

# BRICUP NEWSLETTER

Number 16

May, 2009

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## BRICUP and Europe

Anyone with even a casual interest in the Middle East crisis will be aware of the United States' support for Israel's policy of aggression and terror against the Palestinian people. Yet all too often, in dwelling upon America's role, we overlook the fact that Europe potentially occupies an equally crucial role in shaping a solution to the crisis. For one thing, Europe is far and away Israel's largest trading partner. Taking visible trade (exports and imports together), no less than 33.1 per cent of Israel's trade was with the Europe Union in the first quarter of 2009, whereas the United States, Israel's second largest trading partner, shared only 23.5 per cent of the Israeli market. A reduction of even a third of Europe's trade would therefore have a devastating effect upon Israel's payments position and possibly drive its economy into a tailspin that would be hard to reverse. For another thing, Europe is the cultural community with which Israel most closely identifies. Despite the anger and scorn which frequently marks Israeli references to European policies towards the Middle East, Israeli elites, and not least Israeli academics, cling firmly to their connections to Europe and recognition by their European peers. Hence their intense discomfort at any move to institute a European boycott of their academic institutions and cultural organisations.

In recent years, British opinion on the Middle East crisis has moved substantially ahead of opinion in other parts of Europe. The reasons for this are fairly obvious. Britain, as the author of the Balfour declaration in 1917 and the mandatory power in control of Palestine from 1923 to 1948, bears a heavy responsibility for the

sectarian division of the territory and the devastating consequences so evident today. Subsequently during the Cold War Britain engaged more extensively than other European countries in Middle Eastern affairs, systematically propping up repressive Arab regimes and in 1956 allying with Israel and America in a war of aggression against Nasser's radical regime in Egypt. In the first Gulf war in 1991 Britain played a prominent part in the US-led coalition against Iraq. Following 9/11, Britain endorsed the American call for a 'war on terror', including the attempt to bomb the Taliban out of Afghanistan and persuade its war-lord allies to engage in Western-style democracy. In 2003 Britain became the United States' only important ally when it launched the second Gulf war, and more recently Britain has uncritically followed the United States ever deeper into the Afghanistan morass. Reflecting on another conflict a century ago, the American writer Ambrose Bierce cynically commented that 'War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.' Whatever the shortcomings of Britain's current education system, its leaders have seen to it that, at colossal expense, the public has learned Middle East geography. Britain's continental neighbours have been spared at least some of these terrible lessons. And since they accept greater responsibility for the rise of inter-war fascism and the destruction of European Jewry, they have done almost nothing to discourage their governments from pursuing policies favourable to Israel.

Only the most optimistic observer could expect Europe to change soon. Nonetheless, as in the United States, important signs of movement have recently appeared. On 4 April the European Parliament formally refused to proceed with its

vote on upgrading Israeli relations with the European Union. With the unelected Commission, prodded by the United States and European national governments, anxious to proceed, approval seemed a sure thing until Israel's invasion of Gaza last December. But Parliament could not ignore the groundswell of public revulsion throughout Europe at Israel's murderous behaviour, and for the time being the upgrade has been put on hold.

Developments in France are equally promising. After the start of the second Intifada nine years ago, ministers in the Socialist government halted the boycott movement from getting under way on campus by directly threatening to blight the career of any junior academic who dared to endorse the campaign. Once again, during the recent Israeli outrages in Gaza, the French government distinguished itself by remaining practically silent. Nonetheless civil society, including at least five Jewish organisations which broke with the pro-Israeli policy of CRIF (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France), took to the streets in cities across France. And this time academics were not cowed into silence. A text entitled 'Israel's impunity must end', which endorsed a policy of boycott, divestment and sanctions, was published on 15 February over the signatures of more than fifty French academics. Last month, some of the most prominent signatories of this document met in Paris to hear a presentation from BRICUP. In recognition of BRICUP's effectiveness, our French colleagues decided to create their own organisation on precisely the same model and to work in close association with BRICUP.

Our immediate aim is to promote similar organisations among academics elsewhere in Europe, with our interim goal a pan-European workshop drawing together representatives from all parts of Europe to coordinate and amplify the boycott campaign. We are still a long way from implementing an effective, international boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions. But the crucial first steps have now been taken.

**Robert Boyce**

## **Election Time in Europe.**

### **An Opportunity to lobby for the Cultural and Academic Boycott**

The European Union (EU) and its Parliament (EP) must be a major target for BRICUP's campaign, particularly in the run up to the EP elections in June. The EU has, from the beginning, played a crucial role in the West's almost unqualified support for the Zionist policies of successive Israeli governments. It has consistently failed to uphold the rights of the Palestinians embodied in International Law and, more recently, has failed to use its membership of the Quartet (EU, UN, US and Russia) to press for a just settlement for the Palestinian people under the so-called 'Road Map for Peace'.

### **Relations between Israel and the EU**

While denouncing the Occupation and the Apartheid Wall as illegal, the EU's Council of Ministers (the 27 Foreign Ministers who determine EU policy) has, at the same time, entered into a succession of agreements that give Israel preference in trade, agriculture, technology, scientific research, security, education culture etc - agreements that give Israel profound financial benefits at the expense of the EU taxpayer. It is not surprising therefore that the Israeli Foreign Ministry has been in the habit of referring to the EU as Israel's 'third pillar' (after the Israeli army and the US) for the guarantee of their national survival.

As part of the 1995 Israel-EU trade agreement, Israel joined the free trade area and became a full member of the European Union Research and Development Programmes. This was followed by the EU-Israel Association Agreement in 2000.

### **The European Neighbourhood Policy- A support for Israeli cultural and academic life**

In 2004, the EU- Israel Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) set objectives aimed at intensifying political, security, economic, scientific and cultural relations with Israel. This extract from the Action

Plan provides a flavour of the language that is typically used by the European Commission (an appointed body with considerable influence on the Council) in the documents relating to its extensive dealings with Israel over the years. According to the Action Plan, the policy is based on the principle that

**“The EU and Israel share common values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and basic freedoms. Both parties are committed to the struggle against all forms of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia. Historically and culturally, there exists a great natural and common heritage. Thus we strive to build bridges and networks.”**

In their 2008 progress report on the implementation of the ENP, the Commission reported ‘strong cooperation’ between Israel and the EU in the area of science and technology. Israeli researchers were ‘particularly successful’ in the Framework 7 Programme (FP7) for Research and Development in areas such as Health and Information and Communication Technologies. Sixty seven projects in these areas have been registered, involving 89 Israeli researchers. A ‘memorandum of understanding’ was concluded between the EU and the Israeli Nuclear Energy Commission on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Commission and the European Space Agency (ESA) have been involved in talks with Israel about its involvement in the EU FP7 space funding, in ESA programmes and in issues related to Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Services (GMES), which is a European initiative for the implementation of information services dealing with environment and security.

The EU also supports several Israeli projects related to programmes promoting local and regional cultural activities. Israel participates in a variety of the European Neighbourhood Policy’s EuroMed programmes, such as EuroMed Audiovisual II, a programme aimed at enhancing Euro-Mediterranean audiovisual co-operation and Euromed Heritage III, which aims to

promote cultural awareness and preservation for the Mediterranean’s heritage.

### **EU criticism of Israel**

The policies of the Council of Ministers and the Commission towards Israel have regularly come under criticism, notably by members of the European Parliament. There have been calls to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement, for example in 2004 by the London Green Party MEP, Caroline Lucas. There has also been a successful campaign to tighten the trading rules to prevent the Israeli trade preference being improperly claimed on goods originating in the Occupied Territories. Parliamentary committees that meet with delegations from Israel are much more frank in their criticism of Israel than Commission bodies and some parliamentary debates, particularly during and since Operation Cast Lead, have been severely critical. Even the Council of Ministers has criticised Israel over its settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Some EU-Israel agreements have even been suspended temporarily due to Israeli failings. The assent to the implementation of the first four financial protocols (1978 to 1996) was refused by the European Parliament several times between 1978 and 1996 and, in response to pressure from the Parliament, the Commission stopped all scientific co-operation from Jan 1990 to Feb 1991 because Israel had closed Palestinian Educational institutions. More recently, just before the outbreak of the Gaza massacres, the EP decided to suspend the vote on whether or not to continue Israel’s inclusion in FP7 Programme for Research and Technological Development. The vote has still not been taken.

The signing of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement (EUIAA) itself was delayed from 1991 to 1995 due to unresolved criticisms of Israel and there is now, following the Gaza atrocities, a growing support amongst MEPs, and even some members of the Council of Ministers, for a complete suspension of the EUIAA.

## The EUIAA after Gaza

In December 2008, the Council of Ministers voted to upgrade the EUIAA. Work on the practical details, the new Action Plan, began and the Commission gave an undertaking to the last Israeli government that it would not include any human rights provisions. Work on the Action Plan was suspended at the outbreak of the Gaza massacres and has remained in suspension. In April, Benita Ferrero Waldner, the EU Commissioner for External Affairs, warned the new Israeli government that any upgrade of the EUIAA is dependent on their continuing commitment to the Annapolis peace process and a commitment to a 2 state solution. This surprising development, no doubt strongly influenced by the Gaza atrocities, has finally drawn a limit to Israel's impunity from EU sanctions over its human rights abuses.

The Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman is now touring the pro-Israel governments of Europe in an attempt to remove this block on the progress of the upgrade. Given the strong support that Israel still receives from the Council of Ministers, and from the Commission, it will be necessary to continue to lobby to ensure that the sanction remains in place. **It is generally understood that the pressure of Europe-wide public opinion against Israel has made a significant contribution to this changing policy towards Israel inside the EU, so it is vital that pressure from Civil Society is maintained.**

Article 2 of the Agreement states “ **Relations between the parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement**”.

This condition has never been enforced and has now become the basis for the growing campaign by Civil Society groups and individuals, supported by a number of MEPs and MPs, for a

complete suspension of the whole EUIAA until Israel abides by the terms of Article 2. The EP elections will provide an important opportunity to step up this campaign.

### Lobbying by letter

1. The European Commissioner, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner (fax number 003222981299, email address: benita.ferrero-waldner@ec.europa.eu). Copy your letter to your MEPs.
2. MEPs ([www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)) and candidates for the EU elections( [www.europarl.org.uk](http://www.europarl.org.uk) from May 8<sup>th</sup>)
3. The Foreign Secretary, The Rt Hon David Miliband MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Monica Wusteman

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### French teachers endorse BDS

The FSU (La fédération syndicale unitaire ) is the largest civil service union in France. It is a federation composed of unions within the areas of education, youth and sports, research, culture and justice. It has 163,000 members. **The vote for BDS was 89 in favour and 5 against with 5 abstentions.**

The Union stated:-

The EU and the USA must discontinue policies that encourage the State of Israel to violate international law. The EU can impose sanctions on Israel to force it to respect UN resolutions in order to establish a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Palestinian civil society calls for boycott, sanctions and withdrawal of investment in Israel until that State applies international law and the universal principles of human rights. The FSU supports these initiatives.

Only respect for human rights, international law

and the right of all peoples to self-determination and to live in peace within secure and recognized borders will provide viable and sustainable solutions to a conflict that has scarred the world for over sixty years.

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## **BDS at the most northerly University in the world.**

Twenty-one Norwegian Academics at the University of Tromsø have signed a call for boycott of all Israeli academic institutions. The initiative calls for the University to "establish an academic boycott of Israel", of Israel's "institutions of education, research and culture, and the institutions' representatives, regardless of religion and nationality."

The University of Tromsø has 9000 students and is known in Norway as the "peace university." Mordechai Vanunu and Desmond Tutu were both granted honorary doctorates by the university. The University was a leading force in Norway during the massive boycott of the Apartheid regime in former South Africa.

The city of Tromsø also has a twinning relationship with the city of Gaza, and the people of Tromsø mobilized in good numbers for the Gaza demonstrations in January. One of the Norwegian physicians who worked in Gaza at Shifa Hospital, Mads Gilbert, is also a part of the Palestine movement in Tromsø.

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## **The PACBI column**

### **A statement on the McCarthyist Campaign against Omar Barghouti**

The impressive growth of the Palestinian civil society campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, particularly after its criminal war of aggression on the occupied Gaza Strip, is testimony to the morality and consistency of ordinary citizens and civil society organizations around the world concerned about

restoring Palestinian rights and achieving justice for Palestinians.

The most recent achievement of the Israel boycott movement was the adoption of BDS--nearly by consensus -- by the Scottish Trade Union Congress [1], following the example set by the Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU [2] and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTU [3].

In despair over their evident inability to stop or even hold back the growing tide of BDS across the globe, Israel apologists have resorted to an old tactic at which they seem to excel: witch hunts and smear campaigns. A self-styled McCarthyist academic monitor group in Israel has launched a petition calling for the expulsion of Omar Barghouti, a founding member of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), from Tel Aviv University, where he is enrolled as a doctoral student. The Israeli campaign urges the university administration to expel Barghouti due to his leading role in the BDS movement that calls for boycotting Israel and all institutions complicit in its occupation and apartheid

To date, more than 65,000 persons have reportedly signed this right-wing Israeli petition that depicts Barghouti as an "especially strident and persuasive voice" against Israeli colonial and racist policies. Several media columns by Zionist journalists in Israel and the United Kingdom, among others, have tried to use the "revelation" that Barghouti, "now enrolled" at an Israeli university, is politically inconsistent for calling for the boycott of all Israeli academic institutions while he is a student at one of them. Other than the clear dishonesty and underhandedness of these same media in presenting the case as if Barghouti has just -- or recently -- enrolled in an Israeli university despite themselves having reported years ago that he was already enrolled then [4], the reports have made some glaring omissions about the Israeli apartheid context, the widely endorsed criteria of the PACBI boycott, and the system of racial discrimination in Israel's educational system against the indigenous Palestinians.

