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July 2, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: *Title VI Fund Usage at Yale University*

Dear Secretary DeVos,

I am writing to express my concern that Yale University is misusing funds it has received under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. Title VI was founded to strengthen America's national security interests, but Yale appears to be using funds in ways not authorized by Congress. An earlier inquiry into the Duke/UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies found that most programs had "little or no relevance to Title VI" and "lack balance," and was therefore not in accordance with the law.<sup>1</sup> As a result, I am requesting that your office make inquiries to the administrators of Yale's MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, particularly its Council for Middle East Studies, to determine if the university has failed to comply with the purpose of Title VI grants they have received.

Title VI provides grants with the specified purpose of enhancing "the security, stability, and economic vitality of the United States in a complex global era,"<sup>2</sup> which is accomplished by "develop[ing] a pool of international experts to meet national needs."<sup>3</sup> There are strong indications that the primary outlet through which these goals will be accomplished is through foreign language training in conjunction with relevant supplemental cultural and civic knowledge. Tangentially related topics, politically charged activism aimed at demonizing America's allies and lionizing its rivals, and academic boycotts are not in line with what Congress intended when this program was authorized and these funds were appropriated.

<sup>1</sup> "Notice of a Letter Regarding the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies," Federal Register, September 17, 2019. Available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/17/2019-20067/notice-of-a-letter-regarding-the-duke-unc-consortium-for-middle-east-studies>

<sup>2</sup> 20 U.S. Code § 1121. Findings; purposes; consultation; survey. Available at: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1121>

<sup>3</sup> Id.

The First Amendment protects a university's right to pursue any scholarship with the utmost freedom using private funds or resources not designated for a specific purpose. But that does not mean Yale is at liberty to ignore federal mandates and engage in discriminatory practices under the guise of scholarship. Antisemitism is a particularly toxic manifestation of this kind of discrimination in higher education, and as made clear by a recent executive order by the Trump Administration, discrimination and marginalization of Jews at institutions of higher education may run afoul of civil rights legislation.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, Yale has also received funding from dubious foreign actors. According to a September 2019 Clarion Project report – based on Department of Education figures – since 2012, Yale University has received \$1,259,310 from Saudi Arabia, and \$707,466 from Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Current legislation doesn't require that universities specify which programs are supported by these foreign funds. Nevertheless, the U.S. has very different interests, values, and views than the governments of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. There should be a clear differentiation between programs sponsored by Title VI grants and those sponsored by foreign sources that may have goals that run counter to America's interests.

Among the MacMillan Center's most politicized beneficiaries of Title VI funding is the Council on Middle East Studies. Our research shows that some of its programs contradict the spirit and letter of the law regarding Title VI funds. This is particularly true given support for the "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" movement aimed at our ally Israel. Support for academic boycotts of any kind directly contradicts the purpose of Title VI, which is explicitly to "(P)romote access to research and training overseas, including through linkages with overseas institutions."<sup>6</sup> Additional undertakings that single out Israel for opprobrium also raise concerns.

The Summer Institute for Teachers, sponsored by the Council on Middle East Studies, is among the programs that has directly benefited from Title VI funding.<sup>7</sup> In the last week of June 2019, it explored "Refugees in Recent History," and focused in part on the status of Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, it isn't clear if this course of study taught that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's (UNRWA) definition of Palestinian

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<sup>4</sup> "Anti-Semitism order raises tough issue of defining prejudice," Elana Schor, December 13, 2019. Available at: <https://apnews.com/1765fe4bbd6aeef120e1fb15a4c96305>

<sup>5</sup> "Clarion Exclusive Report: Foreign Influence Ops on US Universities," By: Ryan Mauro and Alex VanNess, Clarion Project, September 6, 2019. Available at: <https://clarionproject.org/us-universities-foreign-funding-clarion-intel-exclusive/>

<sup>6</sup> 20 U.S. Code § 1121. Findings; purposes; consultation; survey. Available at: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1121>

<sup>7</sup> "Teachers explore 'refugee' as defined by international law," Yale MacMillan Center, Program on Refugees, Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Responses. Available at: <https://refugee.macmillan.yale.edu/news/teachers-explore-refugee-defined-international-law>

<sup>8</sup> Id.



refugees is substantially more generous than the definition used for all others by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.<sup>9</sup> Many members of Congress<sup>10</sup> and senior White House staffers have raised this issue as a serious concern.<sup>11</sup>

I have additional concerns: Howard Winant, the keynote speaker at a 2017 conference on "Racism, Antisemitism and the Radical Right," whose cosponsors included the Council on Middle East Studies,<sup>12</sup> asserted that "Israel has always been Islamophobic, that is to say racist ... internally Israel is extremely racist."<sup>13</sup> A conference singling out a close American ally for special, disproportionate scrutiny is not in accordance with the purpose of the Title VI grant programs.

In 2017, a Yale student group reserved space for the organization Promoting Enduring Peace to present an award to Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) spokesman Omar Barghouti in a ceremony held at Yale.<sup>14</sup> While student groups may of course hold any views they like, Title VI funds should not support those that openly thwart the program's goals.

