

# NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

## **NCAC Decries Miami Beach's Retaliation Against O Cinema for Screening Acclaimed Documentary**

March 18, 2025 – Today the National Coalition Against Censorship condemned the threats by Miami Beach officials to terminate the lease of O Cinema, a local independent theater, and rescind more than \$40,000 in grant funding in retaliation for the theater's screening of the Academy Award-winning film *No Other Land*. The Mayor has made clear his personal distaste for the film's depiction of life in the West Bank in Palestine, decrying it as "a one-sided propaganda attack on the Jewish people," and has suggested that because the city owns the theater's building, that the theater's programming should align with his political beliefs.

City officials' use of the city budget, and its contracts, to pressure cultural institutions to censor expression they personally dislike violates the very core of the First Amendment. While government officials may decide to revoke arts funding for a vast number of reasons, doing so as a means to suppress specific viewpoints is an assault on freedom of expression.

Please read our full Statement:

As an organization committed to protecting the freedom of thought and expression, the National Coalition Against Censorship condemns recent threats by Miami Beach officials to evict O Cinema and to rescind more than \$40,000 in city grant funding awarded to the theater. The move follows O Cinema's decision to proceed with screenings of this year's Academy Award-winning documentary, *No Other Land*, after the Mayor urged the venue to cancel them, claiming that the film's depiction of life in the West Bank represents "hateful propaganda."

*No Other Land* is a critically acclaimed documentary produced by a creative team of Israeli and Palestinian filmmakers that records the gradual destruction of a group of Palestinian villages in the West Bank. Predictably, for a film dealing with a politically sensitive issue, the film has been met with widespread controversy.

It is not the role of Miami Beach's Mayor, however, to decide whether residents should be allowed to see the film. Whether or not to see a thought-provoking, Oscar-winning film should be a decision that is up to each of us, not the government—full stop. The looming threat that the City of Miami Beach may deprive its residents of the choice to see a culturally significant film is not only unconstitutional, it is patronizing to local residents, who have the fundamental right to choose what to see, hear, and think, for themselves. While the Mayor is entitled to his own opinions and may find the film distasteful, that subjective judgment should never impact city funding for the theater's film programs. The purpose of Miami Beach arts funding is to serve the broad cultural interests of area residents, not to impose the tastes of city administrators upon

them. An Oscar-winning film is, by definition, of broad cultural interest – whether or not its audiences agree with the film’s point of view.

Our shared culture is at its strongest when it meets and challenges the expectations of a diverse community when it can surprise and engage audiences, and when it provokes thought and disagreement. Public art funding should, by its designation, *serve the public* in all its eclectic interests, and such offerings should never be limited to any given politician’s personal taste and subjective evaluation of what is or isn’t “appropriate.”

When the government uses its power to suppress ideas it disagrees with, we all have a duty to object—even when, and perhaps especially when, we do not agree with those ideas. Both the First Amendment and the values of free expression demand that we refuse government attempts to tell us what expression we can see, hear, or watch.

*All of us are less free in a world where government officials use their power to dictate acceptable expression and ideas. The National Coalition Against Censorship condemns Miami Beach’s intimidation of a theater for showing a film of immense current interest, and we stand with O Cinema for refusing to give in to the censors.*

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### **National Coalition Against Censorship**

Since its inception in 1974, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) has functioned as a first responder in protecting freedom of expression, a fundamental human right and a keystone of democracy. Representing over 60 trusted education, publishing, and arts organizations, NCAC encourages and facilitates dialogue between diverse voices and perspectives, including those that have historically been silenced.