

BRICUP
British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

Newsletter

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A New Commitment for Palestine

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Each entry on the Contents page is linked to the beginning of the article to which it refers. At the end of the articles you will find a 'Return to Contents' button. The layout of the Newsletter has been changed. This is intended to facilitate both on-screen computer reading and printing-out for those who would prefer a paper copy. The layout is not yet finalised for future editions. We will investigate a version for access via mobile devices.

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Please sign up to, or renew, your [Commitment to Palestine](#)

Editorial Introduction

This Newsletter comes after the violent assault on Gaza, the intensification of the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and the West Bank, the attack on Palestinians inside Israel by mobs of ultra-nationalist, Zionist settlers, the Palestinian General Strike across all of Palestine, and the formation of an Israeli Government led by Naftali Bennett, an ultra-nationalist who denies Palestinian identity, and supports the Israeli annexation of the remainder of Palestine. It also comes as the UK Government intensifies its pressure on universities to adopt the discredited IHRA definition of antisemitism. It also comes as the use of the IHRA definition intensifies as the basis for malicious complaints of antisemitism, and starts to be used for disciplinary purposes.

General Editor: Monica Wusteman

BRICUP supporters and subscribers are urged to sign, or to resign, the Academic Commitment,

AND

to raise the model BDS motion in their UCU branch meetings, adapted for local circumstances where appropriate,

AND

to invite all staff to sign school-wide or programme-area petitions to their managements for institutional disinvestment from complicit companies, and for the severing of ties with Israeli institutions.

Please let BRICUP know (via bricup@bricup.org.uk) that these discussion and debates are taking place. BRICUP has resources that may be useful.

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[Please sign up to, or renew, your Commitment to Palestine](#)

A Commitment for Palestine in 2021

by Tom Hickey

Outrage at the recent events in Israel, at the bombardment of Gaza, and the continued ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem has resurrected the Academic Commitment

A determination to hold Israel to account has produced a renewed interest in BDS – UCU branches are debating motions (see the model motion in the next section)

What will you do?

The Commitment for Palestine by UK Academics has been relaunched today (Tuesday 29th June). The UCU Congress 2021 has adopted a policy that calls on all members to consider the moral and political implications of their contacts with Israeli institutions. The Johnson Government, in opposition to BDS, is drawing up legislation to ban international boycotts. In pre-emptive defiance of that legislation, an increasingly large wave of UCU branches are adopting BDS as branch policy, and commencing local campaigns.

The Academic Commitment and its Context

We have just witnessed another chapter in the on-going Israeli attempt to secure total control over the land of historic Palestine, and to drive Palestinians out of Jerusalem.

... whole families had been intentionally targeted in Israeli air and artillery strikes on homes. We have seen the attempt to render the administration of collective, social life in Gaza impossible.

We have seen each aspect of the struggle in sharp focus on our screens: the attempted evictions of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem; the attacks on Palestinians in Israeli cities by mobs of armed settlers, aided by the police; the terrorisation of Palestinians in the West Bank; and the targeted destruction of infrastructure, of hospitals, of schools, and of homes in Gaza City.

We have witnessed with a growing sense of horror the images that recorded the deaths of 219 Palestinians in Gaza, including 63 children. The Israeli journalist Amira Hass observed that whole families had been intentionally targeted in Israeli air and artillery strikes on homes. We have seen the attempt to render the administration of collective, social life in Gaza impossible. We have witnessed further attempts by the Israeli state and its institutions to make intolerable the experience of Palestinian life in Gaza, in the West Bank and in Jerusalem.

What can we do in the face of the murderous cruelty of this colonising project?

Well, ... we CAN make a difference!

We can bring pressure to bear by joining and developing the worldwide campaign to hold Israel to account for its actions. We can make it clear to our Israeli colleagues in the academy, and to all Palestinians, that as scholars in the UK we will not conduct 'business as usual' with the institutions of a colonising state that has been found to be practicing Apartheid by the international organisation, Human Rights Watch, and has been perpetrating war crimes in Gaza.

WE CAN SIGN UP TO THE ACADEMIC COMMITMENT FOR PALESTINE ...

Sign the Commitment here:

<http://academiccommitmentforpalestine.com>

What is the Academic Commitment?

It is simple and straightforward. It is not an attack on individual Israeli academics. Rather, it recognises the complicity of all Israeli academic institutions in the policies and practices of a discriminatory state, in the ideological justification for the inexcusable, in the illegal occupation and settlement of the West Bank, in the fabrication of historical and archaeological narratives, in the denial of the right of return to their homes of displaced and ethnically cleansed Palestinians, and in the maintenance of an open-air concentration camp for over 2m Palestinians in Gaza.

... [the Commitment] recognises the complicity of all Israeli academic institutions in the policies and practices of a discriminatory state ...

The Commitment simply declares that its signatories will not work for or with Israeli institutions until Israel abides by international law ...

The Commitment

As scholars associated with UK universities, and responding to the call from Palestinian civil society, we declare that we will not:

- ***accept invitations to visit Israeli academic institutions;***
- ***act as referees in any of their processes;***
- ***participate in conferences funded, organised or sponsored by them, or otherwise cooperate with them.***

We will, however, continue to work with our Israeli colleagues in their individual capacities.

This commitment is our response to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land, and the intolerable human rights violations inflicted on all sections of the Palestinian people. We will maintain this position until the State of Israel complies with international law, and respects universal principles of human rights.

UCU Policy and the Commitment

This month the UCU Congress 2021 passed an Emergency Motion on Israel-Palestine that is of direct relevance to the Academic Commitment. In a motion that registered the continuing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the barrage of violence against Gaza City, and the racist attacks on Palestinians within Israel, the Congress resolved to do four things:

- urge members to review any relationships with Israeli institutions, and consider their moral and political implications;
- call on the UK Government and devolved administrations to impose trade sanctions and an arms embargos on Israel as an Apartheid state;
- circulate sanctions petition to members;
- urge branch-organised PSC/BRICUP meetings, defending the right to criticise Zionism against antisemitism smears.

... members (who) decide to sever their ties or never to engage with Israeli institutions (can) turn that personal decision into a political act by publicly declaring it through signing the Academic Commitment, and urging others of their colleagues to join them in signing ...

The first of these resolutions is of particular significance for the Commitment. If, having considered the moral and political implications of any associations with Israeli institutions, members decide to sever their ties or never to engage with Israeli institutions then they can *turn that personal decision into a political act* by publicly declaring it through signing the Academic Commitment, and urging others of their colleagues to join them in signing. For branches that have adopted BDS but have no means to implement it or organise it as a

collective, this appeal to the moral consciences and the political judgment of individuals is an effective alternative. In the debate on the motion at the UCU Congress, only one voice was raised against. The motion was adopted by an overwhelming vote of 192 to 15, a 92.6% majority. The full text of the motion is in the box below.

Congress notes:

- renewed Israeli barrage against Gaza, and outpouring of solidarity with the Palestinian people against Israeli aggression
- ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from East Jerusalem
- **Human Rights Watch finding "crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution" by Israel;**
- Kahanists (Israeli Fascists) elected to Knesset;
- racist attacks on Palestinians and progressive Israeli Jews by mobs, protected by police.

Congress believes that this compounds:

- illegal settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem;
- systematic discrimination against Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship;
- the Nation State Law making Israel a state for Jews, rendering Palestinians and non-Jewish immigrants second-class;
- destitution of Gaza; and that
- **this arises from the Israeli state's settler-colonial and supremacist nature, for which Britain bears special responsibility.**

Congress resolves via GS to

- urge members to review any relationships with Israeli institutions, and consider their moral and political implications;
- call on the UK Government and devolved administrations to impose trade sanctions and arms embargos on Israel;
- circulate sanctions petition to members;
- urge branches to support Palestinian rights, which may include branch-organised PSC/BRICUP meetings, and defending the right legitimately to criticise Israel and Zionism.

Speeches for the Motion on Israel

Debated as a Late Motion at the UCU Congress, the motion was moved by Anne Alexander of Cambridge UCU, and was seconded by Maysoun Sukarieh of Kings College London UCU.

Moved by Anne Alexander

“This motion stands in a long tradition of UCU solidarity with the Palestinian people against oppression, injustice and racism. I was very proud to see UCU banners on the historic and massive protests in London last weekend and the weekend before - and I hope in future we’ll see many more of them. I know that colleagues in branches across the country have been supporting local initiatives, including those mobilised by students to demand that our own institutions break links with bodies which enable and profit from the policies and practices of the Israeli state outlined in this motion. Many delegates here will have joined the over 383,000 people who signed a petition to parliament calling for trade sanctions and an arms embargo on Israel.

What this motion recognises specifically, is that Palestinians across the whole of historic Palestine, within Israel, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are governed *separately* and *unequally* compared to Jewish Israelis by one Israeli state. Human Rights Watch rightly calls this apartheid, not as a metaphor or analogy, but as a breach of international law.

This inequality encompasses the most basic and fundamental rights - the right to life, the right to health care including access to vaccines, testing and PPE essential to fighting Covid-19. The rights of freedom from torture, from arbitrary detention, the right to be tried in civil, not a military court, to live in your own home with your family safe from harassment and violence - let alone rights to equality in employment, property ownership, access to health care and education.

Events in the last few weeks have brought to international attention the fact that these apartheid structures are not solely maintained by the state and its officials by also by violent, racist, far-right movements which have long terrorised Palestinians as part of programme of what they call ‘Judaization’ of the land through ethnic cleansing. This is not only taking place in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, but the last few weeks have seen many instances of armed supremacist and far-right activists ‘patrolling’ the streets of cities such as Haifa and Lydd alongside the police and attacking Palestinian citizens of Israel.

This is why, and this is the point I want to finish on, Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid has reasserted its unified character through a historic general strike on 18 May. Palestinians from Haifa to Lydd, from Nazareth and Umm al-Fahm, from Ramallah to Gaza went on strike, took to the streets in protest, organised cultural, creative and educational activities. They are asking us not just to condemn the

... Palestinians across the whole of historic Palestine, within Israel, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are governed *separately* and *unequally* compared to Jewish Israelis by one Israeli state. Human Rights Watch rightly calls this apartheid, not as a metaphor or analogy, but as a breach of international law.

system which oppresses them, but to take action alongside them. That is why this motion outlines practical steps which members, branches and the union as a whole can carry out. Please vote for it.”

