

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 14, 2024

## **VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Miguel Cardona  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

We write out of concern regarding the Department of Education’s (Department) decision to turn a blind eye to academic institutions utilizing federal grant funding to promote radical, anti-Israel viewpoints. Amid an unprecedented rise in antisemitism on America’s college campuses, it is more critical than ever that the Department maintain proper oversight over how taxpayer funds sent to America’s institutions of higher education (IHEs) are being used in potentially unlawful ways. Since Hamas’ murder of over 1,200 people in Israel on October 7, 2023, many Jews have reported facing harassment, intimidation, and physical assault on campus.<sup>1</sup> Now, it seems that the Department is funneling money toward programs that are facilitating, rather than combating, the sources of this surge in the world’s oldest hatred.

Since 2020, the Department has allocated \$283 million in foreign studies grants to the Title VI National Resource Centers (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grant programs. According to a report by a government watchdog group, over \$22.1 million of that funding has gone toward both FLAS and NRC grants in the Middle East — the top recipients being Columbia University and Georgetown University. Both schools have cited extremist, anti-Israel professors in their grant applications.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of international and foreign language studies programs — according to Congress — is to bolster “the security, stability, and economic vitality of the United States in a complex global era.”<sup>3</sup> These grants are intended to equip IHEs with the ability to operate undergraduate centers that serve as “national resources” for teaching foreign languages and providing instruction and

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<sup>1</sup> Egan, Matt, Elisabeth Buchwald, and Samantha Delouya. “‘I Have Become Traumatized.’ Jewish Students Describe Campus Antisemitism.” *CNN*, February 29, 2024. <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/29/business/antisemitism-college-harvard-upenn/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> “A Year After 10/7: Radical Professors, Programs Were Funded by Federal Grants.” *OpenTheBooks*. October 16, 2024. <https://openthebooks.substack.com/p/a-year-after-107-radical-professors>.

<sup>3</sup> “20 U.S.C. § 1121.” *GovInfo*. U.S. Government Publishing Office.

research on global affairs.<sup>4</sup> Instead, as has become all too common during the Biden-Harris administration, these taxpayer funds are bankrolling radical anti-Israel initiatives. When the Department is directing taxpayer funds toward professors who demonize the Jewish state and back organizations with ties to terrorism, it raises questions regarding whether certain academic institutions are complying with the congressional mandates laid out in Title VI.

For example, a 2022-2023 FLAS grant totaling \$653,632 funded at least one student's ability to take Columbia University Professor Joseph Massad's course, "Gender and Sexuality in the Arab World."<sup>5</sup> Alarming, the day after the worst attack perpetrated against the Jewish people since the Holocaust, Professor Massad published an abhorrent article in *The Electronic Intifada* characterizing the Hamas terrorist attack as "a stunning victory of the Palestinian resistance."<sup>6</sup> It is unfathomable that a terrorist supporter such as Professor Massad is receiving taxpayer funding to indoctrinate his students with anti-Israel propaganda.

Georgetown University received \$2.64 million in FLAS grants from the Department between 2020 and 2023.<sup>7</sup> The institution employs Dr. Fida Adely as a professor, who is a member of Anthro Boycott — a collective that lobbies the American Association of Anthropologists to boycott Israeli academic institutions.<sup>8</sup> Professor Adely also serves on the National Steering Committee of Faculty for Justice in Palestine (FJP),<sup>9</sup> which accuses Israel of "apartheid, occupation, and settler colonialism."<sup>10</sup> In addition, FJP endorses the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement against Israel. Strikingly, in its 2018 application for NRC and FLAS grants from the Department, Georgetown names Professor Adely as a staff member of its Middle East and North Africa program and a recipient of NRC grant funding for teaching program courses.<sup>11</sup>

The Biden-Harris administration should not channel American taxpayer dollars toward extremist professors who inculcate their students with hatred of America's strongest ally — and sole democracy — in the Middle East. This potential abuse of taxpayer funds is not just wasteful but may run contrary to the intent of the programs and the law.

Accordingly, we request answers to the following inquiries by Friday, November 29, 2024:

1. Is it consistent with the Department's mission to funnel taxpayer dollars to professors who are ideologically opposed to the existence of the State of Israel?

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<sup>4</sup> "20 U.S.C. § 1121." GovInfo. U.S. Government Publishing Office.

<sup>5</sup> "A Year After 10/7," OpenTheBooks.

<sup>6</sup> Massad, Joseph. "Just Another Battle or the Palestinian War of Liberation?" *The Electronic Intifada*, October 8, 2023. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/just-another-battle-or-palestinian-war-liberation/38661>.

<sup>7</sup> "A Year After 10/7," OpenTheBooks.

<sup>8</sup> "About." AnthroBoycott. <https://www.anthroboycott.org/about>.

<sup>9</sup> "National Steering Committee." Faculty for Justice in Palestine Network. <https://www.fjp-network.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Support for the Student Movement for Palestinian Liberation." Faculty for Justice in Palestine Network. <https://www.fjp-network.org/support-for-the-student-movement-for-palestinian-liberation>.

<sup>11</sup> "Application for Grants Under the National Resource Centers and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships." 2018. U.S. Department of Education. [https://iris.ed.gov/downloads/applications/P015A180068/P015A180068\\_GrantApplication.pdf](https://iris.ed.gov/downloads/applications/P015A180068/P015A180068_GrantApplication.pdf).

2. Will the Department denounce Georgetown and Columbia's misuse of taxpayer dollars to push an anti-Israel ideological agenda? How will the Department rectify this situation?
3. Will the Department commit to a thorough audit of all universities receiving NRC and FLAS grant funding to ensure that only institutions serving the core mission of each respective program receive federal funds and qualify as an eligible National Resource Center?
4. Will the Department sever foreign studies grant funding to institutions of higher education who are found to be abusing such funding to indoctrinate their students with anti-Israel propaganda?
5. Please provide information about any current and future oversight procedures the Department will use for higher education programs receiving NRC and FLAS funds.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Cynthia Lummis  
United States Senator