

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

BRICUP Newsletter 139

January-February 2021

www.bricup.org.uk

bricup@bricup.org.uk

CONTENTS

**P 2. Special Issue of the BRICUP
Newsletter**

P 2. BOOK REVIEW

Ghada Karmi - BRICUP

**A History of False Hope: Investigative
Commissions in Palestine**

*By Lori Allen, Reader in Anthropology, SOAS,
University of London*

RESOURCES

**P 3. The IHRA Definition at Work: a
global survey of intimidation and
resistance**

Les Levidow-BRICUP

**P 4. Challenging the IHRA Definition of
Antisemitism – Expert Views and
Resources**

*Lara Friedman, Foundation for Middle East
Peace.*

**P 5. The IHRA Definition at Work in
Canada**

Robert Boyce, -BRICUP

**P 6. Israeli Academics in the UK call on
university senates and VCs to reject the
IHRA's 'working definition of
antisemitism'**

January 2021

**P 8. New Chair of Equalities Watchdog
against the Call for Universities to
Adopt the IHRA Definition**

P 8. Letter to Facebook

**An important Message from Jewish
Voice for Peace**

Rabbi Alissa Wise, Deputy Director

**P 10. Support the Lancet: An Appeal
from the Lancet Palestine Health
Alliance**

Derek Summerfield- BRICUP

**P 10. Human Rights and Media Watch-
Jewish Voice for |Peace**

Message from Dr Alice Rothschild

**P 10. Palestine Solidarity Campaign-
Student Legal Support Guide**

**P 11. NEWS FROM OTHER
CAMPAIGNS**

P 11. SIGN THE COMMITMENT

**by UK Scholars to human rights in
Palestine**

P 11 . NOTICES

.....

Special Issue of the BRICUP newsletter

On Antisemitism, Academic Freedom and University Autonomy

A BRICUP Briefing - **Palestine, Antisemitism and Academic Freedom: How to Resist the IHRA Definition** was held on 23rd January 2021 for activists in the UCU in all universities and colleges in the UK.

The full proceedings of this briefing will shortly be available as a special issue of this newsletter, together with an appendix of campaigning and negotiating materials. It will be sent to all supporters, and available as a download from the BRICUP website after 7th February. Two videos of the Briefing talks will also be available on YouTube via the BRICUP website from that date.

BOOK REVIEW

Ghada Karmi

A History of False Hope: Investigative Commissions in Palestine

by Lori Allen; Reader in Anthropology, SOAS, University of London

Stanford University Press, December 2020, 432pp

In the two decades of British mandatory rule over Palestine between 1923 and 1948 several commissions of inquiry were set up. All these aimed to investigate the unrest between Jews and Arabs in that period, as if the British authorities had not the slightest idea what caused it. In fact, as these commissions found again and again, the Palestinian population unsurprisingly rejected Jewish immigration into their country, and its facilitation by the British.

At first sight, Lori Allen's new book, *A History of false hope: investigative commissions in Palestine*, suggests that it is a review of these commissions. That would have been a welcome addition to the historical literature on Palestine. Instead, the book selects a number of British, US, and UN commissions for analysis, and does so with such thorough and interesting scholarship as to make one wish it had done the same for all the rest. Allen points out that in the case of Palestine, (and many other places, of course), commissions of inquiry

served mainly to buy time for the ruling establishment while tempers cooled and the status *quo ante* could be re-established.

She analyses several commissions of key importance to the Palestinian struggle. Each time, she does so presenting the Palestinian perspective, and often quoting contemporary Palestinian sources. This is a remarkable feature of the book, and provides an essential balance usually missing from conventional accounts. The first of the commissions she examines, the 1919 US sponsored King-Crane commission, is also the most significant, not because its fair-minded recommendations influenced events in the Palestinians' favour, as they were meant to do, but because they became a historical reference point underlining the early validity of the Palestinians' political cause before Zionism took hold.

