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*This issue of the BRICUP Newsletter includes three stories with a common theme – the efforts of the pro-Israel lobby to prevent free speech and debate on the Palestine/Israel question. By coincidence, the PACBI column this month provides a critical discussion of academic freedom - which is essential for proper debate but can also be distorted to support arguments against boycott. This appears to have happened in the Trondheim University decision which is also described in this edition.*

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## **Freedom of speech – Zionist style**

Ms Miri Weingarten, Director of advocacy at Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, was scheduled to give a series of lectures in the north of England towards the end of October. She started in York with a meeting at the York Medical Society on October 21st: it was well attended and generated a good discussion. There was no antagonism. The next two meetings were at Fairfield Hospital in Bury and at the Manchester Royal Infirmary, both on October 22nd. Miri's title was, "The Right to Health in a Conflict Zone". The rooms had been booked in August and September and Dr Asad Khan, a consultant at Fairfield who organized the meetings, reported that there had been a phenomenal level of interest and nobody at either institution had expressed any doubts or disapproval.

However, on the evening of October 20th the following appeared on the website of the Zionist Central Council (ZCC) of Greater Manchester

***Urgent Call To Stop Anti-Israel Meeting at Manchester Royal Infirmary and Fairfield Hospital.*** *The anti-Israel Group, Physicians [sic] for Human Rights - Israel are arranging a talk called 'The Right to Health in a Conflict Zone' [...] at Fairfield General Hospital, Bury and at Manchester Royal Infirmary (MRI). An example of their anti-Israel sentiment can be found on the website below. [This cited the April Guardian article by [Rory McCarthy](#) that was entitled Israel created 'terror without mercy' in Gaza] If you are upset that an Institution like MRI or Fairfield Hospital could allow such an organisation to speak on its premises contact [and here followed the contact details for both hospitals' press offices] and let them know in your own words that their reputation will be tarnished allowing such a group to speak.*

Enquiries revealed that someone had indeed contacted the Press Office of Pennine Acute Hospitals (of which Fairfield is a part) to complain and demand that this 'anti-Semitic' talk be cancelled. Asad managed to meet the Chief Executive of Pennine that day and the latter was appalled at this interference in the hospital's affairs by an external agent; within hours he had given orders that the talk was to go ahead. Enquiries at the MRI also revealed that they had received a few complaints but the hospital's education centre stated that they were not prepared to bow to pressure: the talk would go ahead.

On the 22nd itself, the talk at Fairfield had the highest Grand Round attendance for a long time (approximately 50). However at 14.30, 4 hours before Miri's talk at the MRI, Asad learned that due to continued threats and complaints, the management responsible for the MRI had cancelled the event, apparently "to avoid

trouble'. With hardly any time to spare, an alternative venue across the road from the hospital was located. People were stationed outside the MRI postgraduate centre to direct people to the new venue. In the end, they had a gripping meeting lasting two hours that was attended by approximately 100 people - mostly healthcare professionals. However it appears that some - including employees of the MRI - did not make it to the new venue. Unhelpfully, the Trust intranet carried a notice that the meeting had been cancelled. There are reports- by some who did not make it to the second venue - that MRI security personnel were telling guests that the event was no longer taking place and asking them to leave the hospital premises. Interestingly, by 9 pm, when the talk had finished, the call to block the meeting had disappeared from the ZCC website.

At neither of the meetings did anyone object to, or even disagree with what was said. Miri was as wonderful as ever, charismatic and with a real passion for justice. Asad reports that he has already received enquiries from people wanting to host her and even some who wish to go to work in Israel/Palestine.

The MRI authorities have subsequently stated :-

*Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust took no part in the organisation of this meeting and was only informed that it was taking place shortly beforehand.*

*The individual who had organised the meeting was seen following an executive decision not to allow the meeting to take place on Trust premises for safety and security reasons. This was as a result of communications received by the Trust.*

*Best wishes.*

*Communications Unit, Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

A spokeswoman from the Manchester Royal Infirmary is quoted in the Jewish Chronicle of

October 29th as saying that they had received complaints from the Jewish community and that the event was cancelled for security reasons. She said: "It was gaining quite a lot of negative feeling and it was felt that it might attract people turning up that would be against the meeting."

So clearly, intimidation works. But take note: the meeting did take place, albeit at a different venue, and there were no security problems.

Asad has commented thus on the events. "The accusation that Physicians for Human Rights-Israel is anti-Semitic or even anti-Israel is ludicrous given that the organization is overwhelmingly comprised of Jewish Israelis of whom Miri is one! Her talk, which was about the violation of the right to access healthcare, was entirely appropriate for an audience of healthcare professionals. The orchestrated bullying tactics of the ZCC are well-known in the Northwest and violate the fundamental right of freedom of expression. If they disagreed with what was said, they were welcome to come and express an alternative viewpoint. However, their objective has always been solely to silence any criticism of Israel. In this case, they failed. As for Central Manchester University Hospitals- it is regrettable that they panicked in the face of pressure. They made no attempt to determine if indeed there was anything objectionable in the subject matter of the talk and the Trust took the easiest option of simply stopping the talk. Had we not been fortunate enough to find the alternative venue, over 100 people - some of whom had travelled from Liverpool and Bradford - would have been deprived of the opportunity to hear a speaker from an internationally respected human rights organization."

Miri was due to speak at three meetings in Liverpool on the following day, October 23rd. Gwen Backwell and Gina Shaw of Liverpool Friends of Bil'in had made the arrangements in good time. Two of the meetings took place but the third, at the Alder Hey Hospital, was cancelled by the management. Miri's title was "Children's Health Rights: the case of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory", a topic that had been specifically chosen to be relevant to an

audience of paediatricians. Less than 24 hours notice of cancellation was given and again the reason was "concern for [Miri's] safety". Gwen has asked what was the source of danger to Miri, but has received no answer. However the Jewish Chronicle has quoted Louise Shepherd, chief executive (CE) at Alder Hey Hospital, as saying, "It came to our attention that what was intended as a private meeting had in fact become public knowledge and was being trailed on various websites as a political issue. This was augmented by accompanying display boards which arrived earlier that week and which contained explicit political content" In fact, the display was the Gaza Children's Art Exhibition that is travelling the country and had already been displayed at Liverpool Cathedral. It had nothing to do with the lecture which in any event had not been advertised outside the Alder Hey hospital.. Ms Shepherd continued, "Alder Hey is, and will continue to be, apolitical and has a proud heritage of actively promoting a culture of equality and diversity. For these reasons a decision was taken to cancel Ms Weingarten's visit to the Trust."

The chair of PHR-I, Dr. Danni Filc, said, " The timing of their decision to silence an Israeli organization was especially unfortunate as, on the same evening, the principle of freedom of speech had been cited to enable Nick Griffin of the ultra-right wing British National Party to voice his positions on the BBC's Question Time. We think this demonstrates a distortion of priorities and that is unfortunate."

But others may be learning from this episode. The British Medical Journal has published an article describing these events. Read it at

[http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/339/nov17\\_3/b4901](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/339/nov17_3/b4901)

The Jewish Chronicle (JC) reported that Karen Solomon, director of the Zionist Central Council in Manchester, sent more than 200 emails to members urging them to contact the hospitals. Ms Solomon said that the original plan was to send members to the meeting to dispute some of the topics. She said: "We felt the talk was

political and hospitals should not be seen to be political or hold political events. The group is blatantly anti-Israel and so we asked people to write in to say what we felt." But it didn't work! Just two of the 6 talks were cancelled by the management but one was immediately reinstated and those who attended the five talks went away with renewed determination to oppose the violations of human rights and medical ethics by the Israeli government and armed forces. The JC also ran a readers' poll on the question "Should the Zionist Central Council have blocked the lecture tour by Physicians for Human Rights?" When I last looked the vote was 29% Yes: 71% No. The JC also carried an editorial under the heading "Shooting the Foot" that concluded as follows:

*" .. it is all the more difficult to understand the attitude of the Manchester Zionist Central Council to a planned series of lectures by a representative of the Israeli branch of Physicians for Human Rights. Rather than go to the lectures and challenge the content, which was the sensible thing to do, the ZCC deluged health professionals at three major hospitals with emails and sought the withdrawal of the lecture invitations. Result, cancelled lectures, bewildered nurses and doctors and an outraged Israeli lecturer. The sound of shot feet resonates throughout north-west England. As we said, freedom of speech is a valuable commodity."*

It may be assumed that, after this press coverage within the Jewish community, there is now some embarrassment at the Manchester Zionist Central Council and its supporters. However, the decision by two Chief Executives of two major hospitals to bend to such illegitimate external pressure must be firmly challenged. As Dr. Filc has said in his letters to the Trusts,

*" In Israel, dissent and debate on these issues are increasingly delegitimized. Similar patterns of silencing would do the medical community in Britain no good service."*

So what is to be done? As Asad has said, "We cannot take this lying down!" Many, including PHR-I, have written to Mr M Deegan, the CE of

Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust, (email to [michelle.green@cmft.nhs.uk](mailto:michelle.green@cmft.nhs.uk)) and to the CE of Alder Hey Hospital (email to [louise.shepherd@alderhey.nhs.uk](mailto:louise.shepherd@alderhey.nhs.uk).) At the time of writing, only the Alder Hey had replied - as follows

*To Dr Dannic Filc, Chair and Hadaz Ziv,  
Executive Director  
Physicians for Human Rights, Israel*

*Thank you for your letter of 28th October relating to the cancellation of the visit of Dr. Miri Weingarten who was to address our Grand Round session on 'Children's Health Rights: the Case of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory' on Friday 23rd October 2009.*

*Shortly before this date it came to our attention that what was intended as a private NHS meeting about the health issues of some very disadvantaged children had in fact become public knowledge and was being trailed on various websites as a political issue. This was augmented by accompanying display boards which arrived earlier that week and which contained explicit political content.*

*This Trust is recognised as one of the world's leading providers of children's healthcare and encourages appropriate discussion on the health rights of vulnerable children – wherever they may be. However, Alder Hey is, and will continue to be, apolitical and has a proud heritage of actively promoting a culture of equality and diversity.*

*It was for these reasons a decision was taken to cancel Dr. Weingarten's visit to the Trust. I would like to reassure you that no external pressure was brought to bear on any member of this Trust and at no time was Dr. Weingarten's personal safety ever at risk. I do however apologise that Dr. Weingarten was informed of the cancellation by a member of my staff whose email was of an emotive nature and not reflective of this organisation's position relating to the visit."*

The Alder Hey sent essentially the same letter to Gwen Backwell who had complained to the hospital management both about the action itself and the content of their letter.

In view of the irrational and cowardly actions of the management at both the MRI and the Alder Hey which, in the circumstances, amount to insulting behaviour towards the representative of an internationally respected human rights organization, it would be appropriate for each of the responsible officers to write a personal apology to Miri.

We should congratulate Mr John Saxby, Chief Executive of Pennine Acute Hospitals, for his principled stand in favour of freedom of expression and institutional autonomy in the face of external pressure. (email to [Janette.Melia@pat.nhs.uk](mailto:Janette.Melia@pat.nhs.uk).) and make your disgust known to the Zionist Central Council (email to [zccoffice@zcc.org.uk](mailto:zccoffice@zcc.org.uk)) Above all, make sure that colleagues understand this threat to freedom of communication and be ready to take counter action when such intolerance next shows its face.

