



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

*Office of the President*

December 12, 2025

Officer [REDACTED]  
Officer in Charge  
Special Procedures Branch  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations

*Via email*

Dear Officer [REDACTED],

We are in receipt of your letter and offer these observations in response.

Georgetown University is profoundly committed to freedom of expression. The University's mission statement includes adherence to the principle that "serious and sustained dialogue among people of different faiths, cultures, and ideas promotes intellectual, ethical, and spiritual understanding." As a Catholic and Jesuit institution, our commitment to inter-religious and inter-group dialogue demands both that we foster a community with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints and that we vigorously protect each community member's freedom to articulate their ideas and beliefs. This core value shapes our desire to bring international scholars and students to our campus, allowing us to use different perspectives to seek the truth and deepen our understanding of the world for the common good.

As provided by the Constitution of the United States, the University safeguards its essential rights and freedoms to determine, on academic grounds, who may teach, what to teach, and how to teach it. The government cannot direct the content or methods of what Georgetown and its faculty teach.

Our long-standing, university-wide Speech and Expression Policy protects our community members' rights to free and open inquiry, deliberation, and debate, even on controversial or objectionable ideas. Our policy "encourages and protects the free expression of ideas within the broadest possible latitude... and the untrammelled verbal and nonverbal expression of ideas."

To support and operationalize this commitment, Georgetown invests in several specific initiatives aimed at fostering civic engagement and civil discourse. The university launched the Georgetown Dialogues Initiative (GDI) during the 2024–2025 academic year, which aims to give all students exposure to and personal experiences in respectful dialogue across opposing viewpoints through Signature Events featuring public leaders discussing disagreements "civilly, without rancor, not debating, but in respectful dialogue," and new courses designed to equip students with necessary interpersonal skills. This dedication is foundational to the curriculum, where every undergraduate student is required to take two courses in theology and two courses in philosophy to build interreligious dialogue into the core of their education.

Beyond the curriculum, Georgetown supports dialogue through specific centers and projects, including The Free Speech Project, an independent, nonpartisan initiative that assesses the state of free speech nationally through events, learning modules, and a tool that tracks free speech controversies. GU Politics also

exposes students, faculty, and staff to ideas from across the political spectrum via events featuring high-level speakers and engagement with fellows from diverse political backgrounds. Faculty and students are further supported by the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), which offers resources like the Doyle Engaging Difference Program and the Inclusive Pedagogy Toolkit to facilitate productive conversations. Georgetown provides wide latitude to its programs and centers to host events and invite speakers, consistent with its commitment to academic freedom, ensuring a diversity of perspectives is available. The university explicitly upholds the principle that academic boycotts are antithetical to the mission of higher education and undermine academic freedom.

This dedication to free speech is appropriately balanced with our other responsibilities as a University. Our policy makes clear that we do not tolerate speech that defames an individual, constitutes a genuine threat, or violates our Harassment Policy, and we enforce limited exceptions related to time, place, and manner, to ensure that expressive activity does not disrupt the other important functions of the University. Georgetown has, in recent years, clarified and strengthened its practices regulating the “time, place, manner” of speech, including prohibiting encampments and disruptions of academic events. The university launched new mandatory training for over 700 leaders of all undergraduate and graduate student organizations in January 2025, focused on preventing discrimination and harassment. Beginning in August 2025, this training has been required for all incoming first-year undergraduate students. With these supports in place, Georgetown University believes it can cultivate an environment where all are free to express themselves, listen, and learn.

Following the detention of Dr. Badar Khan Suri, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Foreign Service, in a letter that I sent to the Georgetown University community on March 25, 2025, I expressed deep concern about the circumstances of his arrest and any implications for free speech, stating our expectation that the legal system would adjudicate the case fairly while committing to close monitoring. In keeping with our support for Dr. Suri’s rights as both a scholar and a member of the University community, we are pleased to confirm his re-engagement as a postdoctoral fellow.

Georgetown’s mission dictates that we continually strive to live out our faith-based values by building a community where mutual respect, listening, and service to others are paramount, dictating that we recruit a diverse student body and always apply a global lens to stay alert to the needs of vulnerable persons and populations. The Jesuit precept of being “people for and with others” and the call to foster reconciliation guide our commitment to ensuring that individuals enjoy all the rights and privileges of any member of our community, strengthening our capacity to understand different cultures and cultivating a spirit of openness.

The University recognizes that we must balance our commitment to openness and international engagement with our obligations to comply with applicable laws, including those immigration laws and regulations that pertain to hosting international scholars and students. Georgetown takes seriously its obligations to diligently serve and support the safety of all members of this community as they work toward expanding their knowledge and enhancing ours.

Finally, we wish to express our deep respect for the UN and its work. We cherish our engagement with the international community. We remain steadfast in our commitment to free speech, legal compliance, and a safe, respectful environment for all.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Groves  
Interim President