

June 10, 2019

Dear Professor Friedmann,

I write to address calls from various interested parties for ending GILEE's presence at Georgia State University.

None of those calling for the termination contend that GILEE is something less than a first-rate institution or dispute that it is deeply engaged in important matters of homeland security, law enforcement, and criminal justice. In fact, it appears that there is widespread consensus regarding the caliber, quality, and seriousness of GILEE's undertaking. For that, you and your colleagues are to be congratulated.

Rather, it appears that the basis for the demand for termination is GILEE's engagement with Israeli security and police officials. Aimed solely at professional law enforcement exchanges with Israel, this demand is inherently discriminatory. Prima facie it appears the sole basis for the demand for termination is GILEE's engagement with Israeli police officials. This raises serious and legitimate concerns that this effort is inherently discriminatory in nature.

Beyond the discriminatory nature of the demand, which is reason enough to oppose it, I find the demand for termination both disconcerting and puzzling. Like any democracy, Israel faces threats from within and without. That is a matter of public knowledge, regardless of whether we agree or disagree regarding the sources of the threats and the manner in which threats are addressed. Such debates are, frankly, a different matter.

Given the range of threats — apart from any debates in the political fray — that Israel faces, it seems to be a remarkable opportunity for US law enforcement to engage with, share knowledge with, and learn from those who face a myriad of threats. Indeed, US officials who have participated in, and benefitted from, GILEE programs affirm that very sentiment.

Although criticism of Israel is legitimate — I write as one who is on public record criticizing various government policies — demanding cessation of academic-focused engagement is the very antithesis of academic discourse and debate. Calling for a ban on engagement between an academic program and a viable and respected counterpart is counter to the very spirit and purpose of academia.

I therefore join other voices in support of GILEE's continued engagement with Israeli partners and wish you success in facing this challenge. My wholehearted support for continued engagement is, under no condition, intended to suggest that debate about Israel or any other topic, be stifled or criticism be muted. No, indeed both are essential.

But legitimate criticism of Israeli government actions must not lead to disengagement from academic forums and engagement, precisely because those very fora and engagements are what lead to robust debate, tolerance, diversity of views, and other values essential to the rule of law and security, for all individuals and groups on all sides of such debates.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'A' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line.

Amos N. Guiora, J.D., Ph.D.
Professor of Law