

## **Bias, Malice, or Both: Disproving UW President Ana Mari Cauce's False Accusation of Pro-Palestinian Students Being "Antisemitic"**

Today, May 31, 2024, is the 237th day of an ongoing genocide in Palestine. More than [36,000](#) Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been murdered by Israel. [Hospitals](#), [universities](#), [cities](#), and [environments](#) have been completely decimated, and [massacres of civilians-turned-refugees in Rafah using US-manufactured weapons](#) are ongoing. Meanwhile, credible international sources including the [International Court of Justice](#) and the [International Criminal Court](#) have condemned the Israeli government's use of [starvation](#), [aid restriction](#), [human rights violations](#), and [chemical warfare](#) as weapons of war against people in Gaza.

[Students across the US](#), and at the [University of Washington](#), have demonstrated themselves as willing to stand in strong solidarity with Palestinians, and are demanding that their institutions address their own complicity in the Israeli government's decades of human rights violations. The [Liberated Zone and Popular University for Gaza](#) (LZ) established at the University of Washington (UW) is proof of this passion manifesting in Seattle. Members of the UW community have publicly showcased their commitment for ending the UW's valuation of the military-industrial complex as more important than its own community, and are continuing to campaign for 1. UW to academically and financially divest from complicit corporations, 2. UW to cut ties with Boeing, and 3. UW to end the repression of pro-Palestinian voices on campus.

Yet, despite the impassioned pleas of the community, the UW has refused to take significant action addressing its complicity in the ongoing genocide. In fact, UW administration has been actively harmful in how it has characterized pro-Palestinian members of the community. In an [email sent by UW President Ana Mari Cauce](#) on May 15th, President Cauce called chants and signs in the UW Liberated Zone "vile and antisemitic," citing evidence UW admin had received. This accusation was deeply troubling to pro-Palestinian protestors for a variety of reasons. First, members of the LZ consistently worked to make the LZ a space that is accepting to all community members that support Palestinians, including Jewish members of the community.

Even more troubling was President Cauce's justification for her accusation. It took multiple emails requesting photographic evidence of what President Cauce determined to be antisemitic for her to provide any "proof." Of the [multiple images](#) President Cauce sent, only two provided alleged proof of antisemitism. However, these images were **not** even from the University of Washington. In fact, a 30-second Google image search showed that the images the President used to justify her harmful email from May 15th were from [Florida](#) in 2021 (Figure 1a, b) and [California](#) in 2019 (Figure 2a, b).

Additionally, President Cauce's definition of "vile" includes any messaging targeting Zionists and colonizers directly, as she seemingly feels like people who identify as such should be

openly-accepted members of the UW community. The University administration has gone as far as to platform white supremacists and Zionists, arguing that they should not be personally condemned for their harmful rhetoric.

This suggests the UW and the President are acting either with malicious intent or are fully incompetent. More likely both are true, and evidence suggests that the President has caused harm to the UW and its community through these actions and lack of forethought. Such incompetence includes not being able to do even a cursory investigation of images which were easily confirmable as not being from UW, Washington state, or even this year. Or, more damningly, the President and administration acted with malicious intent towards pro-Palestinian student activists at the UW by using images they knew were not from the UW to further the rhetoric that Pro-Palestinian activism is inherently antisemitic. Regardless of malicious intent, the President and the UW used these images to attack pro-Palestinian activists at the UW. Antisemitism is a real threat to individuals at the UW, and the lack of response or investigation, yet the blind blaming of a group of students, is a gross abuse of power showcased by administration and the office of the President. If the President truly cared about student safety, these two images would have been investigated with the same level of scrutiny and importance that has been placed on pro-Palestinian community. Instead they were used to perpetuate false and unfounded accusations against the Liberated Zone and its members. This lack of investigation by President Cauce's office in this accusation and the images she based her May 15th email on is a failure to the safety of UW students, faculty, and staff.

