

# BRICUP Newsletter 84

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

February 2015

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## CONTENTS

### P 1. **ADVANCE NOTICE**

**P 1. Did you say freedom of expression?**

**P 2. Zionist Fuelled Islamophobia on the rise in Europe**

**P 5. Artful dodging; Tel Aviv art world discusses BDS.**

**P 7. The PACBI Column**

**Israel's desperate new tactic in fighting the growing academic boycotts**

**P 8. A moral victory: US Historians Tweak the Conscience of Their Colleagues**

**P 9. Arrest and detention of a Palestinian astrophysicist on his way to a conference.**

**P 10. BRICUP's contribution to consultation on the current Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill and its associated guidance**

**P 12. Notices**

### **ADVANCE NOTICE**

Several members of BRICUP have been involved over the past 2 years, with members of other groups, in some interlocking projects that are due for public launch in mid-February. It is with some difficulty that the Newsletter has resisted the

temptation to get a scoop. But hopefully it will get media attention when the launch date does arrive, and then the Newsletter will give you more extensive coverage in the March issue.

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### **Did you say freedom of expression?**

On 7, 8 and 9 January, Paris and its suburbs were the scene of acts of extreme violence in which ten people were killed. The impact on France has been considerable. Historians, political scientists and sociologists will long debate how young Frenchmen or women, with chaotic and unsatisfactory lives and belonging to social groups that have faced every kind of discrimination, have come to murder in cold blood journalists, police officers and employees or clients of a kosher grocery. The various paths leading to these events and their consequences, have yet to be fully investigated. Some no doubt lead to Daech (as ISIS is commonly known in France) and its leadership, which can be traced back to the Ba'athist army and bureaucracy in Iraq, and whose policy – if indeed it has one – is evidently to punish the West. Others lead to the social conditions that have prompted these young people to be fascinated with the violence present in various media, and to be so susceptible to indoctrination that leads them to kill and be killed in turn. There is also the acute suffering of the Palestinians whose fundamental human rights are being violated on a daily basis. The crisis they face is almost beyond words. A [report](#) recently published by the Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights confirms that the Israeli military attacked civilian and military targets indiscriminately in their assault on the Gaza Strip last summer, and that more than 70 per cent of the casualties were civilians. Nearly 2,200 Palestinians were killed and more than

10,000 were injured, not to mention the wholesale destruction of houses, schools and hospitals. Among the civilians killed were 17 journalists.

This State violence neither excuses nor justifies the murder of French civilians or police. But it seems reasonable to assume that if Israeli leaders were to cease their unreasoning violence and heed international law, the rage of those who feel humiliated by their actions would begin to subside. Instead, world leaders made a mockery of the situation by gathering in Paris on 11 January to demonstrate their commitment to [freedom of expression which most of them openly flout](#) and opposition to racism which most of them practice. France itself ranks only 39th in the latest Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders. The first barrier to freedom of expression in France and several other European countries are so-called 'security' measures. The BDS movement is constantly threatened by the [Alliot-Marie Circular](#) and therefore acutely aware of this constraint. AURDIP itself has been denied [freedom of expression on university campuses](#) where it has been invited. The various security measures already taken or in preparation [will only worsen the situation](#). We thus have every reason to be worried.

In the middle of all this we have received one piece of good news, [the release of the Palestinian astrophysicist Imad al-Barghouthi](#), who was held in administrative detention for six weeks, apparently for having had the audacity to condemn publicly the Israeli offensive on Gaza. We could dwell on the double standards applied to Israeli citizens and Palestinians. Let us instead celebrate the fact that the [international campaign](#) to secure his release has been rewarded, and let us continue to demand respect for international law.

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Vice-President of AURDIP

**Note:** This editorial is reprinted from the AURDIP Newsletter, 24 January 2015

## **Zionist Fuelled Islamophobia on the rise in Europe**

### **Background**

In the wake of the terrifying events in France, related to the Charlie Ebdo affair, ending with 17 people dead, there has been an unprecedented increase in Zionist activity across Europe, and

especially in France and Britain. Before the blood of victims had a chance to cool, Benjamin Netanyahu had gate-crashed into the world leaders congregation, uninvited but, after initial doubts, so intent on partaking that he overlooked President Hollande's express wish that he should refrain from coming.

Within few hours, it was made clear that his mission was NOT to make France's Jews feel more secure. Indeed, it was the opposite – to rattle the difficult situation further and escalate the tension, but declaring that Europe, and France especially, are no longer safe havens for Jews. Using Holocaust memes, he chose the Paris central synagogue to tell the congregation that they should all up and leave France, and immigrate to Israel forthwith. This he did a few minutes after the French President, who had come to partake in the understandable grief of the community after the murders, left the synagogue so as not to be there when Netanyahu rose to deliver his message of despair. Netanyahu was less than pleased, however, when the combined audience rose to its feet, singing the Marseillaise, a reaction he had not expected. He made his getaway so as not to face further embarrassment by the congregated press.

