

# BRICUP Newsletter 51

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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NOTE: the contents list for this newsletter is on page 6.

**The Guardian printed this open letter on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2012.**

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## **Dismay at Globe invitation to Israeli theatre**

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We notice with dismay and regret that Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London has invited Israel's National Theatre, Habima, to perform *The Merchant of Venice* in its Globe to Globe festival this coming May. The general manager of Habima has declared the invitation "an honourable accomplishment for the State of Israel". But Habima has a shameful record of involvement with illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory. Last year, two large Israeli settlements established "halls of culture" and asked Israeli theatre groups to perform there. A number of Israeli theatre professionals – actors, stage directors, playwrights – declared they would not take part.

Habima, however, accepted the invitation with alacrity, and promised the Israeli minister of culture that it would "deal with any problems hindering such performances". By inviting Habima, Shakespeare's Globe is undermining the conscientious Israeli actors and playwrights who have refused to break international law.

The Globe says it wants to "include" the Hebrew language in its festival – we have no problem with that. "Inclusiveness" is a core value of arts policy in Britain, and we support it. But by inviting Habima, the Globe is associating itself with policies of exclusion practised by the Israeli state and endorsed by its national theatre company. We ask the Globe to withdraw the invitation so that the festival is not complicit with human rights violations and the illegal colonisation of occupied land.

**David Aukin** *producer*; **Poppy Burton-Morgan** *artistic director*, *Metta Theatre*; **Leo Butler** *playwright*;  
**Niall Buggy** *actor*; **David Calder** *actor*; **Jonathan Chadwick** *director*; **Caryl Churchill** *playwright*; **Michael Darlow** *writer, director*; **John Graham Davies** *actor, writer*; **Trevor Griffiths** *playwright*; **Annie Firbank** *Actor*; **Paul Freeman** *actor*; **Matyelok Gibbs** *actor*; **Tony Graham** *director*; **Janet Henfrey** *actor*; **James Ivens** *artistic director*, *Flood Theatre*; **Andrew Jarvis** *actor, director, teacher*; **Neville Jason** *actor*; **Ursula Jones** *actor*; **Professor Adah Kay** *academic, playwright*; **Mike Leigh** *film-maker, dramatist*; **Sonja Linden** *playwright, iceandfire theatre*; **Roger Lloyd Pack** *actor*; **Cherie Lunghi** *actor*; **Miriam Margolyes** *actor*; **Kika Markham** *actor*; **Jonathan Miller** *director, author and broadcaster*; **Frances Rifkin** *director*; **Mark Rylance** *actor*; **Alexei Sayle** *comedian, writer*; **Farhana Sheikh** *writer*; **Emma Thompson** *actor, screenwriter*; **Andy de la Tour** *actor, director*; **Harriet Walter** *actor*; **Hilary Westlake** *director*; **Richard Wilson** *actor, director*; **Susan Wooldridge** *actor, writer*.

## Top actors challenge globe over Israeli theatre invitation

Habima, the Israeli national theatre company, is scheduled to perform *The Merchant of Venice* in Hebrew during the Globe to Globe World Shakespeare Festival on May 28 and 29.

But leading British actors, directors and authors are challenging the Globe over its invitation to an Israeli company that performs for settlers on illegally occupied Palestinian land. In an [open letter published in The Guardian](#), which is reproduced on page 1, David Calder, Trevor Griffiths, Jonathan Miller, Mark Rylance, Emma Thompson and Harriet Walter, along with 31 others, say the Israeli National Theatre, Habima, “has a shameful record of involvement with illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory”. They call on Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre to withdraw the invitation “so the festival is not complicit with human rights violations and the illegal colonisation of occupied land”. The Guardian letter notes that a number of Israeli theatre professionals have declared that they will not take part in performances in “halls of culture” built in two large Israeli settlements. Habima, however, has pledged to continue doing so.

Actor Mark Rylance said “I sign this letter in support of those artists within Israel who are resisting the requests to play in the illegal settlements,”. He drew a parallel with earlier campaigns supporting change in apartheid South Africa. “Acting in the illegal settlements seems to me an act of provocation and disrespect. Surely peace will only be born when each person respects the other's boundaries.” David Calder, whose roles include Shylock with the Royal Shakespeare Company and Lear with the Globe Theatre Company, said that Habima “placed itself outside the general case of ‘bridge-making culture’ by being prepared to play before a segregated audience of illegal settlers in a theatre from which Palestinians themselves are barred”. He said that Habima is part of “a cultural fig leaf” for Israel’s daily brutality.

Habima’s planned involvement in the Globe to Globe festival has been opposed by the Israeli organisation Boycott from Within and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) which wrote to the Globe, “Just as British theatres in the 1980s avoided inviting South African theatres that were part of the apartheid system and took a stance in opposition to apartheid, so must the Globe today disinvite Habima, a cultural ambassador of Israel and a defender of Israel's illegal colonies”.

The Globe’s response to these appeals from Israeli, Palestinian and British campaigners for Habima’s invitation to be withdrawn has been to insist that the World Shakespeare Festival must be inclusive and keep channels of cultural communication open. But all main Palestinian theatre artists and other cultural figures [endorse](#) the cultural boycott of Israel and its complicit institutions as a minimal, peaceful form of resistance to the occupation and other forms of Israeli oppression.” Habima’s general manager Odelia Friedman declared the invitation to perform at the Globe “an honourable accomplishment for the State of Israel” [1]

The Israeli state explicitly and habitually utilises culture as a propaganda tool under the auspices of its Foreign Affairs ministry which launched a ‘Brand Israel’ campaign in 2005. Nissim Ben-Sheetrit of Israel's Foreign Ministry said: “We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and I do not differentiate between propaganda and culture.” Artists who accept funding from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs are required to sign a contract which states that the artist “is aware that the purpose of ordering services from him is to promote the policy interests of the State of Israel via culture and art, including contributing to creating a positive image for Israel” [2]. A Palestinian theatre group, Ashtar, based in Ramallah in the Occupied West Bank, is to stage *Richard II* in Arabic on May 4 and 5. A Habima spokesperson, Rut Tonn, described Ashtar’s appearance in the same festival as Habima as an example of “collaborations which will help with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” [3]. But Ashtar has refuted any suggestion that its appearance in the festival four weeks before Habima’s implies any sort of balance or equivalence, and said in a letter to the Globe:

“They have insinuated cooperation with us to undermine the growing cultural boycott of complicit Israeli institutions.” The international community has failed to hold Israel to account for its persistent infringements of human rights, flouting of UN resolution and breaches of international law and this has led to the [Palestinian call](#) for boycott, divestment and sanctions modelled on the non-violent campaign to end South African apartheid.

Notes:

1] <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4170210,00.html>

2] <http://www.haaretz.com/putting-out-a-contract-on-art-1.250388>

3] <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/55939/israelis-fear-protests-globe-shakespeare-festival>

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## Haaretz reports, “Israeli theater must be removed from London festival, top U.K. cultural figures say”

On April 1<sup>st</sup> Haaretz picked up the Habima story featured above. The newspaper noted that signatories had cited “what they say is Habima's shameful record of involvement with illegal Israeli settlements.” The reporter picked out the fact that the Guardian letter was signed by “such leading cultural figures as film director Mike Leigh, actress Emma Thompson and actor-director Richard Wilson.”, and noted particularly the Theatre company's “willingness to play at settlement cultural halls despite a boycott by several Israeli actors and playwrights.” The article presented the arguments in the letter in a factual way but Habima's artistic director Ilan Ronen was quoted as saying

“The attempt to portray Habima as a mouthpiece of this or that policy wrongs the creators, the actors and anyone who is a part of the endeavour. Performing in all of Israel is not the initiative of Habima, as the letter, presents, but is a result of state law to which all public cultural institutes are subject”

But one need not be a spokesperson to be an accomplice and performing to segregated audiences in the occupied Palestinian Territories is participation in the crime of apartheid. Complicity is “Partnership in an evil action” which Habima certainly does.

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### The PACBI Column

## Debating BDS: On Normalization and Partial Boycotts

Two of the most important issues that arise in debating Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), particularly in Western countries, are (A) whether or not Palestinians should be working with Israelis rather than boycotting them, and (B) whether supporters of BDS should fully boycott Israel or boycott only companies involved in Israel's occupation and colonial settlements. We hope the discussion below will help shed some light on both issues.

### Co-resistance vs. Co-existence

Over the years, at the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), we have consistently outlined our position on normalization in an effort to gain new allies and to clarify to our partners the premise of Palestinian and Israeli exchanges. It is important to note that in the BDS movement, there are several Israeli partners who also support our comprehensive rights under international law, including the *Coalition of Women for Peace and Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within* [1]. Furthermore, reading the BDS Call of 2005 [2], endorsed by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian civil society, one can note an explicit call on conscientious Israelis to join the movement for freedom, justice and equal rights for all. Therefore, what is important for determining normalization is not mere collaboration with Israelis, but rather, the substance and premise of this collaboration.

Normalization is an English translation of the Arabic word *tatbi'*, making something abnormal appear normal. As stated before by PACBI:

It is helpful to think of normalization as a “colonization of the mind,” whereby the oppressed subject comes to believe that the oppressor's reality is the only “normal” reality that must be subscribed to, and that the oppression is a fact of life that must be coped with. Those who engage in normalization either ignore this oppression, or accept it as the *status quo* that can be lived with. In an attempt to whitewash its violations of international law and human rights, Israel attempts to re-brand itself, or present itself as normal - - even “enlightened” -- through an intricate array of relations and activities encompassing hi-tech, cultural, legal, LGBT and other realms. [3]

Another aspect of normalization is the attempt to use Palestinians and/or Arabs as “fig leaves” [4]. In the context of applying the BDS movement's guidelines for the international academic and cultural boycott of Israel, PACBI sometimes faces scenarios where boycott bashers attempt to redeem their conscience, and with it some moral ground, by using token Palestinians (or more rarely other Arabs) as a fig leaf to cover up their complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. While the pool of available “fig leaves” is diminishing every year, thanks to the recent impressive spread of BDS consciousness among Palestinians and in the Arab world, there are still those who are ready to accept for their names to be

manipulated in the cynical political agendas of international boycott violators.

From the above, one can see that normalization applies to relationships that convey a misleading or deceptive image of normalcy, of symmetry, of parity, for a patently abnormal and asymmetric relationship of colonial oppression and apartheid [5].

For a Palestinian-Israeli relationship not to be a form of normalization two basic conditions must be met: (1) the Israeli side must support full and comprehensive rights for all Palestinians in accordance with international law, and (2) the relationship itself must involve a form of resistance to Israel's occupation and violations of international law. Israelis who support our comprehensive rights under international law and struggle with Palestinians against the wall, checkpoints, and other forms of apartheid are our partners. Relationships with them do not constitute normalization. Activities such as those of "Seeds of Peace" [6], "One Voice" [7], and other such organizations, however, are clear examples of normalization, regardless of what those involved in the projects claim. They deceptively portray Palestinians and Israelis as if they were on the same footing, without any clear-cut position on ending Israeli's multi-tiered system of oppression.

As a leading Palestinian youth activist put it, the only normal relationship between those from the oppressor community and those from the oppressed community is *co-resistance*, not *co-existence* [8]. Co-existence can only happen (ethically speaking) after the end of oppression, when both sides can enjoy equal rights.

### **Partial or Full Boycott of Israel?**

After failing to slow the spread of BDS, motivated by genuine fear of the demise of Zionism, and with an explicit "save apartheid Israel" agenda, some so-called left-leaning Zionists have recently tried to muddy the waters by suggesting a Zionist-friendly boycott to undermine the Palestinian-led BDS movement [9], which is attracting an increasing number of younger Jewish activists in the West, especially on college campuses. BDS is an ethically-consistent rights-based movement that is anchored in international law and universal human rights. As such, BDS rejects and cannot coexist with racism of any type, including Zionism. A "Zionist BDS" is as logical as a "racist equality"!

BDS is not about saving Israel as an apartheid state, giving up some occupied lands that are densely populated by Palestinians to make Israel a more pure apartheid, and to prolong the life of this apartheid for several more years. BDS is all about achieving

Palestinian rights, paramount among which is the inalienable right to self determination, by ending Israel's three-tiered system of colonial and racial oppression: colonialism, occupation and apartheid.

Of course, PACBI and the BDS National Committee (BNC) advocate a complete boycott until Israel ends its three tiered system of oppression, not simply its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The main reason for this position is that, according to international law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, bears responsibility for the occupation and all its manifestations (colonies, wall, siege, house demolitions, etc.), not to mention the other grave violations of international law outside the realm of occupation, such as forcible displacement, denial of refugee rights, and the crime of apartheid (which an increasing number of legal scholars is now convinced Israel is guilty of). The BDS movement calls for boycotting Israel as the state responsible for denying Palestinian rights, just as South Africa was the target of boycott due to its apartheid regime, and China is the target of some boycotts due to its occupation of Tibet, and Sudan is the target of some boycotts due to its crimes in Darfur. Only in Israel's case do we hear objections to boycotting the state that is responsible for egregious violations of international law, and do we hear suggestions instead to boycott only some manifestation of these violations (settlements), not the root cause.

Still, BDS is all about context sensitivity. This means that supporters of BDS in any particular context decide what to boycott or divest from, how to pursue their local goals, how to build alliances, and how to campaign--with sensitivity to their own political, cultural and organizational contexts. Partners may decide to boycott only companies implicated in Israel's occupation, and that is perfectly fine if done tactically, not out of a principled rejection of a *full* boycott when the circumstances allow it. This is the strength of BDS; it is not a centralized, dogmatic or command-driven movement. It is a morally-consistent, citizens driven, human rights movement that has basic principles of human rights and international law as its common denominator, and a lot of creativity and initiative when it comes to implementing the various forms of BDS in any context.

Whether British, American, German or Dutch supporters of BDS, wish to campaign for a selective boycott or not is entirely up to them, it goes without saying, as we believe in local, context-sensitive initiatives, as explained above. But we sincerely hope they will respect the Palestinian right to self-determination, and will not attempt to speak on our behalf when it comes to asserting our

comprehensive rights and civil resistance strategies, as that would be a form of patronizing that is unbecoming to a relationship of partnership in the struggle for a just peace—the only peace that oppressed communities the world over can ever seek.

As was the case in the international struggle against apartheid in South Africa, taking guidance from broadly-endorsed representatives of the oppressed, in this case the Palestinian leadership of the BDS movement, the BNC, and respecting boycott guidelines set by the great majority in the oppressed society is an ethical obligation for any conscientious person or group genuinely standing in solidarity with the oppressed. This must be understood in the context of a decentralized global movement based on respect for partners' tactics and choice of targets, so long as the overall principles of the movement are safeguarded.

#### Notes:

- [1] <http://boycottisrael.info/>
- [2] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>
- [3] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749>
- [4] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1645>
- [5] <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/RToP-Cape-Town-full-findings2.pdf>
- [6] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1220>
- [7] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1436>
- [8]
- <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=405314>
- [9] [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/19/opinion/to-save-israel-boycott-the-settlements.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/19/opinion/to-save-israel-boycott-the-settlements.html?_r=1&ref=opinion)
- [10]
- <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>
- [11]
- <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/The%20Bethlehem%20call.pdf>
- [12] <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article//from-south-africa-to-pale.html>

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### Respected' Israeli Universities offer courses in lying for Israel

Haifa and Tel Aviv Universities are offering course in hasbara for Israeli and International students respectively. Hasbara is the name Israelis give to propaganda and disinformation in defence of Israel and the Occupation.

While many courses in many universities worldwide can be accused of bias these are unusual in overtly teaching the skills of distortion and lying.

Trainers on the courses include: Mark Regev, famous worldwide for defending the indefensible and saying what is convenient rather than what is accurate; and Neil Lazarus who promoted a video

falsely claiming that the Gaza Flotilla was homophobic. The Tel Aviv course is supported by *Stand with Us* an extremist pro-Israel US group associated with Islamophobic funders.

This is yet more evidence to justify the boycott of Israeli Universities: they do not promote the values of disinterested enquiry expected of any university.

Based on Israeli universities becoming Hasbara mills.

Contributed by Mike Cushman

<http://972mag.com/israeli-universities-becoming-hasbara-mills/38929/>

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### Italian activists denounce 'Brand Israel' at Cartoons Festival of Rome

Italian activists demanded and were granted the opportunity to speak prior to the presentation by Hanan Kaminski, director of the school of animation of the Bezalel Academy of Jerusalem. The BDS activists informed the audience that the participation of Bezalel, with the sponsorship and financial support of the Israeli Embassy in Italy, represents one of many attempts by Israel to use culture to rebrand its image and divert attention from policies of occupation, colonialism and apartheid.

In 2005, Nissim Ben-Sheetrit of Israel's Foreign Ministry stated: "We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and we do not differentiate between propaganda and culture."

[The standard Israeli sponsorship contract states:](#)

"The service provider [or in English, the artist] is aware that the purpose of ordering services from him is to promote the policy interests of the State of Israel via culture and art, including contributing to creating a positive image for Israel.

Based on extract from Stop Agrexco Italia

Contributed by Mike Cushman

[Rome, Italy: Boycott Action Condemning the Use of Culture to Cover Israeli Crimes](#)

## **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

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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.

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[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 welcome.

Email them to: [newsletter@bricup.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.uk)

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