



4.May.2023

To the American Anthropological Association, President Ramona Pérez, Members of the Executive Board, and the full AAA membership,

We are writing from the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE), which represents more than 6,000 Palestinian university staff at more than a dozen Palestinian universities in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We are deeply grateful to the more than 200 members of your association who recently put forth a principled motion that would ensure the **American Anthropological Association** (AAA) is not complicit in Israel's decades-long regime of military occupation, [settler-colonialism and apartheid](#) by refraining from any institutional ties with Israeli academic institutions that support this regime or are otherwise complicit in maintaining, justifying or whitewashing it.

Since 2016, when nearly half the AAA membership voted in favor of a similar motion, the need for effective solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, and equality has only become more urgent.

Leading international and Israeli human rights organizations, including [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [B'Tselem](#), have confirmed what Palestinian scholars and organizations have documented for decades, that Israel is guilty of the crime against humanity of apartheid.

Palestinian academic associations and unions, including our federation, along with Palestinian civil society organizations, call for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions due to their deep, longstanding complicity in Israel's crimes against Palestinians.

This is a specific call from the oppressed Indigenous community not to collaborate with the oppressor's institutions precisely because of their active collusion in the system of our dispossession.

The complicity of Israeli universities is well-documented and extensive. Israeli universities work in the service of the Israeli government for the development of the policies, technology, doctrines, and justifications for Israel's rampant and ongoing colonial oppression of Palestinians. Israeli universities also maintain close research and development collaborations with Israel's arms industry, which markets its weapons globally as "field tested" on Palestinians. These are not benign research collaborations. For Palestinians, they translate into dispossession, domination, forcible displacement, destruction, life-altering disabilities, and death.

The complicity of Israeli academic institutions is pervasive and goes beyond collaboration agreements. [Hebrew University Mount Scopus](#) and [Ariel University](#), for instance, are built on Palestinian land militarily occupied by Israel in clear violation of international law, and therefore directly serve the ongoing land theft and dispossession of Palestinians. Hebrew University [offers](#) its campus to Israeli forces for the oppression of the surrounding occupied Palestinian communities, while it [hosts](#) a military base on campus to offer academic training to Israeli soldiers. The Technion and Tel Aviv University run [joint centers](#) with the Israeli military and Israel's arms industries.



Israeli universities, in close partnership with the apartheid government and the military industries, have been a pillar in the development of weapons, criminal military doctrines, and tools of cyber repression that are at the center of Israel's system of injustice against Palestinians and are exported around the world. Reichman University, formerly IDC Herzliya, for example, has [held courses](#) in collaboration with Israel's notorious NSO Group known for its Pegasus spyware used to spy on Palestinian NGOs and sold to authoritarian regimes around the world to spy on human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, and political opponents. The work of Israeli universities to support Israeli military units and Israeli cyberwarfare and military industries is enabling and exacerbating repression, [civil wars](#), [disinformation](#), and [election rigging](#), as well as mass surveillance worldwide.

As Palestinians, we will soon be marking 75 years of Israeli settler-colonial oppression against us, and we will be doing so under the escalating violence of Israel's most far-right, racist, fundamentalist government ever. We trust that you will understand if we are not encouraged by the current wave of protests by some sectors of the Israeli establishment, including by some Israeli universities, even those illegally built on Palestinian land, against the far-right government's planned "reforms." These are internal conflicts within the settler-colonial society that are based on a consensus to maintain Israel's system of oppression against Palestinians, but that stems from the increasingly incompatible visions of the two opposing camps in Israel of the ethos and character of the settler colony.

These anti-government protests, always keenly attuned to liberal sensibilities in the US and Europe, present the patently false, even ludicrous, slogans of "defending democracy" and "equality." But democracy and equality cannot exist and have never existed under Israeli apartheid, which treats Indigenous Palestinians, even those who are citizens of present-day Israel, as "an inferior racial group," in the words of Amnesty International. In its report on apartheid, [B'Tselem](#) described Israel as a "regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea." Even a [former Israeli Attorney General](#) wrote in 2022: "You simply cannot be a liberal democracy if you operate apartheid over other people. It is a contradiction in terms because Israel's entire society is complicit in this unjust reality." Therefore, the claim made by ostensibly "leftist" Israeli academics and academic organizations that Israeli universities are a beacon of democracy and equality flies in the face of the incontrovertible reality of those universities' unethical and criminal complicity in Israeli apartheid and settler-colonial violence.

While the proposed reforms of the Israeli judiciary sparked protests, the new government's unmasked plans to escalate Israel's dispossession of Palestinians and entrench its regime of settler-colonialism have not warranted any protest from the anti-government camp, including from universities. In short, these protests are aimed at defending the status quo of apartheid and racial domination and maintaining the power of a judicial system that B'Tselem has documented to be a [pillar](#) of Israel's oppression against Palestinians.

Israeli universities not only play an active role in maintaining Israel's system of apartheid, but they have also repeatedly stood silent in the face of Israel's attacks on Palestinian life, including military assaults on besieged Palestinians in Gaza. They are a foundation of this racist system that sharply devalues Palestinian lives. During Israel's 2014 military assault on besieged Gaza, which [killed](#) at least 2200 Palestinians, including more than 550 children, Hebrew University sent a [letter](#) stating it was "mobilizing to support its student soldiers" and invited donations to a special scholarship fund using the name of the Israeli military operation. The Ben Gurion University of the Negev issued a [statement](#) professing admiration for its student soldiers and gratitude for their "contribution to the security of the country."



Israeli universities [repress](#) Palestinian students' right to protest against our oppression and undermine the academic freedom of those who dare to interrogate the context of this oppression and the means to resist it. Last year, Ben Gurion University campus security coordinated with the Israeli police to [arrest](#) Palestinian student Maryam Abu Qwaider for holding a peaceful vigil to commemorate Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian journalist for Al Jazeera who was killed by Israeli snipers the day before. Off-duty Israeli police officers studying at Hebrew University as part of a police program [arrested](#) two Palestinian students for singing in Arabic on campus. Campus security did nothing to intervene and the university suspended the Palestinian students for six days.

We are encouraged by the [rising tide](#) of effective solidarity coming from hundreds of academic departments, programs, centers, unions, and societies across the world, as well as from tens of thousands of international academics.

We have no doubt that the absolute majority of AAA members want to see an end to Israel's violations of our rights. To achieve that goal, Palestinians have elaborated a strategy based on our lived experience, our history of popular struggle, and that of other oppressed peoples, using the tool of boycotts, of non-collaboration with systems of injustice, as was done in the global solidarity movement that helped abolish apartheid in South Africa.

We are calling on the AAA membership to ensure the association is not complicit, to do no harm, to respond to the authoritative, near-consensus call from Palestinians by voting to "boycott Israeli academic institutions until these institutions end their complicity in violating Palestinian rights as stipulated in international law."

The AAA adopting the proposed resolution would be a meaningful contribution to our struggle for our inalienable right to live in freedom and dignity.

Sincerely,

Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE)



Erratum: Letter from PFUUPE to AAA, May 10, 2023

This note aims to correct an error in the letter sent from the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE) to the American Anthropological Association (AAA) on May 4, 2023. We were alerted to the fact that the third paragraph inaccurately attributes votes in favor of the 2016 motion to nearly half of the AAA membership. It should read instead:

Since 2016, when nearly half of those AAA members voting were in favor of a similar motion, the need for effective solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, and equality has only become more urgent.