



DATE: May 3, 2013

Official Statement Regarding the Resolution:

The Resolution to Support the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions was voted upon and passed at the general business meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) Conference in Seattle. The meeting was open to all members, and the conference drew approximately 700 members. We announced that the resolution vote would be held to all conference attendees and encouraged them to attend the general business meeting. Our policy is that all resolutions are voted upon at the general membership meeting by a confidential ballot, not by a ballot sent to all members in advance. The resolution was discussed as one of the agenda items at the business meeting of the conference. Approximately 10% of the membership was present at the meeting, with many members who could not attend expressing their support for the resolution.

There was thoughtful discussion about the significance of the resolution to the Association's history. Members reaffirmed the core values of the association – its resistance to imperialism and racial discrimination, and its support for self-determination of disenfranchised peoples, academic rights and the right to education for all members of a society. That the call to boycott comes from Palestinian civil society was an important point that some members emphasized. Some members made specific mention of the ways in which Israeli academic institutions are complicit with the Occupation and the discrimination of Palestinian students. There was a careful distinction made between Israeli academic institutions and individual Israeli academics. It is the former – the institutions – that are the target of the boycott and **not** individual scholars. The similarity of the Palestinian boycott call to the South African boycott movement to end apartheid was also underscored. The point was made that because the US government does not oppose or protest the illegal actions of Israel with respect to the Palestinians' right to education and freedom of expression, it falls to civil society organizations like the AAAS to take up the call by the Palestinian peoples to boycott Israeli academic institutions. A final point was that US academics who speak out against the Israeli government's policies are subject to intimidation and retribution, and so it is crucial that the AAAS stand in solidarity with US academics, particularly those of Middle Eastern (West Asian) and Muslim descent, who protest the policies of the state of Israel.

Specifically, the Resolution to Support the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions calls upon members of AAAS to educate, through courses, forums, and other means, the students, faculty, and staff on their campuses of the realities on the ground for Palestinians who live under the policies of the Israeli government; to discourage their campuses from

entering into curricular or other partnerships with Israeli academic institutions; and to forge alliances with Palestinian academics and students.

The board believes that AAAS members, in voting for this resolution, affirmed the organization's commitment to academic freedom for all scholars. The AAAS is opposed to all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism, and is committed to advocating for human rights and social justice.

Many other countries are, of course, human rights abusers and violators of international law, but there is active debate on and criticism of their actions at the levels of government and civil society. Israel enjoys special status with the United States and is immune from governmental criticism even when there is consistent violation of international law. A boycott of Israeli academic institutions by hundreds of U.S. academics and now by the AAAS is a response to this special protected status of Israel, and it is a call to civil society in both Israel and the United States to take action. We urge other U.S. academic organizations to expand debate about Israeli policy and its special status in the United States.

Sincerely,

Mary Yu Danico, President of AAAS
Executive Board Members of AAAS