

# BRICUP Newsletter 135

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

June 2020

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## CONTENTS

**P 1. Letter from European researchers and academics concerning Israel's participation in Horizon Europe**

*Sue Blackwell, BRICUP*

**P 4. Israeli Violence on Palestinian Campuses**

*Richard Seaford, BRICUP*

**P 5. Coronavirus Solidarity Appeal**

*Friends of Birzeit University*

**P 5. UK Government's Anti-BDS Pension Guidance Ruled Unlawful**

*Robert Wintemute, BRICUP*

**P 7. CULTURAL BOYCOTT NEWS**

**377 Scholars and artists pledge to oppose political litmus tests in Germany**

**Call from 240 Irish & International artists for an end to Israeli Siege of Gaza**

*Editor*

**P 9. CAMPUS NEWS**

**1. From the UK  
Palestinian students at Sheffield Hallam University protest over a new Israeli partnership**

**From the US**

**2. From the US**

**Israel's Losing Battle : Palestine advocacy in the university**

*Hatem Bazian*

**3. From Israel**

**We feel the impact of BDS but are not afraid' -**

*Arie Zaban- President of Bar Ilan University*

**P 10. COVID -19 IN PALESTINE**

**1. Updates- From Jewish Voice for Peace**

**2. Two Rapid Responses on Palestine in the BMJ**

**P 13. SIGN THE COMMITMENT**

*UK Scholars for human rights in Palestine*

**P 13. NOTICES**

**Letter from European researchers and academics concerning Israel's participation in Horizon Europe**

*Sue Blackwell, BRICUP*

The following letter will be sent later this month by ECCP (the European Co-ordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine) to Mariya Gabriel (European Commissioner for

Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth) and Josep Borrell (High Representative of the European Union). It is the latest response by ECCP to the EU's bland regurgitations of its commitment to a two-state solution, while ignoring the fact that Israel's policies of settlement expansion, and now annexation, have made such a solution impossible.

BRICUP has long been among the organisations campaigning for a suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and exclusion of Israeli institutions from EU research funding. So far we have about 200 signatories. If you would like to add your name to the letter, please email your endorsement to Nozomi Takahashi <[Nozomi.Takahashi@irc.vib-UGent.be](mailto:Nozomi.Takahashi@irc.vib-UGent.be)> stating your name, title, affiliation (optional) and country. Please note that it only makes sense for researchers based in EU countries, or at least countries eligible for Horizon Europe research funding, to sign this letter.

thank you for your support!

Sue Blackwell

(BRICUP delegate to ECCP)

Brussels, June XX, 2020

Dear Ms. Mariya Gabriel,

Dear Mr. Josep Borrell Fontenelles,

We would like to thank you for your response to our letter on this subject (your reference: vdl-ca-12.cab Staff.dir (2020)). We greatly appreciate your taking the time to address our questions about the implementation of international law in Israel-Palestine and to provide us with valuable information about the legal governance and decision-making process on the research projects. However, some of your answers raise further concerns, which we would like to address below.

In your response you confirmed the commitment of the EU to “a negotiated two-state solution”. However, the planned unilateral annexation of large parts of the occupied West Bank from 1 July by Israel’s unity government will seriously and fundamentally undermine the position of the EU, making a viable and meaningful state for Palestinians impossible. You referred to the statement of Mr. Borrell on 4 February that **steps towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged**. Mr. Borrell reiterated the

EU’s principled rejection of annexation on 18 May, stating “We strongly urge Israel to refrain from any unilateral decision that would lead to the annexation of any occupied Palestinian territory and would be, as such, contrary to International Law.” **We also firmly believe that only solutions based on International Law will bring just and lasting peace to the region, and are encouraged by these strong statements. We would like to see them translated into tangible action.** One possible form of such action would be **the exclusion of Israel from EU research programmes along with suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and a comprehensive arms embargo**, as we urged you to do in our earlier letter. The EU has the means at its disposal to act to change the dangerous dynamics on the ground.

You wrote that “**The union expects the Israeli authorities to fully meet their obligations as an occupying power under International Humanitarian Law**”. However, **the Israel authorities have failed to do anything of the kind for 53 years**. On the contrary, Israel has been conducting ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people living under its rule on a daily basis through house demolitions, expulsion, dispossession and siege; violent attacks are regularly carried out by the military as well as by settlers. In our previous letter we outlined the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza <sup>1</sup>. We wrote about the disproportionate and systematic use of force against civilians, medical personnel and journalists, amounting to war crimes <sup>2,3,4</sup>. Recently the International Criminal Court initiated investigations into possible war crimes committed by Israel and confirmed its jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territories <sup>5</sup>. This is the longest occupation in modern history, defying International Law for more than half a century in spite of condemnation by the international community including countless UN resolutions. The ongoing impunity of the occupying power has been perpetuated by the lack of effective action to make Israel comply with the rules of International Law.

We acknowledge the excellence of the Israeli research community in many areas of science and technology as argued in your letter, and fully understand “the mutual benefits’ of EU research programmes for EU and Israel. **However, the question is whether the scientific/technological**

**benefits outweigh the grave human rights violations committed by Israel.** We welcome the ethical screening procedure introduced in Horizon 2020 inclusion criteria as detailed in your response. Requirements for ethical compliance, ethical screening and the establishment of a monitoring mechanism in Horizon 2020 are definitely important improvements, and we eagerly await the ethical files you kindly requested on our behalf from relevant agencies. However, we would question whether the current screening procedure is sufficient to meet the EU's own ethical standards. We would like to draw your attention again to the fact that **Israeli military companies accused of war crimes, such as Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), have received almost 10 million EUR of European taxpayers' money** under the current Horizon 2020 programme.<sup>6</sup> Elbit systems developed combat drones such as Hermes 450 which were deployed in the 2014 Gaza military attack that caused the deaths of more than 2,100 Palestinians, most of them civilians, including more than 500 children<sup>4</sup>. How could companies accused of war crimes pass the eligibility criteria? Another example is **Motorola Solutions Israel, which earlier this year was listed by the UN human rights commission among companies complicit in sustaining illegal Israeli settlements**<sup>7</sup>. **Motorola Solutions Israel participated in 4 projects under Horizon 2020 and received about 3,5 million EUR in total.** How could a company listed in an authoritative UN list pass the ethical eligibility criteria for the EU research programme? Many other companies on the UN list might be indirectly profiting from the EU research programmes as a partner, if not as a direct beneficiary. Could the UN database/list be a useful tool to be used in future ethical assessments?

As you pointed out, the guidelines on dual-use technologies under Horizon 2020 are very clear: civil applications are permitted, whereas military applications are prohibited. Yet these criteria have ironically allowed the above-mentioned military companies accused of war crimes to receive EU funding. We wonder whether more accurate ways to assess the ethical consequences of dual-use technologies on a case-by-case basis can be found. **EU financial Regulations Article 136 (1) c calls for the exclusion from EU funding of**

**entities involved in grave violations of international humanitarian law and/or gross human rights abuses**<sup>8</sup>. Regarding Elbit Systems, IAI and Motorola solutions, there are ample written documents available that supports such an assessment. We researchers wish to see the EU's own financial regulations implemented in the EU Research programmes, to ensure that EU research funding will not benefit any entity for which there is documented evidence of grave human rights violations.

As both professionals directly involved in research and members of civil society, we appeal to the EU to mobilize all diplomatic means to pressure Israel to comply with International Law. The move to unilateral annexation is the decisive act of defiance that should be met with sanctions, not with words. In the face of the imminent threat of annexation that would formally establish Israeli sovereignty over stolen territories, we reiterate that the EU should exclude Israel from EU Research Programmes, suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement and implement a comprehensive arms embargo against Israel. Exclusion of Israel and Israeli companies accused of war crimes from the research programmes is the absolute minimum needed as a first measure against Israel's' violations of international law. As the exclusion of a country from EU Research Programmes does not require a unanimous decision of the European Council and falls under the responsibility of the European Commission and the Parliament, we urgently appeal to you to uphold justice by implementing this first step which is within your power.

Your sincerely

Signatories\*:

\* The institutions are added for identification purpose only. All signatories have signed the letter in personal capacity

References:

1 <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/PressRelease.aspx?OriginalVersionID=260>

2 Report of the detailed findings of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1- A/HRC/29/CRP.

3

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE15/032/2014/en/>

4

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iop\\_t0609webwcover\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iop_t0609webwcover_0.pdf)

5 [https://www.icc-](https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2020_01022.PDF)

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<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/sense/app/a976d168-2023-41d8-acec-e77640154726/sheet/0c8af38b-b73c-4da2-ba41-73ea34ab7ac4/state/analysis/select/Country/Israel>

7 <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/71>

8 REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>

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## Israeli Violence on Palestinian Campuses

*Richard Seaford, BRICUP*

The issue of Palestinian political prisoners is surreal. Even the staunchly pro-Israel British government recognises that the Israelis' occupation and colonisation of land that does not belong to them is, unsurprisingly, illegal (under the Geneva conventions). The illegal colonisation includes judicial punishment for upholding international law (by resisting the colonisation). Ethnic cleansing is bound to meet resistance, which then has to be suppressed by systematic brutality. This has happened throughout history. In Palestine it is being enacted before our eyes.

Especially affected are the Palestinian universities. As an introduction, I recommend this footage of the [kidnapping of a student leader](#) on

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the campus of Birzeit University near Ramallah on March 7th this year: Note that the Israelis have no more moral or legal right to kidnap students from Birzeit campus than they do from the campus of my university (Exeter). The arrest of students continues despite the pandemic. At dawn on May 22st the occupiers arrested three Birzeit students from their homes: Azidin Dar Ali, Mehdi Dar Nasr, and Basil Barghouti.

Currently there are over 5,000 Palestinian political prisoners, of which about 250 are students. About 450 prisoners are held under Administrative Detention (introduced under British colonial rule), which allows prisoners to be held indefinitely without charge or trial. As Amnesty International states in its recent report on Israel, 'Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, including children, were committed with impunity.' All this breaches international laws and conventions, piling illegality on illegality. What may seem like inexplicable sadism is in fact systematic intimidation, enabled by the necessary reassurance that those whom you are ethnically cleansing cannot be fully human.

Cases that go to trial almost all result in conviction. A recent example is Mays Abu Gosh, 22 years old, a fourth year student at Birzeit University. Seized from her home in August 2019, she was subjected to 30 days interrogation without a lawyer. On 3rd May this year the Israeli military court at Ofer sentenced her to 16 months imprisonment starting from the day of her arrest, and to a suspended sentence of 12 months to begin from the day of her release. Her defence lawyer stated that her injuries and severe back pain derive from torture during her interrogation. For more details, see [this](#) from the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, and [this](#) from the Palestinian Prisoners' network Samidoun.

Imprisonment is not the only weapon in Israel's rich panoply of intimidation. Dr Widad Barghouthi, a Media Studies faculty member at Birzeit, was detained for two weeks in September 2019, and then in the early hours of the morning of May 11<sup>th</sup> her [house was demolished](#). To Mays Abu Gosh's prison sentence the court added, for good measure, a fine of 2,000 Israeli shekels.

An example of the use of Administrative Detention is the political scientist Dr. Ahmad Qatamesh, now almost seventy years old and in poor health, who has been designated a prisoner

of conscience by Amnesty International. First imprisoned in 1969, he was held without trial from 1992 to 1998, and again from April 2011 to December 2013 under a series of eight short-term detention orders. In May 2017 he was again placed under administrative detention, and yet again on January 1st of this year. His book, “*I Shall Not Wear Your Tarboush*,” recalls his time in prison as well as the 100 days of torture he underwent during interrogation in 1992. Of his many books one has been translated into English (2007), on [the one democratic state in Palestine](#).

Finally, I recommend support for the remarkable Right to Education campaign, base at Birzeit. <https://www.birzeit.edu/en/right2edu>

### Coronavirus Solidarity Appeal

The [Friends of Birzeit University](#) are calling for donations in response to the impact of coronavirus on Palestine.

#### The Appeal

We need your help to step up the support for Palestinian students and academics at this critical time. The number of cases of coronavirus in Palestine continues to rise. Since the ‘state of emergency’ declared on 5 March all universities and schools have been closed. Palestinians, who are already in the grip of a financial crisis from decades of occupation and US policies, face further economic disaster. Palestinians in Gaza, living under a crippling illegal siege, fear the worst.

Responding to the closure of schools and universities today, Palestinians are undertaking creative initiatives online and offline to keep learning alive. But the impact of the pandemic will hit Palestinian access to higher education hard, threatening university funding and making courses even more unaffordable for Palestinian families.

Donate [here](#) to

Provide laptops, tablets and Wifi to FOBZU-UNRWA students at Birzeit and in Gaza so that they can access online learning at home.

Support students in urgent financial need through scholarships and the Birzeit Hardship Fund

Strengthen links between UK and Palestinian universities

Raise awareness about critical needs of Palestinian Higher Education.

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### UK Government’s Anti-BDS Pension Guidance Ruled Unlawful by UK Supreme Court

*Robert Wintemute, BRICUP*

On 29 April 2020, in R. (on the application of Palestine Solidarity Campaign Limited and Jacqueline Lewis) v. Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, [2020] UKSC 16, <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2018-0133-judgment.pdf>, the United Kingdom Supreme Court (UKSC) reversed (by 3 votes to 2) the 6 June 2018 decision of the England and Wales Court of Appeal, [2018] EWCA Civ 1284, <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2018/1284.html> (see [BRICUP Newsletter 123](#)), which had reversed (by 3 votes to 0) the 22 June 2017 decision of Sir Ross Cranston, sitting in the England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court), [2017] EWHC 1502 (Admin), <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2017/1502.html> ([BRICUP Newsletter 113](#)) 113,

The case was a judicial review of statutory guidance, guidance on preparing and maintaining an investment strategy statement (the Guidance), which the Secretary of State published on 15 September 2016, and which took effect on 1 November 2016. The guidance, which governs the investment strategy for the local government pension scheme (LGPS), permits ethical and social objections to a particular investment, but prohibits "... using pension policies to pursue boycotts, divestment and sanctions [BDS] against foreign nations and UK defence industries ... other than where formal legal sanctions, embargoes and restrictions have been put in place by the [UK] Government", and "pursuing policies that are contrary to UK foreign policy or UK defence policy". The

guidance prohibits an investment strategy with an element of BDS, even if it would not involve significant financial risk to the pension scheme and irrespective of member support for the investment strategy. The judgment of Lord Wilson (with which Lady Hale agreed) noted at [3] (of the Supreme Court judgement): “in support of the application of the claimants for permission to appeal to our court, submissions were filed by the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, known as the Quakers, and by the organisation known as Campaign Against Arms Trade”.

