

From: **Cornell President** <president@m.cornell.edu>

Date: Fri, May 1, 2026, 11:41 AM

Subject: Harassment and intimidation incident at Day Hall

To: [REDACTED]



Cornell University

Dear Cornell Community,

Yesterday evening, I introduced an Israel-Palestine debate series event in Goldwin Smith Hall, hosted by the Cornell Political Union and co-sponsored by, among others, Cornell Progressives, Cornellians for Israel, and Students for Justice in Palestine. The debate was vigorous and civil, and an example of the kind of open discourse that we prize in our academic community.

As I left the event room, I was accosted by a group of several individuals in the hall, among them students and non-students. These individuals are known to Cornell for their past conduct, including a long history of ongoing verbal and online abuse toward numerous members of Cornell's administration and staff, as well as disruptive protest resulting, in the case of two individuals, in bans from campus.

These individuals followed me from the event space and across campus, while loudly shouting questions and recording on their phones. After answering a few questions, I let them know that I was not planning to engage further, and asked them to stop recording.

Their response to this was, "No, we are not going to stop." They continued to follow me to my car and then surrounded the car, banging on the windows, blocking the car, and shouting. I waited until I saw space behind the car and then, using my car's rear pedestrian alert and automatic braking system, was able to slowly maneuver my car from the parking space and exit the parking lot.

As I said in my remarks yesterday, if democracy has a single, foundational skill, it is successful disagreement. A primary goal of a Cornell education is preparing our students to participate productively in civil society; to do this, they must be able to hear different voices, assimilate different perspectives, and build evidence-based understanding.

The behavior I experienced last night is not protest. It is harassment and intimidation, with the direct motive of silencing speech. It has no place in an academic community, no place in a democracy, and can have no place at Cornell.

Sincerely,

Michael I. Kotlikoff
President