The following Council for Middle East Studies faculty demonstrate that Yale may have failed to ensure that Title VI funds are used to advance the mission Congress originally intended.

### **Dmitri Gutas - Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations**

In 2001, Gutas condemned the U.S. for bombing Osama bin Laden and the Taliban during Ramadan, saying "Because there is this resentment there, the bombing during Ramadan will be seen as an additional insult. It will be interpreted as such by the ideologues and seen as such by the moderates, the ones that America should be trying to win over."<sup>15</sup> Citing Gutas's comments, Middle East scholar Martin Kramer observed that students enrolled in U.S. Middle East studies programs might get a fine Arabic education, but "they also get indoctrinated by a professoriate that is dead-set against the exercise of American power against anyone for any reason."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "The Real Palestinian Refugee Crisis," Asaf Romirowsky, The Tower, May 2014. Available at: [www.thetower.org/article/the-real-palestinian-refugee-crisis/](http://www.thetower.org/article/the-real-palestinian-refugee-crisis/)

<sup>10</sup> "Trump should release secret report on the true number of Palestinian refugees," By: Cliff Smith, Washington Examiner, August 12, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/trump-should-release-secret-report-on-the-true-number-of-palestinian-refugees>

<sup>11</sup> "UNRWA runs on fumes and Band-Aids, can't be fixed, Greenblatt warns UNSC," By: Tovah Lazaroff, The Jerusalem Post, May 23, 2019. Available at: <https://www.jpost.com/General-Assembly/United-Nations-Security-Council-debates-UNRWA-watch-live-590383>

<sup>12</sup> "Racism, Antisemitism and the Radical Right - Keynote, Howard Winant," Yale University, September 28, 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfmJFmzpFAo&feature=youtu.be&t=36m49s>

<sup>13</sup> Id.

<sup>14</sup> "BDS movement founder receives Gandhi Peace Award at Yale," Jewish News Service, April 25, 2017. Available at: [archive.jns.org/news-briefs/2017/4/25/bds-movement-founder-receives-gandhi-peace-award-at-yale](http://archive.jns.org/news-briefs/2017/4/25/bds-movement-founder-receives-gandhi-peace-award-at-yale)

<sup>15</sup> "Too Few Yalies Know Arabic? Don't Lose Sleep," By: Martin Kramer, MartinKramer.org, May 9, 2003. Available at [www.meforum.org/campus-watch/8419/too-few-yalies-know-arabic-dont-lose-sleep](http://www.meforum.org/campus-watch/8419/too-few-yalies-know-arabic-dont-lose-sleep)

<sup>16</sup> Id.

At a 2003 event discussing the war with Iraq, Eliana Johnson and Jamie Kirchick reported that Gutas claimed that “these people,” by which he meant Jews, led the Bush administration into war with Iraq. “To accuse these leaders of taking orders from a minute portion of the population – ‘these people,’ Jews – who are divided on the issue like all Americans, is to employ an ancient anti-Semitic technique which harkens back to the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,” Johnson and Kirchick wrote.<sup>17</sup>

In 2014, Gutas was one of 218 professors on U.S. Campuses to sign a letter calling for an academic boycott of Israel.<sup>18</sup>

### **Zareena Grewal - Associate Professor of American Studies, Religious Studies, and Ethnicity, Race, and Migration**

In 2014, Grewal, who writes on “the intersections of race and religion in American Muslim communities,” was one of 218 professors on U.S. Campuses to sign a letter calling for an academic boycott of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Grewal, in 2015, joined other pro-BDS professors to sign petitions against a program to send American Muslims to Israel to meet with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders as part of the Muslim Leadership Institute (MLI), sponsored by the Jerusalem-based Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI).<sup>20</sup> One petition called for “an immediate halt” to the program, calling its financiers “Islamophobia sources.”<sup>21</sup> The petition was prompted by a 2014 declaration by the Palestinian BDS National Committee to boycott MLI.<sup>22</sup>

In May 2018, Grewal wrote on Twitter, “Israeli state violence is absolutely, unquestionably genocidal by design. To invoke Hamas is completely disingenuous racist bulls\*\*\*. THE RACIAL SCRIPT IS A LIE: Opposition to #BDS is opposition to nonviolent protest.”<sup>23</sup> At the time Israel was responding to riots at the Gaza border under the guise of the so-called “Great March of Return.” The march was in fact violent, as rioters fired guns and sent incendiary devices into Israel. A few weeks before Grewal’s tweet, a leader of Hamas said on television that 50 out of the 62 rioters killed were members of Hamas.<sup>24</sup> Grewal also emailed all the students of her spring semester 2018 anthropology class in which, according to a student, “she invited her

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<sup>17</sup> “Postwar Delusion at Yale,” By: Eliana Johnson and Jamie Kirchick, FrontPage Magazine, April 11, 2003. Available at: <https://www.meforum.org/campus-watch/8369/postwar-delusion-at-yale>

<sup>18</sup> “AMCHA Publishes List of Over 200 Anti-Israel Middle East Studies Professors,” AMCHA Initiative, Available at: <https://amchainitiative.org/amcha-publishes-list-of-over-200-anti-israel-middle-east-studies-professors/>

<sup>19</sup> Id.

<sup>20</sup> BDS Profs vs. The Muslim Leadership Institute,” By: Cinnamon Stillwell, Front Page Magazine, August 21, 2015. Available at: <https://archives.frontpagemag.com/fpm/bds-profs-vs-muslim-leadership-institute-cinnamon-stillwell/>

<sup>21</sup> Id.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://twitter.com/ZareenaGrewal/status/997814797226905601>

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/996742250364395522>



students into her grief as a Muslim and a mother in the midst of the Israeli occupation of Gaza.”<sup>25</sup>

**Marcia Inhorn – Chair & Graduate Certificate Adviser, Council on Middle East Studies;  
William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs; Center for  
Middle East Studies, Chair**

In 2009, Yale University Press refused to republish cartoons of Muhammad in Jytte Klausen’s book about the 2005 incident in which a Danish newspaper published political cartoons of Islam’s prophet, thereby sparking violence across Europe. According to Klausen, when Yale University Press director John Donatich told her the press would not publish the cartoons, Inhorn and Linda Lorimer, Yale’s vice president and secretary of the Yale Corporation, attended the meeting. Klausen believed the university pressured the Press to omit the cartoons. Middle East scholar Martin Kramer suspected Yale refused to include the cartoons to avoid offending Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal in the hopes of receiving a generous endowment from the Prince similar to those he awarded Harvard and Georgetown (\$20 million each in 2005).<sup>26</sup>

About the same time, Inhorn traveled to Lebanon, the UAE, and Iran. She later wrote that in Iran she was treated as an “honoured guest in every setting.” In a critique of that sentiment, journalist Noah Pollak observed that there’s something self-serving about Inhorn’s praise of Iran when the regime pushes for war, promotes terror, and abuses the rights of its citizens. The lesson tyrants can learn from Inhorn’s praise, Pollak wrote, is that if “you want to get good press in Western academic circles—well, give some lavish toasts to the timorous professor at your table, make her feel important, and then watch the apologetics and accolades pour in. This is the petty narcissism of mediocre academics who are desperate for the celebrity and adulation that they are so deservedly denied in America.”<sup>27</sup>

The *Columbia Journalism Review* gave a thumbs up to Klausen’s book *The Cartoons that Shook the World* when it was published.<sup>28</sup> It noted that Yale’s decision not to publish the cartoons was based on assessments given by experts, including Marcia Inhorn, that publishing the cartoons would likely spark violence. Despite its praise, the review concluded, “Klausen has still written an important, thorough history of the Danish cartoon controversy, based on sound scholarship. It is unfortunate that her publisher prevented it from being a comprehensive one.”

## **Conclusion:**

Such a record of biased, anti-American, anti-Israel output raises deep concerns about the extent to which Yale may be misusing funds that counter Title VI’s mission of enhancing national

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<sup>25</sup> “Zareena Grewal: Standing with Palestine,” By: Bleu Wells, Broad Recognition - A Feminist Publication at Yale, June 4, 2018. Available at: <https://www.broadsatyale.com/zareena-grewal-standing-with-palestine/>

<sup>26</sup> “Some day, Yale’s prince will come,” By: Martin Kramer, Sandbox, August 21, 2009. Available at: <https://martinkramer.org/2009/08/21/some-day-yales-prince-will-come/>

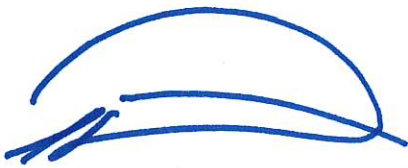
<sup>27</sup> “Fear-Mongering at Yale,” By: Noah Pollak, August 18, 2009, Contentions (blog of Commentary magazine) Available at: <https://www.meforum.org/campus-watch/15810/fear-mongering-at-yale-on-marcia-inhorn>

<sup>28</sup> “Show and Tell An enlightening history of the Danish cartoon controversy--minus the cartoons,” By: David Gura, December 2, 2019, Columbia Journalism Review. Available at: [https://archives.cjr.org/critical\\_eye/show\\_and\\_tell.php](https://archives.cjr.org/critical_eye/show_and_tell.php)

security. It demonstrates that some professors and programs attack America's allies and whitewash its enemies, possibly at times with funds provided by nations opposed to our interests at home and abroad. This was not Congress's intent when it authorized Title VI.

While universities such as Yale are fully protected by the First Amendment to engage in whatever research they wish, it must fulfill its obligations on all federal grants. Similarly, it must refrain from violating the civil rights of its students. I ask that the Department of Education fully investigate how Title VI funds are being spent, determine whether their use is in accordance with the intent of Congress, and take appropriate actions against violations of civil rights laws, particularly in light of the Trump Administration's executive order on antisemitism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping arch over a series of horizontal strokes.

Scott DesJarlais, M.D.  
Member of Congress