

To the Emory Community,

At 2:00 P.M. on Wednesday, October 26th, around 150 Emory students, faculty, and staff gathered at Asbury Circle at an Emory Stop Cop City (ESCC) protest. Said protest has since received significant attention, although the focus has not been Stop Cop City itself. Instead, shared content related to the protest has weaponized vagueness and misleading information in a deeply anti-Black diversion from the goals of ESCC. [Cop City has incredibly dangerous implications— especially for the Black communities surrounding the Weelaunee forest—compounded with the environmental racism already affecting the area.](#) Marching to Convocation Hall, protesters on Wednesday called for the elimination of Cop City, the severing of Emory's ties to pro-Cop City groups, and the end of institutional repression of students. Upon arrival at Convocation Hall, protesters entered the foyer, occupying it until [our 12 demands](#) were accepted by a representative of the President. Two of these 12 demands call for the support of Palestinian students and condemnation of doxxing by donors and alumni. Afterward, students gathered on the quad for a community event, practicing non-violent demonstration through art making, and waited for a response from the President's office.

[In response, President Fenves issued a statement condemning our protest as anti-semitic, refusing to explicitly mention the chants we used, and the demands we issued.](#) Fenves also did not acknowledge the existence of Palestine and the Palestinian people, failing to use the word Palestine in any way. We have decided to provide clarity on what occurred at our protest, what we stand for, and why we will not allow him to divert attention from a campaign to bring an end to the ways in which Emory commits and is complicit in institutional systemic violence.

The accusations of anti-semitism are largely due to a short clip in which protestors chant in support of Palestine's quest for liberation. The phrase, "[From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,](#)" is being purposefully misconstrued as a call for genocide against the Jewish people. We acknowledge the recent history and use of this expression to further anti-semitism. However, many [academics explain anti-semitism is not intrinsic to the phrase.](#) The slogan originated in the context of calls for the full liberation of the land of Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. "From the river to the Sea, Palestine will be free," is not a statement for the exclusion of the Jewish people, but rather a call for solidarity, acknowledgment, and freedom from the chains of colonial oppression that bind all. The assumption that a free Palestine would result in a Jewish massacre holds deeply racist and Islamophobic notions. We call for unity in the region; as long as one people's existence relies on the oppression of another, Palestinians and Israelis can never share freedom. The framing of Wednesday's protest as divisive and anti-semitic is a repressive tactic by the university as it attempts to ignore the harm being done to its students, Atlantans, and Palestinians.

Despite recent misleading claims, the cornerstone of Stop Cop City is ending anti-Black violence perpetrated by the United States police force and other state actors. The primary goal of our

event was to present our list of 12 demands to the administration, two of which implicitly mention the conflict in Gaza. We firmly stand by our calls for the public support of Palestinian students and unequivocal condemnation of doxxing. We also included a demand that Emory separate itself from Zionist groups, specifically alumni and donors, who have threatened the safety of students on campus. In addition to misinformation about the goals of our protest, there is also confusion about how Cop City connects to the state of Israel. [Georgia's International Law Enforcement Exchange \(GILEE\)](#) facilitates IDF representatives' meetings, training, and tactic exchanges with Georgia police. [The state of Israel is being criticized by ESCC for many reasons](#), but most specifically the use of IDF tactics to facilitate anti-Black violence here in Georgia.

The propagation of misinformation serves to divert attention from the systemic violence directed at Black Americans by the state. Misconceptions surfaced that the march was a joint event with Students for Justice in Palestine and that the primary goal was to call attention to the situation in Gaza. A case in point is the misleading circulation of a photograph featuring a protest sign with the acronym "Colonizing Oppressive Pigs," which falsely claims to target Jewish individuals as pigs. In actuality, the acronym stands for "cop," and the sign was created to protest police brutality in the United States. Despite this knowledge gap, the derogatory term "pigs" for law enforcement carries a long history of significance. This language holds a pivotal place in Black history, and failing to acknowledge its historical context demonstrates a profound ignorance. Furthermore, many discussions surrounding the widely circulated image neglect to acknowledge that the sign clearly reads, "fuck cop city." While we strive to educate and engage in constructive dialogue, it is not our responsibility if some continue to overlook Black activism post-2020 due to willful ignorance or racial resentment.



By misrepresenting or falsely linking anti-racist movements, such as the fight against institutional racism or police brutality, to anti-semitic sentiments, this diversion not only diminishes the urgency of addressing anti-Black racism but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes about Black activists and their movements. This tactic not only harms the fight against anti-Black violence but also undermines the broader struggle for justice and equality.

We would like to acknowledge peaceful protestors who joined us in our march and now are in fear of doxxing. Media from our protest was rampantly reposted without the context of the event or our organization's values. Protestors have since experienced doxxing, calls for disciplinary action, and extreme feelings of anxiety. While penalization is an egregious response to peaceful dissent, it is an unfortunate condition of radical action. We thank you for your solidarity and seek to support you in these times. We must remember that this kind of response is a repression tactic designed to stop us from doing work that can genuinely change Emory and Atlanta and we must refuse to bow to it.

We want to make it abundantly clear that our letter of demands put pressure on President Fenves and the Emory institution to divest from the various bodies involved in the anti-democratic Cop City project, such as the Atlanta Committee for Progress. His response not only ignored the content of our protest, it also weaponized an atmosphere of confusion due to its vague language. By purposefully leaving out what "anti-semitic phrases" were used at the rally, he has intentionally created division in the Emory community, and distracted from the systemic violence which ESCC stands against. Stop Cop City firmly stands against the pro-militarization goals of the Emory administration in Atlanta. The list of demands delivered on the day of the protest has not been mentioned in any official statement released. Instead, President Fenves has deployed claims of anti-semitism as a tool to distract from Emory's direct role in the increased militarization of one of the most violent police forces in the nation. He has ignored calls to protect Palestinian students, which emboldened students to further dox ESCC organizers.

Among the president's various claims, he also argued that Emory had a "long and distinguished history of supporting open expression," "that they welcome peaceful protests," and "a vast range of ideas and perspectives." Frankly, that is a deliberate and malicious load of bullshit. These claims have not applied to the students of ESCC, before or after we made any statements on Gaza. [Emory's principles were proven to us early in the morning of April 25th, 2023, when the university called officers of the Atlanta Police Department on students peacefully protesting on the quad.](#) These students were threatened with arrest, and intimidated, for doing nothing more than staying on the quad to prove their dedication. It is not difficult to see how calling the police on a protest that criticized the police is dangerous for peaceful protestors. Fenves has yet to apologize for this dangerous escalation against students on campus, despite repeated calls from students and faculty. This makes it transparent that he has no intention of fostering a safe community for change on campus. We, however, will not allow this repression and intimidation to stop us from creating genuine community and radical change at Emory and in Atlanta. Cop City will never be built!!!

Sincerely,
Emory Stop Cop City