Material provided by Dr Asad Khan, Miri Weingarten & Gwen Backwell

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### **Interference with academic freedom in a professional medical journal.**

The journal "Therapy Today" is published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The March 2009 issue contained an article entitled 'To resist is to exist', written by two psychotherapists, Martin Kemp and Eliana Pinto [1]. It is an account of a 10-day tour of the West Bank in November 2008 in which the authors saw for themselves the situation of the Palestinian people: the title of their article is taken from graffiti that was written on the Israeli wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem. The authors emphasised the psychological effects of the Israeli Occupation, particularly on children, and to do so they

catalogue specific Israeli policies and actions that are responsible - such as the 600 checkpoints within the Palestinian territory and the separation wall, much of which is built on Palestinian land. They report that three hundred children are in Israeli prisons, often as punishment for minor acts of resistance. "It is a psychological war", said the Director of the Palestine Counselling Centre. The article was accompanied by a thoughtful and welcoming editorial and several photographs including a full page photograph of Palestinian children on the front cover.

Then, and quite suddenly, the article was withdrawn from the web version of the Journal. A while later, the article reappeared on the web but now with an introductory note announcing that, "Following complaints this article was temporarily withdrawn from our website to enable us to reflect and consult more widely [...] with the aim of giving balance over time" The authors were sent copies of two letters that had been received by the journal officials, which at considerable length, accused the authors of anti-semitism and racism and urged the publishers of the Journal to retract the article and issue a full and clear apology. On April 1st I noted that the republished web article was accompanied by 15 letters of comment, twelve highly critical and three supportive of the article [2]. But again, and once more with no warning, the article and all the letters of comment were withdrawn, shortly to be followed by closure of the whole web version of the Journal. From then, and until mid-June the website displayed a notice "Under Construction".

I wrote to the editor asking exactly what had happened and on May 5th she replied by email as follows: "The Board of Deputies of British Jews asked us to remove it until we had a balancing article to go with it." She also clarified as follows, "Yes, the new upgraded archive will include the Kemp/Pinto article".

Both the authors and a group of concerned psychologists and other medical professionals wrote to the Editor and Chief Executive of the Journal, rejecting absolutely the accusation of anti-semitism, criticising the manner in which

the journal and BACP had responded to the critical reactions and demanding a full right of reply. We argued that this interference with freedom of speech and discussion is unacceptable. In subsequent emails the Editor told me that a 'balancing article would be available in June and that when it was, the original Kemp and Pinto article would be reinstated.

The 'balancing article', which concerned the effects of Palestinian rockets on the inhabitants of Sderot, was duly printed in the June issue [3] and the original Kemp and Pinto article was restored to the website alongside the letters commenting on it. However, the Journal also published, but only on the web version in June, a very long 'critique' of the Kemp/Pinto article by Irwin J. Mansdorf [3]. Mansdorf's main arguments are that the article was overtly political, that the authors did not support their statements by citing sources, and that they had paid insufficient attention to the context within which the events described took place. All of Mansdorf's accusations are easily challenged: his article is highly political and crucially it completely ignores the elephants in the room - the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the numerous unimpeachable official sources that support Kemp and Pinto's observations and include Amnesty, the EU, the UN and many highly respected Israeli NGOs. Kemp and Pinto submitted a carefully argued, low-key response to the 'balancing articles' [4] and this response was published in the July issue along with two supportive letters.

One is left with the impression that the journal was unprepared for the orchestrated attempt to have the article withdrawn, culminating in a demand by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. But the final result, following the persistent application of pressure on the Journal, is that the original article is there in the public domain [1], the opposing arguments can be seen for what they are - threadbare and illogical [2], the so-called balancing articles are obfuscation [3] and the authors' meticulous responses [2,4] remain challenged. The Journal has not withdrawn the article and has not issued an



apology for publication: the article remains available for all to read and judge.

