

Fighting Academic Boycotts: Hebrew University's Response to the BDS Campaign

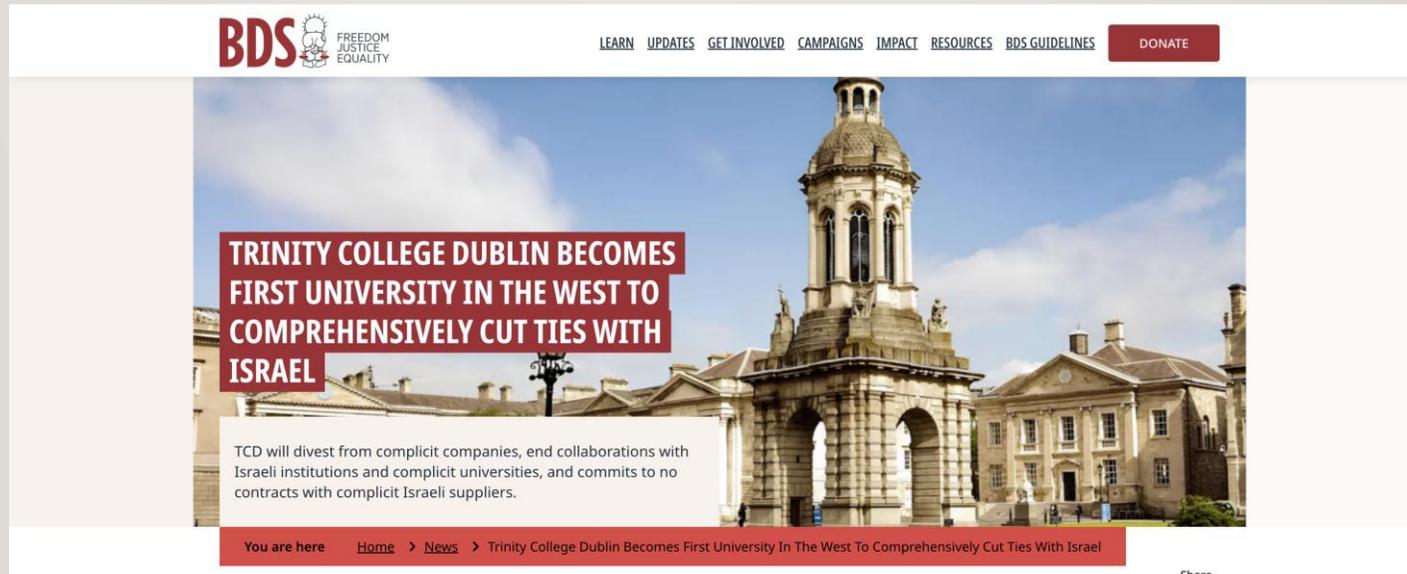
PROF. YUVAL SHANY – CHAIR OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM TASK FORCE, HUJI

GOALS OF THE BDS MOVEMENT:

- Being the part of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) tasked with overseeing the academic and cultural boycott aspects of BDS, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) has advocated, since 2004, for a boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions. This is based on the fact that these institutions are deeply complicit in the Israeli system of oppression that has denied Palestinians their basic rights guaranteed by international law, or has hampered their exercise of these rights, including academic freedom and the right to education.
- Academic institutions are a key part of the ideological and institutional scaffolding of Israel's regime of occupation, colonialism and apartheid against the Palestinian people. Since its founding, the Israeli academy has cast its lot with the hegemonic political-military establishment in Israel, and notwithstanding the efforts of a handful of principled academics, the Israeli academy is profoundly implicated in supporting and perpetuating Israel's systematic denial of Palestinian rights.
- **PACBI GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL 2014**

MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Formal adherence by academic institutions, professional associations and individual researchers to the BDS Guidelines



The screenshot shows a website header with the BDS logo (Freedom Justice Equality) and navigation links: LEARN, UPDATES, GET INVOLVED, CAMPAIGNS, IMPACT, RESOURCES, BDS GUIDELINES, and a DONATE button. The main content area features a large image of Trinity College Dublin with a red text overlay: **TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN BECOMES FIRST UNIVERSITY IN THE WEST TO COMPREHENSIVELY CUT TIES WITH ISRAEL**. Below the image, a white text box states: "TCD will divest from complicit companies, end collaborations with Israeli institutions and complicit universities, and commits to no contracts with complicit Israeli suppliers." A red breadcrumb trail at the bottom reads: "You are here Home > News > Trinity College Dublin Becomes First University In The West To Comprehensively Cut Ties With Israel".

MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Suspension of existing inter-institutional academic cooperation agreements and decisions not to enter into new cooperation agreements

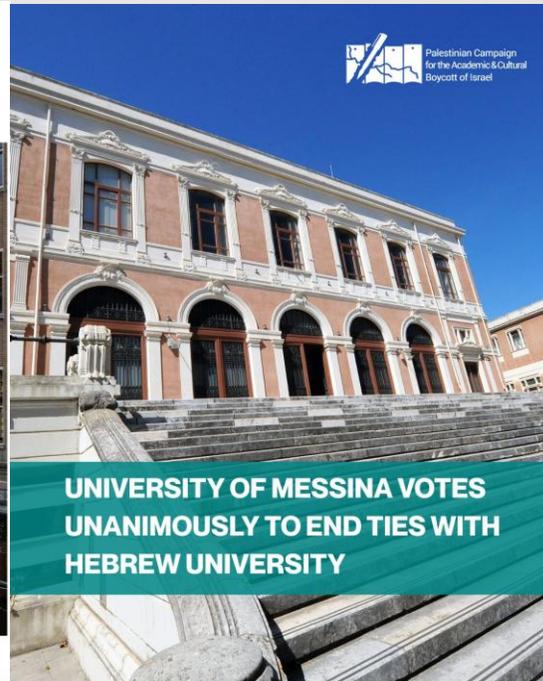
GLOBAL

University of Amsterdam ends student exchange with Hebrew U, saying it's complicit with Israeli military

About 10 students from each school had participated in the exchange annually.



The University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. (Courtesy of the University of Amsterdam)



MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Refusal to invite HUJI researchers to conferences, research groups and to publish in academic publications
- Open boycott
- Silent boycott
- “Balancing requirements” (e.g., linking the invitation of Israelis to conference panels to the invitation of Palestinians)
- Demands to remove HUJI affiliation or make historical acknowledgment statements
- Such boycotts typically exceed the scope Of PACBI Guidelines



Wake Forest University

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

This statement honors the land on which Wake Forest University now resides and the land on which the original campus resided. This land served for centuries as a place for exchange and interaction for Indigenous peoples, specifically Saura (saw-ra), Catawba (ka-tah-buh), Cherokee (chair-o-kee), and Lumbee (lum-bee) in this location and Shakori (shuh-kor-ee), Eno (ee-no), Sissipahaw (sis-suh-pa-hah) and Occaneechi (oak-a-nee-chee) in the original campus location. Today Wake Forest continues to be a place of learning and engagement for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff regionally, nationally and globally.



MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Refusal to participate in HUJI events, research groups/consortia and to support other academic activities (e.g., review letters, publication reviews, publication in HUJI journals).

Dear Yuval and Maria,

Thank you for your email and your kind invitation, and my apologies for the delay in my response - the initial email sent by Maria ended up in my spam folder and I only managed to retrieve it recently.

Thank you for thinking about me for this workshop, which is also very aligned with the research I've been conducting very recently.

Nonetheless, I am afraid I will not be able to attend as, in line with the PACBI guidelines, I do not participate in events which are partially funded or sponsored by Israeli academic institutions.

I wish you very fruitful discussions!

