

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

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The Boycott Israel Network (BIN) – A step forward.

Over the weekend of the 2nd to 4th October an impressive gathering of 69 BDS activists from 12 different organizations in the UK, Ireland, Norway and France met at Wooler Youth Hostel in Northumberland to discuss the development of a more effective European BDS programme against Israel. Workshops on a wide range of BDS actions provided an opportunity for experienced campaigners to share their knowledge and experience with those new to BDS. Vital new links and relationships were forged over the residential weekend, definite plans for new collaborative campaign actions were made and the framework for a new activist network (BIN) was established to enable the work, begun at Wooler, to continue and expand.

Linda Tabar, representing PACBI, eloquently put the call from Palestinian Civil Society for a comprehensive boycott of all Israeli institutions and activities that support the Israeli apartheid state and it was unanimously agreed that determining how best to answer this call would be the objective of the weekend.

Discussion in the workshop sessions focussed on a wide range of possibilities for BDS action, including the academic and cultural boycott; four members of the BRICUP committee were present and took part. Discussions covered boycott activities at supermarkets, both at national and street level and experiences and advice about direct action was shared. The whole group agreed on a number of collaborative projects, beginning with a nationwide week of action that would be focussed on selected specific retail stores. Discussions about complicit firms – Veolia, Eden Springs, Ahava, Agrexco etc - produced similar ideas and plans for future joint actions. This session benefited from the presence of an activist from the French Coalition against Agrexco who reported an action in Montpellier that involved over 1500 protestors. The need for urgent attention to the arms trade with Israel was

highlighted, as was the significance of the diamond trade to the Israeli economy.

Scottish PSC provided an invaluable insight into the history and current activities of the Jewish national Fund (JNF), which is a registered charity in the UK, and has a prodigious ability to raise funds apparently without check. Its significance and role in the establishment and maintenance of the racist state of Israel was discussed. A small research team was set up to investigate and analyse the JNF's activities further and to identify ways to challenge its charitable status in the UK.

The session on the academic and cultural boycott included an in-depth analysis of the guidelines that were developed by PACBI and have been adopted by BRICUP. Members of the BRICUP and PSC BDS committees described some practical examples of the implementation of the guidelines and discussed the occasional difficulties in interpretation and application that can occur in specific practical circumstances. These discussions are ongoing and will feature in future meetings.

The interaction between students, very effectively represented by a large Action Palestine contingent, was a major focus of the weekend. Strong connections were made between the participating organizations and the students. BRICUP featured strongly in this - thanks to the discussions with Action Palestine representatives that took place at our last committee meeting. We anticipate that these connections will substantially increase the profile and impact of both organizations in campuses around the country.

The final session focussed on the creation of a new communication network connecting all the organizations that are committed to working for BDS and wish to join in. It was agreed that the mechanism will be the minimum required to enable the network to function efficiently with minimal administrative effort. This will include

regular workshops, the next one being planned for March 2010 at some location in the midlands. Volunteers to set the system up were identified, as were individual representatives for each organization.

BRICUP looks forward to taking this opportunity to increase the effectiveness of its campaigns. The weekend demonstrated the intention of a wide range of active and accomplished groups and individuals to work together to support and strengthen the efforts of the Palestinian people to end the military occupation and apartheid in their homeland

Report by David Pegg and Monica Wusteman

The PACBI Column

Israel's Brand Apartheid at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The "Toronto Declaration: No Celebration of Occupation," protesting the Toronto International Film Festival's (TIFF 2009) decision to highlight Tel Aviv for its inaugural City to City program, has gained international support. Within days of the PACBI statement [1] condemning the spotlight on Tel Aviv, an international group of more than 50 prominent filmmakers, writers, artists and academics – including Ken Loach, David Byrne, Naomi Klein, Alice Walker, Wallace Shawn and Danny Glover – had signed the Declaration protesting the Spotlight on Tel Aviv.

“As members of the Canadian and international film, culture and media arts communities, we are deeply disturbed by [TIFF's] decision to host a celebratory spotlight on Tel Aviv,” the letter began. “We protest that TIFF, whether intentionally or not, has become complicit in the Israeli propaganda machine.” [2] Over the past five years, Canada has seen the growth of a vibrant Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement organically connected to the BDS movement on the ground in Palestine. Due to the various successes of the BDS campaign across Toronto, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs chose the city as a "test market" for a year-long public relations campaign. In 2008, Israel's consul general, Amir Gissin, announced that the culmination of this "Brand Israel" campaign would be at the Toronto International

film Festival [3].

A few months before TIFF's opening, rumours of a spotlight on Tel Aviv started to emerge. Cultural workers and activists in Toronto attempted to gather information on this spotlight as early as possible and met with the organizers of TIFF to understand the logic of highlighting an Israeli city that is the very heart of Israel's regime of occupation and oppression only months after the atrocious war of aggression on Gaza. The results of the meeting were very disappointing. TIFF only gave vague statements and no definitive declaration that this was not part of Brand Israel; as a matter of fact, it was discovered later that there was funding received from the Israeli Film Fund for directors' travel and, though it was not widely publicised, the mayor of Tel Aviv was also invited to Toronto for the Spotlight.

This left PACBI no choice but to issue a statement on August 27th, condemning the decision by TIFF to spotlight Tel Aviv. We encouraged filmmakers and audiences to specifically boycott the Spotlight as it extended a gesture of “goodwill” to a colonial and apartheid regime which is violating Palestinian human rights with utter impunity. We needed to find the most strategic way to turn the spotlight on TIFF itself, questioning its complicity in sanitizing Israel's image.

Supporting the Palestinian protest against TIFF, filmmaker John Greyson pulled his film, *Covered*, from the festival and added it to his website for audiences to watch for free, for the entire duration of TIFF. As the protest grew and reached the Arab world, more Arab films were pulled from TIFF. The drafters of the Toronto Declaration played a crucial role in accumulating an impressive list of signatories, who may have diverse opinions on BDS, but agreed that TIFF should not be used to help Israel whitewash its war crimes and other violations of international law and basic human rights.

There are strategic lessons to learn from the TIFF campaign, specifically in terms of the cultural boycott of Israeli Apartheid. It is very important to organize protests of all Israel Rebranding activities around the world. We need to continuously emphasize that we are not boycotting individual artists, rather we are boycotting institutions of Apartheid and the use

of international cultural platforms to sanitize or normalize Israel's image around the world. Being ready and organized to handle the backlash against such protests is critical. The usual arguments of the pro-Apartheid lobby emerged: that to protest the spotlight on Tel Aviv was "anti-Semitic," and that the BDS campaign blacklisted individuals or stifled cultural exchange. Our response was to carefully explain that – much like the campaign against South African Apartheid – this was a campaign that targeted complicity with Apartheid Israel. We were not calling for a boycott of any individuals or of TIFF itself. The protest itself promoted a rich, uncensored debate on the responsibility of artists and artistic institutions in upholding human rights.

The campaign was a huge success. It brought home the enormous reservoir of support for Palestine that exists among artists, film-makers and writers from across the world. It achieved its primary goal – casting our own "spotlight" on Israel's crimes and propaganda machine and forcing those who support it to answer publicly for their defence of apartheid.

[1] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1085&key=tiff>

[2] For the full text of the Declaration please see: <http://torontodeclaration.blogspot.com/>

[3] Andy Levy-Alzenkopf, "Brand Israel set to launch in GTA," Canadian Jewish News, August 28, 2008).

Spain expels Israeli scientists from solar energy competition.

