

Sally Kornbluth, President

January 9, 2025

Dominic Coletti
Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy
510 Walnut Street, Suite 900
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mr. Coletti,

Thank you for your letter.

We appreciate FIRE's commitment to fostering and protecting freedom of expression at colleges and universities, and we share it. We are also aware, as you surely are, that many incidents in this realm are not clear cut; they are judgment calls that require us to strike a balance between important competing values. In the case you cite, we were faced with balancing our commitment to free expression with our commitment to ensuring a safe campus environment.

During my time as president, we've given a wide berth for speech at MIT – including speech that many have found deeply offensive – and we have drawn criticism both on and off campus for allowing speech perceived as provocative or even hateful. Yet there have been occasions when we've felt an imperative to act, not because some find the speech objectionable, as you suggest, but because the totality of the circumstances leads us to conclude that the speech has crossed the line into hindering our ability to provide a safe environment, free from harassment and intimidation.

As with complex cases of this nature, and specifically in considering the matter you've highlighted, we consulted with key stakeholders, including the faculty-led [Committee on Academic Freedom and Campus Expression](#). The committee prepared [its own assessment of the Institute's response](#), which bears directly on the points you make.

Past and future editions of the magazine in question have not been affected, and the MIT Libraries has preserved the issue in question in its physical collections and online catalog. We have simply stopped distribution on our campus or elsewhere using MIT's name.

These are challenging issues to navigate, and at times they call upon us to make difficult decisions. While I appreciate that FIRE may have reached a different conclusion in this instance based on the information you have, I hope you can appreciate that we are consulting and deliberating extensively and generally allow speech, even speech that offends. But we are charged with maintaining the safety of our community. Thus, in this circumstance, we were compelled to act.

Respectfully,



Sally Kornbluth