



M. Elizabeth Magill  
President  
The Trustees University Professor

September 20, 2023

Mr. Jonathan Greenblatt  
CEO and National Director  
Anti-Defamation League  
605 Third Avenue  
New York, New York 10158-3650

Dear Mr. Greenblatt:

Thank you for our conversation on Monday, September 18, 2023, and your follow-up letter yesterday, which I appreciate. I write to describe some immediate steps that Penn is taking in response to concerns raised about some of the speakers invited to the *Palestine Writes Literature Festival*. These steps are intended to support the Jewish community at Penn and to combat antisemitism.

First, though, I want to underscore what I shared during our call on Monday. Especially at this moment where we are all witnessing a dramatic rise in antisemitic incidents, including on college campuses, I am personally committed more than ever to addressing antisemitism in all forms. The University of Pennsylvania has a long and proud history of being a place for people of all backgrounds and faiths, and acts of antisemitism have no place at Penn.

On September 12, 2023, I, along with Provost John L. Jackson, Jr., and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Steven Fluharty, released a University [statement](#) on the *Palestine Writes Literature Festival*. Intended to be an important and welcome showcasing of Palestinian art and culture, the inclusion of some speakers in this festival, prominently Roger Waters -- who has been condemned by (among others) the U.S. Department of State for a long history of denigrating Jewish people -- is deeply offensive, misaligned with the festival's stated purpose, and stands in direct opposition to our institutional values. As you know, Penn's commitments to open expression and academic freedom are central to our educational mission. This is true even -- and especially -- when keeping those commitments is most challenging.

Since learning details of this event, I, and my leadership team, have engaged deeply with our community to listen to and address their concerns and importantly, to support our students. We have taken a series of actions that we believe align with the four pillars of *The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism*:

- Pillar 1: Increase Awareness and Understanding of Antisemitism
- Pillar 2: Improve Safety and Security for Jewish Communities
- Pillar 3: Reverse the Normalization of Antisemitism and Counter Antisemitic Discrimination
- Pillar 4: Build Cross-Community Solidarity and Collective Action to Counter Hate

Specific actions we have taken include:

- University leaders convened meetings with academic leaders in the School of Arts and Sciences and student leaders to discuss concerns about the festival. As part of this outreach, University leaders have met with student representatives from Penn’s Hillel as well as with students who are interested in Palestinian art and culture.
- University leaders have – and will continue to – work in close partnership with the leadership of Penn Hillel to address concerns, provide support, and reinforce a whole-community approach to combatting antisemitism.
- University leaders have worked with School of Arts and Sciences leadership to clarify that students are not required to attend the *Palestine Writes Literature Festival*.
- Penn’s Division of Public Safety provided increased security to Penn Hillel for Rosh Hashanah services and also conducted special checks at the off-campus Lubavitch House. In advance of and through Yom Kippur, the Division of Public Safety will continue to provide enhanced security coverage. Additionally, University leaders are actively working to determine appropriate security measures for Jewish students who reside in on- and off-campus housing.
- In the University’s [statement](#), Penn stated that we “unequivocally – and emphatically – condemn antisemitism as antithetical to our institutional values.” The Sachs Program for Arts [Innovation](#) and the [Department of Cinema and Media Studies](#) also issued statements to clarify their roles in the festival and to condemn discrimination and hate.

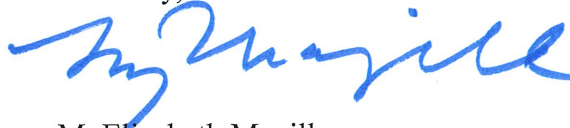
Our commitment to countering antisemitism on Penn’s campus extends far beyond this event. There is more we can and will do to continue to create an environment where all members of our community can thrive and succeed. We will look to the *U.S. National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism* as we do this work. For now, let me identify several specific steps we are taking:

- We will review and build upon our existing training and education programs to ensure we are including antisemitism awareness as part of our equity and inclusion programs for faculty, staff, and students and, in conducting this education, we will refer to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, the working definition of antisemitism adopted by the 31-member states of IHRA, including the United States. As part of this work, we will continue to ensure that our community is knowledgeable and aware of University policies and federal, state, and local laws that prohibit discrimination, including acts of antisemitism.

- We have initiated a review of the process by which groups external to Penn can reserve space and host events on campus.
- We will redouble our work with student organizations and other groups to encourage efforts to understand the interconnectedness of different forms of bigotry and oppression. The Interfaith Service for Penn's MLK Symposium and Baccalaureate Ceremony are two examples of University-sponsored programs that focus on celebrating different faith traditions. We will continue working with the Office of the Chaplain and the Division of University Life to bring people together to learn from and with one another.
- As we implement these measures, we will continue to evaluate and pursue additional actions to counter antisemitism on our campus. We will engage Penn's faculty whose scholarship is grounded in this work, and we will seek the advice and insight of organizations, like yours, the IHRA, and other organizations working on antisemitism and the implementation of the important recommendations of the *U.S. National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism*.

The University of Pennsylvania remains unwavering in its commitment to combatting antisemitism and supporting our Jewish community, and people of all faiths and backgrounds. I am grateful for your continued partnership in our relentless pursuit of this shared responsibility.

Sincerely,



M. Elizabeth Magill  
President  
Trustees University Professor and Professor of Law  
University of Pennsylvania