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## An Important Community Update from Laura Walker and Maurice Hall

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Mon, Oct 16, 2023 at 9:04 AM

### BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Dear Bennington Community,

At some point prior to the brutal attack on Israel, a Palestinian flag was hung on the balcony of the Commons building. The hanging of the flag was not approved by the College or an appropriate committee, and as of this morning, we have removed it after consultation with the Faculty Executive Committee, the Land Use and Buildings Committee, and some students, staff, and faculty members.

Our decision to remove it was based on the feelings of trauma some in our community experienced, along with direct requests. Many in our community have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the attack on Israel, the ensuing war, and the continued violence within the Middle East. The flag has caused deep distress to some students, faculty, and staff.

Conversations about the situation in the Middle East are taking place across the country and around the world. Given the ongoing conflict in the region, we want to take up the conversation that the flag has helped to inspire. As a college, we believe our role is to help facilitate a healthy dialogue while also working to promote a positive, open, and safe community that can explore the most difficult conversations that can arise.

Over the next two weeks we will be exploring the idea of a community conversation. We are inviting the student council, faculty executive committee, staff council, CAPA leadership, and other student groups to help shape these possible conversations and we will follow up shortly with more information.

We acknowledge that we have been inconsistent in our regulation of public displays, including those specifically on the Commons balcony. We will soon appoint a working group of faculty, students, and staff to review processes through which public displays and statements across campus are considered and to make recommendations about more clear and transparent policies. A part of the charge of the working group will also include the idea of creating a space or spaces on campus where flags and other statements of expression can be posted.

It was clear that committee members of both the [Land and Building Use Committee](#) and [Faculty Executive Committee](#) agree clarity is needed with respect to our policies and process.

Education must strengthen understanding and empathy, and promote the use of language and dialogue to further justice and peace in this world. Thank you for your commitment to community conversation. We are proud of all of you as we act together to show each other empathy and kindness.

Sincerely,

Laura Walker  
President

Maurice Hall  
Provost