

Office of the President of the Columbia University

Friday, April 26, 2024

Subject: Upholding Pro-Palestinian Student Rights and Ensuring Humane Treatment during Protests

Dear President Shafik,

I trust this letter reaches you in good health. As the President of Columbia University, you hold a pivotal role in shaping the academic environment and safeguarding the rights of pro-Palestinian students. Today, I write to address an urgent matter that requires your collective attention: the recent pro-Palestinian student protests on the campuses of Columbia University.

First and foremost, let me express my unwavering support for the right to peaceful protest. Your students are the heart and soul of this institution, and their voices deserve to be heard. Their passion, idealism, and commitment to positive change are essential for the growth and progress of your university community.

However, recent events have raised concerns about the treatment of protesting students. Reports of physical aggression, intimidation, and excessive force have surfaced, tarnishing your reputation as an institution that values respect, empathy, and inclusivity. As we navigate these challenging times, I urge us all to uphold the following principles:

- 1. Non-Violence and Respect:** We unequivocally prohibit any form of violence against your students. Physical harm, whether inflicted by security personnel or any other party, is unacceptable. Your commitment to non-violence extends to all members of your community, regardless of their stance on any issue.
- 2. Dialogue and Understanding:** Let us foster an environment where open dialogue prevails. Encourage students to express their grievances, opinions, and aspirations through peaceful means. As administrators, we must actively listen, engage, and seek common ground. Your doors should remain open for constructive conversations.
- 3. Humanity and Kindness:** Every student is an individual with unique experiences, challenges, and dreams. Let us treat them with kindness, empathy, and compassion. A humane approach ensures that your actions align with your core values and the principles of justice.

4. **Protection of Student Rights:** The right to protest is constitutionally protected. We must safeguard this right, ensuring that students can express themselves freely without fear of retaliation. Your security personnel should be trained to de-escalate situations and protect student well-being.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Transparency builds trust. Any incidents involving student protests should be thoroughly investigated, and accountability upheld. We owe it to your students, their families, and the broader community to maintain transparency in your actions.

President Shafik, I implore you to take decisive steps to reinforce these principles. Let us work collaboratively to create an environment where students feel safe, respected, and empowered. Your legacy as an institution will be defined not only by academic excellence but also by your commitment to justice, fairness, and compassion.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that, together, we can uphold the dignity of your students and ensure that their voices resonate within the hallowed halls and campuses of Colombia University.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ahmad Lameei

President of the University of Birjand

Islamic Republic of Iran