

## COMMENTS and CORRESPONDENCE

### Announcement

#### **Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility after 9/11: A Handbook for Scholars and Teachers**, prepared by the Task Force on Middle East Anthropology

Attempts to undermine professors' abilities to teach and do research are increasingly directed at scholars who seek to provide a contextualized and critical view of recent international developments and their interaction with US foreign policies and practices.

This handbook provides an overview of the range and nature of recent challenges to academic freedom. It provides concrete suggestions for how to respond to such attacks and to avoid them in the first place. Utilizing research on institutions and interviews with academics, it considers the potentials and limitations of internal university structures, professional organizations, legal recourse, and media outlets. Finally, it contains useful pedagogical tools for dealing with difficulties in the classroom, and an informative bibliography of recent writings on academic freedom.

**Download a copy from: [www.meanthro.org](http://www.meanthro.org)**

### Letters

#### **On "Israel on Trial"**

23 May 2007

To the Editor,

After reading a review essay by Rita Simon entitled "Israel on Trial" in the *MESA Bulletin* of December 2006 [volume 40(2): 227-229], I felt compelled to write. As a strong proponent of academic freedom, I have no problem with Zionist perspectives being expressed in the *Bulletin* or other MESA fora. However, such articles on any region or issue should be more substantive academically than Professor Simon's. With an opening sentence saying "The common theme in the three books under review – Finkelstein's *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*; Ron's *Frontiers and Gbetos*; and Hamzch and May's *Operation Defensive Shield* – are strong anti-Israel sentiments..." (p. 227), I immediately questioned the nature of the subsequent article. It was clear that the books were not going to be dealt with on their own terms but through a political hermeneutic imposed by the reviewer and rooted in her ideological and national commitments.

This point is further validated in Professor Simon's closing line, in which she says that Finklestein, May, and Hamzch "would have us believe that the Israelis are the Nazis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. That assessment, in my view, destroys the scholarly integrity of their work" (p. 229). This last expression is