

BRICUP Newsletter 98

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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Billionaire donor using British Council to combat Israel boycott

Hilary Aked

New documents obtained by the author under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and published by [Electronic Intifada](#) (14 March 2016) show that the [British Council](#) has been quietly working to thwart the [boycott, divestment and sanctions](#) (BDS) movement in support of Palestinian rights. The revelations about the government-funded program come as the UK attempts to [ban local government from](#)

[boycotting](#) investment in companies complicit in Israeli human rights abuses. It was also discovered that Nathan Kirsh, a billionaire businessman profiting directly from [Israel’s wall in the occupied West Bank](#), is a donor to the British Council’s little-known anti-boycott project, the Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX).

The British Council is a [quasi-governmental](#) body that [describes itself](#) as making an important “contribution to UK soft power.” It gets approximately 20 percent of its funding [from the UK Foreign Office](#) and administers educational and “cultural relations” projects in [more than 100 countries](#) around the world. In [2008 its Israel office instigated BIRAX](#) jointly with the British Embassy in Israel and private pro-Israel donors. As the original proposal, published by Electronic Intifada, states explicitly, BIRAX sought to offer “a practical response to recent calls in the UK for an academic boycott of Israel” — a reference to [one of the first major boycott victories](#) in a British trade union, the 2007 vote by [the University and College Union](#) which caused [international alarm in the Zionist camp](#). In response, BIRAX was [launched by the prime ministers of Israel and the UK](#) with the aim to “deepen institutional links” between British and Israeli universities. Only [later, in 2011](#), was it decided that BIRAX should focus on regenerative medicine, a scientific emphasis which played neatly into [Israel’s public relations strategy](#) to promote itself as a hub of technological innovation.

Through BIRAX, the British Council has so far arranged [15 research collaborations between Israeli and UK universities](#). With a total value of at least £7 million (\$9.9 million), these function

as facts on the ground, undermining the campaign to boycott Israeli academic institutions by their very existence. The third round of calls is [currently open](#), offering £3 million (\$4.2 million) of additional research funding.

Non-political?

In 2012, the [Palestine Festival of Literature](#) spoke out in favour of BDS. Its dismayed financial sponsor, the British Council, justified its own position in a statement opposing the boycott, ironically describing itself as a “[non-political organization](#).” Yet internal correspondence obtained, through a FOI request (some of which is published by Electronic Intifada) shows that behind the scenes the British Council has been making strenuous efforts to track and oppose the boycott. In an October 2015 email, (see Electronic Intifada) British Council staff asked the pro-Israel [Union of Jewish Students](#) to keep them abreast of “what’s happening re the boycott on campuses.” In a 12 June 2015 email (published in full by Electronic Intifada) an employee of the British Council’s Israel office offered assistance to the Union of Jewish Students, saying the organization was considering ways “to support combatting the calls for BDS on UK universities.” That message was sent soon after the [National Union of Students](#) (NUS), which represents 7 million university pupils in the UK, had [voted to support BDS on 2 June 2015](#). Just a day after that vote, British Council employees, apparently monitoring developments with a sense of urgency, sent emails with the subject “BDS” outlining a range of possible actions in response (see Electronic Intifada).

While paying lip service to “the right of the Union to hold and to publicize this position,” in practice, British Council staff – whose names have been redacted – sought to undermine the democratic decision of the NUS. They enlisted the help of academics, “BIS” (the Department for Business Innovation and Skills) and “Number 10 contacts,” i.e. the prime minister’s office, in the counter-campaign. The British Council saw fit to intervene yet again when in October 2015, [300 UK-based academics pledged to boycott Israel](#) in a statement published in The Guardian. In an email seen by Electronic Intifada, an opposing anti-boycott statement was quickly compiled and circulated by the British Council. An academic from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel (name redacted) replied complimenting the [swift UK response](#).

“Anti-BDS activities”

The British Council has also been explicit about its counter-boycott goals when courting donors for the BIRAX project. In one internal email (sent on 17 June 2015; see EI), a staff member suggests a “possible patron” for BIRAX, and shares with a colleague “some recent info about his interest in supporting anti-BDS activities.” Indeed, a specific emailed pitch — under the subhead “BIRAX / BDS appeal” — was even penned to appeal to this funder. Although the funder’s name was redacted, the identity of many of the donors behind the project is known.

A few established medical research organizations, like the British Heart Foundation, have recently donated to BIRAX. However, the evidence suggests that most of its benefactors are more interested in combatting the boycott than furthering scientific progress. The earliest confirmed backers of BIRAX were the [United Jewish Israel Appeal](#) — Britain’s “[major fundraising organization for Israel](#)” — and the Pears Foundation. The latter, also the chief financier of [Israel Studies](#) programs at UK universities, has given £1 million (\$1.4 million) to the British Council for the BIRAX project. Its executive chair, Trevor Pears, is a [millionaire property magnate](#), [Conservative Party donor](#) and formerly sat on the boards of both [Conservative Friends of Israel](#) and [BICOM](#), a heavyweight Israel lobby group in the UK.

Meanwhile, millionaire Tory peer Lord Stanley Fink, one of the private donors who [financed](#) the short-lived pro-Israel propaganda organization [Just Journalism](#) and is also [vice president](#) of the pro-Israel [Jewish Leadership Council](#), has given £100,000 to BIRAX, according to figures released by the British Council under a FOI request. The Atkin Foundation, whose founders Celia and [Edward Atkin](#) have [also supported BICOM](#), [gave an undisclosed amount](#) to BIRAX. A 2012 letter to the British Council from Yad Hanadiv which coordinates philanthropic donations for the Rothschild family (a historically important dynasty in the Zionist movement) also donated an unknown amount. In both of these cases, the donations were subject to a confidentiality clause. The British Council said that this is why the amounts were redacted from the documents released under the FOI.

Although the name Nathan Kirsh had not previously been publicized in connection with the project, [unlike other donors](#), according to a 2012

grant letter from Yad Hanadiv, (seen by EI), the billionaire South African businessman is also a BIRAX donor. The [world's 435th wealthiest person](#), according to the 2015 Forbes list, Kirsh is [the biggest shareholder](#) in [Magal Security Systems](#), a company that [won 80 percent of the original contracts](#) for Israel's wall in the West Bank in 2002 and has also made millions from building the [Israeli fence around Gaza](#). In an emailed response the British Council confirmed that the Kirsh Foundation gave £176,000 (\$250,000) to Israel's Hebrew University through BIRAX. This begs the question whether the project may even be partially funded with profits from Israel's wall, which the International Court of Justice said violates international law in an advisory opinion issued in 2004. In addition, Israel's Ministry of Science and Technology has invested at least £250,000 (\$350,000) in the BIRAX project, according to a 2012 letter.

Apartheid South Africa

The taxpayer-funded British Council is trying to quash a grassroots movement for Palestinian rights supported by an increasing proportion of the British public. But it is also channeling donations from the Israeli government and elite Zionist donors with direct links to Israel's illegal wall. The British Council is at least consistent. In [an interview with the Tel Aviv newspaper Haaretz](#) during a visit to Israel, its chair Sir Vernon Ellis noted a historical precedent for his organization's anti-boycott stance, stating that it "continued working in apartheid South Africa." When asked to comment on the efforts of its Israel office to monitor and oppose boycott motions passed by representative student bodies — and the explicit references to stopping the BDS movement in pitches to potential BIRAX funders — a British Council spokesperson said these characterizations were "untrue" and that the entire purpose of BIRAX was "to promote cultural relations and support scientific research." When asked if it worked to undermine the boycott movement that helped isolate South Africa and contributed to bringing down the apartheid regime, as it is today working to undermine the boycott of Israel, the British Council did not respond.

[Hilary Aked](#) is a freelance writer, researcher and journalist and a doctoral candidate at the University of Bath, investigating the pro-Israel lobby's response to the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. The article, reproduced here with permission of the author, was originally published online by Electronic Intifada, where

some of the original documents obtained through FOI can be read.

BDS Activism under Attack in Italy

Nicola Pratt and Paola Rivetti

There has been a worrying trend of increasing efforts by university authorities to censor BDS activism on campuses and prevent criticisms of Israel. Last year, a conference hosting the world-renowned historian Ilan Pappé was moved to a new venue at the last minute after the Rector of Roma Tre University withdrew permission for the organizers to use university facilities. As highlighted by the Electronic Intifada, this was part of [a wider trend to close down discussion of Palestinian rights in several universities in Italy](#) in 2015.

Since the launch of the "Stop Technion" Campaign in February, this suppression and demonization of Palestine solidarity activism has dramatically escalated. Some of the signatories of the campaign, which calls for the suspension of research collaboration between Italian universities and the Israeli research centre Technion on the basis of the latter's complicity with the Israeli occupation, [have been targeted](#), and Italian authorities, from the mayors of some small towns to Prime Minister Renzi, have condemned the campaign.

