

November 13, 2023

Dear Law Firm Leaders, Management, and DEI Teams,

We, the undersigned bar associations, appreciate that many of you raised concerns about anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and racism in a letter sent to law school deans on November 1. Like you, we also stand against hate and bigotry of any kind and are concerned about their rise in the United States and abroad. We were dismayed, however, that other than a brief reference to Islamophobia, your letter seemed to focus almost exclusively on addressing anti-Semitism. The letter unfortunately missed the opportunity to equally express concern for members of the Palestinian and Muslim communities who have been experiencing significant discrimination, harassment, silencing, hate, violence, and fear in the current social climate. Firms have made genuine efforts to promote more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments, and it is in that spirit that we felt it necessary to raise the concerns of our communities and seek to promote more inclusive environments.

For the last month, Arab, Christian, Israeli, Jewish, Muslim, and Palestinian communities here in the United States have been experiencing tremendous loss and pain. There are no words that can fully capture that experience, and it is essential that we remember the human side of the conflict. On top of that horrific trauma, our communities are facing brutal violence, dehumanizing rhetoric, and disparate treatment in our workplaces, schools, and daily lives. Reports of discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims, Palestinians, and Arabs have skyrocketed. On October 15, a six-year-old Palestinian-American boy, Wadea Al-Fayoume, was viciously [murdered](#) and his mother was critically injured in Chicago when they were stabbed repeatedly by their landlord, who yelled “You Muslims must die!” On November 3, an Arab Muslim student at Stanford University was [rammed](#) with a truck in a hit-and-run by a man who yelled “f*** you and your people.” Just recently, House Republicans [introduced](#) a bill that would ban and expel Palestinians from the United States. Across the country, supporters of Palestinian human rights have been facing [harassment](#), intimidation, death threats, workplace or school discipline, and other reprisals. Many have [concluded](#) that this atmosphere harkens back to McCarthyism.

These attacks have been driven by hate and bigotry, and fueled by tolerance for anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic rhetoric. They do not happen in a vacuum. They happen in an environment in which many Palestinians and those advocating for their basic human rights have often been dehumanized and unfairly branded anti-Semitic or terrorist sympathizers. Hate and bigotry have no place in our communities.

Unfortunately, we have also seen some in our own legal community contribute to this environment of Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment. In the days following October 7, some firms issued internal and external statements standing in support of Israel. In the weeks since, some of the same firms have refused to even acknowledge the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians, even though employees at their own firms have loved ones in Gaza who were killed, in some cases by the dozen. Some firms also raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of Israel but failed or refused to raise money for humanitarian assistance for innocent

Palestinians. Openly one-sided support for Israel has inherently ostracized Palestinian employees and employees from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing intense pain and only desire to express peaceful advocacy for Palestinian rights in their private lives. That the November 1 letter was sent to law school deans and focused primarily on anti-Semitism also contributes to an environment of chilling speech advocating for Palestinian human rights. Taken together, the message being sent is that Israeli and Jewish lives matter, but Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim lives do not.

Law firms' commitments to fostering inclusive environments are undermined when firms take a one-sided approach to the current crisis. Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and other legal professionals, including many attorneys of color and Jewish attorneys, are terrified to openly express sympathy for the plight of Palestinians for fear of retribution. Many legal professionals of Palestinian or Arab heritage, or who identify as Muslim are even afraid to reveal their heritage or religious affiliation to their colleagues. Thus, some firms' uneven treatment of this highly sensitive issue is sadly dehumanizing Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim lives, creating a workplace that is less inclusive, less welcoming, and more hostile toward these underrepresented groups.

Firms must make space for *all* of their colleagues. To do so, firms should take the following steps:

- Work with us to issue a new letter to law school deans addressing Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian hate and bigotry.
- Acknowledge the equal humanity of Palestinians and Israelis, and equally condemn the killing of all civilians, Israeli and Palestinian, in any internal or external statements.
- Create safe spaces and direct channels to firm leadership so attorneys and staff can be supported and heard.
- Implement educational programs on Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian hate and bigotry.
- Engage in pro bono opportunities aimed at combating Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian hate and bigotry.
- Express support for the fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution for the freedom of speech and the right to peacefully assemble without experiencing intimidation, harassment, hate, bigotry, retaliation, or discrimination.

We invite you to partner with us to implement these important steps. Contact us at AllianceforInclusionandJustice@gmail.com. We look forward to working together to foster more inclusive environments for all of your employees.

Very truly yours,

National Bar Associations

American Muslim Bar Association

National Association of Muslim Lawyers

Regional Bar Associations

Bay Area Muslim Lawyers Association

Capital Area Muslim Bar Association

Dallas-Fort Worth Muslim Bar Association

Georgia Association of Muslim Lawyers

Muslim Bar Association of Chicago

Muslim Bar Association of Houston

Muslim Bar Association of New York

Muslim Bar Association of Southern California

New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association

North Carolina Muslim Bar Association

South Asian Bar Association of Houston