

Dear Colleagues,

We have heard concerns from MSP members about threats to their safety, their free speech rights, and their jobs, based on their statements or actions related to the terrible violence in Israel and Gaza. Over several decades, the MSP has won strong contract language guaranteeing academic freedom for our members. Our contract protects faculty and librarians, tenured and untenured, part-time and full-time – and it sets a standard that we believe should apply to the entire campus. Academic Freedom is Article 8 of the MSP contract: https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1029/msp_2020-23_successor_agreement_06_08_2022_-_final.pdf. It includes this language:

8.2 Bargaining unit members are entitled to full academic freedom in research and in the publication of the results; in matters pertaining to their academic service to the university; and in discussing their subjects in and outside the classroom. They should be careful not to introduce persistently, into their teaching, matter unrelated to their subject.

8.3 Bargaining unit members should remember that the public may judge their profession and the University by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times make every effort to indicate whether or not they are speaking officially for the University.

8.4 Bargaining unit members are entitled to freedom of political belief and/or affiliation.

MSP will be vigilant about enforcing this language and protecting our members' right to academic freedom, free speech and expression. Any MSP member who is threatened or silenced should be in touch with us immediately. Our contract goes well beyond national AAUP standards by protecting the right to free expression inside and outside the classroom, in our teaching and research and service. If necessary, if the administration violates our members' rights in any way, the union can provide free legal representation to our members through the MTA Legal Department.

MSP has been here through many local, national, and international crises over the past 25 years, and we have successfully defended our members' rights: not a single faculty member has been harmed by the university for stating their opinions or for respectfully discussing controversial topics in the classroom.

Beyond the right to academic freedom in the MSP contract, you have these rights:

1. The right to engage in political activity or activism of your choice during non-working hours.
2. The right to sign onto statements of support and to encourage others to do so.
3. The right to donate your own money to causes or individuals you support.
4. The right to engage with co-workers for mutual aid, collective action, or union activities.
5. The right to use your own social media to express yourself, as long as you do not claim to speak for the university or your employer.
6. The right to free speech and expression under the First Amendment. There is a significant exception: as public employees, Massachusetts law restricts certain ***electoral*** political activity; for example, we cannot use any state or university

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resources for any campaign purpose, and we cannot solicit contributions for electoral campaigns or for specific legislation. Even in the electoral and legislative realm, we retain the right to donate our own funds, to speak out for issues and candidates, and to use our own time for activism.

MSP strongly encourages faculty, librarians, staff, and students to learn more about national and international issues, and to attend the discussions and events that our members have planned on campus. As educators, we will always support free and vigorous debate, and as unionists, we will defend everyone's right to activism, organizing, and political expression.

In solidarity,
Eve and Marc