

BRICUP Newsletter 36

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BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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An open letter from BRICUP to German bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff

We understand you're scheduled to give five concerts in Israel in February 2011, where you will sing Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children). We're struggling to understand why this might seem to you an appropriate thing to do.

Possibly you are already thinking by what right a group of British academics questions a professional commitment you have made – but we hope you will hear us out.

We are looking at a report about two-year-old Nasma Abu Lasheen, who died in October 2010. Nasma had the misfortune to be born Palestinian in the Gaza Strip, under blockade by the Israeli government. In her very short life she lived through the terror of Operation Cast Lead, the three-week assault on the trapped population of Gaza that Israel unleashed in December 2008-January 2009.

But this is not what killed Nasma. Nor did she die because in the devastated Strip, nine-tenths of the

water people drink is contaminated and the sea is full of untreated sewage (the Israelis bombed water and sewage systems and haven't allowed in reconstruction materials).

Nasma developed leukaemia. Gaza's hospitals are prevented from importing radiation machines and other equipment necessary to treat cancer patients. Nasma's parents applied for urgent permission to take her to a hospital in Israel. In spite of the efforts of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the permit took eight days to arrive -- too late for Nasma.

When, in the hushed concert halls of Haifa and Tel Aviv, you sing *Wenn dein Mutterlein...* [When your mother comes into the room, my eyes light on the place where your dear little face would have been, my little girl], will the parents of Nasma Abu Lasheen be there to hear you? They will not. Palestinians from Gaza and the Occupied West Bank are not allowed to enter Israel. So they won't be consoled, however briefly, by the intensity of Mahler's music and the warm humanity and beauty of your voice.

We read that you are, quite rightly, fed up when people focus on the physical consequences for you of thalidomide – you lead, you say, 'a normal life'. But we would like to ask whether you know that the possibility of permanent disablement is often deliberately inflicted on Palestinian children. For instance, the organisation Defence of Children International says that in the eight months to 28 November 2010, 16 children were deliberately shot in the leg or arm by Israeli forces in Gaza. Their crime? They were scavenging for gravel among bombed buildings near Israel's border fence.

We are not denying that Israeli children have been killed and maimed, mainly by suicide bombings by

Israelis write to Thomas Quasthoff

Palestinian militants. We do not condone these actions. But we call to your attention Nurit Peled-Elhanan, whose 13-year-old daughter Smadar died in a suicide bombing in 1997. Peled-Elhanan has turned her grief into determined activism against the Israeli occupation, describing both her daughter and the bomber as 'victims of the occupation'.

Our argument is that by performing in Israel, you help draw a veil over the 'killing, liquidation, destruction, devastation and abuse of millions of civilians' that Peled-Elhanan so eloquently describes in her 4 December article for Israeli Occupation Archive. You help the Israeli government camouflage something very racist, very systematic and very ugly. And you reassure Israelis that, whatever cruelty and illegality their government, their army and the settlers commit against the Palestinians, they still have a place in the 'civilised' world. Do you really want to do this?

You teach at an academy in Berlin named after a composer, Hanns Eisler, who did not flinch from engagement in anti-fascist struggles in the 1930s. Eisler and Brecht's songs could not, of course, prevent the Nazi holocaust of disabled people, communists, Jews, gypsies, Slavs, Poles, across Europe. And now we may be less moved by the martial rhythm and simple hopes of 'Solidarity Song'. But solidarity still matters, doesn't it?

Palestinian civil organisations are asking international artists not to co-operate with Israeli institutions. We know that in asking you to respect this Palestinian call, we're asking you to do something very hard. But this year alone, British film-maker Mike Leigh and musicians Elvis Costello, Gil Scott-Heron and Tindersticks are among a number of artists who have withdrawn from commitments in Israel on political and humanitarian grounds.

