

## DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ANTI-BOYCOTT ARGUMENTS

*Part of the struggle against the boycott movement has involved framing arguments that speak directly to disciplinary or group self-understanding and shared aims. Comparing and contrasting such arguments may help people in additional disciplines craft approaches most likely to reach their peers and prove successful. The effort to work across disciplines and build a national coalition will also benefit from understanding what works in other fields. Of course sharing factual evidence is also essential, and fact-based refutations of false or misleading claims is a priority. But disciplines do differ. The Health Sciences have proven very receptive to factual arguments. English is often moved by a few anecdotes combined with emotional appeals. Most of these statements were distributed as part of recent struggles at disciplinary meetings. Jeffrey Herf's comments, however, are designed to rally historians behind a particular point of view in future debates. One important resource we have not taken excerpts from is that of the Presbyterians for Middle East Peace website. It makes wide use of videos, which are often quite good. The URL is. <http://www.pfmep.org>*

### CONTENTS

**ANTHROPOLOGY—Page 1.**

**HISTORY—Page 5.**

**LIBRARY STUDIES—Page 10.**

#### **ANTHROPOLOGY:**

##### **Michele Rivkin-Fish:**

I am an anthropologist because I strive to understand perspectives that differ from my own, particularly those that seem strange, irrational, or disturbing.

I am an anthropologist because I aim to understand the ways historical trauma becomes discursively framed as collective memory and used as the material for social identities based on bounded and hostile forms of closure.

I am an anthropologist because I seek to understand the competing moral perspectives and political-economic interests that structure enduring conflicts.

I do so not as a moral relativist but as a scholar critically concerned to recognize and examine asymmetries in power relations.

I am an anthropologist because I engage in research and teaching on these topics to challenge the public to think anew about stereotypes, stigmas, dynamics of domination, subordination, and victimhood. And as an anthropologist, I know that it is possible to apply these perspectives to generate creative ways for subverting the violence of the status quo.

For these reasons, I oppose a boycott on Anthropologists in Israel, our professional colleagues who share these goals and aim to realize them through their research, teaching, and social engagement. An academic boycott contradicts the fundamental precepts of anthropology— an insistence on listening, learning, and leaving room for ambiguity in the analysis of complex situations; an understanding that the anthropologist cannot be less embedded in social and symbolic relations than the people and situations that are studied. A boycott positions “us” –the non-Israelis—as less entangled, less responsible, less complicit in the militarization and violence of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict—despite the deep involvement of the US government and corporate world in this conflict. It expresses a hubris of moral purity that one can condemn colleagues without understanding the lives they lead, or knowing the specific labor they pursue. A boycott represents a simple refusal to engage, under the guise of engagement, rather than the challenging investment of time and energy to figure out how our expertise may contribute positively to the goals of peace.

For these reasons, I urge the AAA to consider productive ways that we, as an organization expressing deep concern over the violence in Israel/Palestine, can deploy our expertise as researchers and teachers, to promote peaceful change in the Middle East through supporting the development of anthropological research, teaching, and dialogue.

Such initiatives should include educating ourselves about the efforts currently underway or desired in local universities, colleges, and at the grassroots, to bring anthropological kinds of insights to the publics engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Such initiatives could include supporting Palestinian anthropologists through research fellowships, opportunities to network with colleagues abroad, and support for their teaching endeavors. Such initiatives could include supporting the work of Israeli anthropologists who research and teach on topics related to peaceful co-existence, the historical and cultural analysis of nationalism, collective memory, the anthropology of the military, education, NGOs, and human rights.

Such initiatives should put our outrage and anguish over this conflict to work in ways that support our Middle Eastern colleagues in their profoundly courageous efforts to promote peace through anthropological knowledge.

## **ADIP: Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Recognizing the severe anguish and human tragedy resulting from the political and military violence in Israel and Palestine, and the ongoing Occupation of Palestinian lands and population by Israel in violation of the international consensus favoring a two-state settlement along the pre- 1967 borders, **Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine (ADIP)** promotes the use of our discipline’s critical theories and methods in working towards peace and social justice in Israel/Palestine. We encourage and support dialogue and engagement among Israelis, Palestinians, and others concerned with the region, taking into account a range of anthropologically based values, including abhorrence of violence and a desire to expose inequalities of power along with acknowledging a wide diversity of

opinions and possibilities of action. We believe that finely tuned ethnographic-based research and interventions, and the promotion of academic freedom, are essential to this process.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY:** Anthropology is a field devoted to grasping multiple and competing perspectives, understanding the social legacies of history, memories and collective traumas, and identifying systems of power throughout society. Our skills guide us to unpack taken for granted politicized slogans, symbolic formations, and social identities based on bounded and hostile forms of exclusion. We believe that the critical thinking and skepticism towards all kinds of group-think that is a hallmark of our discipline can play a critical role in identifying new ways to conceptualize and promote social justice and equality for Israel/Palestine. Anthropologists can join existing grassroots dialogue initiatives among people and groups from diverse political perspectives—dialogue that begins with the recognition of the other’s humanity, collective loss, and human rights; dialogue that reflexively addresses the politicization of language and terminology, and strives to negotiate a meaningful framework that enables listening to others and finding new, creative solutions for conflict resolution.

**ON THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE:** We recognize the existence of a grave inequality in which Israel is occupying Palestinian lands and population, and promoting a settlement project that continuously jeopardizes possibilities for peace. Israel, we believe, has the greater responsibility of pulling out of the stalemate, ending its occupation, and moving toward peace. At the same time, we recognize that important fractions of the Palestinian people, like Hamas and others, continue to call and act for the destruction of Israel. There are voices from many corners which reject the legitimacy of the other. We thus further recognize that both Palestinians and Israelis continue to suffer violence and trauma, fear, intimidation, threats to their security and loss of innocent civilians’ lives. This is not to equate their powerlessness or view their degree of collective suffering as commensurate. It is to promote a third way and oppose all discourses that are one-sided. The situation has reached an impasse, with people on both sides losing hope for a political solution, and with fear, hatred, and violence overtaking efforts for conflict resolution. Subtle anthropological analyses that provide context, and interventions that explicate the situation and identify alternative visions for a peaceful future are imperative.

**ON ACADEMIC BOYCOTTS:** We oppose the move by some of our colleagues to establish an academic boycott against Israeli academia and against Israeli and other anthropologists in particular. An academic boycott will not help the Palestinian cause, but it will erode our discipline’s professional ethos. An academic boycott is a political action that rests on absolutist positions rather than probing analyses. Despite its claims, such a boycott fails to distinguish between institutions and individuals. An academic boycott compromises academic freedom by censoring professional colleagues on the basis of their place of employment. It works symbolically and materially to create boundaries of exclusion from the moral community of scholars based on criteria that are disconnected from academic standards. **ADIP** proposes that rather than disengaging from the region through a boycott, the American Anthropological Association and all anthropologists should increase engagement through the promotion of research, teaching and academic dialogue.

## GOALS AND INITIATIVES

**Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine** proposes to deploy our moral sensitivities and expertise as researchers and teachers to promote peaceful change in the Middle East. We will defend freedom of academic speech and encourage the development and dissemination of research, teaching and dialogue on peace and justice for Israelis and Palestinians, including analysis of politics, social movements, and everyday life. We believe that the mandate of the AAA as a scholarly organization both defines and limits the kinds of advocacy we can and should undertake. We are not lobbyists but we can use anthropological research, data and analysis to offer insights and recommendations, and make arguments to political bodies. We will thus specifically focus on elucidating the kinds of actions appropriate to take within the framework of the AAA, a scholarly organization devoted to promoting the discipline of anthropology.

Our goals are to develop and promote diverse initiatives, including:

### **Within the AAA:**

- Educate anthropologists about the efforts currently underway or desired in local universities, colleges, and at grassroots' levels, to bring anthropological insights to the publics engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We support the work of the AAA Task Force. In the spirit of anthropological field work, we encourage its members—and all those at the AAA who seek involvement in this issue—not to pass judgment from a distance but instead visit Israel/Palestine. We invite all anthropologists who are concerned to help identify scholars, institutions and projects within the region that are working in these directions and interested in global collaborations.
- Ensure that anthropological and other social science research shapes current debate over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the AAA.
- Promote engaged dialogue, debate and deliberation within the AAA in which all perspectives on the conflict are treated with respect and where unpopular or minority opinions can be expressed without fear, intimidation or recrimination.
- Support anthropological responses to the conflict that adhere to the AAA's role as an organization of academic professionals.
- Oppose academic boycotts, which exacerbate conflict and recrimination, constrain dialogue by framing debate in reductionist and one-sided ways, and undermine the professional integrity of the AAA.

### **Within the Region:**

- Devise strategies to strengthen the autonomy of academic research vis-à-vis interference from the state and powerful political actors in Israel and Palestine.
- Support Palestinian anthropologists through research fellowships, opportunities to network with colleagues abroad, and support for their teaching endeavors.
- Promote freedom of movement and access to research for Palestinian, Israeli and other scholars working in the area.
- Support joint research projects and exchange of ideas among Israeli, Palestinian and other scholars.
- Facilitate anthropologists' active contributions to debate in the Israeli and Palestinian publics to address issues of justice and conflict resolution from a research and ethnographic grounded perspective.

- Sponsor workshops on teaching about the region and conflict through an anthropological perspective, and develop a syllabus bank.
- Encourage faculty lines for anthropologists who focus on Israeli/ Palestinian societies and conflict resolution.
- Create a research fund for ADIP oriented research—to ensure the academic autonomy of important anthropological projects at risk of political capture or funding denial because of their topic.

## **HISTORY:**

### **WHY WE OPPOSE ACADEMIC BOYCOTTS**

The message of this flyer does not address the policies of the State of Israel in the Occupied Territories (which many of us condemn), the plight of the Palestinians within or beyond the Green Line, or the larger Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement that targets business, products, and corporations. On these subjects, we have a wide range of views. But all of us oppose sanctions and boycotts that involve the exchange of ideas. The movement to boycott Israeli scholars and universities stifles opportunities to listen to, learn from and exchange our scholarship with all of our professional colleagues regardless of where they live and the policies of the states where they find themselves. What responsibilities do we as historians have? How do academic boycotts impinge on our ability to carry them out?

- As historians, we are committed to the free exchange of ideas and the unfettered sharing of knowledge about the past. We believe that we have a responsibility to expand our conversations and to promote opportunities for dialogue. Our work is diminished when governments, universities or scholarly bodies seek to place limits on our engagement with others.
- The historians' commitment to independent inquiry involves speaking and learning from other scholars. Academic boycotts that target particular groups of scholars on the grounds that they may be implicated in the actions of their governments, nevertheless restrict all of us.
- We have an ethical responsibility to examine ideas and arguments on their own merits, rather than to attribute guilt by association. Supporting boycotts on scholars who are attached to, or work in, political situations that we might condemn, isolates them from the global community of scholars and reduces them to the status of representatives of the nation state in which they live. As scholars who earn our livings in various locations, we understand that our personal opinions and our research findings often conflict with the ideas of those who employ us. A boycott of scholarly institutions, workshops, and seminars tars independent scholars in the name of condemning their institutions. Ironically, such a boycott in Israel hurts not just Jews, but Palestinians who study and teach at Israeli universities.
- As historians, we understand that academic boycotts are not solutions to political problems, but may in fact diminish the possibility of achieving solutions by reinforcing existing barriers. Instead of boycotts, we should strive to find resources to expand exchanges, to create collaborative projects, and to open up conversations across groups.

Academic boycotts provide no answers to the long lasting conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Pro-active engagement with our colleagues on both sides of the green line might. **Issued by the Alliance for Academic Freedom.**

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST ISRAEL-RELATED RESOLUTIONS PREPARED FOR USE AT THE APRIL 2015 BUSINESS MEETING OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS (OAH)

**Debate 1:** Procedural arguments against suspending the rules to vote on a resolution submitted at the business meeting:

- **Allowing last-minute resolutions on the agenda violates the democratic process.** To introduce new resolutions in the eleventh-hour violates the OAH constitution's call to "encourage wide discussion of historical questions." Instead, it allows no time for OAH members to educate themselves and one another about the range of viewpoints on a complicated situation or to build institutional consensus. It explicitly excludes from dialogue those who might have wanted to weigh in on the issue but didn't know that it would be introduced.
- **The OAH is the wrong venue for this.** Given the complexity of these issues, they are best debated in the political arena, not in a scholarly professional organization.
- **This will create needless division.** The OAH should remain a welcome home to all historians, whatever their politics. Taking sides in a notoriously controversial issue will only pit colleagues against each other, alienate members who don't share the thrust of these resolutions, and make those who identify with Israel feel singled out and victimized.
- **The resolutions ignore the immense complexity of the issues.** Israel's policies, the actions of the Palestinian leadership, and U.S. policies toward Israel have divided thoughtful people of goodwill for decades. There is no way the OAH can stake out a position that will find anything like consensus among its members. It is beyond the OAH's capacities, and not the OAH's role, to satisfactorily arbitrate these issues.
- **This will damage the OAH in the eyes of the wider world.** The OAH has nothing to gain and everything to lose by wading into this conflict. Rushing into a resolution that singles out Israel will erode the association's image of professionalism.
- **These resolutions distract from the OAH's mission.** The vast majority of OAH members did not join the organization to undertake the kind of political campaigns of which these resolutions are a part. They joined for the conferences, the *Journal of American History*, and the many professional and intellectual opportunities that membership affords. This represents a distraction from the body's cultivation of the study of history.

**Debate 2:** Arguments against the content of a potential Israel-related resolution:

- **The resolutions rest on false, inaccurate or tendentiously framed claims.** There is a startling absence of an established evidentiary basis for the crucial "whereas" paragraphs. Historians should avoid presenting one-sided narratives as "fact" and should remain sensitive to the range of perspectives on contested events. Such one-sided claims certainly shouldn't be rushed through.
- **The resolutions omit a great deal of relevant context.** The full context, if given, would sharply revise the portraits painted by these claims. For example: They omit Egypt's role in regulating population flows in and out of Gaza; omit the nature of weapons research conducted at the Islamic University; omit the Israeli Supreme Court's power to overturn unfair visa denials; and more.
- **The resolutions are part of an ongoing campaign.** Casual observers may be unaware that the resolutions are part of a campaign within the scholarly professional associations to target Israel. In the last year, groups have brought resolutions to the ASA, MLA, AAA, MESA, AHA, and other bodies.

Though couched in universalist terms, these resolutions make no effort to analyze dispassionately the challenges to academic freedom worldwide. On the contrary, they should be recognized for what they are: the latest tactic in a political campaign focused exclusively on Israel. To vote for them is not simply to agree with their claims; it is to support this broader academy-wide campaign against Israel.

- **The resolutions single out Israel and neglect the worst human rights offenders.** No other country—not Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, North Korea nor any other—has been the target of a persistent, academy-wide campaign of delegitimation. The OAH should universally defend the rights of students and researchers to travel and have access to archives. For it to single out alleged violations in one country alone is arbitrary and tendentious.
- **These resolutions won't advance peace.** Nothing constructive can be achieved through these resolutions. They will not advance the cause of Middle East peace, nor the rights of Palestinians. They will only sow deep and potentially permanent divisions within our community, causing acrimony and recriminations that detract from our work and destroy the collegiality and goodwill within our profession.
- **There are better ways to promote Middle East peace.** If scholars can help in the Israeli-Palestinian or other intractable conflicts, it is by promoting mutual understanding, explaining the complexity of the region's history, and analyzing the work that remains on all sides. The OAH could contribute to such efforts by creating opportunities for collaboration and exchange that might expose Palestinians and Israelis to each other's historical narratives and use knowledge and mutual understanding to promote peace. Targeting one party in such a multifaceted conflict does violence to our charge as historians to understand the complexity of the situation.

*This flier is issued by the Alliance for Academic Freedom*

*Below are amendments to resolutions offered for consideration at the AHA in Jan. 2015 that would have universalized the resolutions. Because members voted not to suspend the rules at the business meeting in order to consider the resolutions, which were submitted after the deadline, these amendments were never proposed. Nevertheless, the principle of universalizing resolutions with Israel specific language remains useful across the disciplines.*

### **1. Resolution on Academic Freedom of U.S. Citizens**

**WHEREAS** members of the historical profession are committed to the principles of academic freedom, whose curtailment severely compromises education; and

**WHEREAS** members of the historical profession believe that the free exchange of ideas is facilitated by teaching, delivering lectures and participating in conferences; and

**WHEREAS** some governments arbitrarily limit the entry and exit of foreign nationals who seek to lecture, teach and attend conferences, denying both faculty and students the rich experience enjoyed by their peers at other universities around the world;

**THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the AHA calls for an immediate halt to all government policies that arbitrarily restrict entry to foreign nationals seeking to promote educational development; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the AHA urges that the U.S. Department of State honor the academic freedom of U.S. citizens by contesting arbitrary denials of entry of U.S. academics who have been invited to teach, confer, or do research at universities around the globe.

## **2. Resolution on Protecting the Right to Education**

**WHEREAS** members of the historical profession support the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including universal access to higher education; and

**WHEREAS** some governments violate their obligations to these principles by refusing to allow students to pursue higher education abroad; and

**WHEREAS** members of the historical profession believe that the free exchange of ideas is facilitated by teaching, delivering lectures and participating in conferences; and

**WHEREAS** some governments arbitrarily deny entry to foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, who seek to lecture, teach and attend academic conferences, denying both faculty and students the rich experience enjoyed by their peers at other universities worldwide; and

**WHEREAS**, members of the historical profession are dedicated to the documentation of human experience through the collection and preservation of historical information;

**THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the AHA reaffirms its long standing support of policies that inhibit free access for scholars and students to archival collections; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the AHA calls for an immediate halt to some government policies that arbitrarily deny entry to foreign nationals seeking to pursue educational opportunities; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the AHA calls on all governments to provide opportunities for students and faculty to pursue their education wherever they choose.

---



### **Jeffrey Herf:**

On January 4, 2015, at the Business Meeting of the American Historical Association in New York, the members in attendance voted 144 to 51 against further consideration of resolutions denouncing Israel. The resolutions had been introduced by the Historians Against the War (HAW) . . . The first, and in my view the most important, takeaway is that the majority of historians gathered in New York appeared to grasp the absurdity of reaching conclusions “as historians” about facts in dispute about the Gaza War. The HAW resolutions claimed that Israel had intentionally attacked an oral history archive at the Islamic University in Gaza and “arbitrarily” blocked foreign scholars from entering Gaza and the West Bank and Palestinians from leaving for educational purposes. With assistance from the Israeli journalist Ehud Yaari and information from the Israeli Embassy in Washington, I reported to colleagues that the reason Israel targeted Islamic University was that rockets were being built and fired from its campus, and that the charges about travel restrictions were baseless. (For details see my essay for *Legal Insurrection*.) If the substance of the resolutions themselves had come up for discussion, the historians in New York would have had to choose between claims made by the government of Israel and those made by Hamas, which had been repeated by the HAW group. We don’t know if they would have placed more confidence in the assertions of an anti-Semitic, Islamist terrorist organization than in the statements of the government of Israel.

