

## **An Open Letter In Support of Professor Abdulkader Sinno**

Contact: Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac

Cell Phone: (812) 345-1586

Email: [isaac@indiana.edu](mailto:isaac@indiana.edu)

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Indiana University has [suspended a tenured faculty member](#), Associate Professor of Political Science Abdulkader Sinno, for assisting a student group, Palestine Solidarity Committee, in sponsoring a lecture on a matter of public concern.

The suspension comes as IU and other universities are under pressure to curtail free speech over the Israel-Palestine conflict. A violation of university due process and long-standing principles of faculty governance, the suspension is also a serious threat to civil liberties and academic freedom. A group of IU faculty members has come together to express support for Professor Sinno, to demand his immediate reinstatement, and to sound the alarm, because this suspension is a dangerous precedent of concern to everyone who cares about free speech on U.S. campuses and in the U.S. more generally.

The faculty letter below is being circulated to all Indiana University faculty members at all of IU's campuses. In less than 24 hours it has already garnered almost 200 signatures. Linked [here](#), all IU faculty members are strongly encouraged to read and sign it.

This morning the local AAUP chapter has also released a public statement, linked [here](#).

We hope this letter will be shared very widely, and that this suspension will receive the media and broad public attention that it deserves.

## **An Open Letter In Support of Professor Abdulkader Sinno**

Indiana University has [suspended a tenured faculty member](#), Associate Professor of Political Science Abdulkader Sinno, for assisting students in sponsoring a lecture on a matter of public concern. So determined was the university to punish Professor Sinno that it refused to follow long-established procedures that guaranteed him a hearing in front of peers before such a severe sanction could be imposed.

As faculty members of Indiana University, we condemn this persecution of a colleague and the administration's shocking expression of contempt for IU's longstanding practices of shared governance.

The suspension comes as IU and other universities are under pressure to curtail free speech over the Israel-Palestine conflict. On November 15 Rep. James Banks (R-IN) called on IU President Pamela Whitten to demonstrate her opposition to supposedly "antisemitic" acts associated with the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC), an officially recognized student group on campus.

A month later Professor Sinno, the faculty advisor of the PSC, was suspended.

The supposed reason for the suspension: alleged mistakes in the filing of a room reservation form to support a PSC event, a scheduled public lecture by Miko Peled, an Israeli-American IDF veteran and peace activist. The alleged mistakes led the administration to demand cancelation of the event two days before it was scheduled to take place. The PSC went forward with the event, which proceeded without a hitch—until the administration claimed that the "unauthorized event" was a form of reckless endangerment for which Professor Sinno, as the group's faculty advisor, was being held responsible.

Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Carrie Docherty informed Professor Sinno on December 15 that he was suspended from all teaching and mentoring of students for the Spring and Summer 2024 semesters. The grounds: “serious concerns about the effect your behavior may have on members of the campus community. These concerns are enhanced by the potential impact that your inattention to university compliance requirements has on the students you influence in the classroom and in your role as a student organization faculty advisor.”

In suspending Professor Sinno on such trumped-up charges, Vice Provost Docherty, in consultation with IU’s Office of General Counsel, violated university and campus policies by purporting to act on her own authority, rather than referring the matter to the campus Faculty Misconduct Review Committee, as clearly required by IU policies ACA-33, Section 5e, and BL-ACA-D27.

These policies were collaboratively developed by faculty and administrators. While we may differ on the Israel-Palestine conflict, every faculty member must consider their rights – not to mention the integrity of their university – in danger when the campus’s chief faculty administrator and its lawyers collude to violate principles of shared governance in order to make an example of a colleague.

As for Professor Sinno, we consider his suspension to be a pretextual and unwarranted punishment based on groundless inferences about his character and ability. And we find it impossible to regard the administration’s handling of this matter as a normal personnel matter, because university administrators across the country are doing very similar things in response to very similar pressures to limit pro-Palestinian campus advocacy on their campuses.

On November 10, for example, Columbia University controversially suspended two student groups, Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace. According to the *New York Times*: “the action was justified because the two groups had repeatedly violated university policies

requiring them to get permission and give 10 business days' notice before holding an event." This is essentially the official rationale used to suspend Professor Sinno.

We consider the suspension an injustice to Professor Sinno but also to the entire IU community, for it places into question the university's commitment to academic freedom, civil liberties, faculty governance, and the free exchange of ideas about controversial matters that is at the core of any first-class public university.

We demand that this unjustified suspension itself be suspended immediately, for the sake of our colleague but also the credibility and reputation of our university.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Isaac, James H. Rudy Professor of Political Science

Steve Sanders, Professor of Law and Val Nolan Faculty Fellow

Asma Afsaruddin, Class of 1950 Herman B Wells Endowed Professor of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

Mark Roseman, Distinguished Professor in History and Pat M Glazer Chair in Jewish Studies

Jean Robinson, Emeritus Professor of Political Science and Former Associate Executive Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Robert L. Ivie, Professor Emeritus in English & American Studies

Constance M. Furey, Ruth N. Halls Professor, Department of Religious Studies and co-founder, The Center for Religion and the Human

Heather Akou, Associate Professor of Fashion Design and Adjunct in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

Aviva Orenstein, Professor of Law, Karen Lake Buttrey and Donald W. Buttrey Chair

William Scheuerman, James H. Rudy Professor of International Studies and Political Science

Bob Eno, Emeritus Associate Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures

Benjamin Robinson, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies

Full list at the link . . .