So, it was now clear again, like so many times before, that Zionism and its leaders have never been, neither are likely to become, interested in the security of Jews in the diaspora. Their only interest is always the same – using a tragedy to increase the number of Jews in Palestine/Israel, and hence to tip the balance within this small country towards a Jewish majority. This was true in the 1930s, when Zionism hastened to sign the shameful Ha'avara (Transfer) Agreement in the summer of 1933, hence derailing the growing boycott movement against the Nazi regime, when such movement had the clear potential of unseating Hitler [1]. This was again clear in 1938, when the Zionist movement had done all it could to make sure that the Evian Conference on European (Jewish) refugees of Nazism was called by President F D Roosevelt of the US in order to resolve the issue, would be a complete and utter failure, unless the refugees were delivered to Palestine. Even after the war in 1945, Zionist leaders did all they could to make sure that the survivors in Europe did not go to other countries, rather than come to Palestine.

Such policies have been, and remain, a long-term mainstay of Zionism for a number of reasons. The

simple one is the numbers game – how to raise the number of Jews west of the River Jordan, while at the same time reducing the number of Palestinians. This has been going on for seven decades, and only intensifies as time goes on. The other reason is related – the newcomers can be channelled to the Occupied Territories, surrounding Palestinians living in the 22% of Palestine occupied in 1967 with even more Jews, as the number climbs towards the million settlers. Such a huge illegal community of settlers is going to be difficult to dislodge, and is used by the Israeli governments as a pressure instrument on their own policy – with pressure against any peace settlement invited by the government, and willingly supplied by the settlers and their organisations. There is also the question of funding – communities such as the Jews of France and Britain are very affluent, and add important resources to the Israeli economy, as did the incoming Jewish refugees from Germany during the 1930s. The arrival in Israel of many European Jews will also have a domino effect, it is hoped, on Jews in other countries, in North and South America, further assisting Israel, and also assisting the standard Zionist argument that there is no use or need to fight racism and Judophobia in Europe or elsewhere – a view first voiced by Herzl [2] and often repeated afterwards. Now this is the ‘new’ ingredient I wish to concentrate about in this article.

### **Zionism and anti-Semitism: partners in crime?**

For most people in the west, the assumption that one needs to counter and eradicate racism in all its forms, including Judophobia and Islamophobia, is a no-brainer, of course. Most of society, that is – excluding racists and Zionists – will agree that such a change would improve the whole of society, whether one is talking of European countries or elsewhere. But such widely-held agreement is deeply problematic for the two extremes – Zionists on the one side, and Islamophobes and racists on the other, of course. To resolve Judophobia, for example, would dry the racist swamps that drive Jews out of their homes in Europe and towards Israel/Palestine. To resolve Islamophobia would mean that European Moslems would be fully reconciled to their new homes in Europe, and integrated into the wider community. Both such possible achievements are worrying developments for Zionism, needless to say. Hence, the new drive by Zionist bodies in Europe (and beyond) is to link in the public’s mind Judophobia with European Moslems, and

with the radical left, and to present Israel (and its racist policies...) as a solution for both issues – the Jews should emigrate to Israel, decimating a history, however painful in the past, of two millennia; The Moslems everywhere, and Islam itself, are then presented as un-Western, non-democratic, murderous and ‘medieval’ and anti-modern, hence also having no place in Europe (or anywhere else, actually).

Of course, neither Judophobia, nor Islamophobia are ‘new’ in any real sense. Judophobia has been, for over a millennium, an integral part of Christian identity in Europe. To those who might argue that it was inherent mainly in Catholicism, one only need mention Martin Luther, and his *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* (*On the Jews and Their Lies*, of 1543). All branches of Christianity have exhibited the same level of animosity towards Islam, for very different reasons, of course. If Jews were hated and despised as the *other* within European societies, the Moslems were, as Arabs, Moors and Turks, also deeply feared, as formidable imperial competitors. The amazing and unprecedented advance of Islam across Arabia, North Africa and Asia following its inception in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the real military and cultural threat it represented to medieval Europe as it also crossed the sea, building permanent outposts across the Southern European Mediterranean countries, and especially in Andalus and later the Balkans and central Europe, stayed in the European collective psyche as deep shock; if Jews were considered by Judophobes as the ‘enemy within’, then Moslems and Arabs became Europe’s ‘enemy at the gate’, the *Hannibal ante Portas* of mediaeval and modern Europe, a shadow somewhat diminished, only to intensify again at the end of the twentieth century. Thus, the struggle against these two forms of Xenophobia is a long and difficult one.

