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

Edward R. Royce
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Fred Upton
Member of Congress

Peter T. King
Member of Congress

James Lankford
Member of Congress

Pete Sessions
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Steve Israel
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Alan Nunnelee  
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

Joe Garcia  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

Tom Reed  
Member of Congress

Mark Meadows  
Member of Congress

Patrick Murphy  
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce  
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters  
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Daniel Lipinski  
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Tom Latham  
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert  
Member of Congress
Suzan 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 Loebsack  
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

Jo Young  
Member of Congress

Carolyn Malash  
Member of Congress

Cc:  
Ms. Lisa Duggan  
President-elect  
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