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AICE Announces Winners of 2006 Israel Scholar Awards

CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND — The American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) today announced the recipients of the Israel Scholar Awards. These prestigious awards are meant to encourage students interested in academic careers to seek graduate degrees in Israel-related fields so they can teach courses about Israel.

This year's winners, who will each receive \$10,000 to support their studies, are Guy Ziv (University of Maryland), Alejandro Paz (University of Chicago), Liora Halperin (UCLA), Eric Fleisch (Brandeis), Joshua Gleis (Tufts), and Sophia Meskin (Tel Aviv University).

“Universities throughout the country need more scholars to teach courses about Israel so students can gain an accurate view of Israel’s history and culture,” said AICE President Howard Rosenbloom. “Many students are discouraged from pursuing degrees in Israel studies because few opportunities exist for young scholars to teach the subject. We believe each of these students has great potential for making important contributions to the field of Israel studies, and we’re grateful to the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Natan Fund for taking a lead in our effort to create a cadre of future scholars.”

AICE’s Executive Director, Mitchell Bard, added, “We are concerned that most courses about Israel focus on the conflict with the Arabs, but a full understanding of Israel requires discussion about the many other facets of Israeli society, culture and politics. By supporting aspiring scholars from a range of disciplines, and a variety of perspectives, we hope to encourage a new generation of educators who can expose students to all aspects of Israel.”

Guy Ziv, a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Maryland’s government department received top marks from our panel of faculty judges. He has excelled in his field of government, politics & international relations. He has worked as a Legislative Assistant to Senator Barbara Boxer, and served as Congressional Director for the Israel

Policy Forum. He has already taught undergraduate courses at the University of Maryland. One judge said that Ziv would become a “serious international relations scholar.”

Alejandro Paz is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in anthropology. He received his MA in Middle East History at Tel Aviv University. Paz is writing a dissertation about undocumented Latinos living in Israel. His experiences led one judge to say that he “has an extraordinarily impressive resume,” and a second judge said Paz is a “superb student with an excellent record and preparation.”

Liora Halperin has a B.A. from Harvard University and is now working on Ph.D. in History at UCLA. Halperin has spent a significant amount of time living in Israel and can speak both Hebrew and Arabic. She has an “extraordinary record,” according to one judge, while another judge says she is an “outstanding and committed” student with excellent grades.

Eric Fleisch has an M.A. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. Our judges believed that Fleisch’s business and academic background speaks well for his becoming part of the professorate in Israeli Studies and considered his dissertation topic on nongovernmental organizations of the utmost importance.

Joshua Gleis is a Ph.D. student at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. He received his B.A. in Near East Studies at Cornell. He has studied at Tel Aviv University and has published work on terrorism. He is also well on his way to completing a doctorate. One judge described him as “highly motivated...capable and involved.”

Sophia Meskin is completing her M.A. in Middle East History at Tel Aviv University, and plans to obtain a Ph.D. in International Relations and Middle East Studies. Meskin can speak several languages, including Russian, French, Hebrew and Arabic. She has a strong foundation in economics. One judge said Meskin is “clearly very bright with an excellent record.”

The Israel Scholar Development Fund is a project of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created in 1993.

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