At [4], Lord Wilson described the local government pension scheme as “a statutory occupational pension scheme”, under which “authorities in England and Wales ... administer some 89 distinct funds, which are kept separate from other local authority resources. In its capacity as an employer, a local authority makes contributions into the pension fund referable to its employees, as do its employees themselves. The scheme provides statutorily defined pension benefits for about 5 [million] past and present employees ...”

After examining the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, which authorized the 2016 Regulations which authorized the 2016 Guidance, Lord Wilson concluded: “26. ... the policy of the Act ... is to identify procedures - and indeed the strategy - which administrators of schemes should adopt in the discharge of their functions. 27. In the two passages under challenge, however, the Secretary of State has insinuated into the guidance something entirely different. It is an attempt to enforce the government’s foreign and defence policies; and it purports to provide that, even when the tests commended by the Law Commission for reaching a potential investment decision by reference to non-financial considerations have both been met [no financial risk and member support], an administrator is prohibited from taking the decision if it runs counter to such policies.”

Why did the Secretary of State think this might be within his powers under the Act? “30. ... [T]here has been a misconception on the part of the Secretary of State which

probably emboldened him to exceed his powers in issuing guidance which included the two passages under challenge. The misconception relates both to the functions of scheme administrators in relation to investment decisions and ... to the identity of those to whom the funds should properly be regarded as belonging. ... [A]dministrators of local government schemes ... consider themselves to be quasi-trustees who should act in the best interests of their members. The view, superficial at best, that the administrators are part of the machinery of the state, and are discharging conventional local government functions, fails to recognise that crucial dimension of their role. And it is equally misleading to claim that pension contributions to the scheme are ultimately funded by the taxpayer. ... The contributions of the employees into the scheme are deducted from their income. The contributions of the employers are made in consideration of the work done by their employees and so represent another element of their overall remuneration. The fund represents their money. ... [I]t is not public money.”

Lord Wilson concluded: “31. Irrespective of whether [this] misconception ... played a part in leading the Secretary of State to include in the guidance the two passages under challenge, I conclude that his inclusion of them went beyond his powers. HOW does not include WHAT. Power to direct HOW administrators should approach the making of investment decisions by reference to non-financial considerations does not include power to direct (in this case for entirely extraneous reasons) WHAT investments they should not make. 32. I would allow the appeal and restore the order made by Sir Ross.” Sir Ross Cranston had concluded in 2017: “32. ... In issuing the challenged part of the guidance [the Secretary of State] has acted for an unauthorised purpose and therefore unlawfully.”

Lord Carnwath voted with Lord Wilson and Lady Hale to allow the appeal. He concluded at [para 43] that investment decisions based on non-financial (including ethical) considerations “are judgements to be made by the administering authority, not the Secretary of State. The attempt of the Secretary of State

to impose policy choices was objectionable, ... because they were choices to be made by the authorities [administering the LGPS], not by central government”.

Lady Arden and Lord Sales dissented: “58. The [challenged] passage in the guidance ... recognises that framing investment decisions by reference to [non-financial] factors may serve to communicate or express views of a political, social or ideological character. In our view, it is clear that the state (representing the interest of the general public) and scheme members may both have an interest in how this expressive function is exercised. The LGPS is liable to be identified with the British state. ... So, for instance, if the managers of funds within the LGPS decided to boycott Israel, that could readily be portrayed as the British state (in the guise of one of its major public sector pension funds) deciding to boycott Israel. Moreover, such a perception could well fuel difficult and sensitive tensions in society ...” They noted: “77. ... [The] aggregate value [of the pension funds within the LGPS] as at 31 December 2020 [2019?] was some £287 billion, which makes them very substantial investors indeed. ...”

In theory, the UK Government could override the UKSC’s decision, by proposing an Act of the UK Parliament that would clearly authorize the challenged parts of the Guidance. Section 17(5)(e) of the Local Government Act 1988, enacted during the campaign against South African Apartheid, prohibits public authorities from taking into account certain “non-commercial matters” in relation to public supply or works contracts, including “the country or territory of origin of supplies to, or the location in any country or territory of the business activities or interests of, contractors”.

However, the majority of the UKSC stressed the independence of the administrators of the LGPS, and the fact that the funds they administer belong to current and former local government employees. The administrators’ independence and the ownership of the funds might place political constraints on the UK Government, which might decide to respect their independence in future, and not to interfere again.

## CULTURAL BOYCOTT NEWS

### 377 Scholars and artists pledge to oppose political litmus tests in Germany

May 11, 2020

Read the pledge [here](#)

Contact: [nopoliticalitmustests@gmail.com](mailto:nopoliticalitmustests@gmail.com)

Some [377 scholars and artists](#) from more than 30 countries have signed a [pledge](#) opposing litmus tests and political interference by institutions, municipalities, and public officials in Germany aimed at silencing advocates for Palestinian rights under international law. The signatories commit not to serve on juries or prize committees or in academic hiring consultations in Germany whenever there are “convincing indicators that their decisions may be subject to ideological or political interference or litmus tests.”

The signatories include many distinguished figures, including philosophers Judith Butler and Étienne Balibar, award-winning screenwriter and producer James Schamus, Nobel laureate in Chemistry George P. Smith, linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky, literary and postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, author Ahdaf Soueif, former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Hans von Sponeck, Holocaust history professor Amos Goldberg, and artist and writer Molly Crabapple. Renowned architect Michael Sorkin also signed the pledge before he passed away in late March from COVID-19.

The pledge comes in response to multiple instances in which artists and scholars suspected of supporting the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights were subjected to repressive political interference and smear campaigns.

In March, public officials put pressure on the Ruhrtriennale Festival to [disinvite](#) philosopher Achille Mbembe, who was to deliver the festival’s opening address. The festival has since been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Last year, the City of Dortmund [reversed](#) the decision to award author Kamila Shamsie the Nelly Sachs Prize for Literature. Shamsie and Mbembe both signed the pledge.

The pledge signatories affirm that, “To reverse a prize jury’s decision or to withdraw an invitation to speak on ideological grounds is an intolerable interference that we cannot condone, even by our participation in juries subject to such interference.” They state that making decisions contingent on a commitment to disavow BDS violates academic freedom and freedom of expression, making “a mockery of the very system for and purpose of awarding prizes to individuals judged to be leaders in their fields.”

Importantly, the pledge counts more than 40 signatures from Germany, including leaders of notable cultural institutions.

The disturbing trend in Germany of silencing critical voices, in particular people of color, has increasingly been met with indignation from around the world. Hundreds of writers and cultural figures [denounced](#) the withdrawal of Kamila Shamsie’s award. More than one hundred public figures [condemned](#) the decision by Düsseldorf’s Open Source Festival to disinvite black American rapper Talib Kweli last year.

In 2018, 75 celebrated figures [condemned](#) Ruhrtriennale’s decision to disinvite predominantly Black music group Young Fathers and, as a result, a number of artists and groups [canceled their participation in the festival](#), forcing the festival to re-invite Young Fathers.

Last month, dozens of Jewish and Israeli scholars, many of whom specialize in anti-Semitism and in Jewish, Holocaust and Israel Studies, [called on](#) the German government to replace Felix Klein, the federal antisemitism commissioner, over “shameful” smears of Achille Mbembe and his “leading role in the ‘weaponization’ of antisemitism against critics of the Israeli government and activists exercising their freedom of speech and assembly to protest Israel’s violations of basic rights of the Palestinians.”

Philosopher Étienne Balibar affirmed: “*We live in a dangerous period for peace and human rights in the world, which includes rising nationalism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and islamophobia. It is important that freedom of expression is preserved and the defense of universal values is not instrumentalized by politicians who seek to shield regimes of colonial occupation and racial discrimination from international criticism and silence voices who denounce them publicly. This*

*perversion of justice is especially regrettable if it takes place in Germany, a country which wants to be a model democracy, drawing lessons from a tragic history, an effort which many of us have admired. For this reason, I joined with regret but no hesitation the international protest of academics and writers against the recent cases of censorship and discrimination targeting eminent intellectuals of undisputable moral value – Prof. Achille Mbembe being the latest case. This should not continue, for Germany’s reputation and the cause of democracy.”*

The pledge signatories state that they “hold a variety of positions on BDS, but we agree with the 40 Jewish organizations and also with the three German courts — most recently the Administrative Court of Cologne, in September 2019 — that have reaffirmed that support for BDS is a legitimate exercise of the universally recognized right of freedom of expression.” The signatories further state that the false accusations of the kind levelled by German officials against Shamsie, Mbembe, and the others “are intended to narrow the frame of discussion solely to antisemitism and its pernicious impacts” and “are designed to draw attention away from, and to silence, any critical focus on the treatment of Palestinians in Israel-Palestine.”

Author Ahdaf Soueif commented: “*I hope that the fact that so many of us – and from such a variety of political persuasions – feel the need to issue this statement will alert our colleagues in Germany to the gravity of the ongoing political and ideological intervention in their arena, and move them to stand with us against it.*”

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## **Call from 240 Irish & International artists**

### **For an end to Israel Siege of Gaza amid Covid-19 pandemic**

Irish cultural figures Mary Black, Lankum, Liam Cunningham, Sinéad Cusack, Christy Moore, Dónal Lunny, Stephen Rea, Kevin Barry, Emer Martin, Frances Black, Anne Enright and Colm Tóibín are among more than 240 musicians, actors, filmmakers, authors and others calling for an end to Israel’s siege of the Gaza Strip amid the coronavirus crisis. In an open letter they write, “*Gaza’s almost two million inhabitants,*



*predominantly refugees, face a mortal threat in the world's largest open-air prison."*

Commenting on the letter, Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign Chairperson, Ms. Fatin Al Tamimi thanked the signatories saying "*As we Palestinians commemorate the 72nd anniversary of the [Nakba](#) this week, it is truly heartening to see so many Irish and international cultural figures call for an end to the cruel and illegal siege of Gaza, for an arms embargo on Israel and for the right of the Palestinian refugee to return. We thank them all for their support and solidarity in these critical times for Palestinians.*"

Authors Irvine Welsh and Jeanette Winterson, actors Julie Christie, Viggo Mortensen and Steve Coogan, and sculptor Antony Gormley are also signatories to the letter, which states:

***"International pressure is urgently needed to make life in Gaza liveable and dignified. Israel's siege must be ended. And most urgently, a potentially devastating outbreak must be prevented."***

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## CAMPUS NEWS

### From the UK

#### **Palestinian students at Sheffield Hallam University protest over a new Israeli partnership**

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) has begun [a new partnership](#) with Selfit Medical, an Israeli start-up company. The university has gone ahead with the new collaboration despite concerns raised by its staff and students over its partnerships with Israeli companies, and companies complicit in the occupation of [Palestine](#). According to Nemo Abdel-Rahman, president of SHU's Palestine Society:

*'I find it shameful that Sheffield Hallam University has chosen, despite our many pleas for it to divest, to further the normalisation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine land.'*

Selfit Medical's work is [being promoted](#) as part of the university's 'Wellbeing Accelerator' programme, and SHU claims that the technology developed will be beneficial for older people. However, students say that working with an

Israeli company makes SHU complicit in Israel's apartheid policies.

Read more [here](#)

### From the US

#### **Israel's Losing Battle : Palestine advocacy in the university**

[Hatem Bazian](#)

April 21, 2020

Overview Palestine Legal recently [published a report](#) noting that the majority of suppression of Palestine advocacy in the US targets students and faculty. In particular, 89% of such incidents occurred on college campuses in 2014, and 74% in 2019. While these statistics illuminate the current struggle that university-based advocates for Palestinian rights are facing, it is also critical to trace the development of Palestine advocacy on US college campuses. Tracking this 20- to 30-year history allows a better understanding of not only how we got here, but also of the current and intensifying campaign against students and faculty – and how to fight it. [1](#)

This commentary first provides an historical examination of the Palestine advocacy movement in the United States and how Palestinian advocacy on college campuses emerged from it, using Students for Justice in Palestine as a particular example. It then analyzes Israel's and its supporters' response to this shift. The piece ultimately offers recommendations for how the university setting, despite attacks against it, can continue to provide and even amplify an environment that fosters critical research and thinking on Palestine, which in turn furthers the struggle for Palestinian rights and self-determination.

Read whole article [here](#)

### From Israel

#### **'We feel the impact of BDS but are not afraid'**

***Arie Zaban- President of Bar Ilan University***

*... If the university enjoys many international collaborations, including with schools in the US, Europe and the Far East ("and the coronavirus emergency has somehow made these connections even stronger"), Zaban said that they also feel the impact of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement.*

*“At Bar Ilan we are very active on this front. Our professors work hard to fight it,” he told the Post. “Sometimes we assist to clear explicit episodes of boycott, especially in countries like South Africa and the UK, sometimes things are not openly stated: it could be things such as that an expert who has been working for decades in a specific field does not get invited to a conference, or that we compete for a grant and we are treated unfairly.”...*

Read full article in the Jerusalem Post [here](#)

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## **COVID-19 IN PALESTINE**

### **Updates- From Jewish Voice for Peace**

Welcome to the Jewish Voice for Peace Health Advisory Council timeline on the spread of Covid 19 in Israel/Palestine. This resource (<https://www.jvphealth.org/covid-19>) will be updated regularly to provide a full picture of the unfolding pandemic and the medical, political and economic ramifications in real time. Please note that Coronavirus cases are an underestimate given the lack of testing and asymptomatic carriers.

### **Two Rapid Responses on Palestine in the BMJ**

#### **1. Covid 19 in Palestine under Israeli occupation**

*Authors : Paola Manduca, Derek Summerfield and 11 others*

Read whole article [here](#)

28 April 2020

Dear Editor,  
Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention specifies that an occupying power has a duty to ensure the “adoption and application of the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics”. The tools available to deal with a pandemic are prevention of contagion; identification of the carriers; testing; and provision of care (1, 2 ).

Many reports by the WHO and UN agencies have indicated that in Gaza healthcare services are

chronically stretched and on the brink of collapse (3). This has arisen directly from the blockade Israel has maintained around Gaza since 2006, and the repeated health emergencies arising from assaults on the whole population by the Israeli military (4), including the mass maiming of unarmed civilians since 2018 protesting about the siege (5, 6).

Electricity provision is insecure, affecting health and sanitation services, there are chronic shortages of medical equipment and medicines, and patients and medical personnel cannot move freely. Gazans have had reason to remember what the then Interior Minister of Israel, Eli Yishai said in 2012: “we will bring Gaza back to the Middle Ages”(7).

And now the Covid 19 pandemic. Gaza is unable to identify and lack the means to care for a still unknown number of infectious patients, having no provision of its own of protective gear and tests, and very limited numbers of hospital beds and ventilators. In fact the Gazan health authorities did adopt precautions in early March, isolating for 21 days anyone returning to Gaza. No community cases have emerged in Gaza to date, but by April 25 there were 17 cases infected outside Gaza. More than 2000 people are currently in quarantine, but it has been possible to test only a fraction of these. A task force of 300 has been readied, itself in need of protective gear, for further testing and 1000 rooms located for quarantine purposes (8). Schools, mosques, marriage halls, and public gatherings have been suspended, with inevitable extra stress for the local economy and for unemployment rates already more than 50% (youth unemployment is more than 70%).

WHO’s advice is to “test, test, and test”, but since the first detection of Covid-infected returnees from Pakistan a month ago, it has been able to provide Gaza with less than 3000 tests. No other tools for testing or for medical care of the sick have been delivered from Israel- it did take about 50 test samples from Gaza this week but then suspended testing (9). The continuing blockade of Gaza impedes/delays the delivery of other sources of aid from abroad, and at a time when hospitals should be readying themselves in relation to oxygen, ICU beds and ventilators. Gaza has only 65 ventilators in use or in poor condition, and

urgently needs at least 150 more (10). Israel is not discharging its duty as occupying power, though the infection of even a few people in the community would be a disaster in a place with one of the highest population densities in the world.

While the lack of health structures is less extreme, in West Bank and East Jerusalem, the support of the Israeli government to the Palestinians efforts to contain the infection is very questionable.. The Palestinian Ministry of health declared restriction of movement in West Bank in March. More than 400 cases were detected since the first ones in Bethlehem; thousands of Palestinian laborers in Israel were repatriated to the West Bank without sufficient notice and without testing, and many of them covid19 positive among them; a few sick Palestinians were even dumped on the road (11); the military, unprotected, escalated incursions into Palestinian homes and increased detentions (more than 100 only in March); settlers, in quarantine for Covid19 themselves, increased the attacks on the Palestinians, with the declared aim to infect by spitting on them and were not contained by Israeli police (12). A request for a plan on Covid19 by Human rights organizations (13) to the Israeli government awaits answer since April 7..Israeli actions aggravate the difficulties in containing the spread of infection in the Palestinian communities under its direct control in East Jerusalem: no instructions for prevention were disseminated in Arabic, clinics dedicated to isolate and treat infected people supported by the Palestinian Authority were closed and testing prohibited; Unwra delivery of protective kits was obstructed (14).

Five thousand Palestinian prisoners, 194 children, were denied sufficient quantity of water and sanitary items and family and lawyers visits denied. On health security ground, Israeli released a good number of Jewish prisoners, but is refusing to do so even for the children, the sick, the ones without charge, if they are Palestinians; already cases of guards positive for the virus and sick prisoners have been reported.

These facts suggest that Israel has so far taken a political line not to assist Palestinian efforts to buttress themselves against the Covid threat, yet their control over every aspect of Palestinian life continues as before. As health professionals we call on the international community, including the

UN and EU, to address this situation urgently. Led by the need for rapid action, the international community, in whichever configuration it may coalesce at the time of this emergency, has the duty and legitimacy to take direct action with long perspective in mind, and directed to overcome the use of health restrictions as political tool. Lifting the sea blockade would make it possible for aid to reach Gaza directly by sea. Political pressure and discussion about accountability if help is denied may achieve the changes needed to address the pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territories, and within Israel's 1948 borders, including the rapid release of prisoners.

Read whole article [here](#)

## **2. Chronic Impunity for attacks is keeping Palestinian health workers in the firing line**

**Re:** [The maiming fields of Gaza](#) Franco Camandona, Gianni Tognoni, Ireo Bono, Marina Rui, et al. 362:doi 10.1136/bmj.k3299

Authors: *Neil Sammonds, Director of Advocacy, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Issam Younis, Director General, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, Tareq Shrourou, Director, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights*

Dear Editor

Previous reports in the BMJ have highlighted the shocking toll inflicted by Israeli snipers since March 2018 using military grade ammunition at close range against unarmed Palestinian civilians protesting against the continuing illegal closure and blockade of Gaza and for Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes and lands. This has included the shooting of clearly identified health workers attempting to rescue the wounded. Our new report *Chronic Impunity: Gaza's Health Sector Under Repeated Attack* further demonstrates how warnings over systemic impunity for Israeli attacks on the Palestinian health sector have gone unheeded by the international community, with foreseeable deadly consequences. At least three health workers have been killed and more than 800 injured, with 112 ambulances and 7 health facilities damaged. Palestinian paramedic Musa Abu-Hassanin was the first health worker to be fatally shot by Israeli forces, shortly after rescuing an international doctor who had been shot in both legs. Health

workers Razan al-Najjar and Abdullah al-Qutati were subsequently shot dead while wearing medical uniforms and assisting injured protesters.

The report features the stories of these and other Palestinian health workers who have died since 2018, also placing their deaths in the context of other policies that have damaged the Palestinian health system and are in breach of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Attacks on health workers on duty by Israeli forces are nothing new. In 2015, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) published a report on attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities during the 2014 military offensive on Gaza (during which 23 on-duty health workers were killed and 78 injured, 45 ambulances were damaged or destroyed and 73 health centres were damaged or destroyed) and called for an end to the impunity which sustains systematic violations of this kind. A UN inquiry into suspected war crimes in 2014 noted Israel's "lamentable track record in holding wrong-doers to account".

6 years on from the offensive, however, there have been no criminal charges, prosecutions or convictions for these and other well-documented violations. Our new report provides updates to 6 typical cases of attacks on health centres and health workers on duty during the 2014 offensive, demonstrating that internal Israeli investigation mechanisms continue to fall short of international standards.

- the bombardment of Al Aqsa Hospital on 21 July 2014 which killed two civilians, one of them a child, Alaa Abdel Majeed Abu Dahrouj, and injured tens of patients, visitors and staff, including nurse Eman Abu Jayyab who is now permanently disabled.
- the destruction of Al-Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital by multiple bombings between 11 and 23 July 2014.
- the attack on Mebarat Palestine Centre for People with Disabilities on 12 July 2014 which killed two female patients, Suha Abu Sa'daand Ola Wishahi, and severely injured three other patients with disabilities and a care support worker, and destroyed the centre.

- the killing of 3 members of an ambulance crew in Msabbeh in north-eastern Rafah, on 1 August 2014 by a double drone strike on their ambulance. They were Atef Saleh Ibrahim Al Zamli, Yousef Ejme'an Nasrallah Al Sheikh Al Eid and Yousef Jaber Hassan Darabieh. A mother and three children were also killed by the same drone strike.
- an attack on a paramedic crew on 25 July 2014 which killed the Palestinian Red Crescent Service (PRCS) ambulance driver, Mohammed Al Abadla. He was fatally shot in the chest and leg despite complying with agreed coordination protocols between the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Israel military and the PRCS.
- Anas 'Bader' Hatem Suleiman Qdeih, aged 7, was critically injured at 8am on 24 July 2014 during the bombardment and ground assault on Khuza'a in the southern Gaza strip. Bader was severely wounded by shrapnel that left his abdomen exposed but the Israeli military obstructed medical access to him. At 11.57am an ambulance finally was permitted to reach him, finding him still alive and conscious, but Bader died just before arrival at hospital. Bader is among 511 Palestinians who died during the offensive after access to medical care was delayed by the Israeli military.

Our Chronic Impunity report highlights the lack of any meaningful progress towards accountability in these and other cases. This almost blanket impunity denies legal accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. It also fuels further such attacks. The Commission of Inquiry established by the UN to investigate suspected abuses, by any side, in the context of the protests in Gaza found "*reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli snipers shot at journalists, health workers, children and persons with disabilities, knowing they were clearly recognizable as such.*" Our organisations urgently call on the international community to assist in ending the chronic impunity which drives repeated attacks on Palestinian health workers and on the viability of the Gazan health system.

Concerted international action is rendered only more urgent by the battle to contain and respond to the coronavirus pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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### **Sign the commitment by UK Scholars for 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>

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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](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.uk)

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