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bricup@bricup.org.uk**BRICUP victory at the Israeli
“greenwash” seminar, February 9th**

BRICUP sent David Bellamy a letter that was signed by a Nobel Peace Prize winner, members of Parliament and the House of Lords, and numerous academics from Israel and the UK, urging him not to attend the “Israel: Blue White and Green” event on 9th February. (See Newsletter 25 February 2010). BRICUP accused the organizers of “greenwashing” the occupation and the letter stated, “We are outraged, and think that you ought to be too, at the prospect of Israel presenting itself [...] as a champion of environmental virtues.”

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead of BRICUP wrote to all the signatories: “As yet we have had no statement from Bellamy as to his reasons for his non-appearance but in the meantime it is a reasonable inference that his withdrawal is related to our letter to him asking him to do so.”

Although the hall at the Institute of Education has a capacity of over 900, the audience only reached double figures. Meanwhile a lively demonstration of about 35 pro-Palestine campaigners took place outside. Protesters mobilised by BRICUP, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG) and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) handed out leaflets and displayed placards with slogans which included: “Israel Pollutes Palestinian Land”, “Israel destroys Palestinian trees”, “Israel Steals Palestinian Water” and “Israel: Blue, White and Toxic”.

Inside the hall, three leading Israeli scientists gave presentations about the importance of underground aquifers in desert regions, the impact of aerosol emissions on rainfall, and the environmental challenges facing Israel and its neighbours.

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, a BRICUP member and

secretary of J-BIG who had bought a ticket for the event, said afterwards, "The explanations about how Israel uses its technology to benefit communities in developing countries were particularly galling given the gross contrast with the treatment of Palestinians, but we were not given the opportunity to point out the irony."

During questions, a second J-BIG activist asked about Israel's role in depleting the Mountain Aquifer which is the main source of water for Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank, effluent discharged from Israeli settlements onto occupied Palestinian land and the disastrous impact of Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip in December 2008/Jan 2009 on sewage treatment plants and drinking water resources. He was prevented from continuing by the chair and then carried out bodily by members of the Community Security Trust (CST) and denied re-entry.

When the chair refused to allow Ms. Wimborne-Idrissi to put a question to the panel, she called on the meeting to consider Israel's denial of fair access to water for Palestinians, as outlined in Amnesty International's 2009 report from the Israel-Occupied Palestinian Territories. She too was physically dragged out of the meeting by members of the CST. "I was frog-marched up the stairs", she said afterwards.

Ms. Wimborne-Idrissi later telephoned the Institute of Education to complain about the treatment she and her fellow activist had received, and received an apology. "From the reports the IoE have received from their own staff, they seem to feel that the level of restraint used by the CST was inappropriate for the situation", she said. The two ejected activists are considering taking legal advice.

The CST responded to BRICUP's Press Release, which contained the above information, thus:-

Further to my conversation at approximately 1715hrs today with Dr Sue Blackwell, I wish to place on record CST's request that you immediately correct the mistakes concerning CST that are contained in BRICUP's press release of 15th February 2010.

The press release states that one person was "carried out bodily by members of the Community Security

Trust (CST)". This is incorrect, the person was escorted from the room, with both arms touched by CST personnel. No force was used. Nobody was "carried out bodily". The press release also states that "Ms. Wimborne-Idrissi. too was physically dragged out of the meeting: "I was frog-marched up the stairs", she said afterwards." This is incorrect, she was escorted from the room in the same manner as the other person. No force was used. Nobody was "dragged". Furthermore, Ms. Wimborne-Idrissi was only taken outside the room. She was not taken up any stairs by CST, not by "frog-marching" nor by any other manner. All of the above was witnessed by scores of people.

The claims in your press release are inaccurate and potentially damaging to the reputation of CST. We therefore request an immediate correction to your press release.

Sincerely,

Mark Gardner, Director of Communications, CST

To this BRICUP responded:-

Dear Mr. Gardner,

Further to your complaint about the BRICUP press release dated 15th February, we have now obtained written statements from both the individuals who were ejected by the CST from the Zionist Federation meeting at the Institute of Education on 9th February. Both of these statements support the account given in the BRICUP press release in all important respects, and are substantially at variance with your own version of events as expressed in your e-mail to Sue Blackwell of 15th February [...] Both of the individuals concerned have stated that they endorse the wording of the press release.

Therefore, we regret to inform you that BRICUP will not be retracting any part of the press release which was circulated.

