

**Contents**

- P1 On the Cultural Boycott
- P3 Elvis Costello – after considerable contemplation...
- P3 Open letter [#2] to Elton John
- P4 The PACBI Column  
BDS is the answer to Israeli Brutality
- P6 A new policy briefing on BDS
- P6 News from the UCU
- P7 European Academics protest against the deadly attack on the freedom flotilla
- P8 Financial support for BRICUP
- P8 Follow BRICUP on twitter

\*\*\*\*

**On the Cultural Boycott.**

Spare a thought for Israeli music promoter Shuki Weiss. On June 6 he had to announce that US alternative rock band The Pixies, due to perform in Tel Aviv three days later as part of Weiss' Pic.Nic 2010 festival, had cancelled. Just a few days earlier, he'd been obliged to inform ticket-holders that two of the UK bands headlining the festival, punk band Klaxons, and Damon Albarn's Gorillaz, had withdrawn.

The travails of Weiss -- who started in the music business in Israel with a chain of record stores called, surreally, 'Masada' -- began in January this year, when Carlos Santana, whom Weiss was bringing to

Israel, cancelled his appearance. Weiss has now issued a press statement saying, 'Events have got out of control. Intense pressure is being applied to foreign artists not to come to Israel. This is cultural terrorism'.

And *Jerusalem Post* writer [David Brinn complains](#), 'From the moment a high-profile artist is booked into an Israeli venue, a non-stop barrage of emails, open letters and petitions rains down on them like stinging needles, prodding and irritating their consciences'.

But what if their consciences fail to be prodded? What if the artists agree with Shuki Weiss, that they're being subjected to 'cultural terrorism'? It seems that's how writers Margaret Atwood and Amitav Ghosh felt about the many appeals to them to decline the \$1mn Dan David prize they'd been awarded, or at the very least not go to Tel Aviv to accept it. Their joint speech at Tel Aviv University on May 9 was entirely about their own bravery in facing down what they described as 'bullying': 'Writers are soft targets... They don't have armies, they can't retaliate... The all-or-nothings want to bully us into being their wholly owned puppets. The result of such a decision on our part would be to turn us into sticks with which to beat other artists into submission, and that we refuse to do'.

The idea that two rich and famous writers could be 'bullied' into becoming the 'puppets' of pro-boycott letter-writers is the kind of guff that gives a metropolitan elite a bad name. Their speech nods faintly in the direction of Palestinian rights -- 'We are not against fairness and the creation of a long-overdue Palestinian state' -- but Atwood and Ghosh's hearts aren't really in it. What they're really keen to do is to say that by turning up in Tel Aviv, they're somehow

putting themselves in the long brave line of those many novelists ‘around the world [who] have been shot, imprisoned and exiled for their failure to toe someone else’s line’.

So they’re heroes of cultural freedom. Housed in one of Tel Aviv’s best hotels, transported everywhere in official cars, but in the front line nonetheless, with Nawal Saadawi and Orhan Pamuk and Es’kia Mphahlele and Solzhenitsyn, the prison cell just around the corner...

Extraordinary as it is that household names like Margaret Atwood and Amitav Ghosh could regard themselves as victims because they were lobbied to refuse the Dan David prize -- they, after all, are the ones who get the headlines, the sales, and the awards, while supporters of Palestinian rights are variously damned as anti-semites, hounded by the likes of Alan Dershowitz, and lose their jobs – nonetheless the outright support Ghosh and Atwood got from writers’ organisation PEN (at a greasy-fingered event in New York atmospherically described in a *New Yorker* blog<sup>1</sup>) means those who advocate the boycott need to keep making clear that cultural boycott is a matter of individual conscience, and it’s not in opposition to cultural freedom.

The really significant figure in the development of this issue is Elvis Costello. Israeli journalists are furious with him because when fans first started to lobby him to cancel his June 30 and July 1 gigs, he rang up several journalists to talk to them about Israel, and told them that he opposed cultural boycotts. But what makes Twickenham boy Declan MacManus, aka Elvis Costello, so admirable -- a real hero of individual conscience and cultural freedom -- is that he thought about things and *he changed his mind*. And he was brave enough to issue a statement to explain his thinking. See his statement on page 3 or [read it online](#).

---

PEN American Center president Anthony Appiah’s speech is cited in the [Ghosh/Atwood speech](#)

Costello said that after what he called ‘considerable contemplation’, he had understood the symbolic importance of performing in Israel: ‘There are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act that resonates more than anything that might be sung and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent’.<sup>2</sup>

Ghosh and Atwood persuaded themselves that ‘the innocent’ were – extraordinarily enough – themselves. Elvis Costello’s thoughtful and modest statement makes clear he’d reached a different conclusion about who ‘the innocent’ are: ‘It has been necessary to dial out the falsehoods of propaganda, the double game and hysterical language of politics, the vanity and self-righteousness of public communiqués from cranks in order to eventually sift through my own conflicted thoughts... It is a matter of instinct and conscience’. And instinct and conscience led him to cancel. No, he told the same Israeli journalists who rang him up after he made his statement public, he hadn’t been subjected to ‘coercion’ – no, he hadn’t been ‘bullied’ – he wasn’t a victim of what music promoter Shuki Weiss calls ‘cultural terrorism’.

In a situation where almost everybody wants to be a victim – Weiss says ‘these decisions turn thousands of Israeli music lovers into victims...in the name of suffering they have neither caused nor wish for’ – and where Israeli self-interest trumps everything else – Weiss says musicians should act ‘in the name of pluralism, camaraderie and mutual respect’ without indicating how these are to be extended to the Palestinians – Costello’s voice of conscience was, of course, painful for many to hear.

But may it speak to all artists who are considering an invitation to Israel. Costello said that if the ‘intimidation, humiliation or much worse visited on Palestinian civilians in the name of national security’, on the one hand, and the effects of ‘so many despicable acts of violence perpetrated in the name of liberation’, on the other, are ‘subjects too grave and complex to be addressed in a concert’, then ‘it is quite

---

<sup>2</sup> [The statement should be read in its entirety](#)

impossible to simply look the other way'. May all artists hear him.

And may Shuki Weiss continue to have a very bad year.

BRICUP

\*\*\*\*

### **Elvis Costello – After Considerable Contemplation...**

It is after considerable contemplation that I have lately arrived at the decision that I must withdraw from the two performances scheduled in Israel on the 30th of June and the 1st of July.

One lives in hope that music is more than mere noise, filling up idle time, whether intending to elate or lament. Then there are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act that resonates more than anything that might be sung and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent.

I must believe that the audience for the coming concerts would have contained many people who question the policies of their government on settlement and deplore conditions that visit intimidation, humiliation or much worse on Palestinian civilians in the name of national security. I am also keenly aware of the sensitivity of these themes in the wake of so many despicable acts of violence perpetrated in the name of liberation.

Some will regard all of this an unknowable without personal experience but if these subjects are actually too grave and complex to be addressed in a concert, then it is also quite impossible to simply look the other way. I offer my sincere apologies for any disappointment to the advance ticket holders as well as to the organizers. My thanks also go to the members of the Israeli media with whom I had most rewarding and illuminating conversations. They may regard these exchanges as a waste of their time but they were of great value and help to me in gaining an appreciation of the cultural scene.

I hope it is possible to understand that I am not taking this decision lightly or so I may stand beneath any banner, nor is it one in which I imagine myself to possess any unique or eternal truth. It is a matter of instinct and conscience. It has been necessary to dial out the falsehoods of propaganda, the double game and hysterical language of politics, the vanity and self-righteousness of public communiqués from cranks in order to eventually sift through my own conflicted thoughts.

I have come to the following conclusions.

One must at least consider any rational argument that comes before the appeal of more desperate means.

Sometimes a silence in music is better than adding to the static and so an end to it.

I cannot imagine receiving another invitation to perform in Israel, which is a matter of regret but I can imagine a better time when I would not be writing this.

With the hope for peace and understanding.

Elvis Costello

Source: Yellow Press General News 15/05/2010

\*\*\*\*

### **Open letter [#2] to Elton John**

It's funny how people can be close friends, and yet react so differently to things. You're apparently close friends with Elvis Costello – so close you hosted his wedding to Diana Krall at your 'castle' in Windsor. After just three weeks of people appealing to Elvis Costello not to perform in Israel, he's decided not to go. See his thoughtful statement above.

But months down the line from our first letter to you, with hundreds, if not thousands, of your fans appealing to you to cancel your gig in Tel Aviv (including Canadian film-maker John Greyson at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HSCIZbhB5g>), you remain silent. Of course you have every right to do so. But we're wondering what this silence means.

Does it mean you think the dirty business of Israeli colonialism and ethnic cleansing has nothing to do with you? That you can play for the officers and conscripts and secret service people who will make up much of your audience in Tel Aviv without giving them the stamp of your approval? You will offer them a few hours' respite from administering beatings and torture and land-theft and house demolition and sieges and destroying wells and denying sick people access to hospital – and the simple fact of your presence will tell them that all this cruel business, which they conduct daily, is okay with you.

Or does your silence mean you think it's more important to stand in solidarity with gays in Israel than with the Palestinians? But what about Palestinian gays? Israel has a record of sending those who've sought refuge in Israel back to the Occupied Territories. So much for Israel being 'gay-friendly'. Palestinian gay rights activist Haneen Maikey (an Israeli citizen) says, 'It's really pathetic that the Israeli state has nothing besides gay rights to promote its liberal image. Ridiculous, and in a sense hilarious, because there are no gay rights in Israel'. To the Israeli state she says, 'Stop speaking in my name. If you want to do me a favour, stop bombing my friends, end your occupation, and leave me to rebuild my community'. Sir Elton! – maybe you've decided, in your generous way, that you'll donate the proceeds of your Tel Aviv concert to the Global Fund, or another AIDS charity (and of course good deeds cannot be spoken about, so you don't announce it). But our appeal to you isn't about money. It's about the meaning of actions. Elvis Costello understood exactly that 'simply having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act...and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent'.

To his great credit, he decided that 'a silence in music is sometimes better than adding to the static'. We are asking to you to abandon the silence of your apparent indifference to our appeal, and that of thousands of your fans, and join Elvis Costello in his musical silence. Please don't play in Israel.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth

Mike Cushman

Professor Steven Rose

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

For BRICUP on 19 May, 2010

\*\*\*\*

### **The PACBI Column**

## **BDS is the Answer to Israeli Brutality**

Once again, Israeli acts of brutality are being met with resounding calls around the world for the isolation of Israel and the imposition of punitive measures against it until it respects international law and recognizes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The unprecedented act of Israeli aggression on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in international waters in the early hours of May 31<sup>st</sup> and the wanton killing and injury of dozens of international aid workers and solidarity activists determined to break the siege on Gaza has been met with widespread calls for the imposition of boycotts and sanctions on Israel to end its criminal impunity.

The latest Israeli massacre of civilians from different countries on board ships in international waters, following on the heels of the large-scale deadly assault on the Gaza Strip in the winter of 2008-2009, has strengthened the resolve of world citizens in solidarity with the Palestinian people. A new threshold of intolerance for Israeli brutality and suppression of Palestinian rights has been reached, as witnessed in the accelerating spread of effective BDS campaigns against Israel in the economic, legal, political, cultural and academic fields.

The UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Richard Falk, expressed this emerging consensus by stating that the "worldwide campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel is now a moral and political imperative, and needs to be supported and strengthened everywhere." [1]

The overwhelming support for BDS against Israel at the UCU Congress on May 30, 2010 is such an indicator of the consolidation of world opinion in favour of BDS. The UCU made history in the international trade union movement in the West by voting with an *overwhelming* majority to "sever all relations with the Histadrut, and to urge other trade unions and bodies to do likewise." The Histadrut's long standing partnership in the Israeli state's colonization, ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination against the Palestinian people, particularly its statement on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 supporting Israel's war crimes in the occupied and besieged Gaza strip, has been condemned by a number of trade unions, around the world. The Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) has recently decided to review its relations with the Histadrut with a view to severing them.

On a practical level, PACBI appreciates the UCU's decision "to seek in conjunction with other trade unions, nationally and internationally, to establish an annual international conference on BDS, a trade union sponsored BDS website and a research centre on commercial, cultural and academic complicity with Israeli breaches of international law." The UCU's decision to campaign actively against the EU-Israel Association Agreement in coordination with other trade unions and solidarity movements is another milestone that responds to a central appeal of the Palestinian civil society BDS campaign. We also appreciate the UCU's decision to work with other bodies in supporting the membership of the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE) in Education International. PACBI salutes BRICUP and its allies who have consistently and tirelessly promoted BDS at UCU Congress and have succeeded with vision and a keen sense of tactics to put forth nuanced and well argued motions in support of the logic of BDS.

Through these decisions, the UCU joins other UK and international unions and public bodies in endorsing and implementing BDS. Most recently, the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) reaffirmed in its annual meetings its BDS policy. Days earlier, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) had also

reiterated its own overwhelming support for BDS. The British TUC has also launched with the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) an important drive aimed at implementing a wide boycott of Israeli colonies' products and services, as a first step towards a more comprehensive application of BDS, as called for in the TUC's last congress.

Creative and effective realization of BDS policies has become a theme among trade unions and TU federations from South Africa's COSATU to the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). In 2009, Hampshire College in the US became the first in the West to divest from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. Many other universities in North America are witnessing similar divestment campaigns at various stages of development. Norway and Sweden have recently divested their respective pension funds of all stock in Elbit Systems, a leading Israeli military manufacturer implicated in violations of international law. Besides the UK, campaigns supporting PACBI's Call for an academic and cultural boycott of Israel have sprung up in the US, Spain, France, Italy, India, Australia, Pakistan, South Africa, among other countries. Leading cultural figures of the calibre of Elvis Costello, Gil Scott-Heron and Carlos Santana have heeded the call to cancel performances in Israel in protest over its persistent suppression of Palestinian rights. Some of the largest supermarket chains in Italy have decided to stop carrying Israeli colonies' products.

PACBI especially welcomes the UCU Congress resolution to "commence the investigatory process associated with the imposition of a boycott of Ariel College," a college-colony built on occupied Palestinian territory, as a first step in implementing the academic boycott against the Israeli academy. It is worth noting that the Spanish Government had excluded an Israeli academic team from Ariel College from a sustainable architecture competition last year for the same reasons. All Israeli universities are deeply linked to the military-security establishment, playing indispensable -- direct and indirect -- roles in perpetuating Israel's decades-old violations of international law and fundamental Palestinian rights. No Israeli university or academic union has ever taken

a public position against the occupation, let alone against Israel's system of apartheid or the denial of Palestinian refugee rights. Israeli universities are profoundly complicit in developing weapons systems and military doctrines deployed in Israel's recent war crimes in Gaza [2]; justifying the ongoing colonization of Palestinian land and gradual ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians [3]; providing moral justification for extra-judicial killings and indiscriminate attacks against civilians [4]; systematically discriminating against "non-Jewish" students in admissions, dormitory room eligibility, financial aid, etc.; and many other implicit and explicit violations of human rights and international law. [5]

Finally, we salute the UCU membership for its effective and consistent solidarity in pushing BDS forward and for its politically and morally sound contribution to the struggle to end oppression and uphold universal human rights for all.

**PACBI**

[1] <http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/israeli-leaders-should-be-brought-to-justice-un-rights-expert-1.635049>

[2] See, for example, the following incriminating evidence against Tel Aviv University's partnership with the Israeli army and weapons industries: <http://www.electronicintifada.net/downloads/pdf/090708-soas-palestine-society.pdf>

[3] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=63>

[4] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1062127.html> and Reuven Pedatzur, The Israeli Army House Philosopher, *Haaretz*, 24 February 2004.

[5] [http://www.alternativenews.org/images/stories/downloads/Economy\\_of\\_the\\_occupation\\_23-24.pdf](http://www.alternativenews.org/images/stories/downloads/Economy_of_the_occupation_23-24.pdf)

\*\*\*\*

## A new policy briefing on BDS

The Palestinian BDS National Committee has issued a new policy briefing paper that is entitled **BDS: A Global Movement for Freedom and Justice**. The author, Omar Barghouti, discusses the development of the BDS concept, its philosophical base in fundamental human rights and its application in practice. The paper is published by the [Palestinian policy network al-shabaka](#) and is [available on the BRICUP website](#).

\*\*\*\*

## News from the University and College Union (UCU)

The University and College Union, representing approximately 120,000 teaching and related staff in colleges and universities in the UK, has passed new policies supporting boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The debate took place on Sunday 30th May at the union's Congress in Manchester.

Motion 30, proposed by the National Executive Committee, condemned "the failure of the international community to confront the Israeli government over the humanitarian disaster it is continuing to perpetrate in Gaza and the continued development of illegal settlements in the West Bank", voted to work more closely with its Palestinian sister trade union (PFUUPE), and committed the union to working with bodies including Scottish TUC, Amnesty International and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) to support the TUC's 2009 Congress decisions. The TUC had voted to end arms sales to Israel, seek an EU ban on settlement goods and support suspension of the the EU-Israel Association Agreement which provides preferential trade facilities to Israel.

More strongly worded motions were to come. Motion 31, from the University of Brighton Grand Parade branch, agreed to establish an annual international conference on BDS, and "to sever all relations with Histadrut, and to urge other trade unions and bodies to do likewise" as well as campaigning actively against the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Tom Hickey, proposing the motion, pointed out that the Histadrut had supported the Israeli assault on civilians in Gaza in January 2009, and did not deserve the name of a trade union organisation. An amendment to this motion, seeking instead to “form a committee which represents all views within UCU to review relations with the Histadrut” and report back in a year’s time, was resoundingly defeated.

Motion 32 committed UCU to commencing the investigatory process associated with the imposition of a boycott of Ariel College. This is an institution in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, also known as the “College of Judea and Samaria”, which has long drawn the wrath of human rights campaigners because such settlements are illegal under international law.

Motion 33 from Oxford University branch criticising a South African trade union official who had been invited by UCU to a BDS conference last year, was defeated. Bongani Masuku, the International Secretary of COSATU, had been accused of making anti-semitic remarks at a rally at the University of the Witwatersrand in March 2009. Mike Cushman, a BRICUP member at the London School of Economics, told UCU Congress that Masuku had vigorously denied all such allegations and was fighting them in the courts and through the appeals process of the South African Human Rights Commission. Cushman said that the real racists were those who had tried to provoke Masuku with insults about “the monkeys in Cosatu” dying of AIDS.

BRICUP welcomes the UCU decisions and will continue to campaign within trade unions in the UK for boycott, sanctions and divestment against Israel until the occupation is ended and Palestinian people have justice.

During Congress Israeli commandos attacked the Mavi Marmara and murdered activists carrying aid to Gaza. Many members of Congress joined the protest demonstration in Manchester and Mike Cushman addressed the rally and called for an intensified campaign of BDS. BRICUP members at Congress prepared an emergency motion condemning the attacks. The motion, in particular, committed the

Union to opposing Conservative proposals to water down universal jurisdiction so that Netanyahu and other criminals cannot walk on Britain’s streets with impunity. [More details on why universal jurisdiction is important.](#)

We urge all BRICUP members to write to their MPs to urge them to oppose limiting universal jurisdiction and to ask them to sign Early Day Motion 108 on this issue.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **European Academics protest against the deadly attack on the freedom flotilla.**

The following letter has been sent to the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Busek, the President of the European Commission, Jose Barroso, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and officers of the three National Governments..

### **ONCE AGAIN INTERNATIONAL LAW HAS BEEN VIOLATED**

We, concerned academics from three European countries, express our dismay and disgust at Israel’s commando assault in the Mediterranean. Firing live ammunition at activists on the boats *en route* to Gaza, constitutes an act of piracy in international waters. Israeli allegations notwithstanding, the boats, whose contents had been verified by the Turkish authorities before departure, were not carrying weapons; they were transporting humanitarian aid, including medicine, medical supplies, and construction materials which are being denied to the Gaza population by the Israeli blockade of Gaza .

Many people have been killed and wounded in the assault – as we write there is no way of knowing the accurate figures. A news blackout has been imposed on the Israeli and international press. It is impossible to obtain access to the survivors of the assault. As was the case during the operation Cast Lead, Israel fears the media and has sidelined journalists. This deadly aggression, aimed at hundreds of non-violent activists who came from around the world to condemn and defeat the three-year-old blockade of Gaza, makes even more apparent the Israeli leadership's total disdain for the rules of international law.

We write as organisations representing academics in our countries opposed to Israel's violations of both international law and human rights. The latest massacre by the Israeli armed forces only underlines the need for academics of conscience everywhere to show solidarity with their besieged colleagues in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by boycotting Israeli academic institutions - whose complicity with occupation, settlement, and siege has been well documented. This is part of the world-wide policy of Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions called for by Palestinian civil society.

The international community must now recognise that its consistent acquiescence in, if not open or implicit support for, Israeli policy, without consideration for the rules of law is a key factor in producing this ongoing tragedy.

The undersigned demand an independent international investigation of the events that took place on May 31<sup>st</sup>. We call on the European Union, our governments and international agencies to

- recall their ambassadors from Israel as an indication of the gravity of Israel's outrageous act;
- impose sanctions against Israel;
- immediately suspend the EU-Israel cooperative agreements

and to continue these pressures for as long as Israel continues to violate international law, specifically by its continued occupation and illegal settlement building programme, and by transforming the Gaza Strip into an open-air prison through a blockade that places its population in grave danger

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

on behalf of

*Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine*

*British Committee for the Universities of Palestine*

*Comissió Universitària Catalana per Palestina*

## **Financial support for BRICUP**

BRICUP needs your financial support.

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

Please do consider making a donation .

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

by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at

Sort Code 08-92-99

Account Number 65156591

IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91

BIC = CPBK GB22

Like all organisations, while we welcome one-off donations, we can plan our work much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order.

You can [download a standing order form](#).

More details can be obtained from [treasurer@bricup.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@bricup.org.uk)

\*\*\*\*

## **Follow BRICUP on twitter**

[twitter.com/bricup](https://twitter.com/bricup)

\*\*\*\*

**BRICUP is the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine.** We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome. Email them to: [newsletter@bricup.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.uk)