If you decide to join them, you will draw back from appearing to condone Israel's suffocation of Palestinian lives, rights, and freedom. "Those in power/Sat safer without me: that was my hope", Brecht wrote. We live in hope that you might share his ambition. Please don't sing with the Israel Philharmonic.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth
Mike Cushman
Professor Hilary Rose
Professor Steven Rose
Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

London, 8 December 2010

We are a group of Israeli citizens, writing in support of the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine's (BRICUP) open [letter](#) to you. We support the Palestinian call for [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) (BDS) against Israel until it abides by international law and ceases its systematic violations of Palestinian human rights; as such, we would like to share with you our concerns regarding your scheduled performances in Israel and urge you to cancel them.

BDS is a rapidly growing non-violent, human-rights based Palestinian-led movement. It was launched by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, and amongst its many worldwide supporters – including directors Mike Leigh and Ken Loach, [180 Irish artists](#), [500 Montreal artists](#), and the international alliance [Artists against Apartheid](#) – are Jews and citizens of Israel who object to Israel's attempts to construct a facade of normalcy over its constant violation of Palestinian human rights.

In his [report](#) to the United Nations General Assembly, UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk notes that the tendency of the international community to overlook Israel's encroachment on the rights of Palestinians living under Israeli military control in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, has resulted in the apartheid features of Israel's current day *de facto* occupation. Mr. Falk points out that Palestinians are, for instance, barred from using the same roads as the residents of their neighboring Jewish-only settlements; their mobility is restricted even between their own villages, and sometimes within them, by military checkpoints, fences and a 26 ft. high cement wall, resulting in denied access to adequate medical services and work; their private agricultural lands are illegally confiscated and annexed to expanding Jewish settlements, and violent settlers attacks on their olive groves and mosques are systematically overlooked. In the context of your performances, Israel's apartheid policies also mean that a Palestinian fan of yours living under Israeli occupation is not allowed by law – and denied by walls, fences and checkpoints – to come hear you perform in Tel-Aviv.

Those who suggest to you that your performance in Israel might in some way “strengthen the notion of co-existence” are either ignorant of the situation in Israel/Palestine or are intentionally overlooking it so as to make sure their own lives are not

inconvenienced by publicly acknowledging it. Almost every international performance – large as small – is understood amongst the Israeli public as condoning this reality of systematic ethnic oppression and making a statement against the necessity of changing it.

Going through with your scheduled performances in Israel will bring a message of support for Israel's policies of apartheid and oppression. A [recent report](#) by Amnesty, Oxfam and other respected human rights organizations, also highlights the need for steady substantial pressure on Israel “to ensure an immediate, unconditional, and complete lifting of the blockade” of Gaza: recently revealed official [documents](#) have demonstrated that in the case of the Gaza blockade Israel has implemented “a policy of deliberate reduction” for basic goods, calculating the amount of food allowed to enter the Gaza strip using mathematical formulas to measure the amount of food sufficient to keep Gaza inhabitants alive at a near-malnutrition level threatening the health and well being of children, women and men^[1] (allowing in an average of less than a third of the needed goods^[2]). Goods “of a rehabilitative character” were shown to have not been allowed to enter the Gaza strip, thus preventing the reconstruction of schools, hospitals and homes.

As Mr. Falk notes, “the BDS campaign seeks to respond to the failure of Israel to uphold its obligations under international law with respect to the Palestinian people”. For decades, the international community has played into Israel's attempts to render a reality of brutal oppression – keeping millions under the rule of martial law in the West Bank, illegally blockading Gaza, and denying Palestinian 1948 refugees the UN sanctioned right of return and compensation – normal.

International performances in Israel at this time elicit a message of 'business as usual' -- that nothing has to be changed because things are fine the way they are. Last month, the Israeli cabinet agreed on a bill requiring that non-Jews who seek Israeli citizenship must swear an oath of allegiance to Israel as a Jewish state. Last week, dozens of Israel's Chief Rabbis issued a public bill ordering against the selling or renting of property to Arab citizens of Israel, constituting 20% of Israel's population. We urge you to cancel your performances in Israel and not grant your seal of approval to Israel's ongoing crimes and human rights violations.

Sincerely,

Ohal Grietzer, Rachel Giora, Ofer Neiman, Shir Hever, Iris Hefets, Kobi Snitz, Ayala Shani, Jonathan Pollak, Tal Shapira and Edo Medicks on behalf of Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from within <http://boycottisrael.info>

[1] [As noted in the report of UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#)

[2] As noted in [UNICEF 2009 report](#) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' [current data base](#)

Gazans write to Thomas Quasthoff

We are a group of artists, singers, academics and students from Gaza, and our only fault is being Palestinians. For that, Mr. Quasthoff, we are imprisoned with our families and loved ones in what even main-stream Human Rights Organizations call the largest open air prison in modern history. It has come to our knowledge that you have plans to perform in Apartheid Israel. The state you are planning to entertain has been committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against us, the indigenous population of Palestine.

We in Gaza have been under a hermetic, medieval siege imposed since 2006 by the state you are planning to entertain. This blockade has cut off the main life-line of goods and people coming into Gaza resulting in severe shortages of food supplies, basic goods and importantly items like cement which is vital to rebuild the 17000+ homes that have been destroyed by Israeli attacks. Injured people are not allowed to travel abroad to receive needed medical care: consequently 400 sick patients have died because they had no solution but to stay in the besieged Gaza Strip where they spent their dying days, to the despair of their families. Do you have plans to sing for them?

In addition to this barbaric siege, in winter 2008-9, Israel attacked Gaza, committing war crimes and human rights violations against a population of which over half, an estimated 800,000, are children. During this merciless 23-day assault, 1,417 people were killed, hundreds more severely injured. The crimes have been recounted in detail in the United Nations Goldstone report. On 2 December, 22 international organizations including Amnesty, Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid. Medical Aid for Palestinians produced a report entitled [Dashed Hopes, Continuation of the Gaza Blockade](#),

again another call for a complete end to the siege, outlining its devastating and unrelenting effects on the civilian population and a week ago Human Rights Watch published the [Separate and Unequal](#) report that denounced Israeli policies as "apartheid." Yet, still we wait for people to stand up around the world to take action against apartheid policies; mere words have made it easy for Israel to continue its genocidal policy against our people with immunity.

If you decide to act against your conscience and play in Israel, please remember us, remember the suffering survivors, and 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 or 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. And remember your fellow singers who have never left Gaza and who are dreaming of cooperating with international artists, such as yourself. We, artists and singers, expect you to show solidarity with us. How do you accept the suppression of our voices? Even musical instruments are banned from being brought into Gaza! Do you know that most of the people in your audience will have served or are serving in the Israeli army?

Israeli forces invaded Gaza's land, air, and sea. Shelling rained in around us, millions of pieces of metal sharp as daggers thudding through our homes, our cars, our roads, our children. Apache helicopters, F16s, F15s, F35s, Merkava tanks, naval gunboats, and illegal white phosphorous were experimented on us. People had no shelter. Many of them left their homes to hide in UNRWA's schools thinking that they would be safe. Sadly, they were proven wrong! Not only were schools shelled with people inside but also mosques, cars, universities, factories, agricultural land and farm animals. It was a vile war, about 1434 civilians including 434 children were killed and around 5,300 injured, some permanently. Many succumbed to their injuries after staying under the rubble for several days, bleeding because Israeli forces didn't allow ambulances to rescue them. In the eyes of Israeli policy makers our being the wrong 'ethnic group' means we should be expelled, humiliated, imprisoned and denied the most explicit and basic human rights. The misery we suffered during those days cannot be expressed in words no matter how much we try to. The singers amongst us have been trying to translate that horror into songs. We thought that you would show sympathy with the victim, not the victimizer!

We are told that you are "a man who has something to say – both as a musician and as a human being. And that [you are] not afraid of saying it." We, musicians of Gaza, are proud of having a fellow singer who speaks out against all forms of oppression. We wonder whether you performed in Sun City during the heydays of Apartheid! How did you feel about the suffering of Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Abdulla Ibrahim—to mention but a few black South African musicians? Those artists who were killed, imprisoned, or expelled by the ugly apartheid regime?

