

American Anthropological Association endorses boycott of Israel



New York, July 27 (RHC)-- The American Anthropological Association (AAA) has become the largest US scholars union to endorse a Palestinian resolution calling for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions, according to a statement released on Monday by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The resolution accuses Israel of "operat[ing] an apartheid regime from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea," citing the country's controversial 2018 "Jewish supremacy" law and the findings of human rights groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B'Tselem, as well as the UN and noting that several international conventions define apartheid as a "crime against humanity."

It specifically targets Israeli academia, claiming the country's educational institutions "do not provide protections for academic freedom, campus speech in support of Palestinian human and political rights, nor for the freedom of association of Palestinian students on their campuses."

Israeli universities and other educational entities are barred from the AAA's published materials, including advertising, cannot use its facilities or participate in its events, and are forbidden from republishing articles it controls, according to a statement the group released on Monday.

The boycott will end when Israel's academia curtails its "complicity in violating Palestinian rights as stipulated in international law," the document explains, while a Frequently Asked Questions page on its website explains that the AAA's board will evaluate the situation every five years.

However, the resolution stresses that the boycott does not apply to individual Israeli academics. While AAA members are encouraged to stay informed on Palestinian issues and divest their own personal finances from Israeli organizations, they are free to apply the boycott as little or as much as they wish in their own professional practice.

Of the group's 12,000 members, 37% voted over a month-long period that concluded earlier this month. Some 71% of those – 2,016 members – backed the resolution. While the AAA is the largest organization of academics to sign on to the boycott, it joins the American Studies Association, the Middle East Studies Association, the National Women's Studies Association, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, and the Critical Ethnic Studies Association in backing the Palestinian cause.

The BDS movement seeks to exert economic pressure on Israel to leave the occupied territories of the West Bank by boycotting companies that do business there, demanding that countries and corporations divest from such companies, and calling on governments to impose sanctions on Israel for its human rights violations. The movement has been banned in several U.S. states -- despite court decisions finding such laws unconstitutional -- following heavy-handed lobbying by West Jerusalem, which has labeled BDS antisemitic.

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