January 17, 2014

Mr. Curtis Marez
President
American Studies Association
1120 19th St NW, Suite 301
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Marez:

We write in strong opposition to the American Studies Association’s (ASA) recent decision to boycott Israeli universities and academic institutions. While ASA has every right to express its views on policies pursued by any nation or government, we believe that the decision to blacklist Israeli academic institutions for Israeli government policies with which ASA disagrees demonstrates a blatant disregard for academic freedom.

The ASA claims that the boycott “is in solidarity with scholars and students deprived of their academic freedom and it aspires to enlarge that freedom for all, including Palestinians.” We believe that this boycott accomplishes just the opposite. The university is an institution intended to foster, encourage, and inspire constructive dialogue and original thought. However, this boycott undermines academic freedom by prohibiting educational and cultural exchanges with Israeli universities and academic institutions.

Even more concerning is the singular targeting of Israel for boycott. Like all democracies, Israel is not perfect. But to single out Israel, while leaving relationships with universities in autocratic and repressive countries intact, suggests thinly-veiled bigotry and bias against the Jewish State. This morally dishonest double standard has already been rejected by well over 100 university presidents, with several member universities even withdrawing from the organization in protest.

Some higher education organizations—including the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of American Universities—have denounced the boycott as unjust and harmful to the goals of academic freedom. Even Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejects boycotts of Israel, stating: “No, we do not support the boycott of Israel... We have relations with Israel, we have mutual recognition of Israel.”

Academic cooperation can be an important tool to help foster peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but you have chosen the unproductive path of isolation. We hope that the ASA will learn to appreciate the mutually beneficial academic ties between the United States and Israel and work with us to promote peace and academic freedom.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Roskam
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress
Doug Collins  
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider  
Member of Congress

Edward R. Royce  
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

Fred Upton  
Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress

Peter T. King  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

James Lankford  
Member of Congress

Steve Israel  
Member of Congress

Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress
Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Tiberi
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Cory Gardner
Member of Congress

Kevin Yoder
Member of Congress

Jim Bridenstine
Member of Congress

Kerry Bentivolio
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Todd Rokita
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Aaron Schock
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Tom Marino
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

John Fleming
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Ron DeSantis
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson
Member of Congress

Alan Grayson
Member of Congress
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

George Holding
Member of Congress

Luke Messer
Member of Congress

Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress

Ted Yoho
Member of Congress

Michael Grimm
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress

Rush Holt
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy III
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress

Paul Cook
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Allyson Y. Schwartz
Member of Congress

Tim Griffin
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress
Susan K. DelBene  Member of Congress
Ann M. Kuster  Member of Congress
Scott H. Peters  Member of Congress
Steve Cohen  Member of Congress
John A. Yarmuth  Member of Congress
David Loebbeck  Member of Congress
Kathy Castor  Member of Congress
James R. Langevin  Member of Congress
Jeff Duncan  Member of Congress
David Cicilline  Member of Congress
Patrick Meehan  Member of Congress
Randy Hultgren  Member of Congress
Al Green  Member of Congress
Steve Scalise  Member of Congress
Adam B. Schiff  Member of Congress
Paul C. Broun  Member of Congress
Joseph Crowley  Member of Congress
Denny Heck  Member of Congress
Todd C. Young  Member of Congress
Carolyn McCarthy  Member of Congress

Cc:
Ms. Lisa Duggan
President-elect
American Studies Association
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