No commission since then has been so thorough in its information gathering from the Arabs, or so concerned with liberal principles of self-determination and protection of minorities, within the framework of international law. Palestinian leaders welcomed the King-Crane commission, of which they had high hopes. They impressed the commission members with their arguments for their right to universal values of independence, self-determination, and an equal status with other enlightened peoples. They were anxious to assure the US and the international community that they were up to these tasks. As the book shows, this message was a constant theme in the Palestinian discourse with the West, something that has remained unchanged to this day.

The 1936 Peel Commission was the second landmark event in Palestinian history during the Mandatory period. It was appointed soon after the outbreak of the General Strike in Palestine, and marked British alarm at the strength of Palestinian resistance. Activists called for a national movement to fight Jewish immigration, which had been steadily increasing, and the British authorities that enabled it to happen. Peel recommended for the first time that Palestine should be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states as a way of solving the problem. The Palestinians boycotted the commission, a brave and unprecedented stand against the machinations of a British administration that had used these devices to suppress their national demands for too long.

The Palestinians continued their revolt for another three years until 1939, costly in lives and economically draining as it was. But in the end, they were coerced into abandoning the boycott, pressured to participate in the commission by pliant Arab leaders afraid to anger Britain. Yet the boycott could never have happened without massive popular support in the Arab and Islamic worlds for the cause of Palestine. In Allen's view, it was then that Palestine became a core concern of a movement of global anticolonial solidarity, and achieved a world audience that went beyond colonial countries and heralded a possible alternative political order.

Things went downhill for the Palestinians after the Peel Commission, primarily due to what was happening in Europe. The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, set up in the aftermath of World War II in 1946, was assembled in Washington, with an American and British membership. Its remit was in effect to investigate Palestine's readiness to accommodate Jewish victims of Nazism. At this time the primacy of Jewish suffering was uppermost in Western thinking, and sympathy with the Jews became the benchmark of humanity. Who had the primary right to sovereignty over Palestine was not the question. It was seen as an imperative for Jews and the Zionist dream to be rescued, and no amount of argument against it on the Palestinian side had an equal validity.

On that logic, it is easy to see how the rest of the story developed, and for Palestinians that is the most important stage in this sorry tale. Nothing is more enraging about the creation of Israel in Palestine than the justification used for it. The decimation of European Jewry at the hands of Nazi Germany in the Second World War was a crime against humanity. But it had nothing to do with a faraway Middle Eastern people and their small country. They should never have been called on to pay for that European crime, or still be persecuted today because of it.

The rest of the book is taken up with post-1948 commissions of inquiry into Israeli-Palestinians affairs, many of them emanating from the UN. It is depressing to come to the inevitable conclusion that most have been ineffective in changing the situation on the ground. But the project to document them is necessary and, in this book, admirably done,

.....

RESOURCES

The IHRA Definition at Work: a global survey of intimidation and resistance

Les Levidow

For several years there has been conflict over the IHRA definition of antisemitism, especially its Israel examples. As background, in 2016 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance ([IHRA](#)) adopted a short definition without any examples. Nevertheless they were posted on its website, thus creating confusion about what is 'the definition'. Promoted by pro-Israel lobby groups, the term has come to mean the entire document. Some confusion continues about whether '*the IHRA definition*' means the initial definition (in the normal sense) or the entire document.

Pro-Israel groups have regularly cited 'the IHRA definition' to stigmatise and silence pro-Palestine voices. Either explicitly or implicitly, the Israel examples have been their main weapon. In particular, the Israeli state as 'a racist endeavour' relates to the epithet 'apartheid Israel'. Indeed, the [apartheid](#) label is 'an accusation linked with antisemitism', according to the original author of the document. Also deployed is the example of analogies between Israel and Nazi Germany; this criterion would cover some statements by [Holocaust survivors](#), though they are rarely mentioned by the pro-Israel lobby.

