

**American Association of University Professors
Capitol Hill Day
June 11, 2009**

Issue Brief: Ideological Exclusion

The AAUP has been one of the foremost voices in calling for an end to the practice of ideological exclusion; the denial or cancellation of visas based on an individual's views and beliefs rather than on any credible threat to our national security.

Ideological exclusion is not a new problem; it has cropped up at numerous challenging times in our history. During the Cold War, for example, the Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda, a globally acclaimed and beloved poet, was denied entry into the United States because of his ideological sympathies. In retrospect, reasonable people across the ideological spectrum can agree that our country was not threatened by a poet. More recently, when Greek economist and professor Yoannis Milios had his visa revoked at JFK airport in 2006, it made front-page news in Greece and insulted many in a country with which we traditionally have had good relations. This practice is at best embarrassing when aimed at scholars who are clearly not dangerous; and at worst deeply damages our reputation and looks hypocritical when America encourages free speech and democracy development abroad.

The AAUP, along with its allies, has long equivocated the practice of ideological exclusion with censorship. The First Amendment's protections of free speech should mean that ideas and words operate in a free market within the country, and that Americans should be allowed to be exposed to a multitude of viewpoints on a range of issues. Controlling the ideas that citizens have access to is simply un-American.

Talking Points:

- 1.) Spending time and resources on legitimate scholars who pose no threat to national security diverts attention and action from those who do; discontinuing the practice of ideological exclusion not only is necessary to uphold the cherished American ideal of free speech, it also is necessary for more focused and efficient national defense.
- 2.) Denying or revoking visas of other countries' most prominent academics and intellectuals severely damages U.S. relations with those countries, at a time when it essential to rebuild trust and collaboration with them to coordinate global responses to economic, health, and military threats.

Suggested background reading:

[Joint AAUP/ACLU/PEN Center letter to Secretaries Napolitano and Clinton](#)

[Obama Must Tread Fine Line on Scholars Barred From the U.S. for Their Views](#), *Chronicle of Higher Ed.*, 3/20/09

[The War on Ideas](#) , AAUP and ACLU, 2008