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Mary Rasenberger

February 19, 2026

Board of Library Commissioners

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To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of the Authors Guild, the nation's largest organization representing writers, advocating for authors' rights and free expression for over a century. Together with our charitable and educational arm, the Authors Guild Foundation, we represent more than 17,000 members including novelists, nonfiction writers, journalists, historians, and poets across all publishing paths.

The Guild is deeply troubled by Los Angeles Public Library's cancellation of the December 6 Read Palestine Week author conversation featuring Jenan Matari and Nora Lester Murad. As an organization founded to advocate for free expression, the Authors Guild condemns censoring, threatening, or blacklisting authors and opposes antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of bigotry used to silence writers.

This cancellation is especially alarming, coming from a public library, an institution funded by taxpayers and entrusted with safeguarding free access to information and ideas. Public libraries occupy a unique position as government institutions that are expected to remain viewpoint-neutral. Canceling programming because of an author's perspective is not only contrary to the values libraries exist to uphold, it also raises constitutional concerns.

LAPL's actions also appear to constitute a breach of its contracts with Matari and Murad. They complied with their obligations under the agreement, including publicly promoting the event using graphics and messaging provided by LAPL. If the library did not consider this a valid and binding agreement, it would not have provided these materials, especially knowing that doing so would convey to the public that it not only approved of but was actively involved in the event. By canceling in a single-line email, LAPL acknowledged that an agreement was in place, then failed to honor it. It breached its obligations under the agreements not only by failing to pay the authors, but by failing to comply with their request for a "conflict resolution meeting" under the terms of the agreement. This refusal is especially troubling at a moment when peaceful resolution of conflict should be actively sought, not dismissed.

This cancellation contradicts LAPL's stated mission of enabling "free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city's diverse communities." Canceling an event and silencing an author's voice because they express the views of a marginalized community is an attack on diversity, not empowerment. It also deprives your community of access to information that might enlighten them and encourage consideration of varying perspectives.

Page 2  
February 19, 2026

We urge LAPL to reschedule this event, honor its contractual commitments to Ms. Matari and Ms. Murad, and adopt clear policies protecting against viewpoint-based cancellations.

Sincerely,



Cheryl L. Davis  
General Counsel