

Emergency Resolution on Academic Freedom

Whereas, the 2019 Law for the People National Convention of the National Lawyers Guild is being held October 16-20, 2019 in Durham, NC and

Whereas, this Convention is being held at a time that the U.S. Department of Education has sought to implement revisions to Title VI of the Higher Education Act and grants thereunder to academic institutions that would endanger existing academic programming at the University of North Carolina in its Middle East Studies, and

Whereas, the revisions would require the Consortium of Middle East Studies to provide an annual report by the University to show how its programming encourages foreign language learning and “furthers national security interests and economic stability of the United States,” and

Whereas, the Consortium held a conference entitled “Conflict Over Gaza: People, Politics and Possibilities” which caused an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education, and

Whereas, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education wrote to the University that most of the Consortium’s activities that received Title VI funding were not authorized, and

Whereas, 18 major scholarly societies have written letters to the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education and the U.S. Department of Education’s General Counsel expressing concern about the Department’s interpretation of Title VI, stating that the Department’s interpretation “constitutes an unprecedented and counterproductive intervention into academic curricula and programming that threatens the integrity and autonomy of our country’s institutions of higher learning,” and

Whereas a letter signed by more than one hundred members of the Jewish Studies Activist Network is being sent to the Middle East Studies Association supporting its statement denouncing the action of the US Department of Education relative to Title VI grants as constituting a serious threat to academic freedom,

Now, therefore, the National Lawyers Guild, being make aware of this attempt by the Department of Education to manage curricula and activities of area studies departments at U.S. Universities unreservedly condemns these efforts, will publicize this matter and educate our membership thereof. Further, we wish to stand in solidarity with the University of North Carolina and the 18 academic societies who are resisting these efforts.

This resolution will be implemented by the National Office with assistance from the Palestine Subcommittee, in the form of a press release, sending the resolution to other allied organizations, and exploring other means of supporting this issue as it develops. The N.O. has been consulted and approves.