

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

Number 1

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The BRICUP Newsletter is launched.

BRICUP, the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine was formed in 2005. It is an organization of UK-based academics, set up in response to the Palestinian Call for an Academic Boycott. Its twin missions are to support Palestinian universities, staff and students and to oppose the continued illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. Israel breaches international conventions of human rights, refuses to accept UN resolutions or rulings of the International Court and consistently suppresses Palestinian academic freedom. To fulfill its mission BRICUP will continue to put pressure on the EU and UK governments to exclude Israel from the European Research Area; will encourage individual academics to break their professional links with Israel; and will support Israeli academic colleagues working with Palestinian colleagues in their demand for self-determination and academic freedom. We will work within our trades unions and professional organizations in support of these actions and will explore all means of supporting our Palestinian academic colleagues.

Further details are to be found on the BRICUP website and in the BRICUP pamphlet 'Why Boycott Israeli Universities' available from BM BRICUP, London WC1N 3XX, price £2.50 plus 50p post and packing.

We plan to issue at least six newsletters per year. If you support our aims and wish to receive the newsletter please send an email to supporters@bricup.org.uk

A message from PACBI to BRICUP Newsletter readers

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) is very pleased to contribute to the inaugural issue of the BRICUP Newsletter. Our partnership with BRICUP goes back several years and is based on a common vision. PACBI will provide a regular column for this newsletter.

PACBI was launched in March 2004 by a group of academics and intellectuals in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT). Advocating an end to injustice and respect for universal human rights, PACBI's call for boycott [1], issued in April 2004, urged international academics and intellectuals to "comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions as a contribution to the struggle to end Israel's occupation, colonization and system of apartheid." This call immediately won the support of nearly sixty of the most prominent academic, cultural, and professional organizations and trade unions in the OPT, including the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE) and the umbrella organization of Palestinian NGOs in the occupied West Bank, PNGO.

In 2005, marking the first anniversary of the historic decision by the ICJ against the Wall, PACBI and a few other human rights and community organizations initiated the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or BDS, against Israel until it fully complies with international law [2]. More than 170 leading unions, institutions, and other civil society organizations endorsed that call, underscoring its value as a highly representative embodiment of the views of the great majority of Palestinian civil society, including the refugee community, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

PACBI has strong links with international organizations and representative bodies dedicated to bringing about the end of Israeli colonial rule and apartheid through various BDS-related actions and measures.

Notes:

[1]

www.pacbi.org/campaign_statement.htm

[2]

www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=66_0_1_10_M11

Future of the BRICUP website.

Anyone who has opened our website over recent months will have noticed that it has been pretty stagnant. Events have been moving fast in Israel/Palestine, with both new horror stories of Israeli oppression and the growth of resistance that we should have been reporting. Similarly we should have been updating on the continuing development of boycott and divestment actions across the globe, to say nothing of what is happening in UCU here in the UK. That we haven't been doing so is because our original web designer, who set up and maintained the site for us, took up a new job and was no longer able to find the time needed for this voluntary work. However the good news is that we have now commissioned a web designer to create a new – and hopefully more user-friendly – site for us which we hope to have up and running in a couple of months. In the meantime we are jury-rigging the existing site to be able to update it.

Whilst all this is happening it is well worth checking other sites for current news. In particular, the [Alternative Information Center](#) is a valuable source – look out in particular for their compilation *The Case for Academic Boycott against Israel*, which documents abuses and illegalities in a number of Israeli universities.

Early Day Motions- get your MP to sign up

The early day motion (EDM) is a much-used device to demonstrate the extent of support among MPs for a particular cause or point of view. EDMs are formal motions submitted to the House of Commons. MPs can add their signatures to an EDM to show their support. They can also submit amendments to an existing EDM. For more information about EDMs, visit the website

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi>

In recent years the number of EDMs relating to Palestine has increased dramatically, as has the number of MPs signing them. This indicates a widening of support among back bench MPs from all parties for the Palestinian cause and an increase in willingness to criticize Israel openly. There are currently 4 EDMs relating to Palestine,

collecting signatures, (numbers 305, 624, 698, 732. The latest is particularly urgent:-

[EDM 732 HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN GAZA \(No. 2\) 21.01.2008](#)

Corbyn, Jeremy

That this House is appalled at the continued and wholly preventable humanitarian crisis in Gaza; unreservedly condemns Israel for cutting off fuel supplies and preventing other vital supplies entering from Israel; and calls upon the Government to make all efforts to ensure that Israel lifts the siege with immediate effect.

