

Dear Colleagues,

We are deeply concerned about freedom of expression at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris and have drafted the attached petition. We hope you will want to join us by signing it and sending it on to others you think might sign it as well. You can sign by forwarding this email and your agreement to sign to: academicfreedom.ens@gmail.com

Thanks for your support.

A PETITION TO MONIQUE CANTO-SPERBER, DIRECTOR, ECOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE, PARIS

We, the undersigned U.S., Canadian and British academics, many of us with long connections to France, and who have long admired the historic role of the École Normale Supérieure in the critical and intellectual life of the country, are dismayed at recent events at the school. The actions of the Director, Monique Canto-Sperber, first banning a talk by Stéphane Hessel and then refusing to allow the Colléctif Palestine ENS to hold a meeting on campus, is a denial of the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Hessel is 93, a former ENS student, member of the Resistance, survivor of Buchenwald, one of the authors of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and of the recent best-selling *Indignez-vous!/Time for Outrage*, in which he (among other things) criticizes Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

We are not persuaded by the reasoning of the Director or of the Conseil d'État, that these meetings constitute a threat to public order or that they exceed the responsibility of the ENS to guarantee all students' rights to speech and assembly.

The action of the Director is an exception to the school's customary toleration of political action by students and it is a recurring exception, aimed at silencing one side in a needed debate about the Israel/Palestine conflict. We believe that the Director's action contravenes a long history of free speech and political expression at the ENS as described in its own publicity: "For decades, the ENS has been the most prestigious site of French intellectual and scientific life. It participated in all the great intellectual debates of modern France, from the Dreyfus Affair to the movements of the 1930's, and from the foundation of the human sciences to the avant-garde movements of the 1970's."

We call upon the Director to reverse her decision and to restore academic freedom, a practice long associated with this distinguished institution.

Michael Harris	Professor of Mathematics, Université Paris-Diderot
Joan Wallach Scott	Professor School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study
Natalie Zemon Davis	Professor of History, University of Toronto
Morris Halle	Institute Professor, MIT
Irene Gendzier	Professor of Political Science, Boston University
Edmund Burke III	Professor of History University of California, Santa Cruz
Edouard Bustin	Director, Groupe de Recherches sur l'Afrique Francophone, Boston University
Gil Anidjar	Associate Professor of Religion, Columbia University
Laurence Dreyfus	Professor of Music, Magdalen College, Oxford
Marina Warner	Professor of Literature, University of Essex
Judith Butler	Professor of Rhetoric, UC Berkeley
Moshe Machover	Professor of Philosophy Emeritus, King's College, London
Martha Bragin	Associate Professor of Social Work, Hunter College
Haynes Miller	Professor of Mathematics, MIT
Robert V. Lange	Professor of Physics Emeritus, Brandeis University

Gordon Fellman	Professor of Sociology, Brandeis University
Assaf Kfoury	Professor of Computer Science, Boston University
Christian Haesemeyer	Associate Professor of Mathematics, UCLA
Louis Kampf	Professor Emeritus of English, MIT
Arthur MacEwan	Professor Emeritus of Economics and Senior Fellow Center for Social Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston
Ann Hibner Koblitz	Professor of Women and Gender Studies, Arizona State University
Neal Koblitz	Professor of Mathematics, University of Washington
Robert M. Hamm	Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Wendy Brown	Professor of Political Science, UC Berkeley
Bluma Goldstein	Professor Emerita of German, UC Berkeley
Graeme Segal	Professor of Mathematics Emeritus, All Souls College, Oxford
Chandler Davis	Professor of Mathematics, University of Toronto