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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ROCK-THROWING PROFESSOR EDWARD SAID

Sir, — As professors and current or former deans at Columbia University, we are colleagues of University Professor Edward Said, who was reported in your newspaper, as well as several others in the American press, as having thrown rocks at Israeli soldiers guarding the border with Lebanon.

Edward Said is indeed a "celebrated intellectual," often referred to as "the leading Palestinian intellectual of this era." He is also a contributor to your own publication. His title "University Professor" is a special honor bestowed on only nine out of a total of 2,872 full-time professors at our university.

What idea of vision could possibly be embedded in a hurled stone aimed at innocent bystanders? An explanation that has been advanced is that no idea was meant at all, but that the act had been committed in a moment of professional absent-mindedness. Accordingly, we have, along with similar statements to the *Washington Post* and the *Associated Press*, Said's written declaration to the *New York Daily News*: "For a moment, I joined in throwing rocks. The spirit of the

place infected everyone with the same impulse, to make a symbolic gesture that the occupation had ended. I had no idea that the media people were there or that I was the object of attention."

Unfortunately, Said's statement is false. Upon inquiries to the Agence France Presse, we have learned that the published photo of the professor ~~throwing the rock was in fact delivered to this news agency by none other than Said himself.~~ Our colleague, thus, continues a pattern of misrepresentation and deception, documented, for example, in an article earlier this year in *Commentary*.

Returning to the rock-throwing incident, Said has claimed that he did not aim at Israeli soldiers, nor did he see soldiers in the vicinity. An eyewitness account in the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir* contradicts Said's claim, stating that "Said had positioned himself less than 10 meters from soldiers in a two-story, blue-and-white watchtower, from which flew five Israeli flags, before throwing the rock over the border fence."

We leave it to the public to decide what price Said has paid in reputation for throwing this

rock, then delivering to the media a photo of himself throwing the rock, then claiming innocent rapture as his sole motive and a random spasm of enthusiasm as his sole act. We do point out, though, that here at Columbia, the "Rules of University Conduct" would classify the same act committed on the Columbia campus as a "serious violation," and would sanction it with suspension or dismissal from university service.

AWI FEDERGRUEN
ROBERT POLLACK
Columbia University

New York