

BRICUP Newsletter 82

BRICUP

British Committee for the
Universities of Palestine

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Introduction

This is a special edition of the BRICUP Newsletter to mark the committee's initiation in 2004. Reaching our tenth birthday provides an appropriate moment for reflection and analysis..

Steven and Hilary Rose were instrumental in all the work that preceded the actual formation of BRICUP and then in establishing and operating the committee itself. In this issue of the Newsletter Steven and Hilary provide a comprehensive review of those early days. This is followed by an account by our chair, Jonathan Rosenhead, of the build -up of activity,

including some notable achievements and successes .

We hope that these accounts will be of interest to all of you who have worked with and supported BRICUP over the years and have made so much of our work possible.

Editor

BRICUP – the early years.

The long march to denormalise Israeli universities began in 2002. The goal was to weaken their network of collaborative research and innovation across Europe, a collaboration critical both to Israel and to the technosciences of the 21st century. To promote growth and innovation European Union member states contribute to a central research fund (the estimate for the current 6 year programme, Horizon 2020, is €80billion), which is then allocated to multi-nation university and industrial consortia through competitive bidding. European countries which are not members of the EU are eligible to join the programme in a wider grouping, the European Research Area (ERA) but why was Israel, a Middle East country, illegally occupying Palestinian land, in manifest abuse of human rights, participating in the ERA? Of course the conventional answer was already known, and yet asking it again, when the equally conventional view of science was that it was both objective and neutral, looked to offer political traction.

Israel has long had a research-based economy⁽¹⁾ and spends a higher proportion of its GDP on research and innovation than any other country (the World Bank's most recent figures are 3.93% as opposed to 2.79 in the US and 1.72 in the UK). Particularly strong in IT and biotechnology, its powerful research bases include Haifa and Tel-Aviv Universities, the Technion, the Weizmann Institute, the Institute for Biological Research (which doubles up as Israel's chemical and biological warfare centre) and pharmaceutical companies such as Teva, the biggest producer of generic drugs in the world with manufacturing plants in Europe, North and South America. (Britain's NHS is a major customer.)

In the early 2000s the international boycott movement was primarily directed towards Israeli goods and services. We saw attacking Israel's participation in the European Research Area as a means of mobilising academics to join the movement to denormalise Israel and her universities. According to Haim Bresheeth's recent calculation, Israel benefits from a greater proportion of European research funding per head of population than any other country within the ERA. Could European researchers, many uncomfortable about collaborating with Israel as this entails tacit support for Israel's policies towards the Palestinians, be persuaded not to enter into any further partnerships? Our letter recognising this unease and calling for a moratorium, published in *The Guardian* in April 2002, was signed by 120 academics including many natural scientists and technologists – important as they secure most of the ERA budget.

The letter read:

'Despite widespread international condemnation for its policy of violent repression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli government appears impervious to moral appeals from world leaders. The major potential source of effective criticism, the United States, seems reluctant to act. However there are ways of exerting pressure from within Europe. Odd though it may appear, many national and European cultural and research institutions, including especially those funded from the EU and the European Science Foundation, regard Israel as a European state for the purposes of awarding grants and contracts. (No other Middle Eastern state is so regarded). Would it not therefore be timely if at both national and

European level a moratorium was called upon any further such support unless and until Israel abide by UN resolutions and open serious peace negotiations with the Palestinians, along the lines proposed in many peace plans including most recently that sponsored by the Saudis and the Arab League.'

A further four hundred academics from across Europe wrote supporting the moratorium and within the month the annual conference of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) called on 'all UK universities and colleges to review their academic links with Israel.' Later that year the text of the moratorium call was endorsed in its entirety by the Association of University Teachers (AUT). A delegation from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign visiting the occupied territories reported the enthusiasm with which the moratorium call and its endorsement by the academic trade unions was received. The hope it offered was confirmed by a brief but poignant note from the president of Birzeit University, Professor Hanna Nasir, exiled by the IDF to Jordan in 1974, and with his University shut down for three years until December⁽²⁾. He wrote 'we thought Europe had forgotten us.' It was the experience of this delegation that helped dissolve any unease that PSC might have felt towards extending the call for boycott into the academic and cultural domain.

The French group Coordination des Scientifiques pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient (PJPO) a group of university teachers calling for a boycott, put the *Guardian* letter onto their web site, enabling people to endorse the call. In this process the softer moratorium call was conflated with a full boycott – incidentally resulting in a handful of the prominent signatories, including Richard Dawkins and Colin Blakemore (soon to become CEO of the Medical Research Council) publicly dissociating themselves.

The letter generated a wave of orchestrated hate mail which plastered our computer screens as the Zionist lobby geared up to attack. But among the hate-mails were also considered discussions as to whether a moratorium infringed academic freedom, the lack of similarity between Apartheid Israel and South Africa, and sometimes a cry of victimhood such as that of the Israeli academic

feminist who wrote to Hilary ‘how can you do this to us?’ Meanwhile the boycott issue hit the media, with articles in the broadsheets and scientific weeklies, and face-to-face debates on TV highlighting the indefensibility of the Israeli academics’ position defending their own academic freedom whilst doing nothing to defend that of their Palestinian colleagues. *Nature* published an editorial attacking the boycott⁽³⁾, followed by a joint article by four Oxford biologists, Blakemore and Dawkins, together with Denis Noble and Michael Yudkin, setting out the conditions under which an academic boycott was ethically appropriate, concluding that the boycott of Israeli universities did not meet them⁽⁴⁾ Primo Levi’s *If not now, when?* comes to mind, but *Nature* refused to publish our response.

There was significant support for the moratorium call from within the European parliament, notably from the Greens, but within the tripartite EU structure the funding decisions rest with the Commission. Within a week of its publication, a copy of the *Guardian* letter was sent (not by us) to the then Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin, who replied robustly rejecting the call in favour of ‘a continuous dialogue...and the positive effects of scientific cooperation.’ It was left to Janez Potocnik, Busquin’s successor to the Research Commission post to respond more bluntly to a Green initiative from the Parliament to block EU funding to countries in breach of the European Charter of Human Rights (deliberately not mentioning Israel directly). In a letter dated 7th March 2006 to Caroline Lucas, then an MEP, he wrote ‘From a research point of view, Israel’s full participation is highly valued by the Commission and European research actors. The multinational cooperation involved in this partnership brings added value, new ideas and accelerated innovation for both sides. EU partners appreciate Israeli technological excellence in key scientific and technological domains.’ Put simply, Europe’s need for Israeli science trumps human rights.

As the *Guardian* letter offered no advice as to how to interpret the moratorium call, in the early days there were some perhaps over-enthusiastic responses. Linguist Mona Baker sacked two Israelis, both critical of Israel’s policies, from the editorial board of the journal she edited and owned. A paper by geographer Oren Yiftachel, a critical voice from Ben Gurion University, was

rejected by a geography journal. In Oxford the geneticist Andrew Wilkie refused a potential PhD candidate as he did not wish to supervise someone who had served in the IDF. A furious and very public row followed each case, serving to publicise the issue but also pointing to the need for the boycott movement, as it had become, to offer guidelines to emphasise that the boycott was of institutions not individuals.

In July 2004 PACBI (the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) issued its call, endorsed by all the West Bank campus trade unions and NGOs, for a comprehensive academic and cultural boycott, thereby opening a new strand within the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. We had met some of the key Palestinians working to establish PACBI, including author and activist Omar Barghouti and BZU sociologist Lisa Taraki, earlier that year at a conference in East Jerusalem. The conference, *Ending the Occupation: the Role of Academia*, had been convened by the - mainly US funded - Faculty For Israeli-Palestinian Peace (FFIPP). The opportunity to support PACBI’s call in Europe came immediately, at a follow up FFIPP meeting in Brussels in July. The organisers were hostile to the boycott, but with support from the many Palestinian students present, sociologist Etienne Balibar and JFJFP’s Richard Kuper (neither at that stage supporting the boycott) Steven read the full PACBI call to the conference, and the workshop discussing the boycott dominated the rest of the meeting.

Meanwhile the core group that was to become BRICUP was assembling itself, initially Hilary (sociologist), Steven (neuroscientist) and anthropologist Martha Mundy, with her Middle East expertise. Having learned from the *Jewish Chronicle* that the Zionists had organised a fund of £1 million and was taking legal advice to defeat the boycott, we each chipped in £100 (a rather more modest start). Clearly the boycott call had touched a nerve, both in Israel and amongst its Euro-American allies.

BRICUP was to be a committee with supporters, not a membership organisation. Following Martha’s experience in a highly effective Iraqi solidarity group, it was agreed that if any member was unable to be active they would pull out until such time that they could recommit themselves.

Hilary and Martha went to a meeting in Paris of the Collectif Interuniversitaire pour la Cooperation avec les Universités Palestiniennes (CICUP) and the acronym BRICUP was born. Early members included sociologist Sami Ramadani, Islah Jad, a BZU sociologist then completing her PhD at SOAS, Nur Masalha (Holy Land Studies), Romy Hasan (Middle East Studies), Sue Blackwell (linguistics) and David Seddon (anthropology) later joined by Mike Cushman and Jonathan Rosenhead (Information Systems and Operational Research respectively). Other early members included Derek Summerfield (psychiatrist), Haim Bresheeth and Jenny Morgan (both film makers). Haim and Jenny's participation opened a new front in BRICUP's activities – cultural boycott, with pressure on international artists, writers and musicians not to participate in events in Israel or funded by the Israeli state.

In December 2004, the Palestine solidarity group at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) organised an international meeting: *Resisting Israeli Apartheid*. The keynote address was given by poet and activist Tom Paulin; speakers included Omar and Lisa, as well as Ilan Pappé, Hilary and Haim, and the meeting offered a platform to announce the formal establishment of BRICUP.

One of BRICUP's early activities was to publish a booklet arguing the case: *Why boycott Israeli Universities?* edited and largely written by Jonathan to win support both from individual academics and the trade unions. The following oscillating fight in the academic trade unions was considerably strengthened by members of the Socialist Worker's Party joining BRICUP, but the presence of a party with its own much larger agenda also brought the usual problems for a single issue campaign. In 2005 the annual AUT council meeting passed a resolution, initiated by BRICUP supporters, calling for the boycott of three Israeli universities, Haifa, the Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan, a resolution that was overturned a few months later by a specially convened AUT meeting after intense lobbying by Zionist anti-boycotters. NATFHE by contrast remained steadily committed to the Palestinian cause, passing a further resolution in 2006 urging teachers to consider their moral responsibilities before embarking on collaborations with Israeli institutions.

Resolution and counter-resolutions followed the subsequent merger of AUT and NATFHE within UCU, and increasing amounts of BRICUP's

energies were focussed on this struggle. One entertaining and highly educational event took place at a UCU conference fringe meeting convened by the UK academic anti-boycott committee. Sue Blackwell asked the Israeli academics if they were members of a trade union, as this was a union conference. After some shuffling around they admitted they were not; indeed it became clear that they had no idea of what a trade union was, thus revealing the emptiness of Israel's claim that Histadrut was a trade union in any meaningful sense.

In the same year, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) planned a meeting to discuss the boycott to be held at the Villa Serbelloni, on Lake Como, funded by Rockefeller and the Ford Foundation. Speakers from both PACBI and BRICUP were invited along with US and Israeli academics opposed to the boycott. Under intense Zionist pressure in the US, the foundations withdrew their funding and the conference was abandoned at the last minute, even though invitees had already booked their travel. Academic freedom, it seemed, was not unconstrained; even to discuss the boycott issue was taboo. AAUP stuck to its principles and proposed publishing the papers that the conference participants had prepared. With the exception of one human rights activist, the Israelis refused the invitation and the AAUP journal *Academe* appeared without them⁽⁵⁾.

In January 2006, in response to the AUT debates, Bar-Ilan University hosted a two day conference on *Academic Freedom and the Politics of Boycotts*. This was the converse of AAUP's principled stance. The conference was backed by an International Advisory Board for Academic Freedom, claiming to have been established 'to guarantee the academic freedom of Bar-Ilan University and other Israeli and non-Israeli institutions of Higher Education'. Despite this, no mention was made of the three year closure of a University not a hundred kilometres from Bar-Ilan - perhaps unsurprisingly as the executive committee of this 'international' board was composed solely of Israeli academics.

Bar-Ilan's refusal to engage with the boycotters was reflected in the UK. Zionist academics had initially been willing to take part in debates with BRICUP speakers, either at public meetings or in the media. The thinness of their arguments and the regularity of their defeat in such exchanges seems to have triggered a rethink, and they sought to silence the boycott case by refusing to put up speakers. At one university a debate scheduled on

a Saturday was cancelled because it would offend Jewish religious principles. At another, when the meeting went ahead anyhow, with Steven making the boycott case, his opponent, David Newman, the Israeli academic stationed in the UK with what can only be understood as a remit from the Israeli government to oppose the boycott (and in 2013 given an OBE from the British government for doing so), pulled out of the debate on the grounds that Saturday was sacred. However once his action had failed to kill the meeting he came anyhow and entered the debate arguing as robustly as if he was a platform speaker.

By 2008, after six years of campaigning, writing and debating, ill health made it necessary for us to stand down from the committee. But by that time BRICUP was established as a strong UK partner to PACBI, working in liaison with PSC. Internationally, the BDS campaign was spreading and chalking up successes. The cultural and political impact developing from the original moratorium call had succeeded beyond anything anyone could have imagined for a small self-funded group confronting the wealth of the Zionist lobby and its powerful allies. One symbol of this was that Netanyahu had early on recognised the threat to the Israeli universities and established a cabinet committee including high level academics to counter the boycott. The international movement is contributing to denormalising Israel's academics but there was and still is more to be done. What those six years were not able to do was to force Israel's withdrawal from the ERA; if anything it is even more firmly entrenched in the current Horizon programme than ever, as are Israel's collaborative links with the EU. Nonetheless while the neoliberal European member states and the EU show little difficulty in ignoring the conflict between Europe's founding commitment to human rights and Israel's murderous policies, civil society was becoming increasingly enraged.

Hilary Rose and Steven Rose

Notes.

⁽¹⁾ Hilary Rose and Steven Rose (2008) Israel, Europe and the academic boycott, *Race and Class*, **50** (1) 1-20

⁽²⁾ There were some Israeli protests about Birzeit. 295 Israeli academics and students signed a petition against its closure.

⁽³⁾ Editorial (2002) Don't boycott Israel's scientists, *Nature*

⁽⁴⁾ Colin Blakemore, Richard Dawkins, Denis Noble and Michael Yudkin (2003) Is a scientific boycott ever justified? *Nature*, **421**, 314

⁽⁵⁾ Omar Barghouti, Rema Hammami, Sondra Hale, Hilary Rose and Lisa Taraki (2006) *Academe: Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, 92 (5) 44-58

BRICUP - a 10 Year Progress Report

So, how are we doing?

In this article I will pick out some highlights of the ten years of BRICUP. There is of course no space to cover everything (and I apologise in advance for the grievous omissions that will no doubt emerge).

But before looking at BRICUP's year record I would like to lift a corner of the veil covering the organisation, to reveal something about how what is, I think, a rather successful operation, actually functions.

How BRICUP Works

I joined BRICUP just late enough to avoid any responsibility for naming it. There were then I should say about 10 members of the group, which had been functioning already for a few months. Of those more original ones only Sue Blackwell is still a BRICUP member. So we are talking here about an organisational continuity rather than a fixed set of individuals.

The basics of the organisation's modus operandi have continued broadly as inherited from those earlier days. Fundamental I think to our achievements is that we have remained a manageably small group, self-selecting our new recruits on the basis either of personal knowledge of abilities and political orientation, or of recommendations.

That may sound a touch elitist, but it was a choice made based on hard experience. Steven and Hilary Rose and I had all been members of a previous organisation, the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, which was inaugurated in 1969 (and survived through to the early 1990's – but that is a different story). BSSRS was a membership organisation, collecting subscriptions, organising local and working groups, producing a regular printed magazine. At one stage it had around 1200 members. But the overhead (voluntary) labour cost in servicing the membership took a significant chunk of the energies available at the organisational centre.

Members of BRICUP have come and gone. We have slowly grown to about 20 strong, which

could make monthly meetings unwieldy if everyone turned up, but that is a rare event. Early on there was a libertarian opposition to having a regular chair, but now it seems to be generally accepted that the advantages (organisational continuity, external representation) outweigh any risks of internal despotism. In fact decision-making is overwhelmingly consensual.

Discussion on particular actions continues until a broad consensus emerges. Nowadays BRICUP is organisationally perhaps a tad conventional, right down to the minuting of decisions.

Our committee members are clustered in London, but we also have members who commute to the monthly meetings from as near as Brighton and as far away as York and Leeds. BRICUP is in effect without resources – no premises, no paid staff, no cash. Being a BRICUP member is expensive – we operate a fares pool, and you generally don't get much change each month from a ten pound note. It is common practice for committee members who give media interviews or write articles to donate the fee to BRICUP. From time to time we read media reports of the research being carried out by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs into the funding of the BDS movement. If only....

BRICUP is more than its central committee. We have a very substantial mailing list of supporters, who are kept informed by our excellent monthly Newsletter (this one), edited since its inception in February 2008 by Professor David Pegg. This targeted information channel is complemented by our efforts, some more successful than others, to broadcast to larger audiences via the media and social media. Our much accessed website is looked after by Mike Cushman.

With this under-resourced and relatively tiny organisation we have set out to make waves. And there is no doubt that over most of the period since BRICUP was founded it has been, with the exception of PACBI (the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), the leading campaigning group for academic boycott anywhere in the world. That pre-eminence is, however, no longer so assured. Successes in other countries are in danger of leaving us behind. I will return to these recent developments later.

Solidarity for ever

In the early years of BRICUP the main, at times almost exclusive, activity was campaigning within the academic trade union UCU. The union cannot instruct its members to boycott Israel. But it could debate motions advising members to

examine their consciences about links with Israeli universities; it could discuss sending information to UCU members on the Israel/Palestine situation and in particular its impact on Palestinian universities; it could call on the executive to organise a speaking tour by Palestinian academics.

The value of the repeated debates at UCU annual congresses cannot be doubted. They provided a forum for debate attended by hundreds of the most socially involved UK academics. And when motions inspired by BRICUP were successful, it produced headlines and shock waves internationally, and particularly in Israel and the US. In fact right from the first congress after UCU was formed in 2006 (out of the merger of the two previous academic unions) our motions were successful. This was initially an enormous surprise, as we had been keeping our spirits up by hoping that our losing vote would be, at least, respectable. But then with each year the majorities in favour of the boycott position grew larger, until in the end the opposition preferred not to turn up.

In 2004 to speak out in favour of boycott in some institutions (mine for example) was to invite the sort of treatment formerly handed out to lepers. Now, though with a great deal of help from the biennial outrages committed by the Israeli state, boycott is widely accepted as a plausible and principled position to hold even by those who have not yet taken that final step.

Court room drama

One spin off from the long-running tussle for the heart and mind of UCU was what I have to call the "Ronnie Fraser affair". Fraser is a UCU member who set up a little pressure group called Academic Friends of Israel to fight the academic boycott. Operating through and with the legal representation of celebrity lawyer Anthony Julius (also Chair of the Board of the *Jewish Chronicle*), repeated legal threats were made against UCU which certainly had the effect of making the union's leadership very cautious about implementing Congress decisions. But in 2011 Fraser made the fatal error of actually taking UCU to court for alleged anti-Semitism. The Employment Tribunal was treated to a succession of 29 of his 'witnesses', and the case extended through 20 full sitting days in 2012, with the judgement delivered in 2013. It was devastating. The proceedings were dismissed "in their totality". "Lessons should be learnt from this sorry saga. We greatly regret that this case was

ever brought. At heart, it represents an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means.”

One interesting by-product of the testimony was the discovery that the sum of £70,000 had been distributed through the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council to fight the academic boycott movement. Some went to Ronnie Fraser’s group, and much more to Engage, a body specifically set up to defeat BRICUP. That sum is certainly more than 10 times greater than the total funds that BRICUP has spent in the ten years of its existence.

Spreading the message

With the battle within the union effectively decided, a range of other activities began to occupy more of BRICUP’s energies. In fact as early as 2007 we produced our booklet *Why Boycott Israeli Universities?* (now available also on the BRICUP website). It has stood the test of time, sadly as relevant and more urgent than when it was published. The booklet has been widely complimented – including the flattery of sister organisations in other countries reproducing it or adapting it to local circumstances.

BRICUP has held public meetings, and produced occasional other publications. Our speakers are always willing to talk at meetings organised by local groups. Indeed there has recently been a series of formally structured debates held at campuses in the North of England – York, Leeds, Sheffield. All resulted in strong pro-boycott votes; perhaps more significantly, votes were taken before the discussion as well as after, and demonstrated a decisive swing to the pro-boycott position once the arguments had been aired. The main factor which stops us from holding more debates like this is the difficulty in finding academics critical of Israel who will argue against the boycott position.

But these have not been the main ways in which we have got our message across.

Long-standing campaigns

One issue that has been running now for some years has been in the medical field, with Derek Summerfield, a BRICUP member, as the central figure. The campaign, fought significantly in the pages of the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, has established the failure of the Israel Medical Association to deal with the complicity of Israeli medics in the torture of Palestinian prisoners. This campaign has gained support from

hundreds of medical staff round the world, and its particular focus has been the demand for the IMA to be suspended from the World Medical Association. The election of Yoram Blacher, long-standing President of IMA, to be President of WMA was an effective blocking manoeuvre, but resistance continues under his successors. Creative attempts to get the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture or the BMA to take up the case have not yet paid off, but the campaign continues.

A parallel strand of activity has been running in the field of architecture. It concerns the complicity of the Israeli architecture profession in the illegal settlement project, the erasure of Palestinian heritage, and ethnic cleansing. This practice violates the ethical standards explicitly adopted by the International Union of Architects (UIA). The centre of this campaign is Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (<http://apjp.org/>), whose chair Abe Hayeem is also a BRICUP member. We provide a sounding board for the discussion of the opportunities and problems that they encounter.

The highpoint so far has been the decision by the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in March 2014 to call for the Israeli Association of United Architects to be suspended from UIA. The RIBA President, in cahoots with pro-Israeli forces both within and outside the association, has manoeuvred successfully (for the moment) to have this vote nullified. However in a statement read out at the triennial General Assembly and Congress of the UIA in Durban in August, the event’s patron Archbishop Tutu supported the call for the suspension of the Israeli architects association. This is not the final chapter in this tawdry episode.

Responding to events

At least until recently BRICUP could reasonably be described as lacking a strategic vision. (We are now trying to take a longer view through the innovation of holding periodical strategy meetings, which take place, after a self-catered lunch, on a weekend afternoon, to permit more extended discussions.) We have, broadly, been responding to events. It is just that there have been so many of these that we often find ourselves running to keep up. Our general approach has been to use our website, the media and social media in order to get our message into the public arena.

An early example of this approach occurred in 2009 when the Zionist Federation booked the Science Museum in London and the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry for 'Israeli Days of Science' – to promote Israel to impressionable 6th formers. Both buildings were picketed, and the accompanying press release generated a major hit: the story occupied the whole front page of the *Independent* newspaper.

Another year, another museum, in this case the Natural History Museum. It was 2011 when we discovered that NHM was a partner in an EU-funded research project (codename NANORETOX) in which another partner was the notorious Israeli cosmetics firm Ahava/Dead Sea Laboratories. Why is Ahava notorious? Two reasons - its location in an illegal settlement on the West Bank, and its plundering of Palestinian natural resources to make its cosmetics. The other dozen or so partners in the project included Kings College London. We worked with students at KCL to support them in their campus-based campaign; and took up the issue with the senior staff of the Museum.

A letter with illustrious signatories from the arts and sciences was published in the *Independent*. It protested the involvement of this major national institution with such an illegal enterprise. The newspaper thought that the letter merited an accompanying news piece. At a meeting with the Managing Director and Scientific Director of the Museum, BRICUP representatives discovered that there had been effectively no due diligence as to the bona fides of their partners. At the request of the museum we provided them with some proposals on how they might avoid such entanglements in future.

The European Union

A delegation to meet EU officials in Brussels revealed a similar state of affairs. There was at that time no willingness in the Commission to address the issue of Israeli institutions and enterprises using Israeli address as their location to cover for their operations in the Occupied Territories. We believe that this delegation, along with pressure from other organisations, helped to sensitise the EU to this issue. (With the collaboration of Keith Taylor MEP, we tabled a written question to EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and eventually obtained the response that "Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories are not eligible for EU funding for activities in the OPT". A result!) In 2013 the EU issued guidelines on this precise point which were fiercely opposed

by the Israelis. When it appeared that the EU might be teetering under this counter-attack, BRICUP (with its European sister organisations) organised a protest from academics across the continent. Within two days we had generated over 500 signatures from 13 member states to a letter to Lady Ashton, which appears to have strengthened her resolve.

That this was possible was due to the formation from 2010 of EPACBI (European Platform for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) as a body to coordinate just this sort of activity. The most established organisations within it are BRICUP and AURDIP (*Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine*). Other countries which are represented include Norway, Sweden, Catalonia, Ireland and Italy, as well as others that are less firmly established and come and go.

This situation represents a remarkable turn-around. For 6 or so years from its foundation BRICUP was the only such organisation in the world. This position left us feeling quite exposed! Now in addition to our European friends there are academic and cultural boycott organisations in the USA, Canada, India, Australia and elsewhere.

Cultural boycott

The Palestinian call which stimulated the foundation of BRICUP was for both cultural and academic boycott. While BRICUP members are predominantly academics, it has always seen cultural boycott as also being part of its remit. Over the past 2 years or so this aspect of BRICUP's work has grown.

Cultural boycott activity in Britain is dispersed over many organisations and individuals. Much of the energy goes into attempting to persuade popular singers and groups not to include Israel on their world tours. BRICUP's initial contribution was the skilful crafting of open letters to noted cultural figures asking them to cancel an announced visit – for example to pick up a literary prize. The letters were carefully researched, often deploying quotations from the targets against themselves, and as a result were widely circulated on the internet. Several times they made life quite difficult for the recipient. Notably, such a letter provoked a firestorm for Nadine Gordimer in South Africa in 2008 over her attendance at the celebrations of Israel's 60 years of existence. Other recipients of letters from BRICUP included bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff, novelist Amitav Ghosh and singer and poet Leonard Cohen. Author Russell Banks

cancelled his trip to the Jerusalem Literary Festival within 24 hours of receiving our letter. But even where the visit went ahead the resulting furore helped to spread the message to new sections of the public, and to other cultural figures.

Certainly the most celebrated refusenik has been Stephen Hawking, commonly described as the most famous scientist in the world. He had accepted an invitation to attend Shimon Peres' 'Presidential Conference' in the summer of 2013. There were many requests to reconsider, including a BRICUP-organised letter signed by 19 distinguished UK academics, predominantly scientists, plus Professor Noam Chomsky. In a joint operation by BRICUP and the Cambridge branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign we facilitated Hawking's request to be put in touch with senior Palestinian academics. His conclusion was to withdraw. In his letter to the Presidential office he said that it had been his intention in his speech to say that "the policy of the present Israeli government is likely to lead to disaster.... However, I have received a number of emails from Palestinian academics. They are unanimous that I should respect the boycott." Hawking's withdrawal is the single most cited success of the boycott campaign.

The next ten years

Of course no one can see that far into the future. Except that I am reasonably sure, sadly, that the need for BRICUP will be of at least that length.

One likely area of growing activity is the cultural boycott field. There has already been extensive activity in this area, not described above, in which a loosely organised group within which BRICUP members supply the largest single component has tackled the impact of Israel on our own cultural scene. The 'Brand Israel' strategy funded by their Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes Israel's academic and cultural achievements in an attempt to show "Israel's prettier face" (their words not mine) rather than images of its brutal oppression.

The opposition to the visit of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra to the 2011 Proms, and the protests against the invitation to Habima Israel's National Theatre to perform at the Globe in 2012 were crucial in bringing this group together – and in fomenting an extensive public discussion about Israel and cultural boycott. This summer's events at the Tricycle Theatre in London have shown a different aspect of Israel's cultural diplomacy, and the reaction to it. The Tricycle asked the Jewish Film Festival, due to be

held at the Tricycle, not to accept funding from the Israeli Embassy. In the ensuing brutal controversy the Culture Secretary linked arms with Israel's ambassador to force a retraction. The theatrical profession is up in arms about this.

More developments are to be expected in the New Year.

Another unexpected, and highly encouraging, development has come from the United States. A series of subject-specific academic associations have passed motions in support of boycott. The most significant, because largest, of these is the American Studies Association (ASA). It organised a several year long multi-stage process of discussion, ending with a debate at the annual conference last winter which was followed by a postal ballot of all its 4000 members. The vote came out in favour of boycott by two to one.

Breaking news comes from the American Anthropological Association. Pro-boycott campaigners decided to pursue the step-by-step approach of the ASA, in order to build the broadest possible support. In an attempt to pre-empt this, a motion was proposed at this year's conference to shut down debate on the boycott topic. On December 5th that motion was defeated. Nearly all of the 700 voting members present opposed the resolution, with only 52 voting in favour.

There are differences in circumstances and organisational forms between the United States and the United Kingdom. However in BRICUP we see it as a challenge to emulate the Americans in this, at least. Work has already begun.

What BRICUP can do depends on you – not just the current members of the committee, but also on our much larger band of supporters including those who read this Newsletter. If you would like to get involved in any of the sort of activities described here, or ones we haven't thought of yet, do please get in touch. Email addresses to make contact are on the BRICUP website.

Boycott is a tried and tested non-violent method by which those individually weak can, by banding together, influence the course of events. Academic boycott targets a particular weakness of the Israeli formation, as their universities are vulnerable to exclusion from normal academic commerce. Academic and cultural boycott provokes discussion among the up and coming generation, and among opinion formers. By making it ever more effective we help to harden the opinion, already crystalising in the UK as

elsewhere, that Israel's violation of civilized norms and human rights cannot be tolerated. Our boycott must move our governments towards sanctions.

Jonathan Rosenhead

Note

There have been many more activities than can be described here. An idea of their scope can be judged from the following, still incomplete, listing:

- Opposition to the British-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX), administered by the British Council, 2008
- Defence of principled members of the Politics Department at Ben Gurion University whose Department was threatened with closure due to their critical stance on government policies, 2012
- Support in the formative stages of the Irish academic boycott group *Academics for Palestine*
- Participation in the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre 2013
- Campaigning against the New York Technion-Cornell project (2013)
- Support of academics whose jobs were under threat due to their views on Israel - Terri Ginsberg at the University of North Carolina (2012), Jake Lynch at Sydney University (2013-14), Rabab Abdulhadi at San Francisco State University (2014), Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2014).

The Life and Times of Adah Kay

To her many friends and colleagues in BRICUP Adah Kay's sudden death in hospital on 12th November came as a dreadful shock. She had been battling with multiple myeloma since 2010, and had only a few weeks ago told us that her doctors had warned her she only had months to live. But as recently as October 27th she had hosted a gathering of BRICUP members and other friends in her home to meet her great friend the Israeli journalist Amira Hass and appeared in good spirits. It is thus with profound sadness and

sorrow that we mourn the passing of a remarkable woman, a woman who had had such a distinguished life and career and who had attracted such respect, admiration and love from those who knew her.

Adah was the daughter of Jewish refugees who left the Soviet Union after the revolution of 1917. She trained as a social anthropologist and urban planner and developed a career in social policy, research in urban planning and teaching, working in local government, universities and several NGOs. Between 1978 and 1986 she was Senior Research Fellow and Co-Director of the Housing Research Group at the City University and then for ten years was Director of Family Service Units working with deprived families and children. Her academic career based on those foundations comprised for example working as Visiting Professor in the Department of Sociology, City University, London and Honorary Visiting Professor in Cass Business School, in which time she wrote many texts and manuscripts on social housing and urban deprivation. Within this framework and a happy family life with husband Tom and two sons Leo and Finn, she maintained a lifelong commitment to social justice and human rights activism.

Analysis of her trajectory toward this activism is fascinating. This started from her early days through her membership of the Zionist socialist youth movement, Habonim, where she was encouraged to take part in vigorous political discussion and debates. She became involved in the peace movement in the early 1960s and went on the first march to Aldermaston. With Habonim she visited Israel twice as a teenager staying on kibbutzim for long summer breaks. In the summer of 1964 while studying at Edinburgh University, she obtained a grant to do three months of field work in Israel for her MA dissertation and in her own words "became increasingly discomforted and then outraged by the racism of Western Jews and turned from a Zionist into something else" and left the Habonim movement. After the Six Day War in 1967, she spent some time in anti-occupation politics. Both she and Tom were active in the UK in social politics throughout the 1960 and 1970s across a broad spectrum of issues including community activism around housing, planning, setting up the Camden Law Centre, women's liberation, childcare issues, the peace movement and many more. Together with four close friends, they set up the Camden Housing Action Group encouraging councils and housing associations through direct action to make use of

empty buildings to house the needy and homeless in the Borough of Camden. Adah and Tom joined the Communist Party and remained members from the late 1960s to mid-1970s. Their activism never diminished throughout the 1980s and 1990s and embraced for example CND, anti-apartheid demonstrations, support for the miner's strike and women's rights to name but a few.

Not surprisingly, with this background their attention returned to the Israel/Palestine conflict. They decided to go to Ramallah in 2002 and live and work there for some four years, supporting with great vigour the Palestinian cause for self-determination and release from occupation and apartheid. Tom taught architecture in Birzeit University and Adah worked as a volunteer in the DCI (Defence for Children International-Palestine Section) in Ramallah and studied in detail the fate of children imprisoned under administrative detention through Israeli military law as well as carrying out more generic research on Palestine society under military occupation.

Tom died in 2007 but Adah, determined to go on with their partnership in Palestine, redoubled her efforts and made many visits to the West Bank, tirelessly recording her experiences in lectures and writings. Having written copiously in her days in social work, she now wrote her first book on Palestine, co-authored with Adam Hanieh and Catherine Cook and in association with DCI(Palestine Section); this was titled *Stolen Youth: The Politics of Israel's Detention of Palestinian Children* and was based on her experiences whilst in Ramallah. More recently, and written whilst she was ill, she co-authored with Nadia Abu Zahra a second important book titled *Unfree in Palestine: Registration, Documentation and Movement Restriction* describing in minute detail how the Israelis seek to enmesh the Palestinians in an inescapable cobweb of bureaucracy designed to make it near impossible to lead a normal life. Both books were well reviewed for their honesty and meticulous attention to detail, although of course attracting the ire and protest of supporters of Israel right or wrong. In fact, in spite of abandoning any residues of Zionism from her traditional upbringing, Adah certainly did not turn her back on the best traditions of her ancestors. She joined *Jews for Justice for Palestinians* soon after they were founded in 2002 and was active too in *Independent Jewish Voices*. Her belief in non-violent resistance to oppression and injustice never wavered. She was active in the *Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-UK*

(ICAHD-UK) where incidentally I first realised the immense strength of character and integrity she possessed when as a Trustee she supported my brief period as Chairman of that organisation. She remained too a devoted and active Trustee of *Friends of Birzeit University (Fobzu)*. Her interest in boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as possible levers for change in the so-called peace process was even more strengthened when we in BRICUP were fortunate to recruit her to our ranks some three years ago. Her logical arguments and wise interpretation of facts were a huge asset that we all appreciated when promoting an academic boycott of Israeli institutions complicit in the occupation of Palestine.

As an effective additional arm to her activism she used theatre as a way of exposing injustice and hypocrisy to a wider public on stage. Her acerbic and dry wit came to the fore in *Welcome to Ramallah*, co-authored with playwright Sonja Linden, and produced at the Arcola Theatre in 2008. Even recently, in spite of failing health, she was Executive Director of *Visible*, a new company of older actors. Their first play called *Who Do We Think We Are?* was premiered at the Southwark Playhouse in October this year with Adah sitting in the front row of the audience. Perhaps that rhetorical question should be her epitaph. Who was Adah Kay? Those of us touched by her and especially those of us in BRICUP can answer that question to a limited extent but only her family can know all. For us, she was a tremendous and very special woman. She was ultra- intelligent, fearlessly original in thought, totally honest and contemptuous of hypocrisy, funny, caring and joyful, inspiring us all with her infectious enthusiasm and immense will to keep fighting in the face of evil forces. Physically she may have been small but as a person she was huge.

Colin Green

Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics

A series of academic research seminars designed for scholars working in the field will be held in the School of Humanities, University of Brighton. For further information, contact Tom Hickey at t.hickey@brighton.ac.uk

Time and place: fortnightly on Thursdays at 18.30-20.00 in Lecture Theatre G7, School of Humanities, University of Brighton, 10-11, Pavilion Parade, Pavilion Street, Brighton BN2 1RA

January 15th
Gilbert Achcar
(SOAS, University of London)
'The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives: History as a Battlefield'

January 29th
Bashir Abu-Manneh (University of Kent)
'Palestinian Trajectories: the Novel and Politics since 1948'

February 12th
Ilan Pappé (University of Exeter)
'The Settler Colonialist State of Israel: seeking an old-new scholarly paradigm for Palestine'

February 26th
Karma Nabulsi (University of Oxford)
'Rousseau's Notion of Popular Sovereignty: Mobilising for Palestinian Political Equality'

March 12th
Mazen Masri (City University)
'Citizenship in the 'Jewish and Democratic' State: the Dynamics of Legal Exclusion'

March 26th
Anna Bernard (Kings College, University of London)
'International Solidarity and Culture: Palestine on Camera'

Book review:

Smadar Lavie, "Wrapped in the flag of Israel : Mizrahi single mothers and bureaucratic torture"

This is a remarkable book by a remarkable woman. Lavie is a professor of anthropology and social activist. Through a set of personal circumstances explained in the book, she also has extensive first-hand experience of life as a single mother attempting to survive on shockingly inadequate social benefits in Israel. In these circumstances, she used her ethnographic training to observe and document her own life and women sharing her experiences. As she says in the book, "I was a welfare mother with no welfare. I was an ethnographer and autoethnographer".

Lavie's book is notable on many different levels. On one page, she can write technical and opaque sentences such as this (p81): "I argued that one learns to culturally construct race and gender differences as one simultaneously naturalizes them into essences". On another page the writing is personal, moving and poetic, such as this (p62): "The crisp and cool desert breeze came from the north and caressed our southbound backs". She moves quick as lightning from anthropological analysis, to sharp dissections of the political landscape, to highly personal and moving anecdotes, to cutting absurdist humour. Accompanying the writer on this journey is like sharing on a long, bumpy, bus ride with a person of great intellect, tough life experience, a cheeky sense of humour, and personal warmth. It is a worthwhile journey. As she says (p90): "I want you, my reader, not only to comprehend the text. I want you to survive it."

In the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, her most valuable contribution is her deep and personal understanding of the predicament of the majority Mizrahi community in Israel (the Mizrahim are Jews originating from formerly muslim countries, as opposed to the largely European-origin Ashkenazim). For my part, I confess to being largely ignorant of the Mizrahim and their significance in the politics of the Israel/Palestine conflict. I knew that much support for the right wing in Israel comes from the Mizrahim but did not really know why that is. I could also imagine that the predicament of poor Mizrahim, especially single mothers, would be very severe in Israel, but could not see that as anything but a sideshow to far bigger political

issues. Lavie argues convincingly otherwise. Her presentation places the domination of the Ashkenazim over the Mizrahim as the central fact of internal Israeli politics. The settlement policies, and the periodic conflagrations in Israeli/Palestine relations, cannot be understood without taking into account Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dynamics. She describes how the dominant Ashkenazi ruling class keep Mizrahi social protest in check by provocation of the Palestinians. She describes the astonishing series of bureaucratic hurdles facing poor Mizrahi women as "torture" - a term that initially grated with me, since it appears to place excessive paperwork on the same level as the infliction of physical pain. However, after reading her personal experiences and anecdotes the term no longer seemed so inappropriate.

Above all, her book provides a vivid sense of what life is like for the majority of Israeli Jews, how they think, what really concerns them, and what constrains them. That is essential knowledge for anyone interested in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Smadar Lavie has written a very insightful and original book.

Malcolm Levitt

www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?rowtag=Lavie
[Wrapped](#)

Notices

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

Letters to the Editor

Please note that we do have a "Letters to the Editor" facility. We urge you to use it. It provides an opportunity for valuable input from our supporters and gives you the opportunity to contribute to the debate and development of the campaign. Please send letters to arrive on or before the first day of each month for consideration for that month's newsletter. Aim not to exceed 250 words if possible. Letters and

comments should also be sent to newsletter@bricup.org.uk

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

Arranging meetings and lobbying activities are expensive. We need funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that a busy campaign demands.

Please do consider making a donation .

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 Sort Code 08-92-99

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