

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 13, 2022

Eve Troutt Powell, President  
Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America, Inc.  
1957 E Street NW, Suite 401  
Washington, DC

Dear Ms. Powell,

I am writing to you out of concern over the Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America (MESA)'s statement about University of Denver professor Nader Hashemi's baseless claim that Israel's intelligence agency Mossad likely was responsible for the attack last month on author Salman Rushdie.

When discussing Hadi Matar's attack on Rushdie last month in New York, Hashemi speculated on a podcast that the attack very well could have been instigated by "someone online who claimed to be an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps supporter... [who] could have been the Mossad operative."<sup>1</sup> Hashemi claims that it is "much more likely" than other scenarios that Mossad is responsible for the attack. Such a conjecture despite existing evidence suggesting otherwise about the attack is fraught with bias and prejudice that any conscientious academic should try to avoid.

It is well known that Iran's former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against Rushdie's life in 1989 due to the writer's novel *The Satanic Verses*,<sup>2</sup> forcing Rushdie to go under round-the-clock British police protection for 10 years. Iran's theocratic regime never rescinded Khomeini's fatwa. In 2019 Iran's current Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reaffirmed the fatwa on Rushdie's life.

In the weeks following the attack, the New York Police Department (NYPD) announced compelling evidence, suggesting that Matar was deeply sympathetic to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.<sup>3</sup> According to the NYPD bulletin, "the apparent assassination attempt on Salman Rushdie by an individual with strong indicators of ideological support for the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/NUFDIran/status/1562181739581059079>

<sup>2</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/14/newsid\\_2541000/2541149.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/14/newsid_2541000/2541149.stm)

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.yahoo.com/suspect-in-salman-rushdie-attack-sympathized-with-iranian-regime-nypd-intelligence-bulletin-says-020032157.html>

Iranian regime, specifically the IRGC, comes amid a series of recent high-profile plot disruptions involving individuals with ties to Iran targeting perceived enemies of Iran in the U.S.”

Hashemi’s baseless statement carries the hallmark of anti-Semitism, that is, the Jewish state, and therefore the Jews, are at the center of a great conspiracy to wreak havoc in the world, in this case, to sabotage the ongoing negotiations for reviving the Iran nuclear deal. MESA’s statement essentially asks the University of Denver to condone such an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory under the aegis of “academic freedom.” Yet, what is “academic” about spreading conspiracy theories that promote hatred and prejudice?

MESA’s open letter to University of Denver said that Hashemi “engaged in legitimate speculation about the politics surrounding the attempted assassination.”<sup>4</sup> It must be asked then – is it a standard practice for MESA and its members to condone and encourage conspiracy theories, and promote hatred and prejudice towards a particular country or people on American university campuses?

As members of the Republican Study Committee, we are committed to providing oversight of the anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism which have become rampant in higher education. It cannot be ignored that MESA recently endorsed the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign,<sup>5</sup> which appears to have caused nearly 1/5<sup>th</sup> of your previous university members to quit affiliating with your organization over fears of being associated with an anti-Semitic movement.<sup>6</sup>

We therefore request answers from MESA to the following questions by September 30, 2022:

1. How is Hashemi’s spreading a baseless, anti-Semitic conspiracy about the Salman Rushdie attack as being “much more likely” than other possibilities a “legitimate speculation?”
2. As an organization purportedly dedicated to “public understanding”<sup>7</sup> of the Middle East, what evidence can MESA or Hashemi provide in any way to corroborate his claim?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to receiving your responses to these questions.

Sincerely,

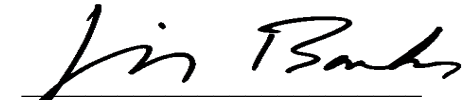
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<sup>4</sup> <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2022/09/02/university-of-denver-statement-about-professor-nader-hashemi>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.meforum.org/62971/jacobson-on-mesas-bds-resolution>

<sup>6</sup> <https://legalinsurrection.com/2022/03/israel-boycotting-middle-east-studies-association-loses-another-institutional-member-takes-down-membership-list/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://mesana.org/about>

  
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