

Reasons to vote "Yes" on the AAA resolution to boycott Israeli academic institutions

Presented by [Anthropologists for the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions](#)

1. **Because anthropology has an historical responsibility to take a stand against colonialism in all its forms.** Many anthropologists today understand our discipline's complicity with and participation in colonial violence and settler colonialism, including in the United States, and often express a commitment to "decolonize" anthropology. Decolonization requires attention to Indigenous sovereignty and land dispossession around the world. A vote for boycott is a vote in solidarity with Palestinians facing colonial dispossession and a vote consistent with an ethical anti-colonial stance.
2. **Because our Palestinian colleagues have asked us to.** The movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led nonviolent movement aimed at pressuring the state of Israel to cease violating the rights of Palestinians and to comply with international law. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations launched the BDS global campaign in 2005 as a way to hold the Israeli government accountable for ongoing human rights violations. Our colleagues at Palestinian universities [have recently reiterated](#) the urgency of the academic boycott, as has the [Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees](#). Answering the Palestinian call for the boycott of Israeli institutions complicit in these human rights violations allows people of conscience everywhere to play an effective role in the Palestinian struggle for justice, equality, and freedom.
3. **Because the Association is committed to human rights, as affirmed by the 1999 and [2020 Declarations on Anthropology and Human Rights](#).** The AAA has a long history of taking stands in support of human rights and in solidarity with oppressed peoples, including by honoring calls for boycotts. The boycott would increase international pressure on Israel to end its systematic human rights abuses. Responding to the Palestinian civil society call for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions is in accord with anthropology's best traditions and collective commitment to justice.
4. **Because Israel is escalating the attack on Palestinian academic freedoms.** Palestinian universities have been increasingly isolated by [Israeli policies](#) limiting their international collaboration, undercutting their autonomy and restricting Palestinian access to circuits of intellectual and academic exchange. The [AAA Task Force on Israel/Palestine](#) noted in

2015 that Israel has long impeded the work of scholars at Palestinian universities. These attacks have only intensified in the years since. As of 2022, Israel has imposed [severe new restrictions](#) on foreign scholars and students who want to conduct research, teach, or learn at Palestinian Universities. Palestinian students continue to routinely face Israeli military interrogations, torture, and administrative detention. As of the 2022-2023 academic year, there are [at least 70](#) Palestinian university students held in Israeli military prisons as political prisoners for their student activism. The boycott protests these crushing restrictions and [violations of Palestinian rights](#) that have been widely denounced by [international human rights organizations](#) and even the [United States government](#).

5. **Because Israeli universities are institutionally and deeply complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights, including their academic freedoms.** Israeli universities operate in the service of the Israeli state, including its security state and military-industrial complex. Some, like [Ariel University](#) and parts of Hebrew University Mt. Scopus in East Jerusalem, are built directly on Palestinian land under military occupation, as recognized by international law. Tel-Aviv University, Ben Gurion University, and the [Israel Institute of Technology](#) develop the technological capacities and military doctrines that are used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in Israeli military offensives for which Israel has been denounced [by the UN](#) as committing war crimes. Among the targets of these doctrines and technologies are Palestinian universities, which are subject to closures, raids, and bombardments by the Israeli military, and the abduction and torture of students and faculty. At Israeli universities themselves, Palestinian students have faced [escalating suppression](#), interrogations, and violent arrests by campus security as well as by Israeli security forces. Israeli universities are [directly complicit](#) in and willingly support violations of Palestinian rights and academic freedoms, both on their own campuses and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
6. **Because speaking out as an institution would make the Association a powerful voice for change and academic freedom for all.** As the largest organization of U.S.-based anthropologists, the AAA has long served as a voice for social justice. The boycott leverages the collective weight of the AAA to put pressure on Israel to end its abuses against Palestinians. It is an institutional response that likewise applies only to academic institutions, making it more narrowly tailored than the blanket academic boycott against apartheid South Africa. The boycott's commitment to academic freedom is absolute and applies to all: Israeli scholars will remain welcome to attend AAA meetings and publish in AAA journals, and any individual AAA member can still choose to collaborate with Israeli colleagues or even Israeli institutions. Boycotts are an effective pressure tactic for

redressing injustice. In the past, the AAA has boycotted the Fulbright-Chile program, and the U.S. states of Arizona, Georgia, and Illinois for their rights violations. This resolution to boycott Israeli institutions continues the Association's proud history of heeding calls for boycott from disenfranchised groups. [As recently argued by AAA members and leading scholars](#), endorsing the boycott is critical to building solidarity across movements for justice, including for decolonization, demilitarization, and abolition.

7. **Because the Association is based in the United States, the primary enabler of Israel's abuses.** Israel is the leading recipient of U.S. military aid and [the only state](#) not required to detail how this military aid is being used. It is also shielded from accountability for its violations of international law by the U.S. government. The AAA has a long record of speaking critically to the U.S. government, including its opposition to the Human Terrain System, torture, and wars on Vietnam, Grenada, and [Iraq](#). The boycott is an act of protest against Washington's unconditional and unlimited military and diplomatic support to Israel. By becoming the largest-ever academic association to endorse the boycott, the AAA would invigorate critical public discussion of U.S. policy.
8. **Because Israel's misuse of scholarship for colonial expansion is at odds with the Association's commitment to research ethics.** One glaring example is Israeli archaeology, which has systematically provided pretexts for the seizure of land and expulsion of Palestinians, as documented by the AAA Task Force on Israel/Palestine. Israeli archeology is directly complicit in Israeli violation of international law. Defying the 1954 Hague Convention, Israeli universities' archeology departments continue to collaborate with the Israeli Antiquities Authority and settler organizations to conduct digs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to participate in the theft of Palestinian artifacts. The Israeli government, in turn, uses these archaeological digs [to expand illegal settlements](#) and intensify military control over Palestinians. The academic discipline and practice of archaeology is effectively under Israeli state (and, in the occupied West Bank, military) control and subordinated to a project of colonial settlement.
9. **Because the Association has thoroughly, thoughtfully, and democratically deliberated the question.** This resolution emerges from a decade of panels and other scholarly discussions within the Association. The AAA Task Force on Israel/Palestine's 140-page report noted that "censure" of Israel would be "an insufficient course of action" on its own. A similar resolution was endorsed by a vote of 1,040-136 at the AAA business meeting in Denver on November 20, 2015, and narrowly missed adoption in the subsequent full membership vote by a margin of only 39 votes (2,384 in favor and 2,423

opposed; 49.6% - 50.4%). The boycott has been rigorously debated by wide swathes of the Association's membership. The time for action is now.

10. Because the situation in Palestine has only become more urgent since the last vote.

Israeli violations of Palestinian's inalienable rights have continued with impunity since the 2016 vote. Echoing the findings of Palestinian human rights organizations, the [UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and Israel's leading human rights group [B'Tselem](#) have all recently concluded that Israel is guilty of the crimes of apartheid. Israel's longstanding impunity is now deemed untenable by the international community. A UN human rights probe [concluded](#) in 2022 that Israel has no intention of ending the occupation or its systemic discrimination against Palestinians. It is urgent that we join international civil society in taking a stand for Palestinian rights. It's the least we can do.