



March 12, 2008

Steve Wood, Director
Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library
2345 Lee Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

SENT VIA REGULAR U.S. MAIL & VIA FAX TO:

RE: Cancellation of series on Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Dear Mr. Wood:

I have been advised that the film series on Israeli-Palestinian relations, co-sponsored by Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library, Cleveland Peace Action and the Council on American-Islamic Relations has now been unilaterally changed by the library, which has withdrawn its sponsorship of one of the films because of its apparently controversial nature. This is blatant censorship.

May we remind you that a public library is a public forum subject to First Amendment constraints. The First Amendment means that a public body, such as the CH-UH Library, may not restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its content or its subject matter. Courts have long maintained that a library may not withdraw books from its shelves because of their controversial content. So too a library may not withdraw its sponsorship of a film series simply because some members of the local community may be offended by it.

Moreover, libraries are cultural and intellectual centers. They are the very places where controversial, even unpopular ideas should be explored. Those who may be offended have, of course, a right to present their own programs advocating their points of view. That is how our system works, through the free and open airing of all points of view.

We strongly urge you to reconsider this unfortunate decision, and permit the program to go forward as originally proposed. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 216/472-2220 or by e-mail at jmgamso@acluohio.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey M. Gamso".

Jeffrey M. Gamso
Legal Director

cc: Board of Trustees, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library

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