

# BRICUP Newsletter 78

July 2014

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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**Medical professionalism and abuse of  
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*Responses by BRICUP members to the British  
Medical Journal concerning the BMJ Editorial  
at BMJ 2014; 348 doi: , April 29<sup>th</sup> 2014. See  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g2947>*

**1] From Dr Derek Summerfield, Honorary  
Senior Lecturer, Institute of Psychiatry1,  
King's College, London.**

It is three years since we last reported on the progress of a medical ethical appeal representing 725 doctors (235 from UK) from 43 countries.(1) In May 2009 we asked the World Medical Association (WMA), the official watchdog on medical ethics worldwide, to take action on the voluminous evidence base attesting to systematic collusion with torture by Israeli doctors, protected by the Israeli Medical Association (IMA), over many years. The WMA is mandated to ensure that its members, which include the IMA, adhere to the Declaration of Tokyo: doctors must not participate in torture but are also mandated to report and denounce it wherever encountered.

The WMA will not act against Israel. It refused even to acknowledge our letters and evidence, and WMA President Blachar (also the longstanding IMA President) used London lawyers to threaten me as convenor with a libel suit. The BMA stonewalled our appeals for them to assist at the WMA. Thus in 2010 we escalated our appeal to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

More than 3 years have passed, and despite many reminders, we have had no substantive response from Rapporteur Manfred Nowak or from his successor Juan Mendez. In March 2013 the Rapporteur's Office informed us that the IMA and WMA were civil society organisations outside their mandate. To whom, then, are they accountable? However they added that they "will be willing to act on information that concerns the actions of Israeli state agents in specific cases". This we sent, drawing on authoritative new documentation of actual cases, with named doctors in a report that has been reported on in the BMJ.(2)(3) The presence of doctors in units where torture is routine offers legitimacy to the

interrogators. Specific violations included: failure to document injuries in the medical notes, precluding victims from ever presenting evidence in court; returning the victim to the torturers despite evidence of torture; falsifying the medical record (eg recording torture injuries as resulting from falling down stairs); passing confidential medical information to the interrogators to assist their effectiveness. In not a single case did doctors act in accordance with the Declaration of Tokyo, showing that this was institutionalised malpractice. Repeated attempts to get the IMA to act have yielded nothing. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel say that the IMA sees itself as an institutional branch of the State and will not contest its practices. New cases continue to come to light.(4)

A further year on, and the Rapporteur on Torture has still not responded to the case material he invited us to send. Yet in 2009 he was tasked by the UN Human Rights Council to prioritise the issue of medical complicity. Elsewhere the signs are no more encouraging. Your editorial alludes to the contribution of US doctors and psychologists to the design and implementation of 'enhanced' torture techniques used on detainees in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.(4) Their names are known but the Ethics committees of the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations have refused to act. Is the international regulation of the ethical behaviour of doctors as regards torture largely a dead letter? Our campaign continues.

**Dr Derek Summerfield,**  
**27<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

#### References

- 1] Meyers A, Summerfield D. The campaign about doctors and torture in Israel two years on. *BMJ* 2022;343:d5223.
- 2] Physicians for Human Rights-Israel/Public Committee Against Torture in Israel. Doctoring the Evidence, Abandoning the Victim: The Involvement of Medical Professionals in Torture and Ill Treatment in Israel. [www.stoptorture.org.il/en](http://www.stoptorture.org.il/en).
- 3] Gulland A. Doctors in Israeli detention facilities are complicit in torture, says report. *BMJ* 2011;343:d7200.
- 4] Devi S. Israeli doctors accused of collusion with torture. *Lancet* 2013;381:794.
- 5] Kimball S, Soldz S. Medical professionalism and abuse of detainees in war on terror. *BMJ* 2014;348:g2947.

## **2] From Dr Christopher Burns-Cox, Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.**

I recommend anyone interested to read the report commented on in this editorial. (The link to the editorial is given above: in that editorial the actual report is cited as reference 2). The report is entitled Ethics Abandoned and covers many areas that our professional associations should attend to. It calls upon them to strengthen ethical guidance, to investigate abuses and speak out publicly against them and to aggressively discipline members found to have participated.

The BMA has told me that the workings of the International Committee are secret to ordinary BMA members so we cannot know what the BMA is or is not doing - shameful and hard to believe but true.

**Christopher Burns-Cox,**  
**23 May 2014**

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## **An open letter from The UK-Palestine Mental Health Network to Psychological Therapists**

### **On the location of the 2015 EABCT Conference in Israel**

As Psychological Therapists we associate our roles with compassion, reflection, and integrity. Yet we know many of our professions have sometimes identified with the negative prejudices, as well as the positive values, of our social environment (eg in relation to racism, sexism and homophobia).

For complex reasons the West has often been an unthinking protector of Israel, and has effectively colluded with the dehumanisation of the Palestinians. So we need to take care not to find ourselves, as therapists, unwittingly endorsing the oppression of the Palestinians simply by default, through thoughtlessness. The UK-Palestine Mental Health Network is concerned that such care was not taken when the European Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies (EABCT) decided to locate its 45th annual conference in Israel next year.

The conference publicity speaks in terms of Israel as a centre of modernity and tolerance, "a modern, diverse country... a multicultural country which has developed significantly over the last century, having absorbed great numbers of people from a

wide variety of countries and cultures". The accompanying promotional video describes Israel as a "bridge" between peoples of the region, as "a rainbow of cultures and traditions". Delegates are invited to view the Conference as an inter-group relations event that might even make some contribution to "political negotiations, peace-making and conflict resolution". It is a Conference offering "hope and compassion" to "people in conflict".

This gives a highly distorted picture and completely ignores Israel's signal failure to integrate those people for whom Palestine has been home for centuries, and its policies of military occupation and systematic dispossession of the Palestinians. Far from promoting inter-group integration, it pursues discriminatory policies that have led many to conclude that it meets the United Nations criteria for an apartheid society (1).

In Palestine/Israel, the norms of ethnic equality and non-discrimination that are taken for granted in Europe do not apply. The process of dispossessing Palestinians of their homes and land to make way for Israeli settlers is taking place within walking distance of the conference venue. House demolitions are a frequent occurrence in East Jerusalem, and in the Negev area of southern Israel where Bedouin villages are routinely bulldozed to make way for Israeli settlement (see 2). The means used to suppress Palestinian resistance also conflict with international standards: the widespread use of imprisonment without trial and torture, and the excessive and unnecessary use of lethal force in response to demonstrations, and the persistent mistreatment of children (3). Research demonstrates the impact of imposing 'chronic humiliation' on Palestinians' mental health - 'less access to basic resources; higher insecurity or fear; higher feelings of depression; higher feelings of being broken or destroyed; higher trauma-related stress' (4).

The obstacles to progress do not reside in the shortage of confidence-building initiatives, bringing people together to realise one another's humanity through a mutual exploration of each group's past historical trauma, something to mourn and move on from. The Nakba, the dispossession of the Palestinian people, did not only happen in 1948 - it is an on-going, daily process, generated by Israel's quest to establish a 'Jewish State' in a country inhabited by more than one people.

Across the world a solidarity movement has grown, including numerous Jewish groups and Israeli human rights organisations, fighting to achieve justice in Palestine. 2014 has been designated the UN's Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. We would urge those considering whether to attend this Conference to first explore the history, the ideological context, and most importantly the lived experience of the Palestinians. In particular we would encourage you to look at the extensive evidence of the impact of the Occupation on the mental health of Palestinians, (particularly children) (eg 5,6,2).

The Conference has been presented as being an inter-group event that might actually contribute to peace. In actuality, it will inevitably be a deeply divisive event. Palestinian CBT therapists who live within a few miles of the conference venue will find it almost impossible to attend because of the difficulty of obtaining travel permits and of getting through the Israeli checkpoints. Israeli therapists living in the illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories will be free to come and go. The tours offered to delegates provide a one-sided view of the realities of the situation and disguise the political and historical realities. Conference participants will not be able to avoid implicitly endorsing the illegal and inhumane policies that are doing incalculable harm to the psychological well-being of the Palestinians (and, it must be acknowledged, of many Israelis too).

It is vital, therefore, to respond to what Palestinian mental health professionals have requested of us, in *their* efforts to find a non-violent road to re-structuring relations between the Palestinian and Israeli communities. Their position is clear. At their last conference the Palestine Union of Social Workers and Psychologists, joining with many other mental health organisations (7), asked that we do not participate in their oppression by normalising a status quo that means the denial of their civil rights, exclusion from the protections of international law and from the social norms embodied in the International Declaration of Human Rights. Yet this is exactly what participating in this conference would amount to.

Desmond Tutu once famously remarked that 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.' He, along with many other men and women of principle from academia, the professions, the arts, and veterans of the civil rights movements across the world (such as Stephen Hawking, Alice Walker, Ken

Loach and Arundhati Roy) have refused to respond to Israel's efforts to present itself as an ordinary member of the international community, and have endorsed the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Our message to those who are considering attending this conference is: find out what is going on in Palestine/Israel. It is important not to protest later 'we didn't realise what was really happening; we wouldn't have gone if we'd known it was like that.' Most important, perhaps, is to find out how Palestinian mental health professionals - our counterparts - would view participation in this event and to not support those who contribute to their dehumanisation.

Dr Martin Kemp for The UK-Palestine Mental Health Network. July 2014

### Notes

- 1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime\\_of\\_apartheid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_of_apartheid)
- 2] [http://www.pcc-ger.org/images/publications/pdf/brokenhomes\\_en.pdf](http://www.pcc-ger.org/images/publications/pdf/brokenhomes_en.pdf)
- 3] <http://www.dci-palestine.org/>
- 4] Barber et al. The Lancet, 382, S7,5 December 2013
- 5] Abdeen et al. 'Psychological reactions to Israeli occupation: Findings from the national study of school-based screening in Palestine' International Journal of Behavioral Development 2008 32: 290
- 6] [http://www.child-soldiers.org/psychosocial\\_report\\_reader.php?id=309](http://www.child-soldiers.org/psychosocial_report_reader.php?id=309)
- 7] [http://www.bdsmovement.net/call#Endorsed by](http://www.bdsmovement.net/call#Endorsed_by) :

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## **A letter to the Guardian editor by Haim Bresheeth: Israeli racism has to be abandoned.**

I found it odd that the Guardian has chosen to offer space for the standard Israeli argument about supposed specificity of the Israeli psyche (Anshel Pfeiffer, "*These Murders Reawaken Israel's Deepest Fears*" July 2, 2014). Supposedly, Israelis stay children well into their twenties, while Palestinians are adults since babyhood, to read Mr. Pfeiffer. His graphic description of the emotions which, he claims, all Israelis share automatically when one of them is harmed, do not, one assumes on reading, affect other nationalities. As someone who has read Mr. Pfeiffer's frequent blogs in Haaretz during the last decade, I can report he has exhibited no such sensitivity in his columns to the shed blood of over 1400 Palestinians in Gaza, killed by his erstwhile countrymen, and including hundreds of babies and children who died for no fault of their

own, unless being a Palestinian is an offence punishable by death, as many in Israel seem to believe. Did these babies not have mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters whose pain he fails to even imagine? Apparently, the pain of Israelis is superior to that of others.

This failure is at the core of the conflict. Hath not a Palestinian eyes? Hath not a Palestinian hands, senses, dimensions, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, and cooled by the same winter and warmed in the summer, as a Jew is? If you prick him, does he not bleed?

The main difficulty Mr. Pfeiffer finds with the illegal settlements and the brutal occupation of Palestine, is a "situation where Israeli teenagers are at constant risk of disappearing." Apparently the occupation itself is not a problem for the Palestinian. It is fascinating to observe that with the strongest army in the Middle East, Israel cannot achieve security. It can only achieve fear and pain for all involved. Until this is understood in Israel, we are unlikely to see any change.

Prof. Haim Bresheeth,

July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014

SOAS, London.

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### **The PACBI Column**

## **Israel must be held accountable for its collective punishment of Palestinians**

- **Palestinian organisations condemn Israeli operations in West Bank and Gaza as collective punishment**
- **Palestinians call for military embargo and boycott action**

Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) activists are urging governments and international civil society to take action to hold Israel to account for its continued collective punishment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza following the disappearance and killing of three Israeli settlers.

Zaid Shuaibi, a spokesperson for the [Palestinian BDS National Committee](#), the civil society

coalition that leads and supports the BDS movement, said:

“Israel’s on-going actions are designed to terrorise Palestinians and constitute collective punishment. Military violence, collective punishment and the deliberate targeting of civilians are endemic to Israel’s of decades old system of occupation, colonisation and apartheid.”

“Israel is able to act with utter impunity because of the military, economic and political support it receives from governments around the world. We call on international governments to impose a two-way arms embargo immediately and to suspend bilateral agreements until Israel fully complies with international law”.

“At a time when mainstream bodies such as the Bill Gates Foundation, the Presbyterian Church USA and the US United Methodist Church are divesting from companies profiting from Israel’s occupation, including G4S and Hewlett Packard, we call on people of conscience to intensify BDS pressure.”

Shuabi also called on people of conscience and supporters of BDS to consider joining [the Month Against the Apartheid Wall](#) that is marking the 10th anniversary of the International Court of Justice ruling that Israel’s apartheid Wall is illegal.

Hundreds of military raids have been launched across the occupied West Bank since June 12, with more than 1000 private homes and refugee camps and the offices of civil society organisations ransacked.

At least 10 Palestinians have been killed and many more have been injured. More than 500 Palestinians have been detained and initial reports suggest that many of those arrested are held under administrative detention, a form of detention without charge or trial on secret evidence. The number of children held in Israeli jails has risen to 250. Israel has also imposed severe restrictions of movement.

On Wednesday, Israeli settlers kidnapped and killed a 16 year old from the Shuafat area of Palestinian East Jerusalem and Israeli soldiers attacked Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Palestinian organisations have [detailed](#) how Israel’s recent actions constitute collective punishment, a crime prohibited by the Fourth

Geneva Convention as well as customary international humanitarian law.

Israeli occupation forces have also targeted the campuses of Birzeit University near Ramallah and the Arab American University in Jenin, resulting in the detention and arrest of students and staff and greatly infringing the Palestinian right to education.

Samia Botmeh, a professor at Birzeit University and a steering committee member with the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, said:

“Israel’s latest violations against Palestinian universities are part of its long history of oppression aimed at Palestinian education. Closure of universities for periods stretching to years, murder and detention of students and professors, destruction of universities’ properties and labs as well as the banning of lists of books have been Israel’s systematic policies targeting Palestinian education.”

“It must be emphasized that throughout the decades of oppression, no Israeli university or association of Israeli academics has ever protested the sustained assaults on Palestinian universities.

It is essential to intensify all forms of BDS, including the academic and cultural boycott, until Israel ends its violations of Palestinian rights.”

Israel has conducted at [least 100 airstrikes and shellings](#) of Gaza in recent days, including an intense bombing of dozens of locations in the early hours of Tuesday, further worsening the situation for Palestinians in Gaza, which has been under a brutal military siege for more than 7 years.

Haidar Eid, associate professor at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza and a PACBI steering committee member, said:

“We, residents of Gaza, have been unable to fathom how it is that official bodies of the international community tolerate blatant war crimes committed against the people of Gaza, in spite of thousands of reports by mainstream human rights organizations!”

“Is it farfetched to expect people of conscience to heed our call to boycott this intransigent, racist and militarized Israeli regime and the institutions that keep it thriving, the same way apartheid South Africa was boycotted until it crumbled?”



Ayah Abubasheer, a youth and BDS activist in Gaza, added:

“During the past few weeks, Israel has been violently and intensely launching a series of air strikes against the Gaza Strip. The population of the Gaza Strip continues to pay the price and bear the blaze of Israel’s polices.”

“Because collective punishment is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions, we urge the international community to pressure Israel to end its all-out military assault aimed against the total population of Gaza, open Rafah crossing permanently and heed our call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions.”

## Notes

(The PACBI column this month is a [press release by the BDS National Committee](#) (BNC))

Posted on 05-07-2014

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## **DIGing Deeper**

The saga of the filming of the NBC action thriller series DIG in Israel, reported in the June BRICUP Newsletter(#77), continues. For new readers, this is a 6 episode action-adventure series set largely in Jerusalem, and due to be broadcast in the US at the end of this year. It is an archaeologically based thriller. The plot line (hinted at in pre-publicity) involves a murder and a race to track down a religious artefact; but also a 2000-year old back story. Filming is substantially to take place in the Silwan district of East Jerusalem, one of the front-lines of ethnic cleansing, where archaeology is being used as an excuse to de-house the Palestinian population.

Israel’s government has provided a hefty grant (read ‘bribe’) to get this to happen. They invented a whole new grant programme, of which DIG is the first and so far only beneficiary. As *Variety* magazine put it, the aim is “most crucially – [to] help brand Jerusalem and the State of Israel in a positive light”. The Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs Naftali Bennett put it this way: “A picture is worth a thousand words — sometimes shooting a series in Israel is worth more than a thousand publicity tours of the country,”

So what has happened since last month’s report? Soon after shooting started on June 5th, one of the

members of the DIG campaign group (which spans 3 continents) tracked them down – filming deep inside the so-called ‘Solomon’s Cave’ under the Old City. Both the British lead actor Jason Isaacs and the British director of the first episode SJ Clarkson were there. Isaacs was in the process of sending out a series of Instagrams of himself, with the cave setting in the background.

Our comrade (I will call him ‘Zalameh’, [as Electronic Intifada has done](#)) chatted up a crew member and was given a tour of the film set and led right up to where the ‘star’ was. He took photographs, and got talking to Isaacs. Gideon Raff the Israeli executive producer and mastermind of the whole series (and the man behind the hit series *Homeland*) was listening in.

The message Zalameh gave Isaacs was

- to think hard about the concerns about this series raised by Palestinian civil society and international activists
- that DIG is being used by Israel to whitewash its occupation, and that just metres away Palestinians were being the target of ethnic cleansing
- that the series is also problematic because it is receiving millions of funding from the Israeli state
- and that consequently his role in the movie is not innocent and that he cannot absolve himself from personal responsibility.

This was no monologue, but a substantial conversation, in which Isaacs listened carefully and responded. He said that he had been approached by the British actor Miriam Margolyes. He opposed BDS, but he read and would respond to all the letters he had received on this subject.

Not all the filming is in Jerusalem. Ten days later another DIG campaign member found them at work in the flea market in ethnically cleansed Jaffa. An impromptu action was rapidly assembled by Boycott From Within, who invaded the set complete with large banners, and chants of “One, two, three, four occupation no more, five, six, seven eight, we don’t *dig* apartheid state”, bringing filming to a stop. Interestingly the police did not intervene – it seems at the request of the film company. ([view video of this action](#))

In New York and Los Angeles a 5000 signature petition has been handed in to NBC, and in New

York demonstrators picketed NBC's Today Show.

Filming a 6-programme series takes a long time. This could run and run.

Jason Isaacs In general seemed an ill-informed but fundamentally decent man who had accepted the role, a great career opportunity, without realising the wider implications of his decision. (For example, apparently he didn't know that the series was receiving Israeli cash, in millions. Now he does.) One guesses he is troubled by the situation, but at this stage no actor can withdraw from a production without crippling consequences. The campaign needs to maximise his discomfort, so that other actors will become better informed than he was.

Jonathan Rosenhead

PS For a full account of DIG's venture into Israel's archaeological fiction factory from an anthropological perspective see [Isiaiah Silver's recent article](#).

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## Notices

**The Newsletter takes a vacation in August. The next issue will be in September 2014**

**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)

## 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 also be sent to [newsletter@bricup.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.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

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If you use the direct funds transfer mechanism please confirm the transaction by sending an explanatory email to [treasurer@bricup.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@bricup.org.uk) More details can be obtained at the same address. 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.