A host of musicians have already joined the Boycott Divestment and Sanction Call of 2005 by refusing to perform in Israel including Santana, Annie Lennox, Faithless, Elvis Costello, the Pixies, Gil Scott Heron, Massive Attack, Leftfield, Gorillaz Sound System and Devendra Bernhart. We hope that you join these courageous artists. To us, your inspirational latest album, "Tell It Like It Is," is a reminder of what the latest Palestinian intellectual Edward Said called "speaking truth to power"

It is high time to take real action to stop Israel's war crimes against children, women and men; it is time to stand on the right side of history and make a difference by singing songs of freedom and "telling it like it is!"

Besieged Gaza, Occupied Palestine December 31st 2010

Signed: Bassam Abu Jiab (Singer), Fadl Lelli (Composer), Samir Shataly (Chorographer), Iamial El-Agha (Musician), Naim Nasr (Composer), Samir Mousa (Singer), Ibrahim Zinaty (Musician), Ibrahim Lulu (Oud Player), Mohammed Abu Eisha (Musician), Basem Shakhsha (Conductor), Sahalah Abu Hamad (Composer), Wael Yazji (Composer), Mohammed El Masri (Composer), Hassan Kharoubi (Musician), Akram Hassan (Singer), Mohammed Bardawil (Oud player), Rami Okasha (Singer), Samir Shatali (Choreographer), Ali Abu Yasin (Director), Zuhair Balbisi (Actor), Sami Fatouh (Actor), Hassan Khatib (Actor), Inas Saqqa (Actress), Majeda Taleb (Actress), Hazem Abu Humaid (Director), Wael Hajjou (Actor), Jawad Harrouda (Actor), Said Eid (Director, Actor), Hassan Aydi (Director), Mohammed Abu Sido (Director), Ahmed Naser (Dramatist), Mohammed Naser (Dramatist), Majed Badra (Cartoonist).

University Teacher's Association in Palestine with the Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI)

The cancellation message from Tindersticks to Israel.

*Readers of this Newsletter will recall
that Tindersticks was encouraged to
review its plans to perform in Tel Aviv.
They did - and this is their response.*

It is with sadness that tindersticks announce the cancellation of their forthcoming concerts in Tel Aviv. When agreeing to play our music in Israel we, perhaps naively, believed that the music we make is beyond political considerations.

Over the past weeks, the pressure exerted on us by people and organisations, some close to us, has shown us that this is not the case. It is difficult to defy a rapidly growing movement with whose aims we agree, even if we are not wholly convinced by their methods.

The songs we looked forward to playing and singing have already been tainted and their enjoyment stifled, if not completely drowned out by the political furore.

We sincerely look forward to a time when we, and others, can make our music for the people in the Middle East for the pure joy of the music itself.

The PACBI column

Listen to Our Voice!

From time to time, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) brings to the attention of BDS activists, both in Palestine and abroad, Palestinian-Israeli joint activities that, while purporting to further “peace,” in fact pursue an agenda that is harmful to the realization of just peace and Palestinian rights. One such effort, which includes campus talks by Palestinian-Israeli teams in the United States and the UK, is organized by OneVoice, a US-based joint Israeli-Palestinian organization with chapters in North America and extensions in Europe. The Palestinian branch in Ramallah, OneVoice Palestine, appears to be the recruiting ground for Palestinian youth for the joint Palestinian-Israeli speaking tours, through a program of training workshops organized in the West Bank.

From PACBI’s perspective, which is grounded in the principles of the 2005 Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and supported by a majority of Palestinian civil society organizations and bodies, [1] there are several objectionable features to the OneVoice platform in general, and its youth activities in particular. These objections pertain to the logic of OneVoice’s political analysis and program, its main objectives, and the forms of action stemming from these.

