

BRICUP Newsletter 125

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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CONTENTS

P 2. Rebecca Gould looks at the IHRA definition as an example of a ‘soft law’ with hard consequences

Jonathan Rosenhead

P 2. British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) protests against Israeli violations of Palestinian academic freedom

P 3. International Darwin Day on the origin of language at the University of Haifa- on upholding the boycott

Professor Chris Knight, UCL

P 5. LSHTM withdraws peer’s invitation over “allegations of anti-Semitic sentiment”- report in the British Medical Journal

Derek Summerfield

P 6. UCU defends free speech on Israel, condemns Israeli murder of Gaza demonstrators, and seeks to defend Jeremy Corbyn

By Tom Hickey, Brighton UCU

P 7. UCU Fringe Meeting Attacked by Zionists

Tom Hickey

P 8. Israeli Anthropologists and Sociologists denounce regularization of settlement colleges

Letter from Prof. Nir Avieli President, Israeli Anthropological Association

P 9. Supporter of Palestinian Human Rights awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry

From Mondoweiss

P 10. Countering a Blacklist- More about ‘Against Canary Mission’

Editor

P 10. New York University (NYU) student groups pledge non-cooperation with NYU Tel Aviv

A pledge by NYU student clubs

P 11. News from other campaigns

US Campaign for the academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel ([USACBI](#))

More news of action in support of Professor Cheney –Lippold (see also our [September newsletter](#))

The Belgian Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel ([BACBI](#))

Action on the suppression of academic freedom at Birzeit University where academics are being forced to leave Palestine.

P 12. Sign the commitment by UK scholars to human rights in Palestine

P 12. NOTICES

Rebecca Gould looks at the IHRA definition as an example of a ‘soft law’ with hard consequences

Jonathan Rosenhead

There are people who know about the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. There are people who think they know about the IHRA definition of antisemitism. There are people who know they don’t know much about the damn definition, but think there must be a fire somewhere or else why would there be so much smoke. Or perhaps they think it bizarre that there is so much fuss about something pretty marginal in their lives, and pass by on the other side of the street.

Professor Rebecca Gould is someone who really knows about the IHRA definition. As an academic at the University of Bristol she was targeted by supporters of Israel and consequently subjected to an investigation by the university authorities – about an academic article she had written 6 years previously. The complainants cited the IHRA definition in support of their demand that she be dismissed from her position. Or, they suggested magnanimously, she could simply retract the article’s argument, which was that allegations of antisemitism are used to deflect criticism of the Israeli occupation. Sir Eric Pickles, the government’s Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues (and its delegate to the IHRA Council) pitched in, saying the article was “one of the worst cases of holocaust denial” he had seen in years.

You might have thought that the complaint against Dr. Gould (as she then was) in itself demonstrated the very point that she was making.

The significant failings of the IHRA contribution to clarifying the nature of antisemitism have been widely rehearsed. (See for example [Feldman Klug, Lerman, Sedley](#).) Their document consists of a 38/9 word definition (depending on how you view hyphens) of conspicuous vagueness, followed by 11 examples of statements regarded as prima facie antisemitic, most of which reference Israel. These examples are needed because the 38 words are so vague. Or maybe the definition is so vague in order that examples are needed.

Rebecca Gould’s [new paper](#) was stimulated by her own experience, but also by other cases in which various aspects of academic life have become targets for attempted and sometimes

successful censorship – with the IHRA document at the chosen weapon. She does not follow the usual path of detailing the tricky wordings of the examples, or the ways in which allegations of contravening them in specific cases involve grotesque distortions of the usual meaning of words. It is not this detail but the purpose of the IHRA document that she addresses. It is she says ‘a document designed for abuse’.

She explains why, although the definition is quite without legal legitimacy, this doesn’t mean that it lacks legal implications. Her argument is based in the field of Critical Legal Studies, exploring the indeterminacy that traverses the legal, the non-legal, the semi-legal and the quasi-legal, and which the IHRA document exemplifies and exploits. Indeed this document is in the process of shifting the pre-disposition of public institutions across Europe, cautious as they are, who over-compensate for the law’s ambiguity by preemptive censorship. They begin to act just as if anti-Israel events had suddenly become unlawful. Erring on the side of caution in effect means imputing de facto legal status to ‘soft laws’ that result in the suppression of free speech.

Quasi laws like the IHRA document empower special interest groups to act as proxies for the state. Certainly the IHRA definition’s facilitation of the targeting of left activism is without precedent. But the newness of the IHRA definition lies not only in its substantive content, but also in the form of legal indeterminacy it introduces, whereby it functions as a *de facto* law, while lacking any democratic legitimacy.

The published version of Rebecca Gould’s thought-provoking analysis is [here](#). It should be available without a paywall [here](#).

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British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) protests against Israeli violations of Palestinian academic freedom

The [letter below](#) can be found on the BRISMES website. It has been forwarded to Professor Ghassan Khatib at Birzeit university to support its campaign of protest against the enforced departure of academics from Palestinian campuses (see our [September issue](#)).

I am writing on behalf of the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) to protest against

Israeli violations of Palestinian academic freedom.

BRISMES was founded in 1973 to encourage and promote the study of the Middle East in the United Kingdom. The leading UK association in this field, the Society publishes the British Journal of Middle East Studies. BRISMES members form a network of global academic collaboration in teaching and research that includes both Israelis and Palestinians, and individual members enjoy fruitful links with colleagues from both academic communities.

Members of our Society have for a long time observed with grave concern the many ways in which Israeli occupation and control has violated Palestinian academic freedom and degraded its educational infrastructure.

Our present concern is a new round of restrictions that the Israeli authorities have imposed on the employment of foreign nationals at Palestinian universities.

According to a recent (2018) survey by the Palestinian National Authority's Ministry of Education and Higher Education, as many as half of the 64 foreign faculty and staff members employed by nine Palestinian universities have been negatively affected by Israeli denial or restriction of their permission to work over the last two academic years.

These measures appear to have been implemented in an arbitrary and opaque manner. They have forced professors and staff to quit their jobs and even to leave the country. They stifle hiring and employment processes. They restrict research and teaching. They disrupt administration. They imply stress and humiliation for the Palestinian academic community in general. These measures clearly violate Palestinian and foreign nationals' academic freedom and further degrade Palestinian teaching and research.

BRISMES condemns these measures and urges you to rescind them.

Yours sincerely,

*Stuart Laing, President of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies
On behalf of the BRISMES Council*

International Darwin Day on the origin of language at the University of Haifa-

Professor Chris Knight

Department of Anthropology University College London

*This article by anthropologist Chris Knight describes why this conference was such an exciting opportunity to speak with others about his absorbing research interest – which he sketches out – but why he decided that he couldn't possibly go- **Editor.***

Early in October, I was delighted to receive an invitation to contribute to a symposium at Haifa University entitled 'Homo Loquens: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Evolution of Language', timed to celebrate [International Darwin Day](#) on February 14, 2019. The invitation came from Professor Nurit Bird-David, based in the [University of Haifa](#) and one of the world's leading specialists in hunter-gatherer egalitarianism. I felt honoured to be offered an opportunity to speak at such a wonderful event, which, with its invited speakers from a range of disciplines including hunter-gatherer ethnography, seemed tailor-made for me. I have attended numerous conferences and organized a good many myself, but this one seemed specially promising. Might this prove a long-awaited opportunity to share my ideas with like-minded colleagues?

How language evolved in the human species constitutes one of the great remaining mysteries in science. The ability to speak is clearly part of human nature, but unlike all our other instincts and abilities, this capacity is without parallel in the natural world. Darwinian theory has equipped us to solve most other problems in human evolution, but here we seem to hit a brick wall. Noam Chomsky put it bluntly when [he commented in 1988](#): 'There is a long history of study of origin of language, asking how it arose from calls of apes and so forth. That investigation in my view is a complete waste of time, because language is based on an entirely different principle than any animal communication system.'

Aware of these difficulties, in 1996 I co-founded the [Evolution of Language](#) (EVOLANG) conference series, which has since become the main international forum for debating the issues. Since those early years, I have been exploring a controversial idea. I have always suspected that language must have had its origins in some kind

of social breakthrough. The crucial factor was a political transition from ape-like hierarchical arrangements to hunter-gatherer-style egalitarianism. My thinking is that our pre-linguistic ancestors were intelligent creatures, quite capable of using symbols to share their thoughts, but remained trapped in despotic arrangements which blocked their potential to speak. Because words are so cheap, they are potentially deceptive, meaning that we can rely on them only where there is sufficient honesty and trust. When political dynamics are Machiavellian and conflict-ridden, as they are among apes, [the levels of public honesty and trust necessary for language to work are simply too low.](#)

Many scientists who oppose my work do so because they consider it too political. ‘What has politics to do with science?’, I am often asked. I agree that scientists must never bend under political pressure, whether from right or left. But sometimes, as with climate science, new theoretical insights [may have profound and urgent political implications.](#) When that is the case, we need to stick with the science, putting its policy implications first, irrespective of opposition mounted by non-scientists on political grounds.

My own view is that language is a social capacity and that its scientific study cannot be politically neutral. The prevailing view has for decades been quite different. The human language capacity has been likened to a mini-computer in the brain. Social and political factors are said to be irrelevant: we can allegedly explain language in a purely cerebral, brain-neurophysiological way. Humans, it is said, are equipped from birth with dedicated language circuits, whereas monkeys and apes are not. As a result of all this, the focus has been overwhelmingly on genetics and [the brain’s innate architecture, not social or political dynamics.](#)

My starting-point has always been very different. Since language is such a social capacity, it is sensitive to social conditions. Where evolutionary origins are concerned, [the core of my work](#) is the evidence I have amassed concerning the hunter-gatherer way of life, both now and historically. My colleague [Jerome Lewis has been particularly influential here.](#) When linguistic creativity began to flower among our prehistoric ancestors, it was because we had recently become egalitarian and emotionally relaxed, not constantly on guard against sexual and political rivals as chimpanzees are in the wild. When life suddenly becomes less grim, we feel free to joke, reveal our true thoughts and laugh uproariously together. Visit any hunter-

gatherer camp and you will be struck by the almost constant laughter, [humour being the main weapon used to stop ambitious individuals from aggrandizing themselves.](#)

In my view, laughter and language evolved simultaneously. In arriving at these conclusions, I rely heavily on the theoretical insights of the great Israeli theoretical biologist [Amotz Zahavi](#), extended from the study of birds to evolutionary developments in our own species. But while Zahavi is essential, my view is that no single theoretical paradigm quite suffices to crack this problem, since we are dealing with a vast jigsaw-puzzle. Everything we know about humans and animals must somehow be fitted in.

On receiving that invitation from Haifa University, I read it with pleasure. Moments later it hit me that I couldn’t possibly go. The symposium venue was Israel and the institution the University of Haifa. No matter how torn, I felt I had to respect the academic boycott which my union colleagues so urgently struggle to maintain. Nevertheless, my disappointment was huge.

I have vivid memories of the first meeting of the World Archaeological Congress, held at Southampton University in September in 1986. The labour-controlled local council had refused funding support for the 11th International Congress of the IUPPS, to be held in the city that year. Their grounds were that the International Union of Pre- and Proto-Historic Sciences were allowing archaeologists from South Africa to attend, in violation of the United Nations-sponsored academic boycott. The local organizers upheld Southampton’s decision to enforce the boycott. The IUPPS responded with outrage and the entire Israeli delegation withdrew, along with all but a handful of North American archaeologists. This turned out to be the birth of [the World Archaeological Congress.](#) From that moment, we declared that science, far from being politically neutral, is always a value system which reflects dominant interests. We added that although science ought ideally to be open to all, political action may be needed to make this a reality.

I was there, and remember both our collective pride in our moral and political resolve but also our sadness and pain. Those colleagues from South Africa whom we had excluded were (mostly) hostile to apartheid and their exclusion was a great loss to us in terms of science. Their absence was particularly severe in my own specialist area of human origins, since southern

Africa was the very place where [so many critical developments](#) in the evolution of language had occurred.

I am still politically active. Among other things, I am known as [one of the founding editors](#) of Jeremy Corbyn's [long-established journal Labour Briefing](#). I also co-organize a popular outreach anthropology lecture series at University College London, the [Radical Anthropology Group](#). Our 'No Borders' political activism is inspired by the example of egalitarian hunter gatherers who, to this day, view fences and territorial borders of any kind as an affront to human freedom and dignity.

There is irony in the fact that while, for example, Israeli child psychotherapists are world-renowned, and while Professor Nurit Bird-David has contributed powerfully to explaining and celebrating the inclusive, 'no borders' outlook of extant hunter-gatherers, the state of Israel now polices a border with Gaza along which unarmed Palestinian demonstrators including children are regularly shot at with live fire.

Recalling apartheid South Africa's 'separate and unequal' legislation, Israel's recently enacted nation-state law clarifies that Israel is an ethno-nationalist state, by definition a racist state, which ['views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value, and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation'](#). This constitutionally enshrines Jewish supremacy, telling Arab, Druze, Christian and other citizens that they are not equal.

All of this is so tragic. Instead of retreating behind our walls, we need to stretch out our hands across our ravaged planet's oceans and barricades. Professor Nurit Bird-David fully sympathises with the boycott, while expressing pride in the fact that the University of Haifa is the most pluralistic institution of higher learning in Israel. I should add that the Israeli Anthropological Association (IAA), of which Professor Bird-David is past President, has taken an admirably principled stand, for example by refusing cooperation with the exclusionary Israeli educational institutions now operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to a recent statement from the [Israeli Anthropological Association's](#) current President, Professor Nir Avieli, his organization has 'chosen to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in general, and in particular with Palestinian students and academics whose right to an education is violated by the establishment and maintenance, in their

own territories, of institutions which they are barred from attending.' (see page 8)

While respecting the boycott, I am concerned not to endanger the internationalist links between anti-racist archaeologists and anthropologists in Britain and our colleagues struggling under much more severe pressures in Israel. I cannot possibly go, but what a wasted opportunity this is.

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LSHTM withdraws peer's invitation over "allegations of anti-Semitic sentiment"- report in the British Medical Journal

Derek Summerfield

The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine rescinded an invitation to the life peer Jenny Tonge to be a panelist earlier this month at a meeting on maternal health because of "allegations of anti-Semitic sentiment." The event, which took place at the Welcome Collection in London on 4 October, was part of the Liverpool institution's BIRTH Project, which uses theatre to raise awareness and provoke debate on global inequality in maternal healthcare. It included two specially commissioned plays about the burden of obstetric fistula in Kenya and the realities of pregnancy and childbirth through conflict, and panelists discussed the issues raised.

