

An Open Letter to President Pines: One Standard for Hate on Campus

October 16, 2026

Dear President Pines,

We write as University of Maryland faculty, members of Faculty Against Antisemitism and For Free Speech (FAAFS) and others. On October 13, you sent a [message](#) to the campus community about the club tennis team's tournament flyer, which replaced the Crossland quarters of the Maryland flag with an image that resembled Ku Klux Klan hoods. You called it deeply harmful and offensive. The team was suspended and the case went to campus police. We thank you for recognizing the harm that students' errors in judgment have inflicted on Black or African American members of our community.

We ask for the same acknowledgment for our community members who are Jews. Over the past week we read the public Instagram feed of UMD Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a registered student organization, going back to 2021. What follows is some of what SJP wrote and published statements that many if not most Jews would interpret as glorifying as October 7th, 2023 murder, rape, and torture of Jews:

1. Four days after the October 7th massacres, [SJP wrote](#) that October 7 "did not occur in a vacuum" and that "Palestinians rose up." (October 11, 2023)
In our view, these statements served to justify the mass murders perpetrated by Hamas on October 7th, 2023. In Arabic, Hamas's political statements speak of 'Zionists.' But its founding charter, its [fighters](#) on October 7 that "rose up", and familiar protest chants name the target plainly: Jews.
2. When the university tried to cancel SJP's October 7 event, the organization [promised](#) to "mark this one year of genocide and one year of resistance," and told its followers that "Zionists on this campus celebrate the death and destruction of Palestinian life." (September 2, 2024)
In our view, these statements constituted a libel against Jewish students at the University, and a false claim about Israel's war of self-defense.
3. This month, on a poster framed by the Arabic chant "with soul and blood we redeem you, Palestine", SJP's [October 7 agenda](#) promised to "honor all our martyrs." (October 5, 2026)
In our view, the statement "honor all our martyrs" celebrates the actions of the Hamas murderers and rapists of October 7, 2023.
4. [SJP renamed](#) the Jewish student group Students Supporting Israel "Students Supporting Genocide." (October 18, 2025)
SJP [accused UMD Hillel](#) of welcoming "those with Palestinian blood on their hands" and

urged the university to “cut ties with Zionist leaders and institutions.” (December 2, 2025) Students [gathered](#) outside a room of Israeli invited speakers, banged on the doors and shouted in an effort to disrupt the talk. Significant police presence was required to protect the speakers, who needed to be escorted with a police line through a back entrance into an unmarked police car. Students reportedly were chanting for an intifada, in reference to the Palestinian Intifada in which hundreds of suicide bomb terrorists engaged in a campaign of murder of Israeli civilians.

We view the false accusation of genocide hurled against Israel as itself a form of antisemitism and a contemporary form of an ancient blood libel against Jews. Moreover, the need for police actions indicates that the behavior of the protestors was threatening and potentially dangerous. It was also clearly racist.

5. SJP [co-published a post](#) tying “the Zionist settler colonial project” to Jeffrey Epstein's “depraved circle of wealthy elites.” (February 26, 2026)
Over many centuries, antisemites have made accusations of sexual improprieties against Jews; this statement of SJP stands in that long and despicable tradition.
6. SJP [sold sweatshirts](#) printed with an inverted red triangle, under the slogan “Within Our Lifetime.” (January 22, 2025). Hamas uses the red triangle to mark buildings that are targeted to murder Jews. Using this symbol clearly conveys a threat of physical violence targeted against Jews.
7. Beyond the activities of the SJP, last year the student government scheduled a vote on a Boycott, Divest, and Sanction [Israel] (BDS) resolution for Rosh Hashanah, then [moved it to Yom Kippur](#), both significant Jewish holidays. A speaker defending the dates dismissed the objectors as “Zionists and Jewish exceptionalists.” The full record, with links and the reasoning for each item, [is here](#).

Some will say these posts attack Zionists, a political category, while a Klan hood attacks a race and threatens harm, thereby justifying suppression by the University. We contend that both instill fear in minority communities. The activities of any hate group, such as public marches and publications that threaten the safety of speakers, publications, and of violent terror itself, are not just inherently political, but also cause great harm among the targeted group.

We also note that the activities of SJP, and indeed the racist imagery on the tennis flyer, offend and cause harm to two central tenets of Jewish belief and the foundational ethics of Jewish civilization. A core idea in Jewish thought is that every human is created in the “image of God”, an idea that directly led to this country's founding premise that all men are created equal. For religious Jews, Zionism represents the return to Zion, literally Jerusalem, that Jews have prayed for since their exile from the land of Israel in the 8th century B.C.E. For Jews generally, the Land of Israel and Jerusalem are inalienable features of the Jewish people's story, history, culture, and civilization.

The state of Israel was conceived as and remains a necessary response to the existence of Jew-hatred in the world. Both Jews and non-Jews recognize calls to destroy the state of Israel as a threat to the lives of ten million Israelis. This amounts to a call for mass murder. That is not only bigotry. It is a form of incitement prohibited by the UN Genocide Convention of 1948.

