

BRICUP Newsletter 126

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British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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Scholasticide: Israel's attempt to destroy Palestine's universities

Robert Boyce, Secretary, BRICUP

(A version of this talk was given on 3 November at the Chester Stop the War Conference on 'Palestine: Reframing the Debate')

Supporters of the academic boycott of Israel are frequently told it's wrong in principle to boycott universities since they are bastions of free speech, and it's downright perverse to boycott Israeli universities since they are islands of liberal opinion in an otherwise reactionary country.

Neither claim bears scrutiny. Boycott supporters do not boycott individuals but institutions, and do not obstruct anyone's free speech. By boycotting, they are expressing their disgust at the complicity of Israeli universities in the plight of their Palestinian counterparts behind the Apartheid wall. Most Israeli faculty and students will have served in the IDF and participated in the illegal occupation, and many are still in the army reserve. Much of the research for their instruments of oppression are carried out at their own universities.

Not only do Palestinian universities have practically no friends in Israel, they have long been targets of Israeli hostility, and this year the hostility has sharply intensified. Daphna Golan recently wrote in [Haaretz](#) of '[the destruction of the Palestinian universities](#)'. This is no exaggeration. To make sense of Israel's action, a brief history of the relationship may be helpful.

Establishing Palestinian universities

Before 1967 there were no universities in Palestine, only a single private agricultural college. Young people seeking higher education went to universities in Beirut, Cairo, Amman or further abroad. It was only after the 1967 war that Palestinians began to turn schools into colleges and colleges into universities.

This was partly because Israel restricted the movement of people in and out of Palestine. But it was also because Palestinians knew that to resist Israel's efforts to destroy them as a nation, they must educate their people, increase their skills and sustain their national culture.

First came Birzeit (formerly a two-year college) in 1972, then Bethlehem (an expansion of the Christian Brothers campus) in 1973, then An-Najah in 1977, the Islamic University in Gaza in 1978, Hebron in 1982, Al-Quds (amalgamating four separate colleges) in 1984, and Al-Azhar in

1992. Today there are 14 degree-giving institutions in the West Bank and 9 in the Gaza Strip as well as several colleges. Student enrolment has correspondingly risen: from a few hundred in 1973 to c.80,000 in 2001, and well over 200,000 today – with 70,000 enrolled in the Palestine Open University and more studying abroad.

Israeli malevolence

From the start Israel has regarded Palestinian universities as centres for political resistance to their imperialist project – what an [Israeli minister](#) recently called 'greenhouses for growing terrorists.' So they put innumerable obstacles in their way.

In the early years, Israel refused to exempt construction materials, laboratory equipment and books destined for the universities from customs duties, VAT and even in some cases luxury taxes – contrary to international law. It censored books and periodicals which were freely available at Israeli universities. It withheld work permits for international faculty – and bear in mind that after the Naqba most Palestinians were driven into exile. Israel also regularly and arbitrarily closed the universities [down](#).

In 1973, just as Birzeit was becoming a full-fledged university, Israeli authorities closed it down and did so several more times in the next few years. In 1974, they arrested and deported the president of Birzeit University, [Dr. Hanna Nasir](#), to Lebanon. For the next nineteen years he presided over the University while in exile.

University closures, initially for a few days or a week, in the 1980s commonly became a month or several months long. In 1986-7 Israeli forces shot and killed students at Birzeit University. They closed the university four times, on one occasion for four months, and carried out two large-scale military incursions into the campus.

In February 1988, just weeks after the first Intifada began, [Israel shut down the universities](#) along with all other Palestinian schools. Hundreds and eventually thousands of students were arrested without charge or trial, as well as dozens of faculty. In the case of faculty it was usually for attempting to teach in mosques, churches and private homes, which Israel criminalised. In the case of students it was usually because they were carrying academic books, which was taken as a sign of rebellion.

