

January 9, 2014

Mr. Curtis Marez  
President  
American Studies Association  
1120 19th St NW, Suite 301  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Marez:

We write in strong opposition to the American Studies Association's (ASA) recent decision to boycott Israeli universities and academic institutions. While ASA has every right to express its views on policies pursued by any nation or government, we believe that the decision to blacklist Israeli academic institutions for Israeli government policies with which ASA disagrees demonstrates a blatant disregard for academic freedom.

The ASA claims that the boycott "is in solidarity with scholars and students deprived of their academic freedom and it aspires to enlarge that freedom for all, including Palestinians." We believe that this boycott accomplishes just the opposite. The university is an institution intended to foster, encourage, and inspire constructive dialogue and original thought. However, this boycott undermines academic freedom by prohibiting educational and cultural exchanges with Israeli universities and academic institutions.

Even more concerning is the specific targeting of Israel for boycott. Like all democracies, Israel is not perfect. But to single out Israel, while leaving relationships with universities in autocratic and repressive countries intact, suggests thinly-veiled bigotry and bias against the Jewish State. This morally dishonest double standard has already been rejected by well over 100 of ASA's own member institutions, with several universities even withdrawing from the organization in protest.

Some higher education organizations—including the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of American Universities—have denounced the boycott as unjust and harmful to the goals of academic freedom. Even Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected the ASA boycott, stating: "No, we do not support the boycott of Israel... We have relations with Israel, we have mutual recognition of Israel."

Academic cooperation can be an important tool to help foster peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but you have chosen the unproductive path of isolation. We hope that the ASA will learn to appreciate the mutually beneficial academic ties between the United States and Israel and work with us to promote peace and academic freedom.

Sincerely,