

## **Architects & Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP)**

Press Release: 21 September 2009

### **Spain excludes Israeli Settlement University from international Solar Decathlon Europe 2010 to be held in Madrid.**

The "University Center of Ariel in Samaria" (AUCS) has been excluded from the [Solar Decathlon, an international university competition promoting sustainable architecture](#).

The self-styled "Ariel University Centre of Samaria" claiming to represent Israel, though situated in the illegal settlement of Ariel in the occupied West Bank, was one out of 20 architecture teams short-listed from university entries last April to compete for the Solar Decathlon-Europe 2010. The Spanish Government together with the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid organizes this most prestigious competition for sustainable architecture in the world.

Although this is the first competition of its kind in Europe, it builds on almost a decade of competitions in the US sponsored by the US Department of Energy.

Selected teams, formed by architects and engineering students are asked to design and build a real house entirely driven by solar energy. Every house should be built in one of the 20 sites in the "Solar Villa" planned in Madrid to host them. To facilitate participation of the various teams, the Spanish Ministry of Housing allocated a sum of 100,000 Euros to every project.

The International Union of Architects (UIA) has already taken note that Israeli architecture and planning in the West Bank is contrary to its professional ethics and Codes of Conduct and Accords. After a motion raised at the UIA Council meeting in Brazil this July, in relation to these activities, the UIA confirmed its policy that:

*"The UIA Council condemns development projects and the construction of buildings on land that has been ethnically purified or illegally appropriated, and projects based on regulations that are ethnically or culturally discriminatory, and similarly it condemns all action contravening the fourth Geneva Convention"*

On this basis, the UK based Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP) [initiated a campaign](#) backed by UK and international architects and academics, which was also taken up by the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and

Sanctions National Committee (BNC) in Palestine, against official Spanish recognition of the illegal Israeli university in occupied Palestinian territory. The support of many individuals and organizations in Spain for the cancellation of AUCS's participation in the Solar Decathlon culminated in a parliamentary question in the Spanish Parliament and the eventual exclusion of the illegal settlement's academic institution from the competition.

Last Wednesday, September 16th, Sergio Vega, General Director of Solar Decathlon Europe addressed all participant teams to inform them of the exclusion of AUCS: "The decision has been taken by the Government of Spain based upon the fact that the University is located in the [occupied] West Bank. The Government of Spain is obliged to respect the international agreements under the framework of the European Union and the United Nations regarding this geographical area." EU policy is firmly against Israel's illegal settlements and occupation, and this clear, firm and principled response represents the first case of sanctions against an Israeli academic institution in Spain and one of the very first such actions in the West.

Spain joins the growing number of European governments taking effective steps to uphold international law by boycotting or divesting from institutions and corporations involved in Israel's illegal settlements and Separation Wall built on occupied Palestinian land.

This move of the government of Spain follows the decision of the UK government [not to rent offices from Israeli settlement builder Lev Leviev](#) and the <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/533>, an Israeli company providing surveillance equipment to the Wall. The global company Veolia, has lost major European contracts due to its construction of the light railway in illegally annexed East Jerusalem.

The Spanish university teachers, parliamentarians and organizations are to be congratulated for this principled stand with the Palestinian people and international law, and professional ethics.

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For more information:  
[Abe Hayeem, APJP](#)  
[The Palestinian BDS call](#)