



For Immediate Release
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**Numerous Reasons to Vote No on Boycott in the Association of American Anthropologists
A Statement by the Academic Engagement Network**

Washington, D.C. – The Academic Engagement Network is a growing national network of 270 faculty members on more than 100 campuses. Our network opposes the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, stands for academic freedom and free speech on campuses, and is committed to stirring robust conversation about Israel and Israel/Palestine.

We believe that the instinct to boycott Israeli universities as a response to the plight of the Palestinians, which was clear in the preliminary passage of a resolution by the Association of American Anthropologists (AAA) in November 2015, is misguided. We are pleased AAA members have had the opportunity to reconsider the resolution, voting it up or down. Embracing boycott neither enhances Palestinian rights nor changes Palestinian conditions. Boycotting Israeli academics and academic institutions instead jeopardizes the reputation of the AAA and identifies it as against academic freedom.

Voting for boycott is harmful to academic freedom. Voting for boycott is also discriminatory. There exist more productive ways to mobilize sensibilities on behalf of peace, justice, and the rights of Palestinians.

An academic boycott is inconsistent with anthropology's values. Anthropology employs diverse perspectives, not least in conflict situations, and is normally concerned to hear and investigate all possibilities. Its methods also stress dialogue, long term relationships, trust and respect for differences, and acts of knowing in context. An initiative for academic boycott conflicts with these values.

The boycott resolution contains general accusations about complicity which are neither accurate nor specific. They are largely presumed. Even the AAA's task force report on Israel/Palestine noticed this and warned the association against vague boycott conditions that might underwrite an indefinite ban. What would need to change to end boycott? Have AAA members been voting to eliminate the existence of a Jewish state?

An academic boycott will harm individuals. Boycott supporters keep saying the targets are institutions, not individuals, but the claim is insincere. Badges faculty wear at conferences, their by-lines on journal articles and resumes, and the forms by which they introduce each other include their names with titles and affiliations. Younger scholars and graduate students are particularly

dependent on institutional support, requiring reference letters, funding opportunities, academic homes.

A professional association should avoid privileging a single narrative and endorsing a one-sided reading of reality. AAA members should be careful about deploying "human rights" discourse from a single political angle and turning the AAA into a partisan political tool.

Boycotting Israeli universities will discredit the AAA, portraying it as biased and impoverished in understanding, and will isolate anthropology on American campuses, where university leaders have spoken and will continue speaking forthrightly for academic freedom and against boycott. Universities will have to reconsider their relations with a professional organization promoting boycott.

We in the Academic Engagement Network have called on our colleagues to vote no to boycott and instead to say yes to exploring other paths to promote peace and mutual understanding.

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