

U.S. Historians Stand Up Against Israel's 'Scholasticide' in Palestine

by David Cherry

March 18—In January, the American Historical Association (AHA), at its annual meeting, voted overwhelmingly in favor of a [resolution](#) stating that Israel was committing in Gaza what it called “scholasticide”—the expulsion and murder of historians, librarians, archivists, teachers, and students, and the destruction of schools, libraries, and archives. The resolution declared that the AHA condemns “the Israeli violence in Gaza” and “calls for a permanent ceasefire to halt the scholasticide documented above.” It went on to specify that the AHA leadership would form a committee to help organize the reconstruction of the educational institutions after the war.

The AHA is an association of 10,450 U.S. history professors, graduate students, and high school teachers. The vote was almost 5 to 1 in favor. When the outcome was announced, a chant of “free, free Palestine!” arose from many of the attendees.

But the AHA council, on Jan. 17, overrode the decision of the membership and vetoed the resolution by a vote of 11 to 4 with one abstention.

Such a resolution would represent a further *institutional* obstacle to the persecution of Americans who actively reject genocide through the First Amendment freedoms of speech and of assembly. Professors and students could point to the resolution in their own defense, whether in the courts, the press, or otherwise.

But the story did not end with this veto. The officers and council of the U.S.-based World History Association (WHA), an affiliate of the AHA, took great exception to the AHA board's action. On Feb. 26, the WHA reported to its members as follows:

On January 30, 2025, the World History Association Officers and Council considered and affirmed a Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza [the full text follows]. The resolution responds to the dire situation facing the teaching, learning, and documentation of history in Gaza; the veto of a similar resolution by the American Historical Association Council in January 2025, and the mission of the World History Association to promote activities which will increase



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Students and teachers at scores of U.S. colleges and universities protest the mass murder of unarmed Palestinians and the obliteration of their institutions with U.S. government approval. Here, the Gaza Solidarity Encampment at Columbia University, April 2024.

historical awareness, understanding among and between peoples and global consciousness.

Strictly following WHA procedure, we submitted the resolution to a vote of the entire membership of the Association which ran from February 18-25, 2025. The vote passed with 83% of participants in favor of the resolution, 13% op-

posed, and 4% abstaining, with 31% of our membership participating. Therefore, the resolution is affirmed as a measure of the WHA....

WHA members who are also AHA members can consider [signing](#) the Historians for Peace and Democracy Petition to Members of the AHA Council.

The WHA is not the first professional association to take a stand against the siege and destruction of Gaza or to defend the right to criticize Israel. The Modern Language Association, for example, at its annual convention in January 2024, “defended college and university employees and students who are facing threats, harassment and violence for criticizing Israel’s own violence against Palestinians,” *Inside Higher Ed* [reported](#). And in February 2024, the American Association of University Professors [demanded](#) “an immediate ceasefire and end to the siege of Gaza.”

Is the AHA Leadership Unbiased?

Professor Anne Hyde of the University of Oklahoma, a member of the AHA council, voted to veto the resolution “to protect the AHA’s reputation as an unbiased historical actor,” she said. Israel’s attempted genocide in Gaza—which she called, “the war in Gaza”—“is not settled history, so we’re not clear what happened or who to blame or when it began even, so it isn’t something that a professional organization should be commenting on yet,” she said, according to *Inside Higher Ed*, January 17.

In February 2022, however, the AHA council had no such qualms when it [condemned](#), “in the strongest possible terms, Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine.” It wrote that, “This act of overt military aggression violates the sovereignty of an independent Ukraine, threatening stability in the broader region and across the world.”

The WHA Resolution

The [full text](#) of the WHA resolution follows.

“Whereas the American Historical Association Council on January 17, 2025 vetoed the Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza despite its affirmation

by more than 80% of the attendees at the AHA Business Meeting on January 5, 2025; and

“Whereas the extensively documented expulsion and murder of historians, librarians, archivists, teachers, and students, and the destruction of schools, libraries, and archives in Gaza, as detailed in [the] Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza, is a matter of concern for all historians; and

“Whereas the mission of the World History Association, an affiliated society of the American Historical Association, is to ‘promote activities which will increase historical awareness, understanding among and between peoples and global consciousness’; and

“Whereas these activities are impossible under conditions of scholasticide in Gaza; and

“Whereas this is an egregious instance of restrictions on history education and historical documentation worldwide; and

“Whereas we support transparent and democratic decision making within the historical profession and efforts to bring attention to the obliteration of historical documents, material culture, and the historical profession;

“Therefore be it resolved that the World History Association adopts a version of the American Historical Association’s Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza as detailed in the following three clauses.

“Be it further resolved that the WHA supports the right of all peoples to freely teach and learn about their past and condemns the Israeli violence in Gaza that undermines that right; and

“Be it further resolved that the WHA calls for a lasting halt to the scholasticide documented in the AHA resolution, which is ongoing despite the current ceasefire; and

“Be it further resolved that the WHA will liaise with Historians for Palestine and Librarians and Archivists with Palestine to identify opportunities to support the rebuilding of Gaza’s educational infrastructure.

“Finally, be it resolved that the WHA calls upon the American Historical Association and its affiliates to adopt their own versions of this resolution.”