But, instead of joining the progressive, normative agenda of fighting all forms of racism and uniting society in this struggle, so as to protect at least Jews, Zionism and its many agents are now spreading a toxic agenda in Europe, likely, if not countered and checked, to make both Jews and Moslems unsafe in their European abode, thus again benefitting Israel in a number of ways, including one not mentioned above – presenting it as the advanced guard of ‘western civilization’ in the Middle East, or the carrier of what they term ‘Judeo-Christian civilization’ [3], uniting against the presumably ‘barbaric’ Islam. That this is done while the West and Israel are both occupying

Moslem and Arab territories illegally, and are responsible for many thousands of deaths of Moslems, is the icing on the racist cake, fuelling the propaganda of extremist organisations like ISIS, and further alienating both Moslems and Jews from their host societies in Europe, and, importantly, from each other. Instead of being united against racism, as happened in the past, the two communities are now poised against each other, mainly as a result of Israeli actions and propaganda, rather than the realities in Europe alone. The series of mass-murders enacted in Gaza by Israel has played a major role in turning European Moslems against Zionism, where before, many such communities were indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinians, combining lack of knowledge with apathy. Gaza changed all that.

However, the current phase of the Zionist onslaught on both Jews and Moslems in Europe has managed the other aim also: to turn Moslems against Jews in Europe, not as an act of Judophobia or the so-called anti-Semitism[4], but as an act of standing by the murdered Moslems in Gaza. That Jews in Europe, not as individuals, but through their representative organisations, have consistently supported Israel in its continued war crimes, and have written, spoken and demonstrated in support of the actions in Gaza whilst they were unfolding, has helped the Zionist effort of blurring the boundaries between Jew, Israeli and Zionist; The continuous and frequent legislative effort in Israel to define it as a "Jewish State", and as the *State of the Jews* of the world, have been successful at last – instead of separating the terms, and recognising that many Jews are neither Zionist nor Israeli, and do not agree or support Israel's crimes, Zionism has succeeded in confusing both Jews, Moslems, and other Europeans. If to be Jewish is to support Israel, then many deluded Moslems in Europe, fooled by Israeli and Jewish Zionist claims, are now finding themselves in opposition to such Jews. That this is a travesty of Judaism is, of course, little understood and beside the point. The damage is done, and the lines are drawn, and European politicians, for decades supporters of Israel, are now joining the fray with Islamophobic legislation in every country.

In Britain, this has reared its ugly head immediately after the events in Paris. Nigel Farage, the Drinking-Man's friendly racist, immediately came out with the terminology closest to his heart: "We do have, I'm afraid, I'm

sad to say, a fifth column that is living within our own countries, that is utterly opposed to our values," and added: "We're going to have to be a lot braver and a lot more courageous in standing up for our Judeo-Christian culture [5]. Another right-wing proponent, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, wasted no time in announcing a whole new raft of 'anti-extremist' legislation, which Karma Nabulsi in the Guardian dubbed as 'extremism in the name of security [6], deriding it as a bill supposedly initiated to protect freedom of speech, but dedicated to silencing and criminalizing democratic critical exchanges, especially in the media and academia. The space here does not allow me to quote extensively from the many contributions in the Jewish Chronicle, full of such sentiments, amounting to a long suicide note of some in the UK Jewish community, who join Maureen Lipman who in October 2014 declared in that vehicle of enlightenment, *The Sun*, that she will not only not vote for Ed Miliband, due to his Commons vote in favour of a Palestinian state, but also warning us all that she is considering moving to either the "US or Israel", in that order, due to what she considers an enormous growth of anti-Semitism. Assisting in this inflammatory hysteria was also a so-called 'survey' by the CAA (Campaign Against Antisemitism) which polled the views of British Jews, and by confusing the concepts of Israeli, Jew and Zionist, has predictably found that the Antisemitism in Britain has reached the level of the 1930s, and that 58% of Jews in Britain believe that there is "no long-future for Jews in Europe". For anyone who saw the survey and its questions, this is hardly a surprise - according to the Institute of Jewish Policy Research, the poll was methodologically flawed and unreliable. It is another case of looking for the lost key under the lamppost, rather than where it was lost.

If all this sounds like the Jewish community in France and Britain is in the grip of a public leadership that is intent on cutting the branch on which they sit, then it is because the danger is real. Any sociologist would confirm that the opposition to Israel that has started the anti-Jewish actions in France is anything but anti-Semitism, and the very use of the term is a-historical and erroneous. Islam and the Arabs did not share in the long history of European Judophobia, had a completely different relationship with Arab Jews, and did not develop racist instruments such as the Inquisition, mass pogroms, or industrial genocide, all instruments

of medieval Europe as well as modern Europe; To call their political opposition to Israel anti-Semitism is obscene. It is also obscene to brand all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic, just because Israel calls itself the State of the Jews – this makes Israel, with its many war crimes, the only country of which criticism will be banned by law. This is already the case in France, where the BDS movement has been criminalised, and boycott of Israel is illegal, and public demonstrations in support of the Palestinians were found to be illegal. That this is now being done in the name of, and under the banner of, ‘freedom of speech’ and the defence of ‘Western values’ is making it no better but much worse. It is directed at the liberal and left opposition to Zionism, and especially at BDS as its most acute political device.

