

UCI HECKLERS

UCI Muslim students are not the victims

Editor's note: This week the Register received 46 letters in favor of bringing criminal charges against the 11 UCI Muslim Students who protested against Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren, Feb. 8, 2010 at a UCI event. Only two letters favored not bringing the charges. To weigh in on this issue or any other one send a letter to letters@ocregister.com. The Register encourages all views and perspectives. See more letters about this subject on our Letters Blog at letters.ocregister.com.

HISTORY OF THE DISPUTES

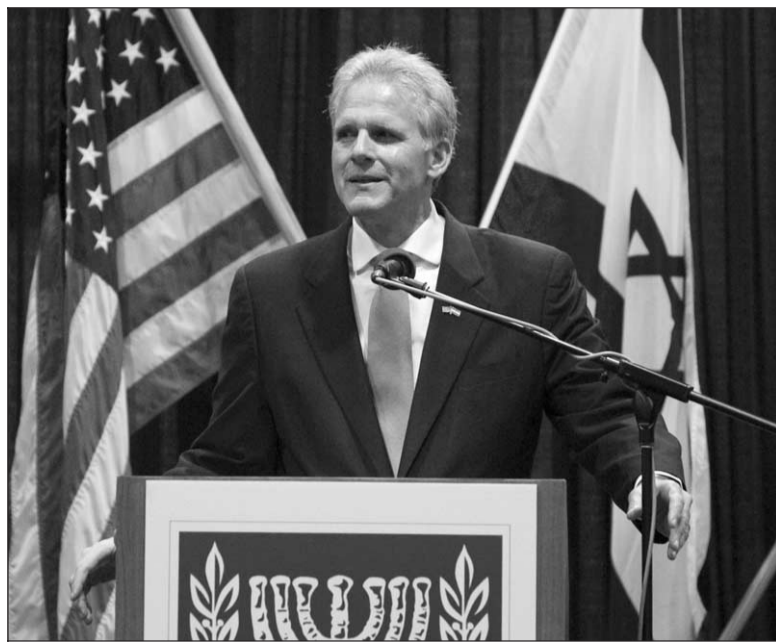
The UCI Muslim Student Union students are a very disciplined, radical group dedicated to changing public opinion by creating hatred toward Israel and the Jews through the importation on campus of the world's most vile hate mongers like Amir Abdel Malik-Ali during "hate week" using our First Amendment rights to spew their poison.

Foreign Islamists dedicated to our destruction, are suspected as the source of funding for the speakers. According to a Sept. 22, 2009 letter from the Zionist Organization of America to the Chief Campus Council of UCI Diane Fields Geocariss, MSU has violated UCI rules and regulations with impunity and the organization has been protected by the political correctness mentality of the University administration.

On May 22, 2008 Pajamas Media reported that Shariah Law was attempted to be enforced on campus when its reporter was told by Dean of Student Services Sally Peterson that no one could photograph any Muslim female on campus. Later, a person taking campus pictures of a procession, including Muslim females was reportedly attacked by four MSU members.

According to the Zionist Organization of America memo it also appears money was raised during the week of May 21, 2009 by MSU speaker George Galloway that eventually found its way to Hamas, a U.S. listed Terrorist organization. The University took no action.

With more than 500 people in attendance, the UCI administration could not ignore the planned attack on Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren Feb. 8, 2010



THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Israeli ambassador, Michael Oren, above, gives a lecture at UCI, Feb. 8, 2010 that was interrupted by Muslim Student Union hecklers. O.C. District Attorney Tony Rackauckas has now brought criminal charges against the students for disrupting a lawful meeting.

to prevent him from speaking. As usual, the MSU lied about their careful planning and staging of the disturbance, but their e-mails to each other proved their guilt.

MSU members used the First Amendment to bring in hate speakers and then violated it to stifle free speech.

The MSU members are not being prosecuted because they are Muslims, but because they repeatedly violate U.S. laws. These folks are not victims, but people dedicated to undermining Western democracy and Western freedoms.

Erwin Skadron
San Clemente

The sympathy expressed for the "Irvine 11" would be understandable if their disruption of Ambassador Michael Oren's speech were truly a spontaneous and isolated incident ["11 students arrested at UCI protest face charges," Local, Feb. 5]. It was neither. I wonder why no action was taken when this same organization defied university rules by holding a fundraising event for George Galloway, a known Hamas supporter. The preparation for receiving donations was obvious. Anyone who follows George Galloway knows exactly where that money went.

