

BRICUP Newsletter 134

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN PALESTINE

Israel confiscates clinic tents during coronavirus crisis

[Press Release from B'TSelem, 26th March, 2020](#)

This morning, at around 7:30 am, officials from Israel's Civil Administration in the West Bank arrived with a military jeep escort, a bulldozer and two flatbed trucks with cranes at the Palestinian community of [Khirbet Ibziq](#) in the northern Jordan Valley. They confiscated poles and sheeting that were meant to form eight tents, two for a field clinic, and four for emergency housing for residents evacuated from their homes, and two as makeshift mosques. The force also confiscated a tin shack in place for more than two years, as well as a power generator and sacks of sand and cement. Four pallets of cinder blocks intended for the tent floors were taken away and four others demolished.

As the whole world battles an unprecedented and paralyzing healthcare crisis, Israel's military is devoting time and resources to harassing the most vulnerable Palestinian communities in the West Bank, that Israel has attempted to drive out of the area for decades. Shutting down a first-aid community initiative during a health crisis is an especially cruel example of the regular abuse inflicted on these communities, and it goes against basic human and humanitarian principles during an emergency. Unlike Israel's policies, this pandemic does not discriminate based on nationality, ethnicity or religion. It is high time the government and military acknowledged that now, of all times, Israel is responsible for the health and wellbeing of the five million Palestinians who live under its control in the Occupied Territories.

In addition to the shocking destruction of the clinic under construction, the Civil Administration is continuing its demolition routine. Today, it demolished three seasonal homes of farmers who are residents of Jerusalem, in the village of Ein a-Duyuk a-Tahta west of Jericho.

Background on Palestinian communities facing expulsion:

Scores of farming-shepherding communities, home to thousands of Palestinians, dot the 60% of the West Bank designated as Area C. For decades, Israeli authorities have pursued a policy aimed at driving out these communities by making living conditions intolerable in an attempt to get residents to leave, ostensibly of their own volition. This unlawful conduct is motivated by the political ambition, publicly stated by various officials, to establish facts on the ground and take over these areas in a de-facto annexation that would facilitate actual annexation to Israel as part of a final status arrangement.

Structural violence in the era of a new pandemic: the case of the Gaza Strip.

David Mills, Bram Wispelwey, Rania Muhareb and Mads Gilbert, published on 27th March 2020

The letter can be found [here](#) .

Text

Hope for improving health and quality of life of Palestinians will exist only once people recognise that the structural and political conditions that they endure...are the key determinants of [Palestinian] population health.

As the world is consumed by the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), it should be of no surprise that epidemics (and indeed, pandemics) are disproportionately violent to populations burdened by poverty, military occupation, discrimination, and institutionalised oppression.

Structural violence rooted in historical, political, and social injustices determines health patterns and creates vulnerabilities that hamper the effective prevention, detection, and response to communicable disease outbreaks. In the occupied Gaza Strip, the convergence of these forces in the

era of a pandemic have the potential to devastate one of the world's most vulnerable populations.

The colonial fragmentation of the Palestinian people and their health systems, combined with a neoliberal development framework implemented during the past decades, has created a profound dependency on aid, placing health care at the mercy of increasingly restrictive international donor politics.

Since 2007, Israel has imposed a crippling land, air, and sea blockade over the Gaza Strip's 2 million Palestinians, 1.4 million of whom are refugees, subjecting them to extreme crowding in one of the world's most densely populated regions.

As a result, the Gaza Strip faces high levels of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and lacks sufficient clean water while the blockade disrupts medical supply chains, curtails the movement of patients and health workers, and severely inhibits medical capacity-building and public health development.

Preventive measures and containment of COVID-19 will be extremely difficult now that the pandemic has reached the Gaza Strip. While prisoners in Iran

and elsewhere are temporarily being released to protect them from contained spread, for Palestinians, living in what is described as the largest open-air prison in the world, there is nowhere to go—unless, of course, they are granted their legal and moral right of return.

