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SFSU sued for investigating stomping of flag with Allah's name

The Associated Press

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SAN FRANCISCO: San Francisco State University was sued 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 and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) filed the federal lawsuit on behalf of the plaintiffs — the College Republicans club and two of its members.

The case 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 can't be singled out for peacefully protesting, but the university continued its investigation, eventually clearing the students.

University officials declined immediate comment Monday because they had not 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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