- [1] <http://www.therapytoday.net/article/15/3/categories/>
- [2] <http://www.therapytoday.net/article/5/5/categories/>
- [3] <http://www.therapytoday.net/article/1/15/categories/>
- [4] <http://www.therapytoday.net/article/5/18/categories/>

David Pegg with material from Martin Kemp

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## A “Right to Health” conference in Turkey

Ruchama Marton is the President and Founder of Physicians for Human Rights–Israel (PHR-I). In a private capacity she was one of the 725 physician signatories from 43 countries who have collectively appealed to the World Medical Association (WMA), the world’s official watchdog on medical ethics, to examine urgently the ethical track record of one of its member associations, the Israeli Medical Association (IMA). The issue is the well documented collusion with torture by Israeli doctors and the IMA, as was clearly demonstrated by this incident at this conference.

Ruchama was a speaker at a conference called "Right to Health as Bridge to Peace in Middle East." That was held in Turkey the other week. There were representatives from five Middle East countries, including Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Israel and including a Palestinian delegation from both the West Bank and Gaza. Lebanon, Jordan and Syria did not participate, probably because of the participation of the Israel Medical Association (IMA) - which had three representatives. The conference was supported by the WMA and WHO and was attended by the new WMA President, Dr Dana Hanson of Canada, and the permanent Secretary General, Dr. Otmar Kloiber of Germany.

Ruchama was scheduled to talk second on the first morning but just before she was due to

speak, she was approached by two representatives of the International Federation of Health & Human Rights Organizations (IFHHRO), Adriaan van Es and Bjorn Hoftvedt, who urged Ruchama not to mention a torture case that she had included in her presentation. The reason, believe it or not, was that IMA members would not tolerate it - with the result that the whole meeting would explode. Adriaan even said that their request was not a censorship but an act of responsibility! Ruchama would not agree so they offered a deal: if she agreed not to talk about the torture case, then torture would be one of the three issues for final voting by the conference. Ruchama has said, “I didn't have time to think properly what to do; it was just before I needed to talk.” In her talk she used the PowerPoint presentation just as it had been prepared, including details of the torture case, but she allowed time while the two slides of the torture case were on - long enough for people to read it. “I did not talk about it, she said, mainly because the PHR-I Board Members are not willing to fight against the IMA”.

The subject of the torture was “M”, a Palestinian man arrested in April 2008. His affidavit states that he was interrogated for 20 days, most of the time seated on a chair fixed to the floor, with his hands tied behind his back. He was beaten and shaken, while shackled to the chair. The interrogators threatened that his house would be demolished and his mother arrested. She was. Following severe beatings, he fainted and sustained cuts to his head and face. He suffered severe pains in his jaw and was unable to eat. In the presence of ambulance paramedics and a doctor, the interrogator instructed colleagues not to tell what happened but to say that “M” fell down the stairs. A doctor was asked by the interrogators not to order hospitalization and he obeyed. “M” was brought back to the prison but his interrogators forced him to wait inside the ambulance for three hours in order to avoid having “M” examined by a prison doctor who was known to ‘ask too many questions’. “M” was finally released to another doctor, one who doesn’t ask too many questions. When “M” complained to the prison doctor he was told to shut up and was sent shackled to a confinement

cell without medicine. Medication was administered only following a Red Cross visit.

The meeting intended to have a vote on what the major priorities might be for future activity, but as a result of her experience Ruchama felt that the 3 IMA votes would not be cast in good faith. She convinced the other participants - coming from Egypt, Iraq and Turkey - that a vote was unfair since there were three IMA members and only her against them from a human rights NGO. Of this she said, "That was nice indeed."

The end result was that no final decisions were made and the IMA members left before the conference was over. No official summary or any other statement was issued. Ruchama has asked us to ask Adriaan Van Es if there is a written report of the conference. Ruchama's experience at the conference makes everything absolutely transparent: one thing that the new WMA President Dr Dana Hanson cannot say is that he has not seen, paraded before his eyes, an utterly telling case of physician collusion with torture in Israel. Dr. Derek Summerfield said, "This lot will not be able to get away with such transparent grotesqueness for much longer. What we see is the WMA traduced, and the whole structure of international medical ethical codes hollowed out."

Source: Ruchama Marton & Derek Summerfield

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## The PACBI Column

### **Muzzling debate on academic boycott through selective resort to "academic freedom"**

A persistent and recurrent theme in arguments used by Zionist and other Israel lobby groups to counter or undermine the Palestinian-initiated academic boycott of Israel [1] is that academic boycotts are "anathema to the free flow of thoughts and ideas" and therefore are the "antithesis of academic freedom." This argument has been refuted quite thoroughly by BDS activists, particularly in PACBI and

BRICUP, over the years; still its convenience and demagogic utility have given it longevity.

PACBI has always argued that the notion of academic freedom as used in the above is not only based on false premises; it also betrays an Israel-centric discourse and agenda that undervalue the rights of the oppressed, the Palestinians, and privileges the oppressors, the Israelis.

Since the PACBI Call for academic boycott, endorsed and advocated by BRICUP and other PACBI partners around the world, unambiguously targets institutions, not individual academics, the assumption that the boycott stifles academic exchange and the free flow of ideas is untenable. Nothing in the PACBI Call or in the elaborate PACBI Guidelines for the International Academic Boycott of Israel [2] prevents any Israeli academic from travelling and participating in conferences and research projects, so long as the project or visit is not sponsored by or conducted on behalf of a boycottable Israeli institution, as all universities are.

Israeli academic institutions are targeted for boycott because of their persistent complicity in perpetuating Israel's occupation, racial discrimination and denial of refugee rights. This collusion takes various forms, from systematically providing the military-intelligence establishment with indispensable research -- on demography, geography, urban planning, hydrology, psychology, among other fields -- that directly benefits the occupation apparatus; to tolerating and often rewarding racist speech, theories and "scientific" research; to institutionalizing discrimination against Palestinian Arab citizens; to suppressing Israeli academic research on the *Nakba* [3]; to directly committing acts that contravene international law, such as the construction of campuses or dormitories in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as the Hebrew University and the so-called Ariel University Center of Samaria have done.

Accordingly, although the ultimate objective of the boycott is to bring about Israel's compliance with international law and its respect for Palestinian human and political rights, PACBI's targeting of the Israeli academy is not merely a means to an end, but rather part of that end. This is especially true when taking into account the fact that the academic boycott is one component of a general campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) adopted by a decisive majority of Palestinian civil society.

Among other problematic aspects, the conception of academic freedom used to muzzle debate on the academic boycott of Israel appears to be restricted to the suppression of the "free exchange of ideas among academics," leaving out the situation of academics in contexts of colonialism, military occupation and other forms of national oppression, where "material and institutional foreclosures [...] make it impossible for certain historical subjects to lay claim to the discourse of rights itself," as Judith Butler eloquently argues.[4] Academic freedom, from this angle, becomes the exclusive privilege of some academics but not others.

The protection of academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas cannot be the only norm dictating the political engagement of academics. Often, when oppression characterizes all social and political relations and structures, as in the case of South Africa during apartheid or indeed Palestine, there are equally important and sometimes more important freedoms that must be fought for, especially by academics and intellectuals. The aim of the academic boycott of Israel, in this context, is not to safeguard academic freedom as an abstract principle, or to obtain better conditions for academic freedom in Palestine, but to obtain justice and fundamental rights for the entire Palestinian people, including academics.

The academic boycott that the Palestinians are calling for aims to bring about an end to Israel's colonial and apartheid policies through targeting one institutional arena deeply implicated in the state's violation of international law and Palestinian rights. The overriding principle is

not academic freedom (whether for Palestinians or Israelis), but freedom from colonial rule and oppression. The underlying principle here is the equality of human beings in moral worth and their equal right to live in freedom, as expressed in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This same principle informed the struggle in South Africa and the international support it received.

Privileging academic freedom as *above* all other freedoms contradicts seminal international norms set by the United Nations. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, for instance, proclaims that [5]:

All human rights are universal, indivisible [...] interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

By turning the free flow of ideas to an absolute, unconditional value, the opponents of academic boycott come into conflict with the internationally accepted conception of academic freedom, as defined by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states [6]:

Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction. The enjoyment of academic freedom carries with it *obligations*, such as the duty to respect the academic freedom of others, to ensure the fair



discussion of contrary views, and to treat all without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds. [Emphasis added]

When scholars neglect or altogether abandon their said obligations, they thereby forfeit their right to exercise academic freedom. This rights-obligations equation is the general underlying principle of international law's position on human rights.

Furthermore, many who have hurled the "suppressing academic freedom" charge at advocates of the academic boycott against Israel completely ignore the rampant abuse of this "freedom" in the Israeli academy to protect and mainstream racist incitement against the indigenous Palestinians. If upholding Nazi views, denying the Holocaust and espousing anti-Semitic theories are widely regarded in the Western academy as falling outside the realm of academic freedom, why should the racially exclusivist Zionist discourse, Nakba denial and Islamophobic/anti-Arab speech and "academic theories" be viewed as normal or acceptable under the rubric of freedom of speech?

Finally, it is quite revealing that prominent academic institutions in the West that were quick to condemn the initial British efforts for boycott of the Israeli academy did not feel any moral obligation to stand up against the Israeli colonial and apartheid injustices which prompted those boycott efforts in the first place. It is this double standard that calls into question the very motives of those who insist on condemning the academic boycott of Israel – and only of Israel! – as conflicting with "academic freedom."

PACBI

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This article is based on previously published articles by PACBI members, particularly the contributions by Lisa Taraki and Omar Barghouti to the special issue of *Academe*, September-October 2006, the publication of the Association of American University Professors (AAUP).

<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2006/SO/Boycott/Critics.htm>

[1] PACBI Call for Boycott:  
<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>

[2] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108>

[3] Oren Ben-Dor argues that one of the purposes of the proposed academic boycott is to "provide a means to transcend the publicly-sanctioned limits of debate," adding that, "Such freedom is precisely what is absent in Israel." From this angle, the boycott is seen as "generating" true academic freedom. "The Zionist ideology which stipulates that Israel must retain its Jewish majority is a non-debatable given in the country -- and the bedrock of opposition to allowing the return of Palestinian refugees. The very few intellectuals who dare to question this sacred cow are labelled 'extremists'." Oren Ben-Dor, "Academic Freedom in Israel is Central to Resolving the Conflict," *CounterPunch*, May 21/22, 2005.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/bendor05212005.html>

[4] Judith Butler, "Israel/Palestine and the Paradoxes of Academic Freedom," *Radical Philosophy*, V.135, January-February 2006.

[5] United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, *Vienna Declaration and Program of Action*, July 12, 1993.  
[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.CONF.157.23.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.CONF.157.23.En?OpenDocument)

[6] UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *The Right to Education* (Art.13), December 8, 1999.  
[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/ae1a0b126d068e868025683c003c8b3b?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/ae1a0b126d068e868025683c003c8b3b?Opendocument)

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## The boycott proposal at Trondheim University

Despite a strong movement for boycott within the University and support from elsewhere, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) has voted unanimously against an academic boycott of Israeli Universities. External petitions supporting boycott included an open letter from a group of Israeli citizens who supported the proposed action as "an historic step in the direction of applying effective pressure on Israel and holding it accountable for its occupation and apartheid policies, which violate international law and fundamental human rights" At the Board meeting it is reported that each of the 12 voting members made a statement explaining their position prior

to the vote. Many statements were critical of Israel, but they concluded that an academic boycott would not be appropriate.

"I was surprised that no one defended it," said Agnes Bolsø, an associate professor of cultural studies and one of the original 34 authors of the boycott proposal. "I thought there would be one or two teachers defending it. They were very critical of the occupation, but the thing was there was so much weight on academic freedom, the institution didn't do anything to prevent that. I find it a bit sad. We all want academic freedom, but there is limited academic freedom for Palestinian academics and for Israelis who are critical of the occupation."

Sources: <http://www.boycottisrael.info/> and the Jerusalem Post at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1258027275931&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>

*See the PACBI column above for a critical discussion of the relevance and use of the 'Academic Freedom' argument .*

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### **URGENT The Lecture tour - Israel, the Palestinians and Apartheid: the case for sanctions and boycott.**

**Manchester** [download a flyer](#)

Monday 7 December 7.00 p. m. Lecture Theatre A, University of Manchester, University Place, Oxford Road, M13 9PL

Ronnie Kasrils, Bongani Masuku, George Mahlangu, Omar Barghouti and Yasmin Khan, Senior Campaigns Officer, War on Want

Tom Hickey, National Executive Committee, Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) and BRICUP

**Leeds** [download a flyer](#)

Tuesday 8 December 7.00 p. m. Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre, Michael Sadler Building, University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, LS2 9JT

Ronnie Kasrils, George Mahlangu, Omar Barghouti and Yasmin Khan, Senior Campaigns Officer, War on Want

**Glasgow** [download a flyer](#)

Wednesday 9 December 7pm STUC Centre, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6NG

Ronnie Kasrils, George Mahlangu, Omar Barghouti  
Chair: Terry Brotherstone, Scottish TUC General Council member, and Past President of UCU Scotland

**Edinburgh** [download a flyer](#)

Thursday 10 December 12 noon. Lecture theatre 183, Old College, Edinburgh University

Ronnie Kasrils, George Mahlangu, Omar Barghouti

**BRICUP is sponsoring this tour and hopes to see you at one of the meetings. Please publicise these meetings among all your friends and contacts.**

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### **Palestinian student deported to Gaza**

Berlanty Azzam is a twenty-one-year-old Palestinian student in her final semester at Bethlehem University in the West Bank. In October, she was returning from a job interview in Ramallah. when she was detained by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in the West Bank.. The reason was that her ID card was registered in Gaza and, in the words of the human rights organisation, B'tselem, "the Israeli occupation almost completely forbids the movement of Palestinians between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip". She was bound and blindfolded and forcibly deported to the Gaza Strip.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip are supposed to be treated as one territorial unit. Ironically, this was affirmed by the Israeli supreme court in 2002 as part of a justification for the expulsion of

Palestinians from the West Bank to Gaza. The court ruled that this did not violate international law because the two areas "should be regarded as one territory". But that is not what actually happens. Placing restrictions on Palestinian students' freedom of movement has been just one element of Israeli actions to deepen the separation between the Gaza and the West Bank. Since the start of the second intifada in 2000 to 2005, it is reported that travel from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank has declined by 98%.

[Ben White](#) concludes that "severing ties between Gaza and the West Bank is part of a deliberate fragmentation policy that not only defies international law and human rights, but is also designed to render genuine Palestinian independence and self-determination impossible."

Source. Ben White in Comment is Free .See [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 2009

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## Book Review

Gabi Baramki, *Peaceful Resistance: Building a Palestinian University Under Occupation*. Foreword by Jimmy Carter. London: Pluto Press, 2010.

This important book chronicles at first hand the struggle and survival of Birzeit University in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is a vivid and readable first-hand account written by a Palestinian professor who was acting President of the University for 19 years. The book is probably the most lucid and detailed English-language rebuttal of the propagandist notion that Israel has supported Palestinian higher education. Instead, the book is powerful testimony to a long history of Israeli military, economic, social and cultural assault on the educative and democratic functioning of Birzeit University. The Israeli government has periodically closed the university, invaded campus, shot, killed and detained students, deported, harassed and beaten staff, blocked access to campus, stifled infrastructural expansion, burdened the

university with extra costs, and censored books and curricula. The book is a damning indictment of Israeli attempts to deny Palestinians academic freedom and the right to education. The author endorses the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions on Israel. The book leaves us in no doubt of the vital importance of international academic solidarity with Palestinian colleagues who have persevered in the discharge of academic functions in the face of constant Israeli oppression.

John Chalcraft

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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 welcome.**

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