Seconded by Maysoun Sukarieh

“This motion needs to be supported also because Israel has systematically attacked and undermined education in Palestine for decades. As educators we have a moral obligation to stand with educators and students who are under constant attack.

In the most recent attacks in the spring of 2021, a professor from Birzeit University, Leena Meari, was shot by Israeli soldiers in [Sheikh Jarrah](#), and two professors from Gaza University were killed in Gaza; fifteen university students were also killed, in Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank and inside Israel. In Gaza, Israeli shelling killed 70 children and partially destroyed 50 schools, which amounts to one in every thirteen schools in the area being damaged by the attack, and three schools in historic

... in the spring of 2021, a professor from Birzeit University, Leena Meari, was shot by Israeli soldiers in [Sheikh Jarrah](#), and two professors from Gaza University were killed in Gaza; fifteen university students were also killed, in Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank and inside Israel.

Palestine were also damaged. More than 500 students were injured in Gaza alone, many with [amputated limbs](#). More than sixty percent of the 1200 Palestinians who have been arrested during and immediately after the Israeli assault are university students.

The assault of 2021 is only the most recent of a long campaign of Israeli attacks on Palestinian education. The IDF raided Birzeit University five times in one year; and 2018 was named the year of [scholasticide](#) by Palestinian organizations when students were [kidnapped](#), and [tortured](#), and lecturers arrested. In the 2014 attacks by Israel, 500 Palestinian children were killed as well as 30 university students. Israel has imposed a state of siege on Palestinian higher

education by exiling professors who work in Birzeit University, not [renewing visas](#), erecting endless checkpoints that students and professors need to cross to get out or in, not allowing scholars to enter Palestine for lectures, and regularly arresting students because of their activism.”

The matter now moves to the National Executive Committee (NEC) and to the General Secretary (GS in the motion) to ensure that the resolutions are implemented.

UK Government Ban on Boycotts of Israel

The UCU Congress vote, and the wave of local support for BDS motions (see below) are timely. The UK Government declared in the Queen’s speech, at the opening of the current Parliamentary session, its intention to introduce legislation to ban the organisation or implementation of a boycott of Israel.

The legislation would prevent publicly funded bodies from supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel, precluding them from acting on the basis of their political and moral assessments of any situations overseas. It can only be presumed that it will also seek to outlaw the advocacy of such a boycott, thus foreclosing on the free speech of supporters of Palestine.

The precise impact on English universities remains unclear, though fee income from the commercialisation of HE in England is publicly underpinned via the Student Loans system, making it a form of public funding, particularly as most of the loans advanced to students will not be repaid.

The hypocrisy of this legislative move by the Johnson Government is astounding. At the same time as it declared its intention to introduce legislation requiring universities to uphold free speech, and while its Secretary of State for Education was continuing to undermine university autonomy by attempting to force the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, ... it is also seeking to ban boycotts and their advocacy.

What it cannot ban is the ability of individuals to reflect on the moral and political implications of supporting Israel, and normalising its structural discrimination against the indigenous people of the land. No government can stop us from reflecting on ethical issues of this kind, and coming to a determination on how we are going to act.

Nor can it ban UCU branches from debating the question of the BDS strategy as a means of forcing Israel to abide by international law, or from voting to decide whether they wish to adopt a policy of BDS in relation to Israel.

Original Commitment and Original Signatories

If you signed the Academic Commitment in 2015, please sign again as an act of renewal, and to register any change of role or of institution or of status, and use the Commitment's e-mail address to let us know. We will not remove any names unless we are asked to do so by signatories.

Israel's seven-week long attack on Gaza in the summer of 2014 (which they called 'Operation Protective Edge') killed over 2,000 Palestinians, including over 500 children, and injured more than 10,000. Israeli casualties from Hamas rockets killed six people, including one child. Amnesty International found that several of the Israeli attacks deliberately targeted civilians and landmark buildings. This followed the brutal assault on Gaza in 2008-9 which the Israelis had called 'Operation Cast Lead'.

... (even) as (the Johnson Government) declared its intention to introduce legislation requiring universities to uphold free speech, and while its Secretary of State for Education was continuing to undermine university autonomy by attempting to force the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, ... it is also seeking to ban boycotts and their advocacy.

... in 2015, 342 academics placed a full-page advertisement in *The Guardian* declaring a commitment for Palestine: that they would not work with or for Israeli institutions until Israel abided by international law.

In response in 2015, 342 academics placed a full-page advertisement in *The Guardian* declaring a commitment for Palestine: that they would not work with or for Israeli institutions until Israel abided by international law. The Commitment was soon signed by over 700 colleagues from across UK Higher Education.

The Academic Commitment Today

With the latest atrocities in Gaza, with systematic discrimination against Palestinians in Israel, with the on-going illegal Jewish settlements and military oppression of the Palestinians in the West Bank, with ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem, and with the refusal to allow displaced Palestinians to return to their homes, ... ***it is time to renew and expand the Commitment.***

We are asking all supporters and readers of the Newsletter to do three things:

- to sign, or to resign, the Commitment;
- to raise the issue of the Commitment in your union branch or school meeting, and get as many colleagues to sign as possible, forwarding it to all those on your lists, and in your scholarly associations; and
- to propose the BDS motion at your local UCU branch.

Sign the Commitment here:

<http://academiccommitmentforpalestine.com>

Join the campaign. Refuse to be compliant and complicit.

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End Manchester University's Research Partnership with Tel Aviv University

An Open Letter from Manchester Staff

From the signatories of an open letter, signed by 223 members of staff and research students

This letter calls on the University to end its partnership with Tel Aviv University, as an institution deeply implicated in Israeli apartheid and the bombing of Gaza, through its R&D in weapons and surveillance technologies and military strategy and operational theory, including developing the "Dahiya Doctrine" of the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

This research partnership, we contend, is in contravention of the University of Manchester's declared ethical principles of "condemn[ing] all racist violence and oppression" and "speaking up for those without a voice".

The open letter is available here, and is copied below:

<https://forms.gle/SvrC4M3E1Jz4X8C78>

Dear Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell and the Senate of the University of Manchester,

We, the undersigned, call on the University of Manchester to end its research partnership with Tel Aviv University, a university deeply implicated in Israel's premeditated bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza. This partnership contravenes the University's ethical commitment to oppose racist violence and oppression, a commitment we request you uphold.

On May 18, Palestinians across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories called a general strike. They demanded an end to Israel's indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, which has killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children, wounded more than 1,900, and displaced at least 58,000. They protested the ethnic cleansing of residents of Sheikh Jarrah from their homes in Occupied East Jerusalem, the military attack on Al-Aqsa mosque, and the Israeli mobs attacking Palestinians in the streets and in their homes as police stand by. Fundamentally, the strike called for an end to 73 years of settler colonialism, not a conflict between two equal sides but a brutal regime of expulsion, military occupation, and apartheid, armed and supported by Western nations.

These are the words with which Palestinians have long named their oppression by the Israeli state. They are now also the words of Israel's largest human-rights organisation, B'Tselem (1), and the words of the international human-rights organisation Human Rights Watch (2). They are the words of the letter of Palestinian solidarity endorsed by 221 international architecture and planning organizations (3), and another signed by an astonishing 129 gender-studies departments in the United States alone (4). We could go on. Declarations and practical measures of solidarity with Palestinians are growing by the day, part of a global movement against all racial and intersecting forms of oppression.

We, the undersigned, call on the University of Manchester to end its research partnership with Tel Aviv University, a university deeply implicated in Israel's premeditated bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza. This partnership contravenes the University's ethical commitment to oppose racist violence and oppression, a commitment we request you uphold.

Palestinians also have good reason to expect support from the University of Manchester. Our University publicly states, “We at the University of Manchester condemn all racist violence and oppression.” We assert “a role in removing systemic inequities and speaking up for those without a voice” (5). However, not only does the University of Manchester fail to speak up for Palestinians and heed their call for material support, but we also forge a strategic partnership with Tel Aviv University, an institution deeply implicated in their violent oppression.

Israeli universities have played a key role in planning, implementing, and justifying Israel’s occupation, and Tel Aviv is no exception. Across a range of disciplines from mechanical engineering to philosophy, Tel Aviv University is heavily and openly involved in research and development in weapons and surveillance technologies, and in military strategy and operational theory (6). It has described itself thus: “In the rough and tumble reality of the Middle East, Tel Aviv University is at the front line of the critical work to maintain Israel’s military and technological edge,” noting “much of that research remains classified” (7). To give only one example, Tel Aviv University is home to the Institute for National Security Studies which takes credit for developing the “Dahiya Doctrine.” This is a military doctrine of disproportionate force, adopted by the Israeli army, which privileges civilian over and above military targets and advocates, as one of its designers at TAU put it, “the destruction of homes and infrastructure, and the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people” (8).

... not only does the University of Manchester fail to speak up for Palestinians and heed their call for material support, but we also forge a strategic partnership with Tel Aviv University, an institution deeply implicated in their violent oppression.

This implicates Tel Aviv University in the deliberate and premeditated bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza – war crimes, in other words, as the UN has described previous military assaults on the people of Gaza. “If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza,” the UN Secretary-General said against the Israeli onslaught (9). Israel should be held to account “for the atrocities it has committed over the last 12 days,” is the view of the head of Oxfam in Israel and the Palestinian Territories (10).

But the atrocities don't end with the fragile ceasefire. After 14 years of devastating blockade by one of the most powerful militaries in the world, the two million people of Gaza effectively live in an open-air prison, where 80% rely on international aid to survive, 90% of the water is undrinkable, and electricity supply is intermittent, with crippling effects on economic activity and health and sanitation services. Amidst a global pandemic, 50% of essential medicines were at zero stock even before Israel’s latest onslaught. The military assault and blockade of Gaza also has appalling psychological consequences, inflicting untold trauma on a population where over 50% are under 18 (11). Meanwhile, in a deliberate act of aggression, Israeli police have launched a wave of arrests targeting Israeli Palestinians who rallied in support of Sheikh Jarrah, Al-Aqsa, and Gaza, thus far totalling 1,550 since May 9 (12).

For these reasons, we cannot, in all conscience, allow the research partnership with Tel Aviv University to continue. It brings our University into disrepute to publicly

claim anti-racism while forging a partnership with an institution deeply implicated in racial violence and suffering. It's also dangerous, for it discredits and hence weakens the claim to anti-racism, turning opposition to racism into empty phrases to use for public relations and marketing, when we should on the contrary be speaking out and taking principled and practical measures against racial oppression. Above all, this partnership makes our University complicit in the brutalisation, blockade, maiming, and killing of Palestinians who have suffered at the hands of the Israeli state for 73 years.

We request that you uphold the University's own anti-racist ethical principles by ending the strategic partnership with Tel Aviv University.

(Signatures to this letter are restricted to University of Manchester staff (academic, PS, Emeritus) and postgraduate research students.)

[For more information, see this [article](#) in the Middle East Eye]

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Architecture and Urban Planning Organisations Stand in Solidarity for Palestine

by Architects and Planners Against Apartheid

Architecture and Planning Departments Reject Settler Colonialism

Stunning response from 283 Schools and Programmes Internationally

School of Architecture staff at RCA and Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths Amongst UK departmental signatories

On May 17th 2021, a group of architectural educators and planners convening under the name *Architects and Planners Against Apartheid* drafted a statement titled *Architecture and Urban Planning Organisations Stand in Solidarity for Palestine*. The statement acknowledged that architecture and planning are both the means and the ends of Israeli State terror. It was our moral and ethical duty, therefore, to state that the tools of the profession had been co-opted to violate the rights of the Palestinian people.

From the logistical dimension of the siege in Gaza, to the settlements, demolitions, segregations, separations, walls, landscapes, checkpoints and towers to the recent attempts to ethnically cleanse the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah, or the ongoing dispossession of ancestral Bedouin lands from the Naqab, architecture and planning are deployed to further fragment the viability of Palestinian land in order to impose a permanent state of Israeli Settler Colonialism. With withdrawal of settlements now a political impossibility, the cynical process of roadmaps and peace processes has come to an end. The withdrawal of the two-state horizon has been replaced by a global acknowledgment of the ongoing facts of occupation. This, alongside the recent uprising in 48 Palestine, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, and in Golan and the borders of Lebanon and Jordan, now makes the claim of Apartheid irrefutable.

... architecture and planning are deployed to further fragment the viability of Palestinian land in order to impose a permanent state of Israeli Settler Colonialism. With withdrawal of settlements now a political impossibility, the cynical process of roadmaps and peace processes has come to an end.

Architecture and Urban Planning Organisations Stand in Solidarity for Palestine was inspired by a statement titled *Gender Studies Departments In Solidarity With Palestinian Feminist Collective* in that it sought institutional and organisational endorsements from bodies relating architecture and planning be they organised around education, culture or labour.

The statement did not allow for individual endorsements. This was a conscious decision for two reasons. First, because petitions so often fall on deaf ears, and depend on the 'status' of the signatories. Second, because the purpose of the

statement was to break the silence on Palestine. By limiting the endorsements to an organisational, departmental or institutional level, the call triggered independent processes at countless institutions as sympathetic comrades took it upon themselves to lobby and pressure their own heads of department or deans to endorse the statement.

... anti-racist groups, student associations, and academic faculty quickly mobilised to secure endorsement from their respective workplaces. We had hoped to go public on the 22nd of May with 10 endorsements, and were astonished to have secured 58. By the time the petition closed, a total of 283 schools, departments, unions and cultural organisations has endorsed the petition ...

As a consequence of the call, anti-racist groups, student associations, and academic faculty quickly mobilised to secure endorsement from their respective workplaces. We had hoped to go public on the 22nd of May with 10 endorsements, and were astonished to have secured 58. By the time the petition closed, a total of 283 schools, departments, unions and cultural organisations has endorsed the petition from around the world.

The aims of the petition were to block forms of knowledge production in architecture and planning that did not foreground the Palestinian

struggle against Israeli settler colonialism, to establish a unity of struggle between Palestine and other struggles by Indigenous people globally, to support campus based action and organising in support of Palestine, and to break partnerships and funding links between architecture and planning departments and organisations with Israeli organisations complicit in Apartheid. Further, we saw the statement as a trigger for a new kind of discussion around Palestine, one that had the ability to break the ongoing stigmatization around it within architecture and planning. Wanting to avoid a performative declaration, the statement included a series of commitments to which all endorsers had to sign up. The statement read:

As architecture and planning educators, we oppose the apartheid policies of the Israeli settler colonial state. We commit to amplify the voices, stories, and histories of Palestinian people in their struggle for justice and freedom from occupation, through the following:

- 1. Pressuring our institutions to support the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions and refusing to engage in partnerships with entities that enact or implement Israel's apartheid policies.*
- 2. Supporting student, faculty and staff activism for justice in Palestine*
- 3. Holding accountable those who undermine academic freedom within our institution by silencing, threatening or bullying students, staff, and faculty who speak up against Israeli State violence*
- 4. As we teach about architecture and planning's complicity in settler colonialism and apartheid, we commit to teaching about Palestine by centering Palestinian scholarship and experience.*

The statement builds on the momentum of the Movement for Black Lives, and it is arguable whether the level of endorsement it secured would have been possible before that movement. At the same time, in a UK and North American context, the statement enters into an already existing dispute around the relevance and legal validity of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which the Secretary for Education in the UK Gavin Williamson has been pressuring Vice Chancellors to sign.

In the context of Architecture and Planning education and culture, the recent decade has seen a significant transformation in the field with a new set of concerns around indigenous rights, resource extraction, anti-racism, decolonisation and ecology. Having made these kinds of commitments in syllabi, lecture programmes and other kinds of academic content, it is fair to conclude that a new kind of awareness or consciousness on these issues was in the air.

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A Wave of Support for BDS in UCU Branches

Pro-Palestine activists on the campuses have realised the enormous underlying reservoir of support amongst staff and students for speaking out for justice in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This has produced the beginning of a wave of support for BDS motions in UCU branches, and for motions of condemnation of Israel and in favour of BDS in students' unions.

A model motion that can be adapted for local circumstances is already being circulated by activists (see below).

by Tom Hickey

In the most dramatic setback for those who would wish to silence the voices of Palestinians and of Palestine solidarity, a series of branches of the UCU have adopted BDS motions, and are organising local campaigns on campuses. In conjunction with student groups, they are pressing for the disinvestment by their universities from any companies that are complicit in supporting the illegal occupation of Palestine, and to secure a termination of any formal university ties with Israeli academic institutions.

Branches are debating and voting on motions that explicitly endorse the call for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israeli institutions, and against companies that are complicit in Israeli oppression of the Palestinians.

There is a clear determination not to have such expressions of solidarity silenced. There is a clear determination not to be denied the right to name the reality of the political situation in Israel-Palestine as 'apartheid' ...

There is a clear determination not to have such expressions of solidarity silenced. There is a clear determination not to be denied the right to name the reality of the political situation in Israel-Palestine as 'apartheid' – to identify and name the nature of the Zionist colonisation project.

Amongst the UCU branches that have adopted such motions so far, are those at Edinburgh, Leeds, the RCA, SOAS, and Brighton, and over 200 academic staff at the University of Manchester have signed an open

letter to the Vice-Chancellor to the same effect. Similar motions are due to be debated at KCL and Brighton, and elsewhere.

There is a model motion that is being circulated amongst activists which can be adapted for local circumstances (see below). Local adaptations would usefully specify known institutional contacts and institutional investments by the particular university.

Those opposed to Palestine solidarity typically try to use legal arguments to squash the expression of trade union support. The decade-old legal Opinions that were sought by the UCU leadership are often dredged up to this end. These Opinions from QCs are as they are named – expert 'opinions' on what *might* transpire were a union taken to court for an unlawful activity. They have never been tested in a court or a tribunal.

Legal arguments about BDS

The arguments against the legality and political logic of BDS are notoriously weak. For anyone debating the issue of BDS in branches or at conferences, these weaknesses need to be etched into our awareness:

- **Discriminatory?**
there is no sense in which BDS could be considered discriminatory towards Jews or Israelis since it explicitly is directed at Israeli *institutions*, and not against individuals, whether on the basis of the latter's religious beliefs, their cultural origins or their nationality;
- **Demonstrative complicity**
even the institutional focus of the boycott isn't because those institutions happen to be Israeli but because they are demonstrably complicit in the oppression and the dispossession of the Palestinians, and in the systematic discrimination that is practiced against them;
- **Infringement of academic freedom?**
the suggestion that BDS is an infringement of academic freedom is an absurd suggestion, since it does not seek to limit the topics that anyone can teach or research, and explicitly does not target academic collaboration and association with Israeli scholars unless that collaboration is funded and facilitated by Israeli institutions, but rather is designed to address the REAL and SUBSTANTIAL infringement of academic freedom that is imposed on Palestinians by the destruction of premises and equipment, by the impediments to the movement of staff and students, by the military raids on universities and colleges, by the arrest and serial detention of Palestinian professors, and their subjection to military jurisdictions, by the refusal of visas to visiting professors at Palestinian universities, and the denial of work permits and renewal of visas to overseas teaching and research staff at Palestinian universities; etc., etc.;
- **Collegial coercion?**
there is no sense in which a BDS motion could be considered a form of coercion of colleagues – the UCU has no mechanism to force people to sever links with Israeli institutions, and motions simply express a collective view of the majority that seeks to persuade members and others of the moral and political case, ... being critical of Israel and abiding by the boycott call has never been, and could and should not be, a condition of UCU membership;
- **Forced disinvestment?**
UCU branches have no mechanism that would allow them to force disinvestment on their local institutions – all they can do is to make the case to the members of their school boards and research centres, to the members of their Academic Boards, and to their governing bodies;
- **Breach of contract?**
there is no sense in which the adoption of a BDS motion could be considered an encouragement to breach of contract since no branch or national officer would encourage a member or an institution to infringe the terms of their contractual obligations, except in the case of lawful industrial disputes, and no academic contracts in the UK specify the requirement to work with Israeli institutions –

which institution with which a member decides to cooperate, or which conference to attend, is a matter for individual academic discretion; and

- **Beyond the aims and objects of the union?**
to suggest that a call for BDS against the institutions of a country that is in breach of international law is *ultra vires* in respect of the aims and objects of the union is more than absurd – the UCU and any educational trade union that is committed to anti-racism and anti-colonialism, and is in favour of justice and equality in educational provision and access, has those as its aims and objectives, and has a responsibility to pursue them.

Thus were the legal Opinions against BDS always suspect. Naturally, as with all opinions, those of legal experts in a field are often inflected by the hopes those experts may harbour as to the actual interpretation of the law to which a court may come. Perhaps it is time for alternative Opinions to be sought.

Model BDS Motion for UCU Branches

This branch notes that:

- UCU Congress 2021 has reaffirmed the union's opposition to Israel's military assaults and apartheid practices directed at the Palestinians;
- the outrage over the renewed drive towards ethnic cleansing of East Jerusalem has been reflected internationally as well as in the UK;
- the adoption of the Nation State Law makes explicit in constitutional law the reality of discrimination – that the c.20% of Israel's population that is not Jewish is in but not properly of Israel;
- Palestinian civil society and its labour movement have long called for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against complicit Israeli institutions;
- over 400,000 people have signed a petition to the UK Parliament calling for immediate trade sanctions and an arms embargo against Israel;
- Israel has systematically undermined education in Palestine for decades, including the bombing or destruction of schools as well as the arrest, torture and kidnapping of students and lecturers, the raiding of campuses, and checkpoints that render journeys precarious; and
- Israeli universities are complicit in the illegal occupation and the systematic discrimination, building on confiscated Palestinian land, training the IDF in sophisticated methods of social control, developing the weaponry of occupation and repression, and seeking to justify Israeli claims and Palestinian dispossession.

This branch believes that as trade union members, and as educationalists and as scholars, we have a duty to speak out against the injustice faced by Palestinians, especially where our own institutions continue to collaborate with companies, government bodies or other institutions that are complicit in this oppression.

This branch resolves to:

- issue a public statement of solidarity with the Palestinian people which expresses our support for BDS against Israel until it complies with its obligations under international law;
- work with BRICUP and PSC to host an online meeting for members of the university / college to explain the case for BDS;
- encourage members to make an *individual* commitment to supporting BDS by ***signing the Academic Commitment for Palestine*** (<https://academiccommitmentforpalestine.com/>);
- write to our Institution's management urging them to divest from all companies complicit in the Israeli occupation, and to end any research and teaching partnerships with Israeli educational institutions in line with the

call for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
(<https://bdsmovement.net/pacbi>);

- actively participate, as a branch, in future general strikes called by Palestinian trade unions by holding protests and vigils on these dates, and promoting information about these actions to our members;
- encourage members to work jointly with students to campaign for BDS in our university / college through a student-staff assembly or joint working group.

Advice on the moving BDS motions

If planning a BDS motion, colleagues are welcome to contact BRICUP should they wish to seek advice or information.

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In Unprecedented Numbers, University Departments and Scholars Urge an End to Israeli Apartheid

Statement from the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel ([PACBI](#)) May 26, 2021

In an unprecedented wave of solidarity, more than 300 academic departments, programs, centres, unions and societies worldwide have endorsed [statements](#) in support of Palestinian rights in response to Israel's violent attacks on Palestinians this month. Similar statements from individual scholars, researchers, university staff, students and alumni have garnered more than 15,000 signatures.

The statements express solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle and condemn Israel's military assault on besieged Gaza, which [killed](#) more than 247 Palestinians, including 66 children, and violent attacks against Palestinians across the occupied West Bank, in particular in Sheikh Jarrah, and within present day Israel. Most of the statements recognize Israel's settler colonial and apartheid regime as the root cause of the violence.

The signatories of many statements reject the sanitizing language of "conflict" and "clashes" to describe decades of Israeli dispossession of Palestinians. They also reject the "two-sides" narrative that obscures the inherent power asymmetry between Israel as a major military colonial power and Palestinians resisting its structural colonial violence. The statements also stress the need to centre Palestinian scholarship and voices.

The signatories commit to or call for accountability measures to end complicity in Israel's violations of Palestinian rights, including ending military funding to and arms

trade with Israel, university divestment from companies complicit in Israeli apartheid, and in many cases supporting the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, including the boycott of complicit Israeli academic institutions.

[The full statement can be found [here](#)]

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DO NO HARM: Refrain from Locating your Conferences in Israel

**A call to all mental health organizations from the USA, UK, Ireland, France and South Africa in solidarity with the Palestinian people, May 21, 2021
from: USA Palestine Mental Health Network; Palestine Mental Health Network;
Ireland Palestine Mental Health Network; France Palestine Mental Health Network; Africa Palestine Mental Health Network**

We call on you, our colleagues in the field of mental health, to join us in taking a "*don't go, don't support*" position in regard to international mental health-related events held in Israel, or external events sponsored by, or in collaboration with, Israeli organizations. We believe we must do so in order to honor our primary professional obligation to do no harm.

While there is strong commitment in our field to encourage dialogue across divides, we also know that we must ensure that our interventions do not replicate or

Such an extreme asymmetry of power exists in Israel/Palestine that we must take special care not to inadvertently support an oppressive environment that is inimical to ordinary life and to psychological well-being.

reinforce abusive relationships. Such an extreme asymmetry of power exists in Israel/Palestine that we must take special care not to inadvertently support an oppressive environment that is inimical to ordinary life and to psychological well-being.

The Israeli Government uses coercive force in a violent and illegal process designed—at the very least—to ghettoise and marginalize the indigenous population on the basis of their ethnicity. To disregard the profound and enduring physical and psychological damage that results would be inconsistent with our professional ethics which include a commitment to justice, inclusivity,

reciprocity and anti-racism. To turn a blind eye to Israel's human rights abuses inflicts further injury on the Palestinian people, including mental health professionals, routinely exposed to the systemic violence of the regime.

The Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem, as well as mainstream organizations like Human Rights Watch, have now concluded that Israel has created an illegal apartheid state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The same moral

imperatives that required the stand taken by people of conscience against Apartheid South Africa apply again.

Both Palestinian civil society as a whole and our colleagues in the mental health field have called on us to honor a policy of non-engagement with Israeli institutions and organizations. This call, which does not apply to individuals, has been supported by a number of Jewish Israeli colleagues. A collective response from us, declining to participate in any proposed event, will send a powerful message that collusion with Israel's systemic dispossession of and discrimination towards Palestinians contravenes our professional ethics urging us to support the struggle for human rights.

This is an appeal to join a form of non-violent resistance, made with clear objectives in mind. Implicit in the struggle for racial justice and equality is an end to the many specific policies that routinely inflict psychological harm on the Palestinians. These include the siege of Gaza and the de-development of the Palestinian economy; shoot-to-kill policies and the deliberate maiming of civilians; imprisonment without trial and the use of torture; the night-time arrests, abusive interrogation and incarceration of children; the kidnapping of the bodies of Palestinians killed by the armed forces; unrestrained settler violence; the demolition of Palestinian homes and villages, the appropriation of their lands and the periodic aggressive military assaults on the besieged and vulnerable civilian population of Gaza.

We ... urge that your association reflect carefully on the obligations enshrined in its ethical codes of practice prior to committing to events, 'live' or 'virtual', that involve co-operation with Israeli institutions. Should such a possibility arise, we trust you will first consult with the Palestinian mental health community.

We therefore urge that your association reflect carefully on the obligations enshrined in its ethical codes of practice prior to committing to events, 'live' or 'virtual', that involve co-operation with Israeli institutions. Should such a possibility arise, we trust you will first consult with the Palestinian mental health community. We would be pleased to arrange the necessary introductions. Consistent with this, we urge mental health organizations to review their financial affairs—including the location of investments and the nature of their donations to lobbyists, political action committees, and political candidates—to ensure that they are not unwittingly investing in, or profiting from state crimes, the consequences of which are directly contrary to our core purposes as mental health professionals.

Many colleagues have committed themselves to “do no harm” by adding their names to the Mental Health Workers’ Pledge for Palestine. We invite you and your members to join them [here](#). Further information about professional solidarity with Palestine can be found at www.usapalmhn.org and www.ukpalmhn.com.

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Academic Freedom and Resistance to the IHRA Definition

The defence of academic freedom against the threat to it from the IHRA definition of antisemitism has reached an interesting, if not a critical, juncture. Williamson's threat has only been partially successful, and resistance to adoption is growing across the sector. Now the focus shifts to the intervention of UCU branches.

by Tom Hickey

Last year's threat from the Secretary of State, Gavin Williamson, to cut funding from institutions that failed to adopt the IHRA definition by the 1st January has not had the results for which he had hoped. Vice-Chancellors, their management groups and senior academic staff in many universities have proved more resistant to that threat, and more determined to preserve their institutions' autonomy, than he had bargained for. Mr. Williamson may keep a horsewhip on his desk during TV interviews as a sad declaration or sign of what he wishes were his Ministerial powers and prerogatives but he has found many universities not to be so easily cowed. He, and the IHRA definition's supporters, have discovered that in dealing with universities he is not dealing with the Labour Party.

Universities UK

Part of the evidence for the disgruntlement of the definition's supporters is that they have been forced to bring additional pressure on Universities UK (UUK) to intervene with its member universities in an attempt to persuade the latter to do what the Government has demanded. It is not clear whether this pressure is from the Government directly, from Lord Mann, from the Community Security Trust, from UK Lawyers for Israel, or from the Board of Deputies.

What is clear is that UUK is being dragged in opposite directions, pulled one way by the political pressure but pulled in the other by its desperation to preserve its integrity in the face of that pressure: it cannot bring itself to recommend adoption of the definition, knowing of its inadequacy in fighting antisemitism and its use as a silencing weapon, yet cannot face down that pressure either. Unlike in its previous circulars on the topic, it makes no mention of the legal Opinions critical of the definition for use in law or for disciplinary processes, or the potential

consequences for academic freedom. Rather it emphasises the growth of antisemitism and cites universities that have opted for adoption.

[See UUK 'Tackling antisemitism: practical guidance for universities' at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/tackling-antisemitism.aspx>]

... UUK is being dragged in opposite directions, pulled one way by the political pressure but pulled in the other by its desperation to preserve its integrity in the face of that pressure: it cannot bring itself to recommend adoption of the definition, knowing of its inadequacy in fighting antisemitism and its use as a silencing weapon, yet cannot face down that pressure either.

Groundswell of opposition

To date, it seems, only about half of the UK's Higher Education Institutions have adopted this definition of antisemitism, and many of those that have adopted it have done so only with such caveats or qualifications or exclusions as to render the definition unusable for disciplinary purposes. In some places where it has been

In some places where it has been adopted there is now an eruption of opposition from academic staff demanding that the adoption be rescinded, as the consequences of the decision to adopt become clear; in others there is a groundswell of opposition, and pressure on the management and leadership of the institutions not to adopt or to adopt an alternative definition.

adopted there is now an eruption of opposition from academic staff demanding that the adoption be rescinded, as the consequences of the decision to adopt become clear; in others there is a groundswell of opposition, and pressure on the management and leadership of the institutions not to adopt or to adopt an alternative definition.

The degree of difficulty for the definition's advocates is now openly acknowledged. The recent report of the Pinsker Centre makes this clear ('Reactions at UK Universities to the Israel-Gaza Conflict', 24 May 2021, at <https://www.pinskercentre.org/single-post/report-reactions-at-uk-universities-to-the-israel-gaza-conflict>).

is not being used to discipline or dismiss staff, or to exclude students: "even when adopted by universities, the IHRA definition of antisemitism appears to have had a minimal effect in creating a safer environment for Jewish students in the absence of a firm disciplinary framework for its enforcement." (p.2) Amongst its recommendations are the following:

The report's focus is on what it interprets as antisemitic statements and events at 21 named universities but part of its concern is that, even where universities have adopted the definition, it

iv) Universities which have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism must impose a stronger and consistent disciplinary framework for the imposition of this definition to ensure that it acts as both a deterrent and shield against antisemitic conduct and language which harms Jewish students;

v) Disciplinary frameworks must include strong sanctions where students or student union officers are found to have contravened the IHRA definition of antisemitism and caused or potentially caused emotional harm to Jewish students; and

vi) The government should consider cutting funding to universities which have merely adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism but which do not take any tangible steps to take disciplinary action relating to it. (Ibid. p.23)

Caveats

Thus the seemingly insatiable appetite for restricting debate and research on Palestine, and on expressions of solidarity with Palestine, has led to petulant disappointment amongst the IHRA definition's advocates, even where the definition

has been adopted. Their resentment is focussed on those institutions that have adopted the definition, with or without its 'illustrative examples', but have imposed boundaries on its use: that it will not be used for disciplinary purposes; that it does not supersede the institution's obligation to defend academic freedom under the terms of the Education Act (1988); that it will be used as one amongst a range of resources to inform decision making; or the Home Affairs Select Committee's recommended caveats. All of these limit, to some degree, the deployment of the definition for the purpose of silencing Palestinian voices. They are, however, no guarantee of academic freedom once the definition has been adopted.

... these restrictions do not protect the academic freedom of staff to reflect in their teaching and research on the communalist nature of Israeli society, on the ethnic exclusivism that has long been practiced in Israel and is now enshrined in its Nation State Law ... , on the nature of Zionism as a project of settler colonialism, or on the relationship between that project and its ideology and the geographical expansion of Israel, ...

immigrants from full citizenship), on the nature of Zionism as a project of settler colonialism, or on the relationship between that project and its ideology and the geographical expansion of Israel, the illegal occupation of the West Bank, and the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem. Nor do they protect the right of students, including Palestinian students, freely to speak in naming the practices of the Israeli state as racist, and the system as one of separation and exclusion, i.e. apartheid.

The caveats presume, moreover, that Israel can properly be described as a liberal democracy despite the constitutional exclusion of over 20% of its population from full citizenship, state support for pogroms against Palestinian residents of Israeli cities, expansion of illegal settlements, destruction of Palestinian agriculture, and the use of sophisticated munitions to inflict mass murder, horrendous injuries and infrastructural devastation on the imprisoned population of Gaza.

The following are the only caveats that MIGHT preserve academic freedom in the face of the adoption of the IHRA definition, though the only safe route to that preservation is not to adopt this flawed definition at all.

Unless there is additional evidence to suggest anti-Jewish prejudice, it will not be considered antisemitic:

The shortcomings of these qualifications is most evident in the case of the Home Affairs Select Committee caveats. These are as follows:

- It is not antisemitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.
- It is not antisemitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.

It is clear that these restrictions do not protect the academic freedom of staff to reflect in their teaching and research on the communalist nature of Israeli society, on the ethnic exclusivism that has long been practiced in Israel and is now enshrined in its Nation State Law (Israel is a nation of and for Jews, thereby excluding Palestinian Arabs and non-Jewish

- to criticise the Government of Israel, or Zionism as a political ideology,
- to describe the law or practices of the state of Israel as racist in their effect, including acts leading to Palestinian dispossession as part of the establishment of the state, or to describe Israel as an apartheid state.

Equally, it will not be antisemitic to advocate the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Resistance

Resistance has taken a number of forms:

- individual academics have **written to their Vice-Chancellors** to protest at the consequences of adoption of the definition for their teaching and research;
- groups of concerned academics in the relevant fields have **published Open Letters** to their Vice-Chancellors and Councils or governing bodies;
- members of **Senates and Academic Boards have voiced objections**;
- the working party set up by the Senate at UCL produced a forensic analysis and **recommended that the IHRA definition be set aside**, and an alternative sought, which recommendation was adopted overwhelmingly (see report in earlier editions of this Newsletter);
- at Warwick, where it is rumoured that multiple malicious accusations have been made against staff and students (see the report in this issue immediately below) academic staff exercised their constitutional right to summon 'an Assembly' of all academic staff, which **Assembly then voted overwhelmingly, by a 93% majority, to set aside the University's adoption of the definition** until a report was received from a working party to investigate alternatives, and for the definition not to be used until then for any disciplinary investigations or other proceedings;
- at the Open University (see the report in this edition below) the **Senate adopted the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism** (JDA) along with the IHRA definition thereby undermining the capacity of the latter to restrict academic freedom, or freedom of speech on Israel;
- UCU branches have made submissions to their institution's managements about the **inevitable consequences of adoption for political, industrial and negotiating processes** on their campuses; etc. ...

The developing campaign against the IHRA definition has now dovetailed with the campaign to make a political and moral stand for justice. in criticising Israel and its actions. Thus far from silencing those concerned with the plight of the Palestinians, the looming threat of the IHRA definition has renewed their determination, and has emboldened them.

It is notable that in every case where the JDA's definition and explanation has been raised as an alternative the IHRA definition ... it has been adopted overwhelmingly! The developing campaign against the IHRA definition has now dovetailed with the campaign to make a political and moral stand for justice in criticising Israel and its actions. Thus far from silencing those concerned with the plight of the Palestinians,

the looming threat of the IHRA definition has renewed their determination, and has emboldened them. Motions in favour of BDS until Israel abides by international law have been passed by UCU branches at Edinburgh, Leeds, SOAS, Brighton, and elsewhere (see article in this edition). Students' Unions and County Councils are also beginning to express support for BDS, and Israel's supporters are now turning their ire on the National Union of Students which in May condemned Israeli actions in Gaza, Jerusalem, Israeli cities, and the West Bank.

UCU Congress and branches

Though all of the above tactics of opposition, from Open Letters to working parties, etc., remain relevant for all institutions, the focus of opposition has now moved to the role of the UCU, both nationally and locally.

The UCU has long had national policy against the IHRA definition as a result of motions passed in 2017 and 2018. At this year's Congress, it renewed and reaffirmed that opposition in a motion from the London Region that was carried overwhelmingly, and similarly adopted a motion from Exeter UCU that urged a better definition of antisemitism that that provided by the IHRA.

The London Region Motion was carried, as amended, by 165 to 15, with 17 abstentions, a 92% majority -

Congress **notes**:

- Williamson's letter threatening universities unless they (a) adopt the "IHRA working definition of antisemitism", and (b) implement it in staff and student codes of conduct;
- UCU's policy opposition to the definition;
- only some UK HEIs have adopted; of these many have 'adopted' but refused to implement;
- the Report of the UCL Working Group on Racism and Prejudice;
- the risk that FE will be next;
- the alternative definition developed by Jewish and Israeli scholars of antisemitism in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA);
- evidence of a chilling effect of the IHRA definition on teaching/supervision, and unfounded IHRA-based accusations and disciplinary action against staff;
- the refusal by Tower Hamlets Council to allow the Big Ride for Palestine to book the use of a park in 2019.

Congress **believes** the IHRA definition impedes campaigning against antisemitism.

Congress **resolves** to:

- condemn Williamson's intervention as an attack on institutional autonomy, on academic freedom and freedom of expression;
- call on the General Secretary to speak out;
- call on branches to organise against the adoption, and to develop a briefing document for branches, drawing on the UCL Report and BRICUP briefings;
- organise a grassroots campaign on academic freedom and free speech on Israel, with a dedicated web page and resources on the UCU website;
- to dedicate resources to, and support, individual members (and their branches) where the IHRA definition is being used to attack their legitimate free speech on Israel or Palestine;

- resist the creation of a hierarchy of racisms by avoiding definitions of specific forms and, where necessary, instead to press for adoption of the JDA as an alternative or a supplement to the IHRA;
- encourage institutions that want a definition to adopt Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism;
- put pressure on institutions to campaign more actively against antisemitism;
- fully support members attacked or victimised for supporting Palestinian rights or through abuse of the IHRA definition;
- support and call for members to participate in the Big Ride for Palestine 2021.

The Exeter Motion was carried by 189 to 17, with 18 abstentions, a majority of 92% -

Congress notes:

- pressure from UK Government for universities in England to adopt the controversial IHRA definition;
- UCU passed motions from the 2017 and 2018 UCU Congresses opposing adoption.

Congress believes that the definition:

- dangerously conflates racist views with legitimate political criticism;
- threatens academic criticism of Israel, and Palestinian solidarity events;
- undermines freedom of speech and intellectual thought central to Universities;
- compromises the fight against anti-Semitism and racism;
- impedes campaigning against antisemitism.

Congress resolves:

- to encourage institutions that want a definition to adopt Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism;
- to call for a rejection of the IHRA definition by universities that have not already adopted it, and for an amendment or codicil appended to it by universities that have already adopted it;
- put pressure on institutions to campaign more actively against antisemitism;
- fully to support members attacked or victimised for supporting Palestinian rights or through abuse of IHRA definition.

Nationally, the matter now rests with the General Secretary and the President to raise this matter with the Secretary of State again, to make representations to Universities UK, and to publicise its interventions in the media. The national union will also need to support branches in taking the issue up in local negotiations with their managements. The key role, arguably, will now be played by UCU branches in the localities.

