

BRITISH COMMITTEE FOR THE UNIVERSITIES OF PALESTINE (BRICUP)

PRESS RELEASE - 8th December 2008

For immediate release

BRITISH ACADEMICS TO BREAK THE SIEGE OF GAZA:

BOAT LEAVES CYPRUS TO IMPLEMENT 'RIGHT TO STUDY' OF PALESTINIAN STUDENTS

Two Jewish academics from the UK, Emeritus Professor Jonathan Rosenhead and Research Fellow Mike Cushman, both from the Department of Management at the London School of Economics, have joined the latest 'Free Gaza' boat in an attempt to enable Palestinian university students to pursue their studies abroad.

The 'Dignity' sailed from Larnaca, Cyprus at 23.40 local time, Monday December 8, in an effort to break Israel's 19-month blockade of Gaza and bring out 16 students who have places to study abroad. There are currently some 1700 students in Gaza who have been granted places at universities abroad - often with prestigious scholarships such as the Fulbright or Ford Foundation awards - but whom the Israeli authorities have prevented from leaving Gaza.

Higher education opportunities are extremely limited in Gaza. Many vital disciplines, including speech therapy, dentistry and physical therapy are not taught in Gaza, and there is no opportunity for doctoral study either in Gaza or in the West Bank. Study abroad is the only alternative for Palestinian students, yet this alternative is being denied them by the Israeli authorities.

Rosenhead and Cushman are members of the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), which advocates boycotting Israeli academic institutions as long as they are complicit in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territory. BRICUP recently held a packed meeting at SOAS where Israeli academic Prof. Ilan Pappé described the Israeli siege of Gaza as "slow genocide".

Now they have joined those taking direct action to enable Palestinian students to continue their academic and professional training. Prof. Rosenhead said: "Our government has failed to uphold international law and defend the human rights of the Palestinians, including the right to study and the right to teach. On the 60th anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights, we are proud to join the 'Dignity' on its fourth blockade-breaking trip to Gaza. We hope that by the end of this week we will have liberated these Palestinian students, in accordance with international law, and enabled them to take up the places awarded them by universities around the world in recognition of their academic merit."

Mr. Cushman said: "As academics we are particularly pleased to be travelling on the Dignity on this mission to enable at least some of the hundreds of students trapped in Gaza by the Israeli siege to get out and take up their places at universities round the world. This siege is an affront to any

idea of academic freedom or human rights. We, working for a British university, have the freedom to teach and study. This must be a universal right, not at the discretion of an occupying power. How can anyone justify preventing young people from fulfilling their potential and learning how to serve their community more fully?"

This fourth trip by the 'Dignity' is expected to take 14 hours, arriving in Gaza on Tuesday 9th December at 13.30 local time (11.30 GMT).

[ends]

Notes to editors

1. The 'Dignity' is at sea right now. You can try ringing Mike Cushman on board the 'Dignity' on +44 773 670 5294, but it may be out of range.
2. BRICUP contact in the UK: Sue Blackwell, 0792 995 3893.
3. Relevant websites for further information:

<http://www.letkhaledstudy.co.uk/>

(for info on trapped Palestinian students in Gaza)

<http://www.freegaza.org/> (Free Gaza boats campaign)

http://www.freegaza.org/index.php?module=latest_news&id=41cadce39691c2458068c725561a1e25&offset=

(Free Gaza movement's own press release)

www.bricup.org.uk (academic & cultural boycott of Israel - UK)

www.pacbi.org(academic & cultural boycott of Israel - Palestine)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dignity to Gaza: “We’re Back!” - Fourth Successful Voyage Breaks Through Siege of Gaza

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(GAZA, 9 December 2008) - The Free Gaza Movement ship “Dignity” successfully broke through the Israeli blockade for the fourth time since August, arriving in Gaza Port at 2:45pm, Tuesday 9 December. The ship carried one ton of medical supplies and high-protein baby formula, in addition to a delegation of international academics, humanitarian and human rights workers. Three earlier missions made landfall in Gaza in August, October, and November through the power of non-violent direct action and civil resistance. The Free Gaza ships are the first international ships to reach the Gaza Strip in over 41 years.

Ewa Jasiewicz, a Free Gaza organizer, journalist, and solidarity worker, pointed out that, “Tomorrow is International Human Rights Day, and it's high time the world turned its rhetoric on human rights into reality. We mounted this mission to give our solidarity to the people of Palestine and to highlight the strangulating conditions Israel causes in besieged Gaza. The inhumane effects of this siege threaten to stunt an entire generation - both in terms of physical and mental growth due to malnutrition, terrorization by bomb attacks, incursions and the use of sonic booms - but also in terms of the generation of students which have won places at academic institutions around the world but cannot fulfill them, and those undermined on the ground in Gaza by a lack of food, medicine, electricity, materials, and the peace and space to make use of them in.”

For over two years, Israel has imposed an increasingly severe blockade on Gaza, dramatically increasing poverty and malnutrition rates among the 1.5 million human people who live in this tiny, costal region. The World Bank recently warned that the entire banking system in Gaza may soon collapse resulting in “serious humanitarian implications.” Already, over eighty percent of Gazan families are dependent on international food aid in order to feed their children.

Lubna Masarwa, another Free Gaza organizer and the current delegation’s leader, pointed out that, “The Palestinians of Gaza don't need charity. What they need is effective political action that changes their lives and ends the Occupation. We can't bring electricity to Gaza on our boats. We can't import freedom of movement or safety. But we can get into Gaza and we are intent to keep coming. We will come again and again and again until the world breaks its silence and we shatter this siege once and for all.”

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BRITISH COMMITTEE FOR THE UNIVERSITIES OF PALESTINE (BRICUP)

PRESS RELEASE - 12th December 2008

For immediate release

PALESTINIAN STUDENTS LIBERATED FROM GAZA ABOUT TO ARRIVE IN CYPRUS: BRITISH ACADEMICS HELP ENACT 'RIGHT TO STUDY'

The small boat 'Dignity', bearing Palestinian students whom the Israeli authorities have prevented leaving Gaza, is just one hour's sailing time away from Larnaca in Cyprus.

This blockade-busting shuttle is the fourth organised by the Free Gaza movement.

Also on board the 'Dignity' are two Jewish academics from the UK, Emeritus Professor Jonathan Rosenhead and

Research Fellow Mike Cushman, both from the Department of Management at the London School of Economics.

Cushman says there are 11 Palestinian students on board, all in their mid- to late-twenties. Two are coming to take up places in UK universities. The others are going to the Netherlands, Greece, Canada, Kazakhstan, Germany and Russia.

The students are enrolled on courses that include biomedical ethics, ship engineering, and economics.

Some 700 Palestinian students from Gaza who have been granted places at universities abroad - often with prestigious scholarships such as the Fulbright or Ford Foundation awards - remain trapped by an Israeli blockade that has now lasted 19 months.

Rosenhead and Cushman are members of the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), which advocates boycotting Israeli academic institutions as long as they are complicit in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territory.

Mike Cushman says: ³The siege of Gaza is an affront to any idea of academic freedom or human rights. We, working for a British university, have the freedom to teach and study. This must be a universal right, not at the discretion of an occupying power. How can anyone justify preventing young people from fulfilling their potential and learning how to serve their community more fully?²

The 'Dignity' is due to dock in Larnaca at 2pm local time.

[ends]

Notes to editors

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2. BRICUP contact in the UK: Sue Blackwell, 0792 995 3893.
3. Relevant websites for further information:

<http://www.letkhaledstudy.co.uk/>

(for info on trapped Palestinian students in Gaza)

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http://www.freegaza.org/index.php?module=latest_news&id=41cadce39691c2458068c725561a1e25&offset=

(Free Gaza movement's own press release)

www.bricup.org.uk (academic & cultural boycott of Israel - UK)

www.pacbi.org(academic & cultural boycott of Israel - Palestine)

Captain: Denis Healey (UK)

Captain of the Dignity, Denis has been involved with boats for 45 years beginning with small fishing boats in Portsmouth. He learned to sail while at school and has been part of the sea ever since. He's a certified yacht master and has also worked on heavy marine equipment from yachts to large dredgers. This is his third trip to Gaza.