While consistently calling upon academics around the world to boycott Israel and its academic -- and cultural -- institutions due to their entrenched collusion in the state's colonial and apartheid policies, [5] PACBI has *never* called upon Palestinian citizens of Israel and those who are compelled to carry Israeli identification documents, like Palestinian residents of occupied Jerusalem, to refrain from studying or teaching at those Israeli institutions. That would have been an absurd position, given the complete lack of alternatives available. Successive Israeli governments, committed to suppressing Palestinian national identity in their pursuit of maintaining Israel's character as a racist state, have made every effort possible to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian university inside Israel. The only choice left to Palestinian students and academics in Israel, then, is to go to an Israeli university or leave their homeland to pursue their studies or academic careers abroad -- often not possible due to financial or other compelling reasons. In fact, the Israeli authorities have consistently worked to strip Palestinians from occupied Jerusalem of their Israeli ID cards and thus their residency rights while they study abroad, thereby prohibiting them from returning.

Palestinians in Israel are treated as second-class citizens in every vital aspect of life and are subjected to a system of "institutional, legal and societal discrimination," as admitted even in US State Department reports on human rights [6]. In the field of education this discrimination is dominant throughout the system, as the following conclusion from a ground-breaking Human Rights Watch study published in 2001 states:

"The hurdles Palestinian Arab students face from kindergarten to university function like a series of sieves with sequentially finer holes. At each stage, the education system filters out a higher proportion of Palestinian Arab students than Jewish students. ... . And Israel's courts have yet to use ... laws or more general principles of equality to protect Palestinian Arab children from discrimination in education." [7]

Palestinians, like any people under apartheid or colonial rule, have insisted on their rights, including their right to education, even if the only venues available were apartheid or colonial institutions. Nelson Mandela studied law at the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, one of the most notorious apartheid institutes then. Similarly, leaders of the anti-colonial resistance movement in India and Egypt, among many other countries, received their education at British universities at the height of the colonial era.

PACBI has always made a distinction between the forms and range of academic boycott it urges the world to adopt and what Palestinians themselves can implement. The former have a moral choice to boycott Israeli universities in order to hold them accountable for their shameful, multifaceted complicity in perpetuating the occupation and racist policies of the state; the latter are often left with no choice but to use the services of the oppressive state, to which they pay taxes.

Finally, we stress that it is precisely PACBI's five-year-old record of moral and political consistency and the growing influence of its principles and the campaigns it and its partners have waged around the world that have provoked Zionist anti-boycott forces to try, yet again, to rehash old attacks of inconsistency, failing to understand or intentionally and deceptively ignoring the boycott criteria set by PACBI. We urge all academics, academic unions, cultural figures and cultural associations to adopt whatever creative form of BDS their context allows them. This remains the most effective and morally sound form of solidarity with the Palestinian people in our struggle for freedom, dignity, equality and self determination.

[1] <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/376>

[2] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=271>

[3] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/20>

[4] See for example: <http://www.israel21c.org/bin/en.jsp?enDispWho=Vie>

[ws%5E1181&enPage=BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=object&enVersion=0&enZone=Views](#)

[5] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>

[6] <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108484.htm>

[7] Human Rights Watch, *Second Class: Discrimination Against Palestinian Arab Children in Israel's Schools*, September 2001.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/israel2>

## PACBI

### The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

Occupied Ramallah, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009

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**Editor's note:** Readers of the Newsletter are indebted to Omar Barghouti, and his colleague Lisa Teraki, who have provided the PACBI Column for each issue of the BRICUP Newsletter. We all applaud their struggle for Palestine and regret this deplorable action by Israel Academia Monitor. If supporters wish to see the anti-intellectual material they produce, please go to [http://israel-academia-monitor.com/index.php?cookie\\_lang=en&page\\_data\[id\]=170&page\\_type=1&type=get\\_page](http://israel-academia-monitor.com/index.php?cookie_lang=en&page_data[id]=170&page_type=1&type=get_page)

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### BRICUP has posted the following declaration of support on its website:

There has been an orchestrated campaign to hound Omar Barghouti a leading figure in PACBI. Omar has registered for a PhD at Tel Aviv University and is being accused of hypocrisy by boycott opponents. It has never been PACBI's policy, or BRICUP's to call for Palestinians not to study at Israeli Universities. Because of the restrictions on Palestinian Universities, Israeli universities are the only

places that many Palestinians can study at. This is particularly true at doctoral level where Israeli occupation and blockade has prevented all but a few programmes being offered within the Occupied Territories.

It is difficult for many Palestinians to study abroad, even if they can get scholarships and exit visas they run a high risk of losing their residencies rights when they try to return. This is an especial issue for those with Jerusalem IDs.

Omar's decision to study at TAU highlights the pressure that Palestinian Universities are under and reinforces the argument for an international boycott of Israeli higher education. There is hypocrisy here, but it comes from the Zionist clique, not from Omar who BRICUP is proud to have as a friend.

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### Financial support for BRICUP,

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**BRICUP is the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine.** We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments and suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome.

Email them to:

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