

אקדמיה לשוויון

أكاديميون من أجل المساواة

23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2021

Dear Secretary of State Antony Blinken,

We are Israeli academics who are politically involved, fighting for human rights, justice and equality, dedicated to promoting a peaceful end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. We are therefore writing to ask you to act swiftly and resolutely to reverse a disastrous legacy set in place during the last days of the Trump administration, undermining peace in our land.

We are referring to former Secretary of State Pompeo removing the decades-old policy of not allowing the U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) grants to cross to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (as the EU and German grants still insist). In the revised regulations document of the BSF grant it now says:

"In keeping with an amendment, signed on 28 October 2020, to the original agreement between the U.S. and Israeli governments, the Foundation sponsors US-Israel collaborative research with participation of all Israeli academic institutions, including research carried out in geographic areas that came under the administration of the Government of Israel after June 5, 1967. "

The BSF has been the prime source for scientific collaborations between US and Israeli academics, since it was founded in 1972. The academic institutions that Israel has built in the OPT are part of the settlement effort, which is deemed illegal and considered as a war-crime by the UN, according to the Geneva Convention. This is the reason that the ERC/DFG/GIF research grants are not given to Israeli academic institutions which are located beyond the 1967 "Green Line", and grants given within Israel aren't allowed to "leak" outside this border. These academic institutions, mainly the so-called "Ariel University" in the settlement of Ariel, are off-limits to the local Palestinian population, as are all the settlements themselves. No academic institution in a democratic country is closed to the population in which it is situated, based on ethnic barriers. This was done in the past in Apartheid South-Africa; and of course segregation in educational institutions was prevalent in southern states of the US under Jim Crow laws. Such disgraceful policy is implemented by Israel nowadays in the OPT.

The settlement of Ariel was intentionally built deep inside the West-Bank, with the purpose of dividing it and obstructing the establishment of a continuous and viable free Palestinian state. The Israeli Right-Wing Government aims at bolstering and "white-washing" the settlements, in this case by recruiting academia and abusing academic values such as the free flow of knowledge. But this is a camouflage. Since the new Biden administration declared its wish to push for a peaceful conclusion to this conflict, end the occupation and have an independent Palestinian state next to Israel, we ask that you restore the BSF to its original mandate, whereby US funds do not support settlement activity, as awarding these grants to "Ariel University" would do directly.

In addition, by having the BSF provide US grant money to settlements, it becomes tainted in the political debate that has been dividing Israeli society for decades. Researchers who oppose the settlements may

**אקדמיה לשוויון**

**أكاديميون من أجل المساواة**

boycott the BSF committees and activities, in order to avoid having to approve grants to the settlements. Dragging the BSF into the political debates could destroy its foundations, reputation and future.

We hope that you will take the necessary action to restore the BSF's role in fostering scientific collaborations between the State of Israel and the US, and look forward to your response.

Your sincerely,

Dr. Anat Matar, The Department of Philosophy, Tel Aviv University, [anatmatar@gmail.com](mailto:anatmatar@gmail.com)

Prof. Nir Gov, Department of Chemical and Biological Physics, Weizmann Institute of Science, [nir.gov@weizmann.ac.il](mailto:nir.gov@weizmann.ac.il)

We represent in this appeal over 600 members of our organization, Academia for Equality:

<https://en.academia4equality.com/>