

Issued on 2024-05-01

We, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners, were shocked by the recent detention and arrest of scores of Indiana University students, faculty, and staffers during what was a peaceful protest regarding the Israel– Hamas war in Gaza.

Not only was this heavy-handed response entirely disproportionate, but the 11th-hour change to IU's assembly policy lacked transparency and is itself antithetical to all that Indiana University has, historically, supported—namely academic freedom and the freedoms granted to each of us in the Constitution of the United States.

To suggest that IU's policy changes were made in the name of public safety—while simultaneously inviting Indiana State Police officers clad in full riot gear to intervene—is both disingenuous and downright Orwellian. Indiana University's Dunn Meadow has seen many decades' worth of peaceful protests under the previous, longstanding assembly rules. By swiftly revising those rules with breathtakingly little public input or oversight, IU administrators must surely intend to have a chilling effect on free speech and peaceful assembly on campus. This is simply unacceptable.

We urge Indiana University administrators to revert to the 1969 Dunn Meadow policy, to drop any criminal and campus disciplinary charges against the protesters swept up in the recent action, and to allow subsequently barred protesting students to return to campus.

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