Spain has disqualified a group of Israeli scientists who intended to take part in *Solar Decathlon Europe*, an international competition involving 20 universities. The state funded Israeli group at the Ariel University College of Samaria (AUCS) is situated the occupied West Bank . The team was one of 20 finalists in a competition to design solar-powered housing that is sponsored by the US energy department. The letter in which the organizers explained their decision reads thus: "Solar Decathlon Europe regrets to inform you

that AUCS University team will no longer be participating in the competition. This decision is not related to their work nor their project. They have always showed that they are rigorous professionals. The decision has been taken by the Government of Spain based upon the fact that the University is based in the West Bank. The Government of Spain is obliged to respect the international agreements under the framework of the European Union and the United Nations regarding this geographical area.

Needless to say the organization of the Solar Decathlon Organization is deeply sorry about this situation as we have always defended that this is strictly an academic issue. In light of the above, the Organization is considering the viability of incorporating another university from the applicant waiting list. As such, the Organization is excluding for tomorrow's process the area numbered as 20. We do not want to leave an empty space between projects, though it is going to stay empty for the moment in case a new team is added.

Sincerely yours,

Sergio Vega Sanchez, PhD
General Director. Solar Decathlon.

The AUCS centre was founded as a regional branch of Bar-Ilan University; it is located in the Ariel settlement which, together with its industrial zone Barkan, is the second largest Israeli colony in the West Bank, located 22 km away from the "Green Line". It cuts deep into the Palestinian Governorate of Salfit, grabbing more than 22% of its land: 10% is used to house 17,000 settlers, and 12% is used for military training purposes¹. The Israeli project for this competition was called 'the stretch house' which is strangely appropriate as a model of Zionist expansion and colonialism. Faye Kishawi, coordinator of the popular committees against the Wall and the settlements in Salfit district, commented: "The Israeli project represents Israeli claim to expand control over our land and resources and to expel us, occupy us and destroy our livelihoods at their own whim and desire. It is a recipe for how to steal more and more land. As somebody living in Salfit and suffering like the

others from Ariel's continuous 'stretching' I wonder how the Solar Decathlon could accept a project submitted by an institution that has stolen our land and will build its project on our stolen land." Abe Hayeem of BRICUP and Chair of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, has referred to the irony of the name that AUCS chose for its project - "the stretch house".- Illegal settlements, like Ariel, have been built by 'stretching' and distorting international law to justify their construction.

The decision to expel the team from AUCS has provoked angry reactions in Israel. The university said it "rejects with disgust the one-sided announcement" and claims that the decision "contravenes international law and international charters on academic freedom". Inevitably, Zionist groups, including the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, have claimed that the decision is anti-semitic: "We are deeply concerned about the mainstreaming of anti-semitism in Spain, with more public expressions and greater public acceptance of classic stereotypes," said the league's director, Abraham Foxman. One wonders why these people cannot use the same dictionary as the rest of us: the decision to exclude the team from an Israeli organization that is heavily involved in the illegal occupation action simply was anti-occupation, not anti-semitic. It seems to be better understood by Haaretz which noted that the European Union has adopted a more critical attitude toward Israel since the Israel Defense Force's 22-day offensive in Gaza last January and the refusal of Israel's new right-wing government to heed demands for a complete settlement freeze. For further detail see these links:-

The Palestinian Civil Society Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) www.bdsmovement.net

Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP) www.apjp.org

Israel Bars Some Foreign Academics Who Teach in the West Bank

Israel has clamped down on the movement of foreign academics teaching at Palestinian

universities in the West Bank, barring some from entering the region altogether or stamping Palestinian Authority only" in the passports of others, preventing them from entering Israel. For example, an English-language instructor from Ireland who taught for several years at the Arab American University in Jenin, was refused entry on August 23 when she returned to the West Bank to take up a new position at Bethlehem University and is now unable to teach. A Canadian instructor of Iranian descent was given the "Palestinian Authority only" stamp when he arrived on Sunday to teach at the Arab American University's English Language Center. A British lecturer in Middle East politics had to cancel a planned lecture at Birzeit University this year after she was denied entry by Israeli immigration officials.

Information for travelers posted on the website of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem confirms the recent change in policy. "Anyone indicating that they either have connections to the West Bank or are planning to travel to the West Bank, may get this stamp," which does not permit them to enter into or return to Israel. The Website goes on to state, "The Consulate can do nothing to assist in getting this visa status changed".

