

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

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Trade union policies on Palestine and Israel

While UCU moves towards scrutinising the College of Judea and Samaria under its greylisting policy, it is worth remembering that UCU has other policies on Israel and Palestine which are stated in unequivocal terms and should be implemented immediately.

Last year, at its inaugural Congress, UCU overwhelmingly carried Motion 31 on the European Union and Israel, which noted "that Israel is seeking to upgrade its relations with the EU to the same level as Norway and Switzerland, permitting free passage of goods, people and capital, while denying these freedoms to Palestinians". The motion called among other things for:

- "1. The restoration of all international aid to the PA and all revenues rightfully belonging to it;
2. No upgrade of Israel's EU status until it ends the occupation of Palestinian land and fully complies with EU Human Rights law.
3. A moratorium on research and cultural collaborations with Israel via EU and European Science Foundation funding until Israel abides by UN resolutions."

Regrettably, we have just witnessed the threatened upgrade of Israel's relations with the EU being agreed without any conditions whatsoever, let alone those mentioned in the UCU motion. Meanwhile Unison, the public-sector union, carried at its 2008 conference a motion including the following:

"a) an end to the arms trade between Israel and Britain and EU Member States leading to a mandatory United Nations Arms Embargo;

b) suspension of the European Union/Israel Association Agreement until Israel is in full compliance of its human rights clauses;

c) a ban on imports of all goods, and especially agricultural produce, from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories;

d) recognition of the outcome of the last elections to the Palestinian Authority which were certified as free and fair by international observers."

The Unison motion further calls on the union to divest itself "of any holdings in companies responsible for maintaining the illegal Wall condemned by the International Court of Justice."

As we read in BRICUP Newsletter no. 5, the details of the EU upgrade, including increased research funding to Israel, are yet to be worked out, so there is still time to campaign on this issue. UCU and Unison should be lobbying the European Parliament vociferously, and concerned individuals need to take this matter up with their MEPs. The other boycott aspects of the Unison motion, while not directly connected with the EU, are also significant and should be noted by BRICUP supporters.

Meanwhile another motion at this year's UCU Congress fired a warning shot across the bows of the Histadrut, the Israeli so-called trade union confederation. Motion 27, endorsed by the national Executive, deplored the Histadrut's failure to pay the approximately 2.5 million Euros owed to the PGFTU since 1995, and called on it "to pay the dues owed to the PGFTU; to call for an end to the siege of Gaza; and to call for an end to the occupation of Palestinian and Syrian territory." Some Palestinian civil society organisations, notably the General Union of

Palestinian Workers and the Grassroots anti-Apartheid Wall campaign, are already calling for trade unions in the rest of the world to boycott the Histadrut because of its ongoing complicity in the occupation. Watch this space.

Finally, UCU motion 26 at this year's congress condemned the siege of Gaza and resolved "to organise a fact-finding delegation to Gaza after the bombing stops and to send delegates on future TUC-sponsored visits." How will the union know when the bombing has stopped? We can't expect the IDF to inform us. Perhaps this will be used as an excuse to postpone the trip indefinitely but we must hope not. Who knows, perhaps the General Secretary will visit Gaza and witness the devastation for herself.

The second PSC trade union delegation to Palestine took place in June, and it is sincerely to be hoped that UCU and other PSC-affiliated unions will continue to contribute delegations to such initiatives and report back to their members, so that British trades unionists can make informed decisions about any links they may have or may be contemplating with Israeli institutions.

Sue Blackwell
UCU Executive Committee member

BRICUP objected strongly to the upgrading of Israel's relationship with the EU - see Sue's article above and Newsletter 5. The Foreign and Commonwealth office responded to our objections as follows:-

Dear Mr. Rosenhead,

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 June to the Foreign Secretary about the EU and Israel . I have been asked to reply.

The EU Israel Association Council met on 16 June to set out the direction of the EU's relationship with Israel. It outlined a relationship based on closer working in a number of technical fields in which the EU and Israel share many links.

However, the measures announced do not mark a substantive political upgrading of the EU's relationship with Israel . Co-operation will continue to be within the existing framework of the European Neighbourhood policy; a policy that forms the basis of the EU's relationship with a large number of neighbouring states and the Palestinian Authority. The UK supports the ongoing EU process of forming stronger relationships with other ENP members, in particular the Palestinian Authority.

The EU declaration released at the Association Council raised many of the concerns you raise (settlement expansion, compliance with international law, removal of restrictions on movement and access and the humanitarian situation in Gaza) and reiterates its support for a two-state solution. The text of the EU Declaration reflects the reality that progress on the peace process would naturally provide a better context in which the EU could develop a substantively enhanced political relationship with Israel.

The Association Council also announced more rigorous structures for engaging with Israel on human rights issues. The EU intends to establish a formal subcommittee on human rights, within the framework of the Association Agreement, which will replace the current informal working group. The government strongly believes that the EU-Israel Association Agreement, and these latest measures, provides a framework and a forum for the EU to raise and discuss the shared concerns we have directly with the Government of Israel.

We will continue working with the EU, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to achieve a peaceful and lasting two-state solution to the conflict.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe Jones

Near East Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Readers will make their own judgements concerning the significance the new subcommittee on human rights in Israel. At least it may provide a better defined target for our lobbying.

The PACBI column

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Campaign National Committee (BNC)

Building on a century-long Palestinian experience in civil resistance and inspired by the victory of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa in the early 1990s, a broad consensus in Palestinian civil society was formed around the need for an effective, inclusive and sustained campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israeli until it fully complies with its obligations under international law. This resulted in the unified [Palestinian Call for BDS against Israel](#) that was launched in July 2005, with the initial endorsement of over 170 Palestinian unions, political parties, mass movements and social organizations. The signatories to this call represent the three major components of the Palestinian people: the refugees in exile, Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip, and the subjugated Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The efforts to coordinate the BDS campaign, that began to grow rapidly since the 2005 call was made public, culminated in the first Palestinian BDS Conference held in Ramallah in November 2007. Out of this conference emerged the BDS National Committee (BNC) as a coordinating body for the BDS campaign within Palestine. The key goals of the BNC are:

- To strengthen and spread the *culture* of boycott as a central form of civil resistance to Israeli occupation and apartheid;
- To formulate strategies and programs of action in accordance with the 9 July 2005 Palestinian

BDS Call;

- To form the Palestinian reference point for BDS campaigns worldwide;
- To coordinate the various BDS campaign efforts in all locations;

The tasks of the BNC include local campaigning and awareness raising; training local activists and organizations on BDS work; international BDS advocacy; rapid response to projects and initiatives that violate the boycott and/or promote a deceptive image of coexistence despite occupation and oppression; media advocacy; and promoting BDS in the Arab World. The BDS campaign website, www.bdsmovement.net, is a principal tool in the BNC work.

The current members of the BNC are:

- Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine
- Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition
- General Union of Palestinian Workers
- Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU)
- General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
- Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)
- Ittijah: Union of Arab Community Based Associations
- Independent Federation of Unions – Palestine (IFU)
- Palestinian Farmers Union (PFU)
- Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI)
- Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (Stop the Wall)
- Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
- Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees
- Charitable Organizations Union
- National Committee for the Commemoration of the Nakba
- Civil Coalition for Defending the Palestinians' Rights in Jerusalem

BRICUP continues the cultural boycott by urging prominent artists and others not to accept invitations to perform in Israel until Israel allows the Palestinian people their human rights. In our last Newsletter we reproduced an open letter from BRICUP to Branford Marsalis. This led to a second letter to Marsalis, this time from the black American activist Larry Hales.

Mr. Marsalis,

Perhaps by now you've seen or heard about the open letter to you from the British Committee for Universities of Palestine regarding your quartet's concert date in Tel Aviv on July 17th.

It's an appeal I'd like to echo here, while again raising the call for a boycott of Israel by academicians and cultural artists that the BRICUP letter mentions.

I'd like to appeal to you not solely on the basis of my being an aficionado of the Black musical tradition, and you being a giant in that tradition, but as one brother to another, a brother who is a writer to a great musician who has embraced the entire scope of Black music and culture; a brother who has been to Palestine to a brother who is slated to play in the capital of the Zionist entity.

The lament of the Palestinian is a similar refrain to our own. Music, all culture, cannot help but reflect the material conditions of the people that the music-maker comes from. A person's artistic self is an extension of her or his political self. Jazz is indeed subtle, and perhaps more open to interpretation, but at its essence, when created by a Black person in tune to the conditions of Black folk, it is an expression of the desire and the struggle for true liberation.

Of course, you know that our musical tradition sprang from our history of struggle. From the Sorrow Songs of the days of slavery to the vocal blues tradition to jazz, soul music and hip hop, the evolution of our music is tied to the dialectical nature of the Black freedom struggle that continues to this day.

Then, the traditions of the Palestinians, though

from a different historical development and a unique struggle, are similar to ours.

To play a concert in Israel, which recently celebrated 60 years of the creation of the Israeli state that usurped Palestinian land, displaced 750,000 Palestinian people and has balanced its weight on the hopes and dreams of all Palestinians, would be a disavowal of the suffering of another people and a validation of the crimes of the state of Israel.

All of history is important, but we are at a crucial juncture and living in a world rife with contradictions and suffering. Even in a rich nation like the U.S. there is a seething lower rung of the poor and disposed, whose greatest numbers are people of color, Black, Latin, Asian, Arab - and poor whites as well.

Now, moral conviction is needed, not the moral conviction of those who hold power, but of the oppressed and artists like yourself who play to thousands and whose music touches the lives of millions.

How can the suffering of the Palestinian people be ignored, millions of people denied freedom of movement and their human rights? Israel is a nation that possesses numerous nuclear warheads, has bombed and occupied not only Palestine but Lebanon, Syria and parts of Egypt, and has destabilized an entire region.

Israel is also a nation that supported apartheid South Africa with weaponry and political support. Yet, we can both agree that the history of oppression and repression of the peoples of South Africa and the southern Africa region was a great evil.

How can such a thing be right when perpetrated anywhere? I'd like to point you to a statement from South Africa regarding this issue, at www.endtheoccupation.org.za.

I cannot pretend to understand the constraints put upon an artist (the record labels, recording contracts, contractual obligations) so I can't speak to you about the toll the moral stance you are

being asked to take would exact from you.

You may lose jobs, face being blackballed, censured, who knows? But did Ray Charles not face the same thing when he refused to play in Georgia? Did the great Paul Robeson not suffer a high cost? Did the boxer Larry Holmes face an unsure future when he refused to fight in South Africa? And, of course, Muhammad Ali refused to fight in Vietnam and for that he lost his belt.

The history of the great majority of people around the world, who create all wealth and who struggle to get by, holds a different set of truths. This history will remember and embrace you tighter than a dear love.

The people of Palestine, of Iraq, Africa, Haiti, the world over will remember you and you can set a precedent, similar to that of Kanye West when he broke script to speak about the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. Don't go. Your refusal will open new doors.

As the appeal from the British Committee for Universities of Palestine asks, How can you, in all conscience, play Sonny Rollins 'Freedom Suite' in Tel Aviv? Don't go, brother.

Larry Hales

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The following open letter was addressed by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) to US rap musician Snoop Dogg on June 29th.

Dear Snoop Dogg,

The Palestinian arts community was deeply saddened and surprised by the news of your upcoming performance in Israel on 18 September

in Ramat Gan. We strongly urge you to cancel your plans to perform in Israel until the time comes when Israel ends its illegal occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and respects the relevant precepts of international law concerning Palestinian rights to freedom, self-determination and equality.

How can an artist whose name is prominently associated with this form of popular and freedom-based musical expression, rap, be apathetic to the monstrosity of Israel's current war crimes in Gaza, its Apartheid Wall, declared illegal by the International Court of Justice at the Hague, or its continued violation of fundamental Palestinian rights? Just as conscientious artists the world over boycotted South African apartheid in the past we expect and urge them to boycott Israel's own system of colonization and racial discrimination, compared to apartheid by former US President Jimmy Carter, as well as many leading figures in South Africa, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and current minister, Ronnie Kasrils.

"Make it Good" and do not come to Israel. "Make it Good" and dedicate your cancellation to all the mothers who lost their children; 24 Palestinian children were killed in April 2008 alone by the Israeli occupation army; 34 were killed in the Gaza Strip in March in what the Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Matan Villnai threatened to become a "bigger Holocaust." And 327 Palestinian children are still in prison. So far, more than 180 terminally ill people and premature babies have died within four months in Gaza as a result of the heinous, medieval siege imposed by the country you are planning to visit.

It is also worth reminding you that Palestinian rappers and musicians in the occupied Palestinian territory, like all Palestinians under Israeli occupation, are denied their basic rights, including the "privilege" of freedom of expression which you -- and all of us -- so highly value. They are often denied their right to travel, sometimes even within the Occupied Palestinian Territory; many are denied access to festivals; and some are imprisoned, injured or killed by the occupation forces. Try to find out, for instance, how many Palestinian rappers, particularly those in besieged

Gaza, will be allowed to attend your concert? By performing in Ramat Gan you are helping to perpetuate this special form of apartheid that denies us our rights.

Palestinian civil society has almost unanimously called upon international civil society to engage in acts and campaigns of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it fully complies with international law and recognizes the fundamental human rights of the people of Palestine. The Church of England, the US Presbyterian Church, a group of top British architects, major unions in Britain, South Africa, Ireland and Canada, among many other groups and institutions in the West, have all heeded the Palestinian distress call and considered applying effective pressure on Israel to promote peace and justice in our troubled land.

We sincerely hope that you shall cancel your announced performance in Israel.

PACBI

French-Swiss director pulls out of Israeli film festival.

It has been announced that the prominent French-Swiss moviemaker Jean-Luc Godard cancelled his appearance at the annual student film festival in Tel Aviv. Godard stated that he would not be attending for "reasons beyond his control". We cannot confirm that his refusal was the result of the arguments that were put to him by PACBI, but the organizers said "We are very disappointed because he seems to have succumbed to pressure from pro-Palestinian groups who launched a campaign for people to boycott Israel,"

Clinicians Tour of Palestine and Israel.

Experience Travel Tours, jointly with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel announces

a clinicians' tour of Israel and Palestine that will take place during 10 days in November 2008. The tour will include visits to hospitals and community-based services to learn about the challenges facing patients and staff living under Israeli Occupation. Members will be able to contribute by giving expert seminars, making donations and offering care and treatment. The tour is planned to include visits to Jerusalem and Al Quds Medical School; Bethlehem; Nablus and Ramallah, visiting refugee camps and mobile clinics in the West Bank; a tour of Hebron with an IDF soldier who previously served there and is now part of 'Breaking the Silence'; clinics run by the Palestine Medical Relief Committee; and three days in Gaza, witnessing the situation there and receiving analysis.

Applications will be considered from clinicians in the UK who have experience of traveling to Israel and Palestine. Successful applicants will receive further information about the tour and will be invited to attend a briefing session in London at which time the subjects and speakers for the specialist seminars presented by participants will be determined.

Cost per person sharing a twin-bedded room is £1085 (subject to fuel tax increase), including flights from London Heathrow with BMI, rooms with private facilities in three star hotels and half board (bed, breakfast and evening meal). The tour will be administered by Experience Travel Tours, based in England, which specialises in study tours to Israel and Palestine. For details apply to Experience Travel Tours, "Rose Marie", Mill Hill Lane, Brockham, Surrey RH3 7LS, UK. Email to tours@icahduk.org. Tel: 01737 843408

BRICUP needs your financial support

BRICUP is constantly in need of funds. If you are able to help please see the details in Newsletter 5 or contact us at treasurer@bricup.org.uk

Comments and suggestions concerning the Newsletter are welcome. Email to newsletter@bricup.org.uk