

Professor Joseph Castro, President  
California State University  
Fresno  
by email

July 5, 2017

Dear President Castro:

In 2003, I was invited to Cal State Fresno to deliver a presentation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I am, myself, Israeli-born Jew, and during the past 50 years, had to gradually come to grips with the fact that the government of my country has, for five decades now, been engaged in war crimes against an occupied population. It is that perspective which I came to share with the audience at Cal State Fresno, as well as in other campuses throughout California and elsewhere. It was, both at my end and on the part of the audience, an extremely positive experience, which allowed for my own personal perspective to be fruitfully shared with an audience which, up to that point, has been primarily exposed to official narratives, as they occur in the American media, which is unabashedly pro-Israeli and which rarely, if ever, stops to provide its readers with alternative views.

In the aftermath of my visit, the organizers of the event were attacked by a campaign orchestrated by local Jewish organizations for having invited me, as well as other speakers who gave voice to alternative views on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It was heart-warming that Cal State Fresno stood firmly behind the organizers, giving them full institutional support.

It is for that reason that I am surprised, and deeply disturbed by the events surrounding the search for the Chair named after Professor Edward Said. That Cal State Fresno has named a Chair after Professor Said is a tribute to its intellectual honesty, but that only compounded the disappointment, indeed the shock, at how the search for that position was handled. It is patently clear that the search was aborted, after finalists were invited and ranked, for the sole reason that the shortlist consisted of scholars of a Palestinian origin. The technical reason given for cancelling the search is so lame, that one cannot but conclude that outside pressure has been brought to bear on the university in this matter, on the part of groups and individuals who are willing to use any means to promote a pro-Israel agenda.

Pressure put by the Israel Lobby and other groups in an attempt to stifle any criticism of the State of Israel is well documented. By now it has been even discussed in the main press! The question is, whether academic institutions are willing to stand up to that kind of pressure, so as to remain faithful to their mission which encourages free scholarly pursuit. Cal State Fresno, in naming a Chair after Professor Edward Said, was well placed to assert the existence of such free scholarly pursuit. Instead, it buckled under pressure, paving the way to increasing erosion of all our rights. I encourage you to reconsider, and specifically, to reinstitute the raked shortlist for the position, and proceed with the process!

Sincerely,

## Hagit Borer

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