

FAQs

Several hundred members of the American Historical Association (AHA) have submitted a Resolution in Solidarity with Gaza to be voted on at the AHA's January 10, 2026 Business Meeting in Chicago. To clarify its rationale and background, the resolution's authors have developed answers to "frequently asked questions."

Please feel free to circulate!

1) What is scholasticide?

Scholasticide is a concept that was coined by Palestinian scholar and activist Karma Nabulsi. It refers to the systematic destruction of the education system in Palestine, including attacks on scholars, teachers, students, schools, libraries, universities, archives, museums, bookstores, and more. Nabulsi introduced the concept in 2009 amidst Israel's bombardment and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, known as Operation Cast Lead. It has since been adopted by scholars, human rights advocates, and U.N. experts.

2) How will a resolution from an American professional society make any difference? Isn't it just virtue-signaling?

Palestinian academics have appealed for our support to help them confront scholasticide. In an open letter, more than 150 Gaza academics have urged their colleagues around the world "to resist the ongoing campaign of scholasticide in occupied Palestine" and "to work alongside [them] in rebuilding [their] demolished universities." Many academic institutions and organizations have already offered public pledges, institutional partnerships, and scholarships/fellowships to support their colleagues in Gaza. We have a responsibility to do the same. This resolution is not simply a statement, but rather a mandate that the AHA take concrete action in coordination with other academic associations (like the Organization for American Historians, which has already formed a committee to assist in the reconstruction of higher education in Gaza).

3) What is the point of discussing reconstruction of Gaza's universities when everything has been destroyed?

The destruction of campuses, libraries, and other facilities, along with the killing of scholars and students, have prevented every person in Gaza from having access to regular, functioning education. But many scholars, researchers, staff, and students who once filled those buildings still exist and are resiliently finding ways to continue teaching and learning. For example, they have established a temporary system of online instruction to ensure a basic modicum of education until the end of the genocide. In an open letter, the presidents of Gaza's largest universities have declared that "We are more than buildings — we are academic communities, comprised of students, faculty, and staff, still alive and determined to carry forward our mission." We have a collective responsibility to help them rebuild their education system.

4) Isn't it divisive and counterproductive for the AHA to take positions on controversial political issues? Shouldn't we be united in the face of threats to higher education?

Academic societies often take positions on controversial political matters. After the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, academic communities issued statements against the invasion, launched emergency funds, and supported displaced Ukrainian scholars and students. The AHA issued a statement in 2022 against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the case of Palestine, we must ensure that the widespread opposition to scholasticide from individual members of our association translates into a democratic institutional response.

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5) Is the resolution inconsistent with the AHA bylaws/organizational mission?

The AHA's mission is to “promot[e] historical studies through the encouragement of research, teaching, and publication.” This mission is not limited to any particular people or places—whether in the United States, Palestine, or elsewhere. In this historical moment, the AHA should offer moral clarity and consistency, even when it involves critical assessment of U.S. foreign policy. The resolution against scholasticide is fully in line with the AHA's mandate.

6) Will the resolution expose us to ruinous attacks from the Trump administration?

In the past, other professional societies, like the American Studies Association and the Middle East Studies Association, have condemned Israeli actions and even boycotted Israeli institutions. Both organizations are currently thriving. As many scholars of authoritarianism have stressed, the worst possible response is “anticipatory obedience,” as in preemptive capitulation. We should join our colleagues from other associations in making our voices heard about one of the gravest attacks on education that the world has seen in recent history. Rather than damaging our association, strong and effective action will build internal solidarity in the face of attacks that are sure to come, regardless of what the AHA does or does not do.

7) Isn't the situation in Gaza immensely complicated? Is it clear what happened or who to blame?

As historians, we know that historical facts are always subject to interpretation. No historical narrative is ever absolute. However, there is a growing consensus among international bodies, human rights groups, scholarly associations, and individual experts and historians that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. These include the U.N Independent International Commission of Inquiry in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Al-Haq, and B’Tselem.

As part of its genocide, Israel has obliterated the education system in Gaza. It has targeted and destroyed all 12 universities; it has razed more than 90 percent of schools and most libraries, archives, museums, and heritage sites; and it has killed, injured, starved, and/or displaced thousands of students, faculty, teachers, and educational staff. These facts are not contested.