

My name is Siddharth Nelluri, and I am a senior who has been involved in the IU community since 2020. The recent attempts to silence protests in solidarity with Palestine on campus are simply unacceptable to me, and I am certain that many others feel the same.

Officially, around 40,000 people in Palestine have been killed since October 7th with over 80,000 injuries, yet a recent study estimates that these numbers are a severe undercount and the true death toll may truly be 186,000. This is 8% of the entire population of Gaza. 8%. I hope this number can illustrate to you why I, and many others, have such a strong opposition to the university's keen support for Israel and Crane Naval Base, which supplies Israel with weapons used as tools in the ongoing Palestinian genocide.

Despite the months of protests against the current University administration's complicity in genocide, culminating in the establishment of an encampment on Dunn Meadow at the end of the 2023-24 school year as a symbol of solidarity with those displaced in Gaza, there has been virtually no effort from the administration to meet with protestors. Why is it that the administration would rather go through the lengths they have gone to stifle this public dialogue and defend their investments in global violence than make any effort to address the concerns of their community? Beyond the proposal draft of this new Expressive Activity policy, which is plagued with vague wording and targeted attempts to quell the pro-Palestinian encampment set up on Dunn Meadow, IU has also made a number of personnel changes within their administration, Board Of Trustees, and Police Department. While this may paint the picture of an administration addressing flaws in their system, the truth is that the administration is scrambling to make any effective statement on mistakes they have committed since October 7th when it comes to protecting the rights of their students and faculty.

I have been strongly in support of Palestine for many years now, but only first attended peaceful rallies and vigils for the Palestinian cause after the recent events of October 7th. The huge outpouring of support for Palestine I saw on campus and abroad was inspiring to me, and I had felt more hope for the future of not only my generation, but future generations around the world. However, the impact of my hope was then blunted by the university administration's reaction to these social justice events which, let me remind you, were peaceful, educational, and intended to protect the Muslim and Palestinian communities in Bloomington. I was deeply saddened to see the cancellation of Palestinian artist Samia Halaby's exhibition in the Eskenazi museum, I was also ashamed to see the unjust suspension of Professor Abdulkader Sinno, which the IU Faculty Board of Review confirmed was carried out by violating IU policy.

Professor Sinno was suspended after reserving a room to host a talk with Israeli-American and pro-Palestinian activist Miko Peled. To carry out this suspension, many corners were cut by Vice Provost Carrie Docherty to avoid input from the Bloomington Faculty Council and Faculty Misconduct Review Committee, likely because these groups would view the suspension as an impediment on the rights to free speech. Such hasty decision-making not only speaks to the incompetence of the administration, but

to the outright disrespect and ignorance they hold for the cause of Palestinian Liberation and their pro-Palestinian students and faculty, many of whom are Palestinian or Middle Eastern themselves.

There are no cultural centers for Muslim or Middle Eastern students or faculty on campus. There have been a few other instances in which Muslim and Palestinian students and faculty on campus have faced threats of violence, or actually been attacked, without any meaningful support or response by the University. I firmly believe that the reason for this was because the university feared political backlash or allegations of anti-semitism for daring to advocate for their pro-Palestinian students, but nobody on these grounds should be made to feel so unsafe and dismissed by an administration they entrusted to protect them.

The excessive violence that I witnessed over social media and in the news against those opposing the university's silence and complicity during this ongoing genocide face in April was incredibly shocking to me. I did not think that the administration would go so far to stifle a peaceful event in support of those who are already being killed by the thousands each week. It has left me shaken, and even more paranoid.

IU's Expressive Activity policy fails to mention if and how police force will be deployed against protestors, this is a massive oversight in the wake of months spent of Indiana University's Police Department and Indiana State Police inflicting excessive violence, intimidation tactics, and invasions of privacy against peaceful protestors. In this moment, it is increasingly clear that the university has no interest or care at all for those most at harm in their community. Even those involved in Indiana University's Student Government have voiced concern that the policy draft fails to mention how they would be involved in decision-making processes. The current FUSE government has not endorsed the policy for these reasons, describing it as a restriction of student and faculty's rights to free expression.

If Indiana University does not have the decency to allow their own Student Government the right to expression, what hope is there for the rest of us? What hope is there that the university will fairly approve which structures and protests can be set up on Dunn Meadow without fear of public and political backlash? What hope is there that the students and faculty who have time and time again been made to think that the university they have entrusted to protect them has no regard for their rights or safety will be considered? If Indiana University and their Board of Trustees rush to approve this policy, knowing that there is more than considerable disapproval on behalf of their community, what hope is there for them? How can we go on trusting them to govern our university and represent us?