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**Israel Action Network Applauds Rejection of Anti-Israel Emergency Resolution  
by Modern Language Association**

*Urges Executive Council to Reject Resolution Unfairly Singling Out Israel*

*New York* – Today, the Modern Language Association’s (MLA) Delegate Assembly declined to consider condemning what proponents speciously called “attacks” and “intimidation” of the American Studies Association (ASA) in the wake of its vote in December 2013 to conduct an academic boycott of Israel universities. However, the Delegate Assembly also advanced a resolution for consideration by the MLA Executive Council criticizing Israel for “denials of entry to the West Bank by U.S. academics” traveling to Palestinian universities. The resolution was passed after a contentious debate by a remarkably narrow vote of 60-53. In contrast, the emergency resolution that would have needed a 75% majority of the Delegate Assembly present to be considered was dismissed by a vote of 59-41.

Israel Action Network (IAN) Managing Director Geri Palast applauded the Delegate Assembly’s decision not to consider the emergency resolution, while at the same time urging the MLA’s Executive Council and full membership to reject the resolution that singles out the state of Israel for discriminatory treatment based on admitted misrepresentations of facts, distortions and bias. The Israel Action Network (IAN) is a strategic initiative of The Jewish Federations of North America in partnership with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs that was created to counter the assault on Israel’s legitimacy.

“The Israel Action Network (IAN) commends the decision of the MLA’s Delegate Assembly to reject consideration of this clearly anti-Israel emergency resolution today,” said Palast. “The American Studies Association’s recent vote in favor of an academic boycott of Israel has been roundly criticized from all sides, including by over 183 universities and broad-based academic associations. This emergency resolution would have placed the MLA clearly outside of the mainstream in this discussion. Contrary to assertions by proponents of the resolution, statements made in the public sphere, by design and necessity, attract vibrant debate and that controversy is not equivalent to attacks or intimidation. This is a major victory for the voices of academic freedom.”

“While we applaud this decision, we remain concerned that a second resolution specifically focused on allegations that Israel prevents the freedom of movement of American academics was advanced by the MLA Delegate Assembly. The proposed resolution was

based on false information and misrepresented facts refuted by opponents. Israel does not violate academic freedom and implements reasonable security measures that would be expected by any other country in the world. Those measures would not be needed but for terror attacks against Israeli men, women and children. This is why Israelis and Palestinians need to negotiate a peaceful settlement, and Americans need to support these efforts, not back tools of division like boycotts, divestment and sanctions,” Palast continued.

“This resolution was advanced for consideration by the MLA Executive Council by only a narrow margin. The close vote, and the admission by proponents of the weakness of their evidence, gives us hope that the Executive Council, with the engagement of MLA’s full membership, will reject this resolution. We will work to support their efforts to ensure that the resolution does not progress further.”

Following today’s vote, the resolution does not become policy immediately. It must first be reviewed by the MLA Executive Council to determine if it meets certain criteria. Only with the approval of the Executive Council will it be sent to full membership for ratification.

The debate raised a number of concerns that need to be addressed. The MLA Members for Scholars’ Rights, a group comprised of MLA academics, spoke out publicly against the draft resolution, and remained concerned after the votes over the future of their organization. The group includes, among others, professors Cary Nelson, Russell Berman and Martin Shichtman, who presented evidence that refuted the anecdotes and unsubstantiated testimony contained within the resolution.

“I found it shocking that members I spoke with told me that, despite agreeing we proved our case that the resolution was factually incorrect, they still voted for it out of a single-minded opposition to the state Israel,” said Professor Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, immediate past-president of the American Association of University Professors and current MLA member. “This is an unfortunate instance where politics was allowed to trump scholarship and undermines the credibility of the MLA. To continue down this path warrants public shame.”

“Rather than isolate Israel’s robust democracy, ratification of this resolution would only isolate the MLA from the standards of academic scholarship and impartial inquiry,” Nelson further stated.

“Previous attempts by BDS movement advocates to advance an academic boycott of Israel within the MLA have been defeated,” said Palast. “Knowing that MLA members do not support their agenda of demonizing Israel and undermining a two-state solution to the conflict, this narrow resolution was watered down to focus solely on Israel’s alleged denials of entry to US academics to the West Bank. These allegations were [refuted in a document](#) provided to the Delegate Assembly by the MLA Members for Scholars’ Rights.”

“The principle of free travel is important to uphold for everyone in all countries. It is unfortunate that the Delegate Assembly has focused exclusively on Israel and relied on embarrassingly poor documentation. The vote does a disservice to the MLA,” said Professor Russell Berman of Stanford University, past-president and current member of the MLA.

A broad cross-section of the American academy has condemned attempts to single out Israel and have rejected the notion of academic boycotts as inconsistent with academic

principles. This includes the American Council on Education (an umbrella of 1,800 institutions), the Executive Committee of the Association of American Universities (that represents 62 top institutions in the U.S. and Canada), the American Association of University Professors (that counts more than 48,000 members), and the over 183 and growing list of universities and colleges that condemned the recent ASA decision to institute a boycott on Israeli academic institutions.

Professor Martin Shichtman, MLA Delegate Assembly Member and professor of English language and literature at Eastern Michigan University remarked, "I am greatly disappointed in the Modern Language Association's Delegate Assembly. Today we have passed a resolution that is little more than a partisan political statement. This resolution is ill informed and empty of facts. It is devoid of substance and utterly without nuance."

Michael Kotzin, Senior Counselor to the President of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and an Emeritus Member of the MLA added that, "given the tone of the debate, it is hard not to conclude that the support was motivated at least in part by an anti-Israel animus with a goal of distorting the facts, and therefore, the image of Israel."

"The Israel Action Network," concluded Palast, "urges scholars to reject these types of resolutions that peddle falsehoods inconsistent with academic principles, and instead contribute to efforts that encourage collaboration and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians in a wide range of fields."

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*The Israel Action Network is a strategic initiative of The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) in partnership with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), which together represents the majority of affiliated Jews in North America through 15 national Jewish agency members, 154 Jewish Federations, 300 Network communities and 125 Jewish community relations councils. IAN, JFNA and JCPA, all seek a just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will allow both peoples to live in lasting peace, dignity and security.*