As always, Israel's justification was security: Palestinian universities were allegedly sites of

‘[popular terror and rioting](#)’. But the fact that it closed not only the universities but also secondary schools, primary schools and even kindergartens put the lie to its ‘security’ claims. To suggest that kindergartens were hotbeds of terror was so absurd that it backtracked and allowed them to reopen – but not the universities, which remained closed for over four years.

Eventually in 1984 Israel allowed the universities to reopen, but continued its policy of obstruction. In 2000 it restricted the movement of students to and from the Gaza Strip – part of its separation policy. During Operation Cast Lead in 2008–09 it deliberately bombed and destroyed the Ministry of Education in Gaza and much of the Islamic University.

Down to the present the IDF regularly launches armed incursions into Palestinian universities, disrupting teaching, trashing offices and destroying equipment. In 2013 alone, the IDF invaded Al Quds University no fewer than 26 times and injured over 1,700 students and staff, mainly by wantonly firing off smoke and tear gas grenades. At any one time, Israel holds between 300 and 500 Palestinian students and dozens of faculty in [detention](#), usually without charge.

The bantustanisation of Palestinian universities

Israel forces erect hundreds of checkpoints, some temporary, some permanent, making travel in the West Bank uncertain. As a result, universities even just 30 kilometres apart have had to abandon sharing lecturers and courses.

Some permanent checkpoints close at 6 p.m. and don’t reopen until the following morning. As a result, the universities can’t schedule activities after 5 or 5:30 p.m., since otherwise students and staff might not get home.

Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, it has been totally cut off from the rest of Palestine, and Gaza students are no longer able to study in West Bank universities. At Birzeit, for instance, Gaza students made up 20 per cent of the student body in the first fifteen years of its operations; today, Birzeit has no students from Gaza.

It is not only Gaza that is isolated. An-Najah University in Nablus enrolled large numbers of students from the governorates of Jenin as well as Tulkarm and Tubas until 10 years ago. Now, because of the checkpoints and arbitrary road closures, the number of students attending An-Najah from Jenin has declined almost to zero. The

national role of the universities is thus undermined.

Israel controls everything the Palestinian universities receive from abroad. It regularly blocks the imports of scientific equipment, chemical supplies, books in Arabic, even books on art and art history; and it delays delivering goods for months, sometimes years.

Israel frequently places obstacles in the way of students and faculty seeking to leave or return to the West Bank. The complete uncertainty makes it hard for Palestinian academics to organise international conferences or attend conferences abroad.

Palestinian universities generally don’t have the resources to put on masters or doctoral programs. Most students seeking a postgraduate qualification must therefore go abroad. But if they stay abroad for more than a year they face the threat that Israel will declare they have forfeited their residence status and refuse to allow them back.

Israel also makes it difficult for the universities to receive visiting lecturers. They delay the issue of visas or issue visas too short to cover the time required for the visit.

Israel’s intensified repression

This year Israel has turned the screws even further on Palestinian universities. In July it halted a two-day conference in East Jerusalem on the status of Muslim endowment and property in the occupied city. Gilad Erdan, the Israeli minister of public security who ordered the halt, claimed the conference promoted ‘[incitement](#)’ against the Israeli state. The conference was to take place at Al-Quds University’s Hind al-Husseini College of Arts in Sheikh Jarrah. Israel not only stopped the conference from going ahead. It also detained 15 of the participants and permanently [shut down](#) the College. Presumably this is part of Israel’s long-term plan to drive the Palestinians completely out of Jerusalem.

Israel has also persuaded the US to cut funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), claiming it is ‘strengthening terror’ - by helping to educate Palestinians. As well as providing teaching and teacher training for many primary and secondary schools in the West Bank and Gaza, [UNWRA](#) issues over 1000 scholarships to Palestinian students.

Most serious of all, Israel is now [refusing](#) to renew the visas of academics in Palestine who do

not hold permanent residency in the West Bank. According to the Palestinian civil affairs commission, the Israeli visa renewal rate for these academics has dropped from 70 percent to [10 percent](#) over the past year. Israeli authorities impose unwritten, unclear and changing documentation requirements, drag out the processing time, offer only shorter duration visas and stamps that restrict movement to the West Bank, and demand financial bonds that can reach up to [\\$22,000](#). Non-resident academics must submit their work contract to obtain a visa which states 'not allowed to work.' Until this year, non-Palestinian non-resident academics could transit through Ben Gurion Airport. Not anymore.

Most of those affected are Palestinians whose families fled abroad in 1948 and who hold foreign passports rather than Palestinian residence permits. At Birzeit University alone there are 15 foreign passport-holding faculty members whose requests for visa renewals have been refused or endlessly delayed. Some of them have already had to leave the country.

Two such victims are [Roger Heacock](#) and his wife, Laura Wick. They have both worked at Birzeit for 35 years, he a professor of European history, she a specialist in mid-wifery and public health. They have had to quit their posts, sell or give away their possessions, and are now waiting in France in hope that the Israelis will eventually let them return.

Academics like the Heacocks play a critical role in Palestinian higher education. Forcing them to leave further isolates the universities from the rest of the world, reduces the quality of education they provide, demoralises those who are left, and discourages others from staying on in Palestine. That, it seems safe to say, is precisely why the Israelis are refusing to renew their visas.

The logic of repression and means of resistance

To sum up, Israel's obstruction of Palestinian higher education cannot be explained simply by reference to 'security'. Israel places a high value on its universities and research institutes, regarding them as vital to its economic, cultural and national survival, given that practically its only natural resources are its people. Israel knows well that universities play the same essential role in Palestinian society. It also knows that an empowered Palestinian population is far more capable of challenging its dominance than an ill-informed, poorly educated one. This, no doubt, is the reason for Israel's relentless targeting of the Palestinian educational system. It is scarcely

hyperbole to describe Israeli policy as [scholasticide](#).

So far, Palestine has been remarkably successful in educating its people. For example,

about one-third of all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are enrolled in education at all levels.

according to a report of the UN Development Program in 2016, the [literacy](#) rate in Palestine - 96.3% - is the highest in the Middle East, and the illiteracy rate among Palestinians over the age of 15 - 3.7% - is the lowest in the world.

compared to Israel, Palestine has a [similar percentage](#) of young people - and a similar percentage of young women - in higher education.

But the situation is precarious. Western university heads loudly protest against the academic boycott of Israel, but say nothing when Israel bombs Palestinian universities or cripples their operations. Western governments fold their arms and do nothing. Israeli universities, as ever, will remain silent. The plight of the West Bank and Gaza universities will continue to worsen, and Israel will eventually destroy them if nothing is done. Civil society action must therefore act.

- Students should work within their respective PalSoCs to help prepare the next Israel Apartheid Week.

- Alumni should pressure their respective university to take an interest in this injustice. Partnerships with a Palestinian university are one option.

- University teachers should press their union, UCU, to act on the motions on Palestine adopted at conference. If they haven't done so already, they should sign the **Commitment by UK Scholars to Human Rights in Palestine** (see below).

Everyone wishing to know more or become involved should follow the links to '[Right to Education Campaign](#)', an initiative of students at Birzeit, the '[Campaign for the Right to Enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory \(OPT\)](#)', and the [British Committee for the Universities of Palestine \(BRICUP\)](#), all of which have advice on appropriate action.

[Sign the commitment by UK Scholars to human rights in Palestine](#)

This commitment, which has been signed by over 700 academics across UK's higher education system, is not to accept invitations for academic

visits to Israel, not to act as referees in activities related to Israel academic institutions, or cooperate in any other way with Israeli universities.

It is a response to the appeal for such action by Palestinian academics and civil society due to the deep complicity of Israeli academic institutions in Israeli violations of international law. Signatories have pledged to continue their commitment until Israel complies with international law, and respects Palestinian human rights.

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Uphold international law by not recognising Ariel University

Richard Seaford - BRICUP

In February of this year something bizarre happened in the Israeli Knesset. Ariel University was brought under the Jurisdiction of the Israeli Council of Higher Education. It is bizarre because Ariel it is not in Israel. Israel has precisely as much right to ultimate control over it as it does over a university in Damascus or in London.

Senior Israel politicians regard formal Israeli control of Ariel University as a step towards the annexation of all the occupied territory (<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-applies-sovereignty-over-Ariel-University-in-the-West-Bank-542446>). And in June 2018 Education Minister Naftali Bennett announced a plan for Ariel to double its size in five years with the establishment of a medical school through a \$20 million donation from the American-Jewish casino magnate Sheldon Adelson (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-with-massive-donation-from-adelson-israeli-west-bank-university-to-double-in-size-1.5485357>).

Ariel is a colony-settlement in the West Bank. All such colony-settlements are illegal under international law. The Fourth Geneva convention, to which Israel is a signatory, states (Article 49) that *'the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies.'* The only country that regards the colony-settlements as legal is Israel, maintaining that Article 49 does not apply to the territory that it occupies. However, the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Court of

Justice and the High Contracting Parties to the Convention have all affirmed that the Fourth Geneva Convention does apply to the occupied territory.

And so the British government does regard the colony-settlements as illegal, and regrets it. However, its position is like that of a judge who sentences a habitual thief with the words: *'Your ongoing activity is illegal and disruptive, and I regret them, but I am determined to do all in my power to ensure that you continue to suffer no adverse consequences: you are free to go'*. This is in breach of its own legal obligations: Common Article 1 to the four Geneva Conventions lays down an obligation to *'respect and ensure respect for the Conventions in all circumstances [emphasis added]'*.

This means that the upholding of international law falls to us as citizens. The fact is that any kind of collaboration with Ariel - or with any of the other institutions of higher education (IHEs) in illegally colonised territory - is complicit in breaking international law. This includes attending conferences, writing for journals, and so on. As the annexation by Israel of stolen land advances, we will be hearing more and more about these issues. Here I focus on the recognition of qualifications.

In the UK the evaluation of international academic qualification is done by UK NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre), which informs me that *'In Israel, the competent recognition authority is the Council for Higher Education. If an institution is recognised by that Council, then UK NARIC in turn acknowledges that recognition'* (11.9.2018). Their statement makes no reference to international law, or to the fact that Ariel is not in fact 'in Israel'.

It falls to us therefore to lobby government, and to emphasise to our own IHEs that recognition of qualifications from illegal IHEs is complicit in illegality, and could be a source of negative publicity both within and outside the institution. Do they agree that international law should be respected: yes or no? If the response is that these things are decided by NARIC, then we can quote the following from the same statement by NARIC: *'universities are responsible for their admissions and none is obliged to accept NARIC's opinions'*.

Ariel has for some time been trying to depict itself as a model of co-existence. For instance in 2011 the Ariel University Centre of Samaria (not yet

formally a university) held a conference entitled 'Best Plans for a Peaceful Israel/Palestine', with Palestinian participants. Needless to say, the conference - like most such events - has done nothing whatsoever to slow the ongoing brutal colonisation of the West Bank. It was pure PR. To be sure, the Palestinian citizens of Israel who take the opportunity to study in Ariel (a few hundred out of about 15.000) do not do so in order to disrupt the colonial project. As for Palestinians students from occupied land, Ariel publicity does not mention them, presumably because there are either very few or none at all.

Palestinian residents living around Ariel are not allowed to enter the settlement, let alone the university. The main road linking Ariel to Israel, on which most of the students arrive from Israel, is built on huge tracts of land confiscated from the Palestinians, and is in effect closed to Palestinian traffic. The geographic location of the university was chosen to promote the settlements. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of occupied Palestinians favour much stronger measures than the (comparatively mild) non-recognition of Ariel University, namely boycott of and sanctions against Israel. (see [opinion poll result](#))

There is widespread understanding both inside and outside Israel of the consequences of the illegality of Ariel. For instance, the original decision to upgrade Ariel to a university was opposed by the Council of Presidents of Israeli Universities, and by over 1000 Israeli academics on the grounds that *'involving Israeli academia in the ideology of conquest ... threatens the ability of the Israeli academia to function.'* (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18879786> ; Journal of International Education Research 10.3 (2014) p.214). Another example: in August 2018 the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) [voted overwhelmingly](#) (164-0, with 17 abstentions) not only to support the Israeli Sociological Association in its refusal to co-operate with the illegal IHEs but also to 'pledge its non-co-operation with these institutions'.

Other notable illegal IHEs, located entirely or partly located on stolen land, are (1) Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus Campus, (2) Herzog College a teachers' training college with campuses in Jerusalem and in the Alon Shvut and Migdal Oz settlements, (2) Yehuda Regional College, located in Qiryat Arba, an urban Israeli

settlement on the outskirts of the Palestinian town of Al Khalil – Hebron, and (4) Orot Israel College, a national-religious teachers training college located in the Elkana settlement.

How is Ariel University defended? According to British academic Geoffrey Adelman, some MPs object to it because "it is Jewish. If it was a Palestinian university they wouldn't object' (Jewish Chronicle 25.1.2013). With that intensity of tunnel vision it is impossible to argue. We need to act.

Charity Commission updates guidance after criticism – possible implications for BDS on campus .

Rebecca Gould

During 2017 and 2018, a number of student unions at UK universities received inquiries from the Charity Commission in connection with BDS. As a result they began to worry that certain forms of BDS could pose legal risks for student unions and possibly undermine their charity status. This update (mostly to do with guidance on permitting extremist events on university campuses) is therefore potentially significant. An article in Civil Society ([Charity Commission updates terrorism guidance after criticism from MPs and peers](#)) notes "*The Commission has also updated its internal guidance for caseworkers when dealing with issues relating to students' unions.*"

Although it remains to be seen how universities and student unions will interpret these changes in the Charity Commission guidance, they should take note of the Charity Commission's expanded recognition for freedom of expression on university campuses, including (potentially) for initiatives relating to BDS. That this change was made in response to the report produced by the Joint Committee on Human Rights' "[Freedom of Speech in Universities inquiry](#)" suggests the positive impact of academic advocacy on matters pertaining to academic freedom and free speech.

Leeds University becomes the first UK university to divest from Israeli apartheid

Leeds Palestine Solidarity Group

See also articles in the [Electronic Intifada](#), the [Middle East Monitor](#), and the Leeds University student newspaper, [The Gryphon](#).

Over the weekend of the 9th-11th November, The University of Leeds made public their decision to divest from three companies which were found to be complicit in the violation of Palestinian human rights: Airbus, United Technologies and Keyence Corporation. A fourth company – HSBC – is also under review by the university’s investment managers for its provision of loans to Elbit Systems, Caterpillar and BAE Systems, all of which sell weapons and military equipment to the Israeli government.

The move came in the wake of student activists campaigning for the university to divest from four firms in an open letter at the end of October. The fourth firm was bank [HSBC](#).

The university’s almost \$1.7 million holdings in HSBC remain in place for now, despite the bank’s [\\$1 billion investment](#) in companies that arm Israel. The university claimed to The Gryphon that its HSBC holdings involved “no direct investment in armament companies,” but said it was “in dialogue to understand investments in this area.”

Leeds Palestine Solidarity Group welcomed the news in a statement on Friday. “This is a massive success,” said the group’s co-president Evie Russell-Cohen. “We hope that it will only be the beginning of a wave change across UK universities.” She said it was “clear that the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions is being heard in the UK.”

The group’s media officer Yousef Abdel Fattah said, “We hope all UK universities heed our call and divest just like they did with apartheid South Africa in the 1980s.” Abdel Fattah said that, “Palestinian students on campuses, like myself, have to live with the knowledge that our tuition fees are invested in companies manufacturing the same weapons used in violence against our loved ones.”