I applaud the actions of District Attorney Tony Rackauckas

and urge the O.C. Grand Jury to investigate this matter.

Linda Cone
Yorba Linda

LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE CASE

I was appalled at UC Irvine Law School Dean Erwin Chemerinsky's opinion piece Feb. 9 saying that the District Attorney's office should not pursue criminal charges against UCI Muslim Students Union members ["Don't prosecute UCI hecklers," Orange Grove].

Chemerinsky acknowledged that, "The school's Muslim Student Union orchestrated a concerted effort to disrupt the speech, " and "the students behavior is wrong and deserves punishment." He then offers the most perverse objections to the DA defending the First Amendment rights of the speaker and the public. He says they should not be prosecuted because of "scarce resources" that "criminal prosecution makes the students into martyrs" and, the worst objection, "criminal prosecution should be a last resort and used only when there are injuries or destruction of property of serious threat of harm."

As a law professor he should know that violating civil rights rarely involves destruction of property of physical harm. Using his logic anyone could come into Chemerinsky's classroom and

shout him down on a daily or weekly basis and be confident knowing that they will never be arrested or prosecuted.

Jim Bieber
Santa Ana

I am struck by the irony of the Dean exercising his right of free speech to urge the district attorney to compromise a sworn duty to uphold the law under his jurisdiction, while the DA is in the process of protecting the right to free speech.

On what grounds should the DA capitulate from pressing charges? What severity level of disruption would it take warrant the time and expense of a criminal investigation, Dean Chemerinsky, to justify DA action? Disruption of a speech by Queen Elizabeth II?

He also notes that, if found guilty the defendants would then have criminal records and could not get into graduate or professional school or gain employment. Are these fine, upstanding young people we are talking about or people who have, in fact, have earned criminal records by their behavior?

Norman Witkin
Santa Ana

JEWISH MINORITY TARGETED

The 11 Muslim students and their supporters attacked Michael Oren's speech in a hateful way. This group of Muslim students and their supporters purposefully and conspiratorially targeted the decorum of the meeting with the sole purpose of preventing a peaceful discourse by Oren and his audience.

A letter to the district attorney by a civil rights organization made the following statement: "The [D.A.'s] probe seems to target a select group," and "minority or disfavored groups receive a disproportionate and selective application of the law."

Furthermore, Saint Anselm of Canterbury Episcopal Church is "perplexed," stating a fear that "it could further polarize the community and generate further suspicion of Muslims."

Perhaps the Muslims should have thought of that before they targeted what is rapidly becoming "a select minority or disfavored group."

Cheryl Herbstman
Irvine

JEWISH IN NAME ONLY

The Jewish voice for peace is nothing more than a socialist/communist group that is Jewish in name only based out of Oakland - that haven for conservative Jewish thought ["Jewish group lends its support to Muslim students facing charges" News]?

You should have quoted Aron Hier, a respected voice of the Jewish community. Shame on the Register.

Allan Lynch
Anaheim

UNDERDOGS? HARDLY

Why are so many back-peddling about the disruptions at UCI during Ambassador Michael Oren's speech ["Faculty seek to dismiss case against Muslims," Local, Feb. 10]?

It was an outrageous attack on free-speech. The students were suspended by UCI for one quarter and are now on probation. Now they face legal charges anyone else would face in a similar situation. Yet somehow the "Irvine 11" have become poor underdogs. If we don't safeguard free-speech rights and if we fail to prosecute violations, such disruptions could become the norm.

Suspension with probation is a "slap on the wrist," and will not bring any real change. Maybe criminal prosecution will.

Laurie Lairson-Lacourciere
Costa Mesa

APPALLING BEHAVIOR

I was appalled by the behavior of these so-called students. Their behavior denied both the speaker and the audience the ability to listen to Ambassador Michael Oren, which went against everything we stand for in America.

Are any of these 11 students receiving government aid to attend school?

Vivian Schwartz
San Clemente

TURNING THE TABLES

Regarding O.C. Register "11 students arrested" [Local, Feb. 5]: I wonder what stance these 11 Muslim students would take if one of their imams was rudely interrupted by anti-Muslim protestors while speaking to the UCI student body?

