

#111.02 S24 Affirm Commitment to the Protection of Academic Freedom in the Face of Censorship Around Current Conflict in Palestine and Israel

Whereas, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, as “the official voice of California community college faculty in academic and professional matters,”¹ released a report² on the issue of academic freedom, stating that the definition of academic freedom should be based on the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) definition, which advocates against ‘institutional censorship or discipline’ in their extramural speech.”³;

Whereas, The International Sociological Association (ISA) published a statement in support of academic freedom in examining Palestinian and Israeli conflict stating, “The ISA cannot remain silent as spaces of public and academic debate are shrinking and increasingly policed. Today, more than ever, we require critical interventions by social scientists. Academic freedom needs to be protected and promoted. Well-informed and nuanced debate and a historicized and sociological understanding of the events that have led to the October 2023 atrocities are required to forestall further catastrophic loss of life. As stated by the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Toronto, ‘it is not only permissible, but it is essential for scholars to situate the current war in its broad historical contexts, including those of settler colonialism.’ Our duty as sociologists is to maintain spaces of debate and foster discussion during such a critical moment”⁴;

Whereas, The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) passed a resolution titled “Calling for a Bilateral Cease-Fire in Gaza and Promoting a Two-State Solution and an End to the Weaponization of Hate”⁵ stating, “We will defend the rights of educators and their students to participate in intellectually honest discussions, to articulate and rally around their views, including the underlying conflict between Israel and Palestine, moreover, we will not tolerate the weaponization of academic discourse to be used in political attacks on American colleges and universities, and as a pretext for attacks on efforts to increase diversity, promote equity and advance inclusion, our campuses must be places of dialogue

¹ Academic Senate for California Community Colleges <https://www.asccc.org/>

² ASCCC Position Paper “Protecting the Future of Academic Freedom During a Time of Significant Change” https://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/Academic_Freedom_F20.pdf

³ ASCCC Position Paper, Page 1.

⁴ ISA Statement on the Situation in Israel and Palestine <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about-isa/isa-human-rights-committee/statement-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-palestine>

⁵ “Calling for a Bilateral Cease-Fire in Gaza and Promoting a Two-State Solution and an End to the Weaponization of Hate” <https://www.aft.org/resolution/calling-bilateral-cease-fire-gaza-and-promoting-two-state-solution-and-end-weaponization>

for the furtherance of understanding in a pluralistic society, teachers, and students must be free to express different views on the burning issues of the day, without fear of loss of position and retaliation, and without intimidation and threats of violence.”; and

Whereas, Lawmakers, college administrators and pressure groups from inside and outside our colleges have placed pressures and passed measures to silence faculty around the nation, which have discredited and punished⁶ them for exercising academic freedom⁷ especially while discussing and teaching material related to Palestinian liberation in college classrooms;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges affirm its commitment to the protection of academic freedom on college campuses despite calls to censor texts, discussion, and activism around current conflict in Palestine and Israel.

Contact: Mona Alsoraimi-Espiritu, San Diego City College

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-professors-suspended-probed-over-gaza-war-comments-2023-11-17/>

⁷ <https://www.aaup.org/news/academic-freedom-times-war>