Two weeks before the event Baroness Tonge received a letter from Janet Hemingway, director of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, saying that her invitation was being withdrawn because "a number of issues of concern" had been raised through the school's due diligence ...

See [here](#) for the rest of the article and [here](#) to contribute to responses.

This case involving Baroness Jenny Tonge is a striking example of the pressures being applied to universities throughout the UK by pro-Israel activists, emboldened by a political climate in which Israel can do no wrong, and by the promotion of a wider definition of 'anti-semitism' intended to stifle criticism of Israeli criminal policies towards a captive Palestinian population. The intention is also to stigmatise those who speak out. In this case a world-famous medical institute the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine- the oldest of its kind in the world- simply rolled over and yielded, as did the Royal

Society of Medicine (200 years old) in my case a few years ago. What lessons will smaller, less renowned, less influential academic institutes draw from this? This threat to academic freedom of speech, a new McCarthyism, is being mounted by UK citizens on behalf of a foreign power.

UCU defends free speech on Israel, condemns Israeli murder of Gaza demonstrators, and seeks to defend Jeremy Corbyn

By Tom Hickey, Brighton UCU

Amongst British politicians, Jeremy Corbyn has been exemplary as a consistent anti-racist, and a fighter for justice and equality nationally and internationally. That is what has made him a friend of Palestine, and a critic of Israel. That is also, however, what has made him the target of supporters of Israel, and one of the things that has made him the target of his right-wing adversaries inside the Labour Party. Better, it would seem, to have another Labour election defeat than to see a socialist, an internationalist and an anti-racist in Downing Street.

Corbyn and the IHRA at UCU Congress

That was why the UCU Congress, meeting in Manchester in October, had before it two related motions: one sought to defend Corbyn from his Zionist and right-wing critics in the Labour Party; the other argued for UCU branches to put their weight behind local campaigns to defend free speech on Israel, and indeed the academic freedom of scholars and students to discuss the Zionist project of settler-colonialism in Palestine without falling foul of the discredited, but increasingly widely adopted, IHRA redefinition of antisemitism

Corbyn and the Israeli Lobby

As an anti-racist, Corbyn has always been a trenchant fighter against antisemitism. For Israel's supporters, that is irrelevant. While real and vitriolic antisemitism gains ground in governing and opposition populist parties across Europe and in the USA, and neo-fascist organisations grow in Hungary, Germany, France, Sweden and Britain, Israel's friends want to redefine 'antisemitism' to include criticism of Israel and of Zionism.

Under pressure from some influential trade unions, the Labour Party NEC has now adopted

the widely discredited IHRA definition of antisemitism. It is a definition, despite the intentions of its author, that is being used to attack all forms of Palestinian solidarity, and even to outlaw claims that Israel is a discriminatory, racist state, or thus to question its legitimacy.

IHRA Redefinition

The IHRA redefinition of antisemitism is deeply flawed. To date, the opinions of no less than four prominent lawyers, including two Queens Counsellors, have condemned it. Geoffrey Robertson has described it as "imprecise, confusing and open to ... manipulation". Sir Geoffrey Bindman described it and its examples as "poorly drafted (and) misleading". Hugh Tomlinson's opinion declared it "unclear and confusing". Sir Stephen Sedley observed that it "fails the first test of any definition: it is indefinite".

According to this definition, antisemitism "can be expressed as hatred towards Jews". Which also means that it may not involve such hatred. So, according to this definition, hatred of Jews is not necessarily a central feature of antisemitism. Thus, as a definition of a form of racism, the IHRA proposal is potentially disastrous for anti-racism campaigning.

Silencing Critics

The redefinition is already being used with the intention to interfere with free speech when it comes to criticism of Israel, and of Israel's policies and practices. It is an attempt to establish the presumption that criticism of Israel is unlawful. It is an attempt to make unlawful the observation of Israeli racial discrimination against Palestinians, and its attempted extirpation of them as a people through their dispersal and the erasure of their history.

The IHRA definition has already had a chilling effect on free speech, restricting the capacity of citizens to advocate freedom and justice for Palestine. Its adoption by institutions and authorities is likely to draw them into breaches of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human rights, which protects freedom of speech.

Antisemitism

The redefinition also does immense harm to the fight against real antisemitism. It dilutes the charge of antisemitism by making criticism of Israel or of Zionism sufficient for the charge to be levelled, without an individual having any of the attitudes or beliefs normally taken by historians to constitute antisemitism. As Brian Klug, eminent

scholar of antisemitism, has observed, “when anti-Semitism is everywhere, it is nowhere. And when every anti-Zionist is an anti-Semite, we no longer know how to recognize the real thing”.

Motion 37 – Free Speech on Israel

The motion argued that the use of the IHRA redefinition is a form of censorship, and infringes academic freedom, and freedom of speech; and that it also violates universities’ legal obligations (Education Reform Act 1988, Education Act (no.2) 1986, and Equality Act 2010). It urged Congress to urge branches to host meetings and debates on Palestine which might otherwise be subject to censorship, and to inform members about UCU policy on Israeli discrimination and illegal occupation, and on opposition to all forms of racism, including antisemitism.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly. It is now for those members of the UCU who are concerned about the rights of Palestinians to raise the issue in their branches and with their branch committees, and to seek to host meetings on Palestine in their universities, in conjunction with BRICUP and the PSC.

Motion 32 – on Corbyn and Antisemitism

This motion argued that there was an ongoing campaign to conflate anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and that the attacks on Corbyn were designed to prevent an anti-austerity government whose leadership is critical of Israel. There was a coincidence of interest between Tory Party MPs, the right-wing in the Parliamentary Labour Party and the supporters of Israel to keep Corbyn out of Downing Street. The accusations of antisemitism were a thinly-veiled attack on Palestine solidarity, and on the BDS movement because of its world-wide success as a non-violent campaign against Israeli barbarity, discrimination and colonization.

This motion was remitted to the National Executive Committee because of lack of time at the Congress but will be adopted as policy once the NEC amendment has been passed.

Gaza Murders

The Congress also passed a motion, moved by the National Executive, condemning the murders of Palestinian demonstrators by the Israeli Defence Force on the Gaza border with Israel earlier this year. It observed that Israeli policy seemed designed to render life unliveable for Palestinians, enabling further colonisation by Israeli settlers, and registered the use of military might, forced expulsion, systematic constitutional

discrimination inside Israel, fully attested use of torture against prisoners, abrogation of Palestinian human rights, and illegal settlement of Palestinian land, are central moral and political issues of today.

Congress resolved that the General Secretary should write to the British Government urging reconsideration of arms trade and intelligence sharing with Israel, should protest the murders to the Israeli Ambassador in London, and should issue a press release.

For UCU members, the issue now is to act on Motion 32, and to get their local UCU branch to host meetings on Palestine-Israel in conjunction with the PSC and BRICUP.

UCU Fringe Meeting Attacked by Zionists

Tom Hickey

On the eve of the UCU Recall Congress in Manchester on 17th October, BRICUP organised a fringe meeting to discuss the Palestine-related motions to be debated the following day. The speakers were Ben Jamal (General Secretary of the PSC), Naomi Wimbourne-Idrissi (of Jewish Voice for Labour), and Nita Sanghera (President Elect of the UCU). The meeting was chaired by Tom Hickey of BRICUP and the University of Brighton UCU branch.

The Zionist supporters of Israel were, however, determined to disrupt the meeting, and to prevent it if possible. They mounted a noisy picket outside the meeting, and infiltrated a significant number of supporters into the meeting to heckle and to prevent the meeting from proceeding. As part of the intimidation, they attempted to take photographs and film both the speakers and the members of the audience. Though the disruption was considerable, they failed to prevent the meeting from taking place.

Ben Jamal spoke of the success of the BDS movement, and the desperation of the Israeli lobby internationally to damage it by false charges of antisemitism. He observed that there was growth of antisemitism internationally and in the UK, and that the Labour Party was not, as a mass organisation, immune from this trend. Yet the incidence of antisemitism in the Labour Party was dwarfed by its presence in the Tory Party or

in UKIP, yet the focus for Israel's supporters was Corbyn and the Labour Party. Why was this?

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi spoke as a Jewish supporter of Corbyn and the Labour Party, and documented the scale and character of the accusations that were being made, and analysed their purpose. As part of the tactics of vilification and demonization she told the meeting of having been described by the Israel supporters outside the meeting as a 'kapo', i.e. like those Jews in the extermination camps who laboured for the Nazis to herd people into the gas chambers, and to dispose of the bodies in the crematoria. The worst accusation that could be directed at a Jew, and this because she was a critic of Israel and of Zionism. Her critics had clearly crawled from the gutter.

Nita Sanghera spoke of UCU policy against all forms of racism and discrimination, the union's proud record as an anti-racist organisation, and its consistent refusal to allow criticism of Israel and anti-Zionism to be conflated with antisemitism. The union would not allow itself to be intimidated by the fanatical defenders of Israel.

The lesson of the Manchester meeting is clear. The thuggish behaviour exhibited by Israel's supporters cannot be allowed to silence criticism or close down free speech on what is happening to Palestine and the Palestinians. All future meetings must be carefully stewarded, and those attending only to disrupt must be denied entrance in the interests of free speech and free debate.

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Israeli Anthropologists and Sociologists denounce regularization of settlement colleges

In Stockholm in August, the [European Association of Social Anthropology](#) (EASA) voted overwhelmingly to join with the [Israeli Anthropological Association](#) (IAA) and the [Israeli Sociological Society](#) (ISA) in denouncing the regularization of Israeli educational establishments in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Below is a letter written by the IAA President, Professor Professor Nir Avieli, to his colleagues in the Association providing the background to this decision.

From Prof. Nir Avieli President, Israeli Anthropological Association

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Valeria Siniscalchi, President of the European Association of Social Anthropology (EASA), for providing me with the opportunity to address you with regard to the troubling issue of the exclusionary Israeli educational institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I was greatly heartened to hear that the general assembly of EASA, convened in Stockholm last month, voted overwhelmingly to support the Israeli Anthropological Association (IAA), which I head, and the Israeli Sociological Association (ISA), in their common decision to denounce the regularization of these institutions through their admittance to the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE), and our consequent decision to refuse cooperation with these institutions.

I assume that you are aware of the complications and difficulties resulting from the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli anthropology in general and the IAA in particular have a long history of opposing this occupation and demanding that the Israeli government negotiate in good faith with the representatives of the Palestinian people in order to achieve a just peace. What you may be less acutely aware of is what scholar Eyal Weizman calls the "civilian occupation" and anthropologist Jeff Halper calls the "matrix of control."¹ This can be summarized as the use of a variety of means, including civilian populations and civilian infrastructure, in order to deepen and perpetuate Israeli control over the Palestinian territories, and to prevent a "two states solution".

The Israeli academic institutions established in the West Bank, foremost among them Ariel University, are particular examples of this sort of violation. These institutions are not open to the Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories, but only to Israeli citizens (including those Israeli settlers living in the Occupied Territories). As such, they are exclusionary institutions, and beyond the pale of academic and anthropological ethics. The violation has recently been exacerbated by the right-wing Israeli government's policy of "creeping annexation", which seeks to apply Israeli sovereignty to the Occupied Territories piecemeal, while providing special "breaks" to these institutions.

The admittance of Ariel and two colleges in the Occupied Territories to Israel's Council of Higher Education at the beginning of this year was a clear

step in this direction.² Since then, we have seen professional and ethical red lines repeatedly crossed over in the rush to establish a Faculty of Medicine at Ariel³ and we have every reason to suspect that more such steps are in the works.

This February, the President of the ISA, Dr. Gili Drori, denounced the admittance of the institutions in the Occupied Territories to the CHE and pledged her association to non-cooperation with these institutions. In March, the Executive Board of the IAA also denounced the institutions' admittance to the CHE, and in June the membership of the IAA voted on a motion to refuse cooperation. The motion passed by a large majority. The motion specifies that students and faculty at these institutions remain welcome as members of the IAA. Our refusal is strictly limited to financial and organizational cooperation with the institutions themselves.

Your colleagues at the ISA and IAA have chosen to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in general, and in particular with Palestinian students and academics whose right to an education is violated by the establishment and maintenance, in their own territories, of institutions which they are barred from attending. By voting so massively to support, EASA's general assembly has shown solidarity with both its Israeli and Palestinian colleagues. Those of you who were not present at the assembly now have the opportunity to ratify and amplify that expression of solidarity. I urge you to do so and thank you for your attention and solicitude.

Sincerely,

1 Eyal Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation* (London: Verso, 2003); Jeff Halper, "The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control," *Middle East Report*, no. 216 (2000): 14–19.

2 Yarden Zur, "Israel's Creeping Annexation: Knesset Votes to Extend Israeli Law to Academic Institutions in the West Bank," *Haaretz*, February 12, 2018, [tinyurl.com/zur-creep](https://www.tinyurl.com/zur-creep).

3 Or Kashti, "Israeli University Heads Challenge Decision to Open Med School in West Bank Settlement," *Haaretz*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-uni-heads-challenge-decision-to-open-med-school-in-settlement-1.6319667>.

Supporter of Palestinian Human Rights awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry

See the [article](#) in *Mondoweiss* on October 6th

On October 3rd George Smith, a biologist who worked at the University of Missouri for 40 years, [won the Nobel Prize for chemistry, sharing it with two other scientists](#). Dr. Smith and Dr. Winter were honoured for a contribution to [synthetic biology](#), a field that emerged in the 1980s after a technique called the polymerase chain reaction enabled prolific duplication of DNA. Their work harnessed the power of bacteriophages — viruses that infect bacteria — for applications that eventually contributed to novel drugs to treat a range of diseases.

Professor Smith is a longtime supporter of Palestinian rights, including support for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). He is listed on the [Canary Mission](#) website, which is dedicated to destroying careers of those who express solidarity with Palestinians

Haaretz reported

[Smith's] most controversial moment came in 2015 when he attempted to teach an honors tutorial outside his academic field called "Perspective on Zionism." The course was to have included as a central text "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine" by Israeli historian and anti-Zionist Ilan Pappé, [according to a report in the Columbia Daily Tribune](#) that quoted Smith as defining his position as wishing "not for Israel's Jewish population to be expelled," but "an end to the discriminatory regime in Palestine." He is opposed, he said, to "Jewish ethnic sovereignty over other peoples." Following protests by university alumni, pro-Israel student groups [and an outcry by pro-Israel advocacy groups](#), his course was canceled, the cancellation attributed to "a lack of enrollment."

The Jewish Voice for Peace tweeted

Congratulations to JVP member, teacher, and BDS supporter George Smith for winning a Nobel Prize! Palestinian human rights are represented on #World Teachers Day

Press release from the Palestinian BDS National Committee

Nobel Prize Winner Supports BDS Movement For Palestinian Rights, Ending Military Aid to Israel- October 5, 2018

A Nobel Prize has been [awarded](#) to George P. Smith, a renowned scientist and

longtime [advocate](#) for Palestinian rights who supports the BDS movement and has called for an end to US military aid to Israel. The BDS movement congratulates Professor Smith.

Dr. Samia Botmeh, Dean at Birzeit University in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and leading activist in the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), said:

“Congratulations to Professor George P. Smith for winning the 2018 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. His principled commitments are evident in both his scientific work to protect human life and his support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights.

“Professor Smith has consistently spoken out against Israel’s egregious violations of Palestinian human rights, and taken the extremely important step of calling on his government in the United States to end arms sales to the Israeli military. His call to end military aid to Israel is not only deeply principled, but a critical and effective form of solidarity that we hope to see multiplied. The US government should be investing in human needs, including health, education and dignified jobs, rather than giving Israel \$3.8 billion in military aid a year to repress and destroy Palestinian life. “Thank you Professor Smith for your inspiring solidarity.”



Countering a Blacklist- More about ‘Against Canary Mission’

In our [September Newsletter](#) , we reported on Canary Mission , an anonymous website which promotes the blacklisting of student activists who openly support Palestinian human rights. [This article](#) in Mondoweiss provides more information about its activities and also about *Against Canary Mission*, which has been established to support the global campaign against Israel’s ongoing illegal Occupation of Palestine.

New York University (NYU) student groups pledge non-cooperation with [NYU Tel Aviv](#)

The [pledge](#)

We, the undersigned student clubs, pledge to not participate in or apply to study abroad programs hosted at NYU Tel Aviv. Our participation would render us complicit in the state of Israel’s targeted discrimination against activists and Palestinian and Muslim students. In January 2018, Israel released a list of twenty organizations whose members are denied entry into the country because of their endorsement of the Palestinian call for BDS (Boycotting, Divesting from, and Sanctioning Israel).

The University, as an adoptee of AAUP principles of academic freedom, has the duty to uphold these standards throughout the Global Network University (GNU) and be proactive in addressing any violations of these principles. NYU must upgrade its commitment to ensure equal access to GNU sites and to appeal decisions of entry within the Global Network. Until then, the members of our clubs will not study away and/or visit NYU Tel Aviv.

In the Spring of 2018, the NYU Student Government Assembly passed a resolution expressing concern over the lack of global mobility and cited NYU Tel Aviv as a case study. Citing the U.S. Department of State’s website, the resolution cites the fact that “upon arrival at any of the ports of entry, Palestinians, including Palestinian-Americans, may wish to confirm with Israeli immigration authorities from what location they will be required to depart. Some have been allowed to enter Israel or visit Jerusalem but told they cannot depart Israel via Ben Gurion Airport without special permission, which is rarely granted. Some families have been separated as a result, and other travelers have forfeited airline tickets.”

Recently, we have been seriously troubled by the case of University of Michigan Associate Professor John Cheney-Lippold, in which after refusing to write a recommendation for a student’s study in Israel application, has been arbitrarily punished through a freezing of his pay and a cancellation of all sabbaticals for the next two years. This sets a dangerous precedent, in which departments have the ability to unjustly penalize faculty simply for their support of Palestinian human rights. As a department, we stand within solidarity with Cheney-Lippold and

any faculty and students that support the Israeli academic boycott for Palestinian human rights.

We, the undersigned student clubs, pledge to not participate in or apply to study abroad programs hosted at NYU Tel Aviv.

See [here](#) for the list of signatories

NOTE: See [here](#) for details of USACBI's ongoing campaign for a boycott of studying abroad in Israel until the Palestinians can return. See page X for an update on the campaign in support of Professor Cheney- Lippold.

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News from other campaigns

US Campaign for the academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel ([USACBI](#))

Action in support of Professor Cheney –Lippold (see our [September newsletter](#))

[USACBI's petition to the Interim Dean, University of Michigan Elizabeth Cole](#) **Defend Lucy Peterson & John Cheney-Lippold - Support Academic Freedom & Right to Boycott**

We the undersigned, stand in support of Lucy Peterson's prerogative to follow her conscience in refusing to write a recommendation for a student studying at an Israel academic institution. We demand that the university where she is working as an instructor desist from sanctioning or harassing her in any way..

A graduate student instructor at the University of Michigan (UM), Lucy Peterson refused to write a letter of recommendation for a student to participate in a study abroad in Israel program. This refusal comes as part of the exercise of her own academic freedom and independent judgment as a university educator and as part of the Palestinian call for the academic boycott of Israel.

Disciplining faculty who refuse to write letters for admission to programs that have a documented record and set of policies that discriminate has the effect of completely bypassing the educational mission of the university, which we assume means equal access to education for all, a sentiment enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and turn professors into simply service providers.

Disciplining faculty who refuse to write letters also opens up the possibility that universities will be turned into pawns of ideologically-driven

organizations who target professors critical of their views, and engage students to ask for letters they know the professors are, based on their principles, likely to decline to write.

We express our support of Lucy Peterson, and we are appalled to learn that the University of Michigan has pursued discipline against tenured professor John Cheney-Lippold. We call on the UM administration to ensure the following:

Lucy Peterson must not be subject to academic or professional sanctions or discipline for her act of conscience.

The discipline of John Cheney-Lippold for his refusal to write a letter of recommendation must be rescinded in full.

Faculty members' academic freedom to refuse to write recommendation letters due to matters of conscience must be respected.

Sign the support petition [here](#)

More information on Professor Cheney Lippold and on the ethics of the academic boycott of Israel, can be found in recent articles in the [Washington Post](#) and on the [USACBI website](#) by Professor David Palumbo-Liu, who is a USACBI Organizing Collective member from Stanford University

Here's Professor Cheney-Lippold in his own words: *"I support the Palestinian boycott call because I am appalled at Israel's continuing violation of Palestinian rights, and our government's support for those violations."*

"If a student had wanted to do a study abroad at an institution in Apartheid South Africa, I would have declined to write a letter for her as well.

I firmly stand by my decision, as I stand against all injustice and inequality"

You can also sign the Jewish Voice for Peace's petition in support of Professor Cheney- Lippold [here](#)

The Belgian Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel ([BACBI](#))

Action on the suppression of academic freedom at Birzeit University where academics are being forced to leave Palestine.

A message from Professor Hermann de Ley- BACBI Newsletter Editor

Dear International Friends,

The 40th issue of BACBI's Academic Newsletter (Oct 2018) is accessible [here](#). I hope you'll find some of its information useful. The past month (but also still today) with BACBI (academic) we've been engaged with Birzeit University's [international call for solidarity](#) against Israel's policies of incremental isolation of the Palestinian universities and colleges.

Instead of launching the umpteenth petition, we chose to appeal to the presidents of our Belgian academic authorities, calling on every one of them by means of a substantial letter endorsed by faculty members. The English form letter - accompanied with the call from Birzeit's rector Abdellatif Abuhijleh and with an "open letter" to be addressed to the press: "*Stop the academic asphyxiation of the occupied Palestinian territories!*" - is accessible [here](#). You might get inspired by it.

At this moment, all the presidents of our Flemish universities, united in the Flemish umbrella association - Flemish Interuniversity Council - have reacted in a positive way to our appeal. They have denounced publicly "*the isolation the State of Israel tries to impose on Palestinian universities*". We have been informed that their intervention will be directed at the Israeli ambassador in our country and at the European Commission (Federica Mogherini and Carlos Moedas). The campaign is still going in the French speaking universities of Belgium, e.g. the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the Université de Liège, the Université catholique de Louvain and the Université de Mons. Ideally, the Belgian academic world as a whole would condemn Israel's colonialist policy in this matter (a part, indeed, of its cultural dispossession of Palestine's native population).

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Sign the commitment by UK Scholars to human rights in Palestine

This commitment, which has been signed by over 700 academics across UK's higher education system, is not to accept invitations for academic visits to Israel, not to act as referees in activities related to Israel academic institutions, or cooperate in any other way with Israeli universities.

It is a response to the appeal for such action by Palestinian academics and civil society due to the deep complicity of Israeli academic institutions in Israeli violations of international law. Signatories have pledged to continue their commitment until Israel complies with international law, and respects Palestinian human rights.

For more information, and to sign, go to <http://www.commitment4p.com>

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NOTICES

Speakers: 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

Register as a supporter of BRICUP

You can register as a supporter of BRICUP and of the academic and cultural boycott of Israel [by completing this form](#).

We recognise that many individuals may wish to support our aims by private actions without wishing to be publicly identified. Supporters receive our regular newsletter by email and receive occasional emails giving details of urgent developments and of ways to support our activities. We do not disclose the names of our supporters to anyone outside BRICUP or share them with any other organisation.

Financial support for BRICUP

We welcome one-off donations, but we can plan our work much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order.

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

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

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IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91
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