Meanwhile, in February, the University of Cagliari [refused permission for "Israeli Apartheid Week"](#), whilst the University of Turin [prevented a debate on the "Stop Technion" campaign](#). At the University of Rome "La Sapienza", Israeli Apartheid Week-related initiatives were [targeted by the Israeli Embassy](#), and the Rector, Professor Eugenio Gaudio, stated that [the signatories of the "Stop Technion" campaign should be punished](#).

At the University of Catania, where the annual congress of the Italian Society for Middle Eastern Studies took place in mid-March 2016, a panel on the implications of academic and cultural boycott campaigns against Israel, meant to take place during the conference, [was removed from the official conference programme](#), following the intervention of the university's rector.

Students and staff have remained resilient despite this difficult environment. [More than 300 academics signed the Stop Technion call](#), and discussions are currently underway to strengthen opposition to Israeli occupation. At the conference of the Italian Society for Middle

Eastern Studies, academics overwhelmingly supported a motion defending the freedom to debate and discuss the BDS and PACBI campaigns. SeSaMO is the first Italian professional academic association to vote for such a resolution. Meanwhile, in response to attempts by universities to cancel events, students in [Cagliari](#), [Turin](#) and [Rome](#) initiated an occupation on campus and found alternative venues. In addition, [students across Italian campuses launched 'Students Against Technion' during Israeli Apartheid Week](#).

In March, BRICUP wrote letters to the heads of the universities of Catania, La Sapienza, Turin and Cagliari, as well as the Minister of Education, expressing our concerns about efforts to prevent criticism of Israel and the discussion of the Boycott Israel campaign, calling on all Italian universities to protect academic freedom and end all forms of censorship of criticisms of Israel and expressing our solidarity with the “Stop Technion” Campaign. At the time of writing, we have not received any response to our letters. In addition, the [Committee on Academic Freedom](#) of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and the [Irish Network of Academics for Palestine also wrote statements denouncing](#) the attempts at curtailing discussions about the BDS and PACBI campaigns on Italian campuses.

Nicola Pratt, University of Warwick/BRICUP and Paola Rivetti, Dublin City University.

Is Empathy the Answer to the Palestinian Problem?

Jonathan Rosenhead

Is lack of empathy the real issue standing in the way of a resolution of the Israel/Palestine problem? Lack of empathy – that is, a failure to be able to identify with that other person.

This was the implied assumption of a wholly bizarre conference held on March 7-8 under the august auspices of the British Academy, just across the road from the Royal Society, and round the corner from the Athenaeum. Its full title was [Empathy Neuroscience: translational relevance for conflict resolution](#). The conference’s declared focus was on the idea “that taking the other person’s perspective is ultimately necessary to resolve conflict; ... that conflicts are perpetuated by adopting a single perspective” and that ‘empathy neuroscience’ is potentially relevant for

policy makers working in conflict resolution. Right at the eye of the conceptual confusion and the colliding frames of reference in all this was the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Which is to be master?

Stop right there: ‘Israel-Palestine conflict’. It is there in the title of the talk by Professor Simon Baron Cohen of the University of Cambridge, the principal begetter of the conference: ‘Empathy in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: a new approach to peace’. But is the ‘Israel-Palestine conflict’ really a conflict? Words always matter, but it turns out that in a sense the whole project (of which this conference is just a part) depends crucially on this assertion.

Dictionary definitions of ‘conflict’ dominantly use words and phrases like ‘a state of opposition’; ‘a fight’; ‘incompatible interests’. Implicitly there are two parties, a dispute, and no distinction of status. However if one wishes to describe an unequal state rather than a symmetrical process, there are other words and phrases available. Many of them start with ‘sub’: subjection, suppression, subjugation. The thesaurus offers ‘wipe ones feet on’ in the same entry.

The misrepresentation of the situation in Israel/Palestine as ‘conflict’ is, I am sure, not a deliberate attempt to mislead. More likely it is an unreflective adoption of the biased terminology widely deployed in the public sphere (media, politics) reflecting the balance of forces in the field of ideas as well as on the ground. As the philosopher Humpty Dumpty said when challenged by Alice as to whether he could play fast and loose with the meaning of words “The question is – which is to be master – that’s all”.

Going cross-country

This digression into language bias is relevant to an understanding of the Empathy Neuroscience conference because without this elision this intellectual project could not stand. The project entails a heroic progression across cognitive territory, achieved in stages:

- we start with neuroscience, an entirely valid and indeed rapidly progressing field of natural scientific endeavour making use of advanced brain imaging;
- we move to a more speculative area, which is to use brain scans to explore where the capacity for empathy might be localised in the brain;

- next we make our way to a cross between experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience (exposing people to particular scenarios – eg stories about pain and suffering - and ‘looking’ at what is going on in their brains)

- and finally on to ‘social neuroscience’, where participants in groups discuss potentially divisive subject matter while wired up to systems and machines monitoring brain processes.

This is a quite hairy cross-country trek, with the different terrains divided by deep fissures and ravines, and some raging torrents. The question forces itself on any disengaged observer - how much baggage can be reliably transported across these natural barriers?

And yet – even so we haven’t really arrived, if arriving means having something relevant to say about resolving the ‘conflict’. Where we have got to, for example, is an [experiment](#) conducted by Professor Ruth Feldman at Bar Ilan University. Twelve young women, six Jewish and six Arab, wired up to monitors for data capture, spend sessions “discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, approaches to dialogue, and restorative concepts such as empathy, lovingkindness and generosity”. Professor Feldman spoke at the conference.

Her experiments, she said, actually showed no increase in empathy (although there was an increase in ‘reciprocity’). Feelings, she said, although to a very limited extent malleable, were very deep and entrenched. Now why would that be?

Simon Baron Cohen

The meeting was fully subscribed and the room was packed. Who were these people? A mixture of brain and child development researchers, psychologists and psychiatrists, peace activists and NGO workers. Israel, the UK and the US were the predominant nations represented, with a smaller number of mostly diasporic Palestinians. Some attendees were committed to the whole enterprise, others less so but optimistically hopeful that this could be a way out of the impasse, a minority deeply sceptical. [An informative alternative [account of the conference](#) can be found in the Jewish Chronicle.]

The biggest presence in the room was someone who wasn’t there – Simon Baron Cohen, who had been central to the cohesive and continuing organising group. Due to a bereavement only days before the conference he couldn’t attend; however

an extended abstract of his talk was made available in the conference documentation.

Baron Cohen is a noted autism researcher, whose latest book is [The Science of Evil: on empathy and the origins of cruelty](#) (Basic Books, 2011). His influential if speculative theory is that different brain types are defined by their scores on empathising and systematising quotients. He sees low EQs combined with high SQs as associated with autism, and also with geeky types who tend to gravitate to science and technology. He thinks that assortative mating (people choosing breeding partners of a similar type to themselves) by ‘systemisers’ makes them more likely to produce autistic children. But from that base he has extended the reach of his theme to develop theories about male and female brains; and most recently a theory of human cruelty. Broadly he sees empathy as “the universal solvent. Any problem immersed in it becomes soluble.”

The abstract of Baron Cohen’s talk makes interesting reading. Until its closing passages it does not deal with empathy or neuroscience. Instead it summarises the progressive displacement experienced by Palestinians as Jewish settlers arrived from the 1890’s; the Arab Revolt of the 1930’s; and, strikingly, the massacres and ethnic cleansing of the Nakba. His historical summary stops at 1948. But the account is sufficient, he says, to expose and explain the roots of the ‘conflict’, and why “both Palestinians and Israelis mirror each other’s feelings of being under threat and under siege”. Mirror. Conflict. Yet the story he has outlined is deeply asymmetrical.

He is undoubtedly sensitive to the outrageous circumstances under which 21st century Palestinians live, but needs to say so moderately as his prescription for moving forward needs to keep liberal Israelis on board. Echoing the South African model, he calls this process Truth and Reconciliation; or to be more precise – Truth, then Reconciliation. Truth, the first stage, involves academics and especially historians on both sides intensively educating both communities about the historical record. An understanding of the roots of what is wrong will then tend to generate an empathy that should make reconciliation more possible.

It is no criticism of the sincerity of his motives to see this as unrealistic wishful thinking. In South Africa Truth and Reconciliation, led by Archbishop Tutu’s Commission, became possible after the transfer to majority rule, when the state,

with its army and all its other functions, had been transferred out of the hands of the oppressing community. It could not have happened sooner.

Truth and Reconciliation versus Academic Boycott

As one thoroughly disenchanted speaker at the conference pointed out: since the year 2000 for every Israeli child who has died through inter-communal violence there have been 158 Palestinian children. The per capita income of Palestinians is under \$3000, while for Israelis the figure is \$36000. The entire GNP of Palestine is smaller than the Israeli defence budget. Baron Cohen wishfully thinks that Truth and Reconciliation can occur while the oppressor community still has the oppressed by the throat. But while that persists, rather than the generation of empathy we will see, as we do now, the continued dehumanisation of the other by concentrated indoctrination.

One thing that Baron Cohen is very definite about is boycott, especially academic boycott. He cites the BRICUP-organised Academic Commitment for Palestine in extenso, and explicitly aligns himself with the signatories' condemnation of Israel's illegal occupation, human rights violations etc. In fact he shares everything except the action element, the academic boycott itself. Why? Because Israeli academics are on the side of peace, he says, and boycott closes down debate. Because we need to support academics doing the historical work which will be the basis of Truth (which is the basis for Reconciliation). Because boycott has been tried for 10 years and things are getting worse so clearly boycott doesn't work. Because it targets the Israelis asymmetrically – we are not boycotting the Palestinians!

Enough.

Science or scientism?

Some questions we should ask are - why is this wishful project happening now? And who benefits from it?

Things are getting tough for the Israeli establishment. They have no answer to the Palestinian attacks in Jerusalem except more of the repression which is fuelling their bitter resentment. They failed to frighten the US out of its Iran policy, a major foreign policy defeat which indicates a waning of influence. And BDS grows in strength, while Israel's international image in civil society plummets.

All these reasons explain why Israel, normally so skilful at manipulating things to its advantage in the US, Europe, Britain through insider trading by its friends, is now having to make its power plays in full public view. Orchestrated and strident accusations of antisemitism, threats against the lives of BDS leaders, attempts to criminalise or otherwise hobble boycott in many countries. These are all signs of a growing strategic weakness.

But these are hard times also for soft Zionists and nice liberals, those who deplore the escalating violence and illegality of Israel's methods, but lack the stomach to dissociate themselves from the project.

For them empathy-neuroscience is a godsend. There is, after all, another way, and better still one attested to by science. For the neuroscientists themselves the positives are clear. They have developed an interesting and potentially fruitful new field of study, empathy – and can feel that they may also be contributing (if in a very basic way, far from the action) to the resolution of an important and otherwise intractable problem. Others, not perhaps so aware of scientific method are, I fear, minded to clutch at straws. They appeared at the conference not to be aware of the problems of trans-shipping findings in brain chemistry, or in individual or group psychology, across to the stage of identity and culture, of ideologies and deep state structures, of political mobilisation and national projects.

Findings that may be true in one field of study cannot be transferred across unproblematically to a different one. There are plenty of words with precise scientific definitions that are also used in a loose way – gravity, energy, complexity, empathy.... Valid scientific relationships between concepts well-defined in their own domain can certainly be used in a metaphorical or analogical way to suggest possible relationships in a quite different domain. But the latter remain speculative unless/until you have properly defined equivalently well-specified concepts in the new domain – and then carried out research to see if the equivalent relationships do in fact exist.

Without that hard work, nothing is proved. In our particular case, what has been found out about brain chemistry and activity, or about individual reactions to stimuli, or about bonding in small groups in laboratory situations cannot be a basis for practical action at the wholesale level. Policies for terminating or ameliorating the

Israel/Palestine stand-off need to be determined as best we can.

That ‘best’ cannot be a reliance on neuroscientific research. There is no national or community brain. A national group in the Wild Middle East does not behave like a small bunch of students wired up in a lab. Neuroscience cannot accommodate or take account of the roles of history, of ideology, of the modalities and reach of political and economic power. Claims to the contrary fall into the category of ‘scientism’, the illegitimate extension of claims to scientific authority in realms where the scientific method has not and possibly cannot be applied.

The intractability of the Israel/Palestine problem is surely not due to lack of empathy – in the sense of a failure to understand, a misperception of ‘the other’. Palestinians in general have a pretty good perception of the way they are treated by the Israelis they meet, mostly in uniform. (Israelis may do less well here.) What is missing from the entire discourse promoted by the conference organising group is politics! The problem can only be, will be, solved one day by political action both within Israel/Palestine and on the world stage. We should help to make it sooner.

The empathy-neuroscience initiative is a distraction from this imperative. If it gains any traction I think we can be sure that Israel’s boosters will do their best to divert moderate critics down this dead end. As of now, though, it is reasonable to assume that most, perhaps all, of its advocates are entirely sincere in their motivations. Nevertheless its practical import is to provide a rationale for avoiding the only type of action that will count. It is normalisation with a scientific face.

New Israeli law would further isolate Palestinian academics

Mike Cushman

A bill is progressing through the Knesset which will further increase the isolation of Palestinian Academics.

[Measure P/1906/20](#) in the name of 26 MKs states

No visa or residency permit of any kind shall be given to a person who is not an Israeli citizen or a permanent resident of the State of Israel, if he or the company, organization, or association which he represents call for the boycott of the State of Israel.

The proposers are drawn from all five of the governing coalition parties and two, Yesh Atid and Zionist Union, opposition parties. This wide ranging support increases the likelihood of this measure becoming law.

As [the report of the April 2015 European delegation to Palestinian Universities](#) makes clear isolation from wider academic communities and colleagues is one of the major professional problems confronting Palestinian academics. Overseas academics wanting to visit and teach at Palestinian universities already face huge difficulties in entering and remaining in the West Bank and find it virtually impossible to visit Gaza.

This proposed measure will make entry impossible for those who have expressed political support in the way our Palestinian colleagues have requested, support for the academic boycott. Those who wish to support Palestine academically and intellectually will frequently be those who have also expressed political support. Thus the Israeli suffocating academic boycott of Palestine will be further intensified.

York University and “Seven Jewish Children” – an update

Monica Wusteman

In last month’s newsletter we reported how performances of Caryl Churchill’s “Seven Jewish Children – A Play for Palestine” by York University students during ‘Israeli Anti-Apartheid Week’ were condemned as anti-semitic by members of the university’s Jewish Society. These accusations were enthusiastically taken up and embroidered by the Jewish Chronicle, which also tried to falsely associate these acts of so called ‘anti-semitism’ with Jeremy Corbyn’s son, Tommy- a York university undergraduate

http://www.bricup.org.uk/documents/archive/BRI_CUPNewsletter97.pdf .

Despite a robust rebuttal of these accusations from a group of Jewish staff and students who had seen the play (see March Newsletter), and private assurances from both the University authorities and the Student Union which upheld the right of the Palestine Solidarity Society to perform the play, the University still felt obliged to issue a joint statement with the Jewish Society undertaking to discuss ‘practical steps’ to end Jewish hatred on campus (see below).

It was unfortunate that the university did not take the opportunity, at the same time, to refute this deeply offensive slur against both the students responsible for the performance of Seven Jewish Children and the playwright herself - not least because this increasing tendency amongst supporters of the state of Israel, on and off university campuses, to conflate anti-zionism with anti-semitism is making the genuine article more difficult to identify and address.

It is absolutely right that the University should take such care to identify and eradicate anti-semitism and all other forms of racism from their campus, but it needs to be clear to all concerned what is, and what isn't, anti-semitism.

Joint Statement by the University of York and the University of York Jewish Society

The students raised concerns about anti-Semitism which they and others had experienced in the course of their studies. The meeting discussed the issue of race hate and anti-Semitism and began a dialogue about how the University and the Jewish Society can work together to address this very serious matter. They agreed to discuss further practical steps aimed at: reassuring students who are concerned about anti-Semitism; raising awareness about the points of contact students can use to raise specific concerns; ensuring that Jewish staff and students of all nationalities feel welcome at York. The University representatives indicated that they were seeking external advice on this matter from the Community Security Trust. They would also be meeting with other societies and groups to hear their views and address any concerns they might have.

The University aims to ensure that anyone who experiences anti-Semitism or race hate of any kind is aware of the mechanisms in place to report it. We hope that the above steps as well as actions that result from our future work with the Jewish Society and other groups will help to guarantee this.

David Duncan, Registrar & Secretary

Hanna Ferencz, President, Jewish Society

Jordan Hennessy, Secretary, Jewish Society

Zachary Confino, Treasurer, Jewish Society

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

The AAA vote on BDS

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) will soon be voting on a [resolution](#) to boycott Israeli institutions. Please remember to vote in favour of boycott in the online ballot that opens on April 15 and runs until May 31. All you have to have is a valid AAA membership (you can renew your membership and vote anytime during the balloting window). For more information on AAA memberships, click [here](#). For media and other queries, write to [anthroboycott \[at\] gmail dot com](mailto:anthroboycott[at]gmail[dot]com)

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

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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You can [download a standing order form](#) here.

14 March 2016