The open letter, signed by 23 staff members, 19 student societies and hundreds of students, criticized university management for using tuition fees “to invest in business activity which enables Israel’s violations of Palestinian human rights.” It cited the killing of 2,251 Palestinians during Israel’s 2014 assault on Gaza, including 526 children.

The letter called on the university to divest from the four companies, and for the university to

“adopt a stronger screening policy” for its investments. It demanded management “impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against the state of Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.”

Although the UK’s National Union of Students [has for years had a pro-BDS policy](#), the Palestine Solidarity Campaign told The Electronic Intifada that Leeds was the first university to actually divest holdings in firms involved in the Israeli occupation.

Last year the Tshwane University of Technology [in South Africa announced](#) it was joining the [academic boycott of complicit Israeli institutions](#), saying it supported the call to “boycott Israel and Israeli institutions for as long as Israel continues to violate the basic human rights of the Palestinian people.” In 2009, Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, became the first in the US to [divest from companies involved in the Israeli occupation](#).

As is common when big businesses divest from Israeli-linked holdings, the University of Leeds sought to downplay the role of the BDS movement, telling The Gryphon, the student newspaper, that its divestment from the three arms firms was part of it “climate active strategy.”

Update on 9 November

The day after this article was published, Leeds university [released a further statement](#) casting doubt on “inaccurate reports in the press” and reiterating their line about the “climate active strategy” they claim to have adopted. The university said it “agreed to adopt a climate active strategy on 31 May 2018 and the university has been implementing this over the last four months,” divesting from the three companies on 15 October.

But Leeds University Palestine Solidarity Group responded in a [statement today](#) that in reality, [none of the three companies](#) the university divested from are part of [the Fossil Free Campaign](#) and the university remains invested in fossil fuels, including holdings “of over £3.5 million [\$4.5 million] in Shell and BP. The contradiction between its statement and its actions is clear.”

In the Leeds Palestine Solidarity Group statement, Leeds University Union’s People and Planet Society have backed statement, they are “in full solidarity” with the Palestine solidarity group. The fact that the university is using our campaign

to erase the efforts of Leeds PSG, whilst still investing millions in fossil fuel companies, is hypocritical and offensive,” the statement read. We refuse to be complicit in this,” they stated. “The issues of climate justice and decolonization are inextricably linked.”

Judge Orrick rejected Lawfare’s attempt to equate calls for justice with discrimination.”. For more background, see Palestine Legal’s [case summary](#).

The written decision is [here](#).

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Dismissal of lawsuit against San Francisco University and Professor Rabab Abdulhadi

Editor

On October 29th, a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit against Professor Rabab Abdulhadi and San Francisco State University (SFSU) that had sought to compel the university to restrict the speech of students and faculty who support Palestinian freedom.

The case, Mandel v. Board of Trustees, was first filed in June 2017 by the Lawfare Project, a right-wing anti-Palestinian organization with an explicit plan to “*inflict massive punishments*” against critics of Israel. Having dismissed an earlier version of the lawsuit in March 2018, Judge William Orrick III this time dismissed the case with prejudice, meaning the lawsuit cannot be filed again. The lawsuit is part of a years-long campaign of harassment against campus activists and Professor Abdulhadi, an outspoken scholar and advocate for justice for the Palestinians.

Judge Orrick repeatedly emphasized that the Lawfare Project’s complaint is “devoid” of facts alleging discrimination. He wrote, “*Absolutely no facts have been alleged to support their mere assertion of differential treatment.*” Dr. Abdulhadi commented, “The white supremacist shootings in Pittsburgh and Kentucky over the past few days are but the most recent reminders of how deadly racism, intolerance and bigotry against Jews, Muslims, Blacks, and immigrants can be. We need to fight all forms of racism together. Our individual safety is bound up with our communities. Teaching and advocating for justice in/for Palestine is a crucial ingredient to achieving justice for all.”

Liz Jackson, an attorney with Palestine Legal commented “The Lawfare Project had three chances and a team of corporate lawyers. But they did not have any facts. It is an abuse of the courts to bully Palestinian scholars and students, and scare administrators into silencing campus debate.

