



Study Abroad in Israel Boycott Campaign: Toolkit for Activists



USACBI
US Campaign for the Academic
and Cultural Boycott of Israel

Study Abroad in Israel Boycott Campaign – Toolkit for Activists

See our campaign statement and call for individuals to endorse the boycott of Study Abroad in Israel programs:

<http://usacbi.org/boycott-study-abroad-in-israel/>

Preparing Your Campaign:

Before beginning your boycott campaign learn as much as you can about how Study Abroad in Israel (SAI) operates at your campus. Find out how and when the course is offered, which department or program hosts it, and how credits for the course are determined. Research the content of the course. This information can help you frame your call for boycott.

Suggested steps:

a) Since the conditions of access to these programs are in violation of university rules, remember that students have an unassailable right to challenge them through official channels i.e. through campus governance, whether at the student senate level or through due process at departmental and campus-wide levels. Introducing resolutions at each of these three levels could be highly effective. Students should hold administrators accountable to the university's principles of non-discrimination and equal access to educational programs. See our campaign statement for more information and for a link to the NYU student senate's resolution.

b) Student senators can also try to put pressure on faculty senates to follow suit with departmental or academic senate resolutions. We encourage students to approach sympathetic and secure faculty who can raise the issue with department chairs and deans where students themselves might harbor fear of reprisal. Student-faculty alliance is absolutely KEY.

c) Student clubs recognized and funded by campus administrations can also be an effective platform for passing resolutions and raising the profile of the cause. Building alliances with other student organizations and movements is crucial.

d) Encourage students to find out how the programs are funded. Sometimes, outside funders have a toxic reputation that can help focus attention on the non-academic purpose behind SAI ventures.

e) Interview relevant administrators. They can be "caught" making inconsistent or contradictory statements in their justification of the existence of SAI programs. Administrators are technically beholden to students. If they are unwilling to schedule an interview, show up at their office if possible. If not, open letters can be effective, too. Reach out to other clubs to have them sign on as organizations to the open letter.

f) No reason not to aim for the top. Many college presidents host "town hall" meetings with students. Asking presidents to publicly explain why the programs do NOT violate university rules can be very useful. The closer students can get to threatening the "varsity brand" the better.



g) Use student media and write op-eds, articles, and letters in campus publications. The rooting of this campaign in perceived infractions of fundamental university principles is relatively new as an approach. The fact that it does not rest on anyone's personal views about Israel/Palestine makes it a newsworthy issue. Student newspapers editors are inclined to favor this kind of approach because its appeal goes beyond the realm of opinion.

Talking Points:

Below are some suggested talking points that you can use in presenting this campaign and asking people to join. You should tailor the messaging to the political conditions of your campus community and student movement, but these might provide some helpful arguments and principles on which the messaging for the campaign can be based:

- 1) *SAI discriminates based on ethnic and religious backgrounds.* Whole sectors of the student body cannot participate freely in Study Abroad programs in Israel because Israel regularly denies entry to travelers of Palestinian and Arab origin.
 - According to a [US State Department Travel Advisory](#), Israel routinely interrogates, detains and deports Palestinian, Arab and Muslim travelers.
 - Palestinian students from refugee families, who are indigenous to the land, are denied the right to return to their homeland. The Right of Return is a principle enshrined in international law for all displaced refugees. It has been specifically reaffirmed for Palestinian refugees in dozens of UN resolutions, most notably UN Resolution 194.
 - SAPI programs are the only study abroad academic program on U.S. university campuses which include *de facto* racial and national discrimination as a pre-condition of the program.

- 2) *SAI violates academic freedom.* Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students cannot participate in and earn credit for a sanctioned university program so SAPI violates the academic freedom of students from any of these groups.

- 3) *SAI discriminates based on political views.* Israeli law forbids entry visas to anyone who openly supports the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement in solidarity with Palestine. This law would violate the First Amendment and free speech rights of any student supporting BDS who sought to participate in a Study Abroad in Israel program [mou3].

- 4) *SAI works in tandem with the repudiated practice of blacklisting as a means of political repression.*
 - Israel has issued a [blacklist](#) of organizations whose members are denied entry at the borders it controls and regularly interrogates, detains, and deports travelers with ties to the Palestine solidarity movement. .
 - That list includes [Students for Justice in Palestine](#) and [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), two social justice organizations with large student memberships throughout the US. All of these student activists would likely face harassment and deportation if they tried to participate in SAPI.
 - Study Abroad programs to Israel thus rests on potential violations of constitutionally protected right to free speech. In addition, anti-BDS blacklists such as Canary Mission also



provide data that many believe is used by Israeli border security in detention and interrogation of travelers, thus creating fear among student activists and Palestinians who wish to visit Palestine or meet their relatives.

