

Arguments against the proposed Israel-related resolutions at the January 2015 AHA business meeting.

At the AHA business meeting on Sunday, Jan. 4, advocates are seeking to introduce and pass two Israel-related resolutions. Although they no longer call for a boycott, they are part of a wider campaign to single out Israel. (They can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/HAWres>.) Those who wish to speak against the resolutions should, of course, use whatever arguments they believe and wish to express. The points listed here are merely suggestive.

- **Allowing last-minute resolutions on the agenda violates the democratic process.** The AHA sets a high bar before allowing eleventh-hour changes in the business meeting's agenda because it takes seriously the democratic, scholarly, and educational process. To introduce new resolutions now allows no time for AHA members to educate themselves and one another about the range of viewpoints on a complicated situation or to build institutional consensus.
- **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. Indeed, it hasn't even been established that Israel destroyed an oral history facility, and the university attacked may well have been engaged in military research. Nor is it true that Israel's policies on approving visas is "arbitrary." (For supporting detail, see the accompanying flyer on opposing the resolutions.) 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. (For supporting detail, see the accompanying flyer on opposing the resolutions.)
- **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, 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.** While there have been occasional resolutions about other foreign countries within the associations, 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 AHA 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.
- **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 AHA can stake out a position that will find anything like consensus among its members. It is beyond the AHA's capacities, and not the AHA's role, to satisfactorily arbitrate these issues.
- **The AHA 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 AHA 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.
- **This will damage the AHA in the eyes of the wider world.** The AHA 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 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.
- **They distract from the AHA's mission.** The vast majority of AHA 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 *American Historical Review*, and the many professional and intellectual opportunities that membership affords. This represents a distraction from the body's important work in the cultivation of the study of history.
- **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 AHA 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 flyer is issued by the Alliance for Academic Freedom, which is devoted to promoting academic freedom and mutual understanding about the Israel-Palestine conflict in academia, and to supporting the aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. <http://thirdnarrative.org/uncategorized/alliance-for-academic-freedom/>