

## **Defend Academic Freedom – Fight the ban on discussion of the legal basis of Israel (or any other state)**

### **Appeal for funds**

Southampton University, in a step unprecedented in modern times has succumbed to external political pressure and cancelled a conference on 'International Law and the State of Israel: Legitimacy, Responsibility and Exceptionalism' organised by two professors of the university. The university administration initially resisted pressure from: Zionist organisations; Conservative MPs and Cabinet Ministers; and donors to the university. The opponents of the conference made the derogatory claim that its theme and the organisers were one-sided and anti-semitic, despite the organisers seeking papers from academics with the full range of views on the subject to allow a full critical analysis of the theme. The university administration succumbed to the continued pressure but claimed their decision was made on Health and Safety grounds, because of the risk of disruption from protestors despite clear assurances from the Police that they envisaged no difficulties in handling any protests outside the conference. For more information see <http://freespeechsouthampton.blogspot.co.uk/>

Academic freedom is hopelessly compromised if threats to funding and of hostile media coverage determine what is to be debated. The conference organisers are having to take a case to the High Court to end this abuse. They are seeking an injunction against the ban on the conference and a judicial review of the decision to explore its legality in the light of the commitment to academic freedom in the charter of the university.

It is of utmost importance that the conference takes place regardless of the outcome of the judicial review. If the conference does not go ahead it means that the university would get away with their abuse; and the illegitimate onslaught would have succeeded in its bullying. There will have been a great assault on free thought and free speech setting a ugly precedent to any future events dealing with topics unwelcome to powerful interests. Thus, the organisers are simultaneously looking for alternative venues and arrangements that would allow them to hold the conference on the planned dates with the planned themes and programme.

### **What are the funds needed for?**

We are seeking donations to cover legal costs, which are estimated to be up to £15,000. While lawyers have generously offered to take on the case representation pro bono the conference organisers have had to consult other solicitors and barristers who need to be paid and there are considerable court fees. If the case is lost they will have to pay the costs for the other party. Additionally, the court will only hear the case if the organisers can demonstrate they have sufficient funds to cover the costs.

If the court case is lost the cost of a new venue would need to be met and so we are also calling for donations to support the costs of alternative arrangements in order to hold the conference as planned.

If you donate towards venue costs and the court case is won and Southampton University is compelled to host the conference then donations can be refunded if so requested, if you

wish for a refund in these circumstances please send a message to [juman\\_aj@yahoo.com](mailto:juman_aj@yahoo.com) informing us of your wish at the same time as you send your donation.

If more funds are donated than are needed to meet the immediate purpose of the appeal then the conference organisers will use surplus to:

- Finance study and discussion of the legal basis of the Israeli state; or
- Support the development of advocacy skills of young Palestinian lawyers; or
- Support the work of the charity, Medical aid for Palestinians [www.map-uk.org](http://www.map-uk.org)

### **How to donate**

Please make donations by bank transfer if possible. To make tracking of donations easier please send an email with name, amount and method of donation to [juman\\_aj@yahoo.com](mailto:juman_aj@yahoo.com) when you transfer the funds.

### **UK bank transfer:**

Account name: Students for Palestine Southampton [SfPS has agreed to let the conference organisers use their bank account for the purpose of collecting donations]

Account number: 26617360

Sort Code: 30-90-34

### **International bank transfer:**

Bank: Lloyds Bank

IBAN (for International Transfers Only): GB84 LOYD 3090 3426 6173 60

BIC (for International Transfers Only): LOYDGB21148

**PayPal:** (as PayPal make a significant charge for transferring donations, please only use this method if you cannot make a bank transfer)

<http://www.studentpalestinesolidarity.org.uk/donate/>