

ALL PHOTOS: SURJADITYA SARKAR, JASON SADANANDH | MERCURY STAFF

Pictured above are over 300 students gathered at TI Plaza preparing to march across campus in solidarity with Palestine and in protest against an email sent by President Benson on Oct. 16 about the Israel-Hamas war. Below on the left is a Palestinian student who said 12 of her distant cousins, uncles and other family members were killed from airstrikes between Oct. 15 to Oct. 25. "There was a circulating video of a doctor in my family who could not keep his composure at a hospital after finding out his brother and father were murdered," she said. On the right is one of the leaders of the march chanting.

'BENSON YOU CAN'T HIDE'

Hundreds of protestors denounce violence in Gaza, call out Benson



MARIA SHAIKH
Mercury Staff

Hundreds of students marched from TI Plaza to SSA at 2 p.m. Oct. 25 in response to UTD President Richard Benson's statement expressing sympathy for Israeli casualties without acknowledging Palestinian casualties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At least ten groups helped organize the march, including Students for Justice in Palestine and the Muslim Student Association. The walkout was a part of larger series of marches across the nation last Wednesday organized by the Palestine Youth Movement. At least 112 universities participated across Texas, including UTD, UT Arlington, and the University of North Texas. Peaking with 350 marchers chanting slogans such as "Benson, Benson, you can't hide, you're supporting genocide," and "Palestine will be free" in Arabic, the demonstration could be heard as far as UV Phase

FATIMAH AZEEM
Editor-In-Chief

3. Police were present near the protest for its entire duration. The Oct. 25 walkout is the largest protest SJP has held at UTD and the largest protest on campus since 2020.

"TO BE SENT THAT EMAIL WAS VERY DISRESPECTFUL TOWARDS... PARTICULARLY THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY WHO HAVE FAMILY IN GAZA."

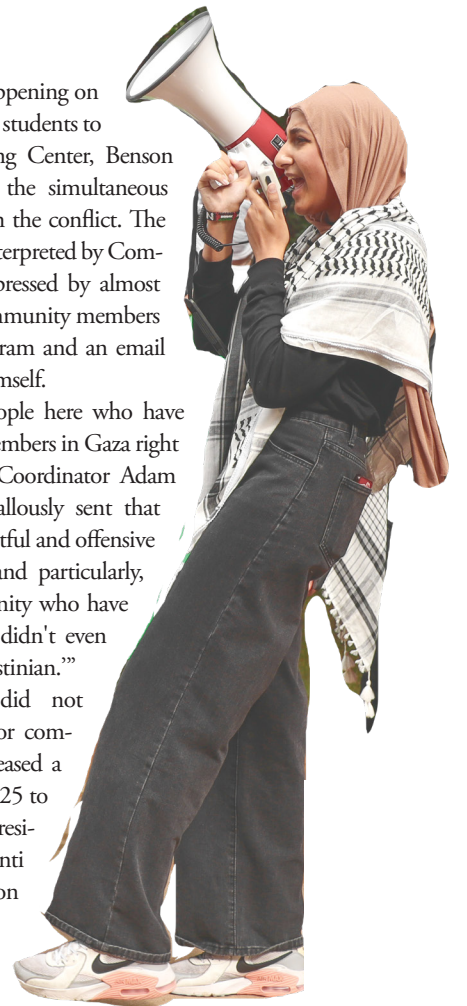
On Oct. 16, President Benson issued a statement condemning the militant group Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel and expressing his condolences for "the people of Israel and for all those affected by the violence and inhumanity of Hamas." Despite commend-

ing the civil protests happening on campus and connecting students to the Student Counselling Center, Benson failed to acknowledge the simultaneous deaths of Palestinians in the conflict. The statement was widely interpreted by Comets as one-sided, as expressed by almost 4,000 students and community members on LinkedIn, X, Instagram and an email campaign to Benson himself.

"There are some people here who have lost dozens of family members in Gaza right now," SJP Campaign Coordinator Adam Hasan said. "To be callously sent that email was very disrespectful and offensive towards the Muslim, and particularly, the Palestinian community who have family in Gaza ... He didn't even mention the word 'Palestinian.'"

President Benson did not respond to a request for comment. However, he released a new statement on Oct. 25 to Student Government President Srivani Edupuganti following a resolution

GAZA, PAGE 11



SG asks Benson to support Israeli, Palestinian students amidst conflict

JACK SIERPOTOWSKI
Mercury Staff

Student Government passed a resolution on Oct. 24 calling on President Richard Benson to amend his Oct. 16 statement about the Israel-Hamas war and acknowledge the suffering of both Israeli and Palestinian students.

S.R. 2023-06 passed with overwhelming support; out of the 65 senators present, 62 were in favor and none opposed. Three senators abstained in addition to Vice President Leah Sullivan.

Benson responded with a letter sent to SG president Srivani Edupuganti on Oct. 25, addressing students with ties to Israel as well as those with ties to Palestine. The resolution also asked that future university statements about similarly sensitive topics be vetted by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion or its equivalent; UTD admin has not yet

shared whether that's a policy they will implement going forward.

"I have been listening closely to our community these past few weeks, and I want to recognize the grief of those whose Palestinian or Israeli family or friends have been affected by the latest eruption of war in the Middle East, those who are anxious about the conflict and those who are concerned about their own safety," Benson said. "I join our community in mourning the tragic loss of life and ongoing suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians, especially the thousands of children who have become victims of this violence."

The resolution stated that the Israel-Hamas war has worsened both Islamophobia and antisemitism

SEE RESOLUTION, PAGE 11

BENSON'S RESPONSE

I have received the Student Government Senate resolution of October 24, 2023, and wish to respond.

I have been listening closely to our community these past few weeks, and I want to recognize the grief of those whose Palestinian or Israeli family or friends have been affected by the latest eruption of war in the Middle East, those who are anxious about the conflict and those who are concerned about their own safety. I join our community in mourning the tragic loss of life and ongoing suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians, especially the thousands of children who have become victims of this violence.

We remain committed to supporting the well-being of everyone on our campus, and I have asked the vice president for student affairs and the vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion to provide recommendations on how to accomplish this.

As an institution of higher learning, UT Dallas will continue to promote free, open and thoughtful dialogue regarding this decades-long conflict. We have a long-standing policy that prohibits discrimination and harassment, and we are committed to ensuring that our institution remains a welcoming and safe place for every member of our community.

How we interact with one another on our campus indicates how we will connect with those outside our university with whom we may have conflict or disagreement. I encourage us all to rededicate ourselves to presuming good faith on the part of others and to listen with kindness and empathy. Only in this way can we begin to truly address the challenges of our world.

May we see a peaceful resolution to this conflict soon.

I am responding directly to you, and I hope you will share this with other interested members of the community.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Benson

Benson officially responded to Student Government's resolution in an Oct. 25 email shared with SG President Srivani Edupuganti, where he acknowledged Palestinians and Israelis.



Protestors started off at TI Plaza before marching down the Plinth weaving around campus.



Chants such as "Justice now is our demand. No peace on stolen land," and "Free Palestine" could be heard from UV.



Three marchers spoke about experiences in Palestine and hope for the movement amidst the humanitarian crisis.