UCU branch activity

The key task for activists in UCU branches and in branch committees is to go through a check list of what needs to be done, and to commence a local campaign if that does not already exist. **BRICUP can provide that check list, and further advice, if required.**

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****** BREAKING NEWS ******

University of Warwick Assembly Votes to Set Aside the IHRA Definition as a Disciplinary Tool, and to Investigate Alternatives

by Our Correspondent at Large

As this Newsletter was about to be circulated, in a stunning reversal of University policy, the Assembly of the University's staff met in what is reported to have been a fervid atmosphere generated by the rumours of a wave of multiple disciplinary investigations of staff and students as a result of accusations of antisemitism.

... the Assembly adopted both motions and the amendment by overwhelming majorities of 96% and 93%. The adoption of the IHRA definition has been suspended, in effect, until a working party reports back to the Vice Chancellor and to a reconvened meeting of the Assembly by the end of the calendar year.

Attended by over 200 members of staff, the Assembly was being invited to consider motions and an amendment condemning the verbal attack on the Vice Chancellor and some senior staff by MPs in the Parliamentary Education Select Committee, and to investigate the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as an alternative to the IHRA definition.

In a remarkable expression of unity and a determination to defend academic freedom, the Assembly adopted both motions and the amendment by overwhelming majorities of 96% and 93%. The adoption of the IHRA definition has been suspended, in effect, until a working party reports back to the Vice Chancellor and to a reconvened meeting of

the Assembly by the end of the calendar year.

Part of one of the motions addressed the dangerous potential consequences of the adoption of the IHRA definition:

... in light of the well-documented legal and scholarly criticism of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and the admission by some of its authors, such as Kenneth Stern, that it was never intended to curtail academic freedom or free speech, the Assembly calls on the University not to use the IHRA definition of antisemitism in

disciplinary procedures or in investigations into allegations made against staff or students.

The Assembly follows a number of interventions by staff to attempt to preserve academic freedom from the consequences of the adoption of the IHRA definition. One such intervention was an earlier Open Letter to the Vice Chancellor from 75 members of staff. This is part of that letter:

We, the undersigned members of staff, write this letter to urge the Vice Chancellor to continue to refuse to adopt the IHRA definition and examples of anti-Semitism as official University of Warwick policy.

We are as a group utterly committed to fighting anti-Semitism and all forms of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination in a steadfast manner, and will accept no compromise on these issues. Many of us are Jews ourselves. Many of us have foregrounded the combat against racism and discrimination in our scholarly and professional work as well. Indeed, it is because of the seriousness of our commitment that we remain opposed to the adoption of this definition.

As is well known, and has been stated repeatedly by some of its own authors, the IHRA definition was never intended to be used as a tool to adjudicate whether any particular statement or opinion is or is not an example of anti-Semitic hate speech, and in its construction and logic it is quite simply not fit for this purpose. Moreover, in contrast to the definitions of institutional racism provided by MacPherson Report or the Commission for Racial Equality, the IHRA definition is unable to deal with structural anti-Semitism as its focus is on emotion or intent - something that is generally unprovable with regards to organisations or legal structures, let alone individuals. For this reason, leading scholars of anti-Semitism have dismissed the definition as inconsistent, contradictory, and ambiguous, and numerous Holocaust historians have expressed similar concerns. Finally, the IHRA definition is of serious concern in that its instrumentalisation can jeopardise academic freedom in the context of teaching and research on Israel and Palestine, whilst not addressing, and even abetting, the rise of anti-Semitism globally.

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The Open University Adopts the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism

by David Johnson

On 21 April 2021, the Senate of the Open University (OU) voted by a large majority to adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), its [definition of antisemitism](#) and its guidelines, to accompany, clarify and reinforce the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The JDA and IHRA definitions will have equal standing in the development of anti-racist (including anti-antisemitic) policies and procedures at the OU.

The background to the adoption of the JDA definition will be of interest.

At the 27 January 2021 meeting of the OU Senate, the Education Committee of the OU, with the support of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, recommended the adoption of IHRA definition in full, accompanied by a preamble that such adoption was in the context of the OU's responsibilities arising from the Equality Act and the OU's statements in support of academic freedom.

The proposers of the amendment argued that the adoption of both definitions would:

- **address concerns that the IHRA definition could be instrumentalised to silence criticism of the state of Israel;**
- **ensure that academic freedom was protected;**
- ...

Accepting that Senate members needed to inform themselves on this issue, Senate agreed to postpone the vote on adopting the IHRA definition until its April meeting.

In the interim, in late March 2021, the JDA definition was published. An amendment to the Education Committee's proposal was then submitted in early April, asking Senate members to adopt both the JDA and the IHRA definitions.

The proposers of the amendment argued that the adoption of both definitions would:

- address concerns that the IHRA definition could be instrumentalised to silence criticism of the state of Israel;
- ensure that academic freedom was protected;
- reinforce the OU's unequivocal rejection of all forms of racism, including antisemitism; and
- enable the JDA's clear exposition of the differences between antisemitism and criticism of the state of Israel to inform the development of OU policies for combating racism and antisemitism.

The motion and amendment accepted that the OU's own declarations in support of academic freedom and the UK Equality Act continue to take precedence in providing the legal framework for addressing accusations of racism and antisemitism.

The Senate motion and amendment on the JDA definition of antisemitism were approved and endorsed by OU Council on 11th May 2021.

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Open Letter on the UK Government's Imposition of the IHRA Definition in England

from 66 Israeli Academics Working in the UK

Introduction

We 66 British academics and Israeli citizens reject the government's imposition of the IHRA definition.

The flawed definition threatens not only the fight against antisemitism, but Palestinian self-determination, academic freedom and our right to criticise the Israeli government.

We, British academics and Israeli citizens, strongly oppose the Government's imposition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism on universities in England, and call on all academic senates to reject it.

We represent a diverse cross-disciplinary, cross-ethnic, and cross-generational group. We all share an extended history of struggles against racism. Accordingly, we have

Our perspective is deeply informed by the multiple genocides of modern times, in particular the Holocaust, in which many of us lost family members. The lesson we are determined to draw from history is of a committed struggle against all forms of racism.

been critical of Israel's prolonged policies of occupation, dispossession, segregation, and discrimination directed at the Palestinian population. Our perspective is deeply informed by the multiple genocides of modern times, in particular the Holocaust, in which many of us lost family members. The lesson we are determined to draw from history is of a committed struggle against all forms of racism.

It is precisely because of these personal, scholarly and political perspectives that we are perturbed by the [letter](#) sent to our vice-chancellors by Gavin Williamson, secretary of state for education, on 9 October 2020. Explicitly threatening to withhold

funds, the letter pressures universities to adopt the controversial IHRA definition. Fighting antisemitism in all its forms is an absolute must. Yet the IHRA document is inherently flawed, and in ways that undermine this fight. In addition, it threatens free speech and academic freedom and constitutes an attack on both the Palestinian right to self-determination, and the struggle to democratise Israel.

...

With its eleven “illustrative examples”, the IHRA definition has already been used to repress freedom of speech and academic freedom (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Alarming, it has served to frame the struggle against Israel’s occupation and dispossession as antisemitic. As recently stated in a [letter](#) to the *Guardian* by 122 Palestinian and Arab intellectuals:

We believe that no right to self-determination should include the right to uproot another people and prevent them from returning to their land, or any other means of securing a demographic majority within the state. The demand by Palestinians for their right of return to the land from which they themselves, their parents and their grandparents were expelled cannot be construed as antisemitic... It is a right recognized by international law as represented in UN general assembly resolution 194 of 1948... To level a charge of antisemitism against anyone who regards the existing state of Israel as racist, notwithstanding the actual institutional and constitutional discrimination upon which it is based, amounts to granting Israel absolute impunity.

The complete statement and list of signatories can be seen [here](#)

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Reshaping the Past: The Pearson Textbook Scandal

by Richard Seaford

When will the ethnic cleansing of Palestine ever end? When will the periodic massacres of Palestinian men, women and children ever end? Westminster politicians and the mainstream media are largely devoted to the perpetuation of stupidity and ignorance around the issue. Along with our day-to-day campaigning there has to be a broader, long-term cultural campaign, which we have to win if the nightmare is to be brought eventually to an end. What follows is about a current battle in this long campaign.

Unusually important, for the issue of Israel-Palestine, is history. We campaigners do not take seriously enough the near-ubiquitous idea that the Jewish settlement of Palestine is merely a people returning to the land that once belonged to its ancestors. This is, from a scholarly perspective, no more than a myth; but it is a myth

powerful enough to prevent millions of people from seeing the ethnic cleansing of a defenceless people by a military superpower.

But my focus here is on the reshaping of the more recent past. For instance, in 2018 Israel and Myanmar signed an education co-operation agreement, in which authorities would review school books, *'particularly concerning the passages referring to the history of the other state and, where needed, introduce corrections to these textbooks.'*

This makes excellent sense: each state can delete from their own textbooks the other state's ethnic cleansing of Muslims. See [here](#) for more details.

As for the anti-Palestinian propaganda in Israeli textbooks, there is the classic account by Jewish Israeli scholar Nurit Peled-Elhanan, Professor of Language and Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem called [Palestine in Israeli School Books. Ideology and Propaganda in Education](#) (2012).

This process, when beyond our shores, is also beyond our control. However, when such attempts occur in British schools, it is a different matter. On the 7th September last year the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BOD) issued a statement referring to two GCSE history textbooks which they had persuaded the publisher (Pearson) to revise. The statement contained the following expression of satisfaction:

'We applaud Pearson for their openness to constructive feedback and willingness to revise these textbooks. We are pleased with the final material which gives a balanced and accurate portrayal of the Middle East conflict. I would like to pay specific tribute and thanks to UKLFI [UK Lawyers for Israel] for their hard work on this project and their collaborative efforts with us to get these textbooks to where they needed to be.'

Job done. Well, not quite. On 2nd April of this year the *Independent* reported that Pearson had paused the distribution of the textbooks. What caused this surprising reversal was a report based on the identification and analysis of the numerous large number of changes made to the textbooks (about 3 per page on average). [BRICUP report on revisions made to Pearson GCSE textbooks](#)

Unlike the Zionists revisions, this report was produced by academic specialists (Dr. John Chalcraft of LSE and Professor James Dickins of the University of Leeds). Unsurprisingly, it turned out that almost all the revisions were designed to impose the Zionist narrative. From the hundreds of examples I confine myself to two.