In the event, they did not have to make this choice, as the membership voted against considering the resolutions. The connection between procedural issues and historical scholarship was crucial to the outcome. The AHA Council had rejected an earlier resolution calling for a boycott of Israeli universities and, as punishment for Israel’s alleged destruction of the archives at Islamic University and impediments to Palestinians seeking education, granting Palestinians the right of return. Both of these measures, the Council argued, were beyond the purview of the American Historical Association. The resolutions at stake at the January 4 meeting repeated the accusations about a supposed Israeli attack on the archives at the Islamic University and about travel restrictions, but they eliminated the demand for a right of return and a boycott. . . . In a secret ballot one cannot know why such an overwhelming majority of the historians present voted as they did. Several colleagues wrote to me expressing their opposition to various Israeli policies; some went so far as to call Israel a nationalist anachronism. Yet they voted against the HAW resolutions. They can speak for themselves, but my hunch is that the decisive factor was their self-respect as scholars. I told my colleagues in New York that these resolutions were asking historians to act like non-historians. Accustomed as we are to spending hundreds of hours working on thousands of documents to ascertain what actually happened in the past, it was absurd for us to presume that as historians we could determine where a bomb fell in Gaza or what the details of a particular travel entry issue were. Presumably, members realized that they should not be railroaded into reaching decisions about important resolutions on the basis of political opinions rather than the norms of scholarship. As one colleague put it succinctly, the American Historical Association does not and should not have a foreign policy. It is, in other words, a scholarly not a political organization. The HAW resolutions were an effort to collapse the distinction between scholarship and politics. . . . Policymakers in Washington should take note: those who shout the loudest about the alleged sins of the state of Israel were unable to convince their fellow scholars to abandon the rigorous demands of scholarship in the face of appeals to political passions. **Excerpted** from *The American Interest* 1/19/15.

---

## **LIBRARY STUDIES:**

### **John Shuler**

With surprise and disappointment I read the proposed ALA resolution to divest ALA funds from several companies that do business in Israel. If accepted, it will push our Association into unsound economic strategies, as well as support an exclusionary information policy that breaks with ALA's many long held core values. At the heart of our Association's ethics is the advocacy for the free exchange of knowledge, as well as the rights of individual choice in economic, social and political communities. The proposed resolution's goals to use divestment to deliver on questionable political goals is profoundly illiberal, and it will hamper our Association's limited economic resources that ought to sustain viable information communities around the world, not tear them apart.

If the draft resolution sent to Council earlier this week is implemented, it sends a clear signal to those ALA partners who work with us to be build active, equitable and engaged libraries, along with the communities that support them. The message it sends is that we now stand for a limited kind of "social justice" and the kind of economic investment that is more economic retribution than any kind of positive plan to build a community. It will force many ALA members, and their leaders, to participate in a heated debate that encourages hardened partisanship to frame the blame for the issues, instead of an open and free exchange of ideas and solutions. Forcing any one to choose between these kind of polar political opposites in a long complicated historical problem will fail to sustain any significant progress. We will lose in clarity, and the ability to find solutions to the many problems in this troubled region of the world. It will more than likely subside into an endless series of useless running skirmishes over who is the most to blame in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. This has happened in other professional associations and communities when the push to open up a wider discussion about these important issues started with this kind of limited resolution.

Further, the draft's negative and moribund rhetoric closes off many of our Association's long-standing strategic investment opportunities to actively engage both sides of a dispute. My thirty years as a government information librarian has taught me that the best way to resolve a difficult situation is to flood the contested area with the sunlight of transparency and knowledge. The hard work of active of social and political engagement succeeds when all points of view are on the table. This inclusiveness encourages community building, respects everyone involved, and increases the chances that we can figure out a way to help as effective community information activists and librarians. But, any activist not succeed if he or she must choose one side over the other. As this resolution so plainly does.

Is this the best we can do? No, it is clearly not.

A better path forward is for Council to seek ways to engage all ALA members to use its policies that champion the ideals and human rights that fully embrace the freedom of information, speech, association, as well as economic independence for all individuals and communities. We already do this in so many ways through many different kinds of libraries. Outreach to the homeless, helping those in many communities beset by personal economic or environmental disruptions, services that help individuals understand complex government laws or policies. All are these things we do now, and must continue to do so, without recklessly choosing political or economic sides.

