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Proposed Israeli “Code of Ethics” Violates Academic Freedom

The following is a statement of the AAUP and the American Federation of Teachers.

The ‘code of ethics’ that the government of Israel is considering for the country’s academic institutions is a threat not only to academic freedom in Israel, but to Israel’s standing as a democracy. We join with colleagues in Israel’s Association of University Heads, and with the National Union of Israeli Students, in condemning it.

No educator—at any academic level, anywhere in the world—should be told by outside forces what to say or how to think. Such a proposal is the antithesis of critical thinking and democratic principles. We call on Israel’s government to reject this proposal by minister of education Naftali Bennett in no uncertain terms. Israel’s universities must remain havens of intellectual curiosity and serious study, with no attempt by the state to monitor or restrict faculty political positions or their ability to freely instruct students in their respective areas of expertise.

While we have opposed efforts to boycott Israeli universities, we also oppose stifling discussion of boycott proposals. No one convinces anyone of the merits of their position by preventing free speech. Moreover, movement to do this violates the norms of intellectual freedom and makes any opposition to boycott proposals significantly more difficult to defend. Either you believe in democracy and the freedom to speak, or you don’t. That’s why this proposed code would, in the end, greatly harm Israel on the international stage.

For these reasons, we stand in solidarity with students, faculty and university administrators who oppose this ill-conceived proposal.

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