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Jewish Studies Scholars Protest British Teachers Union Proposed Boycott of Israeli Universities and Academics

The American Academy for Jewish Research, the oldest body of North American scholars of Jewish studies, and the Association for Jewish Studies, the learned society of academic Jewish studies, urge the membership of the British National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education to reject the proposal to boycott Israeli universities and Israeli scholars and researchers who do not publicly oppose specific governmental policies that the NATFHE opposes. The proposed boycott is an egregious assault on academic freedom. Academics have an obligation to support the free exchange of ideas and to participate in international dialogue, not to shun and restrain them. Israeli universities are an important source of the robust discussion and critical evaluation of governmental policy that characterize Israeli society. It is indeed ironic and offensive, in a world where many governments muzzle their faculties, and academic freedom is rare, that NATFHE should focus solely on Israeli universities, which have maintained academic freedom and diverse student and faculty communities under difficult circumstances. It is also distressing that in a world where, sadly, war and the killing of civilians are far too common only one country is singled out for ostracism.

We stand in solidarity with our fellow Israeli academics and are confident that the NATFHE proposed boycott will be understood internationally to reflect less upon the reality of Israeli universities than upon the politicization of certain leaders of the British academic community. We call on academics throughout the world to condemn the NATFHE proposal and reject the union's political exploitation of the Middle East crisis for narrow political ends.

For additional information, contact the Association for Jewish Studies at ajs@ajs.cjh.org, 917.606.8249, or see the AJS website at www.ajsnet.org.

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