



Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Cease and desist request

28 messages

John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 10:55 AM

To: Dima Pasechnik <dimpase@gmail.com>, Matthias Koepp <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>, Tobias Diez <code@tobiasdiez.de>, sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Dear Dima, Matthias, and Tobias,

I am writing on behalf of the sage-abuse group to ask you to stop all discussion and all modifications involving disputed PRs. Please change the status of each one to "needs info". Please do continue your work on noncontroversial PRs. (I trust you to use your common sense to distinguish between "disputed" and "noncontroversial".)

At some point, I hope soon, the Sage community needs to make some decisions about the future of Sage development. Once we know more about how this will work, we will let you know.

Regards,
John

--
John H. Palmieri

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 11:02 AM

To: John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Hi John & sage-abuse committee --

Framing this as "disputes" or "controversies" is insufficient, as should be very clear by now.

As I reported to you in detail, Dima and Tobias are violating CoC blatantly even after being called out for it.
The damage already done is immeasurable.

I think we need a concrete, specific timeline when the sage-abuse committee will decide on and implement sanctions.

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

--
Matthias Koepp -- <http://www.math.ucdavis.edu/~mkoepp>

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 11:15 AM

To: John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

I have to note that I have not yet received any response from the committee regarding:

- my report regarding Dima (emails from Nov 28, Dec 5)
- my concern regarding the false claims of authorship by Tobias (email of Nov 24)
- my report regarding continued aggressions by Tobias (email of Nov 25).

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 11:30 AM

By the way, John, I had to add that I think also the framing that you used in <https://github.com/sagemath/sage/pull/36726#issuecomment-1866674437>, "Dima and Tobias [...] are unable to compromise, unable to act like adults." is not helpful.

They are responsible for their conduct. And it is necessary to call out their abuses clearly, without sugarcoating.

Matthias

On Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 11:15AM Matthias Köppe
[Quoted text hidden]

John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>
To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 2:21 PM

And with that, I'm stepping away from Sage for a while. Good luck, everyone.

[Quoted text hidden]

--
John H. Palmieri

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 3:07 PM

Hi John,
Thanks for all your support, and enjoy your break.
Happy holidays

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 3:38 PM

I will need a response from the committee.
In case meeting by Zoom is easier, I am available to meet any time.

Thanks,
Matthias

On Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 11:02AM Matthias Köppe
<matthiaskoepp@gmail.com> wrote:
>
[Quoted text hidden]

William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>
To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 3:48 PM

Hi,

John was going to run this process but is temporarily quitting sage development instead due to your response. There is now no process until the rest of us figure out something.

-- William Stein

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

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You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "sage-abuse" group.

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to sage-abuse+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com.

To view this discussion on the web visit https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/sage-abuse/CAJ_wo5jt4qOPpxYOFwd_zr4b0qYPVNgO7TmU8G193_%3DPRzUbA%40mail.gmail.com.

Dima Pasechnik <dimpase@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 3:52 PM

To: John Palmieri <jhpalmieri64@gmail.com>

Cc: Matthias Koeppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>, Tobias Diez <code@tobiasdiez.de>, sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Dear all,

In addition I created label "disputed" to add to the PRs and issues in question.
("needs info" is too generic)

Cheers

Dima

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 4:11 PM

To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

I supported the "appeasement" approach of implementing a "Policy of disputed PRs" (<https://groups.google.com/g/sage-devel/c/rDM3WDHnJkM>).

I still support creating, but it is already clear from Dima's and Tobias's responses in that discussion thread that it will be insufficient.

From Dima's response ("whole thing about specific disagreements on individual PRs comes exactly from the wrong overall direction of the project.") it is clear that he feels justified for using whatever means in the discussion, so he is not bound by CoC.

<https://groups.google.com/g/sage-devel/c/rDM3WDHnJkM/m/6znoMK4IAwAJ>

I have asked Dima in

<https://github.com/sagemath/sage/pull/36726#issuecomment-1864029069>

for a clarification of this, to no avail.

I would like to see a clear, public affirmation by the sage-abuse committee that the CoC applies to everyone; and that the committee is willing to enforce it.

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 4:18 PM

To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>

Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

That is fair. I personally affirm that the sage code of conduct applies to everybody contributing to sage, and I intend to do what I can to enforce it.

-- William Stein
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Fri, Dec 22, 2023 at 4:48 PM

Public = with at least the same reach as the CoC violations.

Key place (with links to many other violations):
<https://github.com/sagemath/sage/pull/36726> ("pkill")
I have marked the most problematic comments with the "accusing eyes" emoji.

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 9:24 AM

Hi William,
May I ask if the sage-abuse committee has any plans to address the reported abuses?

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>
To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 9:52 AM

Hi,

I proposed a plan to the committee, and got some feedback. My plan is basically that given the situation, we (the committee) need to make a hard choice and just strongly support one of the three people involved in this mess.

The real question is who has the *actual power* right now regarding Sage moving forward. I think that's Volker since he is the release manager, so I need to schedule a chat with him.

I've been on vacation with family, but I am getting back today.

Anyway, our plan is the following:

1. Talk with Volker and find out what he thinks and will support.
2. If Volker is onboard, appoint somebody to a more powerful editor role (maybe one of the three of you, maybe somebody else).
3. People have to accept what the editor decides, even if they don't personally agree with it. If they don't, then they will be strongly encouraged to stop Sage development (or work in their own fork -- it's open source after all).

If this falls apart, I will write a post about how I was the BDFL and we switched to a democrat "self governance" for Sage long ago... but that isn't working, and I would like the community's support in acting as an editor in case of disputed PR's, and just call for yes/no vote. I hope it doesn't come to that.

Anyway, rest assured that I'm not ignoring this situation, and I MASSIVELY value your contributions to Sage, and things are going to change, one way or another. However, I don't know how yet.

William

[Quoted text hidden]

--

William (<http://wstein.org>)

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 9:59 AM

To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Hi William,

Thanks for the reaction.

But similar to what I wrote already in response to John's proposal:

This is not a problem of project governance.

It is one of abusive conduct.

Happy to talk when you have time.

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 10:25 AM

To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

On Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 9:59AM Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Hi William,

> Thanks for the reaction.

> But similar to what I wrote already in response to John's proposal:

> This is not a problem of project governance.

> It is one of abusive conduct.

>

> Happy to talk when you have time.

We've had similar situations many times over the years. What always happened in the past

is that when somebody acting "poisonous" doesn't get their way, they quit the project. Right now

nobody is not getting their way, because there is no process in place to decide things, and what some

people want is actually just to derail progress (e.g., Dima actually gets his way by stopping a PR from

being merged). If by a governance process it is decided that all disputed PR's are resolved in your

favor (say), then it's likely Dima would quit out of anger or

frustration. As a community we are then

making hard choices (e.g., loss of a developer who has contributed substantially) instead of trying to

fundamentally change people, which is mostly impossible.

Natthan Cohen who was the most recent blatant example of this, around 2016. His terrible conduct toward one of your colleague's at UC Davis directly resulted in the code of conduct. When I introduced the Code of Conduct, Natthan also stepped up a massive campaign of attacks against me personally, etc. (including personally emailing a lot of sage devs to attack me). In any case, the net result was that he quit Sage, and though we lost somebody who contributed a lot to Sage, it was definitely the best end state, since we would never be able to change Natthan.

I won't be surprised if I end up facing similar attacks out of what's going on right now, but I can handle it.

William

[Quoted text hidden]

--

William (<http://wstein.org>)

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 10:50 AM

To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

On Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 10:25AM William Stein <wstein@gmail.com> wrote:
> On Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 9:59AM Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com> wrote:
> > similar to what I wrote already in response to John's proposal:
> > This is not a problem of project governance.
> > It is one of abusive conduct.
> >
> > Happy to talk when you have time.
>
> We've had similar situations many times over the years.

I'm sorry to say this, but it has not been handled well in the past,
and we should not repeat it.

That Dima feels entitled to using abusive bullying is a result of the
project enabling him by excusing him for it too often.

> What always happened in the past
> is that when somebody acting "poisonous" doesn't get their way, they
> quit the project. [...] If by a governance process it is decided that all
> disputed PR's are resolved in your
> favor (say), then it's likely Dima would quit out of anger or
> frustration.

This would not be a good outcome.

> As a community we are then
> making hard choices (e.g., loss of a developer who has contributed
> substantially) instead of trying to
> fundamentally change people, which is mostly impossible.

No, we don't have to "change people" to fix the problem.

We need to be unequivocal about the standard set by the CoC, and make
it known that it will be enforced.

Right now, from the silence on this matter, Dima is still getting the
impression that it is only my "opinion" that his conduct is
inappropriate.

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 11:18 AM

To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Reference on best practices:
<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/managing-smart/damage-done-dealing-narcissists-workplace>

On Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 10:50AM Matthias Köppe

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 29, 2023 at 3:56 PM

To: William Stein <wstein@gmail.com>

Sorry for sending another email while you're traveling, but one more thing came to my mind:

> People have to accept what the editor decides, even if they don't personally agree with it. If they don't, then they will be strongly encouraged to stop Sage development (or work in their own fork -- it's open source after all).

The idea of banishing someone to work in their own fork just makes no sense any more in the age of GitHub:

- Everyone is already working in their own fork.
- So this would just boil down to the sanction of disallowing *all* communication of the offender with the project.
- But this also would need to be enforced by sage-abuse.
- Compare with the milder sanction of just enforcing CoC in the offender's communication with the project.

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoeppe@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>
Cc: Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Wed, Jan 10, 2024 at 6:59 PM

Hi William, sage-abuse committee, and Volker:
Following up on my response
<https://groups.google.com/g/sage-devel/c/XON6NTJa33o/m/Wby5Ga85BAAJ> to William's post of today.

1) Yes, Volker, William's message does specify the sanctions that the committee will consider. The problem is that this specification, "the main act of censure [...] will be to delete comments (on github and mailing lists) that violate the code of conduct", is a strict subset of the type of sanctions that were applied in 2023.

2) Already the idea that the scope of CoC violations is individual "comments" that violate the CoC is flawed. If there is a threshold for the deletion action, abusers will learn to operate just below this threshold; and they will take non-action by the committee as approval of their hostile conduct. Exhibit A:
<https://github.com/sagemath/sage/pull/36953#issuecomment-1884233452>

3) I still have not received a clear answer whether the committee intends to address the abuses that I have already reported. (My report regarding Dima (emails from Nov 28, Dec 5 to sage-abuse); my concern regarding the false claims of authorship by Tobias (email of Nov 24); my report regarding continued aggressions by Tobias (email of Nov 25); and PR <https://github.com/sagemath/sage/pull/36726>, in which William, John, Volker posted comments.) William's message talks about "the main act of censure that the sage-abuse committee will be taking **going forward**". Does "going forward" refer to future violations or also future action (when?) regarding the already reported ones?

4) Abuse cannot be met with equivocation. For this, I objected to John's message of Dec 22, which addressed "Dima, Matthias, and Tobias," as recipients of a "cease and desist request", and for the same reason, I find the following formulations highly problematic: "we, the community, horribly failed in the code review process and for whatever reason no consensus can be found among the issue participants" (Volker); "The code of conduct should not be used as a tool in case you don't agree with somebody else" (William)

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>
To: Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepppe@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 5:11 AM

On Wed, Jan 10, 2024 at 10:00 PM Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepppe@gmail.com> wrote:

[...] I find the following formulations highly problematic: [...]

"The code of conduct should not be used as a
tool in case you don't agree with somebody else" (William)

I assume you didn't mean it that way, but it does rub me quite the wrong way. This part of William's message should have been the least controversial. The CoC is not something to beat others into submission. First and foremost it is a guideline for YOU to check YOUR OWN conduct and see if its out of line ("you" in general, not necessarily Matthias Koeppke).

The worst punishment available in an online community is always that your voice isn't going to be heard. Apart from deleting abusive comments there isn't really anything that is going to happen. If you find yourself regularly posting to sage-abuse to complain about the unfriendliness of others then you should see that first of all as a hint to check whether a less abrasive communication style might elicit more friendly responses.

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepppe@gmail.com>
To: Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>
Cc: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>

Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 10:06 AM

Hi Volker and all,

On Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 5:12AM Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com> wrote:

> On Wed, Jan 10, 2024 at 10:00 PM Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepppe@gmail.com> wrote:

>>

>> [...] I find the following formulations highly problematic: [...]

