

ANTI-BDS STATEMENTS

*These relatively brief statements are designed to supplement the generally longer essays in **The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel**. They provide you with texts and fliers you can readily share with colleagues.*

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ACADEMIC BOYCOTTS

What is wrong with academic boycotts?

- Regardless of whether one thinks an economic or other type of boycott may be justified to achieve a political end, academic boycotts are different. Ideas and knowledge are not, like a product, produced in a plant on a few acres of land. Scholars, of necessity, collaborate and learn from each other, across borders.
- Academic boycotts are irreconcilable with the core principles of academic freedom, which stress that ideas must be debated and examined based on their merits, not the nationality, race or religion of the academics expounding the ideas.
- Scholars must be free to collaborate with any academic institution to produce and disseminate knowledge without threat of interference or penalty, regardless of a government’s policies. An academic boycott would be an obstacle to such collaboration, imparting a chilling effect on academic freedom.
- Participation in the academic community should not be limited to those with a specific set of political or religious views. “Litmus tests” for “correct” politics in order to have a place at the table are reminiscent of dark days in history.

Individuals certainly have the right to renounce events that contradict their individual beliefs, but encouraging others to systematically censor institutions threatens the very core principles of academia.

- The idea that one can boycott an institution, and not an academic, is deceptive and without merit. Scholars require funds from their institutions for travel and other necessities. To require only Israeli academics to pay out of their pocket, or identify non-institutional alternative sources of funding, is inherently discriminatory, and denies Israelis equal footing with scholars from anyplace else in the world.
- Undoubtedly, there are cases in Israel and Palestine in which academic freedom is violated. But the remedy for such cases is to protect academic freedom further, not to diminish it for Israeli academics and those who work with them. If any academic institution votes a boycott of the academic institutions of a country, faculty at the boycotting institution will likely feel uncomfortable or tacitly pressured not to bring in a speaker from that country.
- At its core, an academic boycott is not so much a boycott, but rather a blacklist since it identifies a group of people who should be excluded from the normal rights and privileges of the profession (Israeli academics). This is not a “secret” blacklist kept in a demagogue’s pocket, but a public one, punishing people and harming their careers simply because of their nationality.
- This blacklist, of necessity, would also include a “secondary” list of academics to be shunned, or at least tarred – American academics who choose to ignore their institution’s decision to ghettoize Israeli academics, and to work with them anyway. The Palestinian Call for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) academic boycott guidelines state: “projects with all Israeli academic institutions should come to an end.” This prohibition would apply to faculty and student authors, who are told not to publish in, or in collaboration with, Israeli universities, or reprint articles that first appeared in such Israeli publications.
- Many of the American academics shunned would be Jews.
Is this proposed boycott to include Israeli Arab academics too? If so, it harms Israeli Arab students and faculty, people it is allegedly designed to help. If it is only intended against Jewish Israeli academics, it is doubly discriminatory.

Who is against academic boycotts?

- A wide variety of institutions, associations and other prestigious academic groupings have roundly condemned academic boycotts generally, and those against Israeli institutions specifically.
- More than 250 university presidents, chancellors and provosts have criticized academic boycott efforts in 2013.
- Academic boycotts have been condemned by educational bodies, such as the

American Council on Education (an umbrella of 1,800 institutions that is widely considered the largest higher education organization in the United States), the Executive Committee of the Association of American Universities (that represents 62 top institutions in the U.S. and Canada) and the American Association of University Professors (that counts more than 48,000 members).

- Said AAUP in a 2013 statement, “In view of the association’s longstanding commitment to the free exchange of ideas, we oppose academic boycotts. On the same grounds, we recommend that other academic associations oppose academic boycotts. We urge that they seek alternative means, less inimical to the principle of academic freedom, to pursue their concerns.”
- In 2007, over 400 American university and college presidents endorsed a statement by Columbia University President Lee Bollinger, which rejected a boycott call by the University and College Union (UCU) in the UK. In essence, the presidents said that if the UCU were intent on dividing the academic world in two – Israelis who should be shunned, and everyone else – the UCU should consider these American universities as Israeli, too.

Why should you care?

- Israeli academics are no more responsible for their government’s actions than you are for the U.S. government’s. Is it wise to set a precedent that academics can be punished, their ability to do their work diminished, and the pursuit of knowledge sacrificed because one doesn’t like the policies of a government?
- Furthermore, Israel’s academic community is, on the whole, to the political left of its government (just as American academics are). It makes no sense to isolate the very group that is at the forefront of raising and encouraging debate about political policy.
- Academic boycotts cannot be applied consistently – scholars are not table grapes. A boycott would encourage faculty to come up with individual ways to punish other faculty and students.
- An academic boycott will harm your students in general, and your Jewish students in particular. The boycott guidelines state that “international faculty should not accept to write recommendations for students hoping to pursue studies in Israel.”
- Furthermore, the guidelines dismiss academic study programs in Israel as “propaganda efforts” and insist that “[p]ublicity and recruitment for these schemes through students’ affairs offices or academic departments (such as Middle East and international studies centers) at universities abroad should come to an end.”

But shouldn’t we support what Palestinians ask of us, to secure

their rights?

- Academic boycotts of Israel are advanced primarily by supporters of the Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and the supporters of the PACBI call for an academic boycott. PACBI claims the core of the problem is not so much specific Israeli policies (nor is even one aspect of the conflict in their view the fault of any Palestinian position), but rather Israel’s “Zionist ideology.” But Zionism is nothing more than the founding principle of self-determination of the Jewish people, just as the Palestinian quest for statehood is the expression of Palestinian national aspirations. BDS and PACBI do not seek peace via an academic boycott, but rather to end the existence of a Jewish state.
- The positions of the BDS movement are neither the sole nor the consensus approach within Palestinian society (and even if they were, academics have the right and responsibility to think for themselves). For example, Al Quds President Sari Nusseibeh publicly condemned academic boycotts, telling *The Associated Press*, “If we are to look at Israeli society, it is within the academic community that we’ve had the most progressive pro-peace views and views that have come out in favor of seeing us as equals. If you want to punish any sector, this is the last one to approach.”^[1] Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is also against a boycott.^[2]
- The BDS movement – despite claiming it has no formal position on the two-state solution – works unambiguously to undermine it, and to promote a “one-state” position, which is a formula for perpetual war. Both peoples will fight forever for their rights of self-determination and national self-expression, and both peoples deserve a state. This is why both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government are in favor of a two-state solution (and Hamas is not – seeking Israel’s destruction, as detailed in its charter).
- The better approach is to encourage and facilitate joint projects with Israeli and Palestinian scholars and students, especially those with potential to improve the political, economic, and cultural life of both peoples, and those that promote empathy and understanding. Boycott proponents cynically call such peace-building efforts “normalization projects,” to be rejected, unless they are joint projects in support of BDS’s goals, and are ones which promote “co-resistance” rather than “co-existence.”

[1] <http://www.haaretz.com/news/palestinian-university-president-comes-out-against-boycott-of-israeli-academics-1.190585>

[2] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/22/mahmoud-abbas-rejection-israel-boycott>.

Issued by the Alliance for Academic Freedom

“Anti-Normalization” Prevents Peace, Sustains the Occupation, Undermines Academic Freedom, and Harms Students

March 16, 2015

One feature of the international campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel has been a troubling tendency to reject all forms of dialogue, cooperation, or engagement between Israelis and Palestinians — and between their respective supporters, including college students and faculty. Such contacts are sweepingly condemned as contributing to “normalization” of oppression and injustice, even in cases where all participants agree that the current situation of Israeli occupation and Palestinian dispossession should not be regarded or accepted as “normal.” Scholars for Israel and Palestine and the Alliance for Academic Freedom jointly stand in complete opposition to this dangerous campaign. It harms both Palestinians and Israelis and creates a hostile environment on our university campuses that is contrary to the values of academic freedom, dialogue, and the development of mutual empathy, understanding, and recognition.

Under the heading of “normalization,” the relevant BDS guidelines condemn projects “designed to bring together Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis so they can present their respective narratives or perspectives, or to work toward reconciliation, ‘overcoming barriers’, etc., without addressing the root causes of injustice and the requirements of justice.” Meeting this criterion of “addressing the root causes” requires that Israeli participants declare in advance that they accept the BDS program in full and that the agenda of the event or project is active “co-resistance” rather than “co-existence.” In effect, unless Israelis and their supporters begin by accepting Israel’s fundamental illegitimacy and the need for ultimate elimination of the Jewish character of Israel, one should not even engage in dialogue with them.

The reach of this so-called “anti-normalization” agenda has been broad. Instances include attacks on the West-East Divan Orchestra established jointly by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim and an outcry against Professor Mohammed Dajani of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem for taking a group of Palestinian students to visit Auschwitz as part of a joint program that also included a visit by Israeli students to the Dheisheh refugee camp — an outcry that led to his resignation.

In North American colleges and universities there are efforts to prevent a wide range of educational and scholarly activities aimed at promoting dialogue, respectful debate, intellectual cooperation, and mutual engagement — not only between Israelis and others, but more generally between people with differing views about the intertwined Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts. On some campuses, Jewish students who fail to meet BDS litmus tests have been effectively shunned by pro-Palestinian groups and told that even to meet for discussion is “normalizing.” It is unacceptable for one group of students to stigmatize another group of students and disqualify them as legitimate participants in conversation in this way. And an ideological ban like this prevents much-needed discussion of controversial political issues, violates the principles of open intellectual exchange, and undermines the common learning enterprise for which educational institutions exist.

We of Scholars for Israel and Palestine and the Alliance for Academic Freedom are committed to a different approach. We are convinced that in order to achieve a just

and durable peace, it is not only possible but essential to be simultaneously pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and pro-peace. Thus, we are committed to sustaining a democratic Jewish state of Israel and to promoting the establishment of a sustainable, independent, democratic state of Palestine.

Accordingly, we condemn Israel's ever-deepening occupation of Palestinian lands and all Israeli policies that seek to make this occupation permanent and irreversible. We condemn Israel's ongoing violations of both individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people, including injuries to their personal security, restrictions on their economic freedoms, and denial of their political self-determination. We also condemn attacks on Israelis and all policies by Palestinians and others in the Arab world that reject or undermine the possibilities for peace and that seek to isolate and demonize Israel and Israelis.

In this spirit, we believe that the "anti-normalization" campaign is profoundly misguided, harmful, and counter-productive even from a pro-Palestinian perspective. Of course, deeply rooted political conflicts can never be resolved purely by dialogue and mutual understanding, and power asymmetries must always be acknowledged. But they must never be an excuse for demonization, dehumanization, or marginalization of others. Even antagonists need to understand and recognize each other if they hope to make peace eventually. "Anti-normalization" rhetoric and practice can only promote intensified polarization, mutual distrust, and permanent conflict. The same holds true for Israelis and supporters of Israel who have been unwilling to engage seriously with Palestinians and their supporters or with good-faith critics of Israeli policies.

Current BDS "anti-normalization" efforts are not really a new tactic, but are only the latest phase of a long-term approach spanning many decades. Ever since Israel's founding, widespread and often intense opposition to "normalization" has been pursued, unevenly but persistently, by governments, organizations, and portions of civil society across the Arab world. From the start, the fundamental underlying motivation was a refusal to accept Israel's existence and legitimacy. There are many good reasons to repudiate these efforts to indiscriminately isolate and demonize Israelis and supporters of Israel and to reject any engagement with them. But for those who consider themselves supporters of Palestinian rights and aspirations, one reason by itself should be decisive: If the goal is to achieve justice and self-determination for the Palestinian people, this has proved to be a failed and deeply counter-productive strategy.

Indeed, Edward Said, a steadfast voice for the Palestinian cause, criticized Arab anti-"normalization" politics over a decade ago on precisely these grounds: "The ban on normalization lacks coherence since its reason for being, Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people, hasn't been alleviated by the campaign.... Complete anti-normalization is not an effective weapon for the powerless: its symbolic value is low, and its actual effect is passive and negative. That is why I believe we must try to penetrate the Israeli consciousness with everything at our disposal. Speaking or writing to Israeli audiences breaks their taboo. Zionism has tried to exclude non-Jews and we, by our unselective boycott of even the name Israel, have helped rather than hindered this."

Today, an "anti-normalization" strategy that closes off discourse with all Israelis and supporters of Israel continues to be misguided, harmful, and self-defeating. This approach:

Separates Palestinians and their supporters from those Israeli and Diaspora Jews who themselves seek to end Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands;

Deprives Palestinians of channels to highlight, to Israelis, the injuries and injustices of their lives under Israeli military rule;

Prevents Palestinians from building common cause with those who share their views and aspirations;

Provokes recriminations within Palestinian society, where political leaders and community activists accuse each other of acts of treason merely for advocating the Palestinian cause to Israelis and supporters of Israel and seeking allies among them;

Undermines the forces in Israeli society and among supporters of Israel seeking an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine

Discourages cooperation with organizations and activities working to build up the kinds of mutual recognition, awareness, and understanding necessary for achieving genuine peace;

Promotes elements of ideological rigidity and exclusion in the movement for Palestinian rights that work against freedoms of thought and expression dear to democrats of all persuasions;

Threatens the principles of academic freedom and open intellectual exchange, stigmatizes and excludes groups of students on unfair and divisive grounds, and undercuts the process of learning and scholarship in colleges and universities.

We call upon Palestinians and their supporters throughout the world to reject these forms of “anti-normalization.” We call upon them to join forces with all those – including Israelis and Diaspora Jews – who seek an end to Israel’s occupation and the achievement of Palestinian national self-determination in the context of a just, secure, and durable peace.

This statement is endorsed by SCHOLARS FOR ISRAEL & PALESTINE (SIP) and the ALLIANCE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Cary Nelson

The New Assault on Israel (and us)

Reprinted from **Fathom: For a deeper understanding of Israel and the region**

(Spring 2014)

While an individual's academic freedom should be fully and consistently respected in the context of academic boycotts, an individual academic, Israeli or otherwise, cannot be exempt from being subject to "common sense" boycotts,' (PACBI Guidelines for the International Boycott of Israel, revised July 2014).

As the fall semester begins, we are sure to see a renewal of anti-Israel activism on many college campuses, especially behind the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The collapse of the Kerry peace initiative and the summer war in Gaza have raised the temperature in an already fiery debate. The group leading these efforts, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) this summer issued updated guidelines. The new guidelines are alarming. The old rules were already the source of the most far reaching, comprehensive, and invasive academic boycott recommendations; the new ones extend themselves into virtually every element of higher education worldwide. They represent not only a relentless assault on academic freedom but also an effort to deprive universities, their faculties, and their students of much of the freedom of choice, agency, and association that have defined higher education's principles and ideals for a century.

BDS has, appropriately, come under fire for many reasons, among them that it amounts to a blacklist of Israeli scholars. Examples of this blacklisting are already legion, beginning with early boycott efforts in Britain, in which an Oxford professor refused an Israeli student permission to work in his lab because the student had served in the IDF and Israeli scholars were thrown off the editorial boards of journals.

To evade this criticism, PACBI has offered pious reassurances that the guidelines preserve and honour academic freedom, but it prescribes one specific practice after another practice which leaves academic freedom in tatters. The guidelines forbid institutions from building joint programmes and working with one another in multiple ways, and they detail elaborate protocols for blacklisting individual faculty members, staff, and students in countries throughout the world. These are police state style regulations aimed at ending higher education as we know it.

Here are ten highlights from the July 2014 guidelines, along with reasons to reject them:

- 1.** Any effort to focus attention on Israel's scientific and cultural achievements is castigated as a 'rebranding' project, an effort to 'whitewash' the country's suppression of Palestinian rights. Individuals and institutions guilty of 'rebranding' – an activity demonstrable by referencing or promoting a science, social science, or humanities project without also condemning Israeli policy in other areas – therefore deserve to be boycotted and blacklisted. Boycotting the activities of so-called complicit individuals means blacklisting them. This will have particularly serious consequences for students and junior faculty

2. Like universities in all other countries, Israeli universities are involved in government sponsored research and therefore receive government funds to support students. Despite this funding, we do not expect these universities to speak for their governments; students and faculty are free to criticise any particular government policies. Were this not the case, it would undermine faculty and student academic freedom to speak free of institutional political coercion. However, BDS regards institutional ‘silence’ about government policy to constitute complicity and is therefore a justification for boycotts. It is particularly troubling that PACBI treats Israeli universities as guilty ‘unless proven otherwise.’ In what other context do we treat people or institutions that way?

3. PACBI would have us boycott not only Israeli-organised conferences and exhibitions, but also any such event merely co-sponsored by a ‘complicit’ Israeli university or any public or private organisation anywhere in the world that endorses Israeli society or interests. This far-reaching organisational and institutional boycott would have a chilling effect on academic freedom everywhere. Also boycott-able are ‘all projects and activities funded, partially or fully, by Israel or any of its lobby groups.’

4. PACBI demands that ‘projects with all Israeli academic institutions should come to an end.’ This demand eviscerates the essential freedom which faculty and students have long had: to make their own decisions about what collaborative projects to undertake. It also does direct harm to those Palestinians engaged in collaborative projects with Israeli faculty and institutions.

5. PACBI now condemns ‘events, projects, or publications that are designed to bring together Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis so they can present their respective views, or to work toward reconciliation’ if they ‘are based on the false premise of symmetry/parity between the oppressors and the oppressed.’ But such efforts typically seek balanced Palestinian and Israeli participation and often build on mutual sympathy and shared human interests. Imposing a confrontational agenda on them undercuts some of the most promising efforts at mutual respect and dialogue in the Middle East. PACBI insists that such projects be based on “‘co-resistance” rather than co-existence.’ The idea is not simply to resist Israeli policies but rather to oppose the existence of the Jewish state.

6. PACBI urges that all faculty and students refrain from publishing in journals based at Israeli universities or published in collaboration with Israeli universities. PACBI also insists we refuse to reprint articles first published in such places, thus initiating an extraordinary blacklisting of publications and their authors. This is a fundamental assault on academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas that is its core principle.

7. PACBI insists that people refuse to serve as ‘external reviewers for dissertations, writing recommendations or other forms of refereeing such as advising on hiring, promotion, tenure, and grant-making decisions at Israeli universities’ unless the university declines to use their names in any way. The prohibition of these standard academic functions not only contravenes academic freedom, it also directly harms both Israeli and Palestinian faculty who would benefit from referee support. This principle could also lead to the blacklisting of faculty referees.

8. PACBI argues that an ‘international faculty should not accept to write recommendations for students hoping to pursue studies in Israel,’ once again abrogating standard faculty rights and directly harming the students involved. Student programmes housed at Israeli universities are characterised as ‘schemes’ meriting boycott and efforts to close them down. Jewish students of course are the primary target of efforts to close down study abroad programmes in Israel. They are also key recipients of what would now be targeted scholarships or fellowships from pro-Israel organisations.

9. PACBI guidelines prohibit visits to Israeli universities if they include any links with the institution visited. Violators once again could be subjected to blacklisting and boycotting. In a blatantly discriminatory gesture, the guidelines advise that, ‘If conducting research at Israeli facilities such as archives does not entail official affiliation with those facilities (e.g. in the form of a visiting position), then the activity is not subject to boycott.’

10. PACBI contends its guidelines establish a ‘picket line’ prohibiting all the activities it lists, including visits to Palestinian universities by faculty who have earlier visited Israeli universities and therefore ‘contribute to the false perception of symmetry.’ Once again the academic freedom of individuals is curtailed, potentially leading to the blacklisting of violators, and undermining the potential for interchanges promoting peaceful resolution of the conflict.

PACBI and its BDS allies have long argued that academic boycotts are directed at institutions, not individuals. The expanded July 2014 guidelines demolish that fiction. Israeli faculty, they generously advise, should not be automatically boycotted; they should simply be treated like all other potential ‘offenders.’ Meanwhile, the PACBI endorsement of ‘common sense boycotts’ strengthens what is already guaranteed by a complex and contradictory document: that academic boycotts will be inconsistently implemented and that inventive and often malicious individual boycott initiatives will multiply. Whatever their attitudes toward Israeli state policies may be, all members of the academy should condemn these guidelines and resist their adoption and implementation by every nonviolent means possible.

The BDS agenda promotes hostility, not peace. It aims to limit contact with both Israeli and Palestinian faculty and students and eliminates many traditional applications of academic freedom for faculty and students worldwide. As the year progresses, concerned faculty and students need to counter the PACBI/BDS campaign with a thorough analysis of its aims. They also need to embody reasoned argument and debate. That is the best way to respond to a movement that often works through intimidation and hyperbole.

Note: PACBI published two versions of its guidelines this year – the full version I discuss and a condensed version designed, presumably, for recruitment and wide distribution. People will likely consult the longer version for detailed guidance.

TODD GITLIN
BDS AND THE POLITICS OF ‘RADICAL’ GESTURES
 Reprinted from *TABLET MAGAZINE*
 (October 27, 2014)

Boycotts and divestments appeal to ideals of citizenship. Vote with your money. Make perpetrators of injustice pay a price. Raise the stakes so that, when they get their calculating minds around a cost-benefit analysis, they decide the cost is too steep. Often such campaigns are constructive.

Others channel anger into postures of virtue that detract from a just end. They demand not changes of policy but the disappearance of one party. These are gestures—a stamping of the collective foot. Repeated enough, such gestures can herald crimes more hideous than what the protesters oppose.

The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, triggered by Rosa Parks, succeeded in convincing the authorities to end racial segregation. The city knew just what it had to do to end the boycott: stop shunting blacks onto the back of the bus. In the end, the courts ordered desegregation, and the city buses, with new seating arrangements, rolled. The bus system, having conceded, continued.

In 1965-70, an alliance of the Mexican-led National Farm Workers Association and the Filipino-led Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee cast anathema on the fruit of the vine in order to make agribusiness recognize the union’s collective bargaining rights. For lovers of grapes, there was a sacrifice but also a glow. What you lost in the taste of grapes you gained in the sweetness of virtue. When the boycott ended, you ate grapes again. (They tasted better than ever.)

In 1976-79, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union organized a boycott of J. P. Stevens. The textile company had been systematically denying workers’ rights, violating laws with impunity. New York Lt. Gov.-elect Mario Cuomo urged Americans “to shun the products of J. P. Stevens as you would shun the fruit of an unholy tree.” The movie *Norma Rae* celebrated striking workers and organizers. In the end, the company signed an agreement with the union.

