



## Academic Boycotts Directly Contravene Title VI HEOA

### The Problems

In recent years many directors and faculty of Title VI HEOA-funded Middle East Studies National Resource Centers (NRCs) have publicly expressed support for an academic boycott of Israeli universities and scholars. (See Table 1)

**Table 1**  
**Number of Middle East Studies NRC Directors and Faculty who Support**  
**The Academic Boycott of Israel (A/B)**

University	Director during Grant Period Supports A/B	Number of Affiliated Faculty Supporting A/B
Columbia U. – Middle East Institute	YES	16
Duke U. – Middle East Studies Center	YES	5
George Washington U. – Institute for ME Studies		4
Georgetown U – Center for Contemporary Arab St.	YES	8
Indiana U. – Center for the Study of the Middle East		4
New York U. – Center for Near Eastern Studies	YES	8
Princeton U. – Program in Near Eastern Studies		3
U. of Arizona – Center for Middle Eastern Studies		0
UC Berkeley – Center for Middle Eastern Studies		7
U. of Chicago - Center for Middle Eastern Studies		6
U. of Michigan – Center for ME and NA Studies		5
U. of Pennsylvania – Middle East Center		2
U. of Texas Austin – Center for ME Studies		2
U. of Washington – Middle East Center		4
Yale U. – Council on Middle East Studies		5

### ***1) Advocating for an academic boycott of Israel may violate the Title VI HEOA stipulation of “diverse perspectives and a wide range of views”***

Three AMCHA Initiative studies suggest that the Middle East NRC directors and affiliated faculty who have endorsed an academic boycott of Israel may use Title VI-funded public outreach events to promote an anti-Israel bias generally, and an anti-Israel boycott specifically, in violation of Title VI stipulations:

- AMCHA Initiative researchers tracked anti-Israel bias in public events sponsored by UCLA’s Title VI HEOA-funded Center for Near East Studies (CNES) over a three-year-period (2010 - 2013), during which the center was directed by three individuals who had all endorsed an academic boycott of Israel. The study found that 93% of CNES’s numerous public outreach events that focused on Israel had a clear anti-Israel bias, and close to 20% of these events included discourse promoting the boycott of Israel.<sup>1</sup>
- A study conducted by AMCHA Initiative in 2016 of the 15 Title VI-funded NRCs in the area of Middle East Studies found that those NRC directors who had endorsed an anti-Israel boycott

<sup>1</sup> Antisemitic Activity and Anti-Israel Bias At the Center for Near East Studies, University of California at Los Angeles 2010 – 2013, AMCHA Initiative. (<https://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CNES-Report.pdf>)

were more than twice as likely to host federally-funded outreach events with pro-boycott speakers.<sup>2</sup>

- Another study by AMCHA Initiative in 2017 of more than 100 Middle East Studies departments across the country, including all 15 NRCs, showed that departments with one or more faculty members who had endorsed an academic boycott of Israel were five times more likely to sponsor public outreach events with pro-boycott speakers, and that many of those events included the promotion of an anti-Israel boycott.<sup>3</sup>

Although academic freedom may protect the right of a program director or faculty member to present politically biased and activist programming as part of their university employment, if such biased programming is being undertaken in fulfillment of the center's obligation as an NRC, it may well violate the Title VI HEOA stipulation to ensure that **"the activities funded by the grant represent diverse perspectives and a wide range of views."**

## ***2) Implementing an academic boycott of Israel violates the very purpose of Title VI HEOA Funding***

The data from AMCHA Initiative's three studies cited above raise the alarming possibility that NRC directors and affiliated faculty who have publicly endorsed an academic boycott of Israel may attempt to implement the boycott on their campuses, whose official guidelines specifically call on the boycott's endorsers to: work toward shutting down study abroad programs in Israel and refusing to write recommendations for students who want to attend them; scuttling their colleagues' research collaborations with Israeli universities and scholars; and cancelling or shutting down events organized by students or faculty that feature Israeli leaders or scholars. (See Appendix 1).

Were a Middle East Studies NRC director or faculty member to actually implement these guidelines and carry out the academic boycott of Israel – a country within the purview of their NRC -- they would be directly contravening one of the explicitly stated purposes of the NRC's Title VI HEOA funding, namely, **"to promote access to research and training overseas, including through linkages with overseas institutions."** (See Appendix 2).

## **Possible Remedies**

Although at the present time Israel is the only country in the Middle East that is being boycotted by some NRC directors and faculty, in theory it is possible to advocate for and implement an academic boycott of any of the Middle Eastern countries within the purview of an NRC. **Therefore, we offer the following possible recommendations, which are framed in the broadest way:**

- **The Department of Education or the White House could issue a statement warning NRC directors and affiliated faculty that: advocating for an academic boycott of one of the countries within the NRC's purview could result in a violation of the Title VI HEOA stipulation of "diverse perspectives and a wide range of views;" implementing an academic boycott of one of the countries in the NRC's purview would be a direct subversion of the stated purpose of Title VI funding; and either violation could result in the non-renewal of federal funding.**
- **Every NRC director should be obligated to sign a statement affirming that neither they nor any of the NRC's affiliated faculty will implement an academic boycott of any of the countries within their center's purview.**

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<sup>2</sup> "Anti-Israel Bias of Directors and Speakers at Title VI-Funded Middle East Studies Programs 2014 – 2015," AMCHA Initiative. (<https://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NRC-Report.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> "The Impact of Academic Boycotters of Israel on U.S. Campuses," AMCHA Initiative (<https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Faculty-Report.pdf>)

## Appendix 1

### **Excerpts from Guidelines of Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel<sup>4</sup> (PACBI) that Directly Contravene Title VI**

“PACBI urges academics, academic associations/unions, and academic -- as well as other -- institutions around the world...to boycott and/or work towards the cancellation or annulment of events, activities, agreements, or projects involving Israeli academic institutions...”

“Specifically, the following events, activities, or situations are in violation of the Palestinian academic boycott:

1. Academic events (such as conferences, symposia, workshops, book and museum exhibits) convened or co-sponsored by Israel, complicit Israeli institutions or their support and lobby groups in various countries...
2. Research and development activities that fall into these broad categories:
  - a. Among academic institutions – Institutional cooperation agreements with Israel universities or research institutes...
  - b. Among the Israeli government and other governments or foundations/institutions...
  - c. Among corporations and academic institutions...

...

5. Study abroad schemes in Israel for international students...

...

10. ... international faculty should not accept to write recommendations for students hoping to pursue studies in Israel, as this facilitates the violation of guideline 11 below.

11. International students enrolling in or international faculty teaching or conducting research at degree or non-degree programs at an Israeli institution...”

## Appendix 2

### **Excerpted from Title VI – International Education Programs Part A – International and Foreign Language Studies**

SEC. 601 (a) FINDINGS. – Congress finds as follows: (1) The security, stability, and economic vitality of the United States in a complex global era depend upon American experts in and citizens knowledgeable about world regions, foreign languages, and international affairs, as well as upon a strong research base in these areas...(4) Systematic efforts are necessary to enhance the capacity of institutions of higher education in the United States for – (A) producing graduates with international and foreign language expertise and knowledge; and (B) research regarding such expertise and knowledge.

(b) **PURPOSES.** – The purposes of this part are - (1)(A) to support centers, programs, and fellowships in institutions of higher education in the United States for producing increased numbers of trained personnel and research in foreign languages, area studies, and other international studies; (B) to develop a pool of international experts to meet national needs;...(D) **to promote access to research and training overseas, including through linkages with overseas institutions...**

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108>