

# BRICUP Newsletter 99

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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### **Catherine Hall withdraws from Dan David Prize**

Jonathan Rosenhead

Professor Catherine Hall of University College London, the widely respected cultural historian,

has withdrawn her acceptance of the Dan David Prize.

Her name was included in the list of prize-winners announced in February. These prizes are awarded annually and presented at Tel Aviv University in an elaborate ceremony, due to take place this year on May 22nd. It is one of the most prestigious awards made in Israel, with the prizes often presented by Israel’s President. It is certainly the biggest award in financial terms, with \$1million for each of 3 prizes (though it is common for each prize to be divided between a number of recipients – as they are this year).

According to the Jerusalem Post, the prize was awarded to Catherine Hall for her ‘impact on social history, as a pioneer in gender history, race and slavery. While active in the women’s liberation movement, her work focused on women’s history in the 1970s.’

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Social-historians-sociologists-and-nanoscientists-awarded-Dan-David-prize-444683>. Catherine Hall’s work has indeed made a significant contribution to these areas. She, along with her late husband, renowned cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall, have been leading figures on the intellectual left since the 1970s.. Her recent major AHRC/ESRC funded projects on the structures and legacies of British-Caribbean slave ownership are politically and academically ground-breaking as well as prestigious.

Catherine Hall reconsidered her decision to accept the prize after consulting widely. In mid-March she notified the Dan David organisation that she was withdrawing. They did not at first remove her name and photograph from their website, but have eventually done so. She communicated the following to BRICUP:

**My statement is that I have withdrawn from the prize – this was an independent political choice, undertaken after many discussions with those who are deeply involved with the politics of Israel-Palestine, but with differing views as to how best to act.**

We might have hoped for a statement more supportive of the BRICUP and PACBI principle of boycott. Nevertheless the BDS movement, and especially its academic wing, is delighted that such a high profile breach of the academic boycott will not be taking place. Given that Dan David Prize winners are always promoted in headlines in Israeli newspapers, in effect as evidence that Israel retains international credibility and respect, this is another defeat in Israel's battle against BDS.

One can perhaps infer that, in some sense, academic boycott is on course to becoming the new norm - the default position that only those with a committed ideological position, to the State of Israel, or to the precedence of academic interchange above all other principles, will reject.

### **Other Prize-winners**

There are three Dan David prizes each year in categories concerned respectively with the Past, the Present, and the Future. Catherine Hall's prize, as befits a historian was in the first of these. Two other British researchers feature in the current year's list. They are

Professor Sir Anthony (Tony) Atkinson, of both LSE and Nuffield College Oxford. An economist and econometrician, he is a leading international scholar on poverty and inequality. Tony Atkinson is noted for his concern with issues of social justice. It is therefore particularly sad that he has been unwilling to respect the call of Palestinian civil society for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel.

Professor Sir John Pendry, a physicist working at Imperial College.

### **More on the Dan David Prize (and why it should be boycotted)**

The Dan David Prizes have been awarded annually since 2001. Their founder, Dan David, died in 2011 – he was an Israel-based businessman and philanthropist who made his money initially from photo-booths, before diversifying.

The Prizes are overseen by a mixed bag of senior academics (university Presidents and the like) and

businessmen (yes men) from Israel, the United States and France. And also Henry Kissinger. The Chair of the Prize Board is Professor Joseph Klafter, President of Tel Aviv University. So the degree is intimately linked to this Israeli academic institution, which is linked in turn to a dazzling array of services to the Israeli state including in its most oppressive modes. TAU has particularly intense connections with the Israeli military. The cover story of its [Winter Review 2008/9](#) is an account of the 64 projects for the military that were then ongoing. The timing of this Review is interesting – just around the time of the Cast Lead assault on Gaza which caused 1400 Palestinian deaths.

In July 2014, in the middle of Operation Protective Edge which killed another 2200 Palestinians in Gaza, the university's President Klafter expressed his "appreciation" for students who went to serve in the army and said "Tel Aviv University has contributed and still contributes greatly to national security." He announced that the university would be providing students called up to serve in Gaza with [one year's free tuition](#). Still more recently in May last year the University announced that it was [awarding all its honorary fellowships](#) for that year to four Israeli army officials and military company directors. The theme is compelling and continuous.

