



January 14, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520 USA

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today to bring your attention to and request your assistance with a pressing matter regarding journalists and documentarians being denied entry to the United States despite recognition by the American television industry.

Each year, our academies present the coveted Emmy® Awards for news and documentary television programming at ceremonies in New York City and Los Angeles. Judged in the United States by a peer community of professionals, the iconic statue is awarded to content of only the highest caliber that has been distributed to a national audience of American viewers.

The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NATAS), based in New York, presented the Emmy® Award for Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary in 2018 to the film, *Last Men in Aleppo*. Directed by Syrian filmmaker Feras Fayyad, the program was broadcast nationally by PBS. His latest project, *The Cave*, continues his telling of the story of the crisis in Syria and was this week nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Mr. Fayyad was reportedly denied entry to the United States last month, when the International Documentary Association recognized *The Cave* for Best Writing at its annual Documentary Awards in Los Angeles. The rejection of Mr. Fayyad's application echoes the experience reported by other documentarians who have been denied entry to the United States while seeking to attend Emmy® Award ceremonies at which their work has been nominated.

It appears that these visas may have been denied solely based on applicant nationality. But it is precisely their nationalities that make programs such as those produced by Mr. Fayyad so compelling. They employ on-the-ground access and knowledge to tell important stories of the highest relevance to the American public's understanding of the Middle East and of U.S. policy in the region. The work is chosen for U.S. network broadcast and recognized by Emmy® judges partly because of this public interest.

Our academies represent nearly 45,000 U.S. member professionals across every genre of programming and 20 regional chapters. Working in every television market in the country, they keep our communities informed and engaged by delivering critical news and information.

In pursuing our mission to foster and recognize excellence in television, the Emmy® Awards elevate the craft of journalism and documentary storytelling — and by extension, the public dialogue that they inform. The awards stand as the premier honor in the television industry globally and convene the most creative talents in the world for collaborative dialogue here in the United States.

This important mission is suppressed when creators are denied the opportunity of full recognition of their work and interaction with their respectful peers.

We urge the State Department to acknowledge the importance of these productions to informing the American television audience and building global awareness, and to waive restrictions that prevent their rightful recognition. The impact of the work and the well-deserved respect of our community handily outweigh blanket policy positions that err in overlooking such individual merit.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Terry O'Reilly
Chairman
NATAS



Frank Scherma
Chairman & CEO
Television Academy



Adam Sharp
President & CEO
NATAS



Maury McIntyre
President & COO
Television Academy

