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Washington, DC—Today, Rudy Fichtenbaum, AAUP president, and Hank Reichman, first vice-president and chair of the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure issued the statement below.

Statement on the Case of Professor Steven G. Salaita

We have read with concern [yesterday's report](#) on insidehighered.com that the University of Illinois has apparently withdrawn a job offer to Professor Steven G. Salaita. It appears that this decision came in response to the tone of his controversial comments on Twitter about the Israeli military action in Gaza. Because both Professor Salaita and the university administration have so far declined public comment, a number of facts concerning this case remain unclear. In particular, it is not certain whether the job offer had already been made in writing when Professor Salaita was informed that he would not be hired and hence whether or not Salaita could be considered to have already acquired the rights accruing to a faculty member at Illinois.

However, if the information communicated in yesterday's report is accurate, there is good reason to fear that Professor Salaita's academic freedom and possibly that of the Illinois faculty members who recommended hiring him have been violated.

We feel it necessary to comment on this case not only because it involves principles that AAUP has long defended, but also because Cary Nelson, a former president of the Association and a current member of our Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, is quoted as approving the Illinois Chancellor's action. Professor Nelson is entitled to his opinions. Indeed, one of AAUP's great strengths is our ability to bring together many differing viewpoints and ideas, including about the meaning of academic freedom. However, we wish to make clear that Professor Nelson's comments do not reflect an official position of AAUP or of its Committee A.

While opinions differ among AAUP members on a wide range of issues, the AAUP is united in its commitment to defend academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas more broadly. On the basis of this commitment we [have opposed](#) efforts by some pro-Palestinian groups to endorse an "academic boycott" of Israel. This commitment has also led us to [defend the rights](#) of critics of Israel, including the right of faculty members such as Professor Salaita, to express their views without fear of retaliation, even where such views are expressed in a manner that others might find offensive or repugnant.

Recently we argued in a policy statement on "[Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications](#)," that faculty comments made on social media, including Twitter, are largely extramural statements of personal views that should be protected by academic freedom. While Professor Salaita's scholarship does appear to deal with the topic of Palestine, his posts were arguably not intended as scholarly statements but as expressions of personal viewpoint. Whether one finds these views attractive or

repulsive is irrelevant to the right of a faculty member to express them. Moreover, the AAUP has [long objected](#) to using criteria of civility and collegiality in faculty evaluation because we view this as a threat to academic freedom. It stands to reason that this objection should extend as well to decisions about hiring, especially about hiring to a tenured position.

Rudy Fichtenbaum, President, AAUP

Henry Reichman, First Vice-President and Chair, Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, AAUP