

# BRICUP Newsletter 44

September 2011

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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**Demonstrators at the Royal Albert hall** Photograph by  
**Brian Robinson**

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**The demonstration at the Israel  
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on September 1<sup>st</sup>**

An open letter was sent to the Proms organisers on July 18<sup>th</sup> by PACBI, the Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. PACBI referred to "the IPO's complicity in whitewashing Israel's persistent violations of international law and human rights", mentioning specifically the IPO's services to the Israeli army dating back to the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba in 1948 and the occupations of 1967, and continuing up to the present day: "the IPO proudly announces its partnership with the army under a scheme whereby special concerts for Israeli soldiers are organized at their army outposts". On behalf of the leading Palestinian musical and cultural organisations, PACBI called on the BBC to withdraw its invitation to the IPO. <http://www.pacbi.org/>

The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine, BRICUP, also wrote to the BBC calling on it to cancel the invitation. (See [www.bricup.org.uk](http://www.bricup.org.uk))

Unknown to the Proms organisers, the protesters had bought over 40 tickets in a variety of locations in the Royal Albert Hall, including boxes. A group of fifteen were seated in the choir. During the Webern piece the "choir" stood up with letters spelling out "FREE PALESTINE" and sang the "Ode to Boycott" repeatedly (see below) until they were removed. When a further group of protesters shouted slogans as the Bruch piece was about to begin, the BBC suspended their live transmission on Radio 3. The BBC attempted to recommence after the interval, but further groups of protesters shouted slogans at the start of the Albéniz piece. At this point the BBC stopped live transmission for the rest of the evening. This is believed to be the first occasion when transmission of a Prom has been disrupted by protesters. All the protesters left peacefully when requested to do so by security. There were no arrests. Some of

the protesters were assaulted by members of the audience but they did not retaliate.

[Video of the demonstration](#) (courtesy of Seymour Alexander)

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## **Beethovians for boycotting Israel**

A new vocal ensemble, Beethovians for Boycotting Israel (BBI), gave its debut performance at a Prom concert at the Royal Albert Hall on September 1st. 2011. Their first piece was intricately interwoven with Webern's Passacaglia, played by guest artists the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO). "We thought we'd liven up the Webern a bit" said Deborah Fink (soprano). "The performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony at the previous night's Prom was so exciting that we decided to treat the audience to our own version of the Ode to Joy". The lyrics of the BBI's "Ode to Boycott" have an unmistakably Beethovenian ring:

*Israel, end your occupation:*

*There's no peace on stolen land.*

*We'll sing out for liberation*

*'till you hear and understand.*

*Ethnic cleansing and apartheid*

*Should belong to history.*

*Human rights cannot be silenced:*

*Palestine will soon be free.*

[Listen to a performance of the piece](#), recorded earlier by the BBI Chamber Choir

Sue Blackwell (alto), who penned the alternative lyrics, said: "We think Ludwig would have approved. He was known to be a bit of a subversive who had no time for conventions, and he admired the French Revolution with its themes of

'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. Sadly, Israel represents the exact opposite of those ideals."

During the second piece, Bruch's Violin Concerto, and in Albéniz's "Iberia" after the interval, BBI duos and trios took part in the Proms charitable tradition of synchronised slogan-shouting, including

*"THE SIEGE OF GAZA - IS OUT OF TUNE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW"*

and

*"THE IPO ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN AN ILLEGAL OCCUPATION"*.

The BBI recital was somewhat curtailed on this occasion due to its members being removed by the Albert Hall security staff, so that they had to continue outside . However, they are intending to build on their Proms success and are now looking for a suitable venue for their next performance.

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi (soprano) of Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, who was one of the choral performers, said: "All this precious talk about the purity of the music ignores the toxic nature of Israel's suppression of the Palestinian people."

