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September 10, 2023

President Christopher L. Eisgruber
Princeton University
1 Nassau Hall
Princeton, NJ 08544

Dear President Eisgruber:

I am writing to express my concerns about an unacceptable addition to a Princeton University humanities course reading list, and the decision by the University to provide a platform for professors to inappropriately engage in political activism at the expense of the safety of Jewish students. I am also interested in understanding Princeton University's process for determining whether course materials at the University accurately reflect the subject matter they cover, and provide pedagogical value. As we enter the 2023-2024 academic year, I remain committed to ensuring our nation's institutions of higher education, including private universities like Princeton, which receive federal research dollars, honor their responsibility to protect Jewish students and root out antisemitism and hate.

As one of the most prestigious universities in the United States, Princeton must uphold rigorous academic standards by utilizing course materials that match its caliber. The use of materials containing antisemitic tropes and anti-Israel sentiment in a Princeton classroom clearly contradict the University's mission of inclusivity, which includes protecting Jewish students. In addition, I believe that employing a professor who has openly endorsed the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and has utilized her faculty position to promote beliefs antithetical to school values should alarm your administration. This is political activism masquerading as scholarship.

As you likely know, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, by Jasbir Puar, is included among reading materials for a humanities course called "The Healing Humanities: Decolonizing Trauma Studies from the Global South," taught by Satyel Larson, an Assistant Professor of Near Eastern studies. Released in 2017, the book veers into offensive, antisemitic blood libel. Puar argues that the Israel Defense Forces, in efforts to oppress and control Palestinians, deliberately creates injury, keeping Palestinian populations debilitated. This claim

of Israeli control over Palestinians to maintain dominance is egregiously false. The author repeatedly casts the IDF and Israelis as the sole antagonist in a conflict defined by complexity and decades of strife.

Professors like Satyel Larson and authors like Jasbir Puar fail to acknowledge deadly terrorist attacks from the West Bank and Gaza that have threatened Israel for decades. Recent attacks are the direct result of incitement by radical Islamist and terrorist elements, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, all Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), that have called on Palestinians to murder Jews. In many instances, terrorism is rewarded with financial incentives, propagating a cycle of hate. Hamas and other terror entities orchestrate group and lone wolf operations against Israelis, including stabbings, arson, shootings, and rocket attacks. The IDF launched Operation Shield and Arrow in May 2023, in response to Palestinian Jihad targets in Gaza, which launched more than 100 rockets into Israel earlier that month.

In addition to hundreds of terror attacks this year alone, the Israeli military responds to near-daily instances of rock-throwing and Molotov cocktails from Palestinian attackers. Portraying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one sided is dishonest and wrong, and smearing Israel as an authoritarian regime is false. The IDF operates in a dangerous neighborhood, yet defends Israel from those seeking its destruction. Israel remains a hub for women's equality and vibrant society for LGBT+ rights, in a region which shuns it. Arab Israelis serve in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, and Druze even serve in the military.

I am disappointed that this book is on an assigned reading list at Princeton University, a school where antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric continues to make Jewish students feel unsafe. The University's Undergraduate Student Government, in November 2022, refused to consider a referendum condemning antisemitism. In February 2023, Princeton hosted writer Mohammed El-Kurd, who in his remarks to the school community called the Anti-Defamation League the "Apartheid Defense League," and refused to condemn Palestinian terror against Israelis. These incidents create a pattern of hateful and divisive activity that is unacceptable.

The University has publicized its commitment to diversity and inclusion, and must not misinterpret that mission to exclude Jewish students. Princeton should please reconsider allowing the work of an author like Jasbir Puar, who is known to traffic in vile antisemitic tropes, to appear on school-sanctioned reading lists. Puar is a noted antagonist of Israel, whose criticism clearly crosses the line into antisemitism. She has egregiously claimed that bodies of Palestinian children "were mined for organs for scientific research" by the Israeli military, and said that recent conflicts in Gaza were driven by organ harvesting. Accusations like these do nothing to properly educate students about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and merely stoke hatred.

Princeton University must protect all students, including Jewish students made to feel unsafe by curricula that incites violence and signals tolerance for Jewish hate and anti-Israel rhetoric. Given New Jersey's strict anti-BDS laws and Princeton's own anti-discrimination policies, the University is not only reminded, but obligated, to safeguard its students. With these concerns in mind, I ask that you kindly respond in writing the process by which Princeton reviews course materials, including Puar's, to ensure they meet academic standards to ensure accuracy educational value.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Gottheimer", with a stylized, cursive script.

Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS