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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Modern Language Association Leadership Refuses to Allow BDS Resolution**

The leadership of the Modern Language Association, a scholarly organization representing scholars of languages and literatures, has, arbitrarily and without explanation, refused to forward a member's motion to the Delegate Assembly for discussion. This motion called upon the MLA to endorse the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel that was made in 2005 by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations.

The member who submitted the motion, Anthony Alessandrini of Kingsborough Community College and the CUNY Graduate Center, went through a lengthy vetting process with MLA Executive Director Paula Krebs and other staff in order to ensure that the motion was appropriately worded and that it did not target individual scholars. Dr. Alessandrini was given written assurances that the motion was proper and would be forwarded to the delegates, who represent the broader MLA membership, through the usual channels. The motion was well supported: 39 members co-signed the initial submission, and over 100 members subsequently signed to indicate their support, meaning that it had cleared all hurdles for discussion at the upcoming January convention. Nevertheless, in an act that may be unprecedented in the history of the organization, it was quashed by MLA's Executive Council. Dr. Krebs, in a three-sentence email sent on Tuesday, October 29th, cited vague "financial and legal effects" as the reason that it could not be discussed. The MLA leadership has subsequently censored attempts by elected delegates to discuss the resolution on an official email list.

The refusal even to allow *discussion* of BDS is highly unusual for a scholarly organization. MLA is well behind its peers: numerous other organizations, including the American Studies Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the Middle East Studies Association, have endorsed BDS; some did so a decade ago. In 2017, the MLA's Executive Council permitted a similar resolution to be considered by the Delegate Assembly, although it did not pass.

The MLA's refusal to allow discussion of BDS at its 2025 convention is indicative of the climate of increasing political repression and censorship within North American academia today. It starkly demonstrates the insidiousness of the "Palestine exception" wherein considerations of free speech and academic freedom are suspended when the topic of Palestine arises. It indicates a shameful abandonment of Palestinian scholars, especially those who are members of the MLA and are scheduled to present at the upcoming convention, at a time when Israel's campaign of scholasticide has destroyed every university in Gaza, killed at least 11,000 students and 529 educators in the West Bank and Gaza (as of September 2024), and prevented

at least 718,000 Palestinian students from attending their schools and universities since October 2023.

At the annual convention in New Orleans, framers of the resolution plan to protest the anti-democratic practices of Krebs and the MLA, and will highlight over 40 panels at the convention devoted to Palestine.

The full text of the resolution follows below; it can also be found online, along with extensive documentation submitted in support of the resolution, at the following links:

<http://tiny.cc/MLA2025Resolution> / <http://tiny.cc/MLA2025Documentation>

Proposed Resolution 2025-1

Submitted by Anthony Alessandrini (Kingsborough Community Coll., NY)

Whereas, international law experts, including UN officials, describe the Israeli war on Gaza as a genocide;

Whereas, human rights organizations and the International Court of Justice have determined that Israel is maintaining a system of apartheid;

Whereas, in April 2024 the United Nations documented that Israel's campaign of scholasticide has destroyed every university in Gaza and killed at least 5,479 students and 356 educators;

Whereas, the complicity of Israeli academic institutions in denying Palestinian human rights has been comprehensively documented;

Whereas, in 2005, 170 Palestinian civil society organizations called for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel;

Whereas, that call is to boycott institutions, not individual Israeli academics, and to support academic freedom;

Whereas the American Association of University Professors declared academic boycotts "legitimate tactical responses to conditions that are fundamentally incompatible with the mission of higher education";

Whereas, the MLA's commitment to "justice throughout the humanities ecosystem" requires ending institutional complicity with genocide and supporting Palestinian colleagues; therefore

Be it resolved that we, the members of the MLA, endorse the 2005 BDS call.