



Useful quotes

I

POLITICIANS

“Not only would a boycott be inconsistent with the spirit of openness and tolerance that should inform public life. It would also be counterproductive. Education plays a vital role in developing and aiding understanding between different people. It is therefore all the more important to keep open channels of communication with academics and educational institutions in the Middle East during these difficult times.”

Bill Rammell MP Minister for Higher Education

“The Government unequivocally deplores any proposed boycott. Not only is a boycott wrong in principle, undermining the integrity of relations between bona fide centres of learning, but in practice its only likely effects would be to weaken the progressive forces within both Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories.”

Lord Adonis Minister for Education

“The boycott – I don’t agree with it.”

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP Secretary of State for International Development, Labour Party Deputy Leader Candidate

“I have always advocated closer and stronger ties between the trade union, co-operative and Labour movements in Israel and the UK. This has always been the socialist approach.

Boycotts of Israeli academics, institutions and products do nothing to help the peace process, nor the conditions of the Palestinian people, nor the right of Israel to exist in peace and security; indeed they may prove counter-productive at this difficult and sensitive time.”

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP Chair of the Labour Party, Labour Party Deputy Leader Candidate

“Instead of proposing unwieldy and blunt instruments such as boycotts, all interested parties in the UK should work to support talks between the democratically elected governments of Israel and Palestine, and support efforts to ensure that international law is followed and applied on all sides.

While these debates have certainly been coming to the fore in several unions, I do not believe that the Trade Union movement as a whole is favourable to boycotts of this kind. I think that the overwhelming majority of Trade Unions are approaching these debates with a clear intention of trying to aid their Israeli and Palestinian sisters and brothers.”

Mr Jon Cruddas MP Labour Party Deputy Leader Candidate



Useful quotes

2

POLITICIANS CONTINUED

“Completely deplorable and counter productive. The motion will do nothing to help Palestinian students who are keen to study in the relative oasis of Israeli universities and will exacerbate the position of Jewish students in the UK who already feel harassed, intimidated and uncomfortable on campus.”

Dr Denis MacShane MP

“It is wrong in principle to try to make individuals responsible for the actions government. This boycott is misconceived and should be dropped.”

Mr Chris Huhne MP

“There are ongoing attempts by the University and College Union to initiate a UK-wide boycott of Israeli academics. Such a biased and unhelpful response cannot be tolerated or supported. There is no justification for punishing some of the world’s finest intellectuals and academic institutions. Disengaging from debate with Israelis could not be more inappropriate for a profession dedicated to debate and discussion.

British lecturers claim the dubious distinction of launching the first campaign for a boycott. The revived UCU has gone on with this anti-intellectualism, so damaging to the world-wide reputation of British universities.”

Baroness Deech

“I entirely share the view that boycotts will be either ineffective or counter-productive, and we are nowhere near a situation where that would be helpful. But, as things stand, young Palestinians in particular are greatly disadvantaged — even more so now than in the recent past.

However, the last thing that is needed is a boycott. The situation needs greater exchange, interaction and mutual conversation by those most involved in it. In this way, indeed, there will be hope in dialogue.”

The Lord Bishop of Chester

“I believe that the idea of a boycott is entirely abhorrent. Exchange is always better than exclusion. The arguments put forward by those who suggest that there should be a boycott of Israeli universities are generally worthy of a mark equivalent to gamma minus given on a good afternoon during this examination season. They ignore the fact that intellectual endeavour is enforced by the hot wires which run between academic journals and academic conferences and which link people together. Engagement is always better than exclusion.”

Lord Patten



Useful quotes

3

POLITICIANS CONTINUED

“The proposed boycott is bad for science. It counters the very concept of science, about absolute truth and academic freedom. The boycott is also bad for the their desire for nationhood. All that it does is alienate their friends and supporters give comfort to their enemies. They have chosen the wrong target.”

Lord Mitchell

“There is a time and a place for teenage gesture politics; this is not it. This is a time for building bridges, opening up dialogue and promoting tolerance. I fervently hope that the moderate members of UCU will seize back their union.”

Baroness Morris of Bolton

“A boycott would be totally misguided. It would offend against academic freedom and destroy precious bridges between academics internationally. Politically, it would help no one, contributing nothing to solving Middle East problems. I hope that the rational arguments against it will prevail within universities.”