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Jewish Students applaud Canadian Federation of Students BDS resolution

[Press Release from Independent Jewish Voices Canada](#)

Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV), including its eight student chapters, applauds the Canadian Federation of Students for adopting a resolution in favour of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement at their annual General Assembly today. The resolution follows an endorsement of the BDS campaign by the Federation’s Ontario component in 2014.

“This is a crystal clear sign that the BDS movement is gaining momentum both in Canada and around the world, especially amongst students,” said Corey Balsam, IJV National Coordinator.

The Canadian Federation of Students supported the boycott of apartheid South Africa in the 80s and has once again opted to stand on the right side of history.”

IJV voted to endorse the BDS movement in 2009 as a means of exerting pressure on the Israeli government to respect the human rights of Palestinians. Specifically, the movement calls on Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, give equal rights to Palestinian citizens of Israel and accept the right of Palestinian refugees to return.

The Canadian Federation of Students’ resolution follows [widespread condemnation](#) of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for conflating BDS activity on university campuses with antisemitism, during his apology speech for turning away Jewish refugees in 1939. “The idea that BDS creates an unsafe environment for Jewish students is simply unfounded. In making this claim, Trudeau unfairly places the blame for antisemitism on Palestinians and those standing in solidarity with their cause, said Rudi Barwin, spokesperson for the IJV studentchapter at Carleton University.

“As a Jewish student and member of IJV, I congratulate the CFS for rejecting the Canadian government’s

scapegoating of Palestine solidarity activists and for taking action toward a just-peace in Israel-Palestine. Resolutions like this can change the world for the better.”

For media inquiries, please contact:

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We need principles, not rules, to fight antisemitism: the IHRA definition and the politics of defining racism

Rebecca Gould (BRICUP) in Open Democracy, 19 November 2018

The definition of antisemitism proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in May 2016 and adopted soon thereafter by the UK government has been widely debated, first in the UK, and then across Europe and North America. The [debate](#) has been accompanied by many heated discussions around what does and does not constitute antisemitism, particularly in connection with the definition’s adoption by the Labour Party in September 2018. Yet, in the heat of argument, little has been said about the implications of defining racism for legal and quasi-legal purposes, or about the difficulty of separating the two domains from each other.

Read the full article [here](#)

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Israeli academics and artists warn against equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism

Their open letter ahead of a conference in Vienna advises against giving Israel immunity for ‘grave and widespread violations of human rights and international law’

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-professors-warn-against-equating-anti-zionism-with-anti-semitism-1.6674309>

An open letter from 35 prominent Israelis, including Jewish-history scholars and Israel Prize laureates, was published Tuesday in the Austrian media calling for a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel, "harsh as it may be," and anti-

Semitism. The letter was released before an international gathering in Vienna on [anti-Semitism](#) and anti-Zionism in Europe.

The event this week, “Europe beyond anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism: Securing Jewish life in Europe,” is being held under the auspices of Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. His Israeli counterpart, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), had been due to take part but stayed in Israel to deal with the crisis in his coalition government.

Read the full article by Ofer Aderet in Haaretz [here](#)

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Shrinking Spaces and the BDS Movement- a new report

Frank Barat, author, human rights activist and former coordinator of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine

[Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement](#) published by the Transnational Institute (TNI) examines the legal and political pressure exerted on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, a global campaign aimed at pressuring Israel to end human rights violations, launched in 2005 by a group of Palestinian activists.

Shrinking Space and The BDS Movement is the latest report in TNI's series [Rethinking Shrinking Space](#) . Rising repression and restrictions for civil society organisations and social movements have put the issue of 'shrinking space' on the NGO agenda. TNI believes that “political space” for civil society is not ‘shrinking’, but rather being taken away, closed down and rendered uninhabitable. TNI is working with activists and academics to probe the issue critically.

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Scholarships for postgraduate study in 2019

St Andrews Education for Palestinian Students (STEPS)

STEPS was established in January 2011 as an independent charitable foundation to provide funding for Palestinian students at the University of St Andrews. This scholarship, co-funded by STEPS and the University of St Andrews, will provide funding for up to two Palestinian students

to undertake a one-year postgraduate course of study.

Further details about STEPS may be obtained from the [STEPS website](#).

STEPS is a charity registered in Scotland: No SCO42518

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News from the UK Palestine Mental Health Network ([UKPalMHN](#))

Dates for your diary: 8th and 9th March 2019

“Palestine: Surviving Childhood” is the provisional title for a conference being planned for London next year, jointly organised by the Network and the new Human Rights Centre at Birkbeck University. Further details to follow.

Another psychoanalysis conference planned for Tel Aviv in 2019 ([see June issue](#))

The UKPalMHN supports our American colleagues in condemning the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis for choosing Tel Aviv for their 2019 annual conference. It is dismayed that psychotherapy organisations are still blind to the contradiction between their professional commitment to the promotion of human dignity and psychological health, and actions that betray a blatant disregard for the lives and minds of real people. We lament the extent of anti-Palestinian racism in our profession, which such decisions clearly illustrate.

Text of USA Palestine Mental Health Network ([USAPalMHN](#)) letter to the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis

Dear Colleagues:

We are writing with concern about the plan to hold the annual conference of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis in Tel Aviv, Israel during June 2019.

As you may know, there is an international movement protesting the human rights violations victimizing the Palestinian people which are committed by the state of Israel. The protest takes the non-violent form of avoiding the location of academic meetings and cultural events within Israel. Because these events cannot be attended by Palestinians and many other people, due to the

obstructive policies and laws of Israel, the events themselves cannot be inclusive or open forums for genuine debate. Protesting the location these events is not aimed at individual persons or professional groups, but at the culpability of the state of Israel itself. We respectfully ask that you reconsider holding your meeting in Israel and that you choose another place instead.

There have been previous protests regarding other psychological and mental health organizations which plan to meet in Israel. One of these is the organization the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, which intends to hold its summer 2019 conference in Tel Aviv. The Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists earlier this month has issued a formal statement in condemnation of that conference, urging all clinicians internationally to stay away from it. Their statement is here:

https://www.facebook.com/PUSWP.Palestine/post/s/902274599967730?_tn__=K-R

We kindly request that you support the clinicians in Palestine and the international movement for justice by reconsidering the location of your NSL 2019 conference.
Very truly yours,

Samah Jabr MD, psychiatrist
Elizabeth Berger MD MPhil, child psychiatrist
Rebecca Fadil LCSW, social worker
Christine Schmidt, psychoanalyst
USA-Palestine Mental Health Network

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From the Medical Campaign

Israel’s push to control the global discourse on Palestine and silence criticism of Israel has infected the medical realm

A very useful review of recent cases *by Ghada Karmi*

[Middle East Eye, November 8th, 2018](#)

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Introducing PALMUSIC Palmusic UK (formerly Friends of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music)

PalMusic is a UK-charity that nurtures the talent and skills of young Palestinians through the provision of scholarships, musical instruments and high-quality music training. It believes that music can make a real difference to the lives of young Palestinians and help them build bridges with the world outside. PalMusic helps talented young musicians with scholarships in the UK and Palestine. It has a new project offering distance learning in Gaza.

Explore their activities through their website, <http://www.palmusic.org.uk/>,



News from other campaigns

Belgian Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (BACBI)

See their November newsletter (N°41) [here](#)

US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

<http://www.usacbi.org/>

News from the **Association of Academics for the Respect of International Law in Palestine** (AURDIP)

<http://www.aurdip.fr/?lang=en>



NOTICES

Speakers: We are 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 standing 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

Sort Code 08-92-99

Account Number 65156591

IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91

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If you use the direct funds transfer mechanism, please confirm the transaction by sending an explanatory email to treasurer@bricup.org.uk