



MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

July 21, 2024

Letter to community on threatening social post being investigated

Dear Milwaukee Jewish Community,

We are writing with an update regarding a disturbing post that appeared Friday and follow-up steps that have been taken.

On Friday, July 19, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation security team became aware of this threatening [Instagram post](#) from UWM Popular University for Palestine. The post declared Israel-supporting organizations such as Hillel Milwaukee and Federation were not welcome on campus and labeled them as "extremist" organizations. We are most concerned about the final line that threatened, "Any organization that has not separated themselves from Israel will be treated accordingly as extremist criminals. Stay tuned."

While we deeply believe in and support freedom of speech and freedom of expression, we believe this post could encourage harassment and violence towards Jewish students on campus as well as towards the staff of Hillel and the Jewish Federation.

Our Vice President of Security and Facilities, Ari Friedman, immediately contacted the UWM Chief of Police, Hillel leadership, local FBI contact, and Secure Community Network. As a result of that outreach, the following actions are being taken:

- The District Attorney has weighed in and currently does not believe this issue falls outside of freedom of speech - we are following up with the DA to ensure that he is correct in his assessment;
- The Fusion Center is investigating the post for local and national connections. [State and regional fusion centers](#) enable local, state and tribal governments to gather, process, analyze and share information and intelligence relating to all crimes and all hazards;
- Hillel Milwaukee has been in contact with UWM Administration as well as concerned parents and students, and UWM Dean of Students reached out to JSS (Jewish Student Services);
- UWM quickly [issued a statement](#) denouncing the posts and offering services to all students.

We thank Rabbi Josh Herman, Executive Director of Hillel Milwaukee, for his leadership, partnership, and daily focus on student safety; Hillel is the lead point in communication with parents and families concerning this issue.

We are grateful for how seriously this issue is being taken and appreciate UWM's swift statement.

Security must be a daily ritual — not focused solely on when we know of a current incident. At a time when there are heightened concerns for the safety of Jewish community members, the Jewish Federation's efforts to enhance and increase security protocols for all Jewish organizations, not only in the Milwaukee area but the entire state, every day, are more critical than ever.

We want to remind members of the Jewish community that while everyone has the right to express themselves through demonstrations and rallies, far too often, we see these events turn into opportunities for harassment and violence by counter-protesters. Out of an abundance of caution, we encourage members of the Jewish community to avoid attending — even just to observe — demonstrations or counter-demonstrations.

Working together we will continue to ensure the safety and security of our Jewish community locally and throughout the state.

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