PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:
Cheri Mason Lewis, Marketing & PR Director
Center For Israel Education
404-727-8047
cheri.lewis@israeled.org

PROFESSOR KEN STEIN RECEIVES
‘OPHER AVIRAN WE STAND WITH ISRAEL’ AWARD
FROM HILLELS OF GEORGIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATLANTA--(May 9, 2016)--Professor Kenneth W. Stein, Director of Emory University’s Institute for the Study of Modern Israel (ISMI), was honored at the annual board meeting of Hillels of Georgia, Thursday, May 5, at the Marcus Hillel Center at Emory University. Professor Stein was presented with the ‘Opher Aviran We Stand with Israel’ Award, created in 2015 to honor Opher Aviran for his impact on Atlanta and his support of Hillels of Georgia during the five years he served as Consulate General of Israel to the Southeastern United States.

Aviran sent a video message of congratulations from Israel and said he, “could not think of a better scholar to receive the award this year than Ken Stein.” Aviran described Professor Stein as a leader in his field--a scholar, academic leader and educator--who educates students and teachers across America about the Arab-Israeli conflict and about Israel’s right to exist. In congratulating Professor Stein, Aviran said, “I hope you will be able to teach many more students, professors and leaders of the academic world [about the importance of Israel].”

Hillels of Georgia carries out Jewish related programs on more than a dozen campuses throughout the state, with significant sums for its operations coming from individuals, foundations and the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.
In conducting the Hillels of Georgia annual meeting, with more than 100 in attendance, President Michael Coles emphasized that the award honors partners who work with Hillel to help students articulate the important role Israel plays in their personal Jewish identities. “The world has changed; Hillel used to be focused on Shabbat meals and basic Jewish programming, but no longer is this the case,” said Coles. “Today, Hillel has to be on the cutting edge of fighting anti-Semitism and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to ensure a safe campus environment for Jewish students. Ken Stein has shown his continual commitment to Hillels of Georgia by helping promote a positive image of Israel to not only increase pride among Jewish students, but to educate uninformed students on campuses across the state.”

Over the past year, Professor Stein and other Emory faculty provided guidance to students as they grappled with the concerted BDS effort to delegitimize Israel as a state.

In accepting the award, Professor Stein focused his remarks on the current status of how Israel is taught on North American campuses today. He noted that, “more than 80 percent of Israel education is taught in courses that focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict.” After reviewing course syllabi where Israel is taught in the conflict, Professor Stein noted that the content and reading assignments are heavily biased away from Israel.

“Hillel and other programs on campus can maintain excellent Jewish and Israel programs, but if the classrooms where students learn have professors who preach rather than teach, one-sided views will educate otherwise unknowing undergraduates,” Professor Stein said.

He made his remarks in the context of creating a smooth path to his own retirement at Emory and urged those attending to support efforts to keep the Emory Institute for the Study of Modern Israel active in years to come. Of the 5,300 students Professor Stein has taught, more than 40 percent have taken courses on Israel.

Professor Stein concluded by urging those attending to do what was necessary to support the continuation of Hillel's critical work and ISMI’s student engagement in Israel education. “The thirst to learn about modern Israel is constantly growing; feeding that desire is what Emory College needs to prioritize in its curriculum in the years ahead.”

In closing, Coles remarked: “Through his tireless support of Israel and his deep knowledge of its history, Ken Stein is helping engage students in the discussion, so that they are able to see current events through a historical lens. Information is power, and by providing students with historical perspective, Ken has helped arm students with tools they need to confidently participate in the discussion and actively promote Israel’s value to Jewish identity and America’s interests.”
**About Hillels of Georgia**

The focal point for Jewish undergraduate and graduate students at universities in the state of Georgia, Hillels of Georgia is committed to creating and sustaining a pro-Israel environment on all of its campuses. The organization seeks to provide every Jewish student with the opportunity to explore and build an enduring relationship with Israel and it works to significantly increase the number of Jewish college students who have meaningful Jewish experiences. For more information about Hillels of Georgia, visit it on the web at: www.hillelsofgeorgia.org.

**About the Institute for the Study of Modern Israel**

Established by Professor Kenneth W. Stein in 1998, the Institute for the Study of Modern Israel (ISMI) is an interdisciplinary and non-degree conferring unit of Emory University in Atlanta. It was the first academic institute for the study of modern Israel established in the United States. ISMI promotes teaching, research, and learning that focuses on Israeli culture, foreign policy, history, society and politics. ISMI’s core mission is to enhance the knowledge and scholarship of Israel and the Middle East on the Emory campus and beyond. It engages students and the general public through outreach to media, civic organizations and educators. For more information, please visit the ISMI website at www.ismi.emory.edu.

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