Chris Hedges delivers lecture on Gaza War

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

The university welcomed Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist, author and activist Chris Hedges on Thursday, March 5 to deliver his moving lecture, The World After Gaza.

Known for his decades of reporting from conflict zones in Central America, the Middle East and the Balkans as well as his criticism of global power structures, Hedges spoke to students and community members about the broader political and humanitarian consequences of the war in Gaza.

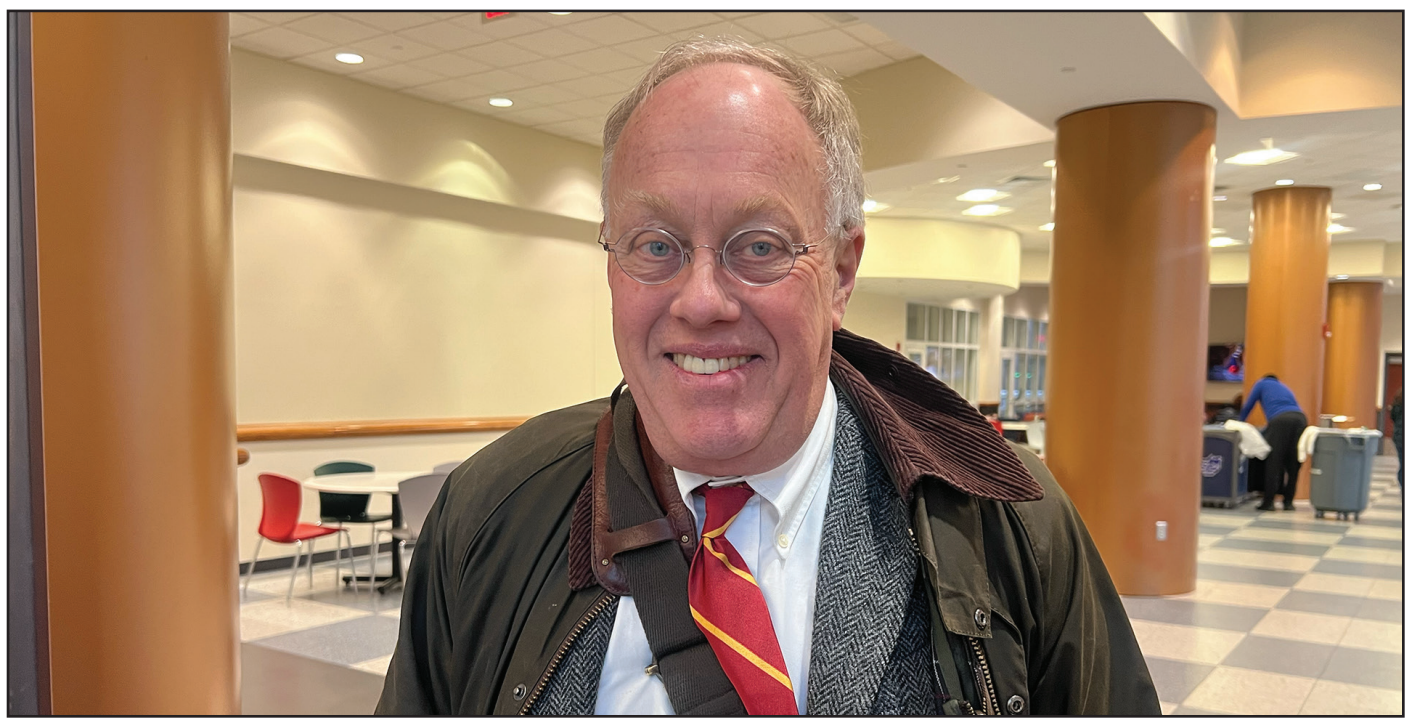

PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Pultizer Prize-winning journalist, author and activist Chris Hedges in front of the Adanti Student Center Theater on Thursday, March 5, after his lecture.

"These tools of control, the wholesale surveillance, the drones, the sensors under the ground, all that stuff which has been used on the Palestinians is now showing up along the border of the United States to stop Mexicans and showing up in places like Lesbos and Greece to block the migrants coming in from North Africa," Hedges said.

Hedges set the stage for audience members by emphasizing that the conflict in Gaza should not be viewed as an isolated tragedy.

He explained that the systems used in the conflict are already coming into play, as they are affecting policies and security measures in other parts of the world.

Hedges tied these developments to the growing climate crisis and ultimately, a mass migration.

"As the climate breaks down, as you have larger and larger numbers of people fleeing devastated ecosystems in the Global South, all of the mechanisms to build what in essence will become climate fortresses are evidenced in the subjugation of the Palestinians," Hedges said.

Hedges placed the conflict in a broader historical context by stating that violence and mass migration have been long-standing elements of colonial systems of power.

"Genocide is at the core of Western imperialism," Hedges said. "We are a genocidal nation. The Americas, whether through Europeans or Euro-Americans or the Spanish, was one big genocide."

Hedges outlined that the patterns of violence inflicted on Palestinians echo past atrocities in the Global South.

He pointed out that in 1943, during the Bengal famine, about three million Indians died mainly because the British took control of the region's grain supplies.

According to Hedges, Winston Churchill dismissed any responsibility for the disaster and instead referred to Hindus as "a beastly people with a beastly religion."

Whether it is famines, forced labor or colonial repression, Hedges noted that these acts of violence and control have a pattern of being silenced or minimized by those in power.

"These kinds of genocides or holocausts were not new if you came from the Global South, but they were not acknowledged by the perpetrators," Hedges said.

Hedges argued that the same patterns of oppression seen in the past continue to shape conflicts and crises around the world today.

Hedges closed his lecture with a warning about the rise of authoritarian practices in the United States by drawing parallels between Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other forces abroad.

"The next five years, I see fascist violence is already on the streets of America," Hedges said. "ICE, now has more funding than any other federal law enforcement agency."

Hedges pointed out that ICE's increasing power is not exclusively asserted to combat immigration enforcement.

"If you think these massive warehouses — and if you've seen the plans for them, like these individual cells where they can cram 10,000 people — and if you think they're for undocumented people, you're very naive," Hedges said.

Hedges drew on his own experiences in Iran, Chile and El Salvador to describe how these kinds of state forces act without accountability. Hedges said he still recalls the exact moment he seen this happen firsthand.

"I have seen these movements, whether it's the Basij in Iran, and I was thrown in a jail cell by them," Hedges said.

Hedges stressed that these state-controlled forces like ICE are fostering a rogue vigilante force that operates outside the law.

"They are usurping the work of police departments, and not just Minneapolis, but cities across the country. They are actually weakening the police departments by creating a climate of fear," Hedges said.

By instilling fear in residents, Hedges said these forces undermine community trust and discourage people from coming forward.

"You shred community solidarity and community assistance, so people don't want or they're too scared to report," Hedges said. "So, the violence already here in this country has been eviscerated," Hedges said.

Apart from this warning, Hedges emphasized the power of nonviolent action by urging the audience to take collective action through solidarity, civil disobedience and organized activism.

"Violence in any society will produce counter-violence," Hedges said. "It's the collective nonviolent ability to shut the system down that's our only hope."

Ken Rahn named university's new police chief

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

A shift in leadership took place within the university Police Department as former Chief of Police and Director of Public Safety Makiem Miller steps down and passes the torch to veteran law enforcement officer Deputy Chief Ken Rahn.

The change was first shared with the university community in a Feb. 27 email from Lillian Wanjagi, the vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer, who announced that Miller would be retiring from his position after serving since June 7, 2024.

"Chief Makiem Miller has notified us of his decision to step down as Southern's Chief of Police, effective March 5, 2026," Wanjagi said. "We are deeply grateful for Chief Miller's dedicated service and contributions to our community and wish him every success in his next chapter."

In preparation for the leadership transition, Wanjagi said she spent several weeks meeting with the police department and other members of the campus community.

These conversations were intended to gather feedback about the department's current operations and priorities while helping to guide the university's next steps.

This included the department continuing to maintain the high quality of public safety operations.

"These discussions have offered meaningful perspectives on current practices, emerging priorities and the areas vital to the department's ongoing success," Wanjagi said.

Following those discussions, the university selected Rahn to become the university's next chief of police.

Wanjagi said the choice was made with the goal of maintaining stability and continuity within the department.

"Based on these conversations, and with an emphasis on consistency and long-term stability, I am pleased to share that Deputy Chief Ken Rahn has agreed to serve as the university's next chief of police," Wanjagi said.

According to Wanjagi, Rahn brings more than three decades of experience in law enforcement to the position.

Rahn is also a familiar face within the campus community, as he previously served as the university's interim chief from 2022–2024.

"Before joining the university Police Department, he spent 25 years with the Milford Police Department, serving as a patrol officer, K-9 handler, detective and administrative supervisor," Wanjagi said.

Over the years, Rahn gained experience across multiple areas of law enforcement and rose through the ranks.

"A graduate of the 274th FBI National Academy, he concluded his tenure in Milford as deputy chief, where he served as second-in-command for his final five years," Wanjagi said.

Since Rahn's arrival at the university in 2019, he has managed several important operational responsibilities with effective leadership and built strong working relationships across campus.

"His broad experience, strong understanding of campus needs and trusted partnerships across the university and with regional public safety agencies position him exceptionally well for this new responsibility," Wanjagi said.

As Miller officially retired on Thursday, March 5, Rahn picked up the torch and began leading the department's efforts to maintain safety across campus.

Wanjagi and other leaders are excited to welcome Rahn back to the university community, as he will serve as the fifth chief of police and director of public safety.

"Please join me in congratulating him as he steps into this important role and in extending our best wishes to Chief Miller in his retirement," Wanjagi said.



PHOTO | JULIAN MARKESE

University police cars in front of the university Police Department on Monday, March 9.



PHOTO | NEWS AT SOUTHERN

Former Deputy Chief Ken Rahn, who was sworn in as the chief of police on Thursday, March 5.



PHOTO | NEWS AT SOUTHERN

Former Chief Makiem Miller outside of the Adanti Student Center after being officially sworn in as the university's fourth chief of police and director of public safety on June 7, 2024.