First Mate: Derek Graham (Ireland/Palestine)

Derek has been a qualified electrician for 20 years. He was a member of the reserve defense forces in Ireland for 21 years and was the first member of the reserves to make the Army sailing team. He has been sailing all of his life and is currently the first mate on board the Dignity. Derek first traveled to Gaza in August, and serves on the Interim Committee / Board of Directors for the Free Gaza Movement.

Delegation Leader: Lubna Masarwa (Palestine 48 / Israel)

Lubna is a Palestinian 48 living in Israel. She is a political dynamic activist in Jerusalem working for the Alternative Information Center and Al Quds University. She chooses struggle as her way against the occupation. She believes that activists should take the authority to change the reality and not wait for someone else to do it. It's important for her as a Palestinian from 1948 to break the siege and keep the relationship with her people. She has also built links with the Palestinian community in Cyprus where she is regularly active as an educator and advisor at Masjid Mosque. This will be her second trip to Gaza on the Dignity.

Othman Abufalah (Jordan)

Othman is a reporter with Al-Jazeera Television. I'm a Palestinian refugee born in exile. I know what it means to not be in your homeland, and since I have been working for Al Jazeera, I feel very close to the Palestinian issue. Hopefully in my visit to Gaza, I can show, in part, the suffering of the Palestinian people and move the conscience of the international community.

Naser Attaallah (Palestine)

Naser is returning to Gaza to rejoin his family. He has been unable to visit his family since Israel intensified the siege in 2006.

Mike Cushman (UK)

Mike Cushman is a research fellow in Information Systems and Information and Communication Manager at the London School of Economics. His research has covered a number of areas including: Digital and Social Exclusion; Digital and Media Literacy; Older People in a Digital Society; Knowledge Sharing and Organisational Learning in the Construction Industry; Approaches to Strategic Development under Conditions of Uncertainty. He has recently been appointed as a Visiting Fellow at University of Bristol Department of Management and is a member of the editorial advisory board of Information Technology and People. Mike is a member of BRICUP and of Jews for Justice for Palestinians and has played an active role in campaigning for Palestinian Human Rights.

Ewa Jasiewicz (UK/Poland)

Ewa is an experienced journalist, community and union organizer, and solidarity worker. Her articles have appeared in The Independent, The Guardian, Le Monde Diplomatique, Red Pepper, Left Turn, and Z Net, among others. She worked with the ISM in Palestine, and with Voices in the Wilderness in Iraq. She believes that direct, participatory democracy and grassroots solidarity activism can bring about justice in our world.

Bella Lock (Australia/Palestine)

Bella was on the original Free Gaza trip. After having finally got the Arabic alphabet figured out, she is returning for several months volunteering. Originally fitting music teaching around environmental and human rights campaigning, much time spent in Palestine led her to learn basic medic skills, and next year she will take up a midwifery degree in the UK.

Dr. Sonia Robbins (UK)

Sonia Robbins is a British reconstructive and hand surgeon who regularly volunteers in Gaza, and has had patients waiting to see her for several weeks.

Prof. Jonathan Rosenhead (UK)

Jonathan Rosenhead has been on the staff of the London School of Economics for 40 years, and became Professor of Operational Research in 1987. Prior to becoming an academic he worked in the steel industry and as a management consultant. He is the author of over 90 professional publications. His fields of research interest, in addition to problem structuring methods, include health services planning, community operational research, and OR in less developed countries. He has been President of the Operational Research Society, and holds its President's, Goodeve and Beale Medals. His jointly edited book Rational Analysis or a Problematic World Revisited (Wiley 2001) is a much cited classic. Prof. Rosenhead has a long political involvement including as Labour Party candidate for Parliament, and as Chair of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science. Currently he is Secretary of BRICUP (British Committee for the Universities of Palestine) which promotes a boycott of Israeli universities.

Firas Tawfeeq (Iraq)

Firas is a cameraman with Al-Jazeera Television.