More generally, false allegations of antisemitism have been thrown at anyone who questions the IHRA definition itself. The document has been deployed as an inherent test of antisemitic attitudes or intent. Thus critics often find themselves trapped by the circular reasoning of advocates.

Numerous [Jewish pro-Palestine groups](#) worldwide have been attempting to counter the definition, especially its Israel examples. Moreover, many such groups have been opposing a similar document since it appeared on a European Commission website in 2006. There is a long experience of critically analysing the document, arguing that it does not help to fight antisemitism (or even hinders this aim), and showing how instead it undermines Palestinian rights.

But such counter-arguments have been rarely able to find a deliberative space or debate venue, instead being generally marginalised. Why? Very simply, real antisemitism has not been the problem motivating those who advocate or accept the IHRA definition. From their standpoint, at least implicitly, the main problem has been a more widespread understanding of Israel as a racist regime and hence potential support for BDS. For that problem, their remedy is systematic intimidation by weaponizing alleged antisemitism to protect Israel.

Hence effective resistance against the IHRA definition depends on intervention strategies that can counter the intimidation and perhaps force an open debate. How to know about such experiences and learn from them?

As a useful resource for that purpose, activists worldwide have sent brief reports for an ongoing global survey, [IHRA Definition At Work](#). The title has a double meaning: its deployment to intimidate pro-Palestine voices in various workplace contexts. The reports are mainly about universities, though also other places such as local authorities, political parties, literary festivals and even wholefood shops. Many reports highlight resistance, sometimes successful in allowing events to go ahead or protecting pro-Palestine free speech. Readers are encouraged to contribute more reports to this ongoing compilation. More detail on each episode would be helpful to understand the intervention strategies and their outcomes.

Thanks to Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) Canada for the ongoing coordination work. See <https://www.ijvcanada.org/ihra-definition-at-work>

Challenging the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism – Expert Views and Resources

[Lara Friedman](#),

[Foundation for Middle East Peace](#).

Traditionally, “antisemitism” has meant hostility and prejudice toward Jews because they are Jews—a scourge that has imperilled Jews throughout history, and is a source of resurgent threats to Jews today. In recent years there has been an energetic effort to re-define the term to mean something else. This new definition –

known today as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) “[working definition of antisemitism](#)”, is explicitly politicized, refocusing the term to encompass not only hatred of Jews, but also hostility toward and criticism of the modern state of Israel. For example, it labels as antisemitic “applying double standards” to Israel or requiring of Israel “behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” While it notes that “criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic,” in practice this “double standard” language has paved the way for attacking virtually all criticism of Israel as prima facie antisemitic, based on the simplistic argument that focusing criticism on Israel, when other nations are guilty of similarly bad behaviour, can only reflect animus against Jews.

In the media and on social media, and in the mainstream political discourse, there are almost daily interventions in support of the IHRA definition – interventions that too often dismiss the well-established, well-fleshed-out substantive and constitutional concerns/objections to the definition and its implementation.

Yet, this new definition has been the focus of enormous controversy and myriad challenges, including from academics/experts on antisemitism and Holocaust studies in the U.S., Israel, and around the world; from prominent voices and groups that defend free speech and human rights; from progressive Jewish community organizations; from leading legal scholars; from groups defending Palestinians and Palestinian rights; and more.

In this context, I have created a new data table — a compendium of expert views and other resources laying out concerns/objections to the IHRA definition.

You can find the new database [here](#). **As always, I will be updating it regularly (if you find resources that I have omitted, please send them to me!)**

The IHRA Definition at Work in Canada

Robert Boyce

Last autumn Rob Ford, the Conservative premier of Ontario, adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism by an obscure procedure involving an order-in-council which requires only the signature of the Lieutenant Governor of the province, thereby forestalling hearings on a private member's bill with the same objective. Given the place the Israel-Palestine issue has come to occupy in Canadian society, this was completely understandable.

Like other Western countries, Canada tolerated informal antisemitism in the public sphere in the years before the Second World War, and as the war approached the federal government closed the door to European Jews seeking refuge from the murderous oppression of the Nazi regime. As the war ended, the government heeded Zionist demands to keep the door closed and instead pressured Britain to permit Holocaust survivors to settle in Palestine. The federal government played a central role in devising the UN partition plan of November 1947, which largely ignored the claims of the settled Palestinian majority and accorded the much smaller Jewish colony 55 per cent of Palestinian territory including nearly all the Mediterranean coast and much of the most fertile lands. Thereafter, federal governments unwaveringly sided with the Jewish settler-colonial project. Every time the UN General Assembly has censured Israel for its crimes and apartheid policy in recent decades, a small handful of countries including the United States, Israel and one or two tiny Pacific islands have registered their opposition. Canada is almost invariably among them. Not for nothing has Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly described Canada as one of Israel's most loyal friends.

But meanwhile students, academics and church leaders in Canada have become steadily more outspoken in support of Palestinian human rights. Recently Independent Jewish Voices of Canada has mobilised popular resistance against concerted efforts to persuade the municipal councils of half a dozen major cities to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Premier Ford's decision to adopt the IHRA definition by using executive privilege and thus avoid a public debate

was therefore unsurprising. Conservative Members of Parliament had hoped to push through the private members' bill by holding the Zoom debate in camera, and when this failed they found public interest in the bill almost overwhelming. One opposition Member reported receiving over 3,000 emails related to the bill. Another told the press, "*I didn't realize the extent of the interest [in] this bill, but I have to admit that my phone has been ringing off the hook since this morning, since, I guess, people have heard that the committee is reviewing this bill.*" Over 30 civil society organisations signed a deposition coordinated by Just Peace Advocates condemning the adoption of the IHRA definition as unfit for purpose and likely to be used to curb freedom of expression.

The Canadian federal government will no doubt continue to appease its powerful neighbour south of the border and repay the wealthy backers who help to finance its political activity by siding with Israel at the UN. Pro-Israel groups will continue their efforts to silence advocates of Palestinian rights inside Canada by weaponising antisemitism through the IHRA definition. But the distance that Canadian civil society has travelled over the last ten years gives every reason for optimism. The instances of attempted suppression described in the following account would probably not even have been reported ten years ago, whereas today they receive front-page coverage in the national press.

Further Reading

From +972 Magazine

In Canada, the IHRA definition has begun to stifle pro-Palestinian voices

Mohamed Fadel; Board Member of the Canadian Arab Institute and Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

Shireen Salti; Executive Directive of the Canadian Arab Institute

In 2019, under the guise of combating racism and bigotry, Canada adopted the highly problematic definition of antisemitism [promulgated](#) by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which conflates political criticism of the state of Israel with anti-Jewish bigotry.

Under this [working definition](#), legitimate critiques of Israel and its policies, such as “*claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor*,” may be condemned as antisemitic. Many critics have rightly warned that these provisions threaten the free speech rights of Canadians and will likely be used to silence criticism of Israel.

Along with this move, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last month [named](#) former Justice Minister Irwin Cotler as Canada’s first special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism. Cotler’s first responsibility will be leading the Canadian delegation to next year’s IHRA conference, where member states will be discussing the alliance’s definition of antisemitism, which Cotler said he hopes more countries will adopt.

Read the full article [here](#)

Israeli Academics in the UK call on university senates and VCs to reject the IHRA's 'working definition of antisemitism'

11 January 2021

To: Vice Chancellors, Members of Academic Senates, all other UK Academics and Students & Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP Secretary of State for Education

RE: The IHRA ‘working definition of antisemitism’

We, British Academics who are also Israeli citizens, strongly oppose the governmental imposition of the IHRA ‘working definition of antisemitism’ on Universities in England. We call on all academic senates to reject the IHRA document or, where adopted already, act to revoke it.

We represent a diverse cross-disciplinary, cross-ethnic, and cross-generational group. We all share an extended history of struggles against racism. Accordingly, we have been critical of Israel’s prolonged policies of occupation, dispossession, segregation, and discrimination directed at the Palestinian population. Our historical and political perspective is deeply informed by the multiple

genocides of modern times, and in particular, the Holocaust, in which quite a few of us lost members of our extended families. The lesson we are determined to draw from history is that of a committed struggle against all forms of racism.

It is precisely because of these personal, scholarly, and political perspectives that we are perturbed by the letter sent to our Vice Chancellors by Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, on 9 October 2020. Explicitly threatening to withhold funds, the letter pressures universities to adopt the controversial ‘working definition of antisemitism’ originally proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Fighting antisemitism in all its forms is an absolute must. Yet, the IHRA document is inherently flawed in ways that undermine this fight. In addition, it threatens free speech and academic freedom, and constitutes an attack both on the Palestinian right to self-determination and the struggle to democratise Israel.

The IHRA document has been extensively criticised on numerous occasions. Here, we touch on some of its aspects that are particularly distressing in the higher education context. The document consists of two parts. The first, quoted in Williamson’s letter, is a ‘definition’ of antisemitism, which reads as follows:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

This formulation is both vague in language and lacking in content, to the point of being unusable. On the one hand, it relies on unclear terms such as ‘certain perception’ and ‘may be expressed as hatred.’ On the other hand, it fails to mention key issues such as ‘prejudice’ or ‘discrimination.’ Crucially, this ‘definition’ is considerably weaker and less effective than anti-racist regulations and laws already in force, or in development, in the university sector.

Moreover, the government’s pressure on higher education institutions to adopt a definition for only one sort of racism singles out people of Jewish descent as deserving greater protection than others who regularly endure equal or more

grievous manifestations of racism and discrimination.

The second part of the IHRA document presents what it describes as eleven examples of contemporary antisemitism, seven of which refer to the State of Israel. Some of these ‘examples’ mischaracterise antisemitism. They likewise have a chilling effect on University staff and students legitimately wishing to criticise Israel’s oppression of Palestinians or to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, they interfere with our right as Israeli citizens to participate freely in the Israeli political process.

To illustrate, one example of antisemitism is ‘[to claim] that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.’ Another antisemitic act, according to the document, is ‘requiring of [Israel] ... a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.’ Surely, it should be legitimate, not least in a university setting, to debate whether Israel, as a self-proclaimed Jewish State, is ‘a racist endeavour,’ or a ‘democratic nation.’

Currently, the population under Israel’s control comprises 14 million people. Nearly 5 million of those are devoid of basic rights. Of the remaining 9 million, 21 percent (circa 1.8 million) have been systematically discriminated against since the establishment of the state. This discrimination manifests itself in dozens of laws and policies concerning property rights, education, and access to land and resources. All 6.8 million people thus prevented from full democratic access are non-Jews. An emblematic illustration is [the Law of Return](#), which entitles all Jews – and only Jews – living anywhere in the world to migrate to Israel and acquire Israeli citizenship, a right extendable to descendants and spouses. At the same time, millions of Palestinians and their descendants, who have been displaced or exiled, are denied the right to return to their homeland.

Such discriminatory legislation and state practices in other contemporary or historical political systems – ranging from China to the USA or Australia – are legitimately and regularly scrutinised by scholars and the general public. They are variously criticised as forms of institutional racism, and compared to certain fascist regimes, including that of pre-1939 Germany. Indeed, historical analogies are a standard tool in academic research. However,

according to the Education Secretary, only those concerning the State of Israel are now forbidden to scholars and students in England. No state should be shielded from such legitimate scholarly discussion.