The [Faculty Against Antisemitism and For Free Speech](#) views SJP as an [extremist](#) and [antisemitic](#) organization which makes clear that it favors the destruction of the state of Israel, the home to 50 percent of the world's Jews. A call to destroy the state of Israel by force of arms is perhaps the most important form of [antisemitism](#)--that is, hatred of Jews--evident in world politics today. Thus, SJP is a hate group comparable to the KKK and neo-Nazi organizations, even though it masks its intentions by (mis)using the language of human rights and liberation to justify its calls for killing Israelis and Jews.

In this sense, SJP's rhetoric constitutes antisemitism and hate speech. Certainly, valorizing the murder, rape, and kidnapping of Jews, women, children and families passes the "perceived harm" standard you have employed this week with regard to the implications of the tennis team's flyer. By comparison, SJP's rhetoric is even more explicit. And it may well serve to incite not just verbal but also physical violence against Jews on campus. Just one example of how this works: the May 2025 murderer of Yaron Lashinsky and Sarah Milgrim outside the Capital Jewish Museum chanted "Free Palestine."

In fact, what SJP causes is much worse than perceived harm. An organization's rhetoric both reveals and incentivizes specific goals. In tolerating SJP's valorization of the massacre perpetrated by Hamas, UMD is assisting crimes against humanity. Hamas has sacrificed its fellow Gazans with its "human shield" strategy, operating from hundreds of miles of tunnels under residential buildings, hospitals, schools and mosques. The organization has a long record of killing or maiming any fellow Gazans who oppose them. Given these practices in addition to the atrocities of October 7, 2023 and the organization's commitment to repeat October 7 ten thousand times, Israel is acting within its basic human right to self-defense to pursue any Hamas member, who has not surrendered. At the same time, SJP, by condemning Israel's actions is, in effect, endorsing crimes against humanity.

The university has [condemned previous expressions of antisemitism](#) on campus, namely, the slogan "Holocaust 2.0" chalked at an SJP rally in November 2023, and then an image targeting a specific Jewish student [this past March](#). We could, however, find no statement from you about any of the recent hateful actions listed above all of which either celebrate one of the most vicious displays of murderous and sexual violence perpetrated against Jews in severy year, or draw on explicit and transparent antisemitic tropes. All of these actions were taken by members of our community as part of a registered student organization or as members of the student government.

In our prior communications and at a meeting with the university council, we were informed that free speech allows for objectionable speech *unless the target is an individual*. While the imagery in the tennis flyer is patently objectionable, it is not clear how it targets a specific individual--yet the university saw fit to condemn it. The actions we have listed above amount to threats against some six thousand Jewish students on this campus, all of whom, in the view of the SJP, fall under suspicion of supporting the existence of the state of Israel. As with the tennis flyer, the threats in the antisemitism posts were not aimed at any one specific individual. Why, then, were the same criteria not used to condemn those threats?

Respectfully, then, we ask that the university policy be made more explicit, so that it will be clear whether all forms of hate speech, or only certain types, are acceptable on our campus. To this end, we respectfully request two changes:

1. **Publish and reconcile the standard with principles of freedom of speech.** This policy should clearly state how and when the impact of hateful rhetoric on the university community is judged to warrant an overrule of the principle of freedom of speech. For example, if a club were to reserve McKeldin Mall, and have its members march around in robes, what would be the appropriate reaction that balances our educational research missions with free speech?
2. **Apply the standard consistently to every group.** This policy means addressing the posts above as you have done with the tennis club flyer, or explaining to the community how that flyer differs to avoid using a double standard. In the case of the tennis team, you made a decision on what you thought was the content, not only the effect or intent, of the image. If that is the standard, we fail to see how you could arrive at a different conclusion regarding the SJP statements and images, and thus we urge you to judge their dangerous content.

We would be happy to meet with you and talk through these complex issues, which clearly have implications for a significant segment of the University of Maryland community.

Respectfully,

Brent Goldfarb, Dean's Professor of Entrepreneurship, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Jeffrey Herf, Distinguished University Professor, Emeritus, Department of History; Acting President, Faculty Against Antisemitism and for Freedom of Speech

Gilad Chen, Professor, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Peter M. Carruthers, Distinguished University Professor, Department of Philosophy

Charles W. Clark, Fellow Emeritus, Joint Quantum Institute

Marco Colombini, Professor Emeritus, Department of Biology

Jonathan Crocker, Clinical Professor

Rellie Derfler-Rozin, Professor, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Arthur M. Eckstein, Professor of History and Distinguished University Professor Emeritus

Mark Freidlin, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, Department of Mathematics

David Fushman, Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Bruce L. Golden, France-Merrick Chair in Management Science, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Neil Goldsman, Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Judith Peller Hallett, Professor of Classics and Distinguished Scholar-Teacher Emerita

David Kirsch, Associate Professor, Robert H. Smith School of Business

David Loshin, Research Engineer, Applied Research Lab for Intelligence & Security (ARLIS)

Armand Makowski, Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Marla McIntosh, Professor Emerita, Distinguished Scholar Teacher, Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture

Sonya Michel, Professor Emerita of History

Michael Padhi, Associate Clinical Professor, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Nick Seybert, Associate Professor, Department of Accounting and Information Assurance, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Phillip Sprangle, Professor, Dept. Electrical & Computer Engineering, Physics & IREAP

Uzi Vishkin, Professor, The University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies (UMIACS) and Electrical and Computer Engineering

Emanuel Zur, Associate Professor, Robert H. Smith School of Business