After all, both Britain and France have the bloodiest history of colonialism and imperialism, and in the case of Britain, also the development of industrial slavery. Every past focus of the British empire has become a festering wound - India/Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cyprus, South Africa, Palestine, Iraq, and not to forget, Northern Ireland. That a nation with such a troubling history of subjugation and oppression, not to mention much blood spilt, in the Third World, and especially in the Arab world, is now succumbing to an Islamophobic campaign of hate organised by Israel, the occupier and subjugator of Palestine, is beyond belief, just as the centenary of the Balfour Declaration is upon us in less than two years. This seminal crime of British Politics has never been atoned for, as far as I am aware, and now we have actions not less criminal in their intention to turn the Moslems of Europe into a hated minority, the Jews of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We should fight this by uniting all progressive forces in Europe, and struggle for a de-colonised, non-racist European society – it is not much to expect from the continent which has invented the Holy Inquisition and the Final Solution.

Haim Bresheeth

## Notes

1] See the excellent book by the Zionist commentator and journalist Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement*, published by Carroll & Graf, New York (1984, 1999, 2001) in which he spends a quite a few chapters in outlining the great potential and power of the boycott, and the actions by the Zionist movement to derail it, as to enable the Transfer Agreement, which basically made sure that Jews could not

take their capital out of Germany, unless they went to Palestine. See especially chapters 3 to 26, pp. 20-251.

2] Moshe Machover, in his recent book *Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution*, Haymarket Books, Chicago (2012) is touching upon the closeness of interests between Zionists and Anti-Semites in the chapter “Zionism and its Scarecrows”, based on an article first published in 1975, but still as correct now as it was then, pp 188-208. Another author which has published on this topic is S B Beit Zvi (1977) *Post-Ugandan Zionism in the Holocaust Crisis: Research on the causes of Zionism’s errors in the years 1938-1945*, Bronfman, Tel Aviv, [Hebrew]

3] This term is really bizarre and oxymoronic, when one remembers that for almost two thousand years Christianity did all it could to humiliate, oppress and destroy Jews in Europe... It will be more apposite to speak of periods when a Judeo-Moslem civilization existed in Europe, such as the Golden Age of Andalus.

4] I avoid using this racist term, invented by European racists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to give ‘scientific credit’ to their hatred. I prefer to use *Judophobia*, as it is both accurate and a sociological term.

5] BBC News website, “[UKIP's Nigel Farage urges 'Judeo-Christian' defence after Paris attacks](#)”, January 12, 2015, accessed on Feb 6, 2015

6] Nabulsi, K “[Theresa May’s Prevent Bill is Extremism in the Name of Security](#)”, Feb 4, 2015, accessed on Feb 6, 2015

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## Artful dodging; Tel Aviv art world discusses BDS.

Israeli reactions to growing political isolation have generally taken the form of attacking dissidents or perceived dissidents and trying to change the perception of Israel as an aggressive, belligerent state. Both these approaches have sought to use art and artists either as examples for the purpose of internal repression or conversely as part of external state propaganda efforts to 're-brand' Israel.

As the threat of BDS grows larger, in addition to the backlash, some in Israel are starting to be interested in more meaningful discussion than what is available in the mass media.

Being especially affected by the boycott, it might be no surprise that one such effort has been carried out by a group of contemporary art curators. This loose group of individuals has held several meetings over the last year to learn about the boycott but not necessarily to take collective action for or against it. Most of the curators work

at public institutions that show local and international artists and almost all of them have been feeling the effect of the cultural boycott on their international contacts. This group is diverse, but when it comes to the boycott they mostly oppose it. Nevertheless, they were able to have the most informed and sincere public discussion about the boycott movement ever seen in Israel.

The public meeting was the culmination of the work of the curators' group and was held in Tel Aviv on January 8th 2015, [1] In preparation for the event, one of its organizers, Chen Tamir, wrote a detailed review of cultural boycotts within the contemporary art world in general and as applied to Israel [2] Partly because of setting this context, the organizers were able to prevent the discussion from being diverted into complaints of antisemitism and Israeli victim-hood and focus instead on the actual implementation of the boycott through several detailed case studies.

As was reiterated at the meeting, by now the effects of the boycott are strongly felt by all Israeli artists and curators who have professional contact with the outside world. ("The quiet boycott: When Israeli Art is Out"; Haaretz Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, [3] What has been felt just as strongly has been the near impossibility of continuing cooperation with Palestinian artists. As is the case with the rest of Israeli society, the art community shows little appreciation of the problem with normalization. In fact some artists and curators were actually arguing *for* normalization. The Palestinian view of normalization and what it means for Palestinian artists does not seem to have been relevant to the discussion, let alone any question of cooperation under terms which would not constitute normalization.

I spoke at the conference mostly about normalization because of how little it is understood in Israel and how readily understood it is in Palestinian society. The point I tried to make was that, as soon as we realize that rather than a 'conflict' between Israelis and Palestinians the situation is one of the oppression of Palestinians by Israelis, the opposition to normalization is automatically understood.

