The Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) has been very active this year. This report describes three activities undertaken by the committee: 1) procedural changes; 2) cases considered; 3) panels proposed for ISA 2017.

1. PROCEDURAL CHANGES

In its last year’s report, the AFC noted a need to streamline the process for consideration of cases. With the help of the IT staff at ISA headquarters, the AFC has created a new website, email address and procedure for submissions of violations of academic freedom. In collaboration with the ISA Executive, the AFC also changed the number of votes necessary from the Exec to initiate action by ISA.

In May 2016, the AFC revised the existing language on the AFC website and created a means by which submissions can be made to the committee (http://www.isanet.org/ISA/Governance/Committees/Academic-Freedom). This was publicized to the ISA membership and other relevant organizations. The section to submit a case is only available to ISA members (though they can submit cases for non-ISA members). This means that accessing this section requires ISA Login details.

Once there, a member must fill in two sections: a 250 description of the case and a section describing what ISA’s action should be. Submissions are automatically forwarded to the AFC email address, which goes directly to the Chair’s email address. Once received, he forwards all requests to committee members to solicit opinions. It is important to note that the AFC cannot undertake investigations so it must rely on the collected wisdom of the committee, details submitted and whatever information can be gleaned from its committee members own efforts.

Once the committee has a consensus view, the Chair then forwards its recommendation of action to the ISA President and Executive Director, along with relevant details of the case. In accordance with changes approved at the ISA meeting in Atlanta, the Executive Committee can undertake action with 2/3 of committee approval (due to difficulty of reaching people).

2. CASES CONSIDERED

The Committee received 6 requests through the website and three directly to the Chair and/or ISA Executive Director. The AFC recommended action in five of those cases. In all five cases, the ISA Executive agreed to the proposed course of action. In two of those cases, the Executive accepted the proposed draft of the statement from the AFC. In three of those cases, the Executive proposed changes to the language originally proposed. The final statement in all cases was issued in consultation with the Chair of the AFC. All statements can be found on the AFC website.

3. PANELS PROPOSED

The AFC proposed two roundtables for the ISA Convention 2017: 1) Academic Freedom, Terrorism, and Counter-Terrorism; 2) Academic Freedom and Professional Organizations. The first will focus on how academic freedom is
challenged by efforts to securitize discourse around terrorism. The second will focus on what academic associations like ISA can and cannot do in relation to academic freedom.