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Response to the most recent UFS Statement on Academic Boycotts

posted Oct 15, 2014, 6:47 PM by Emily Tai [updated Apr 17, 2015, 4:30 PM by CUNY UFS]

by *Cosim Sayid*

It should be clarified that the CUNY Graduate Center's Doctoral



Students' Council (DSC) did not withdraw the [resolution](#) to boycott Israeli academic institutions.

Consideration of the academic boycott was merely postponed till the next DSC Plenary Meeting, in October.

As to the proposed action itself, a few remarks are in order:

First, while the academic boycott resolution purportedly applies to institutions and not individuals, CUNY faculty and students know well that this is a total canard; scholars must rely on institutional funding to do field work, purchase equipment, organize conferences, travel to talks, and so on. Not only do individual academics thrive on funding, but thriving academic institutions are themselves the apex of academic freedom in which individuals can excel and collaborate freely with others; academic freedom without academic institutions would be a farce. Academic institutions aren't to be seen as political instrumentalities of the state that are part and parcel of government policy, but rather as institutions whose aim is cultivation of intrinsic goods like open dialogue, free inquiry, and truth. That the academic boycott violates academic freedom could not be clearer -- UFS thrice reaffirmed that during these past five years -- and it's moreover an academic boycott based on invidious discrimination against Israelis and those at CUNY who'd work with them.

The resolution specifically targets the joint program in business between Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business and the College of Management at Rishon LeZion in Israel, which was approved by CUNY faculty at Baruch via normal faculty governance policies. The thought is evidently that politically motivated persons know better than CUNY faculty carefully considering proposals concerning what's good for scholarship and our students. But we should be fearful of where such misguided efforts invariably led us in the past and we oughtn't to revisit those dark times.

Instead of speaking out in favor of the freest possible movement of ideas across lines drawn by men on maps, the proposed academic boycott erects barriers to international cooperation. Individual scholars may choose to associate with Israeli academics as they like, but the resolution would effectively force all doctoral students to forego the benefits of collaboration with Israeli faculty, whether or not it advances our mission as teachers and researchers.

I hope that the resolution to compel a boycott of Israeli academics by CUNY doctoral students is defeated.

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