



AEN Statement on Incendiary Communications Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Faculty and Academic Departments

June 2, 2021: The Academic Engagement Network (AEN), an educational organization comprising over 750 faculty on more than 260 U.S. universities and colleges, is deeply concerned about the proliferation of [incendiary anti-Israel petitions and statements](#) within the American academy following the escalation of Israel-Hamas hostilities in May 2021. The majority of these recent communications have been ahistorical, factually inaccurate and incomplete, and highly inflammatory in tone. Shared on social media and other online forums and platforms, they erase the history and lived experiences of Israelis, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and unconscionably neglect to mention the role of Hamas and other militant organizations in perpetuating violence. These statements have left many Jewish, Zionist, and Israeli students, faculty, and staff on U.S. campuses feeling deeply demoralized, silenced, and even intimidated.

Many of these petitions and statements also raise worrisome issues surrounding academic freedom and academic peer pressure. As an organization committed to free speech and freedom of expression within the U.S. academy, AEN supports the right of individual scholars to independently voice their opinions on controversial topics and to sign onto the statements and petitions of their choice. However, we are deeply troubled by the chilling effect on Zionist and pro-Israel scholars, particularly probationary and non-tenure-track faculty, when entire departments, centers, or programs endorse such vehemently anti-Israel documents, or use official channels such as department websites and social media pages to disseminate them. In such cases, the departments appear to be speaking for every faculty member, and dissenters may be intimidated from making known their opposing views.

While welcoming difficult campus conversations on contentious issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, AEN rejects simplistic, one-sided narratives, and encourages an embrace of the core values of the academy: rigorous academic inquiry and research and respectful discussion, debate, and engagement that is inclusive of all campus groups and communities. At a time of rising antisemitic incidents, many of them motivated by recent events in the Middle East and the hostile rhetoric surrounding them, we call on faculty to consider how recent communications, replete with incendiary rhetoric that demonizes and delegitimizes Israel and its supporters, negatively impact the campus climate for Jewish and all students.