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August 15, 2023

In anti-Israel vote, anthropologists support the greatest hoax since the Piltdown man

Dear Friend of Israel, Friend of FLAME:

Though anthropology has long been regarded—accurately or not—as a pseudoscience that produces graduates with scant job prospects, the field just took a major hit to its integrity and intellectual stature. The American Anthropological Association (AAA) recently voted in favor of a resolution to boycott Israeli academic institutions, joining in the vilification and empirically false accusations against the Jewish state that defines the BDS movement.

Ironically, it's likely the AAA and its members who will <u>suffer most</u> from the passage of this resolution, not Israel.

As with all pro-BDS resolutions, the AAA resolution unfairly singles out and demonizes Israel—a clear act of Jew-hatred according to the globally accepted IHRA definition of antisemitism. It <u>falsely accuses Israel</u> of oppressing the Palestinians, being an apartheid state and enlisting its academic institutions to persecute Palestinians.

The resolution was carried in a vote involving just 37% of AAA members—hardly a consensus. More importantly, the AAA action is <u>counterproductive</u> because it targets the very academic institutions in Israel that strive to promote cooperation and dialogue between Jews and Arabs.

It's hard to imagine a serious, self-respecting anthropology professional supporting the <u>embarrassing parade of falsehoods</u> contained in AAA's resolution to support BDS and demonize the Jewish state.

Like the anthropological hoax of last century's Piltdown man, AAA's pro-BDS resolution is based on lies. The resolution asserts that a) Israel violates the rights of the Palestinian people; b) Israel is a racist, apartheid state, and c) Israel's academic institutions assist the Israeli military and are therefore complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people.

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Piltdown, you may recall, was touted as a hominid ancestor representing the missing link between humans and apes. It was based on alleged skeletal findings by several prominent anthropologists and was only <u>exposed as a hoax</u> by other scientists some 40 years later.

The AAA's anti-Israel representations are equally untrue and expose it to a similar scandal.

In fact, Israel respects the rights of the Palestinian people more than any country in the Middle East. Two million Israeli-Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the same rights as Jewish citizens. There is simply no separation by race or ethnicity . . . and zero apartheid.

More than 90% of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria (aka the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip—who are not Israeli citizens—have self-governance under the Oslo Accords. While Israel does not deny Palestinians basic, day-to-day civil liberties, their respective dictatorships treat them harshly. Their <u>rulers deny them</u> all basic civil liberties: Free speech, assembly and voting are not allowed, nor is rule of law respected. Corruption is rampant.

Yet the AAA resolution makes <u>no mention</u> of this cruel Palestinian-on-Palestinian oppression.

Moreover, Israel has multiple times tried to free itself from controlling territories where most Palestinians live—by offering the Palestinians statehood. On three separate occasions since the year 2000, Israel offered 95% of Judea and Samaria and a capital in Jerusalem in exchange for peace.

The AAA <u>fails to mention</u> these peace offers or why Palestinian leaders refused every one.

Nor is Israel a racist state. In fact, it is the most racially diverse, multicultural and tolerant country in the region. Israeli-Arabs participate equally in every facet of Israeli society, including all levels of government, and Arabs and Jews live side by side in many larger cities.

For good measure, women and sexual minorities also enjoy equal rights in Israel—unlike any other country in the Middle East.

Yet the AAA <u>neglects to condemn</u> any other state—not Egypt, not Yemen, not China, not Indonesia, not Saudi Arabia—for its persecution of racial, religious or sexual minorities.

Finally, Israel's academic institutions are no more complicit in the activities of the Israeli military than American academic institutions are in the activities of the American military. Yet, the AAA resolution does not call for a boycott of academic institutions in the U.S. . . . or in Russia or Iran whose academies are fully in the pockets of their rulers.

Rather than furthering peace, dialogue and honest debate within their discipline, the AAA's boycott serves to suppress truth and academic freedom. Indeed, prior to the AAA vote on the pro-BDS resolution, the

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Anthropologists for Academic Freedom issued a statement saying, "A boycott means that the American Anthropological Association will be participating in an <u>assault on fundamental principles</u> of open discourse, exchange of ideas, and free argumentation—principles that lie at the very foundation of the academy."

Another statement calling on AAA to "unequivocally reject" the resolution was issued by the Alliance for Academic Freedom and the Academic Engagement Network, who jointly represent nearly 1,000 U.S. faculty, including anthropologists and members of AAA. It was signed by more than 100 organizations, including major Jewish organizations and even left-leaning associations, such as Americans for Peace Now, J Street and Partners for a Progressive Israel.

By joining the BDS movement, AAA is also working against academic institutions trying to promote peace and dialogue between Jews and Arabs.

That's why Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, the former President of Al-Quds University, who once served as the PLO's representative in East Jerusalem, said, "It is within the (Israeli) academic community that we've had the most <u>progressive pro-peace views</u> and views that have come out in favor of seeing us as equals . . . If you want to punish any sector, this is the last one to approach."

In short, the AAA's pro-BDS resolution is shameful—severely diminishing an already beleaguered profession and its members. Indeed, 107 organizations warned they would boycott AAA if the resolution passed. AAA also faces lawsuits for violating the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has been adopted by Virginia, where the association is based, and for violating state laws prohibiting BDS activities.

Please make the point when speaking with family, friends, colleagues—or in letters to the editor—that until AAA reverses its decision to support the antisemitic BDS movement, self-respecting professionals in anthropology and other academic fields should avoid cooperating with the association. Boycotts work both ways.

I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to forward this message to friends, visit FLAME's lively Facebook page and review the P.S. immediately below. It describes FLAME's new hasbarah campaign—"Can Biden's Plan Beat Antisemitism?"—which boldly challenges the Administration to use its new Strategy to Counter Antisemitism courageously, prosecuting and condemning all antisemitism from every corner of American society—including Congressional members, ethnic studies programs, and attacks on Jews by minority groups.

Best regards, Jason Shvili, Contributing Editor Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME))

P.S. You've surely seen headlines describing skyrocketing attacks on Jews in recent years and months—and you probably heard about the President's new National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. But all evidence

indicates that the Administration is *not* committed to fighting antisemites among its own voters and party officials. I hope you'll agree that we opponents of antisemitism <u>across all sectors</u> of American society need to speak out. FLAME's new *hasbarah*—explanatory message—"Can Biden's Plan Beat Antisemitism?"—enumerates some of the antisemitic offenders most damaging to American Jews . . . and most likely to be *ignored* by the Administration. I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME intends to publish in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Star Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Harris and President Biden. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to <u>support us</u>.

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