Best wishes,



MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Interruptions of lectures and academic events involving HUJI faculty



MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST US

- Institutional management decisions – sometimes adopted collectively by a number of institutions
- Senate resolutions
- Petitions and collective letters
- Union and professional associations motions/resolutions
- Action by individual researchers



www.isa-sociology.org
isa@isa-sociology.org

ISA Executive Committee Decision on the Israeli Sociological Society

The ISA reiterates its declaration that, as part of its public stance against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, it has **no institutional relationships with Israeli public institutions.**

We regret that the Israeli Sociological Society has not taken a clear position condemning the dramatic situation in Gaza. In a decision that reflects the extraordinary gravity of the current situation, the **Executive Committee has decided to suspend the collective membership of the Israeli Sociological Society (ISS).**

Adopted on June 29, 2025.



IS BDS A STRATEGIC THREAT?

- Centrality of academic cooperation to “academic life cycle”
 - Study abroad programs
 - Research groups and consortia
 - Research/teaching visits
 - Publication in international journals
 - Obtaining international grants
 - Conference/Poster presentations
 - Academic leadership positions – board of editors, conference organizer, book editor, officials in professional associations
 - Promotion letters
 - Journal refereeing

IS BDS A STRATEGIC THREAT?

- Centrality of cooperation with European universities to HUJI
 - Horizon 2020-2027
- Concerns about staff recruitment and retention
- Concerns about international rankings
- Concerns about exclusion from important research networks
- Concerns about exclusion becoming the norm in certain regions, and invitation the exception that needs to be justified

THE REASONS GIVEN FOR DOWNGRADING OR SEVERING RELATIONS WITH US

- Reasons repeat themselves across institutions – suggesting that we dealing with a coordinated campaign
- Reasons tend to remain constant across time – current situation has limited effect on them
- Reasons are mostly pretextual – they tend to amplify small issues, present issues out of context, ignore redeeming facts, ignore their own institutions' shortcomings
- Most reasons are applied with minor changes to all Israeli universities – suggesting that the agenda may be not institution-specific but anti-Israeli (and at times, anti-semitic)
- Ultimately, there is an attempt to hold Israeli academia accountable for the policies of the GOI, with which we may – as Israeli citizens – agree or disagree, through guilt by association – out of (a mistaken or knowingly false) belief that Israeli academia can influence such policies

THE REASONS GIVEN FOR DOWNGRADING OR SEVERING RELATIONS WITH US

- Military programs – Tzameret, Havatzalot, Talpiot
- Location of University facilities – focusing on the Mount Scopus student village and the sports center
- Allegations regarding the lopsided application of freedom of speech standards in ways that silence Arab students and faculty
- Allegations regarding institutional identification with government and government policies (e.g. free hostages campaigns)
- Allegations regarding tech transfers
- Involvement in archeological excavations

WE HAVE GOOD ANSWERS TO EVERY QUESTION!

- Military programs are full-fledged independent academic programs – we do not offer military training and are not involved in military policies. We are proud of the quality education we provide to all of our students!
- The Mount Scopus itself is not part of the territories seized by Israel in 1967; the two support facilities are on private land which the university held title to before the establishment of the State of Israel
- The University is committed to protect freedom of speech to all members of its academic community – Jews and Arabs – and supports on-campus protests, including political protests. It tries to facilitate freedom of speech while persevering a sense of personal security and collegiality.



WE HAVE GOOD ANSWERS TO EVERY QUESTION!

- HUJI is an independent and pluralistic educational institution. It stands for democracy, human rights, peace, equal opportunities, inclusion and social justice. In this vein, the university leadership has expressed in recent years criticism of governmental policy, which might adversely affect Israeli academia and society, including re the planned constitutional reforms, return of hostages and addressing the humanitarian situation in Gaza
- Few university researchers are involvement in projects that have national security implications. They are committed to maintaining all legal and ethical standards. Like other institutions in the world, HUJI is in the process of reviewing its policies regarding dual use technology.
- HUJI has been involved in a few excavation projects in territories seized by Israel in 1967, in sites which contain important cultural heritage for Jews, Muslims and Christians. Those projects are conducted in accordance with all scientific, legal and ethical standards. Including in accordance with the 1995 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians



AND WE HAVE GOOD QUESTIONS TOO!