Lord Moser

“Academic campuses must provide the fora for critical thinking and the exchange of ideas, but with that freedom comes the responsibility for all academics to make measured and accurate assessments of the actions of governments and to avoid gratuitous attacks and extreme language that may offend or inflame. Universities should teach people to think critically, not criticise unthinkingly.”

Baroness Walmsley

“To target academics in this way is not only anti-academic; it also targets the very people who are most likely to help in a liberal answer to the peace process in the Middle East.”

Professor Lord Winston



ACADEMIC BODIES

“UCU members are free to debate the pros and cons of an institutional boycott of Israeli universities. Universities UK, however, would oppose any such boycott as this would seem to us to be inimical to academic freedom, including the freedom of academics to collaborate with other academics, regardless of nationality or location. It is very difficult to understand how such a boycott would be defensible given these obligations, and even harder to understand what beneficial effect it could possibly have. At the same time, we must uphold the fundamental right of academics to question government policies, including policies of the Israeli Government. Academics must have the freedom to voice that disagreement.”

Professor Drummond Bone President, Universities UK

“We reject outright the call for an academic boycott. It is a contradiction in terms and in direct conflict with the mission of a university. It betrays a misunderstanding of the academic mission, which is founded squarely on freedom of inquiry and freedom of speech. Any institution worthy of the title of university has the responsibility to protect these values, and it is particularly disturbing to find an academic union attacking academic freedom in this way. The Russell Group universities will uphold academic freedom by standing firm against any boycott that threatens it.”

Professor Malcolm Grant Chairman, Russell Group, President and Provost, UCL

“The Academy of Medical Sciences is strongly against academic boycotts based on nationality, race, sex, language, religion or opinion. The Academy supports global collaborations and believes the neutrality of scholarly endeavour should transcend politics.”

Academy of Medical Sciences

“For more than twenty years the British Academy has made clear its opposition to academic boycotts. It supports free academic interchange, global collaboration and participation in scholarly activity, without regard to race, religion, political philosophy, ethnic origin, citizenship, language and sex.”

British Academy



Useful quotes

5

ACADEMIC BODIES CONTINUED

“The Royal Society supports global collaboration and participation in science and is therefore opposed to blanket academic boycotts. We all look forward to an equitable solution to the crisis in the Middle East, with lasting peace and stability for both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. But, the strongest impact of a moratorium would, rather than influence Israeli policy-makers, seriously and unfairly harm our scientific colleagues in Israel - many of whom have actively promoted peace through collegial engagement and open communication among academic centres in the region.”

Royal Society

“Moratoria on scientific exchanges based on nationality, race, sex, language, religion, opinion and similar factors thwart the network’s goals. They would deny our colleagues their rights to freedom of opinion and expression; interfere with their ability to exercise their bona fide academic freedoms; inhibit the free circulation of scientists and scientific ideas; and impose unjust punishment. They would also be an impediment to the instrumental role played by scientists and scholars in the promotion of peace and human rights.”

International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (June 2002)



ACADEMICS

“It is through cooperation based on mutual respect, rather than boycotts or discrimination, that our common goals can be achieved. Our disaffection with, and condemnation of, acts of academic boycotts is predicated on the principles of academic freedom, human rights and equality between nations and among individuals.

The reason I don't believe the boycott is the way to go is that I believe peace must be built on the bridge between two civil societies.”

Sari Nusseibeh President Al-Quds University (Jerusalem)

“The very idea of a boycott of Israeli universities on whose campuses both Jews and Arabs can pursue their studies is quite perverse. The future for Israelis and Palestinians will be bright only when there is co-operation and partnership rather than wholly misguided attempts at division.”

Dr Kenneth Collins Research Fellow, Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Glasgow

“What can possibly be gained by cutting ties between Israeli academics and their peers in other countries? All the research shows that peace and reconciliation grows from dialogue, debate and the strengthening of human interaction. How can an association of academics side with the enemies of open societies and ignore empirical evidence written up in academic journals?”

Professor Margaret Harris Professor of Voluntary Sector Organisation, Aston Business School, University of Aston

“Most if not all British academics would be rightly outraged at being held responsible for many of the actions of the current UK government; threatening an academic boycott against Israel holds Israeli academics responsible for the actions of their government in a revolting double standard.”

Dr Emma Hornby Lecturer in Music, University of Bristol

“I believe that education is one of the best ways of breaking down prejudice and ill-feeling; restricting access and interactions for any group can only lead to increased isolation, making any problems worse, and certainly not helping to solve them. Academic boycotts simply cannot work.”

