

Proposal regarding current political differences within the organization

The number of members who have expressed dissatisfaction with ASOR from both sides of the current Israel-Palestine conflict suggest that further action is needed to mend fences and rebuild a sense of community. We propose the following action items, and request that they be discussed at the upcoming Board meeting:

1. Embed the existing political statement (“[ASOR’s Response to October 7 Events](#)”) on the website within a historical framework that would **contextualize and acknowledge the absence of further statements**, from a positive perspective related to ASOR’s values (see no. 2).¹ This could take the form of a simple header added to the existing page that provides new context.
2. Affirm our commitment to the different perspectives of our members through the adoption of our **institutional values** (see below for discussion). While a Values Statement could be part of our upcoming strategic planning process, we see this as something that could help with this more urgent problem (no. 1), our members' dissatisfaction and division. We think a clearer articulation of our values would provide a welcoming assertion of who we are, moving us out of politically charged issues and back to the beliefs and priorities that we already share in common.²

No. 1: Context for “[ASOR’s Response to October 7 Events](#)” statement:

We propose the following text be considered, for adding at the top of the page for the statement online at <https://www.asor.org/news/2023/10/asor-statement>:

*“This statement was written by ASOR leadership with the input of the Board’s executive committee soon after the devastating events of October 7, 2023. The statement will remain in place as a record of that time, but ASOR’s commitment to hold space for the different perspectives among its members will be a guiding principle going forward, reflecting **ASOR’s values** [link to no. 2, below].*

¹ As the AAUP notes, neutrality statements are less effective than considering “how various practices of an institution—not only its speech or silence but also its actions and policies—might promote a more robust freedom of teaching, research, and intramural and extramural speech.” (<https://www.aaup.org/news/new-aaup-statement-institutional-neutrality>; and see also <https://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/aaup-policies-reports/policy-statements/institutional-neutrality>)

² <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2024/02/27/what-are-values-university-opinion>

No. 2: Values Statement:

When considering an assertion of institutional values:

- Mission describes what we do, values describe how we do it;³ for example, through collaboration, inclusion, care for community, etc.
- Values “must be so central to the institution that it could not function without them.”⁴
- “Values ... are deeply held ideals and priorities; their underlying assumptions influence the institution’s day-to-day behaviours. Values claims include such notions as respect for individuals, accountability practices, quality programming, workplace relevance, fiscal transparency, strategic cooperation, partnerships and alliances, an unwavering commitment to student success among other convictions.”⁵

We propose the following values that underscore what ASOR looks like at its best:

- **Learning:** We learn from research and from ongoing dialogue with one another.
- **Collaboration:** We work together and share resources for better outcomes.
- **Openness:** We see the world differently and all are welcome.
- **Accountability:** We are dedicated to our community, and trust requires acknowledging when change is necessary.

For Reference:

ASOR MISSION STATEMENT⁶

The American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR), founded in 1900, is an international organization whose mission is to initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean, from the earliest times, by:

- Fostering original research, exploration, and archaeological fieldwork;
- Encouraging scholarship in the region’s languages, texts, traditions, and histories;
- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues;
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse;
- Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching;
- Promoting educational opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in institutions of higher education around the world;
- Developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public;
- Supporting and participating in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of the Near East and the wider Mediterranean and to raise awareness of its degradation.

³ <https://www.melanieho.com/values>

⁴ <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2024/02/27/what-are-values-university-opinion>

⁵ Calder 2014; <https://collegequarterly.ca/2014-vol17-num02-spring/calder.html>

⁶ <https://www.asor.org/about-asor/mission/>