

  
**ORFALEA CENTER**  
**FOR GLOBAL & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

May 27, 2017

President Joseph Castro  
President  
California State University Fresno  
Fresno, CA

Dear President Castro:

I write to express my deep disappointment that the search for an occupant of the newly established Edward W. Said professorship was abruptly cancelled due to ‘concerns’ that surrounding circumstance make to appear mainly reflective of outside pressures. The appearance, due to the manner and timing of the cancellation coupled with the identification of four highly qualified candidates, strongly supports this presumption. It seems to form part of a pattern that has recently involved a variety of assaults on academic freedom resulting from pressures brought to bear by strongly pro-Israeli advocacy groups and supporters that seek to stifle free inquiry within universities. It is a dangerous trend as it deprives students, faculty, and university communities of efforts to research and discuss issues and a subject-matter that is of vital contemporary importance in educational institutions of higher learning and to the development of an engaged citizenry.

The fact that this development has led to the resignation of Professor Vida Samiian tends to confirm these suspicions and is a source of additional concern. Her contributions to CSUF over her long period as dean and faculty member have been outstanding, and widely noticed and admired. I twice visited your campus at her invitation, and was deeply impressed by the quality of the intellectual life, and by her gentle yet effective leadership, integrity, and inspiring dedication to academic excellence. I know that Vida was central to the idea of establishing of the Said professorship, including raising the funding needed.

I write not only to share these concerns, but with the hope that you will reopen the search, and allow a normal academic search to proceed without further interference. I can assure you that such an action will be widely acknowledged as a responsible and positive action within the annals of higher education. It will also enable the appointment of someone with excellent academic credentials to the faculty in a field where such expertise is currently highly valued by university communities around the country.

With respectful best wishes,

Richard Falk  
Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Law Emeritus, Princeton University



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Research Fellow, Orfalea Center, University of California, Santa Barbara

CC: Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, CSUF, Rudy Sanchez; Dean of Arts and Sciences, CSUF, Saul Jimenez-Sandoval; Provost, CSUF, Lynette Zelanzny; Chancellor, California State.