



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 50

Resolution denouncing the decision to tenure Joseph Massad at Columbia University.

By Council Members Gennaro, Brewer, Fidler, Nelson and Halloran

Whereas, The New York metropolitan area has the second largest Jewish population outside of Tel Aviv;  
and

Whereas, According to a recent study by the North American Jewish Data Bank at the University of Connecticut, 1,412,000 people of Jewish descent were living in New York City in 2002; and

Whereas, Columbia University, located in New York City, is one of the top academic and research institutions in the world; and

Whereas, Joseph Massad is an associate professor at Columbia University's Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC), whose academic work has focused on Palestinian, Jordanian, and Israeli studies; and

Whereas, Professor Massad received his doctorate in political science from Columbia University in 1998, and was then appointed to the university's faculty in 1999; and

Whereas, In 2004 and 2005, he became the center of controversy over his views that are seen as hostile by many members of the Jewish-Israeli community and the center of debate over academic freedom; and

Whereas, In 2004, a pro-Israel activist organization, the David Project Center for Jewish Leadership, produced a film called *Columbia Unbecoming*, interviewing students who claimed that Professor Massad and other Columbia professors had intimidated or been unfair to them for expressing their support of Israel, which led to the university's appointment of an Ad Hoc Grievance Committee to investigate the complaints; and

Whereas, The Ad Hoc Grievance Committee, which concluded its investigation in April 2005, did not find proof of any violation of these students' academic freedom and dismissed most of the allegations; and

Whereas, The Ad Hoc Grievance Committee did, however, rebuke Professor Massad for inappropriate comments made in class; and

Whereas, In June 2009, Professor Massad was granted tenure at Columbia University, which spurred protests by faculty, students and Jewish advocacy groups; and

Whereas, In July 2009, fourteen Columbia professors protested Mr. Massad's tenure in a letter and questioned the university's tenure process; and

Whereas, The decision to grant Professor Massad tenure was also denounced by LionPAC, Columbia University's pro-Israel political affairs committee, which works to educate the campus community about the importance of the America-Israel relationship; and

Whereas, Due to Professor Massad's controversial history, his tenure at Columbia University is of great concern to many individuals and may create an uncomfortable learning and working environment for students and faculty; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York denounces the decision to tenure Joseph Massad at Columbia University.

TC  
Res 2258/2009

TC  
LS# 94