Services to occupation and oppression come in many formats. It is a Geography professor at the university who is credited with coming up with the idea of the separation wall. And a professor of philosophy at TAU developed for the army the doctrine of disproportionate response.

It is of course the case that all Israeli universities are woven into the fabric of the occupation – after all, Israel has been operating its own version of the 'one state solution' since 1967. In all that time no university, or body of university staff in Israel has dissociated itself from the state policies which perpetuate the suppression of Palestinian rights. No university, or body of university staff in Israel, has spoken up for [the academic freedoms of Palestinian universities](#) which are deliberately hobbled by Israel.

When Stephen Hawking's acceptance of an invitation to a prominent conference in Israel became a subject of controversy in 2013 BRICUP was in communication with him. At his request we then put him in touch with senior Palestinian academics – as far as I recall all university Presidents. As a result he wrote a letter withdrawing from the conference, in which he

said that “Had I attended I would have stated my opinion that the policy of the present Israeli government is likely to lead to disaster.” However it was the unanimous advice of his Palestinian interlocutors, he said, that he should, rather, respect the boycott.

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## **Cancellation of Leeds University ‘debate’ with Israeli Embassy Head Spokesperson Yiftah Curiel**

James Dickins

In the context of attempts by the Leeds University Israel lobby to push back against Israeli Apartheid Week, which ran successfully at the University of Leeds again this year, the POLIS (School of Politics and International Studies) Society and Leeds University JSoc [Jewish Society] attempted to stage a ‘debate’ on Feb. 24, 2016 featuring the Israeli Embassy Head Spokesperson, Yiftah Curiel. The motion was ‘This House would support the Iran nuclear deal’. All audience questions were to be pre-vetted, and no corresponding invitation was given to a similarly well-briefed (or well-funded) senior figure to propose the motion. Proposers were sought via a last-minute call on the event facebook page, ensuring that the Israeli government position (opposed to that of all EU governments, including Britain, and states across the world), would not face any serious challenge.

Twelve Leeds University academics wrote a protest letter to the Vice-Chancellor pointing out that the debate was rigged, and that it also contravened the Palestinian civil-society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, one of whose stipulations is that Israeli government officials are to be boycotted on university campuses.

The debate was subsequently called off, presumably at the behest of the University, and was replaced by a small JSoc question-and-answer meeting with Yiftah Curiel. A number of students from Leeds University Palestine Solidarity Group were able to enter the meeting, attempts by JSoc to prohibit their entry being overruled by a University official present, on the grounds that this would contravene free-speech rules. Another group of protesters from Leeds Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and Leeds Coalition Against the War (both city-based) handed out leaflets explaining the reasons for the protest at the end of the meeting.

This is at least the third occasion in the last few months on which pro-Palestine activists have

been able to intervene to stop appearances by Israeli state officials at British universities. Previous events featuring official Israeli spokesman have been cancelled following interventions by pro-Palestine activists at Warwick and Aberdeen. While Palestine solidarity is coming under increasing pressure from the government and government-related bodies, these successes underline that the sympathies of university students and staff, and in some cases, perhaps even senior management, lie with the Palestinians.

The text of the letter that was sent to the Leeds Vice-Chancellor follows:

Dear Vice-Chancellor,

### **Israeli Official Invited to Speak on Campus: Rigged Debate and Ignoring of Palestinian Calls for Solidarity**

On Feb. 24, Polis Society is holding a so-called ‘debate’ on This house supports the Iran nuclear deal <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/this-house-would-support-the-iran-nuclear-deal-tickets-21722249834>, which the head spokesperson of the Israeli embassy in the UK, Yiftah Curiel, is invited to speak against. The ‘debate’ is a stitch-up: audience questions are all pre-vetted, and no corresponding invitation has been given to a similarly well-briefed (or well-funded) senior figure to propose the motion: proponents are being sought via a last-minute call on the event facebook page, ensuring that the Israeli government position (which is contrary to that of the British government and international community) will not face any serious challenge. Inviting Israeli officials to speak on university campuses is also in violation of the Palestinian call for international civil society to implement boycott and divestment initiatives against Israel.

The call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), issued in 2005, aims to isolate Israel until it recognizes Palestinian rights to self-determination and abides by international law, including ending the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, respecting the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, and granting equal rights to Palestinian citizens of Israel. It is a form of non-violent resistance against a backdrop of a failed peace process and the impunity that Israel enjoys for its continuing violations of international law.

Since 2004, increasing numbers of associations, unions and individuals worldwide have endorsed the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions,

including universities and student unions. In the UK alone, in 2015, students and staff at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, voted overwhelmingly to endorse BDS, to include suspending ties with Israeli universities; more than 300 academics, including several at Leeds, signed a public statement pledging to boycott Israeli universities; and the NUS Executive Committee, Black Students Campaign, Women's Conference and Postgraduate Conference, as well as tens of individual student unions, have all voted to support BDS in recent years.

While debates in general are indispensable for rationally and logically debunking the other side's propaganda and exposing their defence of indefensible violations of international law, debating Israeli officials, including official spokespeople, does more harm than good to the struggle for Palestinian rights. The BDS movement aims to isolate Israel and challenge the legitimacy of its regime of occupation, colonization and apartheid. That isolation entails practical manifestations such as protesting against the visit of Israeli officials and challenging the ability of Israeli officials to use academic institutions and spaces to defend Israel's regime of oppression.

Signed by James Dickins and 11 others

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## **Another campus votes for BDS**

Editor

In April, the Edinburgh University Students' Association passed a motion backing a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions resolution against Israel.

<http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/337867/edinburgh-students-vote-62-for-bds/#ixzz47K7rgXvK>

The nonbinding motion was passed by a vote of 249 to 153, with 22 abstentions. It calls on the university "to target products, companies and institutions that profit from or are implicated in, the violation of Palestinian rights, resist any action that gives political or economic support to violations of international law by the State of Israel and complicit companies and mandate sabbatical officers to work with the Black and Minority Ethnic liberation group, as well as Edinburgh University Students for Justice in Palestine to lobby and campaign for the university

to also commit to BDS," . The motion also called for an academic boycott of Israel.

The student association's policy will apply for three years, after which another vote must be taken. Edinburgh University's Israel Engagement Society described the motion as "irresponsible" and "intolerant,"

This successful outcome follows the vote in November last year by the Liverpool Guild of Students in support of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. Their motion committed the Guild to, among other things, advocate divestment from companies complicit in the Israeli occupation and to lobby their university to similarly divest. The full BDS motion can be read here..

<http://www.liverpoolguild.org/thestudentvoice/boycott-divestment-and-sanctions>

In a press release responding to the victory, the University of Liverpool Friends of Palestine (ULFOP) hailed "a landslide victory" despite a voting system they claimed meant the odds were against them.

<https://www.facebook.com/LiverpoolUniFriendsOfPalestine/posts/348554011934921> .

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## **Palestinian astrophysicist Imad Barghouti imprisoned without charge again.**

Editor

On Monday May 2nd, the prominent Palestinian astrophysicist [Imad Barghouti](#), a professor of theoretical space-plasma physics at Al-Quds University, has been sentenced by the Israeli military occupation to three months in administrative detention – which is imprisonment without charge or trial.

Barghouti, who marked his 54th birthday in Israeli prison, joins nearly 750 fellow Palestinians held without charge or trial under administrative detention. Detention orders are indefinitely renewable on the basis of "secret evidence" to which both Palestinian detainees and their lawyers are denied access. The scientist, from Beit Rima near Ramallah, was arrested by Israeli occupation forces at a military checkpoint in Nabi Saleh on 24 April.

Barghouti, a former employee of NASA in the United States, is a prominent figure in the Palestinian scientific community and his work is

internationally known. He received his BS in physics from the University of Jordan in 1985, followed by his masters' degree in nuclear physics in 1988. In 1994, he completed his Ph.D. at Utah State University in the United States.

[He was arrested before, on 6 December 2014](#), as he travelled to a scientific conference in the United Arab Emirates, and was ordered to administrative detention without charge or trial ; he was released early, on 22 January 2015, following an [international outcry from the scientific community](#), including statements from [AURDIP](#) (Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine), the [Committee of Concerned Scientists](#), MESA (M[BRICUP](#). iddle East Studies Association) [Committee on Academic Freedom](#), [Euroscience](#). and BRICUP.

Upon Barghouthi's release, he wrote a [letter](#) to international organizations that had supported him : "I call on the international community that spoke up on my behalf to speak up also on behalf of all Palestinian political prisoners. There are approximately 500 Palestinians held in administrative detention, imprisoned without charge or trial. The systematic use of arbitrary imprisonment by Israeli forces to punish Palestinians violates international humanitarian law under the Fourth Geneva Convention."

[Al-Quds University](#), where Barghouthi teaches, has also been subject to ongoing Israeli repression, including invasion of the campus, [destruction of student organizations' offices and materials](#), and [arrests of students](#).

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network calls for the immediate release of Palestinian scientist Imad al-Barghouthi, which comes as part of a systematic attack on Palestinian academics, journalists, writers and other cultural workers by the Israeli occupation. We reiterate that the case of Imad al-Barghouthi underlines the necessity of the [international academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions](#) – a call adopted by an increasing number of [academic associations](#) and [academic labor unions](#). Such institutions are deeply complicit in the structures of occupation that deny Palestinian human rights at all levels, including denying Palestinians' rights to education and academic freedom, and upholding

the structures of colonialism and occupation that target Barghouthi, his students and fellow faculty at Palestinian universities like Al-Quds, and the Palestinian people as a whole. (Printed from Samidoun: The Palestinian Prisoners Solidarity Network - May 2016)

Our response has been to join with AURDIP, BACBI ( the Belgian Campaign for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel) in writing to the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation drawing his attention to the renewed detention of professor Barghouthi, calling upon him to request the suspension of the EU Association Agreement until Israel releases Professor Barghouthi. The letter is set out here <http://www.aurdip.fr/letter-to-the-european.html>

If you are an active or retired academic (whether in Europe or not) you can signify your support for this letter by filling the form available [here](#). Your signature will appear with [those of other supporters](#), and will be sent in due course to the European Commissioner.

**Please sign the letter to the European Commission**

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## **Denial of Academic Freedom in the West Bank**

Robert Boyce

Two weeks ago, BRICUP received this appeal from the Vice President of Kadoorie University , Derar Elyan. 'The Palestine Technical University Kadoorie in Tulkarem is under severe conditions imposed by the Israeli army. The army has confiscated land from this agricultural institution and uses it for training and as a shooting range. We, Kadoorie University and Academia for Equality, a members organization dedicated to the democratization of Israeli academia and society, have previously appealed to the military authorities but the situation on the ground remains tense. We therefore decided to launch a joint public campaign to defend academic freedom in Palestine. '

The 'Friends of Kadoorie ([frinedsofkadoorie@gmail.com](mailto:frinedsofkadoorie@gmail.com)) made a plea for supporters to write to the Israeli authorities- the President of Israel, Minister of Defence etc- providing a model letter with details of the grotesque treatment being inflicted on the University by the Israeli occupation forces but BRICUP, concluding that there was no hope of

influence with the Israeli authorities, decided on another approach. In view of the fact that the Palestine Technical University began life as the first agricultural college in Mandate Palestine and is even now mainly an agricultural college, it was decided to issue an appeal to the heads of eight leading UK agricultural and veterinary colleges (Berkshire College of Agriculture , Harper Adams University, Royal Agricultural University, Royal Veterinary College, Scotland's Rural College, University of Glasgow School of Veterinary Medicine, Wiltshire College, Writtle College.) BRICUP has sent the following letter to each Vice Chancellor

2 May 2016

Dear Professor,

Derar Elyan, Vice President of the Palestine Technical University–Kadoorie in Tulkarm, which began life as the first agricultural college in Mandate Palestine, has appealed to us to draw attention to the actions of the Israeli Army which are endangering lives at the University and severely disrupting its activities. Mr Elyan writes as follows:

Since 2002, the army has used a shooting range built on confiscated university land, with firing oriented in the direction of the university buildings. Moreover, since October 2015, the army has responded aggressively and disproportionately to demonstrations against the occupation, storming the university's campus 130 times over 85 days, injuring 138 students and staff members with live bullets. In addition, the army fired tear gas grenades causing 850 cases of suffocation and destroyed greenhouses used by the students. These incursions into [the] campus also included shooting at walls, windows, and lamps; using so-called "skunk water;" and preventing the use of the library for weeks. To date, 12.5% of the total study days have been disrupted this year, as the university was forced to suspend study 12 times and to close its doors for two days to maintain its students' lives and safety.

In the face of this aggression, the university has reacted peacefully, only asking for its land to be given back, and for permission to build a protection wall between the campus and the army installations. This wall would not only prevent

bullets from reaching the buildings, but would also prevent demonstrators from entering the campus and throwing stones at army installations. The army has turned down this simple solution; military exercises – including shooting with live ammunition – continue regularly on the campus' grounds.

This scenario is exceptional and unacceptable, even under military occupation. An agricultural school must be able to use its greenhouses and a university must ensure a peaceful and secure course of study and research for its students.

Mr Elyan has requested the Israeli authorities to:

1. Remove the shooting range from the campus and return the University's lands.
2. Allow the University to build a protection wall against the bullets that endanger students' lives and damage its buildings.
3. Stop all violence, incursions, and interference on campus, allowing students and their lecturers to work and study peacefully for a better future.

As the occupying power, Israel has a clear obligation to ensure unhindered access to education in the West Bank. Unfortunately the Israeli authorities continue to ignore Mr Elyan's appeal and similar appeals from the University. We therefore urge you to assist them by taking the matter up with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Israeli Embassy.

For corroboration of Mr Elyan's appeal and further information, you may contact the President's office at [President@ptuk.edu.ps](mailto:President@ptuk.edu.ps) or the University Public Relations Office at [pr@ptuk.edu.ps](mailto:pr@ptuk.edu.ps) or [info@ptuk.edu.ps](mailto:info@ptuk.edu.ps)

Yours sincerely

Robert Boyce

Secretary, British Committee for the Universities of Palestine

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## Free Speech on Israel: A new initiative to counter ‘antisemitism’ smears

Les Levidow

For the past three months the Labour Party has been hit by allegations that antisemitism is widespread among its members. In mid-February Alex Chalmers resigned as chair of Oxford University’s Labour Club, claiming that that the party had ‘some kind of problem with Jews’, as widely reported in the [mass media](#). As it turned out, he had previously worked for the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM), a central agency of the Israel lobby. Since February the smears against the Labour Party have escalated into a joint operation by pro-Israel groups, the mass media and Jeremy Corbyn’s enemies, both outside and inside the Labour Party, seeking to undermine his leadership. As a consistent feature, the smears conflate antisemitism with anti-Israel or pro-BDS views.

This smear campaign that is trying to highjack the cause of fighting racism and anti-semitism has two main aims: they want nothing less than to criminalize the political actions, analysis and commentary that is working to bring Israel to account; and they are trying to bring down the elected leadership of the Labour Party.

Both of these aims are a fundamental attack on our democratic rights, under the cover of routing out alleged antisemitism. We find it repugnant and have denounced the misuse of antisemitism as a political football. We urge people to take a good look under the cover and ask what is really going on.

To counter the smear campaign, labour movement activists have formed a new network, [Free Speech on Israel](#), bringing together the alternative voices that are being silenced. It issued a statement, Labour Jews assert: the Labour Party has no ‘problem with Jews’, as well as a model motion aimed at branches of the Labour Party and trade unions. The website has posted numerous articles analysing the smear campaign, along with numerous letters published in the daily press. Watch this space....

## 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)

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## 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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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.