# Harvard University announces policy shift on public statements in response to student protests and controversy



On May 28, 2024, Harvard University announced a significant policy change in response to recent student-led protests and controversy surrounding the Israel-Gaza conflict. The university declared it would no longer issue official statements on public matters that do not directly affect its core educational functions. This decision followed recommendations from an Institutional Voice Working Group formed in April.

This policy shift aims to reduce the university's official commentary on global events, such as its previous statements on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks in Israel. The working group argued that such statements often risk alienating parts of the community and may appear to show preferential concern for certain issues.

Harvard emphasized that it would still advocate for issues directly impacting its mission, such as defending academic freedom or opposing policies that could threaten its autonomy, like proposed taxes on university endowments or affirmative action policies. The change has drawn mixed responses: some academics criticize the move as feigned neutrality, citing Harvard’s financial ties to military investments, while others applaud it as a measure to protect free speech and institutional integrity.

The decision comes amidst widespread demonstrations at Harvard and other universities over various political and social issues, highlighting the ongoing debate about the role of academic institutions in public discourse.