Willem Meijs (tenor, aged 70) said: "As someone steeped in classical music from an early age, and a frequent visitor to the Proms since the fifties, I was very hesitant about disrupting a concert in such a hallowed venue. However, I thought inviting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was a provocation in its own right. So I felt voicing a peaceful protest during their concert would be nothing compared to the bombing of innocent civilians and the slow but steady genocide inflicted on the Palestinians by the state of Israel, of which this orchestra claims to be a cultural ambassador."

Aharon Shabtai, Israel's greatest living poet, wrote recently:

'I do not believe that a State that maintains an occupation, committing on a daily basis crimes against civilians, deserves to be invited to any kind of cultural event. That is, it is anti-cultural; it is a barbarian act masked as culture in the most cynical way. It manifests support for Israel, and ... that sustains the occupation.'

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## **Pre-empting the Prom**

The interventions by pro-Palestinian activists in the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra's Promenade concert on September 1<sup>st</sup> have let loose a deluge of criticism, tending towards invective and vituperation. Some of it has been along the lines of "at last, these anti-Semitic wretches have shown themselves up, and we can give them a good kicking for being thugs, and uncultured to boot". Some, not obviously committed Zionists, have based their opposition on the idea that music, especially at this level, is a sacred ritual into which mundane concerns, however important, should not intrude. Others have been more in sorrow than in anger – "we agree with the objectives, but this is simply not the way to do it, because it upsets too many people and is actually counter-productive".

We should listen carefully to those voices which are not simply opportunistically Zionist. Acts of cultural boycott are not a moral imperative. Boycott is a tactic, to be assessed in advance and evaluated retrospectively in terms of its impact.

But before attempting any such assessment, provisional in any case, I will provide some summary information on how the action came about, and what actually happened. Some of the 'facts' as reported are so simplified or inaccurate as to distort the intention of the protesters, and lose the intended message. That this occurred is itself a criticism of our preparations, and one from which we need to learn lessons.

It must be said that many people, in the UK and round the world, have been delighted by our action. The BRICUP supporters list, normally a somewhat inert sounding board, has positively flooded us with praise. And bucket-loads of congratulations have come in from BDS supporters in Israel and round the world. The question is, when the dust settles, what will have been the impact on those less committed, and on public opinion in general?

### **Planning the action**

Like all great ideas (and some not so good) the thought of intervening in the IPO Prom occurred to a number of people more or less independently. The logic is clear. Much of the effort of the external cultural boycott movement has been concentrated on trying to persuade international stars not to perform in Israel. We can argue cogently and plead affectingly, but we cannot be there to protest should they nevertheless go ahead. The IPO concert was different. Here the target event was to be on our own home turf. We could be there, and if necessary in numbers. There is an analogy here with the Zionist Federation takeover of the Science Museums in London and Manchester a couple of years ago to present the achievements of Israeli science, sponsored by Israeli universities. It was very effectively campaigned against by BRICUP. They came to us.

The IPO is a legitimate boycott target, in terms of [the PACBI guidelines](#) ; because of its close entanglement with the Israeli state. It proudly boasts of its partnership with the IDF, and its performances at their outposts. Indeed PACBI issued [a call for this particular concert to be cancelled](#) , which BRICUP forwarded to the Director of the Proms, Roger Wright. The IPO website claims a major role for the orchestra as an ambassador for Israel, reaching areas that their diplomatic service cannot. Evidently it is a key (and enthusiastic) component of the

government's Brand Israel campaign, to construct a facade of cultural and scientific achievement to improve an image sullied by so many acts of brutal illegality.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign organised the picket outside the Albert Hall, but were not connected with the activities inside. Indeed no organisation formally organised the interventions there. However the individuals who formed the core organising group were also active in BRICUP, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, London BDS, and ISM. Planning started in April soon after the Proms program was announced, and over the coming months the general shape of the activity was discussed and gradually formulated. When tickets came on sale in May we were ready. Scattered seats were obtained in twos and threes round the Albert Hall, purchased by people who had no previous record that might arouse suspicion. A block of seats in the choir (ie just behind the orchestra and facing the audience) was also obtained. In all we had over 40 tickets.

The emerging plan was to have a musical intervention in the first piece (Webern's *Pasacaglia*) by the group seated in the choir; then no intervention in the Bruch violin concerto – as it had a soloist who as an individual was not a cultural boycott target. After the interval the separate grouplets round the auditorium would sequentially interrupt the next piece, *Iberia* by Albéniz.

In the last week or so one cohesive group who had been recruited raised objections to the Bruch being left unscathed. The crisis was resolved by a compromise that they (only) would delay the start of that work, but before the orchestra started playing.

At around this stage we developed paranoia. We could not believe that there would be no (British? Israeli?) anticipatory surveillance. So telephone calls or emails about the event were off the agenda, and

we found other ways of a) exchanging ideas among the core group; and b) providing details of what to do to the expanding number of volunteers being recruited through a number of networks.

### **Thursday September 1<sup>st</sup>**

The day itself was an accelerating crescendo of new factors, issues, problems... which resulted in frequent re-organisations of who would sit where. We needed places allocated for video recording, legal observers etc, and there were restrictions agreed with the purchasers on the use to be made of certain seats. This resulted in redesignation of seats on the hoof even right up to the entry to Albert Hall.

There were also continuing discussions about the form of intervention in the Albéniz. Some people felt that to disrupt it comprehensively would be counter-productive. This issue was in the event resolved in action rather than by pre-agreement. In the end, and contrary to reports in virtually the entire world's media there were no interruptions to any of the 4 programmed concert items. Here is what happened.

**Intervention 1** About 2/3 through the Webern our newly formed choir Beethovians for Boycotting Israel stood up in their choir seats, holding individual letters spelling out FREE PALESTINE and blended their re-textualised version of Ode to Joy with the Webern composition. It appeared that the postmodern effect may have been appreciated by the orchestra, which went on playing, if anything louder than before. Indeed we have it from the [IPO's own website](#) that our additions to Webern's *Passacaglia* "passed for most of the audience as a clever musical addition, and didn't realize that anything was amiss."

The combined performance of this piece was broadcast in its entirety by BBC Radio 3.

**Intervention 2.** As the conductor Zubin Mehta raised his baton preparatory to launching the Bruch concerto, a very determined group of 4 broke into chants of 'Free Free Palestine'. Strategically located in a box, they were able also to display the Palestinian flag to advantage. Security took some time to arrive, and passive resistance prolonged the ejection process by several minutes. As the orchestra started up the Bruch, the strains of 'Free Free Palestine' from the last protester could still be heard. It was at around this time that BBC took the concert off air.

**Intervention 3.** The first piece after the interval was Iberia by Albéniz. By telepathic communication, Jungian consciousness or some other means the intervention by the remaining groups was advanced to that pregnant moment as the conductor is poised with baton raised. One after another the six remaining groups popped up one after the other round the auditorium. Appropriate slogans had been carefully crafted. Each said that some aspect of Israeli policy (The Apartheid Wall, the Siege of Gaza, etc) was 'OUT OF TUNE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW'. This musical allusion was perhaps missed by most listeners, as there were enough members of the audience joining in with their alternative and not entirely supportive slogans that our words were hard to make out. As the protestors peacefully resisted being pulled from their seats they switched their slogan to FREE FREE PALESTINE which was easier to shout under pressure. It took up to five minutes for enough Albert Hall security staff could reach each group of protesters to escort them out. They behaved appropriately throughout, which is more than can be said for some audience members who attempted to respond physically (and some succeeded) to our non-violent protest. It was during this protest that the BBC broadcast, which had resumed after the interval, was once again, and this time conclusively, terminated.

The ejected members joined the external protest outside the hall. As news reached the media of the unprecedented protest, TV film crews and newspaper reporters began to appear, and members of the group were able to give interviews explaining the action. We also had our own video crew that had remained outside the hall recording the external activities.

### **Reflections**

This was one of the most ambitious cultural boycott activities attempted anywhere, and involved organizational complexities that have only been hinted at here. In so far as we were able to bring it off, that is an undoubted success. Indeed I think that all those involved deserve credit for their resolution – it is not easy to stand up and make a protest in the face of an audience of 5000 which was overwhelmingly hostile.

We did not expect to find a sympathetic audience. Persuading the audience was never part of the objective of the activity. Musical audiences in general might expect to be displeased at the interjection of politics into their cultural enjoyment. This audience in particular almost certainly had a higher proportion of Jewish members than at an average concert – and while the Jewish community is by no means monolithic in its views on Israel the IPO is likely to have attracted a specifically Zionist contingent.

In fact the Prom audience did hear the concert in full. The action of the BBC in cutting off the broadcast, no doubt to protect innocent ears from exposure to politics, did deprive the radio audience of the live relay (though they got recorded performances instead). But again we were not specifically aiming the argument implicit in our protest at them.

This sort of intervention has a symbolic and a practical aspect. It is symbolic (only) because it will not convert the Israeli state to common humanity, nor will it even cause one disreputable government there

to be replaced by another one. But that does not mean it has no effect. It may cause venues and concert organisers to re-think their booking policies. It certainly tells the Palestinian people that they have a growing movement of international friends which is also growing in confidence. It sets a precedent for civil society oppositional movements round the world – that effective protests about ‘business as usual’ can enter terrain not previously thought accessible. It carried this message in abbreviated form through literally hundreds, probably thousands, of media channels on every continent. (The list is extraordinary – from the Sydney Morning Herald to the Times of India, from the Bloomington Pantagraph to Business Week, from the Oman Tribune to most of the world’s major television news programmes.) This diffusion of the outlandish idea that there are things more important than music, and Israel is doing them, is unprecedented and its effect cannot now be known. Our hope, our intention was and is to provoke new thought in uncommitted people, and to promote a commitment to stronger action among those who were already thinking.

This has however not worked well within the music community itself, at least in the short-run. There has undoubtedly been a strong backlash against this action in the musical world, especially the professional musical community. There seem to be a number of factors at work here. One is the strongly apolitical culture within that community; another is the high proportion of musicians who are Jewish. Among apolitical musicians the default position is ‘keep politics out of music’. Among ‘apolitical’ Jews the default position is support for Israel. The short-term result seems to be that it is at least temporarily harder to get critical thought listened to. And the musical commentators were quick into print with their denunciations.

We should learn the lesson that it is not enough to prepare and execute a protest

action meticulously. We had the opportunity of months of notice and brought it off. We should have prepared equally meticulously for the aftermath. One does not have to be a slithery spin merchant to recognize the importance of getting one's own version of events across during the first news-cycle after the event. That we did not do. We did not prepare the specific points to emphasise when our members were interviewed on the night, so that a rather diffuse and improvised set of points were made. We could for example have made play with the Jewish demonstrators who used repeatedly to interrupt Soviet soloists and orchestras (as Sir Gerald Kaufman did in his letter to the Guardian) but we did not. We did not organize for an instantaneous press release – our 'press officer' was in the hall. 3 hours later is too late. And so on. The result has been, I think, that the balance between positive and negative effects is closer than it need have been.

But we will do (even) better next time.

Jonathan Rosenhead

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The PACBI Column

### **Real Solidarity Should Respect BDS Guidelines**

As the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement continues to gather speed, PACBI continues to receive an increasing number of inquiries from around the world. Many of these inquiries come from allies who are often asked to give talks or performances in Israel, or are invited to participate in activities or projects with boycottable Israeli institutions. These allies often ask for an interpretation of the academic and cultural boycott guidelines. In some instances, our advice is met with what we perceive to be a lack of appreciation of the basic context, principles and logic of the boycott. In this month's editorial, we wish to clarify our responsibility to Palestinian civil society

and our wide BDS coalition in Palestine, and our responsibility to our international allies.