The falsehoods widely spread by President Cauce have not gone without immense harm on members of her own community. **Notably, labeling the pro-Palestinian movement as antisemitic without verifiable evidence has caused harmful rifts in the campus community, and put student activists in physical, academic, and social danger.** The night of the May 15th email, a drone flew over the Liberated Zone playing loud music, and crashed into the Quad; that same night, a [firework was intentionally launched from a building into the Liberated Zone](#). These events paralleled the lead-up to the [police-supported mob that attacked the UCLA camp](#). Additionally, the administration's words and inactions across the course of the past 7 months have fueled aggressive counter-protestors, including highly-publicized attempts to invade the campus and threats to "[buzzsaw](#)" through the LZ. Meanwhile, these statements have tainted the reputation of activists and granted Zionists false legitimacy to berate any pro-Palestine people at the UW. For example, during the May 30th Faculty Senate meeting, a senator stated they would not vote to divest, citing Cauce's email evidence that pro-Palestinian protesters are antisemitic. This list is not comprehensive, as many community members have been threatened with academic consequences, attacked for wearing kuffieyehs, and doxxed for standing in solidarity with Palestine.

Clearly, pro-Palestinian members of the UW are undeserving of being labeled as “vile and antisemitic” by the President. What is truly vile is the ways proponents of Zionism have falsely and maliciously tried to discredit a movement protesting documented human rights violations. It is shameful and embarrassing that the administration of the UW became the driving force of this malice. **President Cauce should retract the May 15th email and issue a public apology.**

But through this institutional adversity, members of the UW community standing in solidarity with Palestine have demonstrated their steadfast commitment to seeing the end of the University’s complicity in genocide. This includes continued pressure to cut ties with the military-industrial complex, demonstrating community support for divestment through a [community petition](#), and uplifting of pro-Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim voices in the face of repression.

The movement for liberation will not stop until Palestine is free!

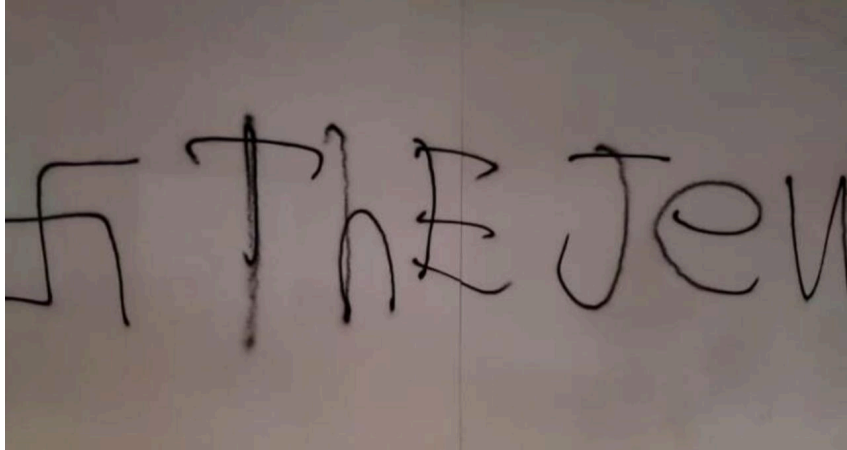


Figure 1a: Image sent from President Cauce as “proof” of antisemitic graffiti.



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## Hundreds rally against hate, anti-Semitism post-graffiti at Florida Holocaust Museum

Toni Rinde, a Holocaust survivor, said, “We in our museum try to explain hate. We teach how to be an upstander. When you see wrong being done, we teach: Fix that wrong.”



Vandalism discovered at the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, May 2021. Credit: Courtesy

Figure 1b: Result of image search, showing this image is from Florida, 2021.



*Figure 2a: Image sent from President Cauce as “proof” of antisemitic graffiti.*



*Figure 2b: Result of image search, showing this image is from California, 2019.*