Furthermore, while the IHRA document considers any ‘comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis’ a form of antisemitism, many in the Israeli political centre and left have often drawn such comparisons. One recent example is a [statement](#) made by Yair Golan, Member of Knesset (Israeli parliament) and former Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Israeli military, in 2016. Another is the [comparison](#) between Israel and ‘Nazism in its early stages’ made in 2018 by the [Israel Prize Laureate Professor Zeev Sternhell](#), a renowned Israeli historian and political scientist who was, until his recent death, a world leading theorist of fascism. Such comparisons are also made regularly by the editorials of the leading Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

The use of such analogies is hardly new. To illustrate, in late 1948, a prominent group of Jewish intellectuals and Rabbis, including Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt, published [a letter](#) in the NYT accusing Menachem Begin (Israel’s future prime minister) of leading ‘a political party closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties.’

With its eleven ‘illustrations,’ the IHRA document has already been used to repress freedom of speech and academic freedom (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Alarmingly, it has served to frame the struggle against Israel’s occupation and dispossession as antisemitic. As recently stated in [a letter to the Guardian](#) by 122 Palestinian and Arab intellectuals:

We believe that no right to self-determination should include the right to uproot another people and prevent them from returning to their land, or any other means of securing a demographic majority within the state. The demand by Palestinians for their right of return to the land from which they themselves, their parents and their grandparents were expelled cannot be construed as antisemitic... It is a right recognized by international law as represented in UN general assembly resolution 194 of 1948... To level a charge of antisemitism against anyone who

regards the existing state of Israel as racist, notwithstanding the actual institutional and constitutional discrimination upon which it is based, amounts to granting Israel absolute impunity.

In her recent [letter](#) endorsing the imposition of the IHRA document on universities in England, Kate Green, MP and Shadow Secretary of State for Education, states that ‘We can only [fight antisemitism] by listening to and engaging with the Jewish community.’ However, as Israeli citizens settled in the UK, many of Jewish descent, and alongside many in the UK’s Jewish community, we demand that our voice, too, be heard, and we believe that the IHRA document is a step in the wrong direction. It singles out the persecution of Jews; it inhibits free speech and academic freedom; it deprives Palestinians of their own legitimate voice within the UK public space; and, finally, it inhibits us, as Israeli nationals, from exercising our democratic right to challenge our own government.

For these and other reasons, even the lead drafter of the IHRA document, Kenneth Stern, [publicly warned](#):

Right-wing Jewish groups took the “working definition”, which had some examples about Israel ..., and decided to weaponize it. ... [This document] was never intended to be a campus hate speech code ... but [at the hands of the Right it has been used as] an attack on academic freedom and free speech, and will harm not only pro-Palestinian advocates, but also Jewish students and faculty, and the academy itself. ... I’m a Zionist. But on ... campus, where the purpose is to explore ideas, anti-Zionists have a right to free expression. ... Further, there’s a debate inside the Jewish community whether being Jewish requires one to be a Zionist. I don’t know if this question can be resolved, but it should frighten all Jews that the government is essentially defining the answer for us. (The Guardian, 13 Dec. 2019).

These concerns are shared by many others, amongst whom are [hundreds of UK students](#), scholars of antisemitism and racism, and numerous Palestinian, Jewish, and social justice groups and organisations in the UK and around the world, such as [the Institute of Race Relations](#), civil rights organisation [Liberty](#), former Court of

Appeal Judge [Sir Stephen Sedley](#), and Rabbi [Laura Janner-Klausner](#).

We join in the demand that UK universities remain firm in their commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech. We urge UK universities to continue their fight against all forms of racism, including antisemitism. The flawed IHRA document does a disservice to these goals. We therefore call on all academic senates to reject governmental decrees to adopt it, or, where adopted already, act to revoke it.

See list of signatories [here](#)

See also coverage in Vashti Media [here](#)

.....

