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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0530

MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

HENRY A. WAXMAN
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

May 12, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20520-0229

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the decision of the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) to boycott Israeli universities and to urge the Department of State to sever all ties with schools and professors who abide by this unjust directive.

The AUT boycott, which was spearheaded by the organization's Executive Committee, was launched on April 22 by a vote of 28-26. The boycott calls for AUT members to "refrain from participation in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration, or joint projects" with two highly respected universities in Israel, Haifa University and Bar Ilan University. Although Hebrew University was pulled from the list at the last minute, it is still being considered for inclusion pending further review.

The AUT's choice to blacklist schools like Bar-Ilan, which has been recognized by UNESCO for its studies to promote peace and tolerance between Jews and Arabs, and Haifa, where more than 20% of the students are Arab, demonstrates its lack of merit. The fact that the AUT ban provides an exception for "Israeli academics and intellectuals opposed to their state's colonial and racist policies" only further indicates how this effort seeks to suppress the free exchange of ideas. The AUT leadership should find a way to express its concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without promoting the kind of prejudice that harkens back to the Nuremberg laws used by Nazi Germany to discredit Jewish academics.

It is incumbent upon the United States to oppose this assault on academic freedom and stand against the effort to isolate Israeli educational institutions. The State Department should take decisive measures to disassociate itself from the AUT campaign and discourage participation by making all professors and institutions that abide by this or other academic boycotts ineligible for U.S. funded grants and exchanges. I urge you to take swift action and I look forward to your response.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,


HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress