



Pitzer College Council
1050 N. Mills Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

Dear Pitzer College Council members,

I write in support of Pitzer faculty's decision to stand up for justice and equality. By suspending Pitzer College's exchange with Haifa University until the state of Israel ends its discriminatory admissions policy at the border and grants visas for individuals to participate in exchanges with Palestinian universities, the faculty has affirmed its commitment to ensuring that Pitzer College values equality of educational opportunity and the rights of all to engage in the "dialogue and intercultural understanding." Israel's discrimination against people based on their ethnicity or advocacy isn't just a problem for Palestinians living inside Israel as second-class citizens, or in the occupied Palestinian territories without political rights or dignity. It is also a problem that impacts Americans traveling to Israel.

Many Arab Americans, because of their ethnicity, and others, because of their support for Palestinian human rights, have been systematically targeted and subjected to discriminatory screening, harassment, detention, and deportation when attempting to enter Israel and/or Palestine for decades.

Israel's discrimination appears to be a matter of practice and policy. Indeed, it has become so commonplace that it has warranted U.S. government action. Four years ago, the U.S. Department of State expressed concern regarding the "unequal treatment that Palestinian-Americans and other Arab-Americans receive at Israel's borders and checkpoints."¹ Secretaries of State Albright, Rice, and Kerry have spoken out on this matter, objecting to Israel's treating Arab Americans as less than full US citizens.

It was precisely because of this Israeli policy of discrimination against American citizens of Arab descent, that the State Department opposed and blocked efforts by some in Congress to grant Israel "visa waiver status."

We were, therefore, heartened by the resolution of the Pitzer College Faculty Council, precisely because we know from direct experience that persons of Arab descent will not easily be able to

¹ U.S. *Citizens at Israeli Ports of Entry*, U.S. Department of State: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/08/246170.htm>

participate in any exchange program established with Israel and that Palestinian colleges and universities in occupied lands encounter great difficulty when they attempt to establish exchange programs of their own.

We appreciate that the resolution was smartly crafted to encourage Israel to change its policies. It was not a flat out boycott. Rather it was a call for Haifa University and Pitzer College to take a stand in support of ensuring that the opportunity to participate in educational exchanges is open to all. In doing so, you are sending a signal to Israel that discrimination is not acceptable.

Further, this resolution passed by the faculty makes clear that the fair treatment of all of our citizens is a minimum requirement for any Israeli institution that seeks engagement with a US institution.

I was especially pleased to see that the resolution includes exchanges with Palestinian universities. These academic institutions exist in areas under Israeli military occupation. They and their students should have the same opportunity to participate in exchange programs as do students in Israel, and yet they do not. Israel places obstacles on their hiring faculty from abroad and from students securing visas to participate in their programs.

If Pitzer College is to foster a relationship with a university abroad, it should ensure that those relationships and associated resources are equally available to all eligible Pitzer students, regardless of ethnicity, national origin, or political views. This equal opportunity requirement is not only a central American value, it is inextricably bound to academic freedom—a freedom that all Israelis and Palestinians deserve, and a freedom they are more likely to enjoy equally if Pitzer College remains on the right side of history by supporting the faculty resolution in your upcoming vote on March 14.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Zogby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Zogby" clearly distinguishable.

James Zogby
President, AAI

Biographical Note

In the 1970s, Dr. Zogby began the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign. Since then, he and partner organizations have documented, and turned over to the Department of State, hundreds of cases where Arab Americans were denied entry or harassed for long periods of time during entry into Israel.

In the 1990s, Dr. Zogby was appointed by Vice President Gore to co-chair a project to promote private investment in support of the peace process. Arab American businessmen who sought to work with the project often encountered difficulties entering Israel. Dr. Zogby himself was detained at the border for hours, almost missing dinner with Vice President Gore at the Knesset, answering questions specifically focused on his Lebanese father.

From 2013 to 2017, Dr. Zogby served as a member of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. He was appointed by President Obama and twice served as vice-chair. At the Commission, he also recorded instances of American pilgrims of Arab ancestry being denied entry into Israel.