In the original version of one of the textbooks there are 32 references to Palestinian 'terrorism' and 10 references to Jewish 'terrorism'. Given that the number of Palestinian civilians killed has been vastly greater than the number of Jewish civilians killed, 32:10 may seem to reverse the reality. Nevertheless, in the revised version it is

... in 2018 Israel and Myanmar signed an education co-operation agreement, in which authorities would review school books, 'particularly concerning the passages referring to the history of the other state and, where needed, introduce corrections to these textbooks.'

even worse: there are 61 references to Palestinian 'terrorism' and 4 references to Jewish 'terrorism'.

Here is the second example. The original version says that *'international law states that a country cannot annex or indefinitely occupy territory gained by force'*. This represents the overwhelming international consensus. But in the revised version it has become *'Some argue that international law . . .'*

That the wholesale revision was accepted by Pearson is barely believable. But it becomes even more bizarre. On 20th January this year the episode was reported by The Bookseller. It quotes a spokesman for Pearson as saying that *'An independent review of the texts by an educational charity found no overall evidence of anti-Israel bias. It identified some areas where the balance of sources could be improved and we are updating the texts ... '*

So, the publisher allowed the book to be made substantially and pervasively more pro-Israel, despite the fact that the independent review found *'no overall evidence of anti-Israeli bias'*. What is more, the revised editions contained no indication that they

An organisation that is explicitly working in the interest of a foreign power (UK Lawyers for Israel) can be allowed to reshape what is taught in British schools in order to further that interest.

had been revised. Could it get worse than that? Yes. We have been told by the independent reviewer (Parallel Histories) that they did not see the revised versions. The revisions were produced in collaboration with the BOD and UKLFI only: no wonder they were so pleased with the result. Pearson are facing damage to their reputation, and are - to their credit - taking the scandal seriously so far. But it remains to be seen what will emerge.

From this extraordinary episode there are three lessons. First, the bad news. An organisation that is explicitly working in the interest of a foreign power (UK Lawyers for Israel) can be allowed to reshape what is taught in British schools in order to further that interest. Second, the good news. Despite the past freedom of victors to impose their narratives of the conflicts that they won, we now live in a world in which scholarly challenges can be mounted against such fictions.

The third lesson is a more subtle one, about the climate of opinion. I do not believe that Pearson is full of fanatical Zionists. We may therefore wonder how they could possibly issue the following statement (included in the BOD statement):

*Senior Vice President of Pearson UK Schools, Sharon Hague, said:
"Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do at Pearson and we believe it is vital to work with the communities we serve to ensure our products are held to the highest standards. We are delighted to be releasing a new edition of these textbooks today at the beginning of the new academic year. We thank the Board of Deputies of British Jews and UK Lawyers for Israel for their excellent collaboration throughout and for helping us to adapt and improve materials on this important topic."*

This takes us even further into the realm of the bizarre. It identifies '*diversity and inclusion*' with listening to only one side in a conflict. But it is also instructive. Just try to put yourself into the mind of someone who states publicly and proudly that Pearson is so devoted to diversity and inclusion that it has - without so much as attempting to access a pro-Palestinian point of view - radically revised a textbook in collaboration with - and to the complete satisfaction of - Zionist campaigning organisations that have never uttered a single word critical of Israel. This was Pearson's public position. It was assumed that this is generally acceptable. Common sense. Normal.

When I try to empathise with this perspective, I am reminded of my earlier self. As a student (1967-72), I had, like almost everybody else in the UK, unconsciously absorbed the dominant narrative. This means that there was a sense in which the Palestinians did not exist. Or rather, since on reflection they did exist, there was nobody who could put their point of view. Common sense. Pearson would no doubt deny that this is their position. But implicit in their proud public statement is indeed this position, precisely and unavoidably. Despite everything, the old unconsciously adopted one-sided narrative lives on. The exposure of the Pearson revision scandal is one of innumerable contributions, along with the current major outrages, to its long overdue demise.

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Please sign and circulate this petition about the Zionist rewriting of school textbooks

<http://bit.ly/PublicPetition>

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From the BMJ: More on Censorship. Opinion: political censorship in academic journals sets a dangerous new precedent

The academic community must develop a strong position to shield journals, their editors, and staff, against pressure to enforce censorship.

by Rania Muhareb, Bram Wispelwey, Mads Gilbert, 2 June, 2021

In March 2020, *The Lancet* published a letter we wrote alerting the medical community to the dangers of a covid-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip. We warned that the pandemic had “the potential to devastate one of the world’s most vulnerable populations.” [1] Since then, this fear has become reality and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have now endured a fifth largescale Israeli military assault that has killed 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, injured nearly 2,000, and internally displaced some 107,000 people. [2,3]

... there had been a similar “sanctions” campaign against *The Lancet* for publishing a letter in 2014 deploring the morbidity and mortality resulting from Israeli state violence against Gaza’s besieged Palestinians.

As we highlighted in our letter, decades of structural violence targeting Palestinian people have brought Gaza’s healthcare system to the brink of collapse. [4] A densely populated area, the majority of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are refugees denied their right of return since 1948. [5] Meanwhile, Israel’s illegal closure and blockade of Gaza since 2007, amounting to collective punishment, have meant that supplies for covid-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination have been severely limited. [6,7]

Although structural racism has increasingly been recognised worldwide as exacerbating the impacts of covid-19, the publication of our letter was met with what Richard Horton, the editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*, informed us was a threatened boycott of the journal. [8] Certain physicians from the United States and elsewhere had demanded our letter’s removal. Previously, Horton informed us, there had been a similar “sanctions” campaign against *The Lancet* for publishing a letter in 2014 deploring the morbidity and mortality resulting from Israeli state violence against Gaza’s besieged Palestinians. [9-10] According to Horton, the ordeal that followed took a “traumatic” personal toll on *The Lancet*’s employees.

... our letter was met with what Richard Horton, the editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*, informed us was a threatened boycott of the journal.

Subsequently, *The Lancet* published a special edition on Israeli healthcare that we believe disregards the historical and political forces impacting Palestinian health outcomes. [11,12] *The Lancet*’s publication seemed to stand as a warning to anyone who dared address Palestinian health consequences of Israel’s action, which are widely recognised as amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. [13]

(read the whole article [here](#))

Contents

False and Disgraceful Accusations against Ken Loach

**Outstanding human rights activist and film maker attacked by a small number of Oxford University students – a sinister and well-orchestrated campaign of character assassination
by Colin Green**

In February, 2021, three of us (Jonathan Rosenhead, Avi Shlaim and myself) at Jonathan's instigation, wrote an article for the Oxford Magazine to protest the totally unfair accusations made by a small number of Oxford University students against the outstanding multi-award winning film maker, social campaigner, lifelong anti-racist and human rights activist Ken Loach. As a distinguished graduate and Fellow of St Peter's College he was invited to a discussion about his career and films together with the Master, Professor Judith Buchanan. This was advertised as a joint event between TORCH, the Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities and St Peter's College. The event was part of a broader university Humanities Cultural Programme, which fosters debate between artists and academics about an artist's work.

What followed was a sinister and well-orchestrated campaign of character assassination against a man who had been indelibly marked in 1944/5 with horrendous images from Belsen-Bergen and other concentration camps, and then spent his life championing the victims of colonialism, oppression and discrimination, including for example, the Irish and Palestinians, as well as the destitute and socially deprived in our own society. Professor Buchanan was bombarded with messages demanding she cancel the event. The Oxford University Jewish Society tweeted that it was deeply disappointed by the decision to host the event with Ken Loach because *"On numerous occasions Loach has made remarks that are antisemitic under the IHRA definition, which was recently adopted by the University of Oxford"*. Any independent analysis of these claims demonstrates conclusively that they lack any evidence base and suggest that the students have not yet absorbed the first rule of scholarship (nothing but the truth) or are pawns in a more sinister plot to block free speech, freedom of expression and academic freedom in all UK universities.

Marie van der Zyl, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, wrote to Professor Buchanan, describing the decision to invite Ken Loach to speak at her college as *'entirely unacceptable'*, and called for the event to be cancelled. The Union of Jewish Students (UJS), a national organisation which represents just 8,500 students in the UK, piled on the pressure and expressed outrage that St Peter's College had ignored the concerns of its Jewish students, and urged Judith Buchanan to remove this speaker from the event.

With commendable courage, Professor Buchanan and TORCH refused to cave in and the event went ahead as planned. It was also streamed live on YouTube.

With commendable courage, Professor Buchanan and TORCH refused to cave in and the event went ahead as planned. It was also streamed live on YouTube. Apart from this group of students, it was seen as a wonderful success with Ken Loach showing clips from his films *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (2006) about Ireland in the early

twentieth century, and *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) about the inhumanity of the social benefits system. Loach talked about his films, and the worldview that informs them, eloquently and movingly in the discussion with Professor Buchanan.

The day after the event took place, on 9 February, the Student Union of Wadham College held a meeting regarding St Peter's College and Ken Loach. The motion before the meeting alleged that Ken Loach had in the past made antisemitic remarks and, even more absurd, was complicit in Holocaust denial. The censure motion to formally condemn Judith Buchanan and St Peter's College was passed by a sizeable majority. One of us (Avi Shlaim) was so shocked and dismayed by these ludicrous accusations that he wrote the following statement to be read out at student union meetings.

I deeply regret the attack by Wadham College students on Ken Loach. He has a strong and consistent record of opposing racism of every kind, including antisemitism. He is anti-Zionist but in no way antisemitic. He is charged with having made comments that are antisemitic under the IHRA definition. But that definition is utterly flawed. Its real purpose is to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism in order to suppress legitimate criticisms of Israeli policies. Antisemitism is hostility towards Jews because they are Jews. Under this proper definition Ken Loach is completely innocent. He is also an admirable person, a champion of social justice, and an outstanding artist. The attack on him undermines freedom of speech and that has no place in an academic institution. I therefore urge the students of Wadham College to stop their vilification of Ken Loach and to accord him the respect that he so richly deserves.

The Junior Common Rooms at St Hugh's, Hertford, and Keble colleges also passed resolutions condemning the action of St Peter's in inviting Ken Loach. Keble College

... Zionists have never forgiven Ken Loach for directing a play, [Perdition](#), by socialist playwright Jim Allen, that was based on a libel trial in Israel in which certain Zionists in Hungary were accused of allowing fellow religionists to be sent to Auschwitz.

JCR condemned the Master of St Peter's for handling the issue "ignorantly and insensitively". St Hugh's motion claimed that "the regrettable response of St. Peter's College has encouraged the pile-on of antisemitic abuse". This last silly assertion raises ever more concerns that the IHRA non-definition of antisemitism has so distorted genuine debate that it is impossible to have a civilised discussion with these students. Alternatively, are these students naïve, with no idea that they are being manipulated and

orchestrated by outside forces which have nothing to do with antisemitism, and everything to do with Zionism (including Christian Zionism) and the survival of a pariah state?

The reality is that the Zionists have never forgiven Ken Loach for directing a play, [Perdition](#), by socialist playwright Jim Allen that was based on a libel trial in Israel in which certain Zionists in Hungary were accused of allowing fellow religionists to be sent to Auschwitz. They did their best to prevent it (and succeeded) being performed in 1987 at the Royal Court Theatre, and later condemned performances in the Gate

Theatre, Notting Hill. I saw the play twice and was greatly impressed by the dialogue and the mainly Jewish actors. This vendetta against Ken Loach probably stems from that time.

This sorry saga emphasizes yet again why adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism is such a naïve mistake on the part of supposed top centres of learning in the world, indeed by anybody. It is so easily used to prevent free speech on campus. In this instance, the document was used to smear a prominent left-wing critic of Israel and a defender of Palestinian rights, and to try to deny him a platform. The attempt at no-platforming ultimately failed because the Master was and is a woman of integrity and high principles.

These Oxford students should surely be sharing their pain and distress in solidarity and cooperation with other groups who are also susceptible to racial prejudice, such as for example Asians, Afro-Caribbeans, Arabs and Muslims. To be effective, the fight against racism, indeed all forms of bigotry and discrimination, needs to take place across the board and not in isolated corners. We do not need new definitions. The Oxford Dictionary of English definition is short and to the point, and covers every eventuality (antisemitism is hostility to Jews because they are Jews). What we need is a code of conduct to protect all minority groups against discrimination and harassment while protecting freedom of speech for all members of the university.

The universal right to freedom of expression is already embodied in UK law by the Human Rights Act of 1998, section 6 of which expressly prohibits a public authority from acting in a way that is incompatible with that right. Specific protection for freedom of expression in universities is provided by the 1986 Education Act. In other words, universities have a legal responsibility to protect free expression, academic freedom and free speech. The IHRA document was never designed by the academic, Kenneth Stern, as any form of definition but was for scholarly discussion only. The students need to remember that. It has no force in law whatsoever.

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On a Definitive Account of Medical Complicity with Torture in Israel

by Derek Summerfield

[This paper](#) has just been published in the Journal of Medical Ethics, a BMJ journal. I think it amounts to a precisely documented and comprehensive indictment of the longstanding collusion of the Israeli medical establishment, headed by the Israeli Med Association (IMA), with torture as state policy.

Hopefully a landmark medical ethics paper, I dedicate it to the 725 doctors from 43 countries, some now deceased, who supported the original appeal in 2009, to subsequent tranches of doctors, and to other organisations with whom at various points we liaised and worked. These included in particular the Jewish Voice for Peace US Health Advisory Council, Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Public Committee

Against Torture in Israel. Friendly free advice was provided by Ben Birnberg when I was being sued by the IMA in 2009, and later Bindmans. Noam Chomsky has been supportive from the outset. And many others. Almost everything on Israel-Palestine sent to the BMJ has first to be shown to their lawyers - often several times for the same article.

What makes campaigning about Palestinian rights so qualitatively different from, say, campaigning about Tibet or Hong Kong, is that you come up so regularly against hostility and defensiveness in Western countries driven by a felt association with Israel ...

The paper is intended to carry 2 stories: first, a straightforward, evidence-based account of the case against the IMA and individual Israeli doctors; second, an account of what happens, what it feels like, when you campaign to get the relevant organisations - national medical associations, the World Med Association, UN Special Rapporteurs, etc. - to do what they are mandated to do regarding medical collusion with torture in the particular case of Israel. The 3,500 words maximum did not allow the full story, of course. Trying to prod a reluctant BMA to take this up at the WMA, the long delays before they replied to our letters, their

being risibly fobbed off by the IMA and not pursuing it further. The pressure placed on journal editors, Lancet, BMJ, etc., the hostile emails from fellow doctors who would not examine the evidence, threats to get King's College to rescind my honorary senior lecturership, etc.

What makes campaigning about Palestinian rights so qualitatively different from, say, campaigning about Tibet or Hong Kong, is that you come up so regularly against hostility and defensiveness in Western countries driven by a felt association with Israel, for some a matter of identity. And some of these are influential post-holders. This is Weber's 'ethics of conviction' which transcends "evidence" and "human rights", and sees itself as a higher value.

Abstract

This is the account of an ongoing appeal initiated in 2009 by 725 doctors from 43 countries concerning medical complicity with torture in Israel. It has been underpinned by a voluminous and still accumulating evidence base from reputable international and regional human rights organisations, quoted below, and has spanned the terms of office of four World Medical Association (WMA) presidencies and two UN special rapporteurs on torture. This campaign has been a litmus test of whether international medical codes regarding doctors and torture actually matter, and are applied rigorously and even-handedly, particularly when compelling evidence incriminates a WMA member association. Our findings in the case of Israel suggest that this is not true, and that impunity largely operates. The WMA seems in partisan violation of its mandate to be the official international watchdog on the ethical behaviour of doctors. And as the IMA case demonstrates, by their inaction national medical associations or other regulatory bodies appear to function at base as buttresses and shields of the state.

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Gaza patients blocked from urgent medical care in Israel authority's heightened closure measures following bombardment

Press Release from the [Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights](#), Gaza City, 31st May

While the devastating consequences of Israel's 11-day military offensive against the Gaza Strip are becoming increasingly manifest, Palestinian patients with urgent medical needs residing in Gaza face yet another threat to their lives and health as Israeli authorities continue to deny all but a handful of patient's entry to hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel in heightened closure measures.

Under the current policy, which permits only patients requiring lifesaving care—a definition that excludes patients with cancer and other chronic illnesses if their lives are not in immediate danger—hundreds of medical patients in Gaza continue to miss urgent hospital appointments. According to available information, between 24-31 May 2021, only 17 patients were allowed to leave Gaza for their hospital treatments, compared to 230 in April. Israel is also maintaining this policy despite at least 1,212 people in Gaza having been injured in the recent bombardment, and hospitals and healthcare centers having also been targets of Israeli military strikes.

The deteriorating condition of Gaza's healthcare system—perpetually on the brink of collapse due to Israel's comprehensive closure policies and repeated military attacks even prior to the recent escalation—forces cancer and critically-ill patients out of the Strip to seek specialized surgeries, diagnostic imaging, cardiology, or other medical treatments otherwise unavailable in Gaza.

Al Mezan closely monitors the situation of stranded Palestinian patients as part of its efforts aimed at facilitating their access to healthcare outside of the Gaza Strip. According to Al Mezan's documentation, between 11-23 May 2021, Israeli authorities completely blocked the passage of Palestinian patients through Erez crossing, thereby halting their needed medical treatments.

It is worth recalling that Israel's closure policies—including its use of crossings as a means of entrapment, arbitrary arrest and attempted coercion, as documented by Al Mezan—has potentially fatal consequences for those in urgent need of medical exit-permits and constitutes an unlawful form of collective punishment under international law and in the most serious cases violates the right to life.

Al Mezan reiterates its strongest condemnation of Israel's tightened closure measures that target Gaza's patients, which not only exacerbate Gaza's chronic

... Israel's closure policies ... have potentially fatal consequences for those in urgent need of medical exit-permits, and constitutes an unlawful form of collective punishment under international law ...

humanitarian crisis, but also constitute gross violations of international law amounting to clear and apparent international crimes. The international community must end Israel's unlawful closure, first by taking swift action to ensure the resumption of crossing operations in line with international standards.

The Israeli military's permit regime is an arbitrary, discriminatory policy that imposes unlawful preconditions on urgent and lifesaving treatment for thousands of Palestinians. To this end, it is critical that the international community put pressure on Israel to comply with its legal obligations as an occupying power vis-à-vis the occupied Palestinian land. [here](#).

Link to press release [here](#)

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Scientists4Palestine (S4P): Updates from their Facebook Page

Scientists for Palestine is an international organisation created by and for scientists to promote and support science in Occupied Palestine. Read more about them [here](#)

A. Newsletter

Scientists for Palestine is launching a newsletter to keep you updated on pertinent news and events. If you are interested in pitching ideas and /or writing for the newsletter, please [contact us](#).

B. Statement on the release of Professor Imad Barghouti

It is with extreme joy that we bring you the news that after nearly a year, our dear colleague Prof. Imad Barghouti was finally released from administrative detention last night and he is now at house arrest awaiting trial. Read the full statement [here](#).

Imad was scheduled to be released at 2 pm Palestine time on Monday, but Israeli authorities delayed the process until about midnight local time. No explanation for the delay was given to the family, but the most important thing now is that Imad is finally home.

As you surely recall, Imad was arrested on July 16th 2020 on his way home from work and never convicted of any crime (though he was charged in relation to some of his Facebook posts). See the timeline and details of his arrest [here](#).

As Scientists for Palestine, we thank you for your support to Imad's right to academic freedom. Our efforts do not stop here, since Imad still has to face a trial under a military court known for its [astronomical conviction rates](#). Once the conditions of the house arrests are known, we will try to organize an event in which Imad will be able to share his story, so stay tuned for updates.

C. Covid-19 vaccination the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Scientists for Palestine supports the global initiative to ensure rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries ([COVAX](#)), and the United Nations

Human Rights [statement](#) calling on Israel to provide Palestinians with equal access to COVID-19 vaccines. We support a [recent letter](#) to the British Medical Journal (BMJ), authored by some of our colleagues, that underscores the critical need to account for disparities in access to health-care within the Occupied Palestinian Territories when allocating vaccinations for Palestinians.

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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, however small or large. 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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