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# **A victory! Professor Rabab Abdulhadi wins second grievance at SFSU**

written by International Campaign to Defend Professor Rabab Abdulhadi  
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Prof. Rabab Abdulhadi at San Francisco State University Cartoon: Carlos Latuff

A faculty panel has unanimously sided with Professor Rabab Abdulhadi at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in a grievance she filed through her union, the [SFSU chapter of the California Faculty Association](#). Dr. Abdulhadi's grievance reiterated her demand for SFSU to fulfill its outstanding commitment to build [Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas \(AMED\) Studies](#) by hiring two additional tenure-track faculty members, institutionally supporting AMED, stopping the attempt to dismantle AMED, and ending the creation of the hostile work environment to which Dr. Abdulhadi has been subjected for at least 13 years for her directorship of AMED and her refusal to abandon it.

Issued yesterday by the three-person Faculty Hearing Committee that adjudicated

Dr. Abdulhadi's grievance on February 4, a [report](#) agreed with Dr. Abdulhadi's claims that SFSU breached her hiring contract and fostered a hostile work environment to pressure her to give up AMED Studies. The Faculty Hearing Committee supported Dr. Abdulhadi, and upheld AMED's independence and integrity.

The statutory grievance filed by Dr. Abdulhadi documented SFSU's refusal to honor the original Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) which the university signed when it recruited Dr. Abdulhadi to create and direct the AMED program in 2005. That MOU stipulated that two additional tenure-track positions would be hired along with Dr. Abdulhadi to ensure a full and sustainable academic, communal and advocacy multi-site space on the history, politics, cultures and social movements of Arab, Muslim and Palestinian communities as they intersect with and contribute to the indivisibility of justice within and outside of the College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU. The fact that those faculty positions were never filled served to thwart AMED Studies and turn it into a token, one-person operation without possibility of growth and development - had it not been for Dr. Abdulhadi's tenacity and determination to resist such designs. In addition, the grievance detailed how the university created a hostile work and study environment on campus for Dr. Abdulhadi and her Arab, Muslim and Palestinian students and their allies, including anti-Zionist Jewish students, staff and colleagues. These efforts have been publicly decried by numerous scholars and academic organizations, including the [SFSU chapter of the California Faculty Association](#).



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The February 4 Faculty Hearing Committee rejected the university's claims, including several bad faith actions that sought to undermine the transparency of the grievance hearing. Not only did the SFSU Administration fail to submit the list of

witnesses and evidence on time as per their own deadline. The university representatives made a mockery of the proceedings by sharing the names of their witnesses less than 24 hours before the hearing, contrary to the very agreement on which they had insisted.

The three committee members, Drs. Rita Melendez (Chair), Elahe Essani, and Hui Yang, relied on “written documents, direct testimony, and cross-examination of witnesses” to reach their findings defining Dr. Abdulhadi’s grievance “to be serious, thus requiring an immediate remedy.” The committee’s report recognized that Dr. Abdulhadi “met the burden of proof and provided evidence that the former Dean of Ethnic Studies (Dean Monteiro) promised two new faculty positions in AMED as a condition of Dr. Abdulhadi coming to SFSU,” as stipulated in her job offer. The report rejected the attempt by the SFSU Administration to engage in character assassination of Dr. Abdulhadi, stressing that SFSU “has fostered a hostile environment” and that “lack of hires has resulted in intellectual isolation for Dr. Abdulhadi and has had negative consequences in terms of her building an AMED program.” The report ordered SFSU to “issue an apology to Dr. Abdulhadi for not fulfilling the promise made to her upon her hire and for years of denying the requests for the faculty hires.”

The report comes on the heels of another recent victory achieved by Dr. Abdulhadi, AMED Studies communities, and Palestine scholarship and pedagogy. In October 2021, a Faculty Hearing Committee ruled unanimously that SFSU violated the academic freedom of Dr. Abdulhadi and her colleague, Dr. Tomomi Kinukawa, when the university failed to stand up to Zoom’s silencing and cancellation of an open classroom they co-organized on Palestine, titled “Whose Narratives: Gender, Justice and Resistance: A Conversation with Leila Khaled”, on September 23, 2020. The Faculty Hearing Committee members ordered the university administration to apologize to Drs. Abdulhadi and Kinukawa and host the censored webinar without interference from big tech corporations while also faulting the administration for

colluding with The Lawfare Project, a right-wing organization that has been part of a network of pro-Israel lobby industry groups intent on smearing, bullying and silencing scholarship, pedagogy and advocacy for Palestinian freedom for years, including that of Dr. Abdulhadi and AMED. The Lawfare Project's federal lawsuit against SFSU and Dr. Abdulhadi (the only faculty member named in this lawsuit) was [dismissed with prejudice](#) in federal court in 2018 after 18 months of persistent attacks against Dr. Abdulhadi.

Rather than respect members of the SFSU faculty who volunteered their time and exerted their intellectual energy to serve on the Faculty Hearing Committee, SFSU President Lynn Mahoney vetoed the committee's unanimous decision that called for redress to Drs. Abdulhadi and Kinukawa. In so doing, President Mahoney sought to nullify the committee's recommendations and sabotage the grievance process. [Intellectuals and academics were outraged by President Mahoney's disregard of faculty rights and due process and called for her immediate resignation.](#)

These outcries and calls coincided with similar calls for the [resignation](#)  of California State University (CSU) Chancellor Joseph Castro, who in fact resigned on February 17, 2022 after reports appeared that he mishandled misconduct complaints. Chancellor Castro had been supportive of Mahoney, giving her a 10% salary increase despite faculty uproar over budget cuts and the firing of a significant number of lecturers, using the COVID pandemic as an excuse. Castro also presided over the [cancellation of the Edward Said faculty position at CSU-Fresno under Zionist pressure.](#)

Academics, public intellectuals, and the broader Palestine justice movement welcome yesterday's ruling and congratulate members of the Faculty Hearing Committee, Dr. Abdulhadi and the SFSU chapter of the California Faculty Association for their persistence in protecting faculty rights and refusing to join the SFSU Administration in its collusion with the Zionist, orientalist and racist agenda that seeks to silence the teaching of Palestine. During the 6-hour virtual February 4

hearing, SFSU arrogantly dismissed the seriousness of Dr. Abdulhadi's grievance and disregarded the university's own proclaimed principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). SFSU's actions demonstrated its cynicism regarding the university's well-publicized support for multiculturalism, equity and inclusion, which directly contradicts the history of SFSU's collaboration with and preferential treatment of Zionist groups, including the recent agreement with Hillel, Hillel International and the Academic Engagement Network, as well as the SFSU's longstanding unjustifiable harassment of Dr. Abdulhadi by subjecting her to multiple baseless audits for the sole purpose of discrediting Dr. Abdulhadi and placating the AMCHA Initiative, a pro-Israel lobby group. SFSU's deceitful practices, misrepresentation of facts, and continued attempts to smear Dr. Abdulhadi's character in the recent hearing once again showed SFSU's disdain for the AMED Studies program and its complicity with outside organizations that seek to silence Palestinian voices (see [Mondoweiss](#)).

Evidence presented in this most recent hearing, including testimonies by witnesses who were unable to testify due to SFSU's attempt to subvert the process, such as [Dr. Robin D. G. Kelley](#), [Dr. James Martel](#) and doctoral candidate [Saliem Shehadeh](#), further demonstrates the corporatization of SFSU and its administration's collusion with right-wing and Zionist organizations trying to dismantle and destroy the critical AMED Studies program. Testifying for Dr. Abdulhadi were Dr. Tomomi Kinukawa, Dr. Marc Stein, Dr. Blanca Misse, and AMED/Ethnic Studies Graduate Student Leith Ghouloum. Dean Amy Sueyoshi, Associate Dean Catriona Rueda Esquibel and Dean of Faculty Carleen Mandolfo testified for the Administration. Dr. Abdulhadi was represented by Professor of English and member of the Executive Board of the SFSU Chapter of the California Faculty Association, Dr. Larry Hanley. Professor Hanley was supported by a committed team of scholars, public intellectuals and activists representing AMED communities of justice who worked tirelessly and voluntarily to defend Dr. Abdulhadi and AMED Studies and its students as they have done throughout the last 15 years of Dr. Abdulhadi's battle to build AMED Studies and refusal to be stymied by the Zionist and corporatized agenda within and outside

SFSU. Yesterday's report by the February 4 Faculty Hearing Committee bodes well for the sustainability of critical challenges to these reactionary efforts and the racism and anti-intellectualism they entail.

**For more information, contact The International Campaign to Defend Professor Rabab Abdulhadi or write to Team@professorabdulhadidfense.com.**

