



August 8, 2018

Statement On Anti-BDS Legislation and Universities

Today the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure released the following statement calling on public universities to stop requiring speakers and others to pledge that they do not now, nor will they in the future, endorse a specific a specific political movement known as boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) with regard to Israel.

According to the National Coalition Against Censorship, at least seventeen states have passed legislation imposing punitive measures against supporters of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) with regard to Israel. As a result, some public universities in those states have begun to require that external speakers invited to campus and others who contract with these universities, such as external reviewers of tenure and promotion materials, sign a statement pledging that they do not now, nor will they in the future, endorse BDS.

The American Association of University Professors does not endorse BDS. We take no position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor on calls for divestment or economic sanctions. But we oppose all academic boycotts, including an academic boycott of Israel, on the grounds that such boycotts violate the principles of academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas for which our organization has stood for over one- hundred years. We believe that academic freedom ought not to be subordinated to political exigency; there will always be compelling political causes that will challenge the ideal of free and open scholarly exchange.

It is precisely for this reason that our opposition to BDS is matched as resolutely by our opposition to these pledges, which are nothing short of an attempt to limit freedom of speech and belief. Indeed, they conjure the specter of loyalty and disclaimer oaths, mainstays of McCarthyism. The right of individuals to engage in political boycotts, and to come together collectively to support a boycott, has a long and storied history in American civil protests. At colleges and universities especially, where reasoned disagreement and debate should be the order of the day, demands that faculty and students forswear support for a peaceful protest are repugnant.

At a time when there is widespread interest in making sure that speakers on all points of the political spectrum are able to make themselves heard on American campuses, the contradiction in seeking to ban advocates of this particular position is obvious and unacceptable. We therefore call on all institutions of higher education in the United States to challenge the required renunciation of BDS and uphold freedom of speech and belief for all members of the academic community.

Additionally, AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure sent a letter to the Israeli government in regard to the interrogation, subsequent expulsion, and apparent banning from Israel of Columbia Law School Professor Katherine Franke over her support of the "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" (BDS) movement in April. The letter urges the government of Israel to "reconsider your immigration officer's decision and to revoke any further ban on Professor Franke's entry for purposes of collaborative academic and scholarly work in Israel."

The letter to the Israeli government can be downloaded [here](#).