

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST the Rutgers AAUP-AFT BDS Resolution

by Jewish Faculty, Staff, and Administrators at Rutgers (JFAS-Rutgers)

The Rutgers AAUP-AFT is seeking to pass a controversial, divisive [resolution](#) to promote the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) agenda. This resolution is **unrelated to** and **distracts from** the mission of Rutgers AAUP-AFT; is **antithetical** to the goal of improving working conditions for Rutgers' faculty and adjuncts; **violates and undermines** academic freedom; and **discriminates** on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, and religion. A summary of our arguments **against this resolution** follows:

1. **The resolution distracts from the Rutgers AAUP-AFT's mission.** Most Rutgers AAUP-AFT members did not join the union to undertake activist political campaigns relating to the Middle East. They belong to ensure fair working conditions, fair pay, and good benefits. The time, money, and human energy being poured into the union's inappropriate foreign policy agenda hamstring its ability to work on the issues of central concern to all members.

2. **The resolution grossly violates academic freedom.** Rutgers AAUP-AFT should stand for academic freedom. This resolution does literally the opposite. The call to cut ties with Tel Aviv University, in particular, would not only restrict creating new partnerships but would *terminate* and *prohibit* existing academic opportunities for members of both universities on the basis of political ideology and cultural identity. This prohibition would also illegally discriminate based on nationality.

3. **To boycott an institution is to punish individuals and to stifle progress in knowledge.** It is impossible to boycott an institution without hindering scholarly collaboration, joint research, and academic discourse, thereby violating individual academic freedoms. As the AAUP noted nearly two decades ago, "Noncooperation with an academic institution inevitably involves a refusal to engage in academic discourse with teachers and researchers, many of whom are not complicit in the policies being protested."

4. **The resolution rests on false, dubious, and tendentiously framed claims.** The "whereas" paragraphs contain many errors of fact and false claims. They egregiously frame the issues in a skewed, one-sided fashion, failing even to mention the atrocities committed by Hamas on Oct 7, 2023. Academics should never present extreme, one-sided narratives as "facts" and must remain sensitive to the range of perspectives on contested events. No measure with such inflammatory, baseless language should receive academic endorsement.

5. **The resolution singles out Israel and neglects the worst violators of freedom and human rights, including countries that are committing atrocities.** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in approximately one million casualties (dead and wounded). China incarcerates its Uyghur population in forced labor camps and has illegally occupied Tibet for 74 years. Horrific repression

goes on in Iran, North Korea, Myanmar, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and many other countries. The union resolution targets Israel, which ranks relatively high on the world's indexes of democracy and human rights, while staying silent about the world's worst human rights offenders. Nor does Hamas—which rejects every tenet of democracy and international law—receive any mention. What standards and metrics does the union use to determine which nations to boycott and in which order? *If the Rutgers AAUP-AFT wishes to sanction foreign entities, it must do so consistently.* To single out alleged violations in one country is arbitrary and tendentious and leaves the implication that the union has no problem with aggression, repression, and human rights violations around the globe.

**6. The Rutgers AAUP-AFT is the wrong venue for international conflict resolution.** Conflicts over the Middle East have divided people of goodwill for decades. They are best debated in the political arena, not a professional union dedicated to its members' fair treatment and compensation. Scores of organizations exist through which individuals can partake in Middle East activism from whatever political standpoint they prefer.

**7. This resolution will sow needless division between and among members.** The Rutgers AAUP-AFT should be a home for *all* its members, no matter their politics. Taking sides in a notoriously controversial issue will pit colleagues against each other, alienate members who don't support the resolution, and make those who identify with Israel feel singled out and victimized. Many Jews, Israelis, and their allies on campus already feel unwelcome and ostracized within a hostile environment. Passing this measure will signal that inclusivity at Rutgers does not extend to them.

**8. Passing this resolution will adversely affect members' activities that are central to their work as scholars and educators.** Although the union resolution focuses on Israeli military and intelligence technology, we anticipate that BDS promoters will use the resolution as a green light to extend the boycott more generally. Already we have witnessed calls to refuse to advise Israeli or Zionist students; not serve on dissertation committees of Israeli or Zionist students, or with committee members who are Israeli or Zionist; not collaborate with or cite research that includes Israeli or Zionist scholars; not serve on professional bodies or attend conferences with ties to Israeli or Zionist academics or Israeli institutions; refuse to provide promotion letters, grant promotion and tenure, or hire Israeli or Zionist academics. These actions violate individuals' civil rights and academic freedom and create a hostile work and educational environment.

**9. Passing this resolution will reputationally and materially damage the union.** Adopting such an emotionally worded, factually deficient, biased and incendiary resolution will tarnish the union's professional reputation. Already, dozens of outraged faculty members have quit the union over its Middle East politics. If this resolution moves forward, many more members will cancel their dues, adversely affecting the union's finances.

**10. The resolution will compromise members' participation in the union.** The resolution will place many people at Rutgers in untenable dilemmas. Although many will cancel their dues, others

will feel pressure to retain their membership at the cost of compromising their cultural identities. If these members need union help, will they feel compelled to hide their religious, national, or cultural affiliations? Will they receive a fair hearing from the union on issues related to their Jewishness or support for Israel, such as on a promotion evaluation that has been tainted by anti-Jewish or anti-Israel bias?

**11. Passing this resolution will damage Rutgers University.** As Rutgers employees, we seek to promote the university's reputation for its high-quality education and research, not any political agenda. Being linked to the sort of extremism that this resolution embodies will hurt Rutgers' reputation at home and abroad.

**12. The Rutgers AAUP-AFT cannot actually carry out this resolution.** The union cannot enforce academic policies at Rutgers, nor can it force the university to divest from assets, or force students and faculty to not use business with significant Israeli connections, such as Google or Amazon. The only result of the resolution will be to sow ill will across the university and damage its reputation.

**13. Individual union members and others will be challenged to practically implement this resolution.** Will Rutgers faculty and administrators, or perhaps the members of the Board of Governors and Board of Trustees with fiduciary responsibility to the University be expected to switch from Google to another search engine? From Amazon to a different e-commerce site? Open their computers, cars, and phones to ensure that the Intel chip was not made or designed in Israel? Make travel plans so as not to fly on a Boeing aircraft? Should everyone stop using Teva Pharmaceuticals? This resolution is an empty gesture to call for divestment from companies that everyone will continue using in their everyday lives.

**14. The State of New Jersey opposes BDS.** New Jersey officially condemns BDS (SJR81) and prohibits the state from investing pension and annuity funds in companies boycotting Israel (S1923). Passing this resolution thus has public policy and legal ramifications. Further, the AAUP's mission includes securing state funding for higher education, yet this measure will very likely have the opposite effect.

**15. This resolution will not advance peace.** Nothing constructive will be achieved through this resolution. It will not further the cause of Middle East peace nor the rights of Palestinians. It will only create more conflict and acrimony in our community.