



American Association of University Professors

New York State AAUP Conference

October 29, 2020

Dr. Andrew Hamilton
President
Office of the President
New York University
70 Washington, South Square
New York, NY 10012
Andrew.Hamilton@nyu.edu

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear President Hamilton,

The New York State Conference of the American Association of University Professors (NYSC AAUP) wishes to echo the call made by our National officers for your administration to make a strong and clear response to Zoom in relation to its censorship of the planned October 23 webinar.

As we understand it, a San Francisco State University webinar in September featuring Leila Khaled was canceled at the last minute by Zoom, Facebook, and other platforms carrying the event. When USACBI, an organization supporting an academic and cultural boycott of Israel, called for Oct 23 online protests of this cancellation of the SFSU event, Zoom pulled the one at NYU as well. That NYU event was to feature a number of prominent advocates, such as Fred Moten, Katherine Franke, Radhika Sainath, and Andrew Ross.

Coming back to the original SFSU event, Khaled is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Lawfare Project seems to have told Zoom that they would be liable under 18 US Code 2339B (Providing Material Support or Resources to Foreign Terrorist Organizations) if they carried the SFSU event. Zoom capitulated, undermining free speech on its platform, with no legal ruling.

That Zoom would then double down and also cancel the NYU event, is truly disturbing – particularly without consulting the NYU administration. Zoom is a private corporation, not an educational institution, but they are contracted by colleges and universities. This pandemic circumstance has muddied the distinction between the university and the platform. Should Zoom be condemned for canceling the NYU event? Yes, we believe so.

While we have little expectation that Zoom or any other private platform will fully protect dissent, we hope a strong response from the NYU administration provokes a critical reflection on how academic

freedom is impacted when we turn over our "learning systems" from the classroom to the private sector. As AAUP National has suggested, we hope you will reach out to other college and university presidents and work with them to ensure that Zoom and other private providers cannot exert veto power over legitimate university activities and classes in violation of academic freedom

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Rose Kubal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being the most prominent.

Mary Rose Kubal
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Cc: Katherine Fleming, Provost, New York University
Rebecca Karl, President, NYU AAUP Chapter
Irene Mulvey, President, National AAUP