We, the undersigned U.S., Canadian and British academics, many of us with long connections to France, and who have long admired the historic role of the École Normale Supérieure in the critical and intellectual life of the country, are dismayed at recent events at the school. The actions of the Director, Monique Canto-Sperber, first banning a talk by Stéphane Hessel and then refusing to allow the Colléctif Palestine ENS to hold a meeting on campus, is a denial of the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Hessel is 93, a former ENS student, member of the Resistance, survivor of Buchenwald, one of the authors of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and of the recent best-selling Indignez-vous!/Time for Outrage, in which he (among other things) criticizes Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.

We are not persuaded by the reasoning of the Director or of the Conseil d’État, that these meetings constitute a threat to public order or that they exceed the responsibility of the ENS to guarantee all students’ rights to speech and assembly.

The action of the Director is an exception to the school’s customary toleration of political action by students and it is a recurring exception, aimed at silencing one side in a needed debate about the Israel/Palestine conflict. We believe that the Director’s action contravenes a long history of free speech and political expression at the ENS as described in its own publicity: “For decades, the ENS has been the most prestigious site of French intellectual and scientific life. It participated in all the great intellectual debates of modern France, from the Dreyfus Affair to the movements of the 1930's, and from the foundation of the human sciences to the avant-garde movements of the 1970's.”

We call upon the Director to reverse her decision and to restore academic freedom, a practice long associated with this distinguished institution.

Judith Butler, Professor of Rhetoric, University of California at Berkeley
Michael Harris, Professor of Mathematics, Université Paris-Diderot
Natalie Zemon Davis, Professor of History, University of Toronto
Joan Wallach Scott, Professor, School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study
Yve-Alain Bois, Professor, School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study
Edmund Burke III, Professor of History, University of California at Santa Cruz
Noam Chomsky, Professor (retired), MIT
Edwin E. Daniel, F. R.S.C., Professor Emeritus of Health Sciences, McMaster University and University of Alberta
Laurence Dreyfus, Professor of Music, Magdalen College, Oxford
Freeman Dyson, Professor Emeritus, School of Natural Sciences, Institute for Advanced Study
Morris Halle, Institute Professor, MIT
Malcolm Levitt, FRS, Professor of Chemistry, University of Southampton
David Mumford, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Brown and Harvard Universities
Jacqueline Rose, Professor of English, Queen Mary University of London
Graeme Segal, FRS, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, All Souls College, Oxford
Ben-Z. Shek, F.R.S.C., Professor Emeritus of French, University of Toronto
Avi Shlaim, Professor of International Relations, St. Anthony's College, Oxford
Richard Taylor, Professor of Mathematics, Harvard University
James L. Turk, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers
Marina Warner, Professor of Literature, University of Essex

Andrew Aisenberg, Associate Professor of History, Scripps College
Gil Anidjar, Associate Professor of Religion, Columbia University
Robert Boyce, Senior Lecturer in International History, London School of Economics and Political Science
Wendy Brown, Professor of Political Science, University of California at Berkeley
Edouard Bustin, Director, Groupe de Recherches sur l'Afrique Francophone, Boston University
Terence Cave, Emeritus Professor of French Literature, Oxford
Jonathan Dewald, Distinguished Professor of History, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
Peter Fitting, Professor emeritus, French and Cinema Studies, University of Toronto
Carla Freccero, Professor of Literature, Director, Center for Cultural Studies, University of California at Santa Cruz
Irene Gendzier, Professor, Dept of Political Science, Boston University
Michael Hardt, Professor of Literature, Duke University
David Heap, Associate Professor of French and Linguistics, University of Western Ontario
Ann Jefferson, Professor of French, Oxford
Katherine Callen King, Professor, Comparative Literature and Classics, University of California at Los Angeles
Martin Klein, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Toronto
Conrad Leyser, Fellow and Tutor in History, Worcester College, Oxford
Brian Massumi, Professor of Communication, Université de Montréal
Peter Sahlins, Professor of History, Executive Director of the France-Berkeley Fund, University of California at Berkeley
Kate Tunstall, University Lecturer (CUF) in French, Worcester College, Oxford
Wes Williams, University Lecturer, Fellow and Tutor in French, St. Edmund Hall, Oxford

Rabab Abdulhadi, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies, College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University
Mary Louise Adams, Associate Professor, Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen's University, Kingston
Sylvat Aziz, Professor of Fine Arts, Queen's University, Kingston
Feyzi Baban, Associate Professor, Political Studies Department, Trent University
Paola Bacchetta, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies, University of California at Berkeley
Ian Barnard, Associate Professor of English, Affiliated Faculty, Queer Studies, California State University at Northridge
Amy Bartholomew, Associate Professor of Law, Carleton University
Micheline Beaudry, Professeure retraitée (nutrition publique), Université Laval
Roger Beck, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Dr G. K. Bhambra, Director of the Social Theory Centre, University of Warwick
Mario Biagoli, Professor of Law & Science and Technology Studies, University of California at Davis
Hagit Borer, Professor of Linguistics, University of Southern California
Eileen Boris, Hull Professor and Chair, Department of Feminist Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara
Martha Bragin, Associate Professor of Social Work, Hunter College
Haim Bresheeth, Professor of Media and Cultural Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London
Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor (PII) of Political Science, Rutgers University
Anne Clement, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University
Lynne Cohen, Former Professor of Photography, University of Ottawa
Rebecca Comay, Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto
Rebecca Coulter, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
Stephen D'Arcy, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Huron University College
Miriam David, Professor Emerita of Education, Institute of Education, University of London
Howard Davidson, Interim Director, Aboriginal Focus Programs, University of Manitoba
Chandler Davis, Professor of Mathematics, University of Toronto
Mary Ellen Davis, Part time faculty, School of Cinema, Concordia University
Geneviève A. Dumas, Professor, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, Queen's University, Kingston
Peter Eglin, Professor of Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University
Christo El Morr, Adjunct Professor of Information Technology, York University
Nada Elia, Professor of Global Studies, Antioch University, Seattle
Randa Farah, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario
Gordon Fellman, Professor of Sociology, Brandeis University
L. M. Findlay, Professor of English, University of Saskatchewan
Norman Finkelstein, Independent Scholar
Gavin Fridell, Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Politics, Trent University
Mark Gabbert, Associate Professor of History, University of Manitoba
Jack Gegenberg, Professor of Mathematics, University of New Brunswick
Marvin E. Gettleman, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn
Harry Glasbeek, Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University
Sherna Berger Gluck, Professor Emerita of History, California State University at Long Beach
Mark Golden, Professor of Classics, University of Winnipeg
Bluma Goldstein, Professor Emerita of German, University of California at Berkeley
Peter Gose, Chair of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University
Allan Greer, Canada Research Chair in Colonial North America, Department of History, McGill University
Julie Guard, Associate Professor and Coordinator, Labour Studies Program, University of Manitoba
Nadia Habib, Department of Humanities, York University
Christian Haesemeyer, Associate Professor of Mathematics, University of California at Los Angeles
Lisa Hajjar, Associate Professor of Sociology, Chair, Law and Society Program, University of California at Santa Barbara
Sondra Hale, Professor of Anthropology and Women’s Studies, University of California at Los Angeles
Robert M. Hamm, Professor, Dept. of Family and Preventive Medicine, Director, Clinical Decision Making Program, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Paul Handford, Professor Emeritus of Biology, University of Western Ontario
Jens Hanssen, Associate Professor of History, University of Toronto
Garry Potter, Associate Professor of Sociology, Wilfred Laurier University
Trevor Purvis, Assistant Professor of Law and Political Economy, Carleton University
Aneil Rallin, Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Soka University of America
Denis G. Rancourt, Former Professor of Physics, University of Ottawa
Rush Rehm, Professor of Drama and Classics, Stanford University
Steven Rose, Emeritus Professor of Biology, The Open University
Jonathan Rosenhead, Emeritus Professor of Operational Research, London School of Economics
Marty Roth, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Minnesota
E. Natalie Rothman, Assistant Professor of History, University of Toronto
Leila Rupp, Professor of Feminist Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara
Claire Schub, Lecturer in French, Tufts University
Alan Sears, Professor of Sociology, Ryerson University, Toronto
Eric Smoodin, Professor of American Studies and Film Studies, University of California at Davis
Metta Spencer, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, University of Toronto
Bernard Sufrin, Fellow Emeritus in Computation, Worcester College, Oxford
Abdel Razzaq Takriti, Junior Research Fellow in Political History, St. Edmund Hall, Oxford
Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Director of the Law and Religion Program, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
Oliver Taplin, Emeritus Professor of Classics, Oxford
Vladimir Tasic, Professor of Mathematics, University of New Brunswick
Barrie Thorne, Professor of Sociology, and Gender and Women's Studies, University of California at Berkeley
Eric Urban, Professor of Mathematics, Columbia University
Richard A. Walker, Professor of Geography, Co-director, Global Metropolitan Studies, University of California at Berkeley
Seth Wigderson, Professor of History, University of Maine, Augusta
Howard Winant, Professor of Sociology, Director, UC Center for New Racial Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara