



January 16, 2025

To the Members of the American Historical Association Council:

American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) write to convey their shared objections to a ["Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide,"](#) which members of the American Historical Association (AHA) voted to endorse during its recent annual meeting in New York City. Alleging that Israel's military campaign in Gaza has "effectively obliterated" its educational system, the resolution condemns "scholasticide," an obscure and invented term that lacks any standing in international law, has never been applied to any country other than Israel, and has been subjected to no rigorous empirical investigation. We believe that a serious study of the "scholasticide" charge against Israel would thoroughly discredit it. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that Israel is deliberately and systematically targeting the Palestinian educational system for destruction. The resolution blatantly ignores the fact that Hamas routinely launches rockets from, and houses its weapons and fighters in, civilian structures and facilities, a cynical tactic that poses significant challenges to Israel's attempt to disarm the Hamas terror regime in response to the horrific and unprecedented October 7, 2023 attacks – the worst mass murder of Jews on a single day since the Holocaust. The preposterous accusation of "scholasticide" sidesteps the strategic realities of military engagement against a brutal terrorist organization in favor of an unsubstantiated claim that villainizes Israel.

It is disheartening that hundreds of AHA members, representing historians across the K-12 and higher educational landscape, voted in support of this misguided resolution, which grossly undermines the rules of causal inference to advance a near-obsessive anti-Israel narrative that casts the Jewish state as a uniquely malevolent aggressor. This is an alarming development for the AHA, considering that the core responsibility of historians is to parse evidence and analyze multiple perspectives carefully.

As organizations deeply committed to the bedrock principles of academic freedom and open inquiry, we support the right of AHA members, and all scholars, to endorse and promote any argument or claim, no matter how factually inaccurate or poorly researched. But as an institution, the AHA should steer clear of weighing in on contentious political conflicts, particularly when so many members vehemently disagree, as in this case. Too often this past academic year, we have seen academic associations issue ill-conceived proclamations and advance similar hastily crafted [resolutions](#) that ignore basic facts, sidestep historical context, and deny the lived experiences, traumas, and suffering of Israelis on and since October 7th. What is very clear is that even easily discredited resolutions, when supported by a vocal cadre of an organization's members, can produce a chilling effect on reasoned debate, as well as a

toxic atmosphere that silences dissenting voices. They can also create a hostile and unwelcoming environment for scholars and students who identify as Zionists and those with strong personal, academic, and professional ties to Israel. In this instance, a number of activists and groups that supported the “scholasticide” resolution aggressively targeted a dissenting AHA member who was scheduled to voice objections to it at the AHA annual meeting, subjecting her to vicious online harassment. We are deeply concerned about the use of such bullying tactics to target Jewish and openly Zionist academics and learners.

We urge the AHA’s elected Council to veto this measure. Should the AHA Council decline to concur with the decision of members at the annual meeting, which would send it to the full membership for ratification, we hope that more AHA members will consider their responsibility to the profession and to standards of evidence and argument, which demand that statements with baked-in inaccuracies, such as this one, be rejected out of hand. We stand with the many historians who have already voiced their concerns over the association taking a formal position on the Israel-Hamas war and who have passionately called on the AHA to remember its primary functions as a professional organization of historians. We agree with those who have argued that this resolution distracts from the AHA’s core mission and current pressing issues, and who believe that the association would be better served by adopting a stance of political neutrality on geopolitical issues – and indeed all issues that fall outside the purview of its central function as a scholarly association. We encourage the AHA to use this moment as an opportunity to recommit itself to intellectual inclusivity and open academic inquiry, and to creating a vibrant space that all historians could be proud to call their professional home.

Sincerely,



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CEO
American Jewish Committee



Mark G. Yudof
Chair, AEN Advisory Board
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