

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

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The Leonard Cohen saga continues.

On June 25, 2009, after several months of pressure on Canadian singer Leonard Cohen not to play in Tel Aviv in September, Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz announced that Cohen was now to play an additional concert in Occupied Ramallah, two days after the Tel Aviv gig. In last month's Newsletter we argued in the PACBI Column, that:

we have always rejected any attempt to "balance" concerts or other artistic events in Israel -- conscious acts of complicity in Israel's violation of international law and human rights -- with token events in the occupied Palestinian territory.

It subsequently emerged that the Ramallah event was at the invitation of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, who told journalists they had taken it on in the hope it would focus attention on the 11,000 Palestinians currently held in Israeli prisons. Several weeks later, however, the Prisoners' Club announced they had withdrawn their invitation: PACBI welcomed this development, saying that 'Ramallah will not receive Cohen as long as he is intent on whitewashing Israel's colonial apartheid regime by performing in Israel'.

But no tickets for the Tel Aviv concert were on sale. And meanwhile many of the concerts in Leonard Cohen's European tour were picketed (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIGj-A8OCMI> for Liverpool, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tyOr6Z6gCE> for Dublin, and <http://www.bigcampaign.org/index.php?mact=CGBlog,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=21&cntnt01returnid=38> for Weybridge), and there continued to be active discussion of the boycott call in many places, including the forum on Leonard Cohen's own website.

However, on July 28, Israeli English-language newspaper The Jerusalem Post reported that tickets for the Tel Aviv concert were indeed about to go on sale, but that all the proceeds from the concert would go into a newly-created Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace, established under the aegis of Amnesty USA. PACBI then issued an Open Letter to Amnesty International, endorsed by several other organisations, including BRICUP. An abbreviated version follows:

Entertaining Apartheid Israel Deserves No Amnesty!

July 30, 2009

In May, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) called on singer/songwriter Leonard Cohen to heed the Palestinian call for a cultural boycott of Israel and avoid complicity with Israel's violations of international law by cancelling his planned September concert in Israel, particularly in view of Israel's war crimes in Gaza earlier this year. Sadly . . . Amnesty International USA will serve as sponsor of a new fund that will whitewash the money raised at Cohen's concert in Israel by using it to finance programs for "peace." Being one of the world's strongest proponents of human rights and international law, you shall thus be subverting a non-violent, effective effort by Palestinian and international civil society to end Israel's violations of international law and human rights principles. We call on you to be true to your values and immediately withdraw support for Leonard Cohen's ill-conceived concert in Israel.

Why we are calling on Amnesty to withdraw from the project?

By supporting Cohen's concert in Israel, Amnesty International is actively undermining a particularly successful effort by Palestinian and

international civil society to end Israel's occupation and other violations of international law and human rights principles. Accepting funds from the proceeds of Cohen's concert in Israel is the equivalent of Amnesty accepting funds from a concert in Sun City in apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, your Israeli partners in this venture actively hinder efforts to achieve a just peace. A columnist in Israel's Haaretz Daily called the Peres Center patronizing and colonial, explaining that "Efforts are being made to train the Palestinian population to accept its inferiority and prepare it to survive under the arbitrary constraints imposed by Israel, to guarantee the ethnic superiority of the Jews." The Israel Discount Bank, a key sponsor of the Cohen concert, has branches in the settlements of Beitar Illit and Maale Adumim, has financed construction in the settlements of Har Homa, Beitar Illit and Maale Adumim, and is a major shareholder in a factory in a settlement. Amnesty hardly needs any reminder that all Israeli colonial settlements built on occupied Palestinian territory are not only illegal under international law but are considered war crimes in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Your intention to indirectly partner with a bank that profits from the occupation and to oversee a fund that uses some of that legally and morally stained money contradicts Amnesty's founding principles and commitment to human rights. We strongly urge you to distance Amnesty International from this discredited project and its tainted money.

Signed by:

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel ([PACBI](#)), [Adalah-NY: The Coalition for Justice in the Middle East](#), [American Jews for a Just Peace \(US\)](#), [Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within \(Israel\)](#), [British Committee for the Universities of Palestine \(BRICUP\)](#), [International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network](#), [Jews Against the Occupation-NYC](#), [New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel \(NYCBI\)](#), [Palestine Solidarity Campaign \(UK\)](#), [US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel](#)

But the story continues!

The Palestinian 'Happy Child Center', which had been listed amongst the supporters for Cohen's

concert in Tel Aviv has withdrawn its support. The director of the Palestinian Happy Child Center has said that she had no idea about the details of this concert or the boycott against it. She was particularly shocked that the Peres Peace Center was involved and that her organization's name was abused to whitewash this project. She wrote to Cohen's team and withdrew. Then Raymond Deane, the Irish composer and Palestine Solidarity Activist, wrote to Amnesty saying, "I am terminating my membership of Amnesty. The last straw has been Amnesty's decision to support a cynical scheme dreamt up by Leonard Cohen's PR department to whitewash the fact that he is ignoring the call from Palestinian civil society to respect the cultural boycott of Israel. While I respect Amnesty's policy of not supporting particular political positions and not itself participating in boycott campaigns, on this occasion it is actively supporting actions that undermine a boycott campaign supported by the Palestinians themselves, and doing so by lending support to Israeli organisations the raison d'etre of which is to seek 'conciliation' without an end to oppression."

The protests will continue!

The PACBI column

Cultural Boycott Guidelines

Since its founding in 2004, and increasingly so during the past two years, PACBI has been called upon by BDS activists and others around the world to give opinions in situations where it is not clear whether a cultural project or activity violates the call for cultural boycott issued by PACBI and endorsed by major Palestinian civil society organizations and forces. PACBI believes that with the impressive growth of BDS initiatives around the world and increasing concern about cultural events and projects that may violate the spirit of the boycott, there is an urgent need for clear, consistent guidelines to be followed by activists.

Accordingly, PACBI has issued the "**Guidelines for Applying the International Cultural Boycott of Israel.**" [1] The overall objective of these guidelines, summarized below, is not only

to make the logic of the boycott clear, but also to suggest questions that should be asked and facts that must be ascertained before reaching a final decision. Due to the institutional nature of the PACBI-advocated boycott, obtaining information about sponsorship and funding of activities and projects is essential.

The Palestinian cultural boycott against Israel applies in the following situations:

(1) Cultural product is commissioned by an official Israeli body

All cultural productions commissioned by an official Israeli body (e.g., government ministry, municipality, embassy, public film fund, etc.) deserve to be boycotted on institutional grounds, as they are funded by the Israeli state -- or any of its complicit institutions -- specifically to help the state's propaganda or "rebranding" efforts, aimed at diluting, justifying, whitewashing or otherwise diverting attention from the Israeli occupation and other violations of Palestinian rights and international law.

(2) Cultural product is funded by an official Israeli body, but not commissioned (no political strings)

Products funded by official Israeli bodies but not commissioned, therefore not conditioned upon serving the Israeli government's propaganda efforts, are not *per se* subject to boycott. Cultural products that receive state funding as part of an individual cultural worker's entitlement as a tax-paying citizen, without her/him being bound to serve the state's political and PR interests, are not boycottable *per se*, according to the PACBI criteria. These products become boycottable, however, if the cultural worker in question accepts such political strings, which would amount to complicity in whitewashing or obscuring Israel's colonial and apartheid reality.

While an individual's freedom of expression should be fully and consistently respected in this context, an individual artist, filmmaker, writer, etc., Israeli or not, cannot be exempt from being subject to boycotts that conscientious citizens around the world may call for in response to a particularly offensive act or statement by the cultural worker involved, such as incitement to violence; justification of war crimes and other

grave violations of international law; racial slurs; actual participation in human rights violations; etc. At this level, Israeli cultural workers should not be automatically exempted from any lawful form of protest, including boycott; they should be treated like all other offenders in the same category, not better or worse.

(3) Cultural event is partially or fully sponsored or funded by an official Israeli body

The general principle is that a cultural event or project carried out under the sponsorship or in affiliation with an official Israeli body constitutes complicity and therefore is deserving of boycott. It is also well documented now that Israeli artists, writers and other cultural workers applying for state funding to cover the cost of their -- or their cultural products' -- participation in international events must accept to contribute to Israel's official propaganda efforts. To that end, the cultural worker must sign a contract with the Foreign Ministry binding her/him to "undertake to act faithfully, responsibly and tirelessly to provide the Ministry with the highest professional services. The service provider is aware that the purpose of ordering services from him is to promote the policy interests of the State of Israel via culture and art, including contributing to creating a positive image for Israel." [2]

(4) Product is not funded or sponsored by an official Israeli body

Unless violating any of the above criteria, in the absence of official Israeli sponsorship, the individual product of an Israeli cultural worker *per se* is not boycottable, regardless of its content or merit.

(5) Event or project promotes false symmetry or "balance"

Cultural events and projects involving Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis that promote "balance" between the "two sides" in presenting their respective narratives, as if on par, or are otherwise based on the false premise that the oppressors and the oppressed are equally responsible for the "conflict," are intentionally deceptive, intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible. Such events and projects, often seeking to encourage dialogue or "reconciliation

between the two sides” without addressing the requirements of justice, promote the normalization of oppression and injustice. All such events and projects that bring Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis together, unless framed within the explicit context of opposition to occupation and other forms of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, are strong candidates for boycott. Sources of funding, the design of the program, the objectives of the sponsoring organization(s), the participants, and similar relevant factors must be taken into a consideration before reaching a final decision on these joint projects **PACBI.**

[1] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1045>
[2] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1005287.html>

Ken Loach boycotts the Melbourne Film Festival

Ken Loach has published this correspondence:

13th July 2009. Letter to the director of the film festival.

Dear Richard Moore,

Sadly, we learn that your festival is sponsored in part by the State of Israel.

As you are no doubt aware, many Palestinians, including artists and academics, have called for a boycott of events supported by Israel. There are many reasons for this; the illegal occupation of Palestinian land, destruction of homes and livelihoods, the massacres in Gaza, all are part of the continuing oppression of the Palestinian people.

We have no alternative but to respond to their appeal for help. The Israeli poet, Aharon Shabtai, has said “I do not believe that a state that maintains an occupation, committing on a daily basis crimes against civilians, deserves to be invited to any kind of cultural event.”

This is not a boycott of independent Israeli films or filmmakers but of the Israeli State. We hope you can reconsider accepting Israel as a sponsor. If not, then we feel obliged to withdraw our film, Looking For Eric, from the festival.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Loach – Director
Paul Laverty - Writer
Rebecca O'Brien - Producer

14th July 2009. Reply from Richard Moore

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your letter and for informing me of your concerns.

I'm replying to inform you that the State of Israel has been a sponsor of the festival for a few years now, including last year when we played Mr Loach's film ITS A FREE WORLD . Their sponsorship – like that of the British Council , the Goethe Institute , the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office , the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism et al – is provided free of conditions and is, I believe, one of the many forms of cultural assistance they offer to Australian arts organisations – including the Adelaide film Festival , The Sydney Opera House et al , and indeed the Sydney Film Festival (in past years) , which opened with LOOKING FOR ERIC this year .

As a festival we have a long tradition of programming films that present and examine various points of view on the Middle East including on the so called Israel Palestinian question.

This year such films include AMREEKA - a drama that outlines the difficulties that a contemporary Palestinian family faces adapting to life in mid west USA : YOUNG FREUD IN GAZA - the efforts of a young Palestinian psychiatrist to deal with psychological problems faced by Palestinians living under occupation and also forced to deal with internecine Palestinian power struggles.

In 2008 MIFF programmed a small programming stream called BORDER PATROL showing films that dealt with the Israel Palestinian question - Eran Riklis's award winning THE LEMON TREE about a Palestinian woman's fight for justice to stop the Israeli army destroying her lemon grove : THE SALT OF THE SEA - a Palestinian drama centred around

a Palestinian's attempts to reclaim their original home : WALTZ WITH BASHIR - a personal autobiographical account of an Israeli soldier and his involvement in one of Israel's entries into Lebanon , ending with footage of the Shabra/Shatilla massacres; and STRANGERS - a romantic liason between a Palestinian and an Israeli shot in and around the world cup finals in Germany .This small sample is illustrative of our wider concern to show films that deal with contemporary political issues and to allow audiences to judge these films on their own merits . We try to adhere to a policy of open dialogue in our dealings with all agencies, embassies and cultural entities who offer to support our independent non-profit organisation. I understand that this issue is a particularly emotional one for people but we will not participate in a boycott against the State of Israel, just as we would not contemplate boycotting films from China or other nations involved in difficult long standing historical disputes.

