

News

Council Statement on the Critical Importance of Continuing International Collaboration in Science

August 27, 2002

Given the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis and other developments that threaten to affect scientific exchange and education, the Council of the National Academy of Sciences reaffirms the need to maintain scientific collaborations, support science education, and enhance the functioning of scientific and academic institutions throughout the world. Our recent concerns include the deaths, injuries, and damage caused by the bombing at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the damage inflicted on the Palestine Academy for Science and Technology and the Palestinian Ministry of Education last April in Ramallah, the temporary forced closing in July of the administrative offices of Al-Quds University, and various petitions advocating boycotts and/or moratoria on relations with Israeli academic and cultural institutions. We are not only concerned for our scientific colleagues; we are also, of course, painfully aware that these and other events have had a tragic impact on other innocent individuals.

Our Council is unanimous in the belief that the world scientific community can and must contribute -- through vigorous scientist-to-scientist and institution-to-institution interactions -- to the reduction of tensions and the advancement of peace in the Middle East, as well as elsewhere around the globe. Scientists can provide a voice for rationality and moderation in political affairs. They also can easily build strong bridges of understanding between cultures -- through their collaborations in science, technology, health, education, human rights, and sustainable economic development.

The National Academies have worked for many years to help establish collaboration among scientists from different countries on such issues. For example, a joint report published in 1999, titled *Water for the Future: The West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel, and Jordan*, is the result of efforts to draw on the common culture and values of scientists to build bridges for peace in the Middle East.

The tragic events in the Middle East have increased our commitment to continuing our work with scientists in the region, where we aim to catalyze collaboration on specific water issues, to establish Frontiers of Science and Engineering programs, to promote new collaborations in the areas of nutrition and health, and to make other contributions to help achieve a lasting peace. We are adamantly opposed to scientific boycotts, and we call upon the members of the world scientific community -- many of whom we know share our concern -- to actively support scientific exchanges, collaborations, and education as a wise and humane investment for peace in the future.

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