A second major concern for Israeli artists and curators is what has been called 'the internal boycott'. As one of the speakers mentioned, as the Jan 8 meeting was taking place in Tel Aviv, not far away, a performance by an Israeli dancer was threatened by fascist hooligans who were upset because the performance included elements from videos of Israeli abuses in the Occupied

Territories (from B'Tselem). Another event involving the same artists was physically broken up about two months earlier. [4] To take just two more examples: the government has recently conditioned grants from the Israeli Film Fund on a signed declaration by recipients of attesting to being 'Israeli' as opposed to say, Palestinian citizens defining themselves differently. ('Israeli Film Fund Closes Palestinian Loophole: Creators Must Pledge to be 'Israeli' Haaretz, Jan 27 2015) [5] Also, as art funding was being cut elsewhere, the Israeli Ministry of Culture instituted a new prize for "Zionist-oriented art." ("Israel Culture Ministry offers prize for 'Zionist-oriented' art"; Haaretz Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 2011, [6]

The actions of the government and the hooligans contribute to the same racist and anti-left atmosphere and are in turn encouraged by this atmosphere. In that sense, they are synergistic with each other and the increasing political pressure on Israel is an opportunity that both the government and hooligans are exploiting.

This McCarthyism is a more general phenomenon that includes an attack on perceived dissidents in the academia as well as in the arts. The effect of this McCarthyism was apparent at the Jan 8 event itself when practically every speaker had to preface their talk with a disclaimer that they do not represent their employers and still they were careful to not say anything that sounds like support for the boycott.

It seems that the social, political, and professional penalties for supporting the boycott have deterred most potential Israeli supporters in the art world as it has in academia. Although the artists and curators do not generally support BDS, at the very least their raising of the level of the discussion makes it harder to demonize the movement. If there is to be a meaningful political shift in Israeli society, such initiatives are a necessary first stage in it.

Kobi Snitz

Boycott from Within

## Notes

[1] <http://daluthacherem.tumblr.com/post/106713978712>

[2] <http://hyperallergic.com/179655/a-report-on-the-cultural-boycott-of-israel/>

[3] <http://www.haaretz.com/life/arts-leisure/.premium-1.635914>

[4] [<http://hyperallergic.com/162495/right-wing-protesters-attack-art-talk-in-jerusalem/>]

[5] <http://www.haaretz.com/life/movies-television/premium-1.639252#>

[6] <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-culture-ministry-offers-prize-for-zionist-oriented-art-1.388419>

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## The PACBI Column

### Israel's desperate new tactic in fighting the growing academic boycotts

Over the last months, Israeli advocacy groups have been scrambling to delegitimize, demobilize, and debunk the fast growing BDS movement with no success. Through leaked emails between pro-Israel lobbyists and Israeli university administrators, as well as through the diligent work of activist scholars communicating with PACBI, we have learned of one strategy Israel and its extensive lobby network are employing to delegitimize the movement, and specifically on the academic front. This strategy seeks to instrumentalize the Palestinian citizens of Israel in the service of the Israeli propaganda war on the BDS movement, by cynically – and quite simplistically -- employing the fact that this community uses the various services of the state, such as health, educational, social security and other services, to refute the argument that Israel is an apartheid state.

This desperate move by Israel and its academic establishment reflects the by now mainstream recognition among Israeli academic institutions and government circles alike that the academic boycott of Israel, whether announced or “silent,” and BDS in general are reaching a tipping point, as both former prime minister [Ehud Barak](#) and former chief of Mossad [Shabtai Shavit](#) have recently warned.

Israel lobby groups are employing three relatively new tactics in this strategy, in addition to the battery of older tactics, most prominent of which remain intimidation and bullying. The first is to collect and disseminate statistics on Palestinian participation in higher education to show how Israeli universities are supposedly “liberal” spaces that do not discriminate against Palestinians, as if mere numbers can cover up the repugnant racist policies and repressive environment that prevail in Israel's academe. The second is to have Palestinian academics in Israeli universities invite

international scholars to boycottable conferences held in Israel. Such a tactic makes it more difficult for international academics to decline these invitations on the grounds that it would hurt Palestinian academics. The third is to ask international scholars to review the works of Palestinian students in Israeli universities. All three tactics are meant to show the international community that an academic boycott of Israel will “hurt Palestinian scholars and students,” first and foremost.

This Israeli strategy is disingenuous at best, racist at worst. Largely [plagiarizing](#) apartheid South African propaganda, it sets up the Israeli apartheid state as protective of Palestinian interests, concerned with Palestinian higher education, and worried about the harm a boycott might do to those Palestinians. It plays on the unintended consequences and harm shouldered by Palestinians in order to legitimize Israeli academic institutions. In this scenario, it is not Israel's multi-tiered system of colonial oppression, but rather Palestinian *resistance* to oppression, including BDS, that is harming the Palestinians. The benevolent Israeli academia is portrayed as the savior, even the civilizer, of those otherwise uncivilized and hapless “Arabs.”

These tactics must be exposed as deeply racist and challenged in order to effectively support Palestinian citizens of Israel, who may be coerced at times, whether directly or indirectly, to undermine the BDS guidelines and act as a fig leaf to cover up Israel's apartheid universities. Palestinian failure to do so may invite the full wrath of Israeli institutional power, which today is far more repressive, racist and draconian than ever.

The close to 1.5 million Palestinians who are today citizens of the state of Israel are the indigenous Palestinians who succeeded in being steadfast in their homeland during the well planned and brutally executed campaigns of terror and ethnic cleansing by Zionist militias, and later the state itself, during the 1948 [Nakba](#). Living under a regime of racial discrimination that is institutionalized and legalized by more than [50 racist laws](#), and that therefore meets the [UN definition of the crime of apartheid](#), Palestinian citizens of Israel have no choice but to utilize whatever – mostly second-class – services they can obtain from the state and its organs. The fact that they are citizens and taxpayers entitles them to these services as a right, not a charity from the state.

Like blacks under South African apartheid, and despite the many differences, Palestinian citizens of Israel face entrenched and systematic racial discrimination and disenfranchisement in every vital domain, including education. In a groundbreaking study in 2001, tellingly titled “Second Class: Discrimination against Palestinian Arab Children in Israel’s Schools,” [Human Rights Watch](#) reveals:

“The hurdles Palestinian Arab students face from kindergarten to university function like a series of sieves with sequentially finer holes. At each stage, the education system filters out a higher proportion of Palestinian Arab students than Jewish students. Children denied access to kindergarten do less well in primary school. Children in dilapidated, distant, under-resourced schools have a far higher drop-out rate. Children who opt for vocational programs are often limited to preparation for work as ‘carpenters, machinists, or mechanics in a garage,’ as one school director told Human Rights Watch.”

The gymnastics that Israeli “hasbara” (propaganda) will have to go through to spin the numbers other than what they are will be quite interesting to see. Adalah, a prominent Palestinian human rights organization in Israel, breaks down the number of graduates by degree, field of study and population group, and on page 43 of their report provides a [table](#) that shows how Palestinians are severely underrepresented in academia, with their numbers decreasing with every subsequent degree. The [report](#) goes on to say that as of 2007, Palestinians made up “1.2% of all academics employed by Israeli universities and colleges in tenured or tenure-track positions, and received on average salaries worth 50% less than those of their Jewish counterparts.”

This is only part of the story as the system of apartheid segregates the Palestinian community through land, marriage, and schooling practices, and seeps into every other facet of life. By the time they enter into academia, Palestinians have already been weeded out of the system. Allowing this small percentage of Palestinians into higher education is, in fact, part of the complex architecture of apartheid practiced by the Israeli state, which plays on these appearances to hide the oppression and appear democratic.

For those who might claim that the boycott harms the few Palestinians at Israeli institutions, PACBI is clear that we call for boycotting Israeli universities and all events and activities organized in or by them, regardless whether those

organizing them are Palestinian citizens of Israel or Jewish Israelis. The boycott that we are calling for is institutional and targets the universities, irrespective of the ethnic, religious or any other identity attribute of those charged with organizing activities that violate the BDS guidelines. It would be quite peculiar if Israel were to try to use this non-discriminatory position to claim that the boycott is hurting Palestinians.

Indeed, some aspects of the institutional boycott will inadvertently, not intentionally, hurt individual academics, including both Palestinian and Jewish citizens. This cannot be avoided in any institutional boycott, anywhere. Contrast this to the apartheid South African blanket boycott of all academics and one can see that the Palestinian call for boycott is clearly more nuanced and decisively less injurious to individuals. In any case, in South Africa, the argument that apartheid institutions should not be boycotted because such a boycott would hurt black South Africans was squarely rebutted by the black leadership, trade unions and social movements, who argued, in unison, that the real “hurt” to the black community was coming from apartheid, not the boycott or other forms of resistance against it. If Israel and its apartheid academic institutions were so concerned then they know what they can do to stop “hurting Palestinians”--end the regime of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid. That would, indeed, obviate the boycott.

PACBI

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## **A moral victory: US Historians Tweak the Conscience of Their Colleagues**

Forty years after radical historians sparked a debate at the annual conference of the American Historical Association (AHA) about their responsibility regarding the Vietnam war, they challenged their colleagues again, this time taking up the question of Palestine.

“Historians against the War” (HAW), formed a dozen years ago by members of MARHO (Mid-Atlantic Radical History Organization) and the *Radical History* collective, organized a very successful panel entitled “What Is the Responsibility of Historians Regarding the Israel-Palestine Conflict?” moderated by HAW Steering Committee member, Carolyn Eisenberg. The panel featured Middle East historians Joel Beinin and Leena Dallasheh; former AHA president and Brazilianist, Barbara Weinstein; and US social movement historian Linda Gordon. [To



watch/listen to the excellent panel presentations and the audience discussion, and read various reports, go to:

<http://www.historiansagainstar.org/aha15/>

HAW supports BDS as a tool and has endorsed USACBI, but the Steering Committee was not inclined to introduce a BDS resolution to AHA. Members of the P-I Working Group concurred, believing that it was tactically unwise to introduce a resolution without groundwork being laid. Nevertheless, they were inspired to take action following the resounding vote by the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) on the right of academics to support the academic boycott. They took a different tack, however, and formulated two separate resolutions focused on the [rights of Palestinians to seek higher education](#), and on the [academic freedom of US citizens visiting Palestine and the rights of foreign nationals to teach, do research and attend conferences in Palestine](#). They hoped that these seemingly “safe” resolutions would lay the groundwork for further dialogue and action.

The resolutions were the buzz of the conference and definitely placed the question of Palestine on the agenda, helping to attract a large and very engaged audience to the panel, including renowned historian and past AHA president Natalie Z. Davis, and incoming president Vicki Ruiz. Ironically, even though the HAW resolutions were not the intended focus of the panel, and BDS was not even explicitly mentioned in the resolutions, the unintended consequences of the attacks by “Historians Against Academic Boycotts” (sometimes called [Alliance for Academic Freedom](#)), including its [flyers](#), was to make these the topic of discussion. In their opening statements, or during the course of their comments, almost all the panelists declared their support for BDS.

Following the formal panel presentations, when the floor was open for discussion, the focus was less about the speakers’ presentations and more on the substance of the resolutions. Among other things, opponents of the resolutions challenged the veracity of some of the facts in the “Whereas clauses,” especially regarding the issue of Israel’s refusing entry to those seeking to do academic work in Palestine. Their incredulity was rather effectively shot down by Joel Beinin, among others, who are quite conversant with the facts on the ground. Apparently these nay-sayers were not aware that even Noam Chomsky had been denied entry to deliver a lecture at Birzeit University.

Although a moral victory might have been achieved during the panel session, by the time the Business Meeting was convened, it was clear that the HAW resolutions, which were submitted after the November 1 deadline, would have very little chance of being considered. Not agenda-ized by the Council, they nevertheless could be considered if two thirds of those present at the Business Meeting voted to waive the rules and add them under New Business. Despite failing to reach the required two thirds vote, the way has been paved for ongoing discussion, especially with the announcement by newly seated AHA president Vicki Ruiz, who committed to using half of her six presidential sessions to the question of Palestine-Israel.

HAW co-founder Van Gosse has aptly noted: “We started a conversation that others do not want to have at all, about the shocking lack of academic freedom in Israel/Palestine, and we look forward to pressing forward with it.” Indeed, P-I Working Group members are discussing our next steps, including panels and a resolution at next year’s AHA conference, and creating resources for our colleague who are generally uninformed on the issue. And now that some groundwork has been laid, some of us are wondering when/how the forbidden three little words - Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions - might be formally introduced.

Sherna Berger Gluck

The author is a member of the Palestine-Israel Working Group/HAW and a founding member of USACBI,

#### Note

This report is based largely on Van Gosse’s account of the Business Meeting, comments of other members of the P-I WG, and the videotape of the panel session. However, the opinions expressed here are the author’s alone.

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### **Arrest and detention of a Palestinian astrophysicist on his way to a conference.**

*Nature* reported that, on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2014, Israeli Police arrested Imad Ahmed Barghouthi who was on his way to the United Arab Emirates to attend a scientific meeting of the Arab Union of Astronomy and Space Sciences in Sharjah. He was detained without charge and an appeal was

scheduled for January 22<sup>nd</sup>. His lawyer has said that Barghouthi was arrested because of statements he is alleged to have made in support of Palestinian activists during Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip last summer.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, the French Association of Academics for the Respect of International Law in Palestine and the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine sent a [letter to the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation](#). They argued that Barghouthi's detention is in violation of Israel's commitment to respect human rights under its Association Agreement with the European Union, which allows Israel to access European research funds. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, the US-based Middle East Studies Association issued an [open letter to Israeli authorities](#), which described the jailing as a violation of academic freedom and freedom of speech. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, the US-based Committee of Concerned Scientists made the same accusations in another [letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#), which also alleged that the arrest was a violation of the freedom to travel.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> the Israeli military court set Barghouthi free. He said that he believed that the letters of support from international scientific organizations which were presented to the judge by his lawyer, were instrumental in persuading the court to release him. "I am a scientist and I am devoted to research but I am also a firm opponent to occupation,"

Upon being freed, Barghouthi told Nature that he believes that he was jailed for wearing a green hat and scarf on his Facebook profile's picture - the colours of Hamas. But Barghouthi says he is "not a member, nor a supporter of Hamas".

AURDIP and BRICUP have issued the following statement:

We are very pleased to learn that our colleague, Imad al-Barghouthi, Professor of Astrophysics at Al-Quds University, has been released from the Israeli prison where he was held in administrative detention. Professor al-Barghouthi was arbitrarily arrested on December 6<sup>th</sup> while attempting to cross the Karama checkpoint separating the Occupied Palestinian Territories from Jordan, in order to attend a congress of the Arab Association of Astronomy and Space Sciences, of which he is a founding member. The international campaign

for the release of Professor al-Barghouthi, who was arrested and held for nearly seven weeks without being charged for any offence, in violation of Israel's obligations under international law, has finally borne fruit. AURDIP and BRICUP are pleased to have played a prominent part in, and perhaps even instigated, it.

This small victory encourages us to pursue and intensify our efforts to promote respect for international law in Palestine. Israel's widespread use of administrative detention, which involved 461 Palestinians in 2014 according to B'Tselem, is only one example of the disregard for international law which we shall continue to challenge so long as it persists.

Editor

#### Note

<http://www.nature.com/news/scientists-protest-detention-of-palestinian-physicist-1.16770>

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### **BRICUP's contribution to consultation on the current Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill and its associated guidance**

The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP) welcomes the Government's consultation on the current Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill and its associated guidance to relevant bodies. We would like to respond to those aspects of the guidance concerned with Higher Education, since this will affect our members.

BRICUP is an organisation of academics, teachers, artists, doctors and similar professionals who campaign both to support Palestinian universities and to end the illegal occupation of Palestine. In particular we support the calls from our Palestinian colleagues for academic and cultural boycott of Israel until the occupation is ended, the right of return of Palestinian refugees is achieved, and the systematic discrimination against Palestinians living inside Israel is dismantled. Our activity, and indeed the boycott campaign as a whole is entirely non-violent. See <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>.

About one-third of our committee's membership is Jewish (despite which we are still regularly faced with routine accusations of antisemitism, essentially because we argue against Israel's policies). We provide speakers at universities all over the country on request, but are already

finding that student groups trying to organise meetings and debates around non-violent resistance to Israel's occupation have encountered very serious difficulties in obtaining sponsors or premises, with the result that a number of such intended events have not been able to proceed. We are therefore extremely concerned about the implications of the proposed legislation and guidance for further restrictions on free speech on campus around such topics. We fear that vague terms like "extremism" will be applied to non-violent campaigners such as ourselves because we are often opposed to aspects of HM Government's policy in the Middle East - as is our right in a democratic society. We respectfully submit that if HM Government is to succeed in its aim of attracting the co-operation of academics and students in combatting terrorism, it is vital that the legislation does not seem to endanger freedom of expression.

We are by no means alone in this concern. Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill Part 5, the Prevent programme is given a statutory basis, and cooperation will become a legally enforceable duty. The trade union UCU has warned that the new duty 'risks undermining the academic freedom of institutions and the trust relationship between academic staff and their students'. The guidance does espouse the aim of creating 'safe spaces' where students can 'discuss sensitive topics'. However in practice the statutory duty will close down space for debate, especially about whether or how to oppose UK foreign policy. The guidance will lead public institutions to fear how the Home Office might interpret 'non-violent extremism', especially in terms of a duty to discourage specific views and selectively exclude external speakers.

We are particularly concerned with the potentially chilling effect of paragraph 66 of the consultation document. Conditions such as "Advance notice of the content of the event, including an outline of the topics to be discussed and sight of any presentations, footage to be broadcast etc." are a virtual invitation to pre-censorship. They cut across the rights of academics, and all citizens, to advance unpopular opinions.

Unfortunately, recent government statements have shown a disturbing and unthinking tendency to conflate support for boycotts of Israeli companies or institutions with the abhorrent phenomenon of antisemitism. An example of this will be provided below.

Such statements, when taken together with the proposed new legislation, whatever the intention of the Government, do create a basis for attempts by authorities (the police, university managements, etc.) to suppress freedom of expression. Sadly mission creep of this kind has become evident with other legislation ostensible targeted at terrorism. As just one example, anti-terror police have been photographing Students Union offices on grounds that they display 'Free Palestine' posters.

To imply that the large and growing number of students and academics (both Jewish and non-Jewish) who support academic and other forms of boycott are motivated by antisemitism in their opposition to illegal occupation and Israel's other oppressive policies towards the Palestinians is both alienating and insulting, and thus counterproductive. Any attempt to suppress debate on the widespread calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions - a non-violent campaign by civil society - on that basis would be profoundly anti-democratic and indeed incendiary.

We submit the following example for your consideration:

A report issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government at the end of December 2014 contains this paragraph:

"Calls to boycott contact with academics working in Israel are an assault on academic freedom and intellectual exchange. We recommend that pro-democracy lecturers in the new [sic] University and College Lecturers Union [sic] are given every support to combat such selective boycotts that are anti-Jewish in practice."

It should be noted that - quite apart from the insult to numerous (Jewish and non-Jewish) students and academics - this statement is ignorant of the nature of the academic boycott, which is not of "contact with academics". (The boycott is confined to involvement with institutions.) We also note that the words "anti-Jewish" and "in effect" do nothing to mitigate the (improper) identification of boycott with antisemitism. We take "selective" to mean that the boycott discriminates against Israel, with the implication that this is somehow irrational and based on racial or national prejudice. On the contrary, Israel is the target of this campaign because for approaching fifty years it has been illegally, and in violation of many UN resolutions, colonising land that does

not belong to it. This boycott has been requested by the victims of oppression, just as was the case in South Africa several decades previously.

Prof. Jonathan Rosenhead  
Chair of BRICUP

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.

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## 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](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)

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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.

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