I trust you will respect this decision.

Yours sincerely

Richard

14th July 2009. Response to Richard Moore

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your email.

We understand that Israel is and has been a sponsor of many festivals, including some which have shown our films. However, situations change. It is the Palestinians themselves, writers, artists, academics, people from all walks of life who are calling for our support. We are forced to make a choice by those who are suffering such intolerable oppression.

The boycott of apartheid South Africa suffered similar criticisms to the ones you now make. But who would now say it was wrong?

Film festivals will reflect many points of view, which are often radical and progressive. It is also true that there are many brutal regimes and many governments, including our own, which have committed war crimes. But the cultural boycott called for by the Palestinians means that

remaining sympathetic but detached observers is no longer an option. You either support the boycott or break it. For us the choice is clear.

Yours sincerely

Ken Loach
Rebecca O'Brien
Paul Laverty

The Australian Boycott of Israel.

In the July edition of this Newsletter we promised to print the whole Australian boycott statement in this issue. Here it is:

As citizens of conscience we would like to protest in the strongest possible terms against the proposed Australia-Israel cultural exchange trip to Israel to be led by Julia Gillard and involving other parliamentarians, academics, business people, and journalists. We consider this trip a dreadful affront to the many Palestinians left maimed, wounded, traumatised and homeless by Israel's devastating assault on the Gaza Strip in late 08/early 09. The statistics of dead, wounded and dying are in the thousands, whole neighbourhoods lie in ruins, hospitals are bursting at the seams without adequate medical supplies to help the suffering, and world aid - some of it already rotting - lies massed outside Gaza's entry points unable to be distributed because of Israel's draconian restrictions, a policy of collective punishment that is an egregious violation of the Geneva Convention. Reports of illegal phosphorous attacks are evident in the horrific burns endured by the victims months afterwards. Every parliamentarian ought to think seriously about the moral implications of Australia normalising relations with a state that is still under investigation for war crimes committed during Israel's 'Cast Lead' operation. Further, Israel is refusing to commit to the two-state solution that Australia supports, it is continuing to build illegal settlements in the West Bank in defiance of the current United States administration and it is continuing to maintain an illegal military Occupation of Palestinian lands that denies Palestinians basic human rights such as freedom of movement. We remind all those contemplating such a trip that Israeli is not a truly democratic society even when it comes to the Palestinian

citizens of Israel. As we write the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Legislation has approved a preliminary proposal which would make it illegal to hold events or ceremonies marking Israel's Independence Day as a 'Nakba' or catastrophe for the Palestinians dispossessed of their homes and land in 1948. We remind you that the party of Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman 'Yisrael Beitneu' has submitted a bill, subsequently rejected, for cabinet approval which would require all Israelis, including Palestinians, Christians, and Bedouins, to declare loyalty to 'the state of Israel as a Jewish, Zionist, and democratic state' before they can be issued a national identity document. We remind you that a bill has just passed its first reading in the Israeli Knesset that would institute a one year jail term for anyone who speaks 'against Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state', and that the Second Annual Palestine Festival of Literature in Occupied East Jerusalem was ordered to close down by the Israeli Ministry of Internal Security only moments before its opening on 23rd May, a festival supported by UNESCO and the British Council among others.

We reject the oft touted cliché that Israel is a democracy like Australia; rather we remind those intent on strengthening cultural and political exchange between Israel and Australia that Israel is not a state for all its citizens but a state that explicitly advances the interests of one ethnicity alone, a state of affairs that is simply unthinkable in modern Australia. Along with the current editor of the respected American periodical 'The Nation', we wonder how a 'State that imprisons 4 million Palestinians behind ghetto walls, bypass roads and a blockade, and treats another 1.5 million as second-class citizens, [can] be democratic?'

