

## Letter to our dear students from the President of the University

“Call them to the path of your Lord with wisdom and words of good advice; and reason with them in the best way possible.”

Allah the Almighty is Truthful.

Quran,16:125

My Dear Students of Al-Quds University,

The university is often subjected to vilification campaigns by Jewish extremists with the purpose of discrediting its reputation as a prestigious academic institution with a unique, humane calling: to strive to instill noble values in its students; to spread the spirit of democracy and openness toward other world cultures; and to present the genuine face of the Palestinian people, calling for peace against the extremism and violence to which we ourselves are subjected as a people denied our rights under occupation.

These extreme elements spare no effort to exploit some rare but nonetheless damaging events or scenes which occur on the campus of Al Quds University, such as fist-fighting between students, or some students making a mock military display. These occurrences allow some people to capitalize on events in ways that misrepresent the university as promoting inhumane, anti-Semitic, fascist, and Nazi ideologies. Without these ideologies, there would not have been the massacre of the Jewish people in Europe; without the massacre, there would not have been the enduring Palestinian catastrophe.

As occurred recently, these opportunists are quick to describe the Palestinians as a people undeserving of freedom and independence, and as a people who must be kept under coercive control and occupation. They cite these events as evidence justifying their efforts to muster broad Jewish and western opinion to support their position. This public opinion, in turn, sustains the occupation, the extension of settlements and the confiscation of land, and prevents Palestinians from achieving our freedom.

My Dear Students of Al-Quds University,

Your university has a proud place on the academic map of the Palestinian and the Arab worlds. And this pride is not only because we have made more progress than other universities in the fields of faculty research and publication. Nor is it only that your graduates are making great achievements for society and knowledge that exceed the achievements of others. This pride is also due to the honorable values that every student should carry, shape, and spread among society. This is a message of noble human values: freedom, democracy, and pluralism. This is a message of equality among people without consideration of status, class, race, gender, religion or any other quality. This is a message to build hope and a better human future. This is a message of justice and love

and peace. This is a message of dialogue and forgiveness, of mutual respect, a message of high ethical standards. A message against hatred, against violence, against extremism, and also a message to make use of reason in every way and make reason dominant over passionate outbursts and to keep passion contained in the breast.

My Dear Students,

Your university makes the maximum effort to create an environment for you that allows you to act freely. Practicing this freedom is the basis on which to foster a better society. But freedom is connected to the whole group of values that I mentioned above. It means respect when you are dealing with others. It means mutual respect among students, of students for their teachers and of teachers for their students. Any attack on teachers violates the principle of freedom. If you try to force your position on others without persuading them, that also is a violation of the concept of freedom. To express any position or opinion in a way that inspires hatred against others violates the concept of respect, which is one of the fundamental elements of freedom – for example, if anyone tries to impose a position on others by force, by verbal threat, or by violence.

And while the university strives to provide an atmosphere of freedom, it is at the same time committed to preventing breaches by those who do not respect its principles and also holding accountable those who violate them, be they students, faculty or staff. Whoever harms another individual or group is also harming the university, its image and its reputation; this is an abomination. The word for a university campus (*haram*) connotes a sacred space for free and open discussion, the exchange of ideas, and the expression of contradictory views. A university campus should provide peaceful coexistence, safe from reactions that occur in the surrounding community, alongside scientific investigation and knowledge incubated in the university.

So we call upon you, for the sake of your society, for the sake of your university, and for the sake of yourselves, to hold firmly these values, for a world with degraded principles is like a beast that may be skillful in its tasks but reaps nothing but havoc upon the earth.