

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Label: SGAR-58002

Date introduced: June 23rd, 2021

Author(s): Vice President Alghafir and Chief Election Commissioner DeSilva

Sponsor(s): Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Muslim Student Association (MSA), Muslim Legal Society (MLS), Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), Refugee Advancement through Humanitarian Aid (RAHA), Ahlul-Bayt Student Organization, CoogSlam

Draft: Vote

Protection and Support of Pro-Palestine Students and Activism Resolution

Whereas, the University of Houston Student Government Association stands in solidarity with marginalized populations and aims to advocate against acts of injustice;

Whereas, the University of Houston, as a public institution, is bound to the tenets of the First Amendment, which outlines the right of freedom of expression and assembly;

Whereas, the Equal Opportunity Services Anti-Discrimination Policy states that the University of Houston system is, “committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and harassment of any kind”¹;

Whereas, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) is a Registered Student Organization at the University of Houston whose mission statement is to “promote an understanding of the Palestinian struggle on campus by encouraging our peers to express solidarity with those fighting for freedom, justice, and equality in the Palestinian region”;

Whereas, Zionism is system of oppression defined by its victims as “a settler colonial movement whose goal was the establishment of a Jewish State on the ruins and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people”²; a

¹ <https://www.uh.edu/equal-opportunity/anti-discrimination/policies/>

² Edward W. Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,” *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979); <https://doi.org/10.2307/466405>.

Whereas, for over 73 years, Israel has subjected Palestinians to home demolitions, forced expulsion, mass imprisonment of youth, and both an expropriation and denial of their natural resources by Israel³;

Whereas, Students for Justice in Palestine and the broader Palestine solidarity movement is built and sustained through a deep camaraderie with other marginalized communities, and opposes all forms of oppression globally;

Whereas, anti-Palestinian Racism (APR) is one of many tactics used to stifle political expression of Palestinian organizers, not only on campus but at a grassroots level;

Whereas, the association of constitutionally-protected pro-Palestine activism with antisemitism is reflective of an orientalist, discriminatory and outdated framework utilized to demonize Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims;

Whereas, this association, as well as any attempt to minimize the impacts and harm of Israel's colonization of Palestine is an example of APR;

Whereas, tactics of repression, have historically been leveraged against movements at the University of Houston fighting for progressive and liberatory change, most notably against Students for a Democratic Society and the Black Student Union during both the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-South African Apartheid Movement;

Whereas, there have been repeated attempts to vilify, deplatform, and doxx Palestinian students and supporters of Palestinian liberation, subverting the University of Houston's stated "commitment to diversity and inclusion"⁴;

Whereas, Canary Mission is a blacklisting tool used by opponents of Palestinian liberation to defame and silence Pro-Palestine student activists, professors, and organizations⁵;

³ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution#>

⁴ <https://uh.edu/about/diversity-statement/>

⁵ <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/canary-mission/>

Whereas, the University of Houston administration publicly rejected the American Studies Associations' 2014 decision to boycott Israel, a decision supported by more than 5,000 members across the U.S.;

Whereas, Judge Pitman of the U.S. District Court in Texas ruled BDS boycotts as "a form of expression on a public issue, rest on 'the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values'^{6,7};

Whereas, constitutionally protected Palestinian activism has been "routinely aigned as uncivil, divisive, antisemitic, or supportive of terrorism" as a tactic to stifle pro-Palestinian activism and speech on campus⁸;

Whereas, "Between January 2014 and June 2015, Palestine Legal responded to nearly 300 incidents of suppression; 85% of those incidents targeted students and professors, on a total of more than 65 US college campuses," demonstrating an increase in APR and suppression⁹;

Therefore, be it resolved by the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:

The University of Houston Student Government Association affirms that speech, action, protest, and campaigns—including the pursuit and support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel—as well as the existence of Palestinian solidarity organizing and other expressions of Palestinian freedom on campus is a protected right at the University of Houston.

Be it further resolved, The University of Houston Student Government Association unequivocally rejects the debasement of Palestinian activism through the false conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism;

Be it further resolved, The University of Houston Student Government Association calls on UH Administration to issue a public statement affirming the right of students to organize and advocate for Palestine.

⁶Connick v. Myers , 461 U. S. 138

⁷ Amawi v. Pflugerville Indep. Sch. Dist., 373 F. Supp. 3d 717 (W.D. Tex. 2019)

⁸ <https://palestinelegal.org/s/Palestine-Exception-Report-Final-jpvy.pdf>

⁹ <https://palestinelegal.org/s/Palestine-Exception-Report-Final-jpvy.pdf>

Arsalan Darbin

Student Government President

Date of President's Approval: _____

APPROVED

David Paul Hilton

David Paul Hilton

Speaker of the Senate

Date of Senate Approval: 7-19-2027

