

BRICUP Newsletter 118

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

February 2018

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First International Meeting for Science in Palestine at the University of Cambridge

Jonathan Rosenhead

Early in the New Year , roughly 30 scientists from various universities in the UK, Europe and the US gathered at the University of Cambridge to take part in the first “International Meeting for Science in Palestine”.

The stated purpose of this two-day meeting of “Scientists for Palestine” (S4P), was to discuss how to implement concrete programs and long term visions to strengthen the growth of science in Palestine, to help build ties between the Palestinian and international scientific

communities. The program included reports by Palestinian academics and students (most of whom attended remotely) on the status of science in Palestine, and the challenges caused by the Israeli occupation. Several groups and individuals with experience supporting science in Palestine reported on their activities, and possible directions for future work were discussed.

The organisation S4P is a relatively new and young group, having been formed two years ago by half a dozen physicists at the postdoc and junior faculty level. Several more senior scientists, including Prof. Stephen Hawking at Cambridge, have publicly expressed support or have actively taken part in the group's activities.

The main focus of S4P so far has been the creation and organisation of the "Palestinian Advanced Physics School", held in 2016 at the Arab-American University in Jenin (AAUJ), which was reported on in the December 2016 issue of our newsletter (<http://www.bricup.org.uk/documents/archive/BRICUPNewsletter105.pdf>) and in 2017 at Birzeit University. These schools have brought internationally recognised experts in physics to lecture to Palestinian MSc students from all universities on the West Bank, with remote attendance by students from the universities in Gaza. The program of these schools also included interactive problem solving and practical sessions with advice on how to apply to graduate programs, and to write CVs and professional emails.

"The presence of the international scientific community here in the West Bank helps a lot", says Prof. Adli Saleh from AAUJ addressing the Cambridge meeting over video link (after not being granted a UK visa in time for the meeting). "The strategy of Israel is to isolate the Palestinian people in many ways. [...] Let's work for more exchange visitors." Prof. Wafaa Khater from Birzeit University agrees, and explains how Birzeit University has been closed 15 times by the occupation forces, and is frequently raided. "The most recent raid on Birzeit was less than a month ago. [...] It's clear that the strategy of the Israeli occupation is to deny the Palestinian people an education, and they do this in very systematic ways."

UK-based graduate students from the West Bank and Gaza told the meeting about challenges faced by the occupation, including travel restrictions and prohibitive limits on imports of necessary lab materials. Three graduate students from the

Islamic University in Gaza, one attending in person, contributed to the meeting with a video made in collaboration with S4P. [This video](#) was subsequently made publicly available through Scientists for Palestine's Facebook account, and has at the time of writing been viewed over 11,000 times.

During the meeting, the question of academic boycott of Israeli institutions was raised more than once, both by the Palestinian academics and other participants. Support for the boycott has been slow to win ground in the natural sciences, and the meeting reflected how views on this question vary even in the pro-Palestinian scientific community. While the Palestinian scientists based in Palestine unanimously expressed support for the academic boycott as one of several ways to help develop science in Palestine and counter the occupation, some Palestinian and non-Palestinian attendees spoke against it.

The organisation S4P is reliant on its members being able to travel without restriction to the West Bank, and does not have a public position on the question of boycott. The constitution of S4P excludes membership by anyone "directly involved in the occupation", and the activities of the group, developed in close collaboration with Palestinian academics, stay clear of normalisation efforts. Members of the group also expressed that part of the purpose of S4P is to raise awareness of the Israeli occupation in the international scientific community, and view their work as part of the resistance against it.

Much of the discussion at the meeting focused on concrete future activities, in which many of the participants were enthusiastic to take part. Over the next year, S4P aims to establish a mentorship program in which Palestinian students can be connected with international academics who can provide advice on careers in academia and research. This program may also be extended to an exchange program for Palestinian academics. The activities of the group, thus far confined to physics, will also be expanded into other subject areas.

S4P welcomes individuals and academics with a background in any scientific discipline to help develop and take part in their activities. More information about S4P can be found on [their webpage](#) or Facebook page.



BDS Movement for Palestinian Rights Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Norway, Feb 2, 2018

Statement from Bjornar Moxnes – Member of the Norwegian Parliament.

As a member of the Norwegian parliament, I proudly use my authority as an elected official to nominate the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights for the Nobel Peace Prize. Nominating the BDS movement for this recognition is perfectly in line with the principles I and my party hold very dear. Like the BDS movement, we are fully committed to stopping an ascendant, racist and right-wing politics sweeping too much of our world, and securing freedom, justice and equality for all people.

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement and the American Civil Rights movement, the grassroots, Palestinian-led BDS movement is a peaceful, global human rights movement that urges the use of economic and cultural boycotts to end Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights and international law.

The BDS movement seeks to end Israel's half-century of military rule over 4.5 million Palestinians, including the devastating ten-year illegal siege collectively punishing and suffocating nearly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, the ongoing forcible eviction of Palestinians from their homes, and the theft of Palestinian land through the construction of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

It seeks equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, currently discriminated against by dozens of racist laws, and to secure the internationally-recognized legal right of Palestinian refugees to return to homes and lands from which they were expelled.

Palestinian refugees constitute nearly 50 percent of all Palestinians, and they are being denied their right to return, guaranteed by law to all refugees, simply because of their ethnicity.

The BDS movement's aims and aspirations for basic human rights are irreproachable. They should be supported without reservation by all democratically-minded people and states.

The international community has a longstanding history of supporting peaceful measures such as

boycotts and divestment against companies that profit from human rights violations. International support for such measures was critical in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the racist colonial regime in former Rhodesia.

If the international community commits to supporting BDS to end the occupation of Palestinian territory and the oppression of the Palestinian people, new hope will be lit for a just peace for Palestinians, Israelis and all people across the Middle East.

The BDS movement has been endorsed by prominent figures, including the former Nobel Peace Prize winners Desmond Tutu and Mairead Maguire. It is gaining support from unions, academic associations, churches, and grassroots movements for the rights of refugees, immigrants, workers, women, indigenous peoples and the LGBTQI community. It is increasingly embraced by progressive Jewish groups and anti-racist movements across the world.

Eleven years since BDS' launch, it's high time for us to commit to doing no harm, and for all states to withdraw their complicity in Israel's military occupation, racist apartheid rule, ongoing theft of Palestinian land, and other egregious human rights violations.

Awarding a Nobel Peace Prize to the BDS movement would be a powerful sign demonstrating that the international community is committed to supporting a just peace in the Middle East and using peaceful means to end military rule and broader violations of international law.

My hope is that this nomination can be one humble but necessary step towards bringing forth a more dignified and beautiful future for all peoples of the region.

Support this nomination – by signing [this petition](#), jointly organized by the Jewish Voice for Peace and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Another BDS Debate success for BRICUP

The Editor

On February 9th, BRICUP members Jonathan Rosenhead and Ghada Karmi spoke for the

motion ‘*This House Supports the Boycott of Israel*’ at a debate at Imperial College, London. The speakers against were Arieh Miller, the Executive Director of the UK the Zionist Federation and Amos Schonfield, the Youth & Student Outreach Worker for Yachad , a UK NGO which describes itself as ‘*pro Israel and pro peace*’.

Our speakers reported on a lively debate. Voting was carried out before as well as after the debate and the result closely reflected those achieved in other recent BDS campus debates (including at York, Leeds, Exeter, and Southampton) in that the arguments for the motion persuaded abstainers to increase the vote in favour (from 37% to 57.5%), while the percentage voting against the motion changed little. (25% before and 22% after) .

BRICUP is always willing to help provide speakers for meetings and debates. Anyone interested should contact us by email at : newsletter@bricup.org.uk

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Israeli occupation forces assault on the Abu Jihad Centre for Captive Movements at Al Quds University

A Statement from Dr Fahed Abu Alhaj

General Manager. Abu Jihad Center for Captive Movement’s Affairs, Al Quds University

January 24, 2018

To the national and international human rights organizations and the Democratic governments, Parliaments and parties worldwide.

From the Abu Jihad Center for the Captive Movement’s Affairs at Al Quds University, and the European Alliance in Defence of Palestinian Detainees

In the early morning on Thursday, December 14, 2017, an Israeli military force broke into the campus of Al-Quds University in the town of Abu Dis near to Jerusalem and stormed the building of Abu Jihad Center for the Captives Movement’s Affairs after breaking its back door. They destroyed the contents, removed and damaged the exhibits that the Center has been preparing for its museum that will be launched in the near future. A total of 300 exhibits (posters, paintings, handiworks, etc.) have been damaged: exhibits of

the two latter said kinds are of the Palestinian captives’ works at Israeli jails.

The Israeli force also raided the library of the Center and damaged 350 copies of *The Experiences of Palestinian and Arab Captives* which is an encyclopaedia at the library, a collection of books of the Center's publications, and some informational materials. This has caused financial losses to the Center and additional efforts spent by the staff of the Center, and other staff, who have been contributing to the preparation of the artistic exhibits, correction of some written materials in the museum, and the following-up of its works.