Yours sincerely, etc

The CST replied as follows:-

"CST has received your e-mail about the BRICUP press release concerning 9th February. CST stands by

the position expressed in its previous email.

Mark Gardner”

The PACBI Column

Geographers on the Move

A world-wide campaign demanding the relocation of the regional conference of the International Geographers’ Union (IGU) outside Israel is an inspiring model that PACBI wishes to highlight in this column. Sustained campaigns arguing for the academic boycott of Israel play an important role in raising awareness of the complicity of the Israeli academy in maintaining and justifying colonialism, occupation and apartheid, and also in serving notice that no business as usual can be conducted with Israeli academic institutions.

PACBI issued an open letter to the IGU in October 2009 urging it to relocate the July 2010 conference to another venue in the region, noting that in the event that this demand was not met, we would call for a widespread boycott of the conference. PACBI based itself on the fact that the conference is to be hosted by the Israeli National Commission for Geography, a body working under the auspices of the Israeli Academy of Sciences, as well as the fact that the conference steering committee is composed of representatives of geography departments at Israeli universities. In PACBI’s view, the conference is thus firmly planted in the academic establishment in Israel, and as such subject to boycott. It is well known that geography departments at Israeli institutions provide the academic scaffolding for the policies of ethnic cleansing, exclusion, dispossession, and racial discrimination practiced against Palestinians both within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The geographical knowledge produced by the Israeli academic establishment has been essential to assemble the spatial apparatus of ethnic segregation and destruction set in place by Israel’s civilian and military structures. [1]

In its response, the IGU Executive Committee rejected the PACBI call, appealing to IGU statutes that proscribe discrimination and boycotts, and repeating well-worn arguments about the free

circulation of ideas that boycotts allegedly violate. The PACBI response, which also included a call for the boycott of the conference, noted that the IGU Executive’s point about discrimination based on race, ethnic group affiliation, citizenship, religion, sex or political opinion was not relevant here. Israel was being targeted because it is a racist and discriminatory state, as its practices—embodied in legislation and state policy—demonstrate. [2]

The PACBI appeal spurred a debate in geographical circles in Europe and North America. Inspired by the PACBI call for a boycott of the conference, a petition entitled “We cannot be neutral on a moving train!” was initiated in February 2010 by geographers from around the world, calling upon the IGU Executive Committee “to take immediate steps to relocate the July 12–16, 2010 regional conference outside Israel. Given the circumstances, if the conference goes ahead inside Israel we will not attend or otherwise participate in any manner. We urge you to act promptly and ethically in this matter.” [3]

We urge geographers and other academics around the world to sign this petition [4], which has been endorsed by the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE), the Palestinian Students’ Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI), the University Teachers’ Association in Palestine, Faculty for Palestine in Canada, and the Israeli group BOYCOTT! Supporting the Palestinian BDS call from within! among many academics in their individual capacities.

Notes

PACBI

[1]

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1119&key=igu>

[2] The exchange with the IGU can be read here:

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1126&key=geographical>

[3] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1181>

[4]

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dEw0OUVnekhuNW9SYV93WHN1OXJfUFE6MA>

BDS on the couch? A critical review of the paper by B.B.Silver 'Traumatic Memories and the Need to Punish: The Boycott of Israeli Academics' *Psychoanal. Rev.* (2008) 95:387-416.

Supporters of the academic boycott may be interested to have their perceptions of themselves and their politics challenged by an American psychoanalyst! Catherine Silver writes as a 'left-wing Jewish academic with connections to Israeli universities' who desires 'a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the end of Palestinian suffering and occupation'. Puzzled by the number of her colleagues who support action to isolate Israel, and 'to make sense of a situation that offended my professional identity and political commitment', she set out to explore the 'signifying discourses used to support the proposed boycott' (Silver 2008 p387-8. All the following page references are to this article). Her conclusion is that those advocating boycott are a seriously ill bunch of people.

In her analysis the BDS movement is not a response to conditions in Palestine (so there is no need to talk about racism or oppression at all!). Rather, Western academics, caught up in dysfunctional individual and group dynamics, have latched onto Israel as a pretext 'for the expression of [their] ideas and feelings (hate, despair, disappointment, guilt) ...at the expense of other colleagues with whom they disidentified and who they wanted to discipline and punish' (p387). How does she attempt to demonstrate this?

Silver suggests a 'reframing' of the whole issue. She claims that catastrophic events in the 20th century have resulted in a widespread inability to remain in touch with feelings. 'Rhetorical formulations are substituted for the experience of painful emotions' (p390). Emotion and intellect have been 'de-linked', and the suppression of affect leaves the way open for perversity, cruelty and sterility (p389). Some people, she suggests, are attracted to ideologies that offer 'a free floating toxic mix of aggression and longing that interacts with traumatic memories of frozen hurt and humiliation' (p391). They will be attracted to language that polarises good and bad: indeed, the employment of a moral language 'points to the use of social defences to cope with [a] troubling and unintelligible past'. Such splitting and polarisation 'leaves little room for a language of ambivalence, mutual recognition, identification, and empathy'

(ibid). The manipulation of emotion takes the place of 'social analysis and shared communication' (ibid).

In this way, a movement's manifest purpose may act as a cover. Its latent – true – function is to provide the unifying cement for a group by offering a target for their shared hatred. 'The fight for a "morally just" cause', she writes, can provide 'a powerful magnet for many disenfranchised academics and intellectuals' (p393). These types, she suggests, have embraced the Israel-Palestine conflict because other sources of left-wing solidarity (Vietnam, South Africa) have faded in importance. Silver argues that opposition to Israel 'while having some real substance... loses the legitimacy of its argument by using undifferentiated and emotionally inflammatory rhetorical devices intended to blur the line between Judaism and ionism and between Zionism and specific policies of the Israeli state' (p392). Criticism of 'specific polices' is allowed, but not criticism of Zionism itself. The equation of Zionism and racism is 'unspeakable' (ibid). You can criticize individual acts by the Israeli State, but not the ideology that lies behind them, so concerted opposition to Israeli power is by her definition pathological (p395).

Silver found three modes of thinking and feeling in her researches: paranoid, humanistic and utopian. 'Paranoid thinking provides a defensive armour organised around formulaic thoughts and empty pseudofeelings, a masquerade of sorts that hides deeper, often aggressive emotions' (p399). An example would be 'defining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of past colonial struggles, apartheid, racist regimes and a Judeo-Nazi state...' Paranoia was diagnosed in the words of one of her interviewees: 'I see Israel as a colonial and expansionist state. It makes my blood boil' (ibid).

She concedes that asymmetrical power characterises relations between Israel and the Palestinians, but claims the boycott movement exploits this to demonize Israel, dehumanise the Palestinians, and generally indulge in a 'fascistic state of mind' (ibid). Behind the paranoia is aggression: sadomasochism, 'narcissistic enjoyment in making the (m)Other suffer', murderous wishes, and the desire to punish. Identification with the Palestinians by radical Israelis 'is best understood through the lens of paranoid thinking... It is often easier to empathize with a phantasized Other who is ethnically, religiously, or socially different, as the differences ensure some emotional control and secure boundaries' (pp401-2).

Those supporting the boycott, I think she is saying, are protecting themselves from mental breakdown.

Humanistic thinking gets a better press. It's based on empathy, belief in a shared humanity, where 'both groups are equally identified as victims of history and social destructiveness' (p403). Unfortunately the boycotters' humanism 'did not lead to empathy with Jewish suffering', and was 'divorced from the recognition of the geopolitical dangers such as Arab nationalism, religious fanaticism, or global terrorism'. (Put on hold the suspicion that she has succumbed to paranoid thought processes here!) The 'emotional move towards empathy can open up a poisonous space for the politicisation of suffering', and for grandiose narcissism (p404). With reference, perhaps, to people like Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall, she writes that humanistic boycotters have the potential to 'mislead or even endanger individuals, especially non-Israelis, willing to fight for human rights without understanding the complex geopolitical dynamics of the situation' (p405).

A minority of interviewees showed signs of utopian or visionary thinking, 'framed around a new vision of a bi-national State, one in which the present Jewish state would give way to a single, democratic, nonreligious state' (ibid). Such people, she writes, are not only rejecting government policies 'but ...also challenging directly the existence of a Zionist state as the only way to maintain a Jewish identity' (p406). Her arguments against this are no longer primarily psychological: such a prospect would mean allowing a country with a Jewish minority. 'Social science research has shown the near-impossibility of having nationalistic groups coexisting in harmony' (while no doubt proving that ethnically-exclusive states in territories containing two national groupings work well!). Perhaps short on argument at this point, she attempts to slur the notion of a bi-national solution by linking it with 'a strong rejection of Western – especially American – capitalist values and neoliberalism; it 'is guided by a universalizing ideology and a fantasy of oneness that leaves little room for particularistic group needs'; 'it is positioned in a mythical past/future spurred by a feeling of delusional phantasies of destructive union' (p407).

