

Middle East
Studies
Association



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ON
March 23, 2022

Contact: secretariat@mesana.org

Middle East Studies Association Members Vote to Ratify BDS Resolution in Referendum

*80% of MESA's Participating Members Voted in Favor of Resolution In
Solidarity With Palestinians Seeking Education Rights*

Washington, DC – In a 768-167 vote, members of the Middle East Studies Association have voted in favor of a resolution endorsing the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions of Israel as a way to hold the government accountable for ongoing human rights violations. All full 2022 MESA members were asked to cast their votes electronically on the proposed resolution during a 50-day voting period that lasted from January 31 through March 22. Now that the resolution has been ratified, MESA's Board of Directors will work in consultation with its Committee on Academic Freedom to enforce it in a manner consistent with MESA's bylaws as well as relevant U.S. federal, state, and local laws.

*"Our members have cast a clear vote to answer the call for solidarity from Palestinian scholars and students experiencing violations of their right to education and other human rights," said **MESA President Eve Troutt Powell**. "MESA's Board will work to honor the will of its members and ensure that the call for an academic boycott is upheld without undermining our commitment to the free exchange of ideas and scholarship."*

The [resolution](#) states that the boycott will not target individual students or scholars, and reiterates the right of individual MESA members to choose whether or not they wish to participate in an academic boycott. It calls for an academic boycott of Israeli institutions for their complicity in Israel's violations of human rights and international law through their provision of direct assistance to the military and intelligence establishments.

Right to education violations cited in the resolution include: “restricting freedom of movement for Palestinians; isolating, undermining, or otherwise attacking Palestinian educational institutions; harassing Palestinian professors, teachers, and students; harassing Israeli professors and students criticizing Israeli policies; destroying, confiscating, or otherwise rendering Palestinian archival material inaccessible; and maintaining inequality in educational resources between Palestinians and Israelis.”

During the 50-day period MESA members were casting their votes, the Israeli government also [published new procedures](#) that would allow it to restrict the employment of foreign lecturers and researchers, the acceptance of foreign students, and fields of study at Palestinian institutions of higher education in the West Bank. MESA is still evaluating how the new procedures will impact its membership.

“Since 2005, the BDS vote has been discussed among MESA members, who have organized various forums for conversations and debates regarding participation in an academic boycott of Israeli institutions and other ways of standing in solidarity with Palestinian scholars at risk under Israel’s longstanding military occupation,” added **Troutt Powell**. *“We affirm our commitment to academic freedom for Palestinians, and for all scholars in all countries throughout the region.”* For more on MESA’s work to defend academic freedom, see [here](#).

For further information or interview requests, please contact: secretariat@mesana.org.

-End-

The [Middle East Studies Association \(MESA\)](#) is a non-profit association that fosters the study of the Middle East, promotes high standards of scholarship and teaching, and encourages public understanding of the region and its peoples through programs, publications, and services.

Follow MESA on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) for the latest on the field of Middle East Studies.