

AN OPEN LETTER TO OHAD NAHARIN,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY

[Note to editors: the Batsheva Ensemble from Israel is due to perform in venues across England between November 2 and 24]

Dear Ohad Naharin,

When the Israeli dance company of which you're artistic director, Batsheva, performed at the Edinburgh International Festival earlier this year, Scots writers and artists and many other citizens of the United Kingdom [made public](#) their objection to EIF's inclusion of a company hailed by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a '[global ambassador of Israeli culture](#)'.

Since August 30, when Israeli cabinet minister Limor Livnat and ambassador Daniel Taub attended Batsheva's first performance, have prospects improved in any way for millions of Palestinians living in forced exile or under occupation? For all the talk of culture promoting the cause of peace, did your appearance in Edinburgh do anything to persuade the government of Israel to respect Palestinian human rights and international law? We've been looking for evidence, but sadly we can't find any.

On the contrary – since Batsheva danced in Edinburgh, the authorities in Israel have:

- [opened fire](#) on a group of thirty Palestinian fishermen casting nets into the sea off the Gaza coast at around 9.30 in the morning on September 28, killing 23-year old Fahmy Abu-Rayyash;
- used batons, rubber bullets and tear gas on Palestinian worshippers inside the precincts of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem [on October 5](#), injuring fifteen people;
- stood by while Israeli settlers [vandalised](#) more than 870 Palestinian olive trees in the occupied West Bank in early October, the start of the olive harvest. