

Statement Condemning British University and College Union Vote to Consider Boycott of Israeli Universities and Academics

The American Academy for Jewish Research, the oldest body of North American scholars of Jewish studies, and the Association for Jewish Studies, the learned society of academic Jewish studies, condemn the indulgence of the United Kingdom's University and College Union, once again, in an intemperate attack on Israeli academics. The union's vote for its members to consider a boycott of Israeli universities and Israeli scholars and researchers who do not publicly oppose specific governmental policies that the Union opposes is an offense to all academics.

We urge the University and College Union membership to overturn the vote of their delegates as an egregious assault on academic freedom. Academics have an obligation to support the free exchange of ideas and to participate in international dialogue, not to shun and restrain them. Israeli universities are an important source of the robust discussion and critical evaluation of governmental policy that characterize Israeli society. It is ironic and offensive that in a world where many governments muzzle their faculties and academic freedom is rare, the University and College Union should focus solely on Israeli universities, which have maintained academic freedom and diverse student and faculty communities under difficult circumstances. It is also distressing that in a world where, sadly, war and the killing of civilians are far too common, only one country is singled out for ostracism.

We stand in solidarity with our fellow Israeli academics. We are confident that the University and College Union's consideration of a boycott will be understood internationally to reflect less upon the reality of Israeli universities than upon the politicization of certain leaders of the British academic community. Furthermore, we call on academics throughout the world to refrain from participating in international conferences, meetings, publications and other such projects from which Israeli scholars have been banned.

The Executive Committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research
The Executive Committee of the Association for Jewish Studies