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March 11, 2025

Chancellor Felix Matos Rodríguez
City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez,

Over the weekend, ICE agents entered a Columbia University-owned residence and detained Mahmoud Khalil, a green card-holding permanent resident who had participated in protests against the war in Gaza while he was a student. The order to detain and deport Mr. Khalil came directly from the White House, according to The Department of Homeland Security. He has been held in Louisiana, 1,000 miles from his home. The detention of Mr. Khalil is an act of intimidation that undermines our constitutional right to speak out, whether or not we are U.S. citizens.

This brazen violation of the Constitution should concern us all. Mr. Khalil has not been charged with a crime. As legal residents, green card holders have broad rights, including protection by all laws of the United States, the person's state of residence, and local jurisdictions. Only an immigration judge has the authority to revoke a student or work visa or a green card. There is a reason that *New York Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg considers Mr. Khalil's detention "the greatest threat to free speech since the Red Scare."¹ President Trump has cast all campus protests against Israel as "terrorist sympathizers" and called Mr. Khalil "the first arrest of many to come."²

The PSC calls on you, Chancellor, to publicly affirm:

- The rights of CUNY students who are here on student visas, and CUNY faculty and staff who hold Green cards or work visas, to exercise their legal right of speech and assembly.
- The prohibition against Department of Homeland Security agents, including ICE officers, from entering CUNY facilities without presenting a judicial warrant to a college's legal counsel or the director of security.

Yesterday, following last week's cancellation of \$400 million in federal contracts with Columbia University, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights notified 60 universities they will be investigated for alleged failure to properly handle charges of antisemitic discrimination and harassment. These are exceedingly perilous times for democracy and the rule of law. The deportation of a student protestor with permanent resident status and a green card is a travesty. Any number of CUNY's international students, faculty and staff are at risk. It is critical that your administration make a public commitment to protecting the constitutional rights of members of the CUNY community.

Sincerely,



James Davis, President

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/10/opinion/mahmoud-khalil-free-speech.html>

² <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-mahmoud-khalil-ice-columbia-university/>