5) *SAI may be complicit in violation of international law.* Israeli universities are complicit with the illegal military occupation of Palestine and with the systemic racial discrimination against Palestinians residing within the Israeli state. Many campuses are built on stolen Palestinian land, have programs that discriminate against Palestinian students, repress Palestinian identities and history, censor political activism and discipline Palestinian student activists, and provide research and technology supporting the occupation and systems of control. No Israeli university has ever publicly opposed the occupation and the racial discrimination against Palestinians in Israel. Study Abroad programs thus whitewash occupation and racism in Israel; this could be called a form of “edu-washing” in which US students who support racial justice should not participate.

6) Palestinian students living under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza and under siege in Gaza are denied the right to education on a daily basis, and discrimination in access to education is faced by Palestinian students who are citizens of Israel as well. Universities have been bombed, teargassed, and closed by Israel; students face restrictions on freedom of movement that make travel to campuses arduous; and they are denied access to scholarly materials as well as to conferences and programs overseas due to their engagement within Israeli borders. This has been called a state of scholasticide in Palestine. The Study Abroad in Israel programs are thus a cover for the denial of academic freedom to Palestinians and students.

Suggested Actions:

There are a variety of actions you can organize in support of the Study Abroad boycott campaign. The suggested actions, below, build on the political arguments, above, and help to dramatize them using a variety of approaches. There are many actions you could organize in building support for the campaign and educating the campus community, and once again, these can be adapted to your specific context:

- i) **Collecting and presenting testimonials** from students detained or denied entry at Israeli borders: There are numerous Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students who are interrogated, detained, and deported at Israeli borders (in Tel Aviv, at the Allenby Bridge, etc). Sharing these stories will help illustrate Israel’s racial discrimination and denial of freedom to enter and of the right of return of refugees. These narratives could be shared at a protest or educational event, published in your student newspapers on a blog, or read aloud at a teach-in (anonymously, if necessary).
- ii) **Leafletting outside of SAI information sessions:** Many students may not be aware of the specific discrimination that Arab, Muslim, and Palestinians students face. Making sure that they are informed can help convince more people to be on the side of justice.
- iii) **Setting up a mock checkpoint** to dramatize the experiences of Palestinian students denied freedom of movement while attempting to go to college: Guerilla theater on campus is a simple and effective way to illustrate what is at stake in the edu-washing of Study Abroad in Israel’s programs.



This could be built into a mock Apartheid Wall action or a dramatization of deportation from Ben Gurion airport or the Allenby Bridge crossing as well. Videotaping such actions is very valuable.

iv) **Staging the Empty Chair:** Setting up an empty chair is a symbolic action to reference the missing Palestinian/Arab/Muslim student who cannot attend classes at a Study Abroad in Israel program due to the denial of entry, as explained in the Talking Points. This is a simple action that fundamentally highlights the absence of Palestinians from the debate about academic freedom and freedom of movement. You can set up the empty chair during a debate about Study Abroad in Israel, in a classroom during an announcement, etc. For more details about this action and its rationale, see:

<http://usacbi.org/2018/06/the-empty-chair-a-simple-action-that-academics-and-students-can-take-in-solidarity-with-palestinian-colleagues/>

iv) **Making connections to deportation, incarceration, militarized borders, policing, and surveillance** affecting other racialized groups: Building alliances with other movements focused on resisting border violence, deportation, separation of families, policing, and incarceration is very important. For example, the Abolish ICE movement; Black-Palestine solidarity platforms <https://bdsmovement.net/tags/black-solidarity-palestine>; and campaigns connecting colonial borders in US-Mexico and Palestine-Israel - <http://www.pymusa.com/new-blog-2/2016/4/30/historic-break-down-borders-5k-in-san-diego-brings-community-together-in-protest-of-local-and-transnational-violences>

v) **Drafting a resolution** in collaboration with Student Senators that opposes SAI programs

vi) **Creating a large coalition of student groups** that refuse to participate in SAI programs. Publicly disseminate a list of said organizations and have it published in campus news outlets.

vii) **Creating anti-SAI buttons and stickers.** Have students and faculty involved with the campaign wear and distribute these. Make them clever and visually appealing.

viii) **Putting flyers up** around campus, stenciling, chalking, etc.

ix) **Making announcement in your classes** about the campaign and encouraging peers to get involved.

x) **Hosting public events** about the problems with SAI programs and why students should boycott them. Encourage students to sign the individual pledge to boycott as well:

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