Instead of divesting its limited funds, ALA should seek ways to work with these companies as activist shareholders. Initiatives that target these companies, and corporations, that take advantage of ALA's strengths at community building. ALA can expand its already engaged programs and services in North America and around the world to work with the greater international library community. We can, and do, help our members increase their enthusiasm and expertise, and put these twin core values to

work through these many civic engagement initiatives. This adds to the resources that sustain solid and engaged communities.

ALA members, as individuals, through our groups and committees, and when we serve in our association's leadership roles, must turn aside this resolution's invitation to divide and disturb an already troubled region. There are better ways for us to help in the task of finding solutions to the serious problems that confront people, libraries, communities and regions. Our Association can start these important discussions, not with resolutions that deny hope to some, but with statements and clear initiatives that are inclusionary. And that take clear advantage of all the opportunities for change now possible through our global resource of information integrated library networks.

This more inclusive approach represents the better part of our nature, traditions and shared professional values as a broad-based member-led association. ALA's many thousands of information activists, funders, and supporters of libraries ought to be the first to advocate for the rights of the many communities lost and forgotten because they lack robust community information resources. We can fight for justice and peace by demanding the free exchange of information. We have, for over a century now, been the public's advocates for freedom of speech, access to public and government information, freedom of political, economic and religious associations, privacy, as well as the economic security that depends on a robust free market of ideas.

Our association can continue to be that staunch leader in this good and necessary global work.

Or, as the draft resolution suggests, we can simplistically choose sides.

Limited calls for targeted economic divestment, isolation for some from the open and free exchange of opposing ideas, along with the deliberate civic disengagement through single-minded resolutions – these choices do not repair our world.

We can choose better. And we must do so.

## **Oppose "Resolution on ALA Divestment from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions"**

As librarians and proud members of the ALA, we are deeply committed to the *Core Values of Librarianship*, including our obligation to social responsibility. As professional librarians, we also share a commitment to the promotion and improvement of library and information services. Accordingly, we strongly oppose the proposed *Resolution on ALA Divestment from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions*, which fails to advance these principles by serving as a vehicle for misinformation services, offering flawed information and a lack of context in order to advance a political agenda within the ALA.

We urge ALA Council members to reject the proposed *Resolution on ALA Divestment from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions* as it:

- Misrepresents Divestment as a Tool that Can Bring About Peace
- Overlooks Key Facts and Context Without Conducting the Research Expected of Professional Librarians
- Is Biased, Discriminatory and Unhelpful

## **Misrepresents Divestment as a Tool that Can Bring About Peace**

The proposed resolution asserts that supporting divestment from companies doing business with Israel is in accordance with the ALA's values and can be used to overcome "obstacles to economic and social development and the attainment of peace and justice in the Middle East." In reality however, economic leverages, although nonviolent, would diminish rather than enhance the chances of peace. Divestment focuses only on pressuring Israel and thus leads to polarization, divisiveness and invigorates extreme elements that are alienating to both sides.

This is because divestment takes a one-sided view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is certainly not blameless in this conflict, but divestment attributes sole blame to Israel and fails to acknowledge Palestinian responsibility for the current impasse, including indiscriminate terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians, or the Palestinian leadership's rejection of multiple offers for statehood. For instance, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak accepted President Bill Clinton's peace plan, but Yasser Arafat did not and instead unleashed a wave of violence. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdrew from 100% of Gaza and since then, 9,000 missiles have been launched at Israeli civilians from Gaza. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered even more, including 98% of the West Bank, but President Mahmoud Abbas again refused to accept Israel's offer for peace. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also accepted the two-state solution and said Israel would make difficult choices for an agreement. We are all aware of the problems on the Israeli side, but it's too simplistic to just boycott one side when both sides share responsibility for a complex conflict.

