

July 21, 2017

Hillel C. Neuer  
Executive Director  
UN Watch

Dear Mr. Neuer:

I am writing in response to your letter of July 20 regarding the work of Western Law Associate Professor Michael Lynk, specifically with regard to the voluntary role he is currently playing as the UN's seventh "*Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.*" The UN's mandate for the Special Rapporteur role and samples of Professor Lynk's work for the UN can be found online at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/PS/Pages/SRPAlestine.aspx>

Professor Lynk assumed this voluntary/unpaid role last year as it clearly relates to his academic interests in the areas of human rights and international law. It is common for scholars across our institution (indeed, at universities in general) to engage in extramural activities that enable them to advance their research and share their expertise beyond campus. Many scholars, including Professor Lynk, embrace their roles as active members of the global academic community through the full range of their educational, research, scholarship, and community development activities that engage students, faculty, staff, alumni and external partners.

I wish to emphasize that Western, first and foremost, embraces the principle of academic freedom; we uphold the right of all in our academic community to speak and write freely, and we expect all who study, teach and do research at Western to uphold the highest ideals of scholarly responsibility. This does not mean the university endorses the specific views and opinions of individual members of the academy, but we certainly defend their right to pursue their scholarly and extramural activities freely.

As a full-time member of Western's Faculty of Law, Professor Lynk is entitled to office space. He also has access to the support of a shared research assistant, whose stated duties are to research "Canadian human rights law, Canadian labour law, Canadian constitutional law and Canadian sex discrimination law." Recently, Professor Lynk was approached by and agreed to engage the help of two Western Law students — through *Pro Bono Students Canada* on a voluntary/unpaid basis — who were interested in providing direct support for his work with the UN.

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Contrary to the misleading inference made in your letter, it should be noted that Professor Lynk is among at least 10 Special Rapporteurs who have, in the spirit of full transparency, disclosed that they received in-kind support from universities around the world in 2016 in relation to their respective UN mandates.

In closing, I wish to reaffirm for you that Western is indeed committed to upholding its institutional principles and values, which include academic freedom, social responsibility, and providing a safe and respectful learning and work environment in which all members of our diverse academic community feel welcome and supported in their scholarly endeavours.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amit Chakma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amit Chakma  
President & Vice-Chancellor