



March 28, 2025

Dear President Ehrkamp, Vice President Moseley, and Chair of the National Councilors Ghosh,

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) are writing to express our deep concern regarding a proposal by a subgroup of your members, Geographers for Justice in Palestine (Geographers4Palestine), to endorse a discriminatory boycott of Israeli academic institutions. We are also concerned by this group's efforts to advance a highly divisive and inflammatory Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) agenda at the recent 2025 American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting in Detroit, Michigan. At the conference, which took place from March 24-28, we are dismayed that Geographers4Palestine organized and hosted seven sessions that were devoted solely to demonizing Israel.

At a time when academic freedom and open inquiry are increasingly under attack, and numerous reports and studies have documented a disturbing uptick in the ostracizing of Israeli academics, we are disappointed to find that a group of AAG members are now working to gather signatures for a petition to hold a special meeting of your full membership whose purpose will be to discuss an academic boycott of Israel. Israeli scholars, including geographers, who are now facing severe professional costs as a result of BDS, should be supported by the AAG—not isolated and shunned.

We call on you and other AAG leaders to ensure that the many scholars within your association who stand opposed to divisive academic boycotts, which are antithetical to academic freedom and open inquiry, are able to share their positions openly and freely both prior to and during any convening of a special meeting of the membership to discuss this matter.

We are further concerned that the proposed BDS-aligned proposal will marginalize Jewish members of the AAG for whom Israel and Zionism is a core component of their faith identities. While presented as a form of legitimate protest, BDS in fact aims to delegitimize and pressure Israel through various forms of isolation, including diplomatic, financial, professional, academic, and cultural spheres. It targets not only Israel and Israeli institutions but also Jewish individuals who support Israel's right to exist as a homeland of the Jewish people. Within professional academic associations, BDS activism therefore often leads to the alienation of Jewish and Zionist members and can contribute to rising antisemitism.

Now that the 2025 AAG Annual Meeting has concluded, we urge you to work to ensure that more balanced sessions about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are offered at future annual meetings, symposium, webinars, and special events. Given the many one-sided panels that Geographers4Palestine fielded at this year's annual meeting, and the absence of any sessions that might have provided a counter-viewpoint, it is imperative that your membership be better informed and educated about Israel and the Middle East. Indeed, it is crucial that discussions around such topics are grounded in factual

evidence, and are presented in a manner that encourages constructive debate and dialogue, thereby fostering AAG's mission of ensuring that all geographers "are valued, heard, and welcomed."

We wish to bring to your attention the fact that, based on advance publicity available online, the seven sessions which were organized by Geographers4Palestine for the recent annual meeting in Detroit promoted a highly contested narrative about Israel that included unsubstantiated allegations of genocide and "scholasticide." We worry that these sessions collectively perpetuated harmful misinformation that was presented uncritically, and without the benefit of dialogue or debate with any opposing views. Furthermore, beyond promoting a one-sided perspective on the Middle East conflict that demonized and delegitimized Israel, we are also appalled that one of the sessions included presentations of how to "escalate" campus anti-Israel "encampments," which as you undoubtedly are aware were over the past year, on many campuses, the sites of anti-Jewish hostility, harassment, bullying, and even violence.

While we fully support academic freedom and the right of the members of your association to discuss complex geopolitical issues, we are troubled by the framing of these seven sessions, as well as by the fact that anti-Israel BDS received considerable coverage at the AAG annual meeting, while not a single panel opposing it was offered. As a result, we are concerned that the annual meeting in Detroit contributed to a polarized climate within your association at a time when tensions are already high. In turn, this has likely alienated many Jewish members of the AAG.

We urge the AAG to consider the broader impact of these recent AAG Annual Meeting sessions that were organized by Geographers4Palestine as well as this group's call for divestment from, and the academic boycott of, Israel. We recommend the following steps to ensure that the AAG remains a welcoming, inclusive, and intellectually rigorous space for all academics and scholars:

1. **Ensure Viewpoint Diversity on the Topic of Israel:** Future AAG meetings and activities should include sessions that offer a range of diverse perspectives, feature Israeli and Palestinian scholars, and facilitate a robust discussion of the complexities of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. This would provide an opportunity for a more informed discourse among members and scholars in the field of Geography.
2. **Offer Professional Development Opportunities on the Jewish Experience:** The AAG leadership and staff can be encouraged to participate in educational programs and trainings to better understand contemporary antisemitism and the concerns of the association's Jewish members.
3. **Condemnation of Antisemitism:** Forcefully and unequivocally condemn any actions or rhetoric that contribute to the harassment or discrimination of Jewish academics and scholars within the association.
4. **Facilitate Open Dialogue:** Create opportunities for AAG members to share their experiences with antisemitism and anti-Israel bias.
5. **Reject BDS and the Academic Boycott of Israel:** The AAG leadership can consider openly rejecting the BDS call for an academic boycott of Israel, which is in fundamental opposition to academic freedom and antithetical to the association's values and mission of open inquiry and unfettered intellectual exchange.

We look forward to the possibility of working together to create a more inclusive and informed academic community. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of further assistance in implementing the next steps that we have highlighted above as critically important and necessary.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Greenblatt

CEO and National Director

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

Miriam F. Elman, Ph.D.

Executive Director

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