

www.bricup.org.ukbricup@bricup.org.uk**Contents**

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A note from the Editor.

This issue completes two years of production of the BRICUP Newsletter. We hope you have found it useful. Each issue has included a 'PACBI Column' and it is appropriate that Issue 24 opens with a major item from PACBI, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. This detailed article surveys the worldwide BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) activity during 2009. It is a lengthy document – but that is because there is a great deal to report and a great deal to celebrate but also a great deal more to be done. Please read it right through: pass it on to friends and use it to recharge your BDS batteries.

BDS IS WORKING!

The PACBI Column**Global BDS**

The Year 2009 proved to be a watershed in the growth of the global BDS movement. The massive

lethal Israeli war of aggression on the Gaza Strip in late December 2008 and January 2009 galvanized many organized groups and individuals around the world to call for BDS actions as a means to end Israel's criminal impunity and disregard for international law.

The report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission led by Judge Richard Goldstone, released in September 2009, which found strong evidence of Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the assault moved the terms of international solidarity with Palestine into a new plane, where calling for BDS is no longer considered "unrealistic" or "counterproductive." BDS has emerged more strongly than ever as a key morally sound and politically realistic strategy for bringing an end to Israel's impunity and holding it accountable to the same international standards as other nations.

In Palestine, the BDS National Committee (BNC), established in April 2008, has been widely recognized as the principal anchor of the global BDS movement. A wide civil society coalition representing major sectors of Palestinian society in the OPT, inside Israel (1948) and in exile, the BNC has played a leading role in initiating international action, giving advice to BDS activists around the world, and participating in national and international forums. PACBI, which is one of the founders of the BDS movement and a member of its leadership, the BNC, continues to be actively engaged in the global BDS movement, both locally and internationally, on the level of academic and cultural boycott.

Global BDS movement achievements in 2009

Below are only selected highlights of the main achievements of the global BDS movement:

- The BDS coordination process, launched at the Bilbao Initiative meeting in November 2008, began showing tangible results in Europe in 2009. The Derail Veolia/Alstom¹ and the great civil society coalition in France -- and other European countries -- against Agrexco-Carmel² are distinguished examples of such results. In February 2009, the Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign had issued an international call to action against Carmel-Agrexco, the Israeli national exporter of fruit and vegetables and importer of goods from illegal Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land.³
- In December 2009, the Turkish BDS Platform was launched at a march of 500 people in Istanbul on the first anniversary of the lethal assault on Gaza. The Platform is composed of major Turkish trade unions and political organizations. The Platform demands an end to military, diplomatic, economic, academic, and cultural relations between Turkey and Israel.⁴
- The Students for Justice in Palestine at Hampshire College hosted a US-wide BDS student conference in November 2009 to organize and galvanize the growing divestment campaigns going on all over campuses in the U.S.⁵ Earlier, in February 2009, Hampshire College became the first college in the U.S. to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation. This landmark move was a direct result of a two-year intensive campaign by SJP.⁶
- In November 2009, the second largest Dutch pension fund (PZFW) divested from Africa-Israel, which has been targeted internationally for its investments in companies that support settlement activity.⁷ In September 2009, the Norwegian

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¹ For more on this campaign see:

<http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/ViewArticle.aspx?id=304>

² <http://www.coalitioncontregrexco.com/>

³ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/240>

⁴ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1140>

⁵ <http://stopthewall.org/worldwideactivism/2138.shtml>

⁶ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/301>

⁷ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/608>

government decided to exclude the Israeli company Elbit Systems Ltd. from the Government Pension Fund – Global, on the basis of the Council on Ethics' recommendation.⁸ In September 2009, 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 Adalah-NY and signed by TIAA-CREF clients.⁹ In February 2009, the Church of England announced that it had divested from Caterpillar, a company whose bulldozers and heavy plant equipment have been used to destroy the homes of Palestinians by the Israeli military.¹⁰

- In September 2009, the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), representing over six million workers, adopted a historic decision supporting a BDS motion put forth by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).¹¹ The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) was the key behind this historic shift in TUC policy. The FBU, an affiliate of PSC, had adopted BDS in May 2009, taking it upon itself to "support and promote throughout the Trade Union and Labour Movement a campaign to boycott Israeli goods, disinvest from Israeli institutions and for sanctions to be taken against Israel, similar to those sanctions imposed by the international movement against apartheid in South Africa."¹² In April 2009, the Scottish Trade Union Congress, representing all Scottish trade unions, voted overwhelmingly to commit to boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, and thus became the third national trade union federation to commit to BDS, after the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the South African COSATU.¹³

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⁸ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/533>

⁹ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/542>

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http://www.palestinecampaign.org/Index7b.asp?m_id=1&11_id=4&12_id=25&Content_ID=376

¹¹ <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/files/09TUCMotion.pdf>

¹²

<http://www.palestinecampaign.org/files/FBU%2009%20RESOLUTION.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/376>

- In November 2009, the National Work Confederation, CNT, a French anti-capitalist internationalist union, joined the BDS campaign.¹⁴

- The Boycott Motorola Campaign was launched in New York in March 2009. Motorola USA and its subsidiary Motorola Israel provide equipment to the Israeli military which include bomb fuses and surveillance for the Wall and settlements.¹⁵ In June 2009, the Municipal Council for Cooperation of Bilbao, composed of 45 NGOs and the four political parties represented in the municipality joined the BDS Campaign.¹⁶

Academic Boycott Initiatives

A number of important international initiatives for academic boycott were launched in 2009, some based on the PACBI call for academic and cultural boycott, such as the recently established US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel¹⁷, the Catalan Commission of Universities for Palestine (CUNCAP, Comisio Universitari Catalana per Palestina),¹⁸ and other, still-developing academic boycott initiatives in Canada, the Basque Country (Spain), France and Australia.

- In September 2009, the Government of Spain excluded an Israeli university in the illegal settlement of Ariel, the "Ariel University Center of Samaria" (AUCS) from the Solar Decathlon, a prestigious international university competition for sustainable architecture in the world.¹⁹

- In May 2009, one of the most important developments in the UK was the passing of an unprecedented number of boycott-related motions against Israel's colonial and apartheid policies at the annual Congress of the University and College Union

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¹⁴ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/582>

¹⁵ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/352>

¹⁶ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/562>

¹⁷ <http://usacbi.wordpress.com/>

¹⁸ <http://cuncap.wordpress.com/>

¹⁹ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1105>

(UCU), which represents over 100,000 academics and related staff in colleges and universities.²⁰

- An important development in winter and spring was the student campus "occupation" movement spearheaded by students in solidarity with Palestine across the UK.²¹

- Two important research documents on Israeli academic institutions' complicity in maintaining the structures of domination were published in 2009: the report by the Alternative Information Center (AIC) entitled "The Economy of the Occupation,"²² and a report prepared by the Palestine Society at SOAS at University of London documenting Tel Aviv University's collaboration with the Israeli military.²³

- A petition by Norwegian Academics in November 2009 urged support for the cultural and academic boycott of Israel, and asked "the boards of our institutions to approve an academic boycott of Israel"²⁴

- In May 2009, more than 40 Australian academics signed a statement calling for a boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions.²⁵

- Several universities in Canada and the US — and over 40 cities across the world, from London to Jerusalem to Johannesburg-- hosted Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) in March 2009. IAW 2009 continued to build and strengthen the growing BDS movement at a global level.²⁶

- In March 2009, a statement issued by Lebanese academics urged colleagues worldwide to support the PACBI call."²⁷

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²⁰ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1018&key=ucu>

²¹ <http://www.actionpalestine.org/student-movement/university-occupations-over-gaza-by-mona-baker/>

²²

http://www.alternativenews.org/images/stories/downloads/Economy_of_the_occupation_23-24.pdf

²³ <http://www.electronicintifada.net/downloads/pdf/090708-soas-palestine-society.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1124>

²⁵ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=998&key=australian>

²⁶ www.apartheidweek.org

²⁷

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=980&key=scholasticid e>

- The Quebec College Federation, Fédération autonome du collégial (FAC), meeting in March 2009, declared that “FAC will concretize its solidarity with the Palestinian people by becoming part of the international campaign for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel, together with trade unions and social organizations that are committed in the same direction.”²⁸
- A statement by staff members of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague in March 2009 proposed “a critical (re)consideration of formal relationships with Israeli academic institutions and programmes.” It called for debating “appropriate institutional responses” to hold Israel accountable for violations of international law and through measures that “include institutional boycotts.”²⁹
- CUPE-Ontario's University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) took significant steps at its annual conference in February 2009 in the direction of applying effective pressure on Israel by passing a number of the resolutions aimed specifically at challenging and ending business-as-usual with the Israeli academy.³⁰
- In February 2009, dozens of French academics issued a statement calling for the cessation of all collaboration with Israeli institutions participating in the occupation, urging their government to “apply to Israel a program of boycott, divestment, and sanctions.”³¹
- In January 2009, the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel was launched.³² Today, over 500 US-based academics, authors, artists, musicians, poets, and other arts professionals have endorsed the call. Among the 34 organizations supporting USACBI’s mission are the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, the Green Party, Code Pink, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, Artists Against Apartheid, and Teachers Against the Occupation.³³

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²⁸ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=971>

²⁹ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1134>

³⁰ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=954&key=cupe>

³¹ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/307>

³² <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=899>

³³ <http://pulsemedia.org/2009/12/25/usacbi-statement-on-1-year-anniversary-of-operation-cast-lead/>

- A call by 300 Canadian academics and educators in January 2009 urged the Canadian government “to implement sanctions against the Israeli government until it ceases its attack against the people of Gaza and fully complies with international law;”³⁴ and a statement by a group of Quebec university staff declaring support for the appeal by the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE) to support a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.³⁵
- A petition from the University of Johannesburg faculty, staff, and community in October 2009 signed a statement opposing the University’s decision to sign a scientific co-operation agreement with Ben-Gurion University.³⁶

Cultural Boycott Actions

- The widely publicized campaign against the Toronto International Film Festival's special tribute to Tel Aviv succeeded in gaining the support of notable artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals. The Toronto Declaration in September 2009 objected “to the use of such an important international festival in staging a propaganda campaign on behalf of ... an apartheid regime.”³⁷
- In August 2009, Amnesty International was successfully pressured to withdraw its support for a Leonard Cohen concert in Israel in violation of the boycott guidelines. PACBI led this initiative, along with international partners.³⁸
- In July 2009, the Yes Men announced the withdrawal of their film from the Jerusalem Film Festival in solidarity with the BDS campaign.³⁹ In August 2009, two international curators withdrew from an art biennial taking place in Israel.⁴⁰
- In May 2009, the Edinburgh International Film Festival organizers announced that they were

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³⁴ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/254>

³⁵ <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/275>

³⁶ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1118>

³⁷ <http://torontodeclaration.blogspot.com/>

³⁸ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1080&key=cohen>

³⁹ <http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/20090701080625471>

⁴⁰ <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1110830.html>

returning funds donated by the Israeli Embassy, admitting that it had been a mistake to accept the funds. Setting a precedent in applying the cultural boycott, the eminent British filmmaker, Ken Loach threatened to boycott the festival unless the organizers returned the contributions they had accepted from the Israeli embassy.⁴¹ In July 2009, Loach withdrew his film from the Melbourne International Film Festival because the festival received funding from the Israeli government and refused to disassociate itself from the Israeli government.⁴²

- Palestine solidarity activists organized protests in the winter and spring in several major US and Canadian cities during the tour of the Tel-Aviv based Batsheva Dance Company. The company receives government funding, and is one of Israel's prominent "cultural ambassadors."⁴³

PACBI and the Global BDS Movement

PACBI has relied entirely on the voluntary efforts of its Steering Committee members and its supporters and partners, locally and internationally. The Steering Committee now includes members based in the West Bank, Gaza, Toronto, New York, London and Berlin.

In 2009, PACBI members spoke at seminars and conferences at several venues to promote BDS: in more than ten cities in the United States (including at six universities); in Canada; in several European cities including Amsterdam, the Hague, London, Manchester, Berlin, Madrid, Rome, and Brussels; and in Ireland, Scotland, and Turkey.

- In the UK, PACBI has continued its close cooperation with BRICUP, particularly in efforts that led to the passing of an unprecedented number of boycott-related motions at the UCU's annual congress in 2009.⁴⁴ Throughout the debate over BDS

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<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1011&key=edinburgh>

⁴² <http://www.greenleft.org.au/2009/804/41365>

⁴³ An example from Los Angeles:

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=956&key=batsheva>

⁴⁴ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1018&key=ucu>

at the UCU, PACBI worked closely with the Palestinian Federation of University Unions of Professors and Employees (PFUPE), whose President addressed the UCU annual congress to appeal for the adoption of the academic boycott of Israel. In December 2009, a PACBI representative gave a keynote address in an international, inter-union conference in London to promote BDS, organized by UCU. This was followed by a BRICUP-organized tour of several universities in the UK by PACBI and leaders from the African National Congress (ANC) and COSATU to explain and advocate for BDS in general and academic/cultural boycott in particular.

- PACBI has also contributed to the debate on academic boycott in the UK through its contribution of a monthly column in the BRICUP newsletter, of which 22 issues have been published since February 2008.⁴⁵

- In the United States, a PACBI representative, speaking on behalf of the BNC, delivered the opening address at the U.S. Campus BDS Conference at Hampshire College in November 2009. PACBI had also helped the student organizers in formulating the conference's objectives and focus.

- A PACBI member gave the keynote speech and led a workshop at the highly successful Wooler BDS Weekend in October 2009. The weekend was organized by the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign together with the Northern Palestine Solidarity Network and was held on the Scottish border.

A number of vital statements and basic reference documents were produced by PACBI for use by boycott activists. These and other efforts include:

- Issuing over 30 statements and appeals, posted on the PACBI website and circulated among concerned parties;⁴⁶

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⁴⁵ <http://www.bricup.org.uk/index.html>

⁴⁶ See PACBI Statements and Open Letters here: <http://www.pacbi.org/einside.php?id=55>

- PACBI in Gaza was instrumental in launching the Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) there⁴⁷ PACBI is also playing the key role in galvanizing civil society support for BDS in Gaza and in promoting civil resistance through media interviews, public lectures and many meetings with civil society representatives.

- Issuing two important reference documents, “Guidelines for the International Cultural Boycott of Israel”⁴⁸ and “Guidelines for the International Academic Boycott of Israel.”⁴⁹ PACBI also issued “Implementing the Academic Boycott: Individuals vs. Institutions,”⁵⁰ another effort to respond to requests for information and advice regularly coming in to PACBI.

- In the OPT, PACBI members have spoken at workshops and events in Gaza, Bethlehem, Hebron, Qalqilya, among other cities and towns. PACBI organized a special panel on the Culture of Resistance and BDS at the Bil'in Annual Conference on Popular Resistance in April 2009. In June 2009, PACBI co-organized the workshop “Education in Palestine between the Peace Industry and the Culture of Resistance” with the Qattan Foundation and the Teacher Creativity Centre in Ramallah. In December 2009, PACBI organized a meeting in Ramallah to discuss cultural boycott with Palestinian cultural centers and cultural workers. A major reference document on guidelines for Arab artists’ and intellectuals’ visits to the occupied Palestinian territory will result from this meeting.

PACBI

Palestine in Egypt

1,400 internationals came to Cairo around the 26th December 2009, expecting to move on to Gaza and join the people of Gaza in their Freedom March. But it was not to be. The Egyptian authorities banned travel out of Cairo and on to the Rafah crossing. They banned meetings of internationals in groups of more than six in any public space. Egypt however

⁴⁷ <http://pscabi.org/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>

⁴⁹ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108>

⁵⁰ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1125>

overlooked one factor in their ban - the cause of Palestine !

Illegal meetings started immediately. They broke out in bars, cafes and hotels. Any Egyptians allowing meetings on their premises were threatened with their licences being revoked. Yet the meetings went on. By the time the massive French contingent arrived, they were ready for organising on whatever basis became necessary. They set up camp outside the French Embassy in Giza and were refused buses to take them on to al Arish and then Rafah. But they held their ground on the pavement surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of tooled up riot police. Having visited the French on their first day I found myself along with other Scots locked in . The French however raised the morale of everyone.

The Spanish were no less inspiring as were so many other groups from all over the world. Eventually the tactic adopted for the 31st December was a flash march: everyone sneaked into the centre of Cairo and took Tahrir Square. At the appointed time there was an instantaneous dash into Cairo's busiest spot and the flags came out. Viva, viva Palestine ...Resistance ...We want to go to Gaza.

It took the military completely by surprise. They had had all the hotels ringed with police since early morning. But most of us had got out of our hotels and gone on early morning strolls well before the police and military arrived. The Free Gaza movement held their ground. They were non-violent but very determined. Egyptians loved it! An international movement came of age in Cairo 2009. The determination of the Palestinian people had inspired all of us and we organised according.

After Cairo things will never be the same ...

A fuller report will follow in the next Newsletter.

The Cairo Declaration follows

Keith Hammond in Cairo

The Cairo Declaration

On January 1st the Gaza Freedom Marchers in Cairo issued the following declaration:-

We, international delegates meeting in Cairo during the Gaza Freedom March 2009 in collective response to an initiative from the South African delegation, state:

In view of:

- Israel's ongoing collective punishment of Palestinians through the illegal occupation and siege of Gaza;
- the illegal occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the continued construction of the illegal Apartheid Wall and settlements;
- the new Wall under construction by Egypt and the US which will tighten even further the siege of Gaza;
- the contempt for Palestinian democracy shown by Israel, the US, Canada, the EU and others after the Palestinian elections of 2006;
- the war crimes committed by Israel during the invasion of Gaza one year ago;
- the continuing discrimination and repression faced by Palestinians within Israel;
- and the continuing exile of millions of Palestinian refugees;
- all of which oppressive acts are based ultimately on the Zionist ideology which underpins Israel;
- in the knowledge that our own governments have given Israel direct economic, financial, military and diplomatic support and allowed it to behave with impunity;
- and mindful of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007)

We reaffirm our commitment to:

- Palestinian Self-Determination
- Ending the Occupation
- Equal Rights for All within historic Palestine
- The full Right of Return for Palestinian refugees

We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the United Palestinian call of July 2005 for Boycott, Divestment

and Sanctions (BDS) to compel Israel to comply with international law. To that end, we call for and wish to help initiate a global mass, democratic anti-apartheid movement to work in full consultation with Palestinian civil society to implement the Palestinian call for BDS.

Mindful of the many strong similarities between apartheid Israel and the former apartheid regime in South Africa, we propose:

- 1) An international speaking tour in the first 6 months of 2010 by Palestinian and South African trade unionists and civil society activists, to be joined by trade unionists and activists committed to this programme within the countries toured, to take mass education on BDS directly to the trade union membership and wider public internationally;
- 2) Participation in the Israeli Apartheid Week in March 2010;
- 3) A systematic unified approach to the boycott of Israeli products, involving consumers, workers and their unions in the retail, warehousing, and transportation sectors;
- 4) Developing the Academic, Cultural and Sports boycott;
- 5) Campaigns to encourage divestment of trade union and other pension funds from companies directly implicated in the Occupation and/or the Israeli military industries;
- 6) Legal actions targeting the external recruitment of soldiers to serve in the Israeli military, and the prosecution of Israeli government war criminals; coordination of Citizen's Arrest Bureaux to identify, campaign and seek to prosecute Israeli war criminals; support for the Goldstone Report and the implementation of its recommendations;
- 7) Campaigns against charitable status of the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

We appeal to organisations and individuals committed to this declaration to sign it and work with us to make it a reality.

The Declaration had been signed by 130 individuals and organizations when it was released. BRICUP has

signed it and other individuals and organizations are invited to do so. The email address provided is: cairodec@gmail.com

Lecture tour - Israel, the Palestinians and Apartheid: The Case for Sanctions and Boycott.

That was the title of the highly successful lecture tour organised by BRICUP in cooperation with the Palestine Society at SOAS, War on Want, PSC, Scottish PSC and the Scottish TUC. The speakers included: Ronnie Kasrils, former minister in Nelson Mandela's ANC government and anti-Apartheid activist; Bongani Masuku, International Secretary of Cosatu (The South African Trade Union Federation); George Mahlangu, Campaigns Coordinator of Cosatu, Omar Barghouti from the Palestinian Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and Stephen Rose, founder member of BRICUP. The speakers addressed packed audiences in London, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh during the period December 4th to the 10th, 2010. The speakers were received with enthusiasm although there was a bizarre and inaccurate report by the BBC on the SOAS meeting which has caused BRICUP to complain (as described in the following item).

The BBC smears a BRICUP meeting

The BBC news website carried a wildly inaccurate report of the BRICUP public meeting at SOAS on December 4th. The BBC report, that appeared two weeks after the meeting, had the headline "Jewish man jeered at SOAS university debate" and contains the allegation that "Footage has emerged ... The film shows Jonathan Hoffman ask ... Upon revealing his name there are boos and shouts of 'Jewish!' ... The overpowering racist jeering as displayed by some audience members at the event is stark and chilling" The video did not emerge... it was published by SOAS Palestine Society, the co-sponsors of the meeting, immediately after the event. There was no shout of 'Jewish' and there was no racist jeering. Jonathan Hoffman is vice-chair of the Zionist Federation and is well-known for attending meetings critical of Israel and attempting to divert the meetings. There was indeed jeering when he gave his name because many members of the audience were

familiar with his tactics, not because he was Jewish. Indeed two of the speakers at the meeting, Steven Rose and Ronnie Kasrils are of Jewish origin as were many members of the audience including several other questioners who made their background public, none of these people attracted any hostility on account of their origin.

The shouting of the word 'Jewish' is a fabrication.

The BBC have stated that the alleged incident occurred at 5mins 12 seconds into the recording. Hoffman had said "Why do you interrupt me?" which elicited the shouted response of "Do you really want to know?" – the 'do you' has been misheard, either carelessly or maliciously, as 'Jewish'. This is the extent of the chilling racism.

At no time did anyone from the BBC contact BRICUP about the meeting to ask for our comment and the request to SOAS PalSoc required an answer within 30 minutes – an impossible turn-round time for a student society, especially out of term-time. There was no need for such pre-emptory demands as this was not a breaking news story that had to be filed within tight deadlines.

The BBC reporter failed his basic journalistic responsibility to check out a story fed him by a partisan source. The story was submitted by Raheem Kassam, a former prominent member of Conservative Forward and producer of a website called 'Student Rights', a website the BBC inaccurately described as an anti-racist website: a self-description not carried on the site or substantiated by the site's content.

Following complaints by members of BRICUP and SOAS PalSoc and by several members of the audience the BBC replaced the story by a far less inaccurate one. However the BBC has not renounced the original version which continues to be circulated on the web and Hoffman continues to recount it as a true account. Indeed Kassam's own site continues to carry a screen grab of the original article.

BRICUP and PalSoc have challenged the BBC's response to our original complaints and have sent a joint letter demanding: "We therefore request you revisit our original complaints and address the points we made in detail. We ask the BBC to make a public statement that the original story contains multiple errors of fact and makes unjustifiable claims and is a piece of journalism of which falls far short of their expected standards. So that reproduction of the article

or uncritical reference to it can be contested by ourselves and the BBC.” If there is no satisfactory response to this letter we will be pursuing a formal complaint to the BBC Trust. Concocting and colluding in such false allegations of anti-Semitism damages the credibility of those, Jews and others, who are genuinely enduring abuse and threats. Opposition to the actions of the Israeli government is not, of itself, any evidence of anti-Semitism: nor is drawing attention to the painful parallels between South African Apartheid and what is happening in Israel and Palestine today.

The text of the original and revised BBC article and a link to the video are at

http://www.bricup.org.uk/news/BBC_SOAS.html

Mike Cushman

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

We need funds to support our program of visiting speakers, public meetings, printing leaflets and meeting the whole range of expenses that a busy campaign demands. You can make a one off donation by sending a cheque to

The treasurer, at BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK or by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at

Sort Code 08-92-99

Account Number 65156591

IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91

BIC = CPBK GB22

While we welcome one-off donations, we can plan our work better if people pledge regular payments by standing order. You can download a standing order from

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.

Our website is at www.bricup.org.uk

We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are welcome

Email them to newsletter@bricup.org.uk