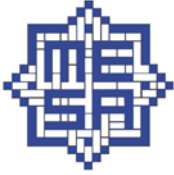


April 26, 2013



**Middle
East
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of North America, Inc.

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Pamela Brooks Gann, President
Claremont McKenna College
500 E. Ninth Street
Claremont, CA 91711
via fax: (909) 621-8790

Dear President Gann:

I am writing on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express concern about the response of Claremont McKenna College (CMC) to an incident that took place on its campus on March 4, 2013, and to urge the CMC administration and faculty to investigate this incident in a thorough and even-handed manner so as to uphold the principles of free speech and academic freedom.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 3000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

As we understand it, Students for Justice in Palestine at the Claremont Colleges, a recognized student organization, was conducting a demonstration on the CMC campus to protest Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank, having secured prior authorization from the CMC administration. During that demonstration someone who turned out to be a CMC faculty member is alleged to have urged a security guard to stop the protest and to have repeatedly directed a degrading epithet at a Pitzer student participating in the protest.

The principles of academic freedom protect the right of all members of a college or university community, including students and student organizations, to express their political views and engage in peaceful protest, in keeping with an institution's reasonable rules and regulations. Those principles also require that such rules and regulations, and any investigation into alleged violations thereof, be applied equally to all; selective application of regulations is itself a violation of the principles of academic freedom and free speech. It is our understanding that the CMC administration's initial response to this incident was to focus on whether the students had violated college policy on demonstrations, rather than on the alleged incident of verbal assault and harassment, despite a complaint having been lodged regarding the latter. We would point out that CMC's own *Guide to CMC's Civil Rights Policies and Civil Rights Grievance Procedures* deems the use of degrading and insulting epithets directed at people as members of racial, religious, ethnic, gender or other groups, and the creation thereby of a hostile environment for them, to be unacceptable. We also note that such language is particularly troubling when it comes from a faculty member and is directed at a student.

Given this, we urge the CMC administration to conduct a thorough investigation of all aspects of this incident, including the actions of the CMC faculty member involved, and to uphold the right of students at the Claremont Colleges to express their views without being subjected to verbal or physical harassment. More broadly, we urge the CMC administration to publicly reaffirm its commitment to the principles of academic freedom, which require that institutions of higher education protect and foster the vigorous and respectful expression and exchange of ideas and opinions on all topics, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sincerely,

Peter Sluglett
MESA President
Visiting Research Professor, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore