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Combating Antisemitism

Dear Members of the Harvard Community,

The past few weeks have been marked by pain and fear for many of us. Harvard rejects all forms of hate, and we are committed to addressing them. I am writing today to share updates on the ongoing work to combat antisemitism in our community, as well as to describe the hard work still in front of us.

As President, I affirm our commitment to protecting all members of our community from harassment and marginalization, and our commitment to meeting antisemitism head-on, with the determination it demands. Let me reiterate what I and other Harvard leaders have said previously: Antisemitism has no place at Harvard. While confronting any form of hatred is daunting, the challenges we face tackling antisemitism are made all the more so by its pernicious nature and deep historical roots. But we are committed to doing the hard work to address this scourge.

As I <u>announced</u>

(https://www.harvard.edu/president/speeches/2023/remarks-at-

harvard-hillel/) in a speech on October 27, I have assembled an Antisemitism Advisory Group of trusted voices, including faculty, alumni, students, and leaders of Harvard's Jewish community. They are: Geraldine Acuña-Sunshine, AB '92, MPP '96, and Vice Chair of the Harvard Board of Overseers; Thomas Dunne, Harvard College Dean of Students; Dara Horn, AB '99, PhD '06, former Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer of Jewish Studies in the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Kevin J. Madigan, Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School, and Eliot House Faculty Dean; Martha L. Minow, EdM '76, former Dean of Harvard Law School, and 300th Anniversary University Professor at Harvard University; Eric M. Nelson, AB '99, Robert M. Beren Professor of Government in the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Nim Ravid, Harvard College Class of '25; and David Wolpe, Visiting Scholar at Harvard Divinity School, and the Max Webb Emeritus Rabbi of Sinai Temple.

This group's wisdom, experience, and moral conviction will help lead us forward. The Advisory Group will work closely with me, guided by Provost Alan Garber and with the help of the School deans, to develop a robust strategy for confronting antisemitism on campus.

Some of the specific steps we are implementing in connection with our ongoing work with the Advisory Group are as follows.

- We have started the process of examining how antisemitism manifests
 within our community and crafting a plan that addresses its complex
 history, including acknowledging this specific form of prejudice in
 Harvard's past, in a comprehensive manner.
- We will implement a robust program of education and training for students, faculty, and staff on antisemitism broadly and at Harvard specifically. As part of this program, we will provide education about the roots of certain rhetoric that has been heard on our campus in recent weeks, and its impact on Jewish members of our community, to help us all better recognize antisemitism in daily life and interrupt its harmful influence.
- We are redoubling our efforts to make students aware that appropriate avenues exist to report feelings of fear or incidents causing harm, including through our anonymous reporting hotline (https://reportinghotline.harvard.edu) for incidents of bias, to ensure that all members of our community have access to and feel comfortable voicing their concerns.
- We are working diligently to ensure the physical, as well as psychological, safety of all members of our community. The Harvard University Police Department (HUPD) continues to detect, assess, and respond to any threats made against any members of our community, including those that are made online. This monitoring is carried out by the HUPD, including through a hotline that is monitored 24/7 to assess and address online harassment and threats.
- The Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging has convened several community support sessions over the past month in collaboration with Harvard Hillel and Counseling and Mental Health Services, and a newly formed Inclusion and Belonging Student Leadership Council has broad representation, including from the Jewish community. In addition, we have been working to increase education around antisemitism and Jewish history—the Harvard Heritage Month workgroup voted unanimously this year to include both Holocaust Remembrance Day and Jewish American Heritage Month observations as part of the official University-wide calendar.

We are seeking to identify external partnerships that will allow Harvard to

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The concrete steps above represent only the starting point for our work. In the coming days and weeks, various of our Schools will be announcing their own efforts and commitments in this regard. We will also work with the Advisory Group to explore areas such as how we can foster broader student and community engagement; how we can build on the initial steps taken by the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging to more fully integrate antisemitism into the work of that office; and how we might strengthen scholarship at Harvard on antisemitism, bringing our teaching and research mission to this effort. Combating antisemitism and hate speech demands a sustained commitment across every facet of University life, including being responsive to input from the full Harvard community. If you have thoughts, feedback, or other suggestions, please share them with us via email at AntisemitismAdvisoryGroup@harvard.edu (mailto:AntisemitismAdvisoryGroup@harvard.edu).

We are grateful for the work of the Advisory Group members, who are giving their time and energy to help us tackle these critical issues. While success may not come quickly or easily, we know that we must continue to press forward in combating antisemitism, and the efforts and expertise of our Advisory Group members are crucial to achieving our goals.

I also want to reiterate Harvard's absolute commitment to the safety and wellbeing of every member of our community. Harvard has been and is a place of civil behavior and civil discourse. We do not condone—and will not ignore—antisemitism, Islamophobia, acts of harassment or intimidation, or threats of violence. I have heard from many community members about the incident on the Harvard Business School campus on October 18. That incident is being investigated by the FBI and the Harvard University Police Department. Consistent with our standard practice, once law enforcement's inquiry is complete, the University will address the incident through its student disciplinary procedures to determine if University policies or codes of conduct have been violated and, if so, take appropriate action.

Finally, I have heard concerns from some about how this important work relating to antisemitism will bear on Harvard's vital commitment to free expression. Combating antisemitism and fostering free expression are mutually consistent goals. We are at our strongest when we commit to open inquiry and freedom of expression as foundational values of our academic community. At the same time, our community must understand that phrases such as "from the river to the see" bear specific historical meanings that to a great many people imply the eradication of Jews from Israel and engender both pain and existential fears within our Jewish community. I condemn this phrase and any similarly hurtful phrases.

Harvard was founded to advance human dignity through education. We inherited a faith in reason to overcome ignorance, in truth to surmount hate. Antisemitism is destructive to our mission. We will not solve every disagreement, bridge every divide, heal every wound. But if we shrink from this struggle, we betray our ideals.

Sincerely, Claudine Gay

President

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