

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

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A salute from PACBI to its British Partners

PACBI salutes the British Committee for Universities of Palestine, BRICUP, for its decisive role in the University and College Union Congress's overwhelming endorsement of several motions unequivocally supporting Palestinian rights; condemning Israel's occupation and apartheid; denouncing the complicity of Israel's academic institutions in the state's system of oppression against the Palestinians; and adopting the logic of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, despite intimidating legal threats.

Heeding the Palestinian calls for boycott of Israel, BRICUP has since its founding tirelessly and creatively worked to raise awareness in the UK about the entrenched complicity of Israel's academic and cultural institutions in the state's colonial and racist policies, advocating institutional boycott as a most effective remedy that international civil society should and can resort to in reaction. PACBI is proud to have BRICUP as its key partner in the United Kingdom.

We also recognize that the recent significant advances for the BDS movement in the UK, which evoke memories of advanced stages in the struggle against South African apartheid, could not have seen the light without the many years of principled and persistent solidarity work by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other solidarity groups, particularly in Scotland. Most recently, the Scottish Trade Union Congress almost unanimously adopted BDS, becoming the third major international federation of trade unions to do so, preceded only by COSATU of

South Africa and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Several major British unions affiliated to PSC, including Unite (2 million members) and Unison (1.25M), have also adopted various forms of BDS in the last few years, indicating beyond doubt that BDS has reached the British mainstream.

The UCU's significant step forward in adopting the logic of BDS against Israel, therefore, fits well in the context of the steadily growing British public support for effectively pressuring Israel to hold it accountable for its war crimes and persistent violation of international law. The British solidarity movement, with its long tradition and rich experience, takes the main credit for this critical shift in public opinion against Israel. It gives Palestinians hope that the end of Israel's impunity may be nearer than previously expected. For further discussion by PACBI see the PACBI Column below.

The PACBI Steering Committee

The UCU Congress endorses boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel

The boycott campaign is "now reaching critical mass" say activists

On May 27th, the University and College Union, representing approximately 120,000 teaching and related staff in colleges and universities in the UK, passed a number of strongly-worded resolutions in support of the human rights of the Palestinian people and condemning Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

The motions had been submitted by a range of bodies within the union.

Motion 24, from the National Executive along with two branches in Further Education colleges, condemned the Israeli military attacks on Gaza and called on UCU to affiliate to the national twinning campaign; to organize events to mark the UN International Day of solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29th November; and to collect information on academics and students prevented from traveling to or from Palestine.

Motion 25, from the Disabled Members' Standing Committee, pledged solidarity to Palestinians left injured by the Israeli assault in Gaza.

Motion 26, from UCU Scotland, agreed to disseminate the report of the President of UCU Scotland, who had recently taken part in the STUC visit to Palestine. That visit had resulted in an endorsement of Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) by STUC Congress. The motion also welcomed the student campaign for disinvestment from arms companies such as BAe.

Motion 27, from the Black Members' Standing Committee, called for "recognition of the democratically elected Gaza government" and for Israel to be tried for human rights violations.

Motion 28, from two regional committees of UCU, demanded that the British government ban "arms sales and economic support to Israel", called for a ban on imports of all goods from illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT and demanded the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador. Controversially, Congress also voted overwhelmingly for an amendment to this motion which affirmed support "for the Palestinian call for a boycott, disinvestment and sanctions campaign", despite a statement from the General Secretary that, on legal advice this amendment would be treated as being "void and of no effect". Nevertheless, this and all the other motions listed above were carried overwhelmingly.

Motion 29 was brought by two branches at universities and one at an FE college. Tom Hickey, proposing the motion on behalf of a University of Brighton branch, stated that his branch wished to amend its own motion by changing the words "Congress affirms support for the Palestinian call for a boycott, disinvestment and sanctions campaign" to "Congress urges branches to discuss prior to Congress 2010 the Palestinian call for a boycott, disinvestment and sanctions campaign". Hickey explained that this change was being made only in order to accommodate the current legal advice and prevent the motion from being ruled "void" like motion 28. This was accepted by Congress, who voted to support both the amendment and the motion.

The outcome is that UCU has voted to host a Trade Union conference in the Autumn to "investigate the lawful implementation of the strategy, including an option of institutional boycotts". Hickey suggested in his summing-up that the time had come for UCU to obtain a court ruling to settle the legal question once and for all and to put a stop to the legal threats to which the union has been subjected over the past few years. He expressed his "extreme disappointment" with members of his own union who resorted to such threats instead of pursuing their arguments through the union's internal democratic processes.

BRICUP congratulates those who have worked so hard and with such persistence for this result. Members will now be encouraging trade unionists to attend the forthcoming BDS conference in order to broaden the campaign.

The full text of all the motions, except for late motions and late amendments, can be read on the UCU website at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCU180.html>

British academic union deals one more blow to business-as-usual with the Israeli academy

Once again, the membership of the University and College Union (UCU) has not let Palestinians down. The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) salutes our British colleagues for their steadfast and principled support for the cause of justice and peace in Palestine and for adopting, at the UCU's annual congress on 27 May 2009, significant steps in the direction of applying effective pressure on Israel and holding it accountable for its colonial and apartheid policies which violate international law and fundamental human rights. Coming four months after the end of Israel's brutal war of aggression on the occupied Gaza Strip, the UCU motions on Palestine could not be more appropriate or relevant, emphasizing the need to end Israel's criminal impunity through pressure on it and on institutions complicit in its violation of international law and fundamental human rights.

The UCU's recognition of "the complicity of Israeli educational institutions in colonisation and military preparation," its belief "that international pressure is necessary to force Israel to abide by international law," and its determination to "renew urgently its call to members to reflect on the moral and political appropriateness of collaboration with Israeli educational institutions" as well as to urge "branches to discuss prior to Congress 2010 the Palestinian call for a boycott, disinvestment and sanctions campaign" are the strongest indicators to date that the Union has taken another significant step forward in the consistent direction of ending business-as-usual with Israeli academic institutions.

Several of the UCU Congress resolutions on Palestine amount to a clear decision to challenge the notion that Israel's complicit institutions, including the academy, can be "normal" partners of any self-respecting British institution. Indeed,

it has to be recognized by academics the world over that Israeli universities, in particular, are part and parcel of the structures of domination and oppression of the Palestinian people. Far from being neutral, Israeli academic institutions are all state funded; they have played a direct and indirect role in promoting, justifying, developing or otherwise abetting the state's racist policies and persistent violations of human rights and international law. It is significant that not only have Israeli academic institutions failed to condemn the state's colonial policies and practices and the longstanding siege of Palestinian education, they have facilitated and enabled the collaboration of their academic departments, faculty members and researchers with the Israeli military-security establishment, above all in the occupation regime, in flagrant violation of the principles of the independence of universities and academics.

Moreover, by welcoming "the campaign amongst students ... for disinvestment from arms companies" trading with Israel; calling for "ending of [Israeli] apartheid;" demanding that "the British government bans arms sales and economic support for Israel;" calling for "a ban on imports of all goods from the illegal Israeli settlements in the [occupied Palestinian territory];" and insisting that "Israel [is] tried for human rights violations," the UCU has unequivocally decided to contribute in an effective and morally consistent manner to Palestinian and international efforts aimed at ending Israel's impunity and holding it accountable for its atrocities and grave violations of Palestinian rights.

PACBI especially welcomes the UCU congress decision to host an international, inter-union conference for supporters of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) this coming autumn "to investigate the lawful implementation of the strategy, including an option of institutional boycotts." Convening such a forum will be a crucial opportunity for Union members to engage publicly with the issue of academic boycott and to have a chance to openly discuss and debate the rationale for such an institutional boycott and the consistency of its

implementation with the law, countering attempts by Israel lobby groups to interpret the law in the most anti-democratic and draconian form with the intention of silencing debate.