Guided by our moral values and professional obligations, the international community must act now to end structural violence by confronting the historical and political forces entrenching a cyclical, violent, and mutable reality for Palestinians.

A COVID-19 pandemic that further cripples the Gaza Strip's health-care system should not be viewed as an inevitable biomedical phenomenon experienced equally by the world's population, but as a preventable biosocial injustice rooted in decades of Israeli oppression and international complicity in the struggle for the health, fundamental rights, and self-determination of all Palestinians.

We declare no competing interests.

Tracking COVID-19 responsibly

Rania Muhareb and Rita Giacaman, published on 27th March 2020

The letter can be found [here](#)

Text

As of March 25, 2020, WHO's online coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) [situation dashboard](#) reveals that the pandemic spans 195 countries and territories with 375 498 cases. With this rapid expansion of the pandemic comes a growing need to ensure that accurate and credible information is accessible to public health authorities, researchers, and the wider public. This has prompted WHO, institutions, and individuals to develop online tools to track the spread of the pandemic. Although WHO's emergency preparedness is informed by established principles of international law, the multiplicity of actors has the potential to create confusion and barriers to accessing reliable and consistent data. These actors' categorisation of countries and territories, which could be subject to geopolitical considerations, remains unaccountable to affected populations.

One of the most visible tools to track COVID-19 has been the online [dashboard](#) hosted by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University. Using data from WHO and health departments, among others, the CSSE dashboard has recorded COVID-19 cases, deaths, and recoveries worldwide since Jan 22, 2020.

Although effective in tracking the pandemic in real time, the dashboard has proven ambiguous in its country designations, particularly with respect to the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Since March 5, 2020, when COVID-19 cases were first confirmed in Bethlehem, the number of cases in the West Bank has risen to 60, whereas two cases have been recorded in the Gaza Strip, and Israel has confirmed 2170 cases by March 25, 2020. Initially listing data recorded by the Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under its entry for Palestine, the dashboard separately listed cases confirmed by the Israeli Health Ministry. On March 10, CSSE replaced the entry for Palestine with oPt; on March 11, the oPt entry was removed and its figures merged with the entry for Israel.

International law does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over any part of the oPt, and the Israeli Health Ministry does not record COVID-19 cases in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. How, then, can we effectively monitor the spread of the pandemic in the oPt using the CSSE dashboard?

Of all times, now is exactly when the international medical and public health community must cooperate to provide accurate, impartial, and sufficiently detailed information on the spread of COVID-19, to inform containment measures and public health research. The removal of the oPt from the CSSE dashboard goes against global scientific cooperation and solidarity, resulting in discrepancies with official data recorded by the Palestinian and Israeli Health Ministries. Consistency with international law and the need for impartial data on the spread of COVID-19 requires databases to list the oPt separately, as reflected in WHO practice. Instead, removing the oPt and merging it with Israel undermines the credibility of the CSSE dashboard. All the more concerning is the dashboard's use of US State Department country designations, which have legitimised the acquisition of territory by force and undermined Palestinian identity and rights in Jerusalem.

It is regrettable that Johns Hopkins University, an institution with historic ties to the slave trade, should continue its colonial violence against the indigenous Palestinian people by removing Palestine from the world map. In the same way that Johns Hopkins University has started acknowledging the indigenous Piscataway people, the traditional owners of the lands upon which the university is built, Johns Hopkins University must also recognise symbolic violence and ensure that it does not contribute to the erasure of indigenous peoples across the globe.

As countries around the world fight to contain the spread of COVID-19, it is more critical than ever to guarantee the ethical integrity and impartiality of scientific research and to ensure the delivery of accurate, reliable, and representative information to affected communities worldwide.

We have contacted CSSE twice on this matter since March 15, 2020, and have not received a response as of March 25, 2020.

‘We have nobody but ourselves’: Palestinians in Israel unite to combat coronavirus

Suha Araf, April 1st 2020 in +972* magazine.

See this article, and other updates on the situation in Palestine [here](#),

*+972 Magazine is an independent, online, non-profit magazine owned and run by a group of Israeli and Palestinian journalists, providing fresh, in-depth reporting and analysis directly from the ground in Israel-Palestine.

IHRA Definition

Opposition to IHRA definition at the University of Warwick

Nicola Pratt, University of Warwick

[The Jewish Chronicle](#) reported on 13 January 2020 that University of Warwick Vice Chancellor, Stuart Croft, had written to the Warwick Jewish Israeli Student Society and the Jewish Chaplain to inform them that Warwick would not be adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. In anticipation of substantial pressure from both within and beyond the university, staff acted quickly in support of the university's decision. An [open letter](#) was signed by around 80 members of staff, opposing the IHRA definition for its 'inability to identify hate speech or identify structural anti-Semitism and its repeated use to stifle academic freedom'. In addition, Warwick UCU passed a motion at its AGM on 5th February commending the decision of the university not to adopt the IHRA definition and '*resolving to work with the university to create definitions and processes that are effective in combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism*'. Meanwhile 5 student societies (Warwick Friends of Palestine Society, Warwick Anti-Racism Society, Warwick Labour Society, Warwick Arabic Society and Warwick Anti-Sexism Society) signed [a statement](#) objecting to the definition, stating that it 'creates a conflict between the rights of Palestinians and the fight against antisemitism when there should be none'. As the student newspaper, The Boar, [reported](#), the university had no comment in response to the open letter, whilst the Jewish Israeli Student

Society stated, *'It is also important to note the immense unity on this issue within the Jewish community. Our communal representatives, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council, have adopted the IHRA Definition and encourage all institutions to follow suit.'*

At the time of writing (March 15th) there are no further developments to report.

'A tale of three cities: saying "no" to the IHRA definition in Canada'

Robert Boyce, BRICUP Secretary

For 15 years Israel and its supporters abroad have worked tirelessly to promote a definition of antisemitism that conflates criticism of Israel and its racist policies towards Palestinians with genuine antisemitism. The first major initiative came with the working definition of antisemitism published on the EU's European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) website in 2005. This closely followed a definition drafted by Kenneth Stern of the American Jewish Committee in 2004 and was in fact never adopted by the EUMC. When the Agency for Fundamental Rights replaced the EUMC in 2010, the working definition was removed from its website and quietly abandoned. Yet the absence of any authority for the EUMC definition did not stop the Israel lobby from persuading the British government, the US State Department and other institutions to adopt it.

Nor did it stop the lobby from persuading the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a body representing 31 Western governments, to adopt a working definition of antisemitism that bore a striking similarity to the Stern and EUMC versions. In fact, as Jonathan Rosenhead explained in an earlier article ([BRICUP Newsletter 117, January 2018](#)), the IHRA adopted just the 39-word definition itself. This was bad enough, since the definition is, as one critic has put it, ['alarmingly vague and easily misinterpreted'](#). But to make matters worse, by the time the definition appeared in an IHRA press release in May 2016, unknown hands had added 11 'examples' of potentially antisemitic statements originally drafted by Stern. Seven of these 11 'examples' refer not to Jews but to Zionism or Israel itself and are manifestly

intended to muzzle advocacy of Palestinian human rights and criticism of Israel's attacks upon them.

Despite this crude deception, the Israel lobby has relentlessly pushed the IHRA definition including the 11 'examples' upon national governments, political parties, local authorities and universities throughout the developed world. In fact, so successfully has the lobby pushed that it comes as a genuine surprise to learn that anyone has managed to resist its efforts. Yet, in the past 12 months the councils of three of the largest cities in Canada have rebuffed its pressure to adopt the IHRA definition. This is by no means the whole story, as will be explained below. But in view of what had seemed a practically unstoppable campaign, it is worth considering how these city councils found the strength to push back.

Ever since the Second World War, when Lester Pearson, a future Nobel peace prize winner and prime minister, helped to negotiate the creation of a Jewish state on appropriated Palestinian land, [Canadian governments](#) have sought to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by emulating its support for Israel. This was emphatically the case during the right-wing premiership of Stephen Harper from 2006 and 2015 and since then under the Liberal Justin Trudeau. In June 2019 the Trudeau government, without consulting parliament, incorporated the IHRA definition including the 11 'examples' into its new "Anti-Racism Strategy". Thus encouraged, the Israel lobby immediately launched a nation-wide campaign to persuade public bodies to adopt the definition, starting with the city of Vancouver on the west coast.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the main lobby organisation in Canada, mobilised its local supporters in Vancouver. Evidently keen to curry favour with them, Sarah Kirby-Yung, a conservative city councillor with little knowledge of the issues, introduced a motion calling on the council to adopt the IHRA definition with the 11 'examples'. Another ill-informed local politician, Jody Wilson-Raybould, a First Nations leader who had recently resigned as federal attorney general and justice minister in protest against corruption in Trudeau's government, soon [tweeted](#) her support. But just as the lobby appeared on the verge of success, civil society organisations organised a public appeal to warn

councillors of the dangers of adopting the definition.

The campaign, led by [Independent Jewish Voices – Canada](#), brought together local Jewish and Palestinian activists, the regional trades union council and various human rights groups. Besides calling on members, supports and allies to email their objections to councillors, they put forward an alternative for them to consider: a more comprehensive approach to address all forms of racial prejudice including antisemitism. The existence of a constructive alternative proved decisive. Deliberating on the motion at a public meeting, the council decided by a vote of 6 to 5 to hand the issue to a sub-committee with instructions to recommend how the city could ‘*combat all forms of racism and hatred, including anti-Semitism.*’

Barely more than two months later, the lobby persuaded another largely unsuspecting councillor, this time in Calgary, the largest city in western Canada, to introduce a motion calling on the council to designate 27 January, the day the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day and to adopt the IHRA definition along with the 11 ‘examples’. Once again, a civil society coalition immediately formed and appealed for public support to resist this latest attempt to stifle free speech on Israel/Palestine. And once again the resulting flood of email protests to councillors had the desired effect. The [sponsor](#) of the motion was taken aback at the hornets’ nest she had stirred up and hastily removed the definition from her motion, while promising to raise it separately. On 18 November the city council unanimously agreed to adopt a Holocaust Remembrance Day while signalling merely that it sympathised with the purported aims of the definition.

It was a similar story when the Montreal city council debated a motion calling for the adoption of the IHRA definition in the new year. Montreal, Canada’s second largest city, has a well-established Jewish community whose leaders have been mainstays of the Israel lobby in Canada. And since the so-called ‘quiet revolution’ in the 1960s, bringing to an end the ascendancy of the Catholic church and open antisemitism among the majority Francophone population in Quebec, Montreal’s Jewish leaders evidently assumed that

no one would deny them the prerogative of defining what is and is not antisemitism. As recently as March 2018, they persuaded the [board of McGill University](#) to adopt what they called ‘the EUMC – now Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) – working definition of antisemitism’ along with the 11 ‘examples’, despite the fact that no such definition actually existed.

But Montreal is also a dynamic city, several of whose universities have strong traditions of political radicalism. And by the time the motion was raised in council on 27 January, opponents of the motion had made their views well known. With most of the francophone councillors prepared to vote against the motion, the mayor, [Valerie Plante](#), proposed to send it to a subordinate committee to see if the definition could be re-worded to address race prejudice more generally. This was not at all what the sponsors wanted, and they angrily [withdrew](#) the motion altogether.

But the Israel lobby has by no means abandoned the fight. On 11 December 2019, Donald Trump signed an executive order endorsing the IHRA definition along with the 11 ‘examples’, thus empowering the department of education to withhold federal funding from universities that allow ‘excessive’ criticism of Israel. The very next day a bill calling for the adoption of the same definition was tabled in the legislature of Ontario, Canada’s most populous province. Formally this is a private member’s bill, but the sponsor is parliamentary assistant to the Conservative provincial premier, Doug Ford, who not only looks uncannily like Trump but not infrequently emulates his policies.

Once again, IJV-Canada mobilised a civil society coalition to oppose the bill. The Canadian Federation of Students voted overwhelmingly to oppose the bill, and nearly 350 academics petitioned against it. But to their dismay, the provincial section of the centre-left New Democratic Party naively endorsed the bill at its first and second reading where it was approved by a vote of 55 to 0. Meanwhile, in the absence of political opposition, the city of Vaughan, a sprawling commuter town north of Toronto, adopted the IHRA definition with the 11 ‘examples’, making it the first Canadian municipality to endorse it.

To sum up, the Israel lobby in Canada, like the lobby elsewhere, is well financed, professionally led and relentless in its efforts to stifle public support for Palestine. But Canadian public, like the public in most developed countries, are evidently far more supportive of Palestinian human rights than their national government. Recent events indicate that the lobby can be defeated, if civil society organisations work together. But as the tale of the three cities also indicates, better than mere opposition to the IHRA definition, the promotion of an alternative definition covering all forms of racism including antisemitism may make all the difference with well-meaning members of the public who, hampered by [corporate media](#) that refuse to report on the plight of the Palestinian people, are susceptible to the lobby's argument.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

Microsoft to Sell Stake in Israeli Facial Recognition Startup- Success for Jewish Voice for Peace Campaign

From Jewish Voice for Peace, New York City, NY, March 28,

“IN LATE JANUARY WE WENT TO MICROSOFT'S HEADQUARTERS WITH OVER 75,000 PETITIONS ASKING THEM TO STOP FUNDING ANYVISION. YESTERDAY THEY DID”

The [#DropAnyVision](#) campaign celebrates a huge victory as [Microsoft divests from Israeli tech firm AnyVision](#). The [#DropAnyVision](#) campaign collected over 75,000 signatures, forcing [Microsoft to launch an external audit](#), and organized a petition delivery with Microsoft workers at its Redmond campus.

Read more [here](#), See also coverage in [Mondoweiss](#)

Ariel: an Illegal University.

Richard Seaford

[The Palestine Campaign for the Non- Recognition of Ariel University](#) is now fully up and running. The fact that Ariel University is built in occupied territory makes it unequivocally illegal, as is

recognised by the British government and all relevant international bodies. Authoritative Palestinian academic bodies have [called](#) on states, academic institutions, multilateral research bodies and international academics not to recognize Ariel University and to refrain from any institutional relations with it.

For universities to co-operate in any way with Ariel would be scandalous complicity in the breaking of international law. Several UCU branches have passed motions to this effect. Please consider asking your branch to do so. And please take a moment to sign [this letter](#) of support for the campaign.

MEDICAL CAMPAIGN

The campaign about doctors and torture in Israel five years on

[From the BMJ:](#)

Dr Ruchama Marton, Founder of Physicians for Human Rights Israel. 11th February 2020

Dear Editor,

As a follow-up to [previous BMJ correspondence](#) on this subject, I wish to add that the active complicity of Israeli doctors with torture in Israel continues. This is not only doctors attached to the intelligence agency Shin Bet or working in the Israel Prison Service, but also doctors in emergency rooms across Israel who write false medical reports. I write as a doctor and as founder of Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI), whose detailed case studies “Ticking Bombs” (2007) and “Doctoring the evidence, abandoning the victim” (2011), assembled irrefutable evidence for these practices.

These abuses go back many years. In June 1993 I organized an international conference in Tel Aviv on behalf of PHRI regarding torture in Israel. At the conference, I highlighted a Shin Bet medical eligibility form discovered by chance by an Israeli journalist. The Shin Bet doctor was asked to certify whether the prisoner could be kept in isolation, whether they could be tied up, could be hooded, and whether he could be made to stand for prolonged periods of time. This was in effect a

“fitness for torture” form to be signed by the doctor. Four years later, a second form, suspiciously similar to the first, came to light, yet Shin Bet always denied that it had ever existed. At the time PHRI asked the Israel Medical Association (IMA) to take action, as they are mandated to do as a member of the World Medical Association (WMA)- the WMA’s Declaration of Tokyo forbids any doctor to collaborate with torture, and directs them to speak out and protect the patient when torture is suspected. The IMA would not act.

Our findings were published in the book “Torture: Human Rights, Medical Ethics and the case of Israel” (1995) whose sale in Israel appears to be banned.

26 years later, in late 2019, we witness the same course of events in the case of a 44 year old Palestinian man Samer Arbeed whose interrogation left him hospitalised in a life-threatening state, in coma on a respirator and in kidney failure. No doctor who saw him, nor the Israeli Medical Association, protested about his torture.

Moreover, doctors in emergency rooms across Israel write false medical opinions in accordance with the demands of Shin Bet, and have done so for years. PHRI documented such cases in “Doctoring the evidence, abandoning the victim” (2011).

The Shin Bet medical eligibility form allows for: sleep prevention; exposure of prisoners to extreme temperatures; beatings; being tied for long periods in “stress” positions; being forced to stand for long periods; being hooded for prolonged periods; sexual humiliation; solitary confinement; no contact with family or lawyer. This kind of “eligibility” leads the prisoner directly into the torture chamber — and the doctor knows this. Moreover his presence in the unit confers on the interrogators the moral authority of the medical profession and gives them confidence. In this role he has always been shielded by the IMA. But a doctor who cooperates with Israel’s torture industry is complicit in that very industry. If a prisoner dies during interrogation, the doctor is an accomplice to his or her murder. A recent report by Adameer, the Palestinian Prisoner Support and Human Rights

Association, gives a graphic account of the kinds of torture and ill-treatment that continue.

In Nazi Germany and Japan during World War 2, in South America in the 1970s/80s, in USA post-9/11 and elsewhere, history has demonstrated how doctors can become loyal servants of regimes, aiding and abetting their human rights crimes. The same goes for Israel.

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

See their March newsletter [here](#)

CAMPUS NEWS

Solidarity with Adam Abdalla

A message from James Dickins, University of Leeds

Dear Friend and Colleague

We are writing to you as a matter of great urgency as it has come to our attention that Adam Abdalla, a student, human rights activist, elected National Union of Students delegate and candidate for the Union Affairs position at the Leeds University Union has been slandered by the Jewish Society through an email sent to over 270 students societies on Friday 28th February 2020, only three days before voting opens on Monday 2nd March 2020.

This letter (below) is to express our solidarity and support for Adam and demand that the Leeds Jewish Society withdraws its accusations and issues a public apology as soon as possible to Adam in order to clear his name of these defamations. You can find the open letter [here](#).

I feel particularly strongly about this issue, having suffered [similar abuse](#), as most BRICUP members will know, from members of the Leeds Centre for Jewish Studies Facebook group; it took me seven months before the University finally upheld my case and required the Director of the Centre to write me a letter of apology.

Text of Open Letter to the Leeds University Union in Solidarity with Adam Abdalla

Dear LUU Administration,

It has come to our attention that Adam Abdalla (Adam), a student, human rights activist, elected National Union of Students delegate and currently candidate for the Union Affairs position at Leeds University Union (LUU) has been slandered by the University of Leeds Jewish Society (JSoc) through an e mail sent to over 270 students societies on Friday 28th February 2020, only three days before voting opens on Monday 2nd March 2020.

This letter is to express our solidarity and support for Adam and demand that JSoc withdraws its accusations and issues a public apology as soon as possible to Adam in order to clear his name of these defamations.

First, the JSoc's email contains only spurious and unfounded accusations. JSoc accused Adam of having ties to Musheir El-Farra, who according to them is related to Hamas and thus they have appealed to the addressed societies not to endorse Adam. These accusations are baseless and lack of credibility since they have been raised without bringing any evidence. Musheir El-Farra has no ties to Hamas. He is a human rights activist who, despite [losing 11 members of his family](#) in a single Israeli air strike in 2014, argues for a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian question. He was invited to Leeds in October 2019 by the Palestine Solidarity Group (PSG) and approved by the Political Engagement Team in the LUU. Any reservations against the speaker or the event were handled by the LUU immediately after the event as they are the party responsible, not PSG or any of its members.

Second, the JSoc's email was spread on Friday the 28th February in the afternoon, only 3 days before the beginning of voting week, failing to give Adam an opportunity to respond in due time and manner. This is a serious interference in the Union's democratic processes, namely the election of the next student executive. Both the timing and the form of the accusation levelled against Adam were used to maximise the effect the accusation would have on his campaign and minimise his ability to respond to these bogus accusations and defend his reputation. They have set out to defame

Adam's reputation and pit the addressed societies against him as a candidate, knowing that this would damage his standing in the election and lower his chances of winning as much as possible. Not only does this tactic leave Adam without a chance to properly respond before the vote but also bars him from getting the much-needed support of the LUU facilities and the political engagement team.

Third, the JSoc does not represent the opinion of all of the Jewish student community at Leeds.

There is another letter in circulation, written by [Adam's Jewish colleagues expressing solidarity with him](#) and refuting the claim that all members of the Jewish community at Leeds

are represented by the JSoc and that they feel intimidated by the thought of Adam becoming the next Union Affairs Officer. Quite the opposite, they commend his activism and commitment to fighting racism in all of its shapes and forms both on campus and beyond it.

Fourth, the JSoc has thus targeted Adam due to his activism in advocating for Palestinian rights in order to silence him. The fact that Adam, the only Palestinian among all the candidates and the only Muslim running for the Union Affairs position, has been quite frankly singled out by these accusations points to the underlying racism in these allegations. It also feeds the Islamophobia on campus as Adam is the only candidate that mentions the adoption of its new and more comprehensive definition as well as promising to pressure the University to sign the Racial Equality Charter.

At the same time, this attack aims to intimidate pro-Palestine voices and create a chilling effect. This racist smear campaign against Adam amounts to a serious attack not only against him, but also against all Palestinian and Muslim students and staff on campus, attempting to suppress their right to speak out about Palestine and Israeli human rights violations.

British Palestinians are bound by their common history, when previous generations of Palestinians were violently denied the right to self-determination by the British colonial power ruling Palestine from 1918. Deprived of their sovereign rights to their land, they were dispossessed of it by force in the establishment of the state of Israel. The reality of the Palestinian people's ongoing dispossession belongs to the public space: article 10 of the Human Rights Act protects rights of Palestinian

people to impart information about these present and past injustices, as every British citizen has the right to hear this information, along with the ideas and arguments that emerge directly from it.

It is also not the first time that members of staff or the student body sympathetic to the Palestinian cause at the University of Leeds have come under the fire of [well orchestrated smear campaigns by JSoc](#) smear campaigns by the JSoc (3). These tactics clearly aim to silence Adam and all other critical voices at the University of Leeds who speak out against Islamophobia, racism and advocate for justice and freedom of the Palestinian people. These attempts must be rejected and we must stand in solidarity with Adam.

In conclusion, we demand that the LUU assures that Leeds Jewish Society withdraws its accusations and issues a public apology to Adam as soon as possible in order to clear his name of these spurious accusations. This is to secure that Adam's good name, reputation and equal circumstances in the election race are protected.

Freedom of Speech in the US; The Israeli Campaign

Reproduced from the EDJP GRAPEVINE.

No. 5 , March 2020

EDJP Grapevine is a news and information broadsheet from a Palestinian perspective, published by the East Devon Justice for Palestinians)

Good news! Two students brave enough to stand up for Palestinian rights have been found not guilty of anti-Semitism. It is an interesting case. The location: Bard College, a private institution up the Hudson valley. In October last year a debate was held on campus with an all-Jewish platform. The topic: "Who Needs Anti-Semitism?" It was moderated by an editor of "Forward" (Batya Ungar-Sargon) and featured Ruth Wisse. The latter is a controversial figure: a retired Harvard academic but with a track record of often extreme anti-Palestinian rhetoric. Most notoriously, [she once observed that](#) "Palestinian Arabs are people who breed and bleed and advertise their misery."

Like many US Universities, Bard has a "Students for Justice in Palestine" (SJP) club and they

decided that a protest had to be made against Wisse's policies. This was agreed with the college and it would be polite. It was. Nineteen SJP students, some of them Jewish, silently stood up and held signs, mostly showing Wisse quotes. Then one interrupted the debate to read a statement explaining that they were protesting about Wisse's views on Palestinians. He spoke for 39 seconds before being removed. He returned and spoke for 18 seconds before being removed again. The debate continued uninterrupted until Questions and Answers when the SJP group began chanting. They were removed without any trouble. That was it.

However, two days later, Batya Ungar-Sargon published an article in the Forward titled "I was protested at Bard College for Being a Jew," claiming that the protest only happened because all the panellists were Jewish and that this was therefore anti-Semitic and in violation of Bard's Free Speech Policy. She also claimed that the protest was ugly, that the director had not had a plan to stop it and that she had been prevented from speaking. Her article was uncritically re-transmitted by, amongst others the New York Times and, not surprisingly, Bard was on the receiving end of much criticism and negative publicity. On the other hand witnesses, including senior Bard administrators, disputed Ungar-Sargon's version of events: she had not been prevented from speaking; there was a plan.

Nonetheless, in November, two leading SJP students were told by the college that they were to be investigated. Their futures were on hold.

So here we have another example of the consequences of the Israeli-inspired broadening of the definition of anti-Semitism to include criticism of Israel. It was designed to stop the world from debating the Israel-Palestine issue. Anyone who criticises Israel is now guilty of anti-Semitism. The Bard SJP protest did not explicitly attack Israel. It was implicit. If you support Palestine you must be criticizing Israel. That is now anti-Semitic.

Impressively, the President of the College, himself Jewish, and his committee, ruled at the beginning of March this year that the protest did not violate the college's Free Speech Policy. Everyone has the right to protest. The two students were cleared and could continue their

studies. Nonetheless, despite this result, the lesson is clear. If you stand up on campus and protest for Palestinian rights, you risk your career.

It is important to see this case as an instance of a much wider phenomenon. Since 2014, for example, Canary Mission has been blacklisting those expressing support for Palestine on US university campuses, smearing them as anti-Semites and notifying potential employers of their details with the expressed aim of damaging their careers. This is pure McCarthyism. SJP clubs have continually faced problems from a variety of sources and the campaign against them might be seen as culminating in President [Trump's December 2019 executive order](#) directing government agencies, including the Department of Education, in effect, to censor human rights activists.

In this battle, both students and staff have known that one group at least is on their side: Palestine Legal. Their young lawyers won the Bard College case and they have specialised in helping pro-Palestinian campus activists. In the 6 years from 2014 they took on nearly 1500 cases and an accurate expression of the scale of the problem is given in their annual reports , eg: <https://palestinelegal.org/2019-report>

They remind us that: “This tactic of censoring activists based on a distorted definition of antisemitism is part of a much larger effort to undermine the movement for Palestinian rights.”

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 [here](#) 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>

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.

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