Dr Julian Huppert Chemistry Fellow, Trinity College, University of Cambridge



Useful quotes

7

ACADEMICS CONTINUED

“Those of us who have lived through the Troubles in Northern Ireland know a thing or two about conflict. One thing we have certainly learned is that a one-sided, partisan approach to a complex problem is counter-productive. If we are going to have a debate on the Middle East then let’s also put on the agenda suicide bombings of civilian targets, Hamas’s challenge to the very existence of Israel, democracy in Syria and Saudi Arabia, Islamist attitudes to women, and academic freedom in Iran. But really, where does this get us? If our Union becomes a forum for contentious world issues, the practical result is to tear the Union apart. The effect of this motion, consciously or not, is a wrecking one: undermining the good work of the Union itself.”

Professor Liam Kennedy Professor of Economic and Social History, Queen’s University Belfast

“I condemn this proposed boycott. It is misconceived, being based on a flawed analysis of the situation in which academics operate in Israel; and it is misdirected in that it targets the very principle on which constructive ways forward may be developed. The statistics on the involvement of Palestinians in Israeli Universities, and the record of Israeli academics in opposing unreasonable government actions speak volumes for the bankruptcy of the boycott proposal. But, at root, I condemn the proposed boycott because it attacks the very foundations of academia; it panders to those insidious forces of darkness which perennially act to obscure the advancement of knowledge.”

Professor (Brian) Les Lancaster Consciousness & Transpersonal Psychology Research Unit, School of Psychology, Liverpool John Moores University

“I am an academic in order to hear and judge voices, never to silence them.”

Dr Timothy Lynch Lecturer in US foreign policy, Institute for the Study of the Americas, School of Advanced Study, University of London

“All fair minded and unprejudiced people, let alone academics in universities, must automatically reject outright the call for an academic boycott. It is a contradiction in terms and in direct conflict with the mission of a university. It betrays a misunderstanding of the academic mission, which is founded squarely on freedom of inquiry and freedom of speech. Any institution worthy of the title of university has the responsibility to protect these values, and all staff in universities should be diligently exercising that responsibility rather than aggressively promoting their destruction. It is particularly disturbing to find an academic union attacking academic freedom in this way and should be vigorously condemned and resisted.”

Professor Mark Pepys Head of Department of Medicine, University College Medical School



Useful quotes

8

ACADEMICS CONTINUED

“When academics start taking the role of judge and juror over the complex governmental policies of another country, and then condemn, exclude and ostracise fellow academics because of those policies, they compromise the very essence of academic freedom and advancement.”

Dr Sandi Mann Senior Lecturer in Occupational Psychology, University of Central Lancashire

“The proposed boycott is inimical to the spirit of free speech and open academic debate. It should be opposed by all fairminded people.”

Dr Thomas Otte School of History, University of East Anglia

“The proposed boycott is one-sided, discriminatory, and contrary to fundamental values of academic freedom and exchange. It would be counter-productive and obstruct rather than further dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. It would further bring the academic profession in the UK into disrepute.”

Professor Larry Ray Professor of Sociology, University of Kent

“I will not support or condone a boycott that would jeopardize my collaboration with Israeli academics, who themselves are working directly with Palestinians to solve water resources problems and social issues that bedevil life on the West Bank and in Gaza.”

Professor Ian Reid Professor of Physical Geography, Loughborough University

“If we boycotted universities every time governments did things we disapprove of, we would gradually cease to engage in academic discourse altogether. The boycott of Israeli academics is discriminatory, ill-judged and wholly unacceptable.”

Professor David Sanders Professor of Government, University of Essex

“I am utterly appalled that as academics we should boycott anyone. Our role as academics is to push knowledge, exchange ideas and promote relationships and dialogue. The boycott does none of this. Further more it would stifle those academics in the UK, such as myself, who have academic relationships with both Israeli and Palestinian colleagues and friends.”

Dr Michael Short School of Planning & Architecture, University of the West of England

“I disagree with some things that the Israeli government have done, many things that the Bush administration have done and virtually everything that the current Zimbabwe government have done, but I simply cannot understand or accept why this means we should cease to have contacts with academic colleagues in any of these countries.

If academics cannot talk to each other, then who can?”

Professor Simon Wessely King's Centre for Military Health, King's College London