

BRICUP Newsletter 49

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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www.bricup.org.uk

bricup@bricup.org.uk

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An open letter from Palestinian students and youth to UK student activist participants in a propaganda tour of Israel

We, Palestinian students and youth organisations, were shocked and disappointed to learn of your all-expenses-paid junket to Israel, involving prominent Labour party student activists and organised by the Union of Jewish Students.[1] By being involved in this propaganda tour, you have crossed a picket line established by the entirety of the Palestinian civil society.

The 2005 Palestinian civil society call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) is a call for supporters of Palestinian rights to actualise their support with concrete and effective actions of solidarity.[2] Boycotting official Israeli state institutions is probably the easiest and most basic form that such support could take. By choosing instead to engage with official Israeli state institutions, you have created a false impression that Israel is a state like any other, rather than one that practices occupation, colonisation and apartheid over the indigenous Palestinian population.

In recent weeks, Palestinians have been commemorating the third anniversary of Operation Cast Lead, the 2008-09 Gaza massacre during which Israel committed crimes against humanity that were established by a UN Fact Finding Mission. Meeting with Mark Regev, the public face of that massacre and the chief spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is a grave insult to the memories of the more than 1,400 Palestinians that

lost their lives during the 22 days of unrelenting aerial bombardment and ground incursions.

Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territory are recognised as illegal under law by the entirety of the international community, including the UK government. Your visit to Gush Etzion is precisely the kind of emboldening support on which the continued colonisation of our territory depends.

Also understand that your decision to meet with OneVoice only places you more firmly on the side of the oppressor. When they are not grounded in a mutual and active opposition to Israeli violations of international law, such dialogue initiatives constitute a form of normalisation that seeks to equate the oppressor with the oppressed and is deeply damaging to the realisation of our rights.[3] As Palestinian youth and student organisations, we have been engaged in many successful campaigns against such initiatives in recent months.

The effective forms of solidarity currently being shown in the UK have inspired Palestinian students and youth. The National Union of Students should be applauded for initiating campaigns against Veolia and Eden Springs over their complicity with Israeli violations of international law, and for supporting the fantastic campaign being waged by students at King's College London against their university's collaboration with Ahava, an Israeli settlement enterprise. The motions passed at student unions across the UK in support of BDS initiatives have been equally impressive, and we look forward to hearing how Israeli Apartheid Week will contribute to the further growth of the student movement in support of Palestine. Your fellow students have shown that concrete and effective solidarity, rather than all expenses paid pro-Israel junkets, is the way to contribute to a just and lasting peace.

Posted on January 24, 2012 and endorsed by the following Palestinian student and youth organisations

Al-Quds Open University Student Councils
Al-Quds University Student Council
An-Najah University Student Council
Arab American University in Jenin Student Council
Bethlehem University Student Council
Birzeit University Student Council
Hebron Polytechnic University Student Council
Association of Youth in Jerusalem
Fateh Youth Movement

Herak Shababi, and other youth groups participating in the March 15th actions against normalization
Palestinian Students' Campaign for Academic Boycott of Israel
Right to Education Campaign
Youth Against the Settlements

[1] <http://electronicintifada.net/content/uk-labour-party-student-officials-face-backlash-over-free-tour-israel-settlements/10819>

[2] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>

[3] For more on the concept of normalisation, see <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1436> and <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749>

[4] <http://electronicintifada.net/blog/jalal-abukhater/cancellation-sharif-dorzis-concert>

An open letter from BRICUP to Christoph von Dohnányi,

We were impressed to [read](#) that last October you cancelled several appearances as conductor with the Hungarian State Opera, in protest at appointments made by the mayor to the New Theatre in Budapest. You were quoted as saying that you did not want to appear in a city 'whose mayor entrusted the direction of a theatre to two known anti-Semites of the extreme right'.

We share your alarm at the growing power of racist and authoritarian parties in the Hungarian state, and we salute you for the stand you have taken. But we're also interested to see that you actively support cultural boycott to express political and moral outrage. Please allow us to suggest that moral and political considerations ought also to argue against your appearances this coming April as guest conductor with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Leave aside for the time being the painful fact that between 1947 and 1949 more than half the Palestinian population was driven out of what became Israel, and has never been allowed to return (many historians, including [Benny Morris](#) and [Ilan Pappe](#), have documented this; and then there is this old man, [Amnon Neumann](#), describing on film to Israeli organisation Zochrot how his Palmach unit got Palestinians to leave).

Leave aside the military occupation of remaining Palestinian land since 1967, illegal under international law, flouting international humanitarian law on a grand scale, but every day, dunum by dunum, removing Palestinians from their land and denying them their rights.

Please just look at what has happened since the start of this year.

On 11 January 2012 the Israeli Supreme Court [decided](#) that marriage to an Israeli citizen does not give Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and elsewhere the right to reside with their spouses inside Israel. Roughly 135,000 Palestinian spouses were granted Israeli citizenship between 1994 and 2002 (when the state stopped doing it), through marriage mainly to Israelis of Palestinian origin (who are, of course, Israeli citizens). These people, and their children, are now liable to be expelled. ‘Human rights are not a prescription for national suicide’, said Justice Asher Grunis. Presumably István Csurka, whose role in the New Theatre in Budapest you understandably object to, might voice similar ethno-nationalist sentiments in relation to the presence of Jews and Roma in Hungary (according to the [Anti-Defamation League](#), he has, many times).

Our argument is that racism is indivisible. If one is outraged by the presence in power of racists in one place, one has to be outraged by their exercise of power elsewhere too. Israeli poet Yitzhak Laor [says](#) the Israeli Supreme Court decision is motivated by the desire to ‘maintain a Jewish majority...The looming expulsion of thousands will be carried out with the silent agreement of enlightened members of society [for whom] maintaining a Jewish majority is an ideological common denominator’. Some of those ‘enlightened’ members of society will be sitting in your concerts, Christoph von Dohnányi, enjoying your interpretation of Schumann and Mendelssohn. Meanwhile, says Laor, ‘the expulsion of women and children from their homes will be carried out by a state that has never held Arabs to be equal before the law’.

We could fill page after page with details of the daily cruelties of the Occupation and racism against Palestinian citizens of Israel. We could also turn amateur psychologist (at the risk of annoying you),

and infer that your involvement with Israel and with the IPO, with whom you’ve conducted many times, might be for you a way of honouring the bravery of [your father](#) during World War II. We will definitely suggest that you take a few minutes to read this [recent interview](#) with Haneen Zoabi, a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, who elegantly makes the absolutely necessary distinction between Zionism and Judaism.

But overall we think you have set a very good example by withdrawing from your concerts at the Hungarian State Opera. We respectfully ask that you consider seriously our argument for your doing the same with the IPO. Please don’t let those ‘enlightened members of Israeli society’ continue to believe that their racism is tolerable and excusable because it’s directed at Palestinians. Please don’t go.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth
Mike Cushman
Professor Adah Kay
Professor David Pegg
Professor Jonathan Rosenhead
London, January 2012

PACBI Column

The Academic Boycott on Campus: Breaking New Ground, Gaining Momentum

In an open letter dated October 21, 2011 [1], Palestinian students wrote to their counterparts across the world, “we hope you put BDS at the forefront of your campaigns and join together for Israeli Apartheid Week, the pinnacle of action across universities worldwide”. The 8th Annual Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) [2] constitutes a direct response to this call, at a crucial moment when youth are taking to the streets to combat dictatorships and an international economic crisis marked by record levels of youth unemployment. In our joint struggle for freedom, justice and equality in a framework of economic and social justice, we at the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) look forward to yet another inspiring IAW. We take this opportunity to salute the dynamism and creativity of a new generation of BDS advocates on campuses and to thank those who have supported our call for the

cultural and academic boycott of Israel from the start.

In cooperation with our allies internationally, PACBI members will be supporting various IAW 2012 activities wherever possible. We see IAW, which has spread dramatically over the past years to include events in over 100 cities, as a clear sign of the growing momentum of the BDS movement globally and on university campuses specifically. Not only do IAW events educate about Israel's multi-tiered system of colonialism, occupation and apartheid, they importantly help to build long term, strategic BDS campaigns on campuses, enhance cross-movement alliances, and broaden the appeal of BDS.

As the call for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel was initiated by an overwhelming majority in Palestinian civil society in 2005 [3], across the geographic fragmentation imposed on our people, it is no surprise that a renewed activism among Palestinian youth is specifically targeting those who advocate and participate in normalization initiatives that undermine our collective struggle for self-determination. Such normalization initiatives posit an equal relationship between an indigenous population and a settler-colonial regime, attempting to understand the issue as a dispute and misunderstanding that can be resolved through dialogue, rather than an anti-colonial, anti-racist struggle for asserting internationally recognized rights. Palestinian civil society, by launching the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, importantly rejects normalization with the Israeli state and its complicit institutions and the whitewashing of its crimes against the entirety of the Palestinian people. To this end, Palestinian youth organizations across the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have started mobilizing for IAW2012, which is co-organized by Palestinian and anti-Zionist Jewish student activists in Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth and Jerusalem. Events are also being planned in Jordan and Lebanon connecting Palestinian refugee communities to the BDS campaign.

Internationally, we are heartened by the increased coordination and growth of Students for Justice in Palestine on campuses across the United States. Their national conference in October 2011 carefully studied how to implement BDS on campuses, and this year an unprecedented number of US universities will be holding IAW activities. Although an upcoming US national BDS conference at the University of Pennsylvania has come under attack from the usual coterie of Israel lobby voices

that continuously move to censor and silence any critical discussion on Palestinian basic rights and international law [4], the conference organizers are on track with their plans and the conference promises to be yet another milestone in coordination and implementation of BDS campaigns [5].

Across campuses in the UK and the rest of Europe, there is also a deepening of BDS activism, and once more IAW will take place on more campuses than ever before with a coordinated tour of youth speakers from Palestine. Importantly, there has been a direct response to the campaign waged by PACBI, PFUUPE, Stop the Wall, and the Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) against the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which is "a multi-billion euro European Union research funding scheme that provides funds for universities and companies from different countries to work together on specific research projects." [6] Students at King's College (London), in close cooperation with the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), launched a petition against a joint FP7 research program between their university, the Natural History Museum and Ahava, an Israeli corporation involved in stealing Palestinian Dead Sea resources and operating inside illegal Israeli colonies in the occupied West Bank. The students gathered signatures and lobbied for support from the UK National Union of Students, which in turn voted to support the campaign adding more pressure on the university.

An important boost to this campaign came in the form of a letter signed by prominent UK academics published in the Independent, a major UK newspaper, and picked up by leading international scientific journals [7]. This strategic combination of public events, petitions, continuous presence and education on campus, as well as coalition building among student groups and faculty, has made this campaign a model for other campuses across Europe to emulate. Also, in an unprecedented move, and due to the consistent efforts of BDS student activists, the National Union of Students (NUS) in the UK is also taking up the campaign to challenge the presence of Eden Springs and Veolia on campuses. Both companies are complicit in violations of international law. Eden Springs bottles, markets and distributes water from territory illegally occupied by Israel and Veolia is helping to build and operate the Jerusalem Light Rail which links illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory with Israel.[8] [9]

In Canada, where the first IAW was organized, three campuses have active divestment campaigns putting pressure on their universities to divest from corporations active in supporting Israel's occupation and ongoing violations of international law. These campaigns employ a variety of tactics and have consistently worked to build broad coalitions, including with unions and faculty on their campuses, as well as use creative actions to explain their targets.

These successes however do not go unchallenged; they encounter concerted and well-funded Zionist propaganda, smearing and bullying operations that cynically attempt to buy off students. A good example of this is the campaign by the National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS) to pay Israeli college students \$2000 each to spread positive propaganda about Israel on social networking sites. [10] This can only indicate the sad state of affairs for Israel when students must be bribed into taking the time to spread whitewashing messages about its actions. In contrast, BDS student and faculty activists put in long hours of volunteer organizing out of their conviction of the justice of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and equality. Israel's propaganda efforts on campuses also include the use of all-expenses paid trips to Israel that many student leaders (especially those elected to positions within student unions) are enticed with. Palestinian student and youth organizations recently condemned such a trip in an open letter to UK Labour party student officers who went on a tour of Israel [11]. Underlying such efforts to whitewash Israel's crimes and violations of international law is often a nod towards "meeting with both sides" and "dialogue" to undercut BDS activism. However, as PACBI has consistently stated: "Dialogue," "healing," and "reconciliation" processes that do not aim to end injustice and oppression, regardless of the intentions behind them, serve to perpetuate oppressive co-existence at the cost of "co-resistance," for they presume the possibility of coexistence before the realization of justice. [12]

Overall, it is clear that the academic and cultural boycott and the BDS movement more generally are breaking new ground and gaining momentum on campuses worldwide, despite all cynical attempts at silencing and censorship. Israeli Apartheid Week's reach and the well-planned boycott and divestment campaigns being initiated daily are a testament to the courage and creativity of the Palestinian people and the international solidarity movement; they highlight the fact that despite the lack of decent

budgets and a state apparatus, the dedicated work of activists can really make a difference. This was a key lesson learned from the South African anti-apartheid movement as well. Moral right coupled with strategic thinking and tactical wisdom can indeed overcome the might and endless resources of the oppressors. PACBI warmly welcomes these successes on campuses and once more salutes all those involved.

Notes

- [1] www.bdsmovement.net/2011/an-open-letter-from-palestinian-students-to-their-peers-in-europe-8228
- [2] www.apartheidweek.org
- [3] www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869
- [4] www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4162/uproar-at-penn-over-a-bds-conference
- [5] Conference website at: www.pennbds.org/press-releases/a-message-from-pennbds
- [6] www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1736
- [7] www.independent.co.uk/news/science/natural-history-museum-attacked-over-links-to-illegal-israeli-company-6290705.html
- [8] www.bdsmovement.net/2010/eden-springs-fact-sheet-5115
- [9] www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/veoliaalstom
- [10] www.electronicintifada.net/blog/ali-abunimah/israeli-students-get-2000-spread-state-propaganda-facebook
- [11] www.bdsmovement.net/2012/palestinian-youth-and-students-condemn-uk-propaganda-tour-8617
- [12] www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749

An Open Letter signed by BRICUP Ginsberg vs North Carolina State University (NCSU)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

At North Carolina State University (NCSU), shortly after Dr. Terri Ginsberg made supportive political comments at a screening of a Palestinian film in 2007, she went from being the favoured candidate for a tenure-track position to being denied even an interview. Her efforts at redress were summarily rejected by NCSU and two courts. A jury should be permitted to decide whether NCSU's real reason for firing Dr. Ginsberg was its hostility to her political

views, but this legal right has been denied. We urge the Supreme Court of North Carolina to review Dr. Ginsberg's case and to reverse the lower courts' decisions to dismiss it. On this basis, faculty at NCSU and elsewhere may finally exercise their legal right to academic speech on the topic of Palestine/Israel and, as such, to their full human rights as scholars, teachers, and intellectuals in the academic community.

To support this request to the NC Supreme Court, we invite academic faculty and students worldwide to sign our [Open Letter as an e-petition](#).

Posted January 25, 2012. We expect to submit the Open Letter with all signatures received by February 7, though signatures received later will still be helpful.

You are also encouraged to send your own letter to:

Supreme Court of North Carolina
Clerk's Office
P.O. Box 2170
Raleigh, NC 27602-2170 USA

Signed by:

[BRICUP](#),
[U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel](#) (USACBI)
[Center for Constitutional Rights](#)
[Jewish Voice for Peace-Westchester](#)
[WESPAC Foundation](#)
[Committee for Open Discussion of Zionism](#) (CODZ)

An open letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a special rapporteur to examine questions relevant to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The following letter is an open letter from Dr Derek Summerfield, the convenor of the group on the collusion of doctors in Israel with torture. It is addressed personally to the Special Rapporteur, Professor Juan Mendez.

Dear Professor Mendez

I am sorry to use your academic email about a matter to do with your role as UN Rapporteur but, as I explain below, we don't know what else we can do at this juncture. I am a UK medical specialist (honorary senior lecturer, Institute of Psychiatry, University of London) who is writing to you as convenor of a principled campaign about the collusion of doctors in Israel with torture. The campaign unites 725 physicians, including 114 professors, from 43 countries- an unprecedented coalition. If you would open the first attachment [see note below], which is a letter in the British Medical Journal last August by myself and first signatory Professor Alan Meyers of Boston University, you can see a brief resume of events since we first approached the World Medical Association (WMA) in May 2009. We did this at a point when the long-time President of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) had become no less than President of the WMA, which to those of us familiar with the IMA/Dr Blachar track record on this issue over many years seemed a mockery of the ideals for which the WMA was founded after the Second World War.

The second attachment [see note below], is the letter we sent to the WMA, including the evidence base from reputable human rights organisations- both international (eg Amnesty, Defence of Child International, DCI) and national (Physicians for Human Rights-Israel PHRI, Public Committee Against Torture in Israel PCATI) . Below the referenced evidence is a background briefing paper and full list of the 725 signatories. Indeed the Israeli organisations PHRI and PCATI also submitted evidence in support of our request for the WMA to do what its mandate requires, to ensure its members abide by the WMA anti-torture Declaration of Tokyo, and thus to investigate the IMA and the probity of Dr Blachar's election as WMA President.

The third attachment [see note below], above describes the responses and non-responses of the WMA to that point, not least Prof Blachar threatening me through London lawyers with a libel suit whilst still WMA President! A scandalous day for international medical ethics, surely! This letter was addressed as a last appeal to WMA Sec Gen Dr Otmar Kloiber, who cannot but be heavily implicated in how the WMA has behaved.

When more than a year had elapsed it was clear that the WMA simply would not abide by their mandate when it came to Israel, and so in August 2010 we wrote an appeal (again sending all the evidence) to

the your Office / Rapporteur Nowak. We used the [email address your office publicises for this very purpose](#) . When we heard nothing, not even acknowledgement of receipt despite reminders, we re-sent everything to you when you took over in November 2010. Again nothing. The BMJ letter attached above summarises our dilemma as of last summer. However when I forwarded the BMJ letter to your office in early September, the next day I received the response below, asking for the material to be re-sent. This I did. I asked for confirmation that you personally had seen it- Professor Nigel Rodley had told me not all submissions reached the Rapporteur himself. So that was September: 4 months on we have heard nothing, as before.

Thus on behalf of the 725 I am asking you to read this please. Naturally you would pay most attention to the most recent documentation, the major ones being the 2007 PCATI 'Ticking Bombs' report, the 2008 United Against Torture report, 2008 DCI report, and the 2008 Amnesty briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture. In the appendices to the Kloiber letter you can also read of the more recent Case 'M' presented at an international health & human rights meeting by Dr Ruchama Marton, founder of PHRI, and in the presence of current WMA President Dr Dana Hanson and new IMA President Dr Leonid Eidelman. The Declaration of Tokyo would dictate that having heard the details of Case M these 2 postholders are obligated to take urgent action, to speak out and more, but they haven't and will not! In addition I understand from Miri Weingarten the EU Advocacy Co-ordinator for Israel/OPT, whom you met recently in London, that she gave you the latest reports from PHRI and PCATI.

We reported to the WMA regarding the IMA in good faith but our experiences with the WMA have made it crystal clear that the organisation is not fit for purpose, at least when it comes to Israel. Either we have an enforceable framework of international standards governing the ethical behaviour of doctors in relation to state torture, or we do not. Thus we have two purposes in reporting to you.

We hope to hear from you Professor.

Yours sincerely

Derek Summerfield BSc(Hons) MBBS MRCPsych

Convenor of a group on the collusion of doctors in Israel with torture.

Note: The information in the attachments referred to above is available from Dr. Derek Summerfield at Derek.Summerfield@slam.nhs.uk

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

Arranging meetings and lobbying activities are 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](#).here.

More details can be obtained from treasurer@bricup.org.uk

You can follow BRICUP on twitter!

See 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 welcome.

Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk