

Statement on the Importance of Free Movement of Scholars Across Borders

September 14, 2018

ASA has recently been alerted to efforts by the Israeli government to tighten restrictions on international academics who teach at Palestinian institutions of higher education.

Israel controls border access to the Palestinian territories, and denial of or refusal to extend visas severely hampers the professional and intellectual freedom of those wishing to teach and learn at Palestinian universities. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education, who queried foreign academics at eight universities, the number of international academics willing to teach at Palestinian universities is decreasing, and those who remain are often afraid to leave for fear they may not be able to return.

ASA has a long history of supporting academic freedom and freedom of movement for scholars. For example, we have voiced concern about Bush administration policies that restricted travel and intellectual exchanges between the U.S. and Cuba, the proposed boycott of Israeli academics and academic institutions and the Trump administration's Executive Order regarding entry into the U.S. for people from seven majority Muslim countries.

Today we reiterate our principles and precedents on the importance of freedom of movement across borders:

"The Association deplores restrictions on the free movement of scholars and students and barriers to scholarly inquiry and exchange."

"The... Association... support[s] the protection of academic independence and the integrity of scientific research through the open movement of faculty and students between universities irrespective of nationality or political views."

"The free flow of scholars and scholarship across national borders is a fundamental tenet of academic freedom."

"Scientific progress depends on openness, transparency, and the free flow of ideas and people."