

20 May 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I write on behalf of the Executive Council of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) regarding your recent decision to grant exemptions to Professors Adam Habib and Tariq Ramadan under Section 212(d)(3)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

In the light of this decision and in the interest of open inquiry and scholarly collaboration, the MLA urges you to cease the practice of denying entry visas to academics and scholars on ideological grounds. Former MLA President Stephen Greenblatt succinctly stated the MLA's position in these matters: "Truth-seeking depends upon dialogue. The advancement of knowledge depends upon more people around the table, not fewer. Excluding scholars because of the passports they carry or because of their skin color, religion, or political party corrupts the integrity of intellectual work."

We look forward to the day when the free exchange of ideas that the United States seeks to foster both at home and abroad is no longer threatened by the unwarranted exclusion of legitimate parties to the debate.

Respectfully,



Sidonie Smith
President
Modern Language Association