The historic significance of the UCU membership's vote to overwhelmingly endorse BDS cannot be overshadowed by the Union's decision to declare the relevant resolution void due to legal advice. PACBI is quite disappointed that legal threats are being used by the Israel lobby to intimidate academics supporting the boycott and to curtail freedom of expression. We recognize that groups opposed to the Israel boycott have resorted to such anti-democratic measures after their resounding failure to stop the spread of support for the academic boycott, particularly in the United Kingdom. The argument they repeat, that a boycott of Israeli universities would be somehow "discriminatory," is absolutely erroneous and intentionally deceptive, particularly because it accuses boycott supporters of targeting Israeli academics, disingenuously ignoring the fact that the PACBI Call for boycott has consistently targeted Israeli academic and cultural institutions, *not* individuals, and is based on universalist values that reject all forms of discrimination and racism, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

We sincerely hope that the UCU will soon follow the admirable example of the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), which resolved at its meeting in April 2009 to support the steadily spreading BDS campaign against Israel.

This genuine expression of solidarity with Palestine by British academic trade unionists is particularly timely in light of the recent Israeli war of aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. During this lethal assault, during which many well-documented Israeli war crimes were committed, 1440 Palestinians were murdered (of whom over 400 were children), 5380 were injured, and scores of institutions—including a university and several schools—and residential neighborhoods were partially or completely destroyed. Israel's diplomatic immunity and status as a state above the law of nations must be

challenged. Academic and cultural boycotts are effective measures available to world civil society to indicate its intolerance of oppression and as a means to bear pressure upon Israel to cease its campaign of ethnic cleansing against and colonial control over the Palestinian people. The 2004 PACBI call for boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions [1], like the Palestinian civil society's widely endorsed call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) in 2005 [2], is based on the same moral principle embodied in the international civil society campaign against the apartheid regime in South Africa: people of conscience must take a stand against oppression and use all the means of civil resistance available to bring it to an end.

The UCU has proven beyond doubt that effective solidarity with the oppressed is the most morally and politically sound contribution to the struggle to end oppression and to promote human rights as well as a just and peaceful future for all.

[1] The Palestinian call for boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions (http://www.pacbi.org/campaign_statement.htm) is endorsed by the major federations and associations of academics and professionals, including the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE) and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). It is supported by dozens of civil society institutions in Palestine, like the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations' Network (PNGO).

[2] <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52>

PACBI

The cultural boycott: Leonard Cohen and beyond

BRICUP started publishing Open Letters to writers and musicians who've announced their intention to perform in Israel during 2008. These letters aren't only released into cyber-

space to go where they will; there's a particular effort to send them to press and institutions in the artist's milieu, with the aim of creating a kind of fire-storm around the artist.

So, for instance, after the South African *Weekly Mail & Guardian* published BRICUP's Open Letter to South African writer Nadine Gordimer in April 2008, many South African organisations and individuals lobbied her (including Archbishop Desmond Tutu), and the press asked her repeatedly about her intentions. Although Ms Gordimer did not withdraw from the Israeli government-sponsored writers' festival in Jerusalem that she was scheduled to attend, she did feel sufficiently under pressure to issue a public statement justifying her decision to do so. No-one who read any of the coverage can have doubted the strength of popular feeling behind the boycott call – so perhaps it was no coincidence that within 24 hours of BRICUP publishing an Open Letter to US novelist and anti-racist activist Russell Banks, scheduled to appear at the same writers' festival, he announced his withdrawal – for 'personal reasons'.

Canadian singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen intends to close his current US, Canadian and European tour with a one-off concert in Tel Aviv on September 24. During the 1973 war, Leonard Cohen volunteered to fight in the Israeli army, but later withdrew from the music scene to spend five years in a Zen Buddhist monastery in California. BRICUP has written asking how he can square the Buddhist concept of 'right action' with performing in a country whose government and army have so recently committed war crimes against the Palestinians and continue to commit crimes against humanity and international law. BRICUP's Open Letter to Leonard Cohen is at <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10480.shtml>.

The US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel immediately distributed BRICUP's letter to its 400-plus endorsers, and within a matter of days over a hundred Israelis had published their own Open Letter asking him

not to go (see <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10493.shtml>)

A fire-storm of emails began to engulf Robert Kory, Leonard Cohen's manager (rkory@rkmgmt.com). To his credit, he replied to many of them, and had telephone conversations with (amongst others) the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), Artists Against Apartheid in the US, and BRICUP.

It gradually emerged that what Leonard Cohen and his manager were offering was a deal – call off the protests, particularly those at the venues of the European tour, and they would donate the proceeds of the Tel Aviv concert to an unnamed charity.

In response to this, and to the insistence from Robert Kory that Leonard Cohen's concert in Israel would have a 'healing effect', PACBI issued its own Open Letter, 'Healing Israeli Apartheid, not its Victims?' (see <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1006>). PACBI called on 'all supporters of a just peace in our region' to 'shun [Leonard Cohen's] concerts and CDs and protest [his] appearances everywhere'.

On May 17, the day after PACBI's call, Adalah in New York held a demonstration outside Leonard Cohen's concert at Radio City in Manhattan (see the images and a report at <http://adalahny.org/>.) Adalah has made available a very useful package of campaign materials: cohen_adalahnypacket.zip.

It is instructive that after the Radio City demonstration, Leonard Cohen's spokesperson, Tiffany Shipp, told the Jewish daily newspaper in New York, *The Forward*, that the Tel Aviv concert 'has yet to be scheduled' (see <http://www.forward.com/articles/106317/>). On May 29 the site administrator at <http://www.leonardcohenforum.com> (where there has been vigorous discussion of the boycott call) confirmed to an enquirer that tickets for the Tel Aviv concert are 'not-yet-existent'.

But according to the Events Guide published by Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, other artists are also scheduled to appear soon in Israel. English musician Joe Jackson will perform on June 30; US singer Suzanne Vega (who shared the Radio City bill with Leonard Cohen in May, and will surely have been aware of the Adalah demonstration outside) on July 19.

And *Ha'aretz* names Madonna, Kaiser Chiefs, Pet Shop Boys and Guns 'n' Roses as some of the artists with whom negotiations are continuing.

So, although Israeli ambassador to the UK Ron Prosor complains that 'the boycott is a phenomenon that is growing'; and although the executive director of AIPAC, the hugely influential Zionist lobby in the US, saw fit to warn its congress just this May that 'boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns' were 'entering the American mainstream' as part of a conscious effort to 'shift policy'; as long as the Pet Shop Boys, Madonna and Leonard Cohen think it's okay to play there, we have work to do.

The dates and locations for Leonard Cohen's European tour, which starts in July in France, are as follows:-

FRANCE (July 6-9): *St. Herblain, Paris, Toulouse, Vienne*

UK (July 11,14): *Weybridge, Liverpool, Belfast* (July 26)

IRELAND (July 19-23): *Dublin*

NORWAY (July 16-17): *Langesund, Molde*

PORTUGAL (July 30): *Lisbon*

SPAIN (July 31-August 15, September 12-17): *Sevilla, Palma De Mallorca, Girona, Madrid, Granada, Bilbao, Barcelona*

ISRAEL (September 24): *Tel Aviv*

The campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott in Norway

The northernmost BDS campaign in the world is gaining momentum. In February this year, a series of meetings was held at the universities of Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Oslo. I had the honour of speaking at the first three of these meetings and found that there was a high level of awareness of the situation in Palestine. One of my fellow panellists at Trondheim was Trond Petter Stamsø Munch, a well-known Norwegian actor who has declared his support for the cultural boycott; another was Morten Levin, a Jewish professor who had independently reached a position that BDS was morally called for, without having had much prior contact with BDS groups. A deputy rector and a Dean also took part, which surprised me greatly, since in British universities senior academics tend to run a mile from the boycott campaign and publicly dissociate themselves from it. But then, there is not so much of an Israel lobby in Norwegian universities, so we were able to discuss the real issues and propose serious solidarity.

Agnes Bolsø of the Trondheim BDS group tells me that the debate was followed up by a meeting in April as part of a Boycott Week organized by the local branch of Palcom: this time the event was a workshop for HOW to work on a cultural and academic boycott.

One of the outcomes is that 34 academics at Trondheim have now signed a boycott call to the boards of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and University College of Sør-Trøndelag (HiST). The text of the call is about to be released to the Norwegian media.