PACBI bases itself on its 2004 Call for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel [2], which follows the same logic as the Palestinian civil society BDS Call. In light of the hundreds of UN resolutions condemning Israel’s colonial and discriminatory policies as illegal; in view of the failure of all forms of international intervention and peace-making to convince or oblige Israel to comply with humanitarian law, respect fundamental human rights and end its occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people; and inspired by the South African anti-apartheid struggle, international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world are urged to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.

It is worth noting that the logic of BDS has become increasingly compelling to Palestine solidarity activists around the world. Today, the global movement for BDS is making great inroads into the political mainstream, pointing to the fact that this long-term strategy of resistance and solidarity is indeed viewed as the most effective means to fight injustice and work towards upholding international law and the realization of the UN-sanctioned Palestinian rights as a necessary condition for achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

It is clear from an examination of the underlying logic and political analysis employed by OneVoice, and its Palestinian branch, that it is neither the logic of pressure on Israel nor a concern about justice for the Palestinian people that fuels their work. While paying lip service to “ending the occupation,” the overriding imperative is to serve Israel’s basic interest in remaining an apartheid state while promoting a form of a Palestinian state in order to secure that end. The philosophy of one of the leading Israeli youth activists, as showcased on the OneVoice website, “is that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state equals a more secure Israel, requiring less money toward its defense and security, and more toward civic and social

development.” [3] Simply put, it is the interests of the occupier that drive the mission.

Indeed, OneVoice declares that “by working in parallel, [it] can appeal to the nationalistic enlightened self-interest of Israelis, through the work of OneVoice Israel in Tel Aviv; and Palestinians, through the work of OneVoice Palestine in Ramallah. For Israelis, it’s about building an understanding that the occupation hurts rather than enhances Israeli security, and poses a threat to Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state. For Palestinians, it’s about building an understanding that violence and extremism hurts [sic] Palestinian national ambitions, providing a convenient excuse to those who wish to perpetually delay the establishment of a Palestinian state.” [4]

This unabashedly Israel-centered approach (framed as even-handedness), unfortunately adopted by the Palestinian branch as well, conveniently ignores the dynamics of the oppressor and the oppressed, the colonizer and the colonized. In reality, this approach takes as given the interests of the Israeli state and polity as they are constituted today. The OneVoice platform is devoid of any affirmation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, principally the right to self-determination. There is no mention of Israel’s grave violations of international law, in many cases amounting to war crimes. Nowhere is there a discussion of the institutionalized and legalized system of racial discrimination in Israel, nor is there any recognition of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the homes from which they were forcibly expelled in 1947-1948, in accordance with the norms of international law and UN resolutions. The latter right is at the very core of the Palestinian national consensus. Ignoring it puts OneVoice Palestine solidly against this consensus.

More significantly, the Israel-centric nature of OneVoice is exemplified by the way the concept of “the conflict” is defined and centrally located to inform the organization’s mission. OneVoice, like many other well-funded dialogue and “peace” groups (Seeds of Peace is one of the most visible), is dedicated to “conflict resolution.” However, “the conflict” is defined symmetrically and trivializes the struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination. The organization describes itself as “an international movement of people fed up with the ongoing conflict” [5], as though this on its own is meaningful no matter how the “conflict” is defined and without taking into account whose rights are violated. “The conflict” paradigm, as used by OneVoice and many other “peace” groups, in reality de-centers the Palestinian struggle and creates parity between

occupier and occupied, not to mention that it also ignores Israeli state violence in response to Palestinian resistance.

PACBI finds the framing of the colonial and apartheid reality in Palestine as a symmetric “conflict” without specifying the nature and scope of the domination and oppression that characterize the relationship of the Israeli state with the Palestinian people to be problematic, to say the least. It implies that a resolution of the conflict is a matter of replacing misunderstandings with more empathy and a concern for the predicament of the “other side.”

Nowhere is there any discussion of the roots of this “conflict,” what it is about, and which “side” is paying the price. OneVoice glosses over the historic record and the establishment of a settler-colonial regime in Palestine following the expulsion of most of the indigenous people of the land. The defining moment in the history of “the conflict” is therefore not acknowledged. The history of continued Israeli colonial expansion as well as dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians is conveniently ignored.

OneVoice prefers to forget the past, the recognition of which, we believe, holds the key to the future. Instead, OneVoice declares that “the idea of focusing on the future instead of clinging to the past is paramount to the philosophy of both OneVoice members and its programs. This is none the more prevalent than in OneVoice’s Imagine 2018 campaign, aimed to create a more future-oriented discourse among the grassroots. Israelis and Palestinians are being asked to envision what the future will look like if there is a peace agreement versus maintaining the toxic status quo or worse.” [6] A closer examination of the campaign reveals the Israel-centeredness of the much-advertised “Imagine 2018,” “a multiplatform campaign that depicts visions by Israelis and Palestinians of 2018.” It is significant that while OneVoice Palestine “targets former flashpoint cities with visions of a peaceful future” in the form of wall murals, OneVoice Israel asks Israelis what they hope for on Israel’s 70th birthday. The choice of the year 2018, not immediately clear from reading the Palestinian promotional material, becomes understandable if one looks at the Israeli website. [7] That it is all about Israel is abundantly clear!

To put PACBI’s objections to OneVoice and similar ventures in perspective, we refer to the PACBI guidelines for the academic and cultural boycott [8] dealing specifically with joint Palestinian-Israeli projects. According to these guidelines,

Cultural events and projects involving Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis that promote “balance” between the “two sides” in presenting their respective narratives, as if on par, or are otherwise based on the false premise that the colonizers and the colonized, the oppressors and the oppressed, are equally responsible for the “conflict,” are intentionally deceptive, intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible. Such events and projects, often seeking to encourage dialogue or “reconciliation between the two sides” without addressing the requirements of justice, promote the normalization of oppression and injustice. All such events and projects that bring Palestinians and/or Arabs and Israelis together, unless the Israeli side is explicitly supportive of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and unless the project/event is framed within the explicit context of joint opposition to occupation and other forms of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, are strong candidates for boycott. Other factors that PACBI takes into consideration in evaluating such events and projects are the sources of funding, the design of the program, the objectives of the sponsoring organization(s), the participants, and similar relevant factors.

It is clear that OneVoice is one of those projects that bring Palestinians and Israelis together, not to jointly struggle against Israel’s colonial and apartheid policies, but rather to provide a limited program of action under the slogan of an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state. In essence, however, and by ignoring the history and reality of the apartheid and colonial system in place, OneVoice and similar programs serve to normalize oppression and injustice. The fact that OneVoice treats the “nationalisms” and “patriotisms” of the two “sides” as if on par with one another and equally valid is a telling indicator. Announcing a series of talks in the UK, OneVoice recently declared that “our youth leaders are uniquely placed to be able to approach these taboo topics with an unparalleled level of authenticity and a singular and previously unheard voice of moderation and pragmatism; bringing a strong, nationalistic and patriotic perspective from both sides of the conflict.” [9]

PACBI believes that the acceleration of OneVoice’s youth work in North America and Europe is meant to counter the growing movement for BDS on campuses in these regions. OneVoice describes its international education program, in the framework of which Palestinian and Israeli youth leaders address North American and European university audiences, as being “designed to help those outside the Region to dispel polarization, extremism, and

hatred in their own communities.” Specifically, OneVoice Europe, established in 2006 and based in the UK, “was set up to fundraise for the ongoing work of OneVoice Palestine and OneVoice Israel in the region. Very quickly, however, it became clear that there was a need for the organisation to combat the increasingly extreme positions that pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian communities were taking within Europe; with UK university campuses being the most glaring example of where action was needed. OneVoice Europe’s mission is to help combat this polarisation amongst the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian communities in Europe, and to engage peoples’ energy and passion over Israel-Palestine away from hatred and towards helping moderates in the region; those looking to end occupation and all forms of violence and find a way out of the conflict.” [10]

It is not difficult to link these oblique statements about “polarization” and “extremism” to efforts to combat the growing BDS movement among UK student activists, especially the courageous campus occupation movement spearheaded by students there during the Israeli war of aggression on Gaza. OneVoice’s judgment is clear: “On UK campuses the war in Gaza led to an entrenchment of positions of advocates for either respective side. We aim to reconnect Pro-Palestinian and Pro-Israeli activists with the grassroots of those societies so their advocates reflect the will of the people in the region.” [11]

Finally, one of the features of the OneVoice youth speaking tours is the showcasing of Israeli “moderates” alongside those from Palestine. The Israeli speakers, based on media reports and their own testimonies, do not appear to challenge the dominant colonial and racist Israeli institutions, paramount among which is the army. The army is a natural part of the landscape in the highly militarized society that is Israel, and the culture of violence, criminality and impunity that pervades the Israeli army is not considered remarkable. In the words of a senior youth leader, “[f]or 3 years I served as a tank commander and did so out of respect for my country, my family, and those we have lost. I am still in [sic] active in the reserves. It is difficult to find any soldier who would choose to connect with someone they once called an enemy. But as a representative of OneVoice Israel, this is exactly what I did. What I learned from this experience is that any soldier or policymaker around the world would benefit from an experience like this. If they did it would have a truly positive effect on the world.” [12]

This is not the first time that PACBI addresses the harmful normalization activities of OneVoice. In 2007, PACBI issued a call urging Palestinian and international artists and public figures not to participate in and be associated with a OneVoice-organized public event that was to be held concurrently in Jericho and Tel Aviv billed “A Million Voices,” “to mark the first time that massive numbers of Israelis and Palestinians gather simultaneously to unite against violent extremism.” The appeal, endorsed by tens of cultural and other civil society organizations in Palestine and the Arab World, called “on the Palestinian public and international supporters of a just peace in Palestine not to take part in this public relations charade that conceals a misleading political program that falls significantly short of international law tenets and the Palestinian national program.” [13] As a result of mass mobilization against this typical normalization event, it was canceled.

PACBI continues to appeal to Palestinians, especially youth and students, to carefully examine what OneVoice stands for, and to reject a deceptive political agenda that does not in any way address the minimum requirements for justice for Palestinians, and instead is aimed at shielding the Israeli system of apartheid.

PACBI supports the appeal issued by student councils and youth organizations in Palestine in commemoration of the anniversary of the Nakba in 2010. The appeal mentioned “Seeds of Peace, OneVoice, NIR School, IPCRI, Panorama, and others that specifically target Palestinian youth to engage them in dialog with Israelis without recognizing the inalienable rights of Palestinians, or aiming to end Israel’s occupation, colonization, and apartheid.” [14] It is indeed time to listen to the voice of Palestinians.

PACBI Ramallah, Occupied Palestine 30 December 2010

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- [1] <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52>
 [2] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>
 [3] http://blog.onevoicemovement.org/one_voice/2010/11/iep-spotlight-eliran-eyal-finds-partners-for-peace-on-the-palestinian-side.html
 [4] <http://press.onevoicemovement.org/2010/02/one-voice-looking-for-hope-in-an-endless-blame-game/>

- [5] <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/about-onevoice>
 [6] http://blog.onevoicemovement.org/one_voice/2010/11/iep-spotlight-mohammad-asideh-devotes-civic-service-to-palestines-future-generations.html
 [7] <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/Imagine2018Temp/index2.php>
 [8] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108> and <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>
 [9] <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/programs/onevoice-europe.php>
 [10] <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/programs/onevoice-europe.php>
 [11] <http://press.onevoicemovement.org/2010/02/onevoice-makes-itself-heard-for-peace/>
 [12] http://blog.onevoicemovement.org/one_voice/2010/12/traveling-to-the-united-states-and-speaking-on-the-onevoice-international-education-program-tour-with-mohammad-asideh-was.html
 [13] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=612&key=million%20voices>
 [14] <http://pyan48.wordpress.com/>

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine

Meeting in London on November 22nd 2010, the Russell Tribunal on Palestine announced its verdict after a weekend of deliberations. The jury said it had been presented with "compelling evidence of corporate complicity in Israeli violations of international law".

Juror Michael Mansfield QC, who chaired the press conference, announced the jury's call for the mobilisation of civil society to end the involvement of companies in Israeli human rights violations.

Both Israel and the complicit businesses are in clear violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, he said. This relates to "the supply of arms; the construction and maintenance of the illegal separation Wall" and providing services to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Israel

is in "flagrant disregard" of international law and is on the wrong side of world opinion, and morality said Mr. Mansfield.

In its public statement, the Russell Tribunal has named seven examples of corporations complicit in Israeli violations, including the British-Danish prison firm G4S which supplies equipment to Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. The public statement is available in full on the Russell Tribunal website at www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com

Juror and veteran of the South African liberation struggle, Ronnie Kasrils said one "cannot underestimate the importance" of civil society action on boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

The jury concluded that there were positive legal ramifications for those who took action on boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. "Those who wish to actively protest about this, are entitled to do so," said Mr. Mansfield. Those prosecuted for criminal damages have a defence: necessity.

The press conference heard breaking news of such an action happening in Covent Garden that morning, as activists shut down Ahava, an Israeli business based in a West Bank settlement.

The statements from those corporations who chose to engage with the tribunal will be annexed to the final report of the London session. This full report will be available in at the beginning of December. It will identify specific legal remedies in the case of the many companies involved in Israeli human rights violations.

For more information go to:

www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com

Or contact RToPmedia@gmail.com

Jewish Chronicle forced to admit misleading racist slur

A complaint to the Press Complaints Commission by campaigners for Palestinian rights has forced the Jewish Chronicle to modify an article alleging anti-Jewish racism during a public meeting at the School of Oriental and African Studies last December.

For almost a year, the JC's website carried a story stating that a Jewish man was subjected to

"overpowering racist jeering" when asking a question at the London meeting called to consider the parallels between apartheid in South Africa in the past and in Israel now.

The story alleged that Jonathan Hoffman 'was told he was "not welcome" after revealing his Jewish name. The JC story did not say that this was vehemently denied by many of those present, including many Jews, that the panel included veteran Jewish anti-racism campaigner Ronnie Kasrils, a former member of Nelson Mandela's ANC government, and that Hoffman, co-vice chair of the Zionist Federation, was well-known for disrupting meetings opposed to Israel's illegal activities.

Mike Cushman, a Jewish member of BRICUP, was one of the organisers of the meeting. He told the commission that his words had been, inadvertently or maliciously, misheard and misinterpreted on the publicly available video recording. "No-one jeered at Hoffman for being Jewish," Mr Cushman said. "It was his history of hostility to Palestinian human rights that made him unwelcome."

The Commission said the JC story had made "serious allegations." It breached the Editor's Code on accuracy by failing to take care "not to publish inaccurate or misleading information" and by failing to tell readers that its account was strongly contested. JC editor Stephen Pollard responded dismissively when asked last May by one of the sponsors of the meeting, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi of JBIG (Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods) and also BRICUP, to retract the story. "We drew his attention to the fact that the BBC Editorial Complaints Unit had acknowledged errors in a BBC Online story that was the source of the JC's report, but he refused point blank to discuss it," said Ms Wimborne-Idrissi.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/ecu/2010/05/100506_ecu_jewishmanjeeredatsoasdebate.shtml

In an email exchange in June Mr Pollard insisted the JC story was "entirely accurate" and wrote: "I do not propose to enter into a correspondence with you or your contemptible organization."

"Only after we involved the PCC did the paper admit to misleading its readers," Ms Wimborne-Idrissi said. She said it was disappointing that the PCC had fallen short of requiring the JC to admit that its story was plain wrong, not just "contested". But she said it was positive that the Commission had insisted on the statement which now follows the JC's online story at

<http://www.thejc.com/videos/news-videos/jonathan-hoffman-jeered-soas-meeting>

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