H. A. "Hal" Fischer
Yorba Linda

UCI protestors must not be singled out

Editor's note: On Feb. 4 The Register received and posted this newsworthy open letter to Tony Rackauckas on our Letters Blog.

The letter was sent to us from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Greater Los Angeles Area. The statement concerns the 11 members of the Muslim Student Union who protested Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren's speech at UCI Feb. 8, 2010. Below is an edited copy of the letter and only the first three of the 29 signatories below. To see the full text and all 29 O.C. organizations that support this joint statement, see our Letters Blog at letters.ocregister.com or ocregister.com/opinion



REGISTER PHOTO

Protesters hold signs outside the O.C. District Attorney's office Feb. 1, 2011 urging no charges be pressed against 11 Muslim Student Union student protestors.

confirmed that the OCDA was actively investigating the events of February 2010, we have strong reason to believe that your office is planning to indict with felonies some of the students who protested Ambassador Oren.

By writing this, we no means seek to unreasonably interfere with the exercise of your prosecutorial discretion. But we feel it only appropriate to comment on what we feel would constitute a proper regard for justice.

We are intimately interested in the proper use of our constituents' tax dollars and our coun-

ty's limited resources. With so many of the above challenges, can the office of the OCDA seriously afford, in terms of money and staffing, to pursue charges against students who were involved in a university protest?

We fervently regret that the OCDA's investigation of the event has risen to the level of grand jury proceedings, and we have no alternative but to believe felony charges would be excessive. First, the students non-violently and verbally protested a university-invited speaker. The students left the event peacefully, and conducted themselves in less of a disruptive manner than some of the counter-protesters, all of which is readily apparent from the video footage available online. Such protests are common to university campuses, where the exercise of free and dissident speech is the bedrock of our democratic process. It is our understanding that the Muslim Student Union and possibly some of the involved students have already been reprimanded by the UCI administration.

The events of Feb. 8, 2010, occurred at UCI, at a UCI jointly-sponsored student and administration event, and the young people in question were or are students. Mr. Oren was able to finish his speech, the event concluded; the impact of the disturbance did not resound beyond

the halls of that evening's event.

While we acknowledge that crimes can and do occur on college campuses, we are hard-pressed to understand why a University-specific situation, which was thoroughly dealt with by UCI administration, would require the OCDA's reopening of the matter, particularly by investigating it as a felony crime.

As District Attorney, it is within your discretion to determine society's interests in seeking punishment of certain offenses. Over the years, there have been countless instances of non-violent protest activities during campus speeches, including at UCI, with no comparable criminal prosecution. By criminally prosecuting one set of protestors and not others, including the counter-protesters at the same event, who cursed, threatened and even assaulted the students, these indictments would be singular. O.C. citizens would understand from your office's actions that minority or disfavored groups receive a disproportionate and selective application of the law, while the integrity of the office of the OCDA as well as the justice system would be profoundly undermined.

Most importantly, indicting these students would have a severe chilling effect on the exercise of free speech on campuses and elsewhere. Because the right

to freely express oneself, particularly against government policies, is a cherished freedom protected by our Constitution, only in very narrow circumstances may these activities be subdued by state action. At the same time, prosecuting these students may in fact lead to more disruptive and perhaps violent forms of political protests, since less non-violent and less disruptive protests would by this new precedent carry nearly the same criminal exposure.

Our vision for Orange County is that it be a place where all faith groups are treated with equal respect and due process of law, where no political viewpoint is penalized, and where all of our public officials and offices utilize their stations to promote these ends. We therefore request that you assist in ending what we believe to be an unnecessary and excessive response to the events of February 2010 by exercising your discretion to not indict the students on criminal charges.

Eric Altman, Executive Director, Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development

Salam Al-Marayati, President, Muslim Public Affairs Council

Chuck Anderson, President ACLU Chapter, Orange County; Chair, The Peace & Freedom Party, Orange County

ABOUT THESE LETTERS

Letters reflect all points of view and are selected for clarity, substance and brevity (150 words). Sentiments expressed on any single issue are published in proportion to what is received, which changes daily. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited and used in print or digital form. All letters become property of the Register. E-mail: letters@ocregister.com. Mail: Letters, The Register, P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana, Calif. 92711-1626. Fax: 714-796-3657.

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