



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

STUDENT AFFAIRS

JEFFREY L. GRAY
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

January 20, 2017

Maria C. LaHood
Deputy Legal Director
Center for Constitutional Rights

Radhika Sainath
Staff Attorney
Palestine Legal
Cooperating Counsel
Center for Constitutional Rights

Dear Ms. LaHood and Ms. Sainath,

Father McShane asked me to respond to your letter to him dated January 17, 2017, concerning the University's decision to deny club status to a group of students at our Lincoln Center Campus, seeking to align themselves with Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

The decision to deny the request to form a club known as Students for Justice in Palestine at Fordham University was based on the fact that chapters of this organization have engaged in behavior on other college campuses that would violate this University's student code of conduct. For example, the Fordham University code of conduct would not permit students to disrupt public speaking events. Rather than supporting free speech at those events, SJP's actions at other campuses have actually attempted to restrict speech. Such behavior is antithetical to our values and code of conduct.

When asked to change the name of the proposed club and to distance themselves from the national organization, our students declined to do so. The University is under no obligation to grant club status to a group of students who choose to affiliate with an organization that engages in behavior that is inconsistent with the University's code of conduct. I have very serious concerns about the prospect of allowing an external organization to encourage disruptive conduct on campus that could adversely impact our students and our campus community.

Fordham University has no registered student clubs the singular focus of which is the political agenda of one nation, against another nation. For the University's purposes, the country of origin of the student organizers is irrelevant. The narrowness of SJP's focus makes it more akin to a lobbying organization engaged in overt political activities focused on a single issue.

I want to emphasize that the University will protect the ability of all of our students to voice their political views--including the students involved in attempting to organize a Fordham chapter of SJP. But that political dialogue must take place within the norms of civility set forth in the University's code of conduct.

Towards that end, I and my staff would welcome the opportunity to meet with these students to facilitate an appropriate forum for debate on the issues confronting Palestine and the Palestinian people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey L. Gray', written over the printed name.

Jeffrey L. Gray
Senior Vice President for Student Affairs

Cc: Joseph M. McShane, S.J.