

18 June 2025

Resignation letter to the Council of AIHS-IAHS

We were proud when we were elected as members of the International Academy for the History of Science (IAHS/AIHS). We thought we could support the international reputation of our fields of work and strengthen cooperation around the globe. Over the years, we learned that the association and the leadership of its various councils were not working for the same goals. Our opinions were not only not asked for, they were rather suppressed and rejected. Various Academy members were harassed, threatened, and insulted. Elections were not run in accordance with the Academy's statutes. Members were not informed about the improper behavior of council members and IT personnel. Conflicts were not resolved but swept under the carpet. Members without sufficient academic merit were proposed as members of the Academy and elected, while distinguished colleagues were kept for decades in the status of corresponding members or were not proposed for membership. Authoritarian rule dominated the Academy for more than two decades.

We had hoped that with the election to the council in 2022 of key new members change of these deplorable habits could be achieved. To our deep regret, we see that the majority of the council opted to sustain past "traditions" that are unworthy of an academy. The most blatant expression of the council's continued violation of acceptable academic behavior is its refusal to inform the membership about the conflict concerning the 2018 membership elections; the violation of the statutes in the procedures of the elections of the council in 2022, of the secretary in 2023, and of the General Assembly in 2023; and its complicity in the highly unprofessional letter sent by the Academy's secretary to its president. We detail the full list of issues and irregularities below this letter of resignation.

We have thus decided to resign—effective 5 July 2025—as a group from this association in strong expression of our protest against the current council and its actions. This association, in our view, no longer deserves the name "academy". With this step, we follow the decisions of our distinguished colleagues Professors Lorraine Daston, Peter Dear, and Floris Cohen who left the Academy in 2024 in protest specifically of the said letter.

Respectfully,

June Barrow-Green, Patrice Bret, Janet Browne, Hasok Chang, Maria Conforti, Angela Craeger, Mordechai Feingold, Klaus Hentschel, Hermann Hunger, Myles Jackson, Richard Kremer, Deepak Kumar, Fritz Nagel, Jeffrey Oaks, Jeanne Peiffer, Ken Saito, Julio Samsó, Michio Yano

Professor Pietro Corsi supports in solidarity the signatories of this letter of resignation.

List of issues and irregularities surrounding the activities of the previous and current councils:

1. The membership elections of 2018, confirmed by the council in 2021 against massive protest, were irregular: 36 voter boxes were opened after the elections had been closed. The purpose of this action has not been explained. The demand that the elections be reconducted was rejected. The secretary responsible for the elections resigned without informing the members about the events. When a minority report to the result of the ad-hoc committee in 2020 accused the then webmaster of having caused the irregular elections without presenting any evidence, the previous council did not revoke this false accusation.
2. Previous councils enabled the nomination and election of academically unqualified scholars as members of the Academy, promoting some of them even to the rank of effective members. They also opted to award the Koyré medal, the main prize of the Academy intended to honor a life-long oeuvre of excellence, repeatedly to scholars whose achievements do not correspond to the Academy's award criteria. This kind of disregard of the Academy's rules has continued with the current council.
3. The elections of the council in 2022 and of the secretary in 2023 were irregular, because they excluded members who had not paid their fees. This, however, was a decision not supported by the statutes and hence, according to French rules, illegal. It can be repaired by voting in Dunedin to declare the elections legal or to reject such a declaration. The current council refused to act according to the French rules and to the Academy's statutes. Hence, the council remains illegal.
4. The previous council ignored the French legal ordinance in 2021 according to which all associations were permitted to hold online meetings and votes. It postponed the elections to 2022 without reason and held a general assembly in 2023. This was not legitimate according to the statutes and now violated French law, because the empowerment by the ordinance had been terminated in October 2022. As a result, the entire schedule of assemblies and elections is now damaged.
5. The previous and current councils were and are of the opinion that "tradition" outweighs the stipulations of the statutes. This violates French legal rules and prevents transparent communication between the members of the council and the members of the Academy. It constantly creates new problems.

6. The previous and current secretaries have pushed the council to declare the secretary—and not the president—head of the council and so head of the Academy. This does not agree with the statutes, although they are imprecise with regard to the obligations of both officers.
7. In our view, the previous and current secretaries severely insulted and threatened with court cases several members of the Academy, including a former and the current president.
8. Some members of the council persist in trying to prevent a change of the statutes of the Academy aimed at achieving a democratic, meritorious association in which members have the right and occasion to voice their wishes and critiques.
9. The majority of the council is disrespectful to the members considering them primarily as a financial source without respecting their financial means.
10. The highly unprofessional letter sent by the Academy's current secretary to its current President (copy attached) represents a severe violation of academic ethics, one more than worthy, in our view, of the secretary's immediate resignation.