" and argued that funding PSC's events – which include a mock replica of Israel's apartheid wall, a screening of the documentary 1948, a talk on origins of the boycott movement for Palestinian rights, and a performance by Palestinian poet Remi Kanazi – would have "significant consequences. . . on the Jewish community at Harvard."

Harvard's [Free Speech Guidelines](#) state that it will determine "whether protection of free speech at an open meeting requires security measures" and that "*the University will fund these measures*" (emphasis added). According to news reports, Harvard unilaterally [paid](#) the security costs for Charles Murray, notorious for peddling racist pseudoscience. As such, it is unclear why PSC is being charged security fees, which not only disparately impacts PSC, but raises free speech concerns as well. As Bagley made clear, PSC is facing this charge not because of any action the group has taken, but out of concern that there may be an effort to disrupt the event. Harvard is in effect giving those who oppose Black-Palestinian solidarity the power to act as gatekeepers by imposing a financial barrier to PSC's event.

Please provide us with an explanation of why PSC is being charged this amount, any articulated standards used to determine the amount of the fee charged to student organizations, an explanation of why the fee is not being covered by Harvard, as the rules state, and whether Harvard will permit tonight's event to go forward should PSC decline to pay the security fee.

Assessing security fees based on the potential hostile reaction of anti-Palestinian groups threatens the free speech principles to which Harvard claims to adhere.

Please respond by 3:30 pm EST.

Best,

Radhika Sainath

--

Radhika Sainath
Senior Staff Attorney | Palestine Legal
Cooperating Counsel | Center for Constitutional Rights
PalestineLegal.org

Phone: [REDACTED]



This message may contain confidential or privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, please advise the sender immediately by reply email and delete this message and any attachments without retaining a copy. This email does not by itself establish an attorney-client relationship, and may not constitute legal advice. Thank you.