

ATTACK ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

Whereas the PSC stands with the AFT and the AAUP in “condemning regimes and institutions that limit the freedoms of citizens and faculty,”¹ and in believing that the “quality in higher education, lies in the practices that ensure educational decisions are made by educators for educational reasons—not political or commercial or management reasons”² and

Whereas the PSC strongly opposes placing limitations on academic travel through the denial of visas in countries across the world, as for instance, by the US when a professor at the American University of Beirut was denied entry while traveling to an engineering conference in California, or, the Indian government's decision to bar Pakistani scholars from attending an international conference in New Delhi, or the denial of visa to three Egyptian curators for travelling to a conference in the UK³ and

Whereas Birzeit University in Palestine, a member of the Association of Arab Universities since 1976, offers a wide range of graduate and undergraduate courses and is developing programs in information technology, engineering, sciences, social policy, economics, and management and

Whereas since 2017 scores of foreign passport holders have been denied entry in the country or have had their visa renewal applications either refused or significantly delayed by the Israeli authorities including fifteen foreign passport-holding faculty members at Birzeit University⁴ and

Whereas six of the affected faculty, whose disciplines are history, sociology, economics and English, and five of whom hold U.S. passports one being a graduate of Brooklyn College, have taken their cases to the Israeli courts and

Whereas this policy threatens to isolate Birzeit University from the global academic environment with its diverse professional experiences and high-level skills in an ultimate denial

¹ https://www.aaup.org/file/On-Academic-Boycotts_0.pdf

² <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/academicfreedomstatement0907.pdf>

³ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/12/au-beirut-professor-turned-back-us-airport>;
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/06/08/pakistani-scholars-barred-asian-studies-conference-india> ;
<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/10082018-egyptian-curators-denied-visas>

⁴ The restrictions on international faculty to Birzeit University has been well-documented by international news outlets including *The Associated Press News*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Middle East Monitor*, and *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*. Please see “Foreigners linked to Palestinians face Israeli visa troubles”, *The Associated Press News*, January 24, 2018. <https://www.apnews.com/cdedf2f696e84136a574c6aa89c87e00/Foreigners-linked-to-Palestinians-face-Israeli-visa-troubles>; “Foreign residents in Palestinian territories denied visa renewals”, *Al Jazeera*, July 13, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/foreign-residents-palestinian-territories-denied-visa-renewals-180713112441505.html>; “Israel’s denial of visas for foreign academics hurting Palestinian education”, *The Middle East Monitor*, August 3, 2018. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180803-israels-denial-of-visas-for-foreign-academics-hurting-palestinian-education/>; and “Israeli restrictions on overseas academics are holding Palestinian universities back”, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, June, 2018. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/cn/opinion/israeli-restrictions-overseas-academics-are-holding-palestinian-universities-back>.

of the University's right to deliver a quality and standard of education that meets the accepted global norm and

Whereas Israel's disallowing of a critical mass of faculty from working at Birzeit is not simply an attack on those scholars but on the entire university, thus making it a particularly egregious instance of the violation of academic freedom and labor standards and

Whereas the right to education is a fundamental human right as established in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right, which underlines the critical link between education and the furthering of global perspectives, understanding and connection between diverse peoples and nations and

Whereas this resolution proposing solidarity with academic workers at Birzeit university is expressing solidarity with workers in India, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Resolved that in an act of solidarity, PSC-CUNY demand a halt to the attack on the academic freedom of Birzeit University faculty and students⁵ instigated by the Israeli government's practice of denying access to and presence of international educators and academics contributing to Palestinian's educational development and

Resolved that PSC-CUNY call on the AFT to convey to the Israeli government to adopt and implement a clearly documented and transparent policy enabling access to foreign nationals who are coming to educate or to promote educational development in Birzeit and other Palestinian universities and

Resolved that all entry denials and visa extension refusals issued to international academics be remedied by relevant Israeli authorities without delay.

⁵ The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), one of the largest academic organizations of researchers and teachers working in the Middle East, has recently published a resolution condemning these visa denials as a violation of academic freedom. Please see MESA (2018). "Statement on arbitrary demands on foreign national academics working in Palestinian universities". <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2018/08/06/arbitrary-demands-on-foreign-national-academics-working-in-palestinian-universities>