

### Academic Freedom and Israel on Campus

Academic freedom is a principle that protects the right of professors to develop and teach original and controversial ideas. However, academic freedom is not without limits. According to professional standards, professors should avoid teaching controversial matters that have no relation to their field. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that universities may determine for themselves, on academic grounds, who may teach, what may be taught, and how. It is widely understood that political indoctrination is distinct from teaching and likely not permitted.

#### When a Professor May Be Abusing or Exceeding the Boundaries of Academic Freedom

- *A professor is teaching controversial subject matters in a class unrelated to the professor's field (e.g., a biology professor teaching a course on Zionism).* If this occurs, contact the department head or university administration stating that a professor is teaching outside the scope of their expertise.
- *A professor is teaching controversial subject matters related to the professor's expertise, but does not provide any balance or diversity of viewpoints on the subject.* In these cases, professors often claim "free speech" or "academic freedom," but this is likely an instance of political indoctrination. Look to your school's policies regarding political indoctrination. You can also try asking the professor to provide a more balanced curriculum. You may appeal to fellow students, campus organizations, and friendly faculty to offer alternative educational programming with more diverse perspectives.

#### Record Evidence

- Record your professor's lecture if school rules allow. It is difficult to hold professors accountable without evidence.
- Keep a written record, such as emails and screenshots, of relevant material and any correspondence with the professor, department, or administration.
- Schedule a private meeting with the department head or administration to explain that professors have a responsibility to uphold academic integrity and expose students to a variety of perspectives on controversial issues.

#### Reach Out for Help:

- Reach out to *StandWithUs'* campus and legal departments for help at [campus@standwithus.com](mailto:campus@standwithus.com) or [legal@standwithus.com](mailto:legal@standwithus.com).
- Reach out to *Scholars for Peace in the Middle East* ([www.spme.org](http://www.spme.org)) and/or *Academic Engagement Network* ([www.academicengagement.org](http://www.academicengagement.org)) to connect with pro-Israel faculty.

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## Academic Boycott of Israel

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has called for an academic boycott against Israel as a key part of its agenda. By doing so, BDS actively undermines the bedrock principles upon which universities are built—academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas.

Calls for academic boycotts against Israel have been [condemned](#) by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 250-plus university and college presidents, and other academic associations. The president of the Palestinian Al Quds University publicly [opposed](#) academic boycotts of Israel, calling instead for “cooperation based on mutual respect.” In past years, 38 Nobel Laureates [signed](#) a joint letter deploring a proposed boycott of Israel because it is “antithetical to principles of academic and scientific freedom, antithetical to principles of freedom of expression and inquiry, and may well constitute discrimination by virtue of national origin.”

According to the AAUP statement, [On Academic Boycotts](#), “Academic boycotts... strike directly at the free exchange of ideas even as they are aimed at university administrations or, [in some cases], political parties in power. The form that noncooperation with an academic institution takes inevitably involves a refusal to engage in academic discourse with teachers and researchers, not all of whom are complicit in the policies that are being protested. Moreover, an academic boycott can compound a regime’s suppression of freedoms by cutting off contacts with an institution’s or a country’s academics.”

### **BDS’s academic boycott guidelines include calls for boycotts of:**

- Study abroad programs in Israel;
- All cooperation projects involving, “Palestinians and/or other Arabs on one side and Israelis on the other.” In order for BDS activists to work with Israelis, Israelis must support the elimination of their own state and the violation of their own rights;
- Events co-sponsored not only by Israel and its academic institutions, but also by organizations that “support” Israel;
- Events that take place in Israel, even if sponsored by international organizations, not Israeli institutions;
- Any event where Israeli officials or representatives of Israeli academic institutions are invited to speak.

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