

US unions slam UK's Israel boycott calls

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Over 30 American trade unions ranging from the American Federation of Teachers to the American Postal Workers have condemned the spate of boycott initiatives by trade union movements in the UK, branding them "inimical" and questioning the motives for singling out Israel.

The University and College Union motion to boycott Israeli academic institutions came in for strong criticism.

"Calls for academic boycotts of Israel are inimical to and counter to the principles of academic freedom and freedom of association, key principles for which academics and educational unions have struggled over many years. Rather than limiting interactions with Israeli educators, academics and educational institutions, we see the importance of maximizing, rather than proscribing, the free flow of ideas and academic interaction between peoples, cultures, religions and countries," the union said in a statement issued late Thursday evening.

With atrocities occurring around the globe, the trade unionists questioned the motivations of the boycotters and asked why the motions are by nature one-sided: "With the large number of local, regional and international conflicts, with the diverse range of oppressive regimes around the world about which there is almost universal silence, we have to question the motives of these resolutions that single out one country in one conflict.

"We note with increasing concern that virtually all of these resolutions focus solely on objections to actions or policies of the Israeli government, and never on actions or policies of Palestinian or other Arab governments, parties or movements. We notice with increasing concern that characterization of the Palestinians as victims and Israel as victimizer is a staple of such resolutions. That there are victims and victimizers on all sides, and that many if not most of the victims of violence and repression on all sides are civilians, are essential items often not mentioned in these resolutions."

The unionists went on to recommend that engagement and investment of time, energy and material aid is the best means to alleviate the ongoing suffering of Palestinians and Israelis.

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