>> "The code of conduct should not be used as a

>> tool in case you don't agree with somebody else" (William)

>

> I assume you didn't mean it that way, but it does rub me quite the wrong way. This part of William's message should have been the least controversial.

By itself, it's a sentence that reads uncontroversial.

> The CoC is not something to beat others into submission.

By itself, also this reads uncontroversial. (Note though the escalation from "tool" use to weapon use.)

> First and foremost it is a guideline for YOU to check YOUR OWN conduct and see if it's out of line ("you" in general, not necessarily Matthias Koeppke).

All of these are true and very agreeable.

It's the context (as part of the response by the sage-abuse committee to reports of violations) that makes them problematic equivocation.

> The worst punishment available in an online community is always that your voice isn't going to be heard.

> Apart from deleting abusive comments there isn't really anything that is going to happen.

If that's the policy of the committee, it's far from best practices, and it will have to change.

As I have explained, focusing on "abusive comments" is much too narrow.

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 12, 2024 at 3:20 PM

Hi sage-abuse,
Meanwhile fresh material has arrived.
<https://github.com/sagemath/sage/issues/32532#issuecomment-1890083964>
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 12, 2024 at 3:49 PM

Thanks John and William for stepping in at
<https://github.com/sagemath/sage/issues/32532#issuecomment-1890145223>;
but I just read more problematic equivocations. The committee really
needs to step up and address the abuse properly.

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM

I'll add that the idea of a *-flame list is an outdated and harmful
relic from the usenet era.
We should remove the mention of it from
https://github.com/sagemath/sage/blob/develop/CODE_OF_CONDUCT.md

Abuse is asymmetric. There is an abuser, and there is a target of the
abuse. Sending both to *-flame is inappropriate and harmful, as it
effectively downplays and legitimizes the conduct of the abuser.

Surely I cannot be the only one of us here who has learned in academic
leadership seminars how to handle harassment and abuse in the
workplace?

Matthias
[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>
To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 15, 2024 at 2:32 PM

On Fri, Jan 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com> wrote:
> Surely I cannot be the only one of us here who has learned in academic
> leadership seminars how to handle harassment and abuse in the
> workplace?

Apparently I need to elaborate on this, as the mishandling of this has
reached a grotesque level.

1. As I have explained, abuse is asymmetric. You cannot address the
abuser and the target of the abuse (reporter) in the same email as
equal parties. Disclaimers such as saying that it's "not a judgment on
the merits" do not fix this fundamental flaw. If you think that doing
so is good because it demonstrates neutrality -- no, it does not.

2. When sanctions are being implemented, confidentiality needs to be a
consideration. What purpose could possibly be served by letting the
abusers know that the committee is hitting the reporter with the same
sanctions?

3. Timely acknowledgment of reports is key. Likewise if the committee does not wish to take action on a reported issue, the reporter needs to know that -- so that he can responsibly report the concern in a different way.

For example, when I report abuse to GitHub in a repo when I'm an admin of the org/repo myself, GitHub Trust & Safety will primarily defer to me just taking administrative action myself.

Likewise, if I wanted to raise an issue of harassment and abuse with the abuser's employing institution, one of the first questions would be whether other reporting options have been exhausted already.

Questions? Happy to share materials with you.

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 26, 2024 at 9:57 AM

To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

Hi sage-abuse committee. I still have not received any reaction.

It's been 2 weeks now since David Roe removed me from owner status of the sagemath github organization and the Triage team. There has been no explanation.

The continued framing as mere "disputes" between equal parties is unacceptable.

I still have not received any acknowledgment whether the severe abuse that I have reported will be addressed as such by the committee, nor any response to my specific objections to the flaws in the handling of the whole process.

Matthias

[Quoted text hidden]

Matthias Köppe <matthiaskoepp@gmail.com>

Sun, Jan 28, 2024 at 2:21 PM

To: sage-abuse <sage-abuse@googlegroups.com>, Volker Braun <vbraun.name@gmail.com>

I've still not received any explanation for the removal of my privileges -- or any other reaction.

[Quoted text hidden]