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*These presidents, along with Harold T. Shapiro, President Emeritus of Princeton University, organized this initiative.

Boycott Israeli Universities? Boycott Ours, Too!

“As a citizen, I am profoundly disturbed by the recent vote by Britain’s new University and College Union to advance a boycott against Israeli academic institutions. As a university professor and president, I find this idea utterly antithetical to the fundamental values of the academy, where we will not hold intellectual exchange hostage to the political disagreements of the moment. In seeking to quarantine Israeli universities and scholars, this vote threatens every university committed to fostering scholarly and cultural exchanges that lead to enlightenment, empathy, and a much-needed international marketplace of ideas.

“At Columbia, I am proud to say that we embrace Israeli scholars and universities that the UCU is now all too eager to isolate—as we embrace scholars from many countries regardless of divergent views on their government’s policies. Therefore, if the British UCU is intent on pursuing its deeply misguided policy, then it should add Columbia to its boycott list, for we do not intend to draw distinctions between our mission and that of the universities you are seeking to punish. Boycott us, then, for we gladly stand together with our many colleagues in British, American and Israeli universities against such intellectually shoddy and politically biased attempts to hijack the central mission of higher education.”

Lee Bollinger, President, Columbia University

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