Please contact your MP without delay and urge him/her to sign this EDM. The EDM has 58 signatures at the time of writing.

BRICUP's medical boycott group

Our medical group was formed in spring 2007 to reflect our concern with the medical abuses that Palestinians suffer on a daily basis at the hands of Israel's army. One aspect of this problem, not widely known, is the role (or its absence) of the Israel Medical Association (IMA). This professional body, supposedly committed to the ethical practice of medicine, has been remarkably silent in the face of the Israeli government's well-publicised assaults on the health and medical services of Palestinians. Worse still, some Israeli doctors are known to be complicit in the torture of Palestinian prisoners. Yet their co-professionals have never protested against this unethical conduct.

Aware that the IMA is a member of the World Medical Association (WMA), whose member bodies are all committed to upholding ethical standards in medicine, our group has been actively campaigning for the expulsion of the IMA from the WMA. We work in close association with Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, who share our aims. But we welcome all support from others in the medical field.

Medical members of BRICUP write to the Prime Minister

The following letter was delivered to Mr. Brown on January 26th 2008:-

Dear Prime Minister,

We write as medical professionals, deeply concerned over the crisis in Gaza. The closures imposed on Gaza and the power shutdown are creating a humanitarian crisis of the gravest kind, as the UN warned on January 19th. The reduction in food and medicines will have far reaching effects on a vulnerable population, already suffering from years of Israeli occupation and a ferocious economic blockade imposed by Israel, along with the US and the EU, since 2006..

The closures have prevented scores of patients from reaching hospitals outside Gaza. Essential medicines are lacking. Surgery is impossible without anaesthetics and other drugs. The largest hospital in Gaza is running on one generator, soon to close down if no more fuel is available. According to UNICEF one fifth of children are malnourished. Clean water is unavailable, with severe consequences for public health. All this is a consequence of deliberate Israeli policy.

As the EU Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said this week, these actions represent collective punishment of a civilian population, not engaged in combat. That is illegal under international humanitarian law, and contravenes Article 33 of the Geneva Conventions, to which Israel is a signatory.

We are sure that HMG does not condone such international crimes and will not stand by and allow this situation to continue without protest. So, we ask that, on our behalf, you bring immediate pressure to bear on the Israeli authorities to halt this assault on the people of Gaza. We also ask that you consider along with your EU partners taking punitive action against Israel until it complies with international law.

This should include suspending the EU-Israel Association agreement as a matter of urgency.

We ask that you do not dismiss our appeal. Humanity, respect for the law, and basic morality demand that we all take action to lift the blockade off Gaza.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ghada Karmi
Dr Chris Burns-Cox
Dr Asad Khan
Professor Colin Green
Dr Derek Summerfield
Professor David Pegg

How BRICUP works

We are a voluntary working committee, currently of 18 members. We are ecumenical; members include Britons of various and of no religious faith, Palestinians and Israelis. The only criterion for membership of the Committee is that you share our goals and working methods, and are prepared to take on any one or more of a multitude of tasks. The chairing of committee meetings rotates. I am the Secretary and will edit the updated website when it emerges – its technicalities are in the hands of Mike Cushman. Martha Mundy and John Chalcraft are joint Treasurers. David Pegg edits the Newsletter. Other members of the Committee take on responsibilities for advancing the work of the medical boycott of the Israel Medical Association (covered in this Newsletter), the cultural boycott, UCU work *et cetera*. We are financed entirely by donations from supporters and the sales of our pamphlet. Anyone on our supporters' list who wants to take on a more active role, please let us know – there is work enough for all!

You can contact us at bricup@bricup.org.uk

Steven Rose

Comments and suggestions concerning the Newsletter are welcome. Please email newsletter@bricup.org.uk