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FREEDOM of CONSCIENCE
— DEFENSE FUND —

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December 10, 2019

By Email

Dr. Marian Kim Phelps
Superintendent
Poway Unified School District
15250 Avenue of Science
San Diego, CA 92128-3406

CC:

Dr. Darshana Patel
Board President
Poway Unified School District
15250 Avenue of Science
San Diego, CA 92128

Hon. Steve Vaus
Mayor
City of Poway
13325 Civic Center Drive
Poway, CA 92064

Dear Superintendent Phelps:

I write on behalf of the Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund, a nonprofit legal organization that defends the religious freedom and equal protection rights of Americans of all faiths. Through our Project for Constitutional Rights in Education, we work with school boards and educators nationwide to ensure our schoolchildren may learn in an environment free from discrimination, indoctrination, and political hostilities. For these reasons, we wish to express our concern about Poway Unified School District's potential cooperation in promoting anti-Semitism and, at a minimum, political divisiveness.

I am referring to the District authorizing the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Representative Rashida Tlaib to hold an event on December 21, 2019, at Westview High School.¹ As you may or may not know, Rep. Tlaib has a public history of making anti-Semitic remarks and espousing animosity toward the State of Israel. For example, Rep. Tlaib compared the boycott movement against Israel to the American boycott of Nazi Germany.² She claimed that thinking about the Holocaust gave her “kind of a calming feeling.”³ And she is an outspoken advocate for the anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, decrying the “racist policies of the government and state of Israel.”⁴

¹ Attached is CAIR's flyer for the event.

² Stuart Winer, *Rep. Tlaib recalls boycotts against Nazi Germany to defend right to snub Israel*, TIMES OF ISRAEL (July 25, 2019), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rep-tlaib-recalls-boycotts-against-nazi-germany-to-defend-right-to-snob-israel/>.

³ *From Rashida with Love, Skullduggery*, YAHOO NEWS (May 10, 2019), <http://ow.ly/bA2a50xwK3Z>.

⁴ Mike DeBonis, *House passes resolution condemning global boycott targeting Israel*, WASH. POST (July 23, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/house-poised-to-pass-resolution-condemning-global-boycott-targeting-israel/2019/07/23/1c24e8f6-ad5b-11e9-9411-a608f9d0c2d3_story.html.

CAIR is no less hostile to the Jewish people. Although it bills itself as a Muslim civil liberties organization committed to “social justice,” CAIR is notorious for its opposition to the existence of Israel and its hostility toward Jewish advocacy in the United States. In 2015, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published a report about CAIR as part of its “Imagine a World without Hate” campaign.⁵ ADL notes that “CAIR has a long record of anti-Israel activity” and that its chapters “continue to partner with various anti-Israel groups that seek to isolate and demonize the Jewish State.”

We hope you agree that these views are reprehensible and should be condemned. We also hope you agree that persons and groups that espouse these views should not be welcomed in the District.

Grievously, the Poway community knows firsthand the horrific effects of anti-Semitism. April 27 of this year will be remembered forever as the tragic day when an anti-Semite stormed Chabad of Poway and viciously gunned down Jewish congregants, killing one woman and injuring three others, including the rabbi.

If you and the District’s leadership stand by in silence and give CAIR and Rep. Tlaib a platform to espouse their views, you are sending the message that anti-Semitism is welcome in Poway. We respectfully and strongly urge you to reconsider allowing CAIR to hold its event at Westview High School. Our office stands ready to assist you and to address any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this grave issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Piedra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel J. Piedra, J.D.
Executive Director
Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund

Encl.

⁵ *Profile: The Council on American Islamic Relations*, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (2015), <http://ow.ly/SyRH50xwJUf>.



BUILD & DEFEND

Our communities



A Conversation with
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Professor Tom Wong and Dustin Craun

Saturday, December 21st - 7-9pm

Westview High School Theatre
13500 Camino Del Sur, San Diego, CA 92129