Source:- Extracts from a report by Matthew Kalman, Ramallah, that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education, September 3rd, 2009.

This is what we are up against

The following extracts from Ma'ariv (on 24.09,09) illustrate some aspects of the fundamental beliefs of two Zionist apologists. They demonstrate quite extraordinary attitudes that are incompatible with the world that we see and live in.

Asa Kasher, is the professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University who wrote the ethical code for the IDF. He says that he "addresses combat from the angle of the army's attitude towards its own troops. The lives of our troops interest me more than the wellbeing and dignity of the Palestinians," He maintains that the IDF is the most moral army in the world. Hence, to him the Goldstone report is one-sided anti-Semitic

propaganda. He says that the conduct of the soldiers and commanders in the Gaza was appropriate, and the allegations of war crimes are ludicrous.

Prof. David Altman of Netanya Academic College wrote an open letter to Justice Richard Goldstone

Whom are you defending, Your Honour, when you point a falsely accusing finger at us, when an army goes out to defend homes and towns, and informs and asks its neighbours to move away, in order to prevent loss and anguish? We believe in human rights and democracy.

Your job – to destroy the image of the State of Israel and each and every one of us – resembles those who collaborated with the Nazis, because they believed the Nazi propaganda that the Jews are guilty and hence must be dealt with through the Final Solution.

I am a proud Israeli, I love my homeland, and I long for peace. The only democratic country in the Middle East – a country that is called Israel – represents our national collective. We believe in justice, in human rights, in humaneness, in love of one's fellow man, and in the Jewish belief that says: every individual that was created in His image is important.

We are not killers, we are not blood-thirsty murderers, we do not wish to punish those who hate us, but to extend to them our hands in peace, in friendship, and in understanding.

[Read the full text of Kasher's and Altman's comments](#)

Leonard Cohen woos the crowds in Ramat Gan...and makes a few gestures for 'tolerance and reconciliation.'

Readers of this Newsletter will be aware of the intense campaign to persuade Leonard Cohen to cancel his planned concert at Ramat Gan . In the end he refused to heed all the arguments and went ahead with his concert...to the delight of the packed stadium. He is reported to have told the audience, "I don't know if we will pass this way again," and then promised "to give it

everything tonight." Apparently he did so. Or did he ?

The proceeds from the concert have been estimated at \$2 million, and are to be directed to organizations working with Israeli and Palestinian organizations committed to reconciliation. Recipients will include The Parents Circle, the Palestinian Center of Research and Information, Radio Kol Hashalom and Saving Children - the Peres Center for Peace. The administration of these funds will be by his own 'Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace', Amnesty International having refused to handle the money. Novelist David Grossman, praised the initiative, reportedly saying that . "It seems so easy to believe that war is the only possibility and that Israelis and Palestinians will continue to kill each other". Is that so easy? Is that how we think? He continued, "But those gathered here tonight know what we have inflicted upon each other and the price we have paid. Leonard Cohen, through his art, indicates that he understands this suffering."

Unfortunately, the fact is that appearances by major artists support the Israeli process of obscuring their oppression of the Palestinian people. Despite many requests to cancel the whitewashing concert - requests by BRICUP, PACBI ,AAA and many other groups - Leonard Cohen insisted on his 'right to perform' while having little to say about the rights of Palestinians to freedom and dignity. Cohen's manager Robert Kory was quoted in the Jerusalem Post as saying, "When I talk to people calling for Leonard to boycott Israel, I ask them, 'Why can't people have different approaches? Can't we respect each other and have a different way of addressing a common problem?' Well, our way is to listen to the Palestinian people themselves, and jointly with them to work to dismantle Israeli apartheid through non-violent means and this includes the Cultural Boycott. In contrast, Leonard Cohen, with his management and publicity team, has engaged in Cultural Imperialism by keeping the proceeds in the hands of those who claim to know what's best for the Palestinians. This is not the way.

Sources: Jerusalem Post; Artists Against Apartheid (AAA)

Gideon Levy on Israel's need for celebrity visits.

It's all because of love. A lack of love, to be precise. And because of provincialism. Here's a possible explanation for the embarrassing groveling before our guest singer: our longing for love. How beautiful we are - if not in the eyes of the world, which increasingly ostracizes us - then at least in the eyes of Madonna. It is difficult to find a single European prime minister or opposition leader who has bothered to meet with her. Only in Israel do they stand in line for her graces, the graces of a singer who is only a singer. An entire country is saying "Madonna."

It didn't begin with her. We have always longed for the world's love, or at least for the love of those of its stars who bothered to come here. Anyone who doesn't love us is against us, anyone who doesn't perform here is an anti-Semite and anyone who doesn't meet with the prime minister, or at least with the leader of the opposition, is unimportant. What did Menachem Begin talk about with the stars of "Dallas," which he had never previously heard of? What did David Ben-Gurion chat about with Danny Kaye? How interested was Moshe Dayan in the chitchat of former film star Maureen O'Hara?

And it's provincialism, too, of course. Madonna came to us from Bulgaria, which is also a country, but it's reasonable to assume that there was much less of a fuss made of it there. She came, she performed, she left. Bulgaria. But here it turned into a formative event, as though her two performances in the park provide the recognition - that we want so badly - that no one is better than we. That we really are the chosen people, or at least the people with the most ethical army in the world. If you need proof: Madonna performed here. [And after that -], Leonard Cohen.

Source: Gideon Levy in Haaretz. See <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/1112184.html>

Hence...the need for the Cultural Boycott!

Student connections on campus ... 'Action Palestine'

'Action Palestine' (AP) is an active student group that wishes to increase its impact on British University campuses and to improve its contacts with committed Academic Staff. AP organises tours of Palestine/Israel and would welcome the presence of academic staff. If you are interested in getting involved please let us know and we will put you in touch. Use the email address bricup@bricup.org.uk.

Some BDS developments.

- **Trade boycott in South America.** The *Southern Common Market* is a Regional Trade Agreement among South American countries. The Brazilian Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Relations and National Defense has recommended that the parliament should not ratify the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the SCM and the State of Israel until "Israel accepts the creation of the Palestinian state on the 1967 borders". This decision is an explicit act of pressure on Israel to comply with international law, and a rejection of years of incessant Israeli lobbying, pressuring for a vote to ratify the agreement. This decision is an enormous blow for Israel's economy and foreign relations. The SCM is one of the world's most rapidly expanding markets and the fifth largest economy in the world. Israeli exports to the SCM amounted nearly 600 million dollars in 2006. Source:

<http://palestinemonitor.org/spip/spip.php?article1072>

- **Pension fund divestment.** The U.S. pension fund giant, TIAA-CREF, confirmed in statements to the media that it divested from Africa Israel Investments, owned by Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev, earlier this year. The statements came in response to a letter initiated by the pro-Palestinian group, Adalah-NY, and signed by TIAA-CREF clients. The fund's investment in Africa Israel amounted to only \$257,000, so the financial effect of the divestment is minimal but news of the divestment came as the Israeli firm was suffering a deep financial crisis, having recently announced that is unable to meet its liabilities to its bondholders. Source:

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1114043.html>

● **Churches support boycott.** The World Council of Churches (WCC) has issued a statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The statement includes the following: the WCC] reiterates the need for an international boycott of settlement products and services, for member churches to inform themselves about settlement products imported into their countries and for churches to practice morally responsible investment in order to influence businesses linked to the Israeli occupation and its illegal settlements.

BRICUP has published conclusive evidence, in its regular newsletters and elsewhere, that Israeli Universities are complicit in the Occupation and notes that the WCC declaration reinforces the call for the academic boycott of Israel. Read the full report on the BRICUP Website.

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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More details can be obtained from

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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 or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome. Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk