

PRESS RELEASE

April 8, 2024

Contact: austinforpalestine@gmail.com



Will another hate crime go unanswered by Austin Mayor Kirk Watson and University of Texas at Austin President Jay Hartzell?

On Friday April 5th, 2024 at approximately 11 pm near Guadalupe and West 21st Street, two University of Texas (UT) students were physically and verbally assaulted by three late teen-college aged individuals in an apparent hate crime. The three perpetrators targeted these students based on their apparent religious affiliation, as one student was dressed in traditional Muslim attire, having recently come from evening prayer at his local mosque.

The perpetrators approached and started yelling pejoratives including “Allahu Akbar” before surrounding the victims. While trying to escape the situation, both victims were attacked, receiving multiple blows to the face, while also being threatened by one perpetrator stating he had a concealed weapon. The two student victims managed to flee, sustaining minor injuries.

After encouragement from community members, the victims filed a police report. This act of hatred and bigotry is just one of many other similar crimes that have taken place on and around the University of Texas at Austin campus in just the last few months. This attack is especially egregious as it comes after the deafening silence on [the attack on Texas Palestinian Zacharia Doar](#) in West Campus.

Muslim and Arab students on campus express their lack of faith in the local justice system as well as their faculty and administrators. In recent months, there has been a documented rise in islamophobia and anti-Arab hate reported in the US. The attack on the two UT students occurred days after the Texas Hillel’s Annual Israeli Block Party hosted on campus and endorsed by UT administrators. This plausible hate crime was reported to the UT administration who responded with little concern, sending an unnamed student representative to get an account from one of the victims. No further action was taken. No public statement was made by UT President Jay Hartzell or his office nor by Mayor Kirk Watson or his office.

This absence of action and condemnation clearly shows UT’s double standards when it comes to hate crimes perpetrated on Arab and Muslim students on and near campus, as well as the greater Austin area. To fail to appropriately respond to credible allegations of hate crimes or other violent acts against any UT student makes all students unsafe. The UT administration, our local government as well as local law enforcement pave the way for more hate crimes to occur. The University must protect all students equally. These acts, Islamophobic and anti-Arab in nature, must be addressed and strongly condemned across a single standard; investigations must be conducted in the same manner as any other reported crimes.