It is important to note that PACBI is part of the Palestinian Boycott National Committee (BNC), a mass coalition of leading Palestinian civil society organizations. This coalition represents a near consensus in Palestinian society around the principles and guidelines of the BDS movement. The BNC has entrusted PACBI with promoting the guidelines for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel. As such, PACBI is, first and foremost, accountable to the BNC, and the guidelines that the BNC seeks to promote are the minimum requirements that Palestinian civil society has agreed upon [1].

When international allies ask us for exceptions to the guidelines, as is sometimes the case, and when PACBI does not agree to such exceptions, this must be understood in the context of our mandate and our consistent adherence to the boycott's principles and logic. We cannot agree to exceptions because we are accountable to our coalition.

One of the more frequent requests that PACBI receives from those who are sympathetic with the Palestinian cause is for PACBI to promote an activity in Palestine held by our allies when they are scheduled to also hold an event in Israel. This usually comes after the individuals or groups concerned realize that they would be crossing the boycott picket line if they held their activities at boycottable Israeli venues and think this is one way to show their support for Palestinians. While PACBI appreciates the desire of such individuals or groups to show solidarity with Palestinians, we cannot agree to such requests since, simply put, it is asking us to turn a blind eye to violations of the boycott guidelines. For PACBI and other Palestinian institutions to ignore these violations and allow visitors to benefit from appearances at both Israeli and

Palestinian institutions would implicitly disempower the Palestinian voice, and remove a key tool of non-violent pressure from Palestinian hands. In the South African struggle against apartheid, such requests were met with the same firm insistence by the ANC that all solidarity visits must refrain from violating ANC boycott guidelines.

Palestinian civil society has come a long way since the time when Palestinian institutions—such as universities—would agree to host international visitors while on visits to Israeli institutions, most often to attend conferences or participate in activities such as concerts and art exhibits. As the boycott movement has grown and adherence to it increases, Palestinian institutions are becoming empowered to ask those who insist on violating the boycott to refrain from visiting Palestine, even if that may affect cultural and academic ties with the international community of artists or academics. In the event that these individuals heed the Palestinian appeal and cancel their Israeli events—as has been happening more and more—then they are more than welcome at Palestinian institutions [2]. Ending Israel’s system of occupation, colonialism and apartheid, and bringing about freedom, equality and justice, have become the primary aim of Palestinian civil society and its institutions, and this is increasingly being seen as a goal that should not be jeopardized by promoting unconditional academic or artistic exchanges.

Another request often received by PACBI from sympathetic international academics and artists is for us to agree to their activities in Israel since this would be an opportunity for them to deepen their knowledge of the “conflict,” and more importantly, since they are allies, that they would use the Israeli platform to express their opposition to Israel’s oppressive policies. PACBI believes that the time has come for individuals of conscience to educate themselves about the colonial and

apartheid reality of Israel without using public appearances and engagements in Israel as a cover to learn about the conflict or to express their criticism of Israeli policies. If one truly cares to learn about a struggle, or to criticize a situation, then there are many ways to do so; a public performance is not one of them [3]. Undermining our struggle for freedom, justice and equality to learn about Israel’s oppression is clearly illogical and morally problematic.

Academics and artists must also realize that their mere presence at mainstream Israeli institutions and forums—regardless of the content of their participation, which may well often be critical of Israel—will be used to whitewash Israeli crimes and normalize Israeli oppression. This is so because violating the BDS call at a time when this movement is growing internationally, as well as in Israel, is far more damaging than making critical statements, especially when those statements are often used by Israel to promote its illusion of a tolerant and democratic society. This is not to mention that there are numerous ways to address Israelis today, and provide critical insights, without visiting the country and making public appearances.

While some might not understand our inability to entertain their requests, we believe this is the most principled way to remain true to our Palestinian coalition and to build an international campaign. Our commitment to international activists and new allies who join our movement is that we will remain firm on anti-racist principles and on principles of human rights. We will continue to hold ourselves to the highest standards that Palestinian civil society expects from us and to whom we are accountable. Our advice to allies is offered in that spirit.

PACBI

**Notes:**

[1] See <http://www.bdsmovement.net/BNC>

[2] More details can be found in [PACBI's Boycott Guidelines Applicable to Visits by International Academics and Artists to the OPT](#)

[3] For a similar argument related to the need to mix public appearances with learning about the situation, see a [previous PACBI statement](#)

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## **BRICUP and AURDIP lobby the EU in Brussels**

Background. In our June newsletter, we reported on BRICUP's submission to the public consultation about the EU Commission's new proposals for funding of research and innovation (to be found in their Green Paper- A Common Strategic Framework for the future of EU Research and Innovation Funding ). BRICUP's contribution (also in our June newsletter) joined those from numerous other activist groups and human rights organizations in focussing on the need for the new rules to ensure that Israeli academic and commercial institutions, complicit in Israeli violations of international law and human rights abuses, are excluded from EU funding.

These human rights concerns were, however, completely absent from the Commission's summing up of the consultation exercise. BRICUP therefore followed up with a delegation to Brussels on July 13<sup>th</sup> to make our case to members of the Commission in person, and to liaise with Brussels based organizations and individuals also committed to bringing an end to the EU taxpayer's subsidy of Israel's instruments of oppression of the Palestinian people.

The lobby. Our delegation of four included Ivar Ekeland from our French sister organization AURDIP (Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine). We met David Harmon, the member of the Cabinet of

Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan Quinn with responsibility for international science cooperation, and with members of the Enterprise and Industry Directorate with responsibility for international affairs. The case we made (below) was accompanied by a dossier describing some of the worst examples of EU funding, under existing Framework 7 (FP7) arrangements, of organizations complicit in serious violations of international law .

In our meetings at the Commission, there was denial of any knowledge of the abuses of EU funding that we highlighted, but some apparent discomfort too. We questioned David Harmon closely about the Commission's attitude to EU funds being diverted to institutions operating in the Occupied Territories, giving Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories (ADSL- currently participating in 3 FP7 projects) as a particular example. We also followed up the meeting with more detailed questions in writing- the answers to which we are still now responding to, and which will report on in our next newsletter.

Our other meetings, with Keith Taylor, Green MEP for SE England, with Brussels based NGO's and with journalist, David Cronin, all gave us a valuable opportunity to discuss tactics for when the Commission puts its new Framework proposals to the Parliament, whose approval will be necessary for their implementation. We are hoping to be able to mount a coordinated approach to Parliamentary lobbying, involving NGOs and activist groups across Europe, in order to prevent the Commission from introducing a process which is likely to give Israel even greater access to EU taxpayer's money than it has already.

*Our submission to the Commission follows:*

**Requirements for a new Strategic Framework for the future of EU Research and Innovation Funding.**

Israel is a state that denies the Palestinian people their rights under international and humanitarian law, and commits daily acts of violent oppression against innocent civilians. It is therefore of deep concern to the **British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)**, to the **Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine (AURDIP)** and a growing number of other civil society organizations throughout Europe, that the EU has developed an intimate relationship with Israel in the area of research and innovation through a number of EU programmes which have delivered millions of euros from the EU taxpayer into Israeli universities, companies and other institutions that are deeply complicit in developing instruments of oppression of the Palestinian people.

#### **The European Union is bound by**

- Its founding principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law’.
- The Lisbon Treaty, and other treaty commitments, which oblige the EU to promote the rule of international law
- The International Court of Justice which, in 2004, held that international law places obligations on third parties not to render assistance to the maintenance of unlawful acts
- The EU’s own research guidelines, which stipulate that projects must meet fundamental ethical principles and, specifically, the rules of its Framework 7 research programme, which exclude proposals that ‘contravene fundamental ethical principles.’

- The terms of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, Article 2 of which states that human rights and democratic principles constitute an **essential element** of the Agreement.

**These obligations supersede all other considerations, even in the absence of any internationally agreed formal legal sanctions.**

Nevertheless, a wide range of Framework 7 projects involve, either the development of new weapons, surveillance and other systems of human rights abuses and other criminal acts directly, or the further development of technology that has been specifically developed in order to facilitate violations of international law.

**The European Union continually seeks to attract greater respect, and greater interest and involvement of its citizens and civil society in its research and innovation activities, but this will not occur as long as it fails to adhere to the basic principles on which it was founded. This willingness to exempt Israel from the human rights obligations demanded of other countries is also bringing the EU into increasing disrepute with international civil society, thereby reducing its ability to influence world events.**

The EU must therefore set up robust mechanisms for ensuring that all supported organizations respect human rights, and are not complicit in human rights abuses. The new Framework under discussion must therefore include effective safeguards to exclude any projects involving military research, and specifically the development of new weapons, surveillance and other systems used for human rights abuses and other criminal acts. The EU should develop guidelines and performance indicators which will ensure that EU taxpayer’s money does not find its way to

organizations complicit in human rights abuses and international law violations. **Strict criteria must be applied to the companies and institutions themselves, and not simply to the projects they participate in.** Only then, can European civil society be sure that EU tax revenue is not being diverted from peaceful objectives to the development of weapons and surveillance techniques for use against innocent civilians.

At present such mechanisms are, either lacking, or are widely abused. In the case of Israel, the current EU policy is to turn a blind eye to transparent abuses. This must change. **The EU must not allow its research funds to be used to subsidize the unlawful occupation of the Palestinian territories and the imprisonment of civilian populations. If world class excellence is to be pursued, it must not be at the expense of the EU's founding principles of human rights and democracy, respect for international law and the EU's reputation around the world.**

#### **Signed on behalf of BRICUP**

by Professor David Pegg, Biology Department, University of York; Professor Jonathan Rosenhead, Department of Management, LSE; Dr Monica Wusteman, Department of Biology, University of York (retired). **On behalf of AURDIP** by Professor Ivar Ekeland, CEREMADE and Institut de Finance, Université Paris-Dauphine.

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### **The Cultural boycott**

#### **Bricup sends an open letter to the Yardbirds**

Dear Yardbirds,

As ancient geezers ourselves, we support the principle of keeping going. So, the Yardbirds still playing gigs – excellent. The Yardbirds playing a gig in Israel, which illegally occupies Palestinian land

and shows no sign of withdrawing – surely not.

Chris Dreja and Jim McCarty, founder members of the band – when you were enjoying such success during the 1960s, the British Musicians' Union had a policy of boycotting apartheid South Africa. We've been looking on-line for evidence that the Yardbirds broke that ban, and we're happy to say we can't find any. The world famous Yardbirds appear to have respected the South African liberation movement's call for artists and musicians to assist them by denying legitimacy to the racist state.

Have you thought through the implications of your appearance at the Barby Club in Tel Aviv on October 29? You're telling Palestinian civil society organisations that are similarly [calling for](#) a cultural boycott of Israel that their dispossession and their oppression don't matter. The Palestinian Teachers' Federation; the Writers' Federation; the League of Palestinian Artists; the General Union of Palestinian Women; and many others – your performance at the Barby will in effect tell all of these people that you side with the Israeli military occupation, that you don't mind helping to airbrush the cruelties of racism and ethnic cleansing, and that you're happy to behave as if there isn't a Palestinian struggle for liberation and justice.

So we're hoping you might think again.

Here's Roger Waters talking about why he [supports](#) the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel. Here are Faithless and other musicians singing '[Freedom for Palestine](#)'. Here is Elvis Costello explaining why he [withdrew](#) from his two scheduled concerts in Israel.

There's a wave, Yardbirds – a whole international wave of people supporting justice for the Palestinians via consumer boycotts, academic boycotts, cultural

boycotts. You can cancel your gig and ride that wave – or you can let one night at the Barby dash you on the shore. Please think again. Please don't go.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth

Mike Cushman

Professor Adah Kay

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

Send your own letter to:

Jim McCartney [info@jimccarty.co.uk](mailto:info@jimccarty.co.uk)

Chris Dreja [chris@chrisdreja.com](mailto:chris@chrisdreja.com)

Their US agent, [Anne Leighton](#)

Their European agent [Nigel Kerr](#)

Visit the [Yardbirds cancel your trip Facebook page](#)

**Note:** The band's website shows they are now on a US tour. See:

<http://www.theyardbirds.com/tour.html>

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## **Tuba Skinny rejects Israeli invitation**

The following public statement by Tuba Skinny explains the careful reasoning that led the group to withdraw from the Israeli Red Sea Jazz Festival. If only all performers would be so thorough and responsible!

This statement was issued by Kiowa Wells on behalf of Tuba Skinny.

“ We have received pressure from many directions to make a statement. Here it is.

“The viewpoints of Tuba Skinny in regard to our recent cancellation at the Red Sea Jazz Festival have recently become a popular topic of debate among numerous websites and news forums. We did not want to comment on a situation that we as foreigners know so little about, but it seems that we now have no choice but to comment.

“The reasons for our cancellation are numerous. First, when we agreed to play the festival we were not aware that it was largely state sponsored, or that people on the other side of the wall would be denied entry. This should suffice to demonstrate my meaning when I say that we do not have the comprehensive viewpoint necessary to make political commentary on such a serious matter.

“It is a fact that prior to our show, two days before we were scheduled to fly to Israel from Rome, we were approached by various people via E-mail who are affiliated with the [BDS](#) and AAA movements. After thoroughly researching what they told us in numerous emails, we were more enlightened on the current situation of the Wall, in addition to the extreme actions taken by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people. This was a shaking realization, especially because as a street band from New Orleans, we had not even heard the call to boycott, and never so much as considered the idea that playing music for people could be seen as a statement aligning us with any extremist group.

“Our intentions were to play on the street in Israel and the surrounding areas for the people, not for any government. It is a real regret to not play for Palestinian and Israeli people alike, especially because many of these people have expressed openly that they do not support the Wall, or the killing of innocent people carried out by either side. Our intentions at no time included playing in support of government sponsored atrocities or independent ones.

“The day before our flight, after hours of stressful deliberation, we decided that we should not back out of our slated appearance for these reasons: Many people who live in Israel and wish for equal rights and peace had bought tickets to see us, and it was mere days before the show; the organizers, whose political stance has never been known to us, had worked very

hard on our behalf; We were in Italy with no way home; and we viewed it as an opportunity to speak out against segregation and senseless killing. We thought to donate the proceeds from the festival to relief and human rights organizations involved in this crisis.

“After reaching this painful decision, we immediately learned of the killings outside of Eilat and the subsequent bombings in Gaza, both with the loss of innocent lives. This was the icing on the cake. We could not support any of these actions, let alone risk the obvious personal danger that was implied. It was for a mixture of these reasons that we decided to back out. Not only the Apartheid Wall, not only the attacks at Gaza, not only the attacks outside of Eilat, not only the endless violence for centuries, but all of it combined. Of course we do not support the merciless bulldozing of homes or the indiscriminate murder of Israeli and Palestinian people from both sides!

“With this in mind, I in my ignorance would never be so presumptuous as to approach an Israeli or Palestinian \*individual \*and start spouting off about my political opinion. To a mother who has lost her child. An Israeli mother, a Palestinian mother, it makes no difference. I cannot imagine what that would be like, though there are many alive today who can.

“We live in a country whose government is involved directly in this crisis, and many of the citizens here avoid talking about it because even here it often ends in heated debate or violence. Many of the citizens in the USA have never supported the government in this.

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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 welcome. Email them to: [newsletter@bricup.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.uk)

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