



### **AIS Statement on MESA Proposed Resolution regarding BDS**

The Association for Israel Studies, as an affiliated society of MESA, is deeply concerned regarding the proposed resolution in support of BDS.

The Association for Israel Studies is neither an Israeli association nor one that takes any particular political stance on matters of Israeli policy or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The AIS is committed to academic freedom, fundamentally the freedom to engage in the pursuit of knowledge without fear of sanction. Membership in AIS has no ideological litmus test, and members in fact reflect the full range of views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many AIS members are also members of MESA. We express our view, then, as an affiliated society with a strong interest in and commitment to academic freedom.

The proposed resolution accuses Israel alone of violations of human rights. By charging Israeli universities as being “imbricated in these systematic violations”, it casts a net of collective and inescapable guilt over any citizen of Israel and ignores the broad range of opinion and political stances articulated by members of the Israeli academic community. It effectively calls for collective punishment for all who are thus guilty by association. While the language of the proposed resolution claims that it will “target institutions and not individuals”, it is clear that its primary impact will be precisely its effect on individuals, including many individual members of MESA.

Although claiming to be operating in the spirit of “MESA’s commitment to academic freedom”, this resolution in fact represents an effort to curtail and to suppress precisely that freedom for any scholar associated with Israel or with Israeli academic institutions. In short, if the proposed resolution in support of BDS is passed, MESA will have taken a clear stance in opposition to academic freedom, and will have transformed itself from an academic association committed to the free exchange of ideas to an ideological advocacy organization in which only some ideas are permissible. The damage to MESA and to academic activity in the field of Middle East Studies will be unambiguous and profound. We call on the MESA membership to maintain the association’s commitment to academic freedom and reject this discriminatory and censorious resolution.

Sincerely,  
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AIS President

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