

COMMITTEE FOR **OPEN DISCUSSION** **OF ZIONISM**

Honorary Co-chairs: James Abourezk • Kathleen Chalfant • Richard Falk • Ghada Karmi
Michael Ratner • Howard Zinn (in memoriam)

August 7, 2014

Dr. Phyllis M. Wise
Chancellor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Swanlund Administration Building, MC 304
601 East John Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Dear Chancellor Wise:

The Committee for the Open Discussion of Zionism (CODZ) is a group of academics, lawyers, physicians, actors and other professionals and laypersons concerned with the suppression of critical discussion of Zionism and Israel's foreign and domestic policy, in academia and other public forums.

CODZ strenuously objects to your decision to rescind the appointment of Professor Steven Salaita to the faculty of the American Indian Studies Program because of statements critical of Israeli policy made by Professor Salaita outside of his academic duties.

To our knowledge neither the faculty of the university nor the Chair of the American Indian Studies Program, both of whom had approved Professor Salaita's appointment, were consulted regarding this decision.

The decision to withdraw the appointment was prompted by informal, but forceful statements, critical of Israeli policy made by Professor Salaita in his personal Twitter account. The statements were made during the recent invasion of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces, in which thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children, were killed and tens of thousands more injured or made homeless.

Professor Salaita's political statements, made during his free time, are protected speech, and cannot be the basis of adverse action by a public institution, such as non-hiring, firing or rescission of an academic appointment.

"Civility" or "collegiality" concerns based on administrators' personal dislike for political views or statements expressed by a prospective faculty appointee in his private life cannot justify

<http://codzorg.net>

the rescission of a faculty appointment by a public university. This is a bedrock principle of academic freedom. Your unilateral action, taken without prior consultation with and support by the faculty of the concerned department, also appears to violate the University's departmental academic freedom. Your action in Professor Salaita's case smacks of the McCarthyism that nearly destroyed political freedom in this country in the second half of the last century, when we nearly lost such beloved artists as Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson, and did lose, in many, many cases forever, rich contributions to our cultural life and political discourse in the blacklisting scourge of American artists, writers, actors, scholars, and college faculty who advocated communism as an expression of their social and egalitarian ideals.

We demand the immediate reinstatement of Professor Salaita's appointment to the University's American Indian Studies program.

Sincerely,

(affiliations listed for identification purposes only)

Dennis James, Esq.

Abdeen Jabara, Esq.

former National President, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Barbara Harvey, Esq.

National Lawyers Guild Palestine Subcommittee

Michael Smith, Esq.

Co-host, Law & Disorder radio show

Joel Kovel, M.D.

Terri Ginsberg, Ph.D.

Board member, International Council for Middle East Studies

Carl Schieren

Professor Harriet Malinowitz

Long Island University-Brooklyn

Jonathan House, M.D.

Columbia University

Professor Bertell Ollman

New York University

Mitchel Cohen

Brooklyn Greens/Green Party

— for the Committee for Open Discussion of Zionism

<http://codzorg.net>