- Are academic boycotts compatible with basic values of academia?
- Are academic boycotts against independent and pluralistic institutions effective or counter-productive?
- Are academic boycotts a form of costless virtue signalling? Do they represent surrender to mob pressure?
- Is it a good idea to politicize academic relations?
- Are academic boycotts moral or a form of collective punishment? Are they legal or discriminatory in nature?

“We appeal to all academic institutions to stand firm against manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments that often masquerade as political criticism. It is essential to maintain an academic environment free of discrimination and prejudice.”



Council of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in a global appeal to fellow academies of sciences and international science organizations



This map created by Newsweek shows different U.S. states that have passed legislation or resolutions restricting state agencies from conducting businesses that boycott Israel. NEWSWEEK/FLOURISH MAP/NEWSWEEK/FLOURISH MAP
Source: Newsweek

European Universities Risk US Ban for Boycotting Israel Under Anti-BDS Law



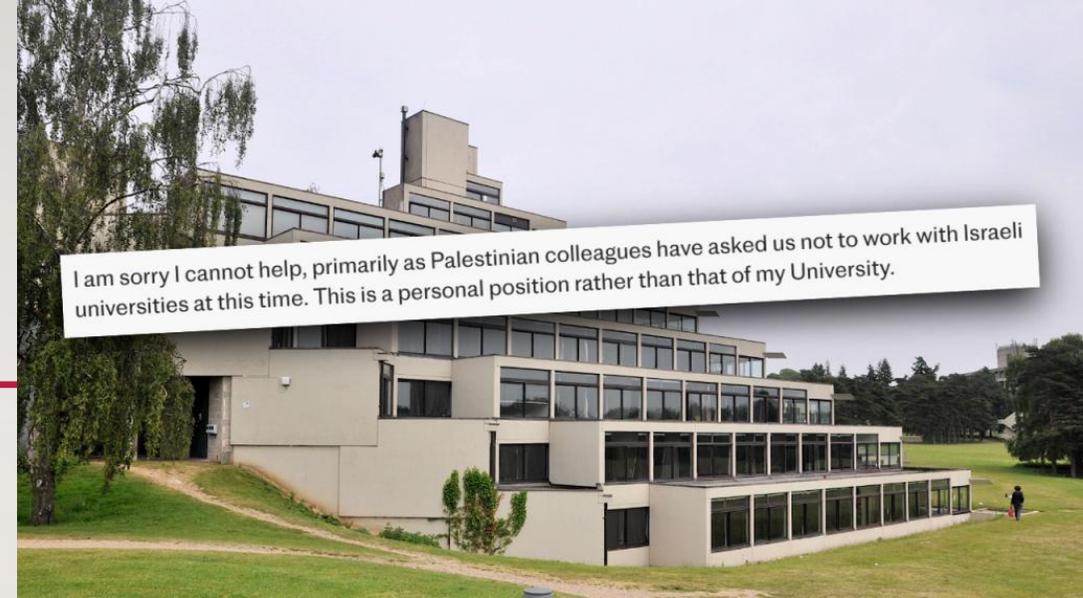
Marc Salomon
Dean Amsterdam Business School & Professor in Decision Science at University of Amsterdam



May 31, 2024

WHAT ACTION DO WE TAKE?

- University task force
- Monitoring and chronicling of BDS incidents
- Dialogue with universities considering or implementing boycott-related measures
- Legal challenges of boycott measures
- Assisting and guiding faculty and students encountering BDS incidents
- Participation in national coordination committee formed by University heads
- Disseminating information on the fight against BDS and in favor of academic freedom and academic cooperation



I am sorry I cannot help, primarily as Palestinian colleagues have asked us not to work with Israeli universities at this time. This is a personal position rather than that of my University.

ולמרות הכל – שיהיה בהצלחה!!!