Those were reform boycotts. They harnessed anger into specific improvements on the ground. The cause was just and the means fit the ends. In the case of grapes, the premise was that the workers who harvested the grapes were entitled to collective recognition to improve their condition. Unstated but assumed was that the owners of the vines (“growers,” they were conventionally called, though their hands did not touch the vines) had the right to continue to own them. The boycott ended when the owners recognized the union. The owners still owned the vines. There remained two parties to continuing disputes, which, if you were a militant, you might call “the class struggle,” and if you were not, you might call “labor-management relations.”

Divestment is another way to vote with your money. The movement to make universities (and pension funds, etc.) divest from corporations involved in apartheid South Africa, from the 1970s through the 1980s, had a more radical objective: to force an end to apartheid by making it economically untenable. I was involved in that movement twice over, as a professor, in the University of California Faculty for Full Divestment, and as an engaged alumnus of Harvard. No one in the American movement ever proposed to blacklist South African professors. (There were exceptions in Britain

although, unlike divestment, without any effect.) The objective was to further the creation of a unitary, nonracial, democratic state in which, perforce, black, “colored,” and “Asian” Africans would greatly predominate and racial inequality would no longer be legal. It was not to drive the whites into the sea, or back to Holland or Great Britain. In a fine book, *Loosing the Bonds*, Robert K. Massie rigorously examines South African divestment and sanctions campaigns in the United States and makes a convincing case for their effects in undermining apartheid.

Presently, I’m involved in the alumni wing of Divest Harvard, a student-run campaign to press the university to sell holdings in fossil fuel corporations whose business model is to make civilization untenable by burning carbon and dumping the by-products into the atmosphere. (So, I want to add, is Robert K. Massie.) There are several hundred other university campaigns of this sort, with some colleges, churches, cities, and foundations following suit. The objective is to stigmatize those corporations and to further the development of energy sources that the earth can sustain.

All these movements have been tied to practical objectives, some more radical than others. Their justifications lay in a sheer disproportion of rights. The rights of the Negro passengers and the grape pickers and the Stevens workers and the South African majority were not comparable to the rights of the segregationists or the growers or the South African white minority. In a sense, the fossil fuel movement has more radical ends, since the present movement, if it had divine powers, would put fossil fuel companies out of business altogether. But in none of these cases was or is there a clash of right against right.

There are people of good will, Arabs, Jews, whatever, who support the so-called BDS movement for boycotts and divestments against Israel, either because they think it can push Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians, or because they want to stamp their feet. (The real energy goes to academic boycotts and divestment campaigns; the “sanctions” part seems nominal.) Their passion to press the state of Israel to abandon the occupation of the West Bank, to encourage de facto the emergence of a Palestinian state that would live side-by-side with a majority-Jewish state, I devoutly share. The death toll and destruction caused by Israeli attacks on Gaza this summer only strengthen the case that Israel’s defense needs do not justify wholesale destruction and everyday victimization, even in the face of terror and aggression.

Still and all, many supporters of BDS do not understand, or have not thought through, just what they are subscribing to. Consider the 2005 BDS call by Palestinian organizations, which can be read on the official BDS website. It favors “broad boycotts” and “divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.” These measures, the call goes on, “should be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by (with my italics):

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;

2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in U.N. resolution 194.”

Leave aside, for now, that the BDS organizers are highly selective about the international obligations they wish to enforce at the cost of academic freedom. (They have a point when they say that all campaigns are partial and selective, though one might well marvel at their insouciance when it comes to slaughter perpetrated next door by Bashar al-Assad.) Leave aside the sleight of hand with which they claim that their boycott (actually blacklist) targets only Israeli institutions, not individuals.

But consider the slipperiness of the BDS goals. The first statement I have italicized is deliberately vague. Which “Arab lands”? According to Hamas, they include the entirety of Israel. Moreover, the phrase is coded to imply that the very existence of the state of Israel, as recognized in 1948, is what constitutes “colonization.” (If that were not so, it would suffice to say “end the occupation”—meaning the occupation that took place, and continues to take place, as a result of the 1967 war and the Jewish-Israeli settlements that continue, illegally, to expand on the West Bank.) To BDS, the original sin would seem to be the founding of the Israeli state. The language masks (however thinly) the desire of one of the parties to the horrendous Israel-Palestinian conflict that the other one disappear.

But one group’s desire that another disappear deserves no respect. As a spasmodic reaction to violence, indignity, and humiliation, it is all too human. As a political position, it is a legal and moral disaster. It is not politics, it is a tantrum—and perhaps a lethal one.

At the same time, moving to point 2, the human rights of Palestinians in Israel are surely in need of defense, and a campaign toward that end is justified. Why an Israel fending off sanctions and boycotts would be more likely to honor Palestinian rights escapes me. Where is the evidence that, as the BDS movement has gained ground, Israeli treatment of its Arab minority has improved?

As for point 3, the innocent reader will likely be unaware that U.N. resolution 194 is highly contested. One line of argument notes that 194 does not proclaim an unconditional right of return. Rather, it affirms that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which ... should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.” Another line of argument is that 194 has been rendered obsolete by events—after all, it also calls for United Nations control of Jerusalem—and in particular that the right of return stipulated in 194 is superseded by Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, which calls for a “just settlement of the refugee problem.” There is also the question of who, exactly, is a refugee.

I do not propose to wade into legal exegesis. My point is that the BDS call goes far beyond expressing outrage at systematic Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinians—anger for which there is ample warrant. It mobilizes that legitimate anger toward a very particular idea about how to settle relations between two peoples—by enfolding one under the dominance of another. Unlike all proposals for just settlements of the

murderous ethnic wars of our time—Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Kashmir—it demands that one of those peoples give up the state in which they predominate. In the endgame envisioned by BDS, one set of pieces is left on the board, and the other removed.

Without doubt, BDS looks like a plausible feel-good proposition for people who weary of endless bloodshed. It is not a feel-good proposition for the victims of a blacklist—the Israeli academics whose scholarly collaborations and publications and research trips to the United States BDS proposes to halt, or the scholars who are to be forbidden access to Israeli archives. BDS is not a practical proposition to raise the price Israel must pay for the Occupation: by demanding, say, that the United States cut aid to Israel that goes to sustain and enlarge the Occupation. It is not focused on unjust practices, like divestment from, or sanctions against, particular corporations that sustain the Occupation, like the three companies recently divested by a narrow vote of the Presbyterian Church. It is categorical, absolute. It knows only one set of wrongs, not another. It proclaims that there is but one story to be told of the Middle Eastern tragedy, and it is theirs.

This is not politics. It is a gesture of disgust, a paroxysm of rage. Like Hamas' rockets, it makes Israelis feel embittered and embattled. It hardens Israel's will to listen to no one. Who benefits from such an outcome? As Noam Chomsky, who cannot be accused of tenderness toward the Jewish state, has argued, it's not the Palestinians. And not the Israeli left either. As the Tel Aviv University historian Michael Zakim recently wrote, the Israel boycott undertaken by the American Studies Association has achieved pointed success in crippling the quality of the only American-studies program in Israel, both for faculty and students. ... In deepening the sense of beleaguerment among Israeli academics, the ASA finds itself in bed with a sordid group of political allies determined to delegitimize the humanism and internationalism which predominate on Israeli campuses. This campaign is part of an organized effort to isolate the Israeli left and prevent it from forging alliances with Palestinians and the Arab world.

Only the advocates of endless bloodshed grin.

But history is always surprising and sometimes pleasantly so. So let me close with some more bad news and then a touch of good news. The bad news is that, in a time of severe fiscal pressures on higher education, of plutocratically enforced inequality, and of relentless, potentially catastrophic climate change, the Doctoral Student Council of the City University of New York took time to consider not a proposal to divest from fossil fuel corporations or a campaign to boost funding but a BDS resolution against... Israel. The good news is that, this past Friday, Oct. 24, the BDS resolution failed.

Cary Nelson

IS THE BOYCOTT MOVEMENT ANTI-SEMITIC?

Reprinted from *Inside Higher Education* (September 2, 2014)

As campus efforts to support boycotts of Israel universities intensify this year — and everyone expects them to in the wake of events in Gaza, the most challenging and

controversial question about the movement that sponsors the boycott agenda looms over all of us: Are there anti-Semitic dimensions to the Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment (BDS) movement?

BDS advocates have long countered the anti-Semitic label by protesting that critics of Israeli government policy do not deserve accusations that they are anti-Semitic. In fact BDS opponents themselves often reject the claim that every critic of Israel, or even every supporter of BDS, is anti-Semitic. Israelis themselves are relentless critics of the government in power, and many of the Jewish state's strong supporters there and abroad condemn the occupation of the West Bank and urge curtailment of settlement construction or withdrawal from most existing settlements. BDS assertions that they are condemned simply because they are policy critics distract us from the more complex and troubling ways that the movement enhances anti-Semitic aims.

Ever since Lawrence Summers asserted that the divestment movement proposals were “anti-Semitic in their effect, if not in their intent,” we have had a model to use in examining the prejudicial implications of BDS in a more thoughtful way. That does not mean that every divestment proposal is anti-Semitic, but it does help us see why people who advocate the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state are promoting a goal that has anti-Semitic effects.

Arguments that Jews have no ancient connection to the land, that Israelites and Hebrews never existed — positions that some academic BDS advocates promote — also have an anti-Semitic component. The demand that the citizens of Israel give up their right to political self-determination and the unsupportable assertion that the Israeli government is an exceptionally egregious human rights violator are also consciously or unconsciously underwritten by the long-term history of anti-Semitism and the history of efforts to isolate and “other” the Jewish people.

I realize that people will dispute these conclusions, but they nonetheless offer examples of a more serious basis for debating the issue I am urging all of us to address. Doing so also requires that we confront the policies vigorously promoted by virtually all of the BDS movement's major spokespeople, whether or not the movement officially endorses them. These include advocacy by Omar Barghouti and others of a one-state “solution” encompassing Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank in which Jews would become a minority. That demand is typically accompanied by the call for the Palestinian diaspora's “right of return” to this new state, a plan that would further marginalize the Jewish population. Both positions are put forward in Barghouti's *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, Judith Butler's *Parting Ways*, and other books.

The confidence with which some BDS advocates assure us Jews could live peacefully and safely and have full religious freedom in an Arab-dominated state is so contradicted by regional history, culture, and politics that one has to consider the possibility that they really do not care about the fate of Israeli Jews. Naivety alone does not seem to account for so thorough a denial of reality. The real perils Jews could face in an Arab-dominated state undercut the rather pious claims about the movement's dedication to nonviolence that are part of its founding principles. Once again, highly likely violent effects call into question the status of nonviolent intent. Equally worrisome are those BDS supporters who ally themselves with Hamas, despite the organization's ferociously anti-Semitic and genocidal charter. One might well wonder why those in the West who would ordinarily oppose a group that vilifies gays — and has an appalling

view of women — would overlook these facts because of Hamas’s stance toward Israeli Jews.

While the BDS movement undoubtedly gathers some conscious anti-Semites into its fold, the way in which it more broadly assigns the traditional pariah status of Jews to the Israeli state is equally troubling. Debates about BDS resolutions and petitions often invoke the standard tropes anti-Semitism has deployed, notably that BDS opponents are organized and funded by an international Jewish lobby, an accusation that surfaced during the Modern Language discussion of its 2014 resolution condemning Israeli visa policies. That both NGOs and foreign governments fund BDS activity is rarely mentioned.

Talking about such matters can also lead people to ask themselves whether their hostility to Israel is a vehicle for unconscious resentment toward Jews. Only individual self-reflection, not academic debate, can answer that question. Certainly when BDS advocates spread anti-Jewish stereotypes and myths they owe it to themselves to examine their hearts more rigorously. The fact that a number of Jewish academics support the BDS movement does not absolve anyone of the possibility they harbor an anti-Semitic bias, though the BDS movement likes to say it does.

Helen Fein’s 1987 definition (in *The Persisting Question*) of anti-Semitism as “a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collectivity” is a good place to begin in thinking about the role of anti-Semitism in BDS passion. Indeed it is not unreasonable to feel that such psychological motives underlie the exceptional level of hostility displayed in some BDS forums, among the most extreme being the Electronic Intifada and Mondoweiss websites. Moreover, there are statements that have anti-Semitic content and anti-Semitic effects — that can be adopted and used by willing anti-Semites — no matter what their original authors think they intended. Such inherent hostility does need to be examined in the academy.

That hostility is often focused on the most demonized term in the BDS lexicon: Zionism. The historical movement and the concept have had many definitions over the years, though in the current political climate simply believing that a Jewish state has a historically, internationally, and morally justified right to exist in Palestine is enough to win disapproval of your Zionist identity. It often doesn’t help if you want Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. You are still a blind Zionist ideologue.

Absolute opposition to Israel’s existence increases anti-Semitism’s cultural and political reach and impact. Indeed, if anti-Semitism is a fundamental condition of possibility for unqualified opposition to the Jewish state, then anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism’s moral salvation, its perfect disguise, its route to legitimation.

There is a disturbing bait-and-switch element to BDS’s recruitment strategies. The movement recruits students with a call for justice for Palestinians — justice that a two-state solution could provide — then draws them into one-state advocacy, a goal with devastating consequences for Israeli Jews. It justifies its one-state advocacy by demonizing the State of Israel with hyperbolic and irrational accusations.

Meanwhile, the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere puts the lie to the confidence that Jews do not need a homeland whose future and right to self-defense they control. Indeed it strengthens the opposite argument.

The same bait-and-switch effect attaches to the risk that recruiting anti-Zionists, while giving them collective support and making them more fervid, will turn them into

anti-Semites. Beginning with the 2006 Journal of Conflict Resolution essay “Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe” by Edward Kaplan and Charles Small and continuing through to Alvin Rosenfeld’s 2013 collection *Resurgent Antisemitism*, research has suggested that the more extreme one’s position on Israel, the more likely one is to harbor classic anti-Semitic beliefs. And those who want to abolish the Jewish state show higher rates of belief in Jewish conspiracies and other anti-Semitic delusions. All these patterns intersect uncomfortably with the BDS movement.

There are two peoples in Palestine who deserve justice and deserve homelands. Demonizing one of them, as BDS does, will not promote peace and not lead to a Palestinian state. Rage and hatred may be personally gratifying to some, but they get in the way of a political solution. Indeed they can block the willingness to compromise that is fundamental to any negotiating process. This suggests that anti-Semitism has consequences that those unconsciously succumbing to its influence need to confront. For anti-Semitism tragically offers nothing tangible to the very Palestinians BDS claims to champion.

Ken Stern & Cary Nelson
War on Campus
Reprinted from Jewish Journal
 (January 23, 2015)

The spring semester on American campuses is beginning. On some campuses anti-Israel groups will be preparing for another round of the so-called Israel Apartheid Week, which will unfold as the aftershocks of this past summer’s Israel-Hamas war are still being felt.

Back in August and September, as the fighting in Israel and Gaza was winding down, the fighting between student groups on some campuses was picking up. At Ohio University, student senate president Megan Marzec, nominated by her school’s president to take the ALS “ice bucket challenge,” poured fake blood on her head instead of ice, to protest the deaths of Palestinians in Gaza. In response she got death threats. At a meeting of the student senate shortly thereafter, some pro-Israel students were arrested after Marzec called in the campus police, because they were allegedly being disruptive. At this point Marzec, standing atop a table, reportedly said she would “never apologize for the people of Palestine,” nor would she ever “stand up for fascists.” The Hillel rabbi described the scene as “explosive.”

At Temple University a pro-Israel student got into an argument with pro-Palestinian students. Hateful words were said, and the pro-Israel student was allegedly assaulted.

Recriminations between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students at John Jay College in New York made news in October.

Tensions were so high at UCLA in November that rather than contest an anti-Israel resolution before the student government (which ultimately passed), the pro-Israel students decided to sit out the fight.

And at Wellesley College, Students for Justice In Palestine (who had put up a poster asking “What Does Zionism mean to you?” on which students wrote “genocide,”

“murder,” “apartheid”) refused to meet with their Jewish counterparts, because to do so would violate an “anti-normalization” policy.

Events such as these may be repeated on other campuses this spring, as tensions remain high, and some student groups promote petitions and referenda calling for their universities to divest from companies with ties to Israel, or in support of a boycott (really a blacklist) of Israeli academics.

Universities are supposed to be places where ideas are held in esteem, and knowledge and truth emerge from rigorous examination and discussion. But we are seeing vilification and hate, instead of discourse.

Debate over the Israel-Palestine conflict is often disabled because few can step back and examine the historical, political, religious, and legal issues dispassionately, let alone compare this conflict to others. Instead, passions on both sides are intensified with self-righteousness. When injustices are at stake, dispassionate analysis may strike advocates as inappropriate, even sacrilegious. A cool head persuades some you do not really care.

Justice for Palestinians, who have been under Israeli occupation for nearly 50 years is set against respect for the rights of Jews, like other peoples, to have national self-expression in their historic homeland. Campus advocates identify with these narratives, and each side paints the other as unjust, racist, or both. Or in Marzec’s words, “fascist.” This dynamic makes it impossible to conduct meaningful conversations. Winning counts for more than learning. Each side rightly notes that one would not have a civil discussion with a neo-Nazi or a Holocaust denier. If that’s how they see each other, engagement becomes impossible. Everyone therefore has to reduce the amount of anti-racist “justice” they invest in their position in order to talk. Otherwise, rather than classmates engaged in dialogue, you see racists, idiots, and enemies.

Add to this the relatively new fashion of some anti-Israel groups opposing “normalization” on campus. It is bad enough that many BDS proponents insist that Israelis should be treated as pariahs (much like Nazis and Apartheid-advocates). It is doubly troubling when such hateful stances are adopted toward classmates, either because of their ethnicity or their political position. It is dangerous when abstract allegiances to people in battles thousands of miles away supersede the respect one ought to exhibit toward fellow students who are neighbors, classmates, and friends.

We sympathize with the students who say they are being forced to “choose sides,” when they insist they want to be both pro-Israel AND pro-Palestinian, but there is little space for them on campus. These students have a capacity for empathy. It helps them hold more than one set of thoughts at the same time, and to seek knowledge that challenges, rather than confirms, their beliefs. They see the humanity and suffering of Israelis and Palestinians alike. They reject the hatred that defines each people as mere roadblocks to the other’s aspirations. At best, they are passionate about compassion. And they think backward from the goal (peace and national self-expression for both peoples in their own lands), and focus on how to get there, rather than on how to be extreme advocates for one side or the other.

Zealots on both sides dismiss empathy, because each says the other doesn’t deserve it. South African Apartheid leaders were human too, and no responsible person should express empathy for them, so how can one have empathy for similar folk today—those who are seen as responsible for Palestinian or Jewish suffering?

But there were very few Apartheid advocates on campus when South Africa was a lightning rod for activism, whereas today there are two camps, each of which can claim justice is on its side.

In this environment, learning requires academic leaders—administrators, faculty, and students alike—to display a capacity for empathy. What would it be like to be a Palestinian in Gaza? An Israeli in Sderot? Can you imagine either, both? Can you construct an argument that is logical, comparative, historically and evidence-based that takes a position opposite to your political beliefs?

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be ideal for demonstrating critical thinking skills—if the environment allowed for thinking rather than slogans, propaganda, hate, self-righteousness, threats, and violence. Our view is that faculty in particular have to work much harder to demonstrate what reasoned discourse means.

Progressives Values in Action: Oppose Both Boycotts of Israel and Occupation of Palestinian Lands

Ameinu stands in full solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians and works for a future of peace, justice and security for BOTH peoples. We see proposals for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as **the wrong remedy for a very real injustice**. We present this analysis to assist progressives to understand how our progressive values are implicated in the debates and disputes over BDS, Israel and Palestine, and to provide a resource for progressives across North America to use in addressing local BDS campaigns.

In opposing the BDS movement and its effort to delegitimize Israel -- and the accompanying “anti-Normalization” campaign – **we do not in any way endorse the status quo** of the Occupation, the expansion of settlements or crimes or discrimination against Palestinians. Creation of a Palestinian State is in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis, and must be created as soon as possible

Pro-Israel advocates who paint every supporter of BDS, as opposed to the leadership of the BDS Movement, as deliberately working to destroy Israel are over-simplifying a complex situation. Not everyone who advocates boycotting or divesting from Israel does so to make Israel as a Jewish State disappear. Some want Israel to stop expanding settlements, end the Occupation, provide equal treatment for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and take other steps that pro-Israel progressives – in Israel and around the world – also endorse

But BDS Does Not = Peace or Justice

Boycotts of Israel Do NOT Promote Peace

When pressed, BDS advocates offer no practical political path to peace and justice. They rely on a vague dream in which the Israeli people someday feel so isolated and under so much pressure that they demand an end to the Occupation. Israel has one of the world’s strongest and most stable economies. So even if economic boycotts and related measures grew more popular, it

would take many years – if ever – before they had a significant impact on Israelis’ daily lives or changed Israeli policies. The Palestinians cannot wait that long to achieve independence. And both Israelis and Palestinians will continue to suffer if the current dead-end status quo is maintained. Only through active steps leading to a negotiated agreement will a Palestinian State be created and conditions for peace and reconciliation be actualized.

BDS is an Ineffective Way to Help Palestinians

Boycotts of Israel and the BDS movement have the effect of delaying the negotiations necessary to end the conflict and create a Palestinian State living in peace next to Israel. But there are steps that can be taken that will actually improve the lives and futures of Palestinians. **Constructive actions include:**

- Peaceful protest by Palestinians, Israelis and international supporters against settlement expansion;
- Support for Palestinian victims of Israeli “Price Tag” attacks including replanting olive trees and repairing damaged Mosques and other Palestinian property;
- Impact investing to strengthen the Palestinian economy and create Palestinian jobs;
- Promotion of programs that encourage Israelis and Palestinians to learn from each other and create a Shared Society in Israel and closer ties between Israelis and Palestinians;
- Support for NGOs committed to peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians; and
- Educational exchange programs to connect Israeli, Palestinian and North American students and faculty to promote a culture of empathy and reconciliation.

The BDS Movement Does Not Promote Justice

A commitment to justice is central to progressive politics. But the BDS movement acts with extreme injustice towards Israelis, including activists against the Occupation. Progressive Israeli Jews are fighting for a Jewish and democratic state of Israel. But prominent leaders of the BDS movement do not hide their antipathy to the Jewish state and some have publicly called for its dismantling. Even Norman Finkelstein, a well-known, harsh critic of Israel, has denounced BDS because the movement aims for “the end of Israel.” Moreover, a progressive commitment to equality is undermined by selective boycotts focusing only on Israel and ignoring equal or far worse crimes committed by other countries.

Boycott Proposals Empower the Israeli Right and Harm Israeli Progressives who Oppose the Occupation

BDS undermines progressive forces in Israel who are working for social justice and human rights. The BDS movement plays into the hands of right wingers in Israel who cultivate an “us against them, Israel vs. the world” mentality. The Right gains more, not less political influence, when they can lump all leftists into the same “anti-Israel” category.

BDS on Campus Undermines Academic Freedom, Freedom of Expression and Empathy

Academic and cultural boycotts violate core goals of the university and global cultural development, which thrive on a free and open exchange and debate. As Professor Cary Nelson of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Kenneth Stern of the Rosenberg Foundation noted, “Universities are supposed to be places where ideas are held in esteem and knowledge and truth emerge from rigorous examination and discussion. But we are seeing vilification and hate,

instead of discourse... We sympathize with the students who say they are being forced to “choose sides” when they want to be both pro-Israel AND pro-Palestinian... These students have a capacity for empathy. It helps them hold more than one set of thoughts at the same time... They see the suffering of Israelis and Palestinians alike... Zealots on both sides dismiss empathy, because each says the other doesn't deserve it...”

Statements from Progressive Academics in Opposition to Boycotts

The first letter is by Professor Steven Zipperstein, Professor of History at Stanford University, which first appeared in the January 26, 2015 issue of the *Stanford Daily*.

I write as a faculty member implacably opposed to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, as a Jew convinced that there is no greater ethical dilemma than this in present-day Jewish life and also as a member of the Stanford community opposed to the divestment initiative now championed by some on campus.

How should we balance these seemingly conflicting convictions?

As it happens, many inside of Israel, and arguably the majority of American Jews, too, share similar beliefs. And it's just these issues that are being fought over in the current Israeli election scheduled for this March. But the divestment campaign provides little more than a distraction. Instead of facing the real-life dilemmas of a conflict in which two peoples demand, legitimately, the right to live decent lives in the same slice of land, it seeks to seduce supporters by collapsing suspicions of dubious multi-national corporate activities into the Palestine-Israel mix.

How Israel and Palestine will sort out a terrible, and unequal, conflict in which the stories told by each side for decades now are harsh and unforgiving and make of a mess of both truth and exaggeration, is tougher now to predict than ever before. It will demand that all who care intensely about these issues are willing to confront the need for real, wrenching compromise, for an honest resolution where no one gets all that one wants, where all recognize that a free and viable life for Palestinians is no less crucial than simple, basic security for Israel. Perhaps in the future, Israelis and Palestinians will be able to live together in a closer relationship but, for now, as writer Amos Oz has so often insisted, divorce is essential with equitable division of assets. Divestment, however dressed up as criticism of nefarious business practices, is merely an effort at delegitimizing one side of this conflict. It is an exercise in obfuscation and it should be seen for the diversion that it is.

The second statement is by Steven Lubet, a law professor at Northwestern University, which first appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 2015

Respecting Palestinians or demonizing Israel?

Does respect for Palestinian human rights require American universities to refrain from owning stock in companies that provide military supplies to Israel? Or is the BDS movement (Boycott, Divest, Sanctions) an impediment to peace, as many supporters of Israel claim?

The latest round in the public relations battle between Israel and the Palestinians has reached the shores of Lake Michigan, where a student organization called NU Divest has demanded that Northwestern University drop any investments in Illinois-based Boeing and Caterpillar, as well as four other firms that are said to profit "off of the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands."

It has been a long time since Northwestern was a hotbed of student activism, and a successful drive by NU Divest — on such a traditionally quiet campus — might well presage similar actions at other colleges and universities. It is, therefore, important to take a serious look at NU Divest's goals and strategies, which will no doubt have implications far beyond Evanston and Chicago.

To its credit, NU Divest insists that it "aims neither to condemn a country, a people, or a community nor to determine a political solution, but is solely aimed at ending our University's support of companies that profit from human rights violations."

Unfortunately, the moderation stops there. Other statements on the NU Divest website indicate that the group's objectives do indeed extend to condemnation and not merely, as asserted, to "financial neutrality."

For example, an NU Divest video includes this testimonial: "I support NU Divest because the New York and the St. Louis police department were both trained by the Israeli military. If black lives matter, then Palestinian lives must also." The second half of the statement is undeniably true — all people matter, after all, including African-Americans, Palestinians and Israelis — but the first half is dangerously inflammatory and essentially false.

The references to the New York and St. Louis police departments are obviously intended to implicate Israel in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, as though the Israeli military had somehow prompted American police officers to gun down or strangle African-American men. This is just not true. While some American police officers have attended programs in Israel — as they have in Britain, France and elsewhere — there is simply no connection between Israel and the tragic events in Ferguson and Staten Island. Neither Ferguson Officer Darren Wilson nor NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo had ever received Israeli-based training in firearms or chokeholds.

Why does this matter? Because the Internet is awash in insupportable claims of Israeli responsibility for recent police killings in the United States. These insinuations are uncomfortably reminiscent of the conspiracy theories that blame Israel for all of the world's woes. After 9/11, it was bandied about that thousands of Israelis had received advance warning to stay away from the World Trade Center. More recently, a founder of the Free Gaza Movement declared that the Charlie Hebdo massacre had been a "false flag" operation masterminded by the Mossad. The NU Divest testimonial is not as extreme — implying only that Israeli training was responsible for the Brown and Garner killings — but it demonstrates how easy it has become for

pernicious myths about Israel to be spread in the guise of political arguments, even among otherwise reasonable people.

The testimonial cannot be discounted as the credulous contention of one ill-informed student, given that the NU Divest leaders obviously made a conscious decision to post it on their website. And other aspects of the NU Divest website further suggest a settled determination to delegitimize Israel. On its home page (and also on its petition), NU Divest announces that it supports the call for "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel," commonly known as the BDS movement. The Palestinian BDS National Committee, however, supports a wide-ranging academic boycott that would squelch academic freedom and institute nationality-based discrimination against Israeli scholars and schools. In fact, the published BDS guidelines actually oppose all events "that are designed explicitly to bring together Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis so they can present their respective narratives or perspectives" and work toward reconciliation. Joint Israeli/Palestinian programs would be permissible only if they promote "co-resistance" rather than co-existence.

So which is it? Does NU Divest endorse only "financial neutrality," or does it agree with the parent BDS movement in abstaining from normalization and co-existence? Does it seek only to end the occupation, without condemning "a country, a people, or a community," or does it unfairly hold Israel responsible for police brutality in America? Is divestment from the six targeted companies an end in itself, or is it the leading edge in a destructive and divisive boycott campaign?

The answers to these questions are crucial because the outcome of the NU Divest operation will be closely watched at other schools. And its eventual tactics — whether they turn out to be admirably transparent or regrettably disingenuous — will serve as a model for other campuses.

Ending the occupation is a laudable goal but only if it is addressed honestly and without a hidden agenda. The gratuitous demonization of Israel, on the other hand, cannot bring anyone closer to peace.

*This statement is issued by **Ameinu**.*

Logan Sander
Reprinted from HAARETZ
(April 30, 2015)

PRINCETON IS “QUIET IVY” NO MORE AS RAUCUS ISRAEL DEBATE ROILS CAMPUS

Princeton University has long been known as the “conservative Ivy.” It’s a reference that encompasses not just the school’s centrist political image when compared with Ivy League universities like Harvard or Brown, but also its bucolic atmosphere and generally quiescent student body.

But Princeton's cultivated image of ivory tower calm seemed to vanish like a daguerreotype from another era recently, when student activists succeeded in putting the question of divestment from Israel up for a vote before the entire student body. With breathtaking speed, students from both sides of the issue began accusing each other of tearing down campaign posters, misrepresenting information and making offensive social media posts. Charges of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and hatred of Arabs also flew over social media.

Other campuses have experienced similar waves of tension when the issue of Israel and the Palestinians has come up. The close votes at Princeton and elsewhere suggest divestment is a live question for college students. But those swept up in the fervor have generally been limited in number. At most schools, the decisions were debated and voted on by student governments. This drew in mostly those in campus politics and students who were sufficiently fervent or well informed to involve themselves. Princeton's referendum marked one of the few times that an entire student body had the opportunity to vote. This put the issue in the hands of students who previously had little or no knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Suddenly, these students were posed with — or maybe, assailed with — the challenge of coming up with a judgment about it.

For Katie Horvath, a member of the Princeton Divests Coalition, this was part of the attraction of the studentwide vote approach. "We wanted this to be a consciousness-raising campaign," she said. "We wanted this to be something that everyone had to engage with."

It was the Princeton Divests Coalition that took advantage of a provision in the bylaws of Princeton's student government that allows questions to be put to the whole student body in the form of a referendum. The coalition students had to gather 200 signatures on a petition to initiate the referendum, which was voted on alongside the spring student elections, from April 20 through April 22.

The proposal put to the students notably did not single out Israel alone for oppressing the Palestinians. It asked whether the school's trustees should be called on to divest from "multinational corporations that maintain the infrastructure of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, facilitate Israel's and Egypt's collective punishment of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or facilitate state repression against Palestinians by Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian Authority security."

The companies the referendum cited as divestment targets by name were American: Caterpillar, which provides bulldozers used to demolish Palestinian homes, a practice condemned by the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report; Hewlett-Packard Co., which produces bio-scanners used at checkpoints on the Israeli-occupied West Bank to control Palestinian movement for what Israel says are security purposes, and Combined Systems Inc., which manufactures tear gas used against protesters.

The results, announced on April 24, gave a narrow victory to divestment opponents, who won over proponents by 52.5%–47.5%. Some 2,032 students, or almost 39% of all undergraduates at Princeton, participated in the balloting. In the days leading up to and during the voting period, posters showed up around every light pole and on every bulletin board. Fliers covered the dining hall tables, and each day the organizations set up tables in Frist Campus Center, hoping to catch the attention of the hundreds of students who walked by.

But the campaign-related discourse sometimes flamed into hate speech, and even into threats. Mohamed El-Dirany co-authored a pro-divestment column in the campus paper about

Egypt because of his Egyptian background, and in response received threatening messages and emails. “I forwarded your BS article about Egypt to authorities. If you ever set foot in Egypt, you’ll be arrested,” one email said. El-Dirany, a freshman, volunteered to be the sponsor of the referendum, placing his name on the formal document and was thus, he said, perceived by some as “leading the referendum.”

Social media played a huge role in both sides’ campaigns, from promoting videos and photographs to advertising events and setting up discussions. One student posted a series of screenshots on his Facebook page from Yik Yak, the site that allows users to post anonymous comments, highlighting anti-Semitic and offensive Yaks under the heading “Criticizing Israel isn’t anti-Semitic. This is.” Yaks included “Jews have huge noses,” and a thread that began with “Jewish lives matter” but ended with “No they dont (sic).” Joshua Leifer, a co-founder of the Alliance of Jewish Progressives, actually downloaded Yik Yak specifically to be aware of what was taking place on that social media platform. But Leifer deleted the app almost immediately because of the stress he experienced just reading the outrageous comments. “I think Yik Yak on campus isn’t representative of the general campus opinion,” Leifer said.

Daniel Kurtzer, a Middle East studies professor who is a former U.S. ambassador to Israel and to Egypt and a vocal anti-divestment figure, said that the tensions on campus and online had grown inappropriate. “Within certain bounds, there should be tolerance for different kinds of discourse,” he said. But he stressed, “I oppose fully the idea that people may be tearing down posters, or Yik Yak, where people can post anonymous things and feel freer to say things they shouldn’t say.”

History and Near Eastern studies professor Max Weiss, an author of the faculty petition for divestment that included 60 tenured faculty members’ signatures, took note of the way that social media actually discourages direct and open discourse. “The fact that there is not open deliberation among people who disagree is actually a sign of a lack of healthy political discourse on campus,” he said. “I would encourage students to voice their opinions. If it is emotional and impassioned, so be it — but face to face as well as on social media.”

Two other schools have put divestment votes to their entire student bodies, though neither made much news at the time. In 2014, students at DePaul University, in Chicago, passed a divestment resolution by 54%–46%. At San Diego State, students rejected a comparable resolution in April by a vote of 53%–47%. The votes at these two schools, and now at Princeton, suggest that whatever the outcome in any particular case, this is now a very live and closely divided question for American college students. Currently, divestment resolutions are being considered by student government bodies at the University of New Mexico; Bowdoin College, in Maine; Wisconsin’s Marquette University; Ohio State University, and the University of Texas at Austin.

As tabulated recently by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, such resolutions have already passed at such colleges as Loyola University, in Chicago; Wesleyan University; Oberlin College; The Evergreen State College; University of Toledo; Stanford University, and the University of California campuses at Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles and Riverside. The February vote at UC Davis was overturned by another campus body, which said it was not within the purview of the student government to approve such a measure. New York University professors and students are gathering signatures for a similar effort.

In one sense, these referenda and student government votes are exercises in student vanity. Not one of these schools has a board of trustees that appears to be interested in considering divestment, whatever their students say. But as political exercises they are taken

seriously by those involved on both sides as tools for influencing the views of students. The experience of students like Kathleen Ma, a Princeton freshman, suggests why this is so. “Hearing and talking to some of my classmates who are clearly very passionate about this issue has made me more aware of the issues, and I’ve definitely noticed an increase in campuswide interest in this issue,” she said.

Just what influences the vote of students with little prior involvement in Middle East issues, however, can be quite personal, for all the intensity of the posters, advertisements, campus paper editorials and social media invective. One senior student, who spoke only on condition that he not be identified so as to keep his vote private, said his decision to oppose divestment was based on the enthusiasm of friends. “What really swung me was several very, very close Jewish friends of mine who felt very, very strongly that divestment would send the wrong message,” he said. “On an issue where I am a little more ignorant than perhaps I should be, the fact that several people took time out of their days to meet with me and talk with me about how it urgent it felt to them and why my vote mattered certainly helped sway my decision.”

In the end, El-Dirany was pleased with the campaign, for all its tensions, even though his side lost. “Even if it didn’t pass, we’ve changed the campus,” he said. “I don’t think anyone’s ever been talking about Palestine or Israel so much ever since divestment came up. We made people care about the issue.... The environment’s changed, and there will be more progress made later on.” But Sam Maron, a sophomore involved with Tigers for Israel, an anti-divestment group, saw negative effects of the referendum on campus politics. “While it created some productive conversation, it created also a lot of unfortunate campus polarization,” Maron said.

The No Divest Campaign, which was the organized umbrella group of opponents of divestment, posted the election results with a condemnation of the referendum. “We hope the rejection of this referendum will mark the last time the student government puts to a vote such a divisive issue so far outside the scope of campus life and beyond the purview of student opinion,” the statement said. Meanwhile, Horvath said that the Princeton Divests Coalition had both reached out to and been contacted by other schools looking to initiate similar campaigns. “We see a lot of hope not only for Princeton, but for schools across the country,” she said. “We know that the name of Princeton carries weight in the broader university context and the broader U.S. context. So we do want this to spark other initiatives at other schools.”