

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2306

Dr. Rebecca Cunningham
University of Minnesota
202 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

July 2, 2024

Dear President Cunningham,

As you begin your tenure as President of the University of Minnesota, I write to you to demand that you immediately address the antisemitic culture stemming from decisions made by your predecessor, Interim President Jeff Ettinger. Antisemitism is on the rise in the United States, specifically on college campuses, which was evident by the violent, unauthorized protest at the University of Minnesota this spring. I wrote your predecessor, Mr. Ettinger, in the wake of the antisemitic protest with major concerns for the safety of Jewish students. In response, I received a letter from him detailing the steps the University was taking, which have significant and dangerous implications.¹ As you begin your transition into the presidency at the University of Minnesota, I implore you to take action to undo the damage done by your predecessor to ensure the campus is a safe and nurturing environment for Jewish students, staff, and faculty.

To dismantle the unauthorized encampment and fully reopen campus after safety concerns, President Ettinger entered into an agreement with the UMN Divest coalition, in which he agreed to six terms. The UMN Divest Coalition is calling this agreement a success, celebrating concessions made by the administration, such as biweekly meetings with the University administration about advancing academic and financial divestment from Israel.² One of the six terms that Ettinger agreed to was entitled ‘Thawabit,’ in which the University of Minnesota agreed to find ways to express and evidence support for the University’s Palestinian student body on this item.³

Ettinger admitted that he agreed to the terms given to him by the UMN Divest Coalition without knowing the meaning of the term ‘Thawabit,’ which now ties the University to antisemitic rhetoric.⁴ The term ‘Thawabit’ comes from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and

¹ Tom Emmer, “Majority Whip Tom Emmer letter to the University of Minnesota,” House of Representatives, (April 24, 2024), available at https://www.majoritywhip.gov/uploadedfiles/u_of_m_letter.pdf.

² UMN Students for a Democratic Society [@umnsds], “PSUMN DIVEST DEMAND WINPS 1. Full financial disclosure by May 7th,” Instagram, (May 3, 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/p/C6hNOR5Jd/?img_index

³ Jeff Ettinger, “Message to the community,” University of Minnesota, (May 2, 2024), available at <https://twin-cities.umn.edu/node/46166>

⁴ Zach Kessel, “University of Minnesota President Admits He Did Not Understand Anti-Israel Statement but Signed Anyway to Appease Activists,” National Review, (June 27, 2024), available at

affirms the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people and to designate Jerusalem as the capital of the state, which functionally implies the destruction of the state of Israel.⁴ The University of Minnesota is now on record agreeing to the antisemitic sentiment that Israel should not exist. This is abhorrent and completely unacceptable.

Most concerning, the UMN Divest Coalition states that their 'Thawabit' agreement with the University includes the right to "resist against the occupation," which is a concept that currently and historically underlies Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis and Jews.⁵ Hamas's General Principles and Policies from 2017 states, "Palestine symbolizes the resistance that shall continue until liberation is accomplished, until the return is fulfilled and until a fully sovereign state is established with Jerusalem as its capital."⁶ Furthermore, Hamas's Covenant from 1988 explicitly states, "so-called peaceful solutions [...] are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas]."⁷ The concept of Palestinian "resistance" has been used to justify terrorist attacks against Jews and Israelis and has involved hostage-taking, the murder of innocent Israelis, and numerous other gruesome acts. In agreeing to the UMN Divest Coalition's demand that Palestinians have a right to "resist against the occupation," President Ettinger, disgustingly, signed off on a principle that is used to justify terror.

Antisemitism has reached a record high in this country after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, leading many students to feel unsafe in their learning environment.⁸ As you begin your presidency at the University of Minnesota, I request the answers to the following questions by July 8, 2024.

1. What actions are you taking to rectify the University's endorsement of the belief that Israel does not have a right to exist?
2. As you prepare for the fall term, what steps is the University taking to ensure the safety of the Jewish students?
3. As per the agreement entered with the UMN Divest Coalition, the University is now required to explore a program with one or more Palestinian universities.⁴ Palestinian universities, for example, Birzeit, have been linked to terrorism.⁹ What is the University of Minnesota doing to ensure that the Palestinian universities are not antisemitic or linked to terror?

<https://www.nationalreview.com/news/university-of-minnesota-president-admits-he-did-not-understand-anti-israel-statement-but-signed-anyway-to-appease-activists/>

⁵ Zach Kessel, "University of Minnesota President Admits He Did Not Understand Anti-Israel Statement but Signed Anyway to Appease Activists," National Review, (June 27, 2024), *available at*

<https://www.nationalreview.com/news/university-of-minnesota-president-admits-he-did-not-understand-anti-israel-statement-but-signed-anyway-to-appease-activists/>

⁶ Hamas, "A Document of General Principles & Policies," (May 2017), *available at*

<https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/hamas-2017.pdf>

⁷ Hamas, "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," Yale Law School, (August 18, 1988), *available at*

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

⁸ Gabriella Borter, "US antisemitic incidents hit record high in 2023 amid war in Gaza, report says," Reuters, (April 16, 2024), *available at* <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-antisemitic-incidents-hit-record-high-2023-amid-war-gaza-report-says-2024-04-16/>

⁹ "Daily Wire": Harvard Defends Partnership with Birzeit, Long Tied to Hamas," Jewish News Syndicate, (January 11, 2024), *available at* <https://www.jns.org/daily-wire-harvard-defends-partnership-with-birzeit-long-tied-to-hamas/>

Thank you for your attention to this issue and I look forward to working with you to cultivate a safe learning environment for Jewish students at the University of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Emmer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end of the name.

Tom Emmer
Member of Congress