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topics >**

**The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. [ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT >](#)

**News Story**
**Students sue university over probe of anti-terror rally**

By The Associated Press  
07.10.07

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco State University was sued yesterday for allegedly violating students' right to free speech when it investigated an incident during which students stomped on flags bearing the name of Allah.

The Alliance Defense Fund, in cooperation with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, filed the federal lawsuit on behalf of the plaintiffs — the College Republicans club and members Trent Downes and Leigh Wolf. FIRE's Speech Codes Litigation Project worked to coordinate the suit but does not represent the plaintiffs.

[The lawsuit](#) charges the university with having violated the plaintiffs' First Amendment rights by dragging them through a five-month investigation and campus tribunal after they stepped on Hamas and Hezbollah flags during an anti-terrorism rally. The flags bear the Muslim name for God, Allah.

"The Supreme Court ruled long ago that the First Amendment protects the right to burn even an American flag in political protest," FIRE President Greg Lukianoff said in a statement. "There are no special protections for Hamas and Hezbollah flags. SFSU knew this, and there is no excuse for putting these students through a five-month ordeal."

Officials with FIRE said they wrote to SFSU President Robert A. Corrigan twice saying that students couldn't be singled out for peacefully protesting, but the university continued its investigation, eventually clearing the students.

University officials declined immediate comment yesterday because they hadn't reviewed the suit.

The lawsuit seeks to hold the university responsible for mistreating students who engaged in constitutionally protected behavior. It also wants the university to strike down codes the plaintiffs consider unconstitutional, because they limit speech on campus.

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