

Statement from the Board of Trustees of the Palestine Exploration Fund regarding the 4-day conference held at the Dan Hotel in East Jerusalem, 10 – 13th February 2025 “Archaeology and Site Conservation of Judea and Samaria – The First International Conference.”

The PEF is dismayed to learn of an international archaeological conference where the participants will discuss various aspects of the archaeology of ‘Judea and Samaria’. This title neglects and erases the geographical identity of that region, the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The conference does not feature any speakers from Palestinian institutions nor are any Palestinian-led projects represented within the conference proceedings.

The current projects listed within the conference present research and data from archaeological projects which are in breach of international laws governing the excavation of archaeological sites in occupied territory, and the responsibilities of the occupying power. This includes the Hague Convention and Protocols of 1954 and the New Delhi Recommendations of 1956.

Given the concerning news of increased, often violent settler activity in the area, and the intention to expand the Israel Antiquities Authority’s jurisdiction to include the West Bank, this conference normalises academic activities which are in breach of international law.

The Palestine Exploration Fund has a long history of over 150 years of engagement in the Middle East. We consider ourselves to be a non-partisan organisation. We believe academics and cultural heritage professionals have an obligation to uphold the highest ethical standards in our professional practices and one way to achieve this is by not participating in conferences, such as this one, which represents a further step towards the disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people from their cultural heritage.

We call on all our colleagues to join us in stating their objection to this event.