

***British Committee for the Universities  
of Palestine (BRICUP)***

**AN OPEN LETTER  
TO LEONARD COHEN**

Dear Leonard Cohen:

Your songs have been part of the soundtrack of our lives -- like breathing, some of them. But we can't make sense of why you've decided to perform in Israel in September this year.

If we understand anything about Buddhism -- your practice of which is public knowledge -- it's that Buddhism advocates 'right action'. We accept that this precept, like the injunction to 'love thy neighbour as thyself', is probably honoured more in the breach than the observance. But we can't believe you didn't weigh up performing in Israel in the light of 'right action'. And apparently you've decided that it's right to take your unavoidably starry and very newsworthy presence there.

But what does this say to the Palestinians? If you had just emerged from three weeks of unfettered bombing from land, sea and air, with no place to hide and no place to run, your hospitals overwhelmed, sewage running in the streets and white phosphorous burning up your children, what would the news that the great Canadian musician Leonard Cohen had decided to play for your tormentors say to you?

You will perform for a public that by a very large majority had no qualms about its military forces' onslaught on Gaza (in fact wanted it to continue). You will perform in a state whose propaganda services will extract every ounce of mileage from your presence (they will use it to whitewash their war crimes). As someone who lives in the US, you are saying 'yah boo sucks' to the American academics, musicians, film-makers and others (including poet Adrienne Rich), who earlier this year launched the US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel. And you are telling the Palestinians -- who had nothing whatsoever to do with the Holocaust in Europe but have endured the torments of exile and

military occupation ever since they were driven out of their country in 1948 -- that their suffering doesn't matter.

Have you come across an Israeli woman called Dr Nurit Peled-Elhanan? She lost her 13 year old daughter to a Palestinian suicide bomber in 1997, but Dr Peled – showing the compassionate greatness of which human beings are sometimes capable – didn't retreat into rage, revenge or depression. Instead she co-founded an Israeli-Palestinian network called 'Bereaved Parents for Peace'. When the 10 year old daughter of a Palestinian colleague was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier, Peled said: 'I sit with her mother Salwa and try to say, "We are all victims of occupation". But my daughter's murderer had the decency to kill himself. The soldier who killed Abir is probably drinking beer, playing backgammon with his mates and going to discotheques'.

Or going to a Leonard Cohen concert in Ramat Gan. Is this really what you want to be part of?

Yours sincerely,

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Mike Cushman  
Professor Hilary Rose  
Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

London  
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