New Chair of Equalities Watchdog is against the Call for Universities to Adopt the IHRA Definition

Baroness Faulkner of Margravine, the Liberal Democrat peer and new chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, has said that she is against the call for universities to sign up to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

Speaking in a personal capacity during a House of Lords debate around antisemitism on campus, Baroness Faulkner said: “*I am afraid that I do not support the call for an IHRA definition.*”

She said it was “*extremely poorly worded and probably unactionable in law,*” adding that it “*directly conflicts with the duty on universities to protect free speech*”.

This has been published [here](#) and [here](#)

.....

Letter to Facebook

An important Message from Jewish Voice for Peace

Rabbi Alissa Wise, Deputy Director

Right now, Facebook is weighing a change to its hate speech policy – but not one that would make anyone safer. The social media giant is considering labelling "Zionist" a proxy for "Jew"

or "Israeli," making it a protected category. Under this policy, attempts to hold the state of Israel accountable could be labelled as hate speech and removed from the platform.

This change would deprive Palestinians of a critical venue for expressing their political viewpoints to the world, chill efforts to hold the Israeli government accountable, and undermine the fight to dismantle antisemitism.

Today, together with 23 partner organizations, we're launching an international campaign to tell Facebook that we need the freedom to talk about Zionists and Zionism – as Jews, as Palestinians, and as anyone joining the struggle for justice and equality for all in Palestine/Israel. Initial signers come from across the globe and include politicians and poets, human rights defenders and movie stars. From Hanan Ashrawi to Karol Cariola, from Wallace Shawn and Peter Gabriel to Noam Chomsky and Judith Butler, from Miriam Margolyes to Dr. Cornel West, the list is growing fast.

Just a few weeks ago, we watched in horror as white nationalists bearing antisemitic slogans overran the U.S. Capitol. Antisemitism is real, and we are committed to dismantling it, along with the entire machinery of division and fear used to keep us isolated and alone. But Facebook's proposed policy would entrench antisemitism, not dismantle it. In falsely equating all Jewish people with the state of Israel, Facebook plays into dangerous stereotypes – and obscures the mechanics of real antisemitism.

As Judith Butler wrote to you in December, this move by Facebook is part of a global effort by the Israeli government and its supporters "to silence legitimate speech and prevent Palestinians and their allies from holding the Israeli government accountable for its unjust policies of dispossession, occupation, disenfranchisement, and incarceration." But social media companies should give us a platform to hold governments accountable, not shield state power from legitimate critique.

Anti-Palestinian activists want to control the use of the word "*Zionist*" because they want to keep us isolated and apart. Their fear is a testament to the power of movement building, communication, and connection. But we won't let them silence us. Let's keep this conversation going.

Letter: Dear Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg,

In a world full of walls, social media is a powerful tool to help us share our stories and support one another and our common humanity — no matter our religion, race or nationality. We know Facebook is considering its responsibility to implement guardrails to keep the platform safe and accessible for us to connect across space and difference.

But we are deeply concerned about Facebook's proposed revision of its hate speech policy to consider "Zionist" as a proxy for "Jew" or "Jewish." The proposed policy would too easily mischaracterize conversations about Zionists – and by extension, Zionism – as inherently antisemitic, harming Facebook users and undermining efforts to dismantle real antisemitism and all forms of racism, extremism, and oppression. We cannot dismantle antisemitism if we are blocked from voicing our opinions and sharing our experiences with each other. We can discuss, debate, and even disagree, as long as we share the belief that all of us deserve safety, freedom, and dignity. We ask Facebook to not erect barriers impeding users from connecting with each other as we engage in this work.

This is the wrong solution to a real and important problem: those who fuel antisemitism online will continue doing so, with or without the word "Zionist." In fact, many antisemites, especially among white supremacists and evangelical Christian Zionists, explicitly support Zionism and Israel, while engaging in speech and actions that dehumanize, insult, and isolate Jewish people. Importantly, this move will prohibit Palestinians from sharing their daily experiences and histories with the world, be it a photo of the keys to their grandparent's house lost when attacked by Zionist militias in 1948, or a livestream of Zionist settlers attacking their olive trees in 2021. And it would prevent Jewish users from discussing their relationships to Zionist political ideology.

Facebook scrutinizing specific words won't keep any of us safe, but it will prevent us from connecting on the political issues important to all of us and block us from holding people and governments accountable for their policies and actions. The current Israeli government, and some of its supporters, have demanded that Facebook

add “Zionist” to its hate speech policy. This would shut down conversations about accountability for policies and actions that harm Palestinians. Facebook should refuse to cooperate with those who seek to build more walls to keep us apart. We call on Facebook to not add “Zionist” as a protected category in its hate speech policy.

Add your name [here](#)

See other signatories [here](#)

.....

Support the Lancet: An Appeal from the Lancet Palestine Health Alliance

Message from Derek Summerfield

Dear Colleagues

An Appeal from [Professor Rita Giacaman, Lancet Palestine Health Alliance](#)

Please see Prof Rita Giacaman’s appeal below. The context of this request is the ferocious attacks that the Lancet has attracted over time from pro-Israel interests for its coverage of health matters in Israel /Palestine. Professor Giacaman wants us to email Lancet editor Dr Richard Horton directly (email below) to endorse the contents of the letter (which is about Covid vaccines) by way of offering the Lancet support against attacks on even this.

Her Appeal

We need your urgent help as soon as possible.

Can you please write a letter to the Lancet, and send it to Dr. Richard Horton, the chief editor directly (email: richard.horton@lancet.com), and indicate in the subject heading that this is a [letter](#) in support of the COVID-19 vaccine for Palestinians' published in the Lancet on January 28th . Please write the letter in support of the following arguments as truthful and consistent with reality:

- That the Palestinian health system in the occupied Palestinian territory is vulnerable under occupation and blockade for years and too weak to deal with the surge of COVID-19 cases.
- That Israel is responsible for the health of the occupied population, as the Geneva

Convention and the United Nations and various human rights organizations emphasize.

- And that Israel has the moral responsibility of providing the vaccine to Palestinians under occupation.

Can you also distribute to your network so that they can also write letters of support as above please?

.....

Human Rights and Media Watch- Jewish Voice for Peace USA

Message from Dr Alice Rothschild

Welcome to the Human Rights and Media Watch. During the Coronavirus pandemic, we are curating a weekly timeline/update on the impact of the virus on Israel/Palestine and all related submissions to Media Watch will be folded into that report. Please follow at <https://www.jvphealth.com/covid-19>. Health and human rights news unrelated to the pandemic is included here. If you want to be involved in this JVP Health Advisory Council Media Watch project, please contact jvphealth@gmail.com.

Please read and share

<https://www.jvphealth.org/post/media-watch-january-1-2021>

.....

Palestine Solidarity Campaign- Student Legal Support Guide

PSC has just released a legal support guide for student activists, to aid them in implementing their legal rights to campaign in solidarity with Palestine.

The guide covers rights to form a society, obtain funding, hold protests and campaign for Palestinian rights. It also covers potential challenges students may face, such as the IHRA definition of antisemitism and the statutory Prevent duty. Download the Guide [here](#)

NEWS FROM OTHER CAMPAIGNS

Association of Academics for the Respect of International Law in Palestine ([AURDIP](#)), see their latest newsletter [here](#)

US Campaign for the academic and Cultural boycott of Israel ([USACBI](#))

Belgian Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel ([BACBI](#))

See their latest newsletter [here](#)

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 Israeli 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 [here](#) have pledged to continue their commitment until Israel complies with international law, and respects Palestinian human rights. For more information, and to sign, go to <http://www.commitment4p.com>

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 BIC = CPBK GB22

If you use the direct funds transfer mechanism, please confirm the transaction by sending an explanatory email