Meanwhile, on 28th April twenty members of academic staff at the University of Tromsø published a Call for an academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Kirsti Henriksen, who heads the list of signatories, reports that the declaration has so far achieved some publicity in both the local papers and the national paper 'Klassekampen', but to date there has not been a lot of debate in the letters pages.

The call has now been translated into English and its original 20 sponsors are calling for additional signatures from both employees and students, before the call is forwarded to the board of Tromsø University. As it is now the end of the academic year, the campaign is likely to continue in the autumn.

The Academic and Cultural Boycott campaign is one of several strands of BDS taking place in Norway at present. There is also a serious attempt to persuade the Norwegian Government's Pension Fund to take its ethical guidelines seriously and divest from the many Israeli companies it currently supports, including such notorious names as Africa Israel, Bank Hapoalim, Caterpillar and Veolia.

Please circulate this call to any staff or students you know at the universities concerned. Signatures for Trondheim should be sent to Agnes at agnes.bolso@hf.ntnu.no; signatures for Tromsø should be added via the website at <http://opprop.no/opprop.php?id=akademiskboikot>.

Sue Blackwell

Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI)

The Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) calls upon freedom-loving students all over the world to stand in solidarity with us by boycotting Israeli academic institutions for their complicity in perpetuating Israel's illegal military occupation and apartheid system. We note the historic action taken by thousands of courageous students of British and American universities in occupying their campuses in a show of solidarity with the brutally oppressed Palestinian people in Gaza. We also deeply appreciate the decision by Hampshire College to divest from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. Such pressure on Israel is the most likely to contribute

to ending its denial of our rights, including the right to education.

In this regard, we fully endorse the call for boycott issued by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, PACBI, in 2004.

We emphasize our endorsement of the BDS call issued by more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations in July 2005.

We also support the Call from Gaza issued by a group of civil society organizations in the second week of the Gaza Massacre (Gaza 2009).

Our goal, as students, is to play a role in promoting the global BDS movement which has gained an unprecedented momentum as a result of the latest genocidal war launched by Israel against the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. We address our fellow students to take whatever step possible, however small, to stand up for justice, international law and the inalienable rights of the indigenous people of Palestine by applying effective and sustainable pressure on Israel, particularly in the form of BDS, to help put an end to its colonial and racist regime over the Palestinians.

We strongly urge our fellow university students all over the world to:

- (1) Support all the efforts aimed at boycotting Israeli academic institutions;
- (2) Pressure university administrations to divest from Israel and from companies directly or indirectly supporting the Israeli occupation and apartheid policies;
- (3) Promote student union resolutions condemning Israeli violations of international law and human rights and endorsing BDS in any form;
- (4) Support the Palestinian student movement directly.

To break the medieval and barbaric Israeli siege of Gaza, people of conscience need to move with a sense of urgency and purpose. Israel must be compelled to pay a heavy price for its war crimes and crimes against humanity through the intensification of the boycott against it and against institutions and corporations complicit in its crimes. As in the anti-apartheid struggle in solidarity with the black majority in South Africa, students concerned about justice and sustainable peace have a moral duty to support our boycott efforts.

PSCABI

Artists Against Apartheid

Artists, arts professionals, or other concerned individuals, internationally, that would like to endorse the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (www.PACBI.org) and be involved in the ongoing discussion with Artists Against Apartheid may join here:-

<http://groups.google.com/group/aaaorg/subscribe?note=1>

or send an email to:-

action@artistsagainstapartheid.org

requesting to join. The membership list is not public. If you wish to learn more about the cultural boycott, please visit the following pages at PACBI:

The Call for Academic and Cultural Boycott :-
<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>

About PACBI :-

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=868>

Artist Endorsements (John Berger, Brian Eno, Sophie Fiennes.)

<http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=416>

And the boycott page on our website:

http://www.artistsagainstapartheid.org/?page_id=19

Much of the copy and design on our website is

temporary, the main focus now is to get the dialog happening about ideas we have for moving forward.

Andrew Felluss

www.radianrecords.com
www.artistsagainstapartheid.org
www.epnyc.org

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that the campaign demands.

You can make a one off donation 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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BRICUP is the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine. We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome.

Email them to:

newsletter@bricup.org.uk