

ISRAELI SCHOLARS: ICSU/SCFCS STATEMENT

Since its inception in 1931, the International Council for Science (ICSU) has affirmed and vigorously upheld the principle of universality of science based on the human right of scientists throughout the world to participate in scientific activity without any discrimination on the grounds of citizenship, religion, creed, political stance, ethnic origin, race, colour, age or gender. It has argued that the processes of academic research and scholarship, and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge, are of benefit to mankind as a whole. Moreover, they are dependent for their advance upon the freedom of scholars to converse, to make contact, to travel to conferences, to publish their results and to proffer advice. It is, therefore, in the interests of governments, institutions and above all individuals – whether themselves scholars or not – to support this principle of non-discrimination. Bona fide scholars pursuing academic activities should be free to do so without hindrance.

Recent moves to foster an academic boycott of Israeli scientists and the dismissal of two Israeli scholars from their roles on the editorial boards of two journals published in the United Kingdom are a flagrant breach of this principle and have rightly drawn substantial adverse comment from scientists, newspaper columnists and human rights activists in the United Kingdom.

On behalf of the Executive Board of ICSU, we draw attention to these events to remind all our national member academies and research councils and our scientific unions and associates of the critical importance of the principle of non-discrimination and of the need for constant vigil in securing its continuing adoption. We understand the strong feelings generated by conflicts, for example that in the Middle East, and the desire of individuals and groups to avoid contact, actively boycott or otherwise demonstrate distaste or disgust for the actions of nation state governments and others. But to do so through the medium of individual scholars is to sacrifice a profoundly important principle of freedom.

We urge all scholarly communities and not least those in science and technology, to heed the words of the Leader in the London Evening Standard on 10 July 2002: “Intellectual communities world-wide are in the business of fostering international understanding and co-operation not of penalising each other for the shortcomings of their governments.”

James C.I. Dooge
Chairman

Peter Schindler
Executive Secretary

ICSU Standing Committee on Freedom in the Conduct of Science