Signed by over 180 academics, writers and artists.

Torture in Israel and Physicians' Involvement in Torture: A statement by PHR-Israel

30 July 2009

A new position paper by Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHR-I) expresses our opinion on torture in Israel and physicians involvement in its use. The paper briefly describes the background of PHR-I's activism on the issue, emphasizing our struggle to change the position of the medical establishment in Israel and our ongoing efforts to engage the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) in the struggle against torture.

To the members and volunteers of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel

Over the past year, PHR-I has held extensive correspondence with the Ministry of Health and the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) on the subject of the roles and responsibilities of doctors regarding the interrogation of detainees in general and interrogations involving torture in particular. As will be made clear in the attached Position Paper, PHR-I calls for the removal of doctors from facilities in which torture is employed, in order to protect them from breaches of medical ethics, and seeks to increase the awareness of medical communities regarding this issue.

As detailed in the Position Paper, the leadership of the medical community in Israel did not in the past take a clear enough stand against torture, and only a ruling by the High Court of Justice provided a clear prohibition on torture. Our current correspondence with IMA and the Ministry of Health suggests that the medical leadership in Israel is still not acting in a determined way against torture, as required by the principles of medical ethics. The Position Paper aims to provide a response to the majority of questions that may arise on this issue, such as: Why are doctors obliged to follow the rules of medical ethics? What are we demanding of IMA and the Ministry of Health (and what is their position on this issue)? and What is the role of international bodies in this struggle?. Doctors are in danger of transgressing their ethical responsibilities, often because they lack awareness of the issues at hand. For this reason, PHR-I has published a short Handbook explaining the ethical responsibilities of doctors in such cases, and detailing the most common injuries of victims of torture and/or violence, in order to improve the chances that when a doctor encounters a victim of torture, he or she will

identify the evidence and will be able to provide the victim with assistance and protection.

We appeal to you, members and volunteers of our organization, to play an active part in the struggle against torture and against the involvement of doctors in torture. We ask all members and volunteers of PHR-I to act for change in Israel in all matters related to torture, and to help us by distributing the Handbook and the Position Paper among your colleagues in the medical community. Only your public support can help those doctors who are working within systems with high risk for dual loyalty.

We believe that raising awareness of this issue is an essential stage in the struggle against torture in Israel. The full statement is at:-

http://www.phr.org.il/phr/files/articlefile_1248974521640.pdf

PHR-Israel

Study tour of Palestine and Israel specifically for health workers.

See the situation on the ground: learn about health care; receive analysis from Palestinians and Israelis who seek the end of the Occupation with a just and sustainable solution for people on both sides of the divide; visit Palestinian hospitals, clinics and teaching establishments; have the opportunity to compare treatment offered in Israeli and Palestinian hospitals. Also meet key leaders and specialists from a variety of organisations working in the field of human rights and international law. Hear from the local people.

During this nine-day clinicians' study tour stay in Bethlehem and East Jerusalem hotels and travel to the surrounding locality as well as to Hebron, Ramallah, Jaffa and Palestinian villages.

The tour is coordinated with PHR-I (Physicians for Human Rights – Israel), ICAHD (the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, the International Medical Educational Trust 2000 and British Doctors for Palestine. It is administered by Experience Travel Tours.

The cost per person for the full tour programme and staying at three star hotels at half board (bed,

breakfast and evening meal), sharing a twin-bedded room with en suite facilities, tour guides and tips is £740 - not included are flights, lunches, and insurance. The supplement for a single room is £165.

For more information write to Experience Travel Tours, PO Box 539, Dorking, Surrey RH4 9FU, England or call 01367 244 636 or email fay@experiencetraveltours.org

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

Recent meetings and lobbying activities have been expensive. We need funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that a busy campaign demands. Please do consider making a donation .

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

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Like all organisations, while we welcome one-off donations, we can plan our work much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order. You can download a standing order form www.bricup.org.uk/documents/StandingOrder.pdf More details can be obtained from treasurer@bricup.org.uk

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 or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome.

Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk

