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**The theatre boycott in Ariel**

Fifty-three Israeli theatre professionals, including performers, playwrights and directors, have signed a petition stating they will not perform in Ariel or any other West Bank settlement and called on Israeli theatre managers to limit their activity to within the Green Line. The Israeli Culture and Sport Minister Limor Livnat said that the actors' protest was a serious matter that was causing a rift in Israeli society. She said "Culture is a bridge in society, and political disputes should be left outside cultural life and art."

But this bogus argument was precisely countered in the open letter from 'Wall of Silence', who contributed the following to the ongoing discussion of the cultural boycott of Israel.

"Political change never takes place as the consequence of a single isolated factor. Apartheid fell in South Africa because of the combined effect of the international boycott, the dis-investment and sanctions campaign and resistance from black South Africans themselves – most significantly the wave of strikes they instigated in the 1980's. Strikes are not an option for Palestinians – the majority of whom are completely excluded from the Israeli economy. Therefore the actions taken by those of us outside Israel are all the more critical. Many Israeli music fans will be among the most progressive sections of Israeli society. But gigs do not take place in a political vacuum, and no matter how much we talk about peace from a stage in Tel Aviv, our presence means business

as usual in a city carefully branded as a libertarian party city. This image matters to Israel because it helps to distract the world from the immeasurable suffering it has created just 40 miles down the road in Gaza. We cannot be complicit in this crime. It is not often that a cultural boycott is both morally right and has the chance to be politically effective. This is one such occasion. (Lowkey Boikutt, 'Wall Of Silence')

Yet, in the case of the actors, the Israeli Culture and Sport Minister called for the performances to be carried out as scheduled "as each citizen has the right to consume culture anywhere he chooses." *[from which Palestinians are excluded of course]* Some of the affected theatres have issued a collective response stating that they will perform anywhere there are Israeli citizens who are lovers of Israeli theatre, including the new culture centre in Ariel. One of the signatories said "I grew up on the myth that culture could get things moving, and I'm sorry that it turned out that that's not how things are." The Yesha Council of settlements called upon the theater managements to take strong counteraction threatening that "Our response to the letter signed by the army evaders and anti-Zionist left-wing activists will be very harsh."

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**The PACBI Column,**

**Boycotting Ariel:**

**Missing the Forest for the Trees**

Provoked by the recent announcement of the inauguration of a cultural center in Ariel, the fourth largest Jewish colony in the occupied Palestinian territory, 150 prominent Israeli academics, writers, and cultural figures have declared that they "will not take part in any kind of cultural activity beyond the Green Line, take part in discussions and seminars, or lecture in any kind of academic setting in these settlements" [\[1\]](#). A few protestors went as far as reiterating the fact that all Israeli colonies built on occupied Palestinian land are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and thus constitute a war crime.

This position by tens of Israeli academics and artists has generated a great deal of controversy within the Israeli public sphere, attracting rebuke from across the political spectrum and especially from the academic and cultural establishment. All major theaters were quick to declare their refusal to boycott Ariel under the pretence of serving "all Israelis;" university administrations echoed this position or resorted to silence, continuing business as usual with Ariel and other settlements. The terms of the discourse, however, raise a number of issues for supporters of Palestinian rights. While we welcome acts of protest against any manifestation of Israel's regime of colonialism and apartheid, we believe that these acts must be both morally consistent and anchored in international law and universal human rights.

First, we believe that the exclusive focus on settlement institutions ignores and obscures the complicity of *all* Israeli academic and cultural institutions in upholding the system of colonial control and apartheid under which Palestinians suffer. PACBI believes there is firm evidence of the collusion of the Israeli academic and cultural establishment with the major oppressive organs of the Israeli state. Focusing solely on obviously complicit institutions, such as cultural centers in a West Bank colony, serves to shield mainstream Israeli institutions from opprobrium or, ultimately, from the growing global boycott movement that consistently targets all complicit institutions.

Furthermore, the cherry-picking approach behind targeting a notorious colonial settlement in the heart of the occupied West Bank diverts attention from other institutions built on occupied land. Supporters of this peculiarly selective boycott must be asked: Is lecturing or performing at the Hebrew University, whose Mount Scopus campus sits on occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem, acceptable?

If opposition to Israel's military occupation is driving this movement, then why has the deplorable stifling of cultural institutions in occupied Jerusalem, for example, been ignored? In 2009, the Arab League with support from UNESCO declared Jerusalem the

Arab Cultural Capital for that year. Celebrations that were to be held across the city throughout the year highlighting the historical and cultural role of Jerusalem in Palestinian society and beyond were shut down and at times physically attacked by Israeli security forces in their ongoing attempt to stifle expressions of Palestinian identity in the occupied city. In scenes worthy of Kafka's novels, organized activities throughout East Jerusalem were summarily cancelled as Palestinian artists, writers and cultural figures resorted to underground techniques to celebrate their city's cultural and popular heritage [2].

If the artists' and intellectuals' role as voices of moral reason is behind this most recent call to boycott Ariel, where were these voices when academic and cultural institutions were wantonly destroyed in Israel's war of aggression on Gaza in 2008-2009?

It has not gone without notice in Israel that BDS is gaining momentum internationally as an effective means of resisting Israeli colonial oppression. Given this context, one may be excused to assert that these recent efforts to narrow the focus of the boycott against Israel may be deliberately missing the forest for the trees.. It is important to reiterate the morally-consistent rationale and principles of the Palestinian boycott campaign against Israel.

The BDS movement derives its principles from both the demands of the Palestinian BDS Call, signed by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations in July 2005 [3], and, in the academic and cultural fields, from the Palestinian Call for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, issued a year earlier in July 2004 [4]. Together, the BDS and PACBI Calls represent the most authoritative and widely supported strategic statements to have emerged from Palestine in decades; all political factions, labor, student and women organizations, and refugee groups across the Arab world have supported and endorsed these calls. Both calls underline the prevailing Palestinian belief that the most effective form of international solidarity with the Palestinian people is direct action and persistent pressure aimed at bringing an end to Israel's colonial and apartheid regime, just as the apartheid

regime in South Africa was abolished, by isolating Israel internationally through boycotts and sanctions, forcing it to comply with international law and respect Palestinian rights.

Those who claim to care about the coherent application of international law and the primacy of human rights are urged to recognize the "forest" of academic and cultural complicity beyond the "trees" of Ariel and act accordingly and consistently.

PACBI

[1] <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/150-academics-artists-back-actors-boycott-of-settlement-arts-center-1.311149>

[2] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8338316.stm>

[3] <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52>

[4] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>

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## **The Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel**

The Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) is a group of active students from the Gaza strip. It was launched, with the help of Dr. Haidar Eid, shortly after the Gaza Massacre of 2008-2009 and now represents more than 10 universities. The campaign is committed to non-violent resistance and its [mission statement](#) was signed and endorsed by almost all student blocs in Gaza Universities:- see

PSCABI is inspired by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) and fully indorses both the PACBI statement of 2004 and the BDS call issued by more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations in July 2005.

PSCABI's main goals are to boycott Israeli academic institutions; to put pressure on University administrations to divest from companies benefiting from the Israeli occupation; to promote student union condemnation of Israeli practices against Palestinians

as violations of international law and human rights; to help the BDS movement to get more endorsements all around the globe. PSCABI has a representative in the UK, Natalie Abushakra, who is studying at SOAS; her email address is: [nfa160@gmail.com](mailto:nfa160@gmail.com)

These details were provided by Mohammed Abuabdou, co-founder of the campaign. He has been awarded a humanitarian scholarship at Goldsmiths, University of London. where he will study for an MA in Cultural Studies. He should be here in October. His colleague Ayah Abubasheer, has a scholarship at LSE, University of London to study for an MA in Global Politics.

Readers may be interested to see some of the documents issued by the PSCABI group. Two samples follow.

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### **An open letter from PSCABI to Chick Corea: don't turn your back on Gaza**

Dear Mr. Corea,

We are a group of students from Gaza, and our only fault is being Palestinians. For that, Mr. Corea, we are imprisoned with our families and loved ones in what major Human Rights Organizations call the largest open air prison in modern history. The state you are planning to entertain, committed a process of ethnic cleansing against the indigenous people in 1948. And now it is engaged in, what the Israeli academic Ilan Pappé calls, "slow motion genocide" against the 1.5 million population of Gaza.

We are writing to you from under the hermetic siege imposed on us. We are punished just because we belong to this land and hold its identity. Israel committed, what Prof. Richard Goldstone called "war crimes and crimes against humanity," knowing very well that it would be immune from accountability. You must be aware that all aspects of our life are affected by the siege, which in itself is a gross violation of international humanitarian law.

We love music. But, we are deprived from it. The sound of Israeli-US made F16s, F15s, F35s, Surveillance planes, White Phosphorous bombs, naval gunboats and Merkava tanks do not allow us to listen to music any more. In Gaza, we are forbidden from experiencing the meaning of humanity, from being in love and expressing it in art, dance, music, and all its magnificent other forms that we long to live and experience.

Dear Mr. Corea, we are deafened by the sounds of crying children around us. Some have lost their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers in the last genocidal war the Apartheid state of Israel launched against Palestinians in Gaza, and others have lost a part of their bodies. But, we can assure you that all of them have lost something they never had... a childhood!

Dear Mr. Corea, if you decide to play in Israel, please remember us, remember the screaming, crying children of Palestine, the voices of the 434 children killed during the 22-day attacks that sometimes linger in the silence of our dark nights. Remember those who cannot read, study and attend school and university as a result of Israel's medieval siege. Remember those farmers who are shot by trigger-happy Israeli soldiers as they harvest their crops on their land. Do you know that most of the people in your audience will have served or are serving in the Israeli army?

Mr. Corea, we call upon your free soul that has been adding magnificent art for decades into this disenchanted world of ours, to join those courageous people of conscience like Elvis Costello, Gil Scott-Heron, the Pixies, Carlos Santana and Devendra Banhart in boycotting Israel until it complies with international law, and until justice and accountability are reached just as the global BDS movement made way for the collapse of apartheid in South Africa.

Anti-Apartheid heroes Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Ronnie Kasrils have all described Israel's control and 60 year collective punishment of the Palestinians as: Apartheid - a brutal, colonial system based on racial discrimination. We ask you now to stand on the right side of history, to respond to our call from the Gaza ghetto to not turn your back on us.

Mr. Corea, if you will play in Israel, then we will be a short distance away from where you are playing.

Perhaps the sound of the deadly silent, cautious nights of ours will send your tunes over to besieged Gaza. But, your beautiful tunes will break our wrenching hearts and not sway our souls.

Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel PSCABI, 9th August 2010

*Endorsed by the University Teachers' Association in Palestine,*

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### **Gaza students (PSCABI) condemn Eilat Funjoya Student Festival**

A month ago, various Israeli media agencies announced the launching of the Funjoya Student Festival in Eilat. The Tourism Ministry of Apartheid Israel has invested around one million dollars in this project.

Students from Western Europe and the US are expected to participate in this event whose organizers are cooperating with international student bodies such as Project Birthright and the World Union of Jewish Students which in their turn are promoting it on campuses internationally.

It comes as no surprise to us, imprisoned students in Gaza, that Israel is desperately trying to whitewash its crimes in such a manner. After bombing our homes, factories, hospitals, schools and universities and taking the lives of over 1434 individuals, including more than 413 Palestinian children, in 2009 and then massacring nine peace activists aboard the humanitarian Mavi Marmara in 2010, Israel is most definitely busying itself in beautifying its image on the international scene in a Hasbara campaign. This time it targets students.

From under a most brutal siege humanity has witnessed during this modern age, we urge all students around the globe to boycott this festival.

We ask: will it speak about the cultural confiscation, the occupation of Palestinian history, the system of racial discrimination, home demolition, settlement expansion, settler colonialism and land expropriation? Will it tell of how apartheid Israel slices the West Bank into Bantustans separated by more than 600 checkpoints and a monstrous Apartheid Separation Wall preventing Palestinians from access to local hospitals, schools and universities, not to mention their families and relatives?

Like the historical moment that Sharpeville 1960 created when the White police force shot and killed 69 Black peaceful demonstrators, Gaza 2009 and the killing of more than 434 Palestinian children has created a spark worldwide. During the attacks of 2009, more than 34 campus occupations took place in Britain and other countries. In the US, student senate of Hampshire College became the first student union in America to divest from some companies having ties with Israel, followed by University of Michigan, Dearborn and later UC, Berkley.

Students from around the world should unite against war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by apartheid Israel until it complies with international law.

We, therefore, appeal to students all over the world to join us in our struggle for freedom, justice and equality. We extend our hands to them to come and visit the Gaza Strip instead and show us true student to student solidarity.

As South African archbishop Desmond Tutu once said "if you choose to be neutral in situations of injustice, then you have chosen the side of the oppressor." And we urge you herein: don't choose the wrong side of history.

Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel. (PSCABI) August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010

*Endorsed by the University Teachers' Association in Palestine*

## ‘Faithless’ joins the boycott

*[‘All Races All Colours All Creeds Got The Same Needs’ wrote Maxi Jazz...](#) “ These are just some of the lyrics I perform every night with my friends known as Faithless. And this short note is for all fans and family of the band in Israel. It's fair to say that for 14 years we've been promoting goodwill, trust and harmony all around the world in our own small (but very loud!) way. Ok. We've been asked to do some shows this summer in your country and, with the heaviest of hearts, I have regretfully declined the invitation. While human beings are being wilfully denied not just their rights but their NEEDS for their children and grandparents and themselves, I feel deeply that I should not be sending even tacit signals that this is either 'normal' or 'ok'. It's neither and I cannot support it. It grieves me that it has come to this and I pray everyday for human beings to begin caring for each other, firm in the wisdom that we are all we have.*

*Dave Randall, Guitarist in ‘Faithless’ [writing in the Socialist Worker](#) said that the decision was taken after long discussions between band members and management. Some argued that we should go and donate money to progressive campaigns in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. But a majority of band members feel that now is the time to join the growing movement for a cultural boycott.*

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## The assault on Israeli academic freedom- and liberal values

*The August 26, 2010 edition of the Chronicle of Higher Education, contains a detailed analysis by Neve Gordon of what he calls “the protofascist logic that is being deployed to undermine the pillars of academic freedom in Israel”. When, on May 31, he joined some 50 students and faculty members outside Ben-Gurion University to demonstrate against the Israeli military assault on the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid toward Gaza, the response, one day later, was a few hundred students marching toward the social-sciences building, waving Israeli flags. There shouted demands for Professor Gordon’s resignation.*

Gordon cites several examples of the oppressive tactics being used. He describes a Facebook the object of which is to have him sacked: over 2,000 people have signed up. A report published by the Institute for Zionist Strategies has analyzed course syllabi in Israeli sociology departments and accused professors of a "post-Zionist" bias. The report was sent to the Israel Council for Higher Education, through which it was circulated to all University presidents. Another right-wing organization, Im Tirtzu (If You Will It), told the president of Ben Gurion University, Rivka Carmi, that it would persuade donors to place funds in escrow unless the University took steps "to put an end to the anti-Zionist " bias in its politics and government department. The Minister of Education made only a statement to the effect that any move aimed at harming donations to Universities must be stopped.

The assault on Israeli academe is, Gordon argues, just part of a much wider offensive against liberal values and favouring an extreme-right political agenda. Americans like Alan M. Dershowitz, are joining the battle, calling for the resignation of professors who support the Palestinian call for BDS against Israeli companies until the country abides by international human-rights law. Rachel Giora and Anat Matar, both tenured professors at Tel Aviv University have been identified by name. Israeli universities receive about 90 percent of their budget from public funds and some of these bodies want to make financial support conditional on the dissemination of nationalist thought and the suppression of "subversive ideas." The Rev. John C. Hagee, the leader of Christians United for Israel, is reported to have provided Im Tirtzu with at least \$100,000. Christians United believes that the Second Coming is dependent on the gathering of all Jews in Israel, and as a step towards this condition, supports an attack on Iran.

Gordon argues that there is now a growing sense among faculty members that a ‘thought police’ has already been formed, and that many of its officers are actually members of the academic community. Students are turning themselves into spies and the syllabi are collected, all of which sends a chilling message to faculty members across Israel. Gordon describes one case in which a young academic was not

hired due to his membership in Courage to Refuse, the organization of reserve soldiers who refuse to do military duty in the West Bank. In the internet, Google and Facebook age, the thought police can easily collect information to disqualify a candidate based on petitions signed and even the online "friends" one has. Israeli graduate students are following such developments, and for them the message is clear.

Gordon concludes, "While in politics nothing is predetermined, Israel is heading down a slippery slope. Israeli academe is now an arena where some of the most fundamental struggles of a society are being played out. The problem is that instead of struggling over basic human rights, we are now struggling over the right to struggle"

Neve Gordon is a professor of politics and the author of *Israel's Occupation* (University of California Press, 2008).

Material from :-

[http://chronicle.com/article/An-Assault-on-Israel-Academic/124158/?sid=at&utm\\_source=at&utm\\_medium=en](http://chronicle.com/article/An-Assault-on-Israel-Academic/124158/?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en)

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## Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

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

Please do consider making a donation .

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

by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at

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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)

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