Rather, peace for both Israelis and Palestinians depends on both parties working together towards a negotiated, mutually agreeable solution. Divestment undermines constructive efforts to bring Israeli and Palestinian scholars together on joint projects, including those that foster reconciliation and promote understanding and trust. Rather than vilifying one side in a complicated conflict, we should be encouraging coexistence and a two-state solution, which is the recognized goal of not only Israel and the United States, but the Middle East Quartet made up of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia.

## **Overlooks Key Facts and Context Without Conducting the Research Expected of Professional Librarians**

The divestment resolution likens the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the completely dissimilar situation of Apartheid-era South Africa. South Africa under apartheid was a state sanctioned system of racial separation and discrimination that dominated nearly every aspect of daily life. This is not even remotely the case in Israel, where there is one law for all citizens and minorities have full political rights enshrined in the legal system. The situation in the West Bank is also not comparable and must be viewed within the context of the very real security dilemmas Israelis face. Check points, security roads, identification cards and security barriers provide physical security from the very real threat of terror attacks. A balance is required to ensure security for Israelis, while working to ease pressure on Palestinians. Rather than misusing the concept of 'apartheid,' critics should instead look for means to work with people of goodwill on both sides to advance towards a negotiated two-state solution.

Additionally, the perspective of the targeted companies themselves has not been adequately shared and these assertions are full of inaccuracies or partial information. A few examples:

- Caterpillar has said that, under American law, it would face **civil and criminal penalties** for refusing to sell to Israel and potentially be banned from future government sales. Further, **even the Arab League investigated and rejected a boycott of Caterpillar** whose products are also used by Palestinians.
- Hewlett-Packard is widely recognized as one of the leading responsible companies in the world, ranking second on Newsweek's "Green Rankings," and listed in Corporate Responsibility Magazine's Top 100 Corporate Citizens.
- The proposed resolution faults Hewlett-Packard with providing technology through a subsidiary in order to use biometric data to monitor the entry and exit of Palestinians into Israel. HP's supply and maintenance of this smart card system is aimed at reducing friction between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers at barrier checkpoints while expediting the passage process. **It was developed and installed with support from the United States and the European Union pursuant to a 1998 agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority**

Unfortunately, the complex realities behind corporate engagement and use of these products have been misrepresented as intransigence and worse. We must exercise caution regarding these attempts that use American companies as a proxy to advance a politicized agenda in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Is Biased, Discriminatory and Unhelpful**

ALA Members should always strive to impart a positive, social impact, but focusing solely on Israel and excluding many other international issues is glaringly suspect. Members of the ALA have holdings in pension funds that cover a wide breadth of militarily and security-engaged companies around the world. Even within the United States, several publicly traded companies specializing in missile and drone technology, which have been responsible for hundreds of civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are involved in major pension fund holdings. This does not preclude Israel, or any other country, from addressing alleged unsavory practices, but ALA is hardly the appropriate forum for such a dialogue. More so, it is abundantly clear that not enough due diligence has been performed to make the overreaching allegations found in the resolution.

Rather than target American companies doing business in Israel in a divisive and inappropriate manner, we should ask what we, as ALA members, can do to promote peace. The answer is clear:

- Reconciliation – those seeking to foster peace should focus efforts on programs that advance reconciliation rather than actions that only serve to tear down either party. We should strive to help one another see the conflict as the other sees it, by recognizing both narratives of both people. Further, we should teach and learn together, in support of the many meaningful coexistence programs that can better bolster these efforts.
- Promoting Solutions – we should encourage and support opportunities that create an atmosphere of economic and political cooperation, such as direct negotiations between the parties and initiatives that will boost the Palestinian economy and infrastructure. It is through these types of activities that we can help both Palestinians and Israelis move beyond the teachings of hate, to live side-by-side as neighbors in peace and security.

Socially responsible investment is an important duty. However, injecting a highly charged issue into the process of aligning investments with the ALA's mission and responsibilities requires added thought, discussion and reflection. Political conflicts should not be permitted to overtake our core values. The ALA membership deserves better than this, as do Palestinians and Israelis.

---