The Abu Jihad Center is an institution specialising in research and studies concerning the Captive Movement. It also includes a museum that has been prepared recently for launched, which presents the Palestinian captive’s experience, unveils their suffering in Israeli jails, and documents human rights violations in terms of torture and ill treatment of women and children and the inhumane and unbearable conditions of these jails. Moreover, the Center presents artistic and literary works, handwritten materials as well as the handicrafts made by captives inside Israeli jails.

We call on all sides that do care for human rights all over the world to work on condemning this attack on the university campus and Abu Jihad Center in particular in international forums, and to demand Israel to compensate the Center for the losses it has been sustaining, ones that are estimated to be NIS 1,950, 000.

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Is academia the last bastion of progressive thought in Israel?

Edo Conrad

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NOTE: *This article first appeared on February 11th in +972- a blog-based Israeli web magazine, jointly owned by a group of journalists, bloggers and photographers who oppose the occupation*

and have declared their commitment to human rights and freedom of information.

Israeli universities have long been viewed as a bulwark against extremism. A new database, compiled by a group of Israeli dissident academics, reveals how the academy works in concert with the state.

It's no secret that the Israeli government's crackdown on freedom of expression in recent years has extended into the academy. Through far-right student groups [such as Im Tirzu](#), proposed ethical codes that would bar professors from [voicing political opinions in class](#), and attempts to shut down entire university departments deemed too left-wing, the government has in many ways framed the very idea of academic freedom as subversive.

Nevertheless, Israeli academia is still held up as an independent, progressive bulwark against extremist and reactionary thought, an argument that is often deployed to combat Palestinian-led academic boycotts. But beneath the rhetoric, the truth is that Israel's universities work closely with various state bodies, from the military and arms industries to anti-BDS networks and programs.

Concerned over the clampdown, as well as by the suppression of Palestinian faculty and students in the occupied territories, a new group of Israeli academics called Academia for Equality is working to expose those ties, and challenge the idea that academia remains one of the Jewish state's last bastions of progressive thought.

As one of its first major projects aimed at documenting and demonstrating those phenomena, the group is set to release a database called "Complicit Academy," comprised of local and international news articles, documents, NGO reports, and official university publications. The idea, says Natalie Rothman, an associate professor of history at University of Toronto, who helped spearhead the project, is to shed light on Israeli academic institutions' repression of dissent, institutionalized discrimination against Palestinian-Israeli students and faculty, collusion with the settlement enterprise, military R&D, and hasbara (Israeli state-sponsored PR operations abroad). The database aims to provide academics, in Israel and abroad, better tools for understanding how, contrary to its image, Israeli academia works in concert with the occupation.

"The rationale behind the database was providing empirical evidence to counter the the prevailing

narrative of Israeli academia as a bastion of opposition and resistance to the regime," says Rothman, "Israeli academia, from the Council for Higher Education to the various student unions, collaborates in one way or another with the occupation. It was important for us to document the collaboration as a way to see if, down the line, something could be done to combat it."

Members of Academia for Equality began working on the database in early 2017, using a small batch of articles compiled by Shir Hever, an Israeli economic researcher, as a jumping off point. The group then expanded the collection to include items on the repression of Palestinian academics in Israel and the West Bank. The database, all of which is based on publicly available materials, is divided into four categories — International Academy, International Funding, Israeli Academy, and Palestinian Academy.

The database also gives the public a way to track top academics' records on academic freedom. For instance, the database includes a collection of articles on the attempts of Ben-Gurion University President Rivka Carmi — who was recently appointed to a third term by the university — to [censor political activism on her campus](#).

The database makes it easy for the general public to monitor several important trends in Israeli academia today, including: the growing number of university programs [designed to battle "delegitimization,"](#) one of the most visible developments of the last few years; [institutional racism](#) against Palestinian students in Israeli universities and colleges — ranging from discriminatory admissions policies to [prohibitions on the use of Arabic](#) to surveillance and [restrictions on political organizing](#); the pervasiveness of "customized" academic programs geared toward military personnel offered by virtually all Israeli universities, often with significantly reduced academic requirements; the creeping collaboration between Israeli institutions within the Green Line and their "offshoots," off-campus facilities, programs, or sponsored colleges in settlements in the West Bank and the Golan Heights; and collaboration between universities and state bodies on militaristic endeavors [like marketing Israel's arms trade](#).

A section on the Palestinian academy, on the other hand, is full of documentation of [raids by Israeli security forces](#) on campuses and the [arrests of students and faculty across the West Bank](#). It also focuses on on the [lack freedom of movement](#)

[for Gaza students](#), and opeds decrying [the silence of Israeli academics](#) in the face of the repression faced by their Palestinian counterparts.

Complicit Academy, currently in its final stages, will be officially launched and uploaded to the Academia for Equality website in the coming weeks. Rothman says she hopes it can act as a library of sorts for academics abroad, who can use it to look for articles about their institutions' ties to Israeli academic institutions. But the database is also meant for Israelis and Palestinians, Rothman adds: "It is important for us that the information be accessible to those inside Israel, which is why the database in Hebrew, as well as in English and Arabic. We want people both in and outside of Israeli academia to have access to these publications."

The goal, Rothman continues, is not only to challenge misconceptions about Israeli academia, but also to actively challenge its relationship to the government and the occupation. "Yes, there is a small group of dissidents in the academia, yet our institutions collaborate on a day-to-day basis with the regime. We have the opportunity to shed light on the fact that this collaboration exists, both overtly and covertly, effectively normalizing what in our eyes cannot be normalized."

Stop the Deportation – Petition to the Israeli government from Jewish Academics

On 21 January 2018, Israeli philosophers published the statement below. We, the undersigned Jewish academics, would like to express our full endorsement of their statement, and also to join in calling on the Israeli Government to stop the deportations. Many of us descend from those who owe their lives to those who opened their doors to refugees and asylum seekers. Israel, of all countries, should be sympathetic to the awful predicament in which asylum seekers find themselves, and fulfill their obligations under international law by participating in the international effort to address the refugee crisis, rather than seeking excuses to send them to a cruel fate.

Stop the Deportation

Israel has recently embarked on the deportation of tens of thousands refugees from the Sudan and (mostly) from Eritrea to third countries – Rwanda and Uganda. This operation marks the

culmination of a long process in which the State of Israel has been neglecting its moral commitment to the refugees.

Israel refuses to consider the asylum requests of the refugees, persecutes them, and indeed encourages an openly racist campaign against them. In fact, the State of Israel seeks to deport all refugees in its territory, and refuses to take part in the international effort to confront the current refugee crisis. By doing so, Israel violates its commitment to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a convention that Israel was – shortly after the holocaust – one of its initiators. Israel thus ignores the memories of the persecutions and closed gates that faced many Jews during the holocaust-era.

In the very few cases in which asylum requests were actually reviewed, they were routinely and arbitrarily rejected. The miniscule acceptance rate of such requests in Israel is the lowest in the world. Furthermore, an on-site visit by an Israeli court in the single office where such requests can be filed resulted in an official decision that corroborates claims about bureaucratic harassment and persistent attempts to prevent refugees from even filing in such requests. In other Western countries where such requests by refugees from the Sudan and Eritrea are reviewed, almost all of them are granted, and even those whose requests are not fully granted receive protection from deportation, in lieu of the dangers they had fled.

Testimonies from Uganda and Rwanda documented by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and by other organizations indicate that refugees from Israel who had been deported in the past to these countries do not receive protection or recognition as refugees, and often become the victims of human trafficking. Israel is responsible for the safety of those within its territory, and is subject to an absolute prohibition against deporting them without guaranteeing their safety. Unfortunately, Israel has been violating this duty and in effect denying it, while propagating falsehoods in order to try and justify, at any cost, turning its back on the refugees and doing whatever it can to deport them.

In this spirit, we have seen attempts to tie the deportation with the genuine hardships of local communities where many refugees live, such as in some neighborhoods in the south of Tel Aviv. These hardships predate the arrival of the refugees, and furthermore, the impression that all Jewish inhabitants of these communities are

united in their hostility towards the refugees is badly misleading. More importantly, the attempt to connect the deportation with such local hardships is to be resisted, because Israel can easily combine the much-needed targeting of the traditional, local hardships with a decent asylum policy, and also because nothing about these hardships can justify deporting thousands of innocent people to a cruel fate.

Present in Israel today are also many other undocumented immigrants, whom the State does not seek to deport. It is hard to find a relevant difference between them and the refugees from the Sudan and Eritrea, except for the color of their skin. This targeting of specifically refugees from African countries expresses a racist tide that we should all firmly resist.

We urge the Israeli government to immediately stop the deportation operation, and to initiate a fair and transparent procedure of granting the refugees acceptable status. We call public opinion, at home and abroad, as well as our colleagues in Academia, members of Jewish communities, human rights organizations and anti-racism organizations to act urgently and do whatever within their power to stop the deportation.

This petition has already attracted over 2000 signatures.

[Sign the Petition](#)

Major Victory for Free speech in Kansas

Last month, A Kansas federal judge ruled that a state law designed to punish people who boycott Israel is an unconstitutional denial of free speech. [This ruling](#) is a significant victory for the right to free speech because of the global campaign to outlaw the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, which has been spreading widely in the US.

<https://theintercept.com/2018/01/31/kansas-bds-law-free-speech/>

Legal Note: This is a preliminary ruling by a federal District Court (first level). The Court's final ruling is likely to be the same, but will probably be appealed to a federal Court of Appeals. If the Courts of Appeals in different Circuits (groups of states) disagree, the issue could reach the US Supreme Court.

Move to bring settlement higher educational institutions under Israeli Law

[Times Higher Education, January 25, 2018](#)

Campaigns for an academic boycott of Israel are likely to be ramped up in the wake of a move to bring higher education institutions in the West Bank settlements under Israeli law.

Israel's BDS Ban list

Statement from The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP- of which BRICUP is a member).

January 2018

The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP) is one of 20 organisations from around the world that fight for Palestinian rights whose members have been banned from entering Palestine by the government of the state of Israel due to their defence of Palestinian human rights and their support of the [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement](#).

The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP) – founded in 1986 is a network of 42 European committees, organizations, NGOs, unions and international solidarity movements from 19 European countries, dedicated to the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and equality.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is a global, peaceful movement anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, led by Palestinian civil society that seeks to put pressure on Israel to honour its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law as demanded by numerous UN resolutions. Having failed to hinder the growing support and impact of the BDS movement in the mainstream, [Israel has launched an unprecedented anti-democratic campaign](#) to silence activism for Palestinian rights and outlaw BDS. The Israeli-induced attacks on the BDS movement include pressure on governments, legislators and officials to [fight BDS activity through implementation of repressive measures](#) that pose a threat to civil and political liberties at large. The publication of the

recent so called Israel's BDS ban list is the latest example of this policy. It follows a series of interferences in several European countries that aimed at preventing Palestine solidarity initiatives being organised in public spaces.

The right to conduct BDS activities was affirmed by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Federica Mogherini, when she stated that *'The EU stands firm in protecting freedom of expression and freedom of association in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which is applicable to member states.'*

In 2012, Frank La Rue, a UN senior official, [confirmed](#) that "Calling for or participating in a boycott is a form of expression that is peaceful, legitimate and internationally accepted."

Representatives of the [Swedish, Irish, Dutch and Spanish state governments](#) have publicly defended the right to advocate and campaign for Palestinian rights under international law through BDS.

A [report](#) released earlier this year by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ([ESCWA](#)) proves beyond doubt that Israel has imposed a system of apartheid on the entire Palestinian people and calls for BDS measures to end Israel's apartheid regime. Apartheid in South Africa was brought to an end, thanks partly to the cumulative impact of a variety of measures, including overwhelming boycotts and sanctions supported by the UN and member states.

The European Union and European governments must condemn this latest crackdown on peaceful, nonviolent movement and take immediate steps to hold the state of Israel to account for its continuing violations of Palestinian rights through measures such as the immediate suspension of its economic and military relations with Israel. There is even more reason for EU member states to stop inviting Israeli senior officials who might very well face charges for war crimes. These officials cannot just visit one or more EU member states while some of latter's nationals fighting peacefully for basic and political rights for the Palestinian people might be banned from entering Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, not to mention the disregard by the Israeli government for Palestinian refugees' right to return.

ECCP in its work is trying to challenge EU complicity with Israel's ongoing violations of International Law and Palestinian rights. We are coordinating political actions, grassroots campaigns and debates at the European level, highlighting the ways in which the EU, despite its many verbal condemnations, continues to fund Israeli companies and institutions that are directly involved in the maintenance of the Israeli regime of apartheid, colonialism and occupation. We'll continue our efforts to hold Israel accountable for its systematic abuse of Palestinian human rights and to end European complicity with Israel's violations of international law.

Belgian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (BACBI)

(<http://www.bacbi.be/>). See their February Newsletter [here](#) .

Notices

Speakers: BRICUP is always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are welcome.

Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk

Register as a supporter of BRICUP

You can register as a supporter of BRICUP and of the academic and cultural boycott of Israel [by completing this form](#).

We recognise that many individuals may wish to support our aims by private actions without wishing to be publicly identified. Supporters receive our regular newsletter by email and receive occasional emails giving details of urgent developments and of ways to support our activities. We do not disclose the names of our supporters to anyone outside BRICUP or share them with any other organisation.

Financial support for BRICUP

We welcome one-off donations, but we can plan our work much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order. You can [download a justanding order form](#) here.

One-off donations may be made by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, at BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK or by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at

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