



March 17, 2025

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Nicole Sampson, Provost
University of Rochester
Wallis Hall
Rochester NY 14627

Dear Provost Sampson:

We write to express our support for your faculty member Nora Rubel. Professor Rubel is a member of the Association for Jewish Studies, the largest learned society and professional organization representing Jewish studies scholars worldwide. She has recently reported online and otherwise efforts to defame her as a scholar. We urge the University of Rochester to offer unequivocal support of her academic freedom and defend her against any attacks she may face for exercising it.

Since 7 October 2023, Jewish Studies faculty across the United States and world have been increasingly subjected to bullying and harassment. Typically, these attacks have sought to intimidate, degrade, or humiliate faculty and are usually instigated due to a perceived deficit in the faculty member's moral character due to the faculty member's alleged political beliefs. Faculty have experienced these attacks regardless of where they fall on the political spectrum: some are attacked for being pro-Israel, some for being anti-Israel, some for remaining silent (as silence is understood as complicity). Sometimes people wage attacks on Jewish Studies faculty because even though said faculty member is pro-Israel or anti-Israel, it is not to the degree deemed appropriate by the attacker. Faculty are often called upon to defend themselves by showing credentials of being a "good Jew," a narrow, unstable category that varies by attacker. Like all bullying, this sort of harassment may increase depression, sadness, and loneliness among Jewish Studies faculty, and make them less able to do their work. We mention this pattern to give you a means to contextualize the missives you have been receiving about your faculty member.

If unanswered, the smear campaign being waged against Professor Rubel sets a very dangerous precedent that threatens the academic freedoms of all members of your faculty. Among the AJS's core values is the academic and intellectual freedom of all of its members. These values include the freedom to teach and publish ideas that are challenging and to engage in political activities outside the classroom. The AJS is committed to the development and strengthening of an institutional and public culture that encourages diverse views, and supports its members' right to articulate beliefs and positions without fear of retribution. Thus, we urge you to reaffirm the paramount importance of the academic freedom of scholars and their right to teach and critically explore ideas, and to reject proposals that curtail the freedom of teachers and researchers to engage in legitimate scholarship in their fields.

We hope your university will take the necessary steps to protect the academic freedoms and well-being of all members of your community.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness on this matter,

Laura Leibman, President, Association for Jewish Studies
Helen Kim, VP of Program, Association for Jewish Studies
Laura Lieber, VP of Publications, Association for Jewish Studies
Hartley Lachter, VP of Membership and Outreach, Association for Jewish Studies
Lila Corwin Berman, Secretary/Treasurer, Association for Jewish Studies
Robin Judd, Past President, Association for Jewish Studies