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# On The Origin, Importance and Vulnerability of Academic Freedom

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# Academic Freedom - Definition

- **Freedom granted to faculty to research and teach according to their interests**
  - **Freedom granted to academic institutions to determine professional standards for the academy**
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# Importance of academic Freedom

- **Freedom of inquiry by students and faculty members is essential to the mission of the academy; it is essential for the advance of science and therefore it is important for the whole society.**
  - **\_"Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate."**
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# Problems to be discussed

- **In case of conflict of interest between the 'academic institution' and its faculty -- whose academic freedom should be granted priority?**
  - **What about academic freedom for students?**
  - **How to protect academic freedom from 'external actors' (Government; Board of Governors; Donors, etc.)**
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# Historical Notes

- **Galilei Galileo (16th century)**  
**Intervention of the Church**
  - **Newton vs Huegenss (17th century)**  
**Intervention of the scientific establishment**
  - **Germany/Berlin (1803)**  
**Lehrfreiheit ("freedom to teach")**  
**Lernfreiheit ("freedom to learn")**
  - **USA (1900)**  
**Edward Ross, Professor of Economy in Stanford, is fired by the University President because of his support of a Democrat candidate.**
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# Historical Notes - Continue

- **1940 AAUP *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom* :**
    1. **Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research....**
    2. **Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject (*but not controversial matter which has no relation to their subject*).**
    3. **In class : Teachers should be free from institutional censorship or discipline..... Out of class: They should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.**
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# Historical Notes and Current Situation

- USA

**1950<sup>th</sup>: Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate.**

**2008: *All academic freedom resides with the university or college***

- Western European Countries

**(-) Academic freedom for faculty members**

**(-) Institutional autonomy**

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# Historical Notes – Cont.

- **Soviet Union**

  - Biology --- Lysenko's ideas dominate**

- **East Germany (before the unification)**

  - nominations on political grounds (not scientific merit)**

- **South Africa (during the Apartheid Regime)**

  - Discrimination in nominations and admittance**

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# Academic boycotts

**A series of annual decisions (since 2004 by UK trade Unions) to boycott Israeli academia**

**2006: "The union calls to boycott Israeli academics who don't publicly dissociate themselves from Israeli Government Apartheid policies"**

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## Prof. Sari Nusseibeh , President of Al- Quds University:

- **"A boycott of Israel is self-defeating to the Palestinian cause: It weakens the important bridge through which the state of war could be ended..."** (Bar-Ilan 2006 Conference on Academic Freedom)
  - **"It is within the (Israeli) academic community that we've had the most progressive pro-peace views..."** (Associated Press)
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# Summary

- Academic freedom is protected in most democratic countries either by law or by a long standing traditions

## However

- Conflicts of interest (University/Faculty and Faculty/Students) should be resolved
  - The many cases of violation of academic freedom demonstrate the vulnerability of this important value
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## Conclusion

To protect academic freedom in the long run  
we need  
**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

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## Goal

*Promoting understanding and support of  
academic freedom in both academic circles  
and the general public*





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# The calls for boycott were criticized in the (general and scientific) media

- Are academic boycotts of Israel ethically justified?
  - Would they be an effective and positive agent of change?
  - Are there overriding issues of academic freedom?
  - Are the proposals a cover for anti-Semitism?
  - Is Israel being unjustly singled out?
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