In her conclusion, Silver widens her remit to consider the implications of the boycott campaign. Gratifying academics wounded psyches, she implies, wouldn't matter so much if there were not 'a darker side to this story' (p408) This is the threat it poses to the

existence of a Jewish state. Its anti-Israel message makes real collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians more difficult, and its arguments 'strangle the hope for a fair two-state solution by delegitimizing the Israeli state as a Jewish state' (ibid). It makes it more difficult to support joint programmes between Israeli and Palestinian universities, and co-operation between the two peoples, and leads to 'increased hopelessness': 'the irony ... is that the suffering and domination of Palestinian people become more hidden, forgotten, or unacknowledged' (p409). Now we know who the Palestinians' real enemies are!

The argument is facile, the methodology superficial. The 'research' involved interviews with eighteen 'left-wing academics', and a review of pro-boycott literature (by Chomsky, Cockburn and St Clair, Tanya Reinhart, Ilan Pape, Avi Schlam, Yehuda Shenhav, Jacqueline Rose and Norman Finkelstein). No passages from any of these writers are analysed, and none of the interviews is described in a way that allows the reader to understand how she has come to her conclusions. Could this approach have delivered anything of substance? Imagine a similar approach to understanding the 'discourse' of the civil rights movement in the USA, of the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, or of any other social movement for that matter. How could such an article appear in a peer-reviewed professional journal, of all places in the journal within a discipline with a fundamentally liberationist ethic? Silver has trained in sociology as well as psychoanalysis: it is hard to believe that this piece would meet the criteria for ethical research in either discipline. It's a travesty that sheds light only on the way that identification with reactionary political forces can corrupt a political culture, and distort scientific enquiry.

Martin Kemp

Note: The author is co-author of a paper on the psychological effects of the occupation - 'To resist is to Exist'. It was published in the journal 'Therapy Today' but then temporarily withdrawn by the publishers following pressure from the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The full story is to be found in BRICUP Newsletter 23 (December 2009)

Five hundred Montreal artists speak out against Israeli apartheid

The following statement was issued on 25 February 2010:-

Today, a broad spectrum of Montreal artists are standing in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom and supporting the growing international campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the Israeli state. Last winter, the Israeli state launched a violent military assault on the Palestinian people of the Gaza Strip, leaving over 1,400 Palestinians dead, including over 300 children. Despite the official end of military operations, the blockade continues to this day, with devastating consequences for Gaza's residents. Over 60 years from the beginning of the ongoing Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced from historic Palestine through Israel's creation, Montreal artists are united in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice.

Montreal artists are now joining this international campaign to concretely protest the Israeli state's ongoing denial of the inalienable rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated in and protected by international law, as well as Israel's ongoing occupation and colonization of the West Bank (including Jerusalem) and Gaza, which also constitutes a violation of international law and multiple United Nations resolutions. Palestinian citizens face an entrenched system of racial discrimination and segregation, resembling the defeated apartheid system in South Africa. A matrix of Israeli-only roads, electrified fences, and over 500 military checkpoints and roadblocks erase freedom of movement for Palestinians. Israel's apartheid wall, which was condemned by the International Court of Justice in 2004, cuts through Palestinian lands, further annexing Palestinian territory and surrounding Palestinian communities with electrified barbed wire fences and a concrete barrier soaring eight meters high. Gaza remains under siege. Israel continues to impose collective punishment on the 1.5 million Palestinians of Gaza, who still face chronic shortages of electricity, fuel, food and basic necessities as the campaign of military violence executed by the apartheid state of Israel endures. UN officials recently observed that the "situation has deteriorated

into a full-fledged emergency because of the cut-off of vital supplies for Palestinians." As a result of Israeli actions, Gaza has become a giant prison.

The global movement against Israeli apartheid, supported by a large majority of Palestinian civil society, is not targeted at individual Israelis but at Israeli institutions that are complicit in maintaining the multi-tiered Israeli system of oppression against the Palestinian people. In fact, the Palestinian civil society BDS call, launched by over 170 Palestinian organizations in 2005, explicitly appeals to conscientious Israelis, urging them to support international efforts to bring about Israel's compliance with international law and fundamental human rights, essential elements for a justice-based peace in the region. The present appeal is also rooted in an active engagement with many progressive Israeli artists and activists who are working on a daily basis for peace and justice while supporting the growing global movement in opposition to Israeli apartheid.

During the first and second intifadas, Israel invaded, ransacked and even closed down cinemas, theatres and cultural centers in the occupied territories. These deliberate attempts to stifle the Palestinian cultural voice have failed and will continue to fail. Around the world, the call for BDS is growing and is strongly rooted in the historic international solidarity movement against apartheid in South Africa. In keeping with Nelson Mandela's declaration that "our freedom [in South Africa] is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians," we believe that international solidarity is critical to liberating Palestinians from Israeli colonialism and apartheid. This struggle will continue until all Palestinians are granted their basic human rights, including the right of return for all Palestinian refugees living in the Diaspora.

Today, a diverse array of artists in Montreal, from filmmakers, musicians and dancers to poets, authors and painters, are joining the international movement against Israeli apartheid. On the streets, in concert halls, in words and in song, we commit to fighting against apartheid and call upon all artists and cultural producers across the country and around the world to adopt a similar position in this global struggle.

A speaking tour by Ghada Karmi of BRICUP and Jeff Halper of ICAHD

Dates: 15 – 20 March 2010

The public meetings are marked in red

15 March - Exeter

6:30pm – Lecture Theatres 1 & 2, Institute of Arabic & Islamic Studies Dept, Streatham Campus, Stocker Road, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4DD.

Local sponsors: Exeter PSC

Contact: Dave Chappell davidchappell@tiscali.co.uk

16 March - Birmingham

1pm – Guild of Students Council Chamber, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT

Contact: palestine@guild.bham.ac.uk

7:30pm – Birmingham Unite Offices, Broad Street, Birmingham

Local sponsors: West Midlands PSC, Birmingham-Ramallah Twinning Initiative, Midlands Palestine Community Association, Friends of Sabeel - UK

Contact: Martin Sullivan pscwm@yahoo.co.uk

17 March - Glasgow

1pm - Boyd Orr Building, Room 507, (Lecture Theatre C)

7:30pm Boyd Orr Bldg, Room 611,

(Lecture Theatre E)

Local sponsors: SPSC

Contact: Poppy Kohner poppykohner@gmail.com

18 March - Edinburgh

1pm - Lecture Theatre 270, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 0YL

Local Sponsor: Edinburgh Students for Justice in Palestine

Contact: Karen karentostee@hotmail.com

7:30 – Augustine Church, 41-43 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

Local Sponsor: SPSC

Contact: Vanessa Fuentes
vanesafuentes@hotmail.com

19 March - Bradford

5:00 with the start at 5:30 - Bradford University Campus, Stanley Bell Lecture Theatre, Richmond Building, Richmond Road, Bradford BD7 1DP.

Local Sponsor: Bradford United 4r Palestine

Contact: events@u4p.co.uk Khaled Al Mudal
Khalnudal@gmail.com

20 March - London

2:30 – 4:30, G2 Main Building, SOAS

Local sponsors: SOAS Palestine Society, Action Palestine – London Universities

Contact: Pat Price-Tomes info@icahduk.org

A drop in the ocean.

On March 2, the British Government launched a programme of Higher Education Scholarships for Palestine (HESPAL) that will see up to 10 academics each year from Palestinian universities complete a year's postgraduate study in the UK. HESPAL is being administered by the British Council (which also administers the much-criticised British Israel Research and Academic Exchange scheme -BIRAX) and is open to seven universities in the West Bank and three in Gaza. Speaking at the launch, British Council director for Palestine Sandra Hamrouni said the scholarships will have a "direct role in developing the quality of higher education in Palestine [...] and developing further opportunities for cross-cultural engagement." UK universities taking part include four from London – Kings College, City, the London School of Economics and the School of Oriental and African Studies – as well as Essex, Exeter,

Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford Brookes, and Sussex. One of the key fundraisers, the Palestine Britain Business Council (PBBC) said that the initiative is a “milestone in the development of higher education in Palestine.” PBBC chair Antoine Mattar said, "It will enhance the skills, expertise and knowledge needed for all disciplines in the socio-economic environment of the communities”.

Notwithstanding its value to individual Palestinians who take advantage of this opportunity, this scheme is likely to be used to promote the illusion of ‘balance’ in the UK’s treatment of Palestinian and Israeli Universities - which certainly is not the case.

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