

BRICUP Newsletter 59

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British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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Ariel College: Q & A

Q. When is a university not a university?

A. When it is in a West Bank settlement.

Let's call it Ariel College for now. The Israelis used to call it the College of Judea and Samaria, which nicely obscures the fact that it is based in the second-largest settlement in the occupied West Bank. The town of Ariel, founded in 1978, now houses some 20,000 settlers, whose wastewater is discharged untreated into the Al-Matwi valley, polluting the main source of drinking water for

Salfeet and other Palestinian villages with heavy metals.

The College was founded in 1982. It has about 10,000 students, mostly drawn from central Israel with 15% coming from settlements. A glowing article in the Jerusalem Report in August 2000 noted that at that time there were 150 "Israeli Arabs" in the student body, though no "Palestinians". The report continues cheerfully:

“Nine of every 10 students at the college live in sovereign Israel. They cross the 1967 Green Line every day, uninterrupted, without ideological inhibitions and with no qualms of conscience. Many of them say they chose the college because it is close to home thanks to the convenient access highway, because of the high level of studies or due to the pleasant social atmosphere. In conversations with students, the terms 'occupation', 'occupied territory' or even 'territories' were rarely mentioned. None of the students had any doubts about the future of the college, none of them raised any questions.”

Most academics in the UK were probably unaware of the College until the Association of University Teachers voted at its 2005 Council meeting "To call on all AUT members to boycott Bar-Ilan University until it severs all academic links with the College of Judea and Samaria and with any other college located in an illegal settlement in the Occupied Territories." Bar-Ilan University had been instrumental in founding the College and continued to have strong links with it.

One of the documents which persuaded AUT delegates to support the motion was an Open Letter from Gush Shalom to Prof. Moshe Kaveh:

"In all of this the Bar Ilan University, of which you are president, made itself a major partner - indeed, since a violation of international law is involved, the term 'accomplice' may well be used. The 'Judea and Samaria College' which you and your colleagues established and nurtured has a central role in the settlement of Ariel, increasing its population and its economic clout. The college's faculty and students are prime users of the 'Trans-Samaria Road', the four-lane highway which was created on confiscated Palestinian land in order to provide quick transportation to Ariel. The Palestinian villagers on whose land this highway was built are excluded from using it. They are relegated to a rugged, bumpy mountain trail. ... It is you and your colleagues, Professor Kaveh, who started mixing academics with politics."

The response of the Israeli government to the AUT boycott was predictable and immediate: the Cabinet voted by 13-7 to declare the College a university. The initiative apparently came from the then Minister of Education, Limor Livnat, who wanted something in return for agreeing to Sharon's "Gaza disengagement plan". Perhaps the intention was to get Bar-Ilan off the hook by cutting its creation loose. However, the move was not at all popular with mainstream Israeli academia, who saw it as a threat to the funding and status of their own existing institutions.

Prof. Shlomo Sand of Tel Aviv University, who left no doubt about his opposition to the AUT boycott in general, took a more principled position of opposing the settlements. He warned in Ha'aretz that:

"the government of Israel's upgrading of the College of Judea and Samaria in Ariel into a university might encourage a spread of the boycott to other European countries. Ariel's university must be considered an illegal outpost ... The fact that an Israeli university like Bar-Ilan is giving sponsorship to this college is a mark of shame on the Israeli academic world. Any

other cooperation, open or *sub rosa*, by Israel's universities with this college is illegitimate, and sabotages the status of Israeli academia in the world. To silence the British, the lecturers' organizations in Israel as well as the heads of the universities must make every possible effort to prevent the Council for Higher Education from upgrading the status of the College of Judea and Samaria, until such time as it is relocated inside the territory of the State of Israel."

Sand called for Israeli academics to boycott the College along with all other settlement activities.

The plans rumbled on, and surfaced again in January 2010 when Defence Minister Ehud Barak accorded University status to the College, this time apparently at the request of Avigdor Lieberman. Why, one might ask, was this a decision for the Minister of Defence? Uri Avery answers the question:

"Ariel is occupied territory. In the occupied territories, the army is the sovereign power. Barak is in charge of the army. The directive to upgrade the Ariel College was given by Barak to the commanding officer. As Yossi Sarid, a former Minister of Education, pointed out, the 'Ariel University Center' is the only civil university in the democratic world set up by the army."

However, the decision was not accepted by the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE), for all the wrong reasons. The CHE was still opposing it when in July this year the Judea and Samaria Council for Higher Education voted 11-2 to recognise what was by now known as Ariel University Center as a fully-fledged university (Unsurprisingly the meeting was held at Bar-Ilan). Despite vocal protests from the Israeli so-called "left", the decision was immediately welcomed by the Finance Minister and by Gideon Sa'ar the Education minister, in apparent conflict with his other role as chair of the CHE.

All of this raises interesting questions for those of us outside Israel who support BDS, including academic boycott. It is tempting to give way to feelings of *schadenfreude* and sit back as Israeli academics and politicians fight each other and agonise over whether

a college in "the territories" is of sufficient academic merit to deserve an upgrade. It is equally tempting to exploit the divisions and support those Israeli academics calling for a boycott of Ariel College, along with the actors boycotting the Ariel Regional Center for the Performing Arts. I believe, however, that the only principled position is to continue to support a boycott of *all* Israeli academic and cultural institutions, and to point out that just as Ariel "University" would never have existed without the involvement of Bar-Ilan, *all* Israeli universities are complicit in the occupation, whichever side of the Green Line they happen to lie on. That does not prevent us, though, from drawing attention to the peculiar absurdities and ironies of the ongoing Ariel College saga.

References

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Sue Blackwell

5th December 2012

The end of collaboration between Ariel College and the Technical University of Denmark

The Danish journal *DanWatch* revealed on November 11th that the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) has been working with Ariel University. Apparently, the DTU collaboration dates back to the 1990s. When *DanWatch* presented the information to DTU, the president Anders Bjarklev stopped the collaboration immediately: He said, "We ended the cooperation immediately after we were made aware of it. The money that was devoted to analyses in the laboratories of Ariel University has been suspended and will be paid back to the fund that supplied the finances."

The President of the DTU also said, "It is problematic for DTU to be associated with illegal settlements. If you fund analyses in laboratories at Ariel University, it can be seen as supporting a settlement, something we will not do."

The Minister for Foreign Affairs commented, "We do not want Danish scientific institutions to participate in activities that may help to maintain the illegal settlements. If there has been any doubt about our position on this matter, the case of DTU is a good opportunity to reiterate. And I am satisfied with DTU's decision,"

Readers of this Newsletter will know that this is not the only case of collaboration between a Danish University and an illegal Israeli settlement. Roskilde University, along with British Universities, are part of a research project, involving Dead Sea Laboratories, which is located in the settlement of Mitzpe Shalem and uses natural resources from Palestinian land.

The President of Roskilde University, Ib Poulsen, offered the extenuating argument that one does not need to assess the ethics if, as in this case, the research project is approved by the EU". But according to Mads Øvlisen, chairman of the Danish Mediation and Complaint Institution for Responsible Business Conduct, universities do have social responsibilities like companies: "I strongly believe that universities have a duty to look at who their partners are, and to have certain demands for partnership," He conceded that "It is a difficult balancing act, as it must be allowed, in scientific situations, to explore taboo or controversial areas."

At DTU ethical guidelines for research are in the making, giving the university better possibilities to avoid working with problematic partners in the future: "You cannot make a definitive ethical checklist for research collaborations, but you can at least create an awareness list so when the different

departments begin collaborations, they know that you need to have special attention to certain conditions that a scientific researcher might not immediately see," The development of ethical guidelines at Roskilde University, has been launched, However the development of guidelines for research partners was recently abandoned by the scientific panel but this is not the last word on the matter, Mihail Larsen, a member of the Academic Council, has said that, "It is unambitious to give up that way. It is possible to make principles of what a researcher should not do, and in this case you should not work with an occupying power" He continued, "At the Academic Council's meeting, it was agreed that the scientific panel's conclusion was not satisfactory and that guidelines need to be made."

Clearly the mood is changing and more careful ethical regulation of collaborative projects is needed. The unequivocal stand of the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs is particularly welcome.

Information from DanWatch

The PACBI Column

From Soweto 1976 to Gaza 2012: What we need is People's Power!

In 2008/2009 Gaza was bombed by Israeli Apache helicopters and F16 and V58 fighter planes for 22 days, ultimately causing the deaths of more than 1400 Palestinians, predominatly civilians. Israel, with all the impunity it has enjoyed since its establishment on the ruins of Palestinian society, returned to Gaza two weeks ago and repeated some of the same crimes in 8 days, launching 1800 aerial strikes, killing more than 175 Palestinians -- including 34 children, 11 women, 19 elderly -- and injuring 1399 people, including 465 children, 254 women, and 91 elderly, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.

Israel's academic institutions have played a key role in the planning, development, implementation and justification of this and many other Israeli war crimes against the Palestinian people. Tel Aviv University, for instance, takes pride in playing the central role in the development of the Israeli military doctrine of "disproportionate force" against Palestinian and Lebanese civilians.[1] Technion, Israel's institute of technology, takes credit for developing many of the deadly weapon systems used against civilians in Gaza and elsewhere in the

occupied Palestinian territory.[2] And the list goes on. This entrenched and fatal academic complicity in the commission of crimes against civilians has made PACBI and its partners around the world intensify their campaign for a comprehensive academic boycott of Israel in light of the latest massacre in Gaza.

Israel's belligerent and entirely disproportionate air, land and sea bombardment of the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip always damages vital infrastructure and terrifies the civilian population and is therefore considered a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. Such war crimes are forbidden under international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prescribes the manner in which armies must treat civilians during times of conflict.

But Israel has been getting away with these war crimes and crimes against humanity. The "international community," under U.S. hegemony, seems apathetic to the plight of the Palestinian people. In fact, from diplomatic support to intricate military, academic and economic relations, the US-European establishment has been deeply complicit in prolonging and strengthening Israel's system of occupation, colonialism and apartheid, as well as in justifying and whitewashing it.

The U.S. president, followed by a chorus of European leaders, duly jumped to Israel's defense, upholding its "right to defend itself,"[3] ignoring the fact that international law unequivocally stipulates that any injustice or unlawful act cannot give rise to a legal right or entitlement. Missing in such mantras is the right of the Palestinian people, the occupied, ethnically cleansed and oppressed, to self-determination and to defend itself against foreign occupation, a right that is granted by international law, within specific parameters. The British FM William Hague performed skillful acrobatics to spin the blame from the aggressor to the victim of aggression, claiming that " Hamas bears the greatest responsibility for the current crisis, as well as the ability to bring it most swiftly to an end!"[4]

It is crucial to contextualize Israel's latest war of aggression as part of an ongoing strategy of depriving Palestinians, especially in Gaza, of means of sustenance in order to "sear into their conscience" Israel's upper hand and the futility of resistance. The hermetic siege imposed on Gaza for more than 5 years, epitomized by Israel's use of a 'calorie count' to limit the flow of food into Gaza, is the most

deadly dimension of this patently criminal strategy [5].

This strategy, characterized by a former editor of Haaretz, a leading Israeli daily, as one of “expulsion” as well as “territorial seizure and apartheid” [6] has shaped Israel’s policy for a long time. As far back as 1992, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin wished Gaza “would just sink into the sea” [7]. The overwhelming majority of Gaza is made up of refugees ethnically cleansed by Zionist militias and later the state of Israel during the 1948 Nakba. The fact that Gazans are not born to Jewish mothers – the criterion used by Israel to determine who is Jewish -- is enough reason to deprive them of their UN-stipulated right to return to their homes and lands from which they were uprooted and exiled. The deeply colonial and racist Israeli logic views Palestinians, like the Afrikaner establishment viewed the Black natives of South Africa, as an inferior, hostile group of people that must be isolated in Bantustans, in accordance with the Oslo Accords’ terms, without calling them so; and if they show any resistance to this plan, they must get punished severely by transforming these Bantustans into “open-air prisons” or walled ghettos.

As a result of Israel's blockade on most imports and exports and its other policies designed to punish Gazans, about 40% of Gaza's workforce is now unemployed or without pay, and about 60% of its residents live in grinding poverty, according to various United Nations agencies’ reports. About 1.2 million of them are now dependent for their day-to-day survival on food handouts from U.N. or international agencies; an increasing number of Palestinian families in Gaza are unable to offer their children more than one meager meal a day, often little more than rice and boiled lentils. Fresh fruit and vegetables are beyond the reach of many families. Meat and chicken are impossibly expensive. And fish is unavailable in its markets because the Israeli navy has curtailed the movements of Gaza's fishermen.

The UN, EU and the “international community,” by and large, have remained silent in the face of atrocities committed by Israel. Hundreds of dead Palestinians have failed to convince them to act. We are, therefore, left with one option; an option that does not wait for the United Nations Security Council, namely: people’s power. This remains the only power capable of counteracting the massive imbalance between the oppressed Palestinians and their Israeli oppressors.

The horror of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa was challenged with a sustained campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions initiated in 1958 and given new urgency in the wake of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. This campaign led ultimately to the collapse of white rule in 1994 and the establishment of a multi-racial, democratic state.

Similarly, the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) has been gathering momentum since 2005. Gaza 2012, like Soweto 1976, cannot be ignored: it demands a response from all who believe in a common humanity. Now is the time to boycott the apartheid Israeli state, to divest and to impose sanctions against it. A crucial dimension of BDS that is more urgent than ever is an academic boycott of Israel’s universities, which have once again been shown to be full partners in crime.

Notes

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The World Social Forum – Free Palestine November 28-December 1, 2012

The World Social Forum (WSF) has for many years been a regular fixture at Porto Alegre, a sizeable but otherwise undistinguished city towards the very south of Brazil. What was unique about this version of the event is the concentration on a single area of social concern. That this was Palestine indicates the centrality that this issue now has on the world’s social and political agenda.

The number of participants seems to have numbered between one and two thousand. (The dearth of centrally-provided information may have been a consequence of the self-organising nature of the

event.) Palestinians were there in force, either from Palestine itself or from the world-wide Palestinian diaspora. The other striking feature about the participants was the strong presence of young women, from all round the world, committed and even fierce activists. The movement evidently has an energetic and purposeful future.

The whole event received tremendous boosts from the UN vote to give Palestine recognition as a nation, and Stevie Wonder's cancellation of his performance at an event in support of the IDF, both announced during the WSF.

There were as far as we could count just 9 participants from the United Kingdom. This seemed not out of line with the contingents from other European countries. North Americans, perhaps especially Canadians, were far more numerous. Brazilians out-numbered everyone else.

I was there as the sole representative of BRICUP, with the main purpose of taking part in the two sessions that had been scheduled on academic boycott. These had been instigated and planned together with a loose electronic consortium of representatives from PACBI, USACBI and (Canadian) Faculty for Palestine. (Sadly none of the other constituent members of the European federation EPACBI was able to be there. And the intending member of India's InACBI was prevented by the length of his entry visa process.) The chance to meet and work harmoniously with these international colleagues was both a pleasure, and groundwork for future collaborations.

Our two sessions were very well attended – between 35 and 45 in the two cases, way above the average for non-plenary sessions at WSF. The first of our meetings laid out the political basis for and accumulated experience with academic boycott, while the second was for strategising about strengthening the campaign. Discussion was lively, and the dozen or so copies of the BRICUP pamphlet I had been able to fit into my bag were snapped up.

It was generally believed that the reason for holding this WSF in Brazil was to strengthen pro-Palestinian activism in Latin America. That was true in spades for the academic boycott. None of the organisers of our sessions was aware of previous academic boycott activity there, and certainly there has been no national organisation promoting boycott in any Latin American country. Our hope therefore was that we would make useful contacts at WSF and especially at our advertised sessions with sympathetic pro-Palestinian academics. That hope however was to be unfulfilled. The saving grace though was the energetic and vocal band of students

from the Palestine Front at a Brazilian university who attended our second session. Contact was established, and hopefully will be maintained and developed. We can hope that the students will show their elders the way.

Jonathan Rosenhead

Stevie Wonder cancels his performance for the Friends of the IDF!

On November 29th, the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (FIDF) confirmed that legendary musician Stevie Wonder cancelled a planned performance for the FIDF Annual Gala Fundraiser at the request of the United Nations, thus signalling a mainstream shift of what can be interpreted as implicit endorsement of BDS! The decision followed massive mobilization by BDS-supporting people of conscience and organizations around the world.

Stevie Wonder's cancellation letter reads:-

“Given the current and very delicate situation in the Middle East, and with a heart that has always cried out for world unity, I will not be performing at the FIDF Gala on December 6th . I am respectfully withdrawing my participation from this year's event to avoid the appearance of partiality. As a Messenger of Peace, I am and have always been against war, any war, anywhere. In consistently keeping with my spirit of giving, I will make a personal contribution to organizations that support Israeli and Palestinian children with disabilities. Hoping for one world, one people, one day.”

Anna Baltzer responded on behalf of those who had urged cancellation:

“As a diverse group of people of conscience and organizations around the world, it is with great joy that we applaud your decision to cancel your performance for the Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (FIDF) annual gala fundraiser. With this principled move on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, you have been true to your title as a UN Messenger of Peace, for it is only through justice for the Palestinians that peace can finally be realized. By signalling your belief in accountability of the IDF for its ongoing abuses of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people, your decision gives hope to those around the world who support freedom, justice, and

equality, particularly following the latest Israeli brutal aggression in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. Thank you, Stevie Wonder, for standing on the right side of history.”

An open letter from Kairos Palestine to the Bishop of Birmingham on the occasion of the Batsheva dance performance.

Kairos Palestine (www.kairospalestine.ps) is a group of Palestinian Christians who authored “A moment of Truth” – Christian Palestinian’s word to the world about the occupation of Palestine, an expression “of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering”, and a call for solidarity in ending over six decades of oppression. The document was published in December 2009.

The letter to the bishop reads as follows:

The Right Reverend David Urquhart,
Bishop of Birmingham
Bishop’s Croft, Old Church Road
Harborne, Birmingham B17 0G

Bethlehem, 11th of October 2012

Your Grace,

This letter comes to you from the land of The Holy One, as an appeal from your brethren in faith, authors of the Kairos Palestine document, the little flock that dare address you both as a prominent leader of the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom but also as a key Board member of the Birmingham Hippodrome.

We, Palestinian Christians, believe that, as members of the one body of Christ, we are dependent on each other’s support at all times, especially when one of us is suffering. We are confident that you are aware of the ongoing injustices that have robbed us of our rights for more than 60 years, but even amidst our affliction, our spirits cannot be broken and we call upon you in faith, hope and love to hear our call. As we appreciate your prayers, we count upon your honest stewardship and your commitment to justice for all created in the image of God.

Since December 2009, Kairos Palestine has reached many churches and touched the hearts of a number of peace-makers of all faiths. We have encouraged theological discussions, reflections and opened up

new venues of dialogue and research, seeking application and implementation of moral values as well as international law to impress upon the State of Israel to rectify its wrongs.

Some of the successful means of influencing change have been the various positive non-violent tools used around the world. There is a growing awareness among individuals, organizations, movements, churches and countries that the Kairos, the opportune moment is NOW.

Your grace, as a religious leader, your word must have considerable weight since we have no doubt that you follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ in seeking justice and pursuing it as well as daring to tell the truth. Therefore we, your brothers and sisters in faith and humanity, appeal to you:

It has come to our attention that the Birmingham Hippodrome will be welcoming the Israeli Batsheva Dance Company in November 13-14, 2012. The Batsheva Dance Company is known as a cultural ambassador for Israel. For us as Palestinian Christians, cultural exchange is not apart from politics. Therefore, cultural and academic boycott are as important as economic boycott to prick the conscience of oppressors. The goal of BDS and therefore the goal of academic and cultural boycott are to end the occupation and secure peace and security for all. BDS is a nonviolent means of affecting positive change for the welfare of both peoples. From the Kairos Palestine perspective, boycott against Israel “is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.” From the Kairos Document “A moment of truth”, “Our word to the International Community”, p. 16).

Now we urge you, as Palestinian Christians, to hear our call of faith, hope and love from the heart of our suffering. We urge you, your Grace, to discourage the hosting of the Israeli Batsheva Dance Company at the Birmingham Hippodrome.

Kairos Palestine, Bethlehem

Notices

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

Publication date.

We aim to publish the monthly Newsletter around the end of the first week of each month.

Letters to the Editor

Please note that we do have a “Letters to the Editor” facility. We urge you to use it. It provides an opportunity for valuable input from our supporters and gives you the opportunity to contribute to the debate and development of the campaign. Please send letters to arrive on or before the first day of each month for consideration for that month’s newsletter. Aim not to exceed 250 words if possible. Letters and comments should be sent to newsletter@bricup.org.uk

Announcement

Professor Peter Alexander of the University of Johannesburg has asked us to circulate the following announcement of a new book .

Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer is published by Jacana Media. It will be available for purchase at good bookshops from December 7th. 2012

Bishop Joseph Seoka, the President of the South African Council of Churches, will be the guest speaker at the launch of this book, the first on the Marikana Massacre. Seoka, a key witness at the Marikana Inquiry, says that Lonmin's failure to negotiate with the strikers was a primary cause of the tragedy, and he ridiculed police explanations that focus on *sangomas* and *muti*.

The book, *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*, is authored by the University of Johannesburg professor Peter Alexander, who holds the South African Research Chair in Social Change, and a team of researchers that included Thapelo Lekowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell and Bongani Xezwi.

The launch will be facilitated by Prof. Adam Habib, UJ's deputy vice-chancellor for research, and it will also be addressed by Tholakele 'Bhele' Dlunga, one of Marikana strikers, and by the books' authors.

The heart of the book is a series of interviews with strikers, most of them recorded on 'the mountain' close to where 34 of their comrades were killed on 16 August. Prof. Jane Duncan, chair of Media and Information Studies at Rhodes University says: 'The book provides a bottom-up account of the Marikana story, to correct an imbalance in many official and media accounts that privilege the viewpoints of governments and business, at the expense of workers.' Prof. John Saul, the Canadian political scientist, one of the world's top experts on liberation struggle in Southern Africa, comments that the book is: 'well written, extremely scrupulous in its research and forceful in its argument'.

Despite the relevance of the book for the work of the inquiry, and although it is based on academic research by a team led by a top social scientist, the Farlam Commission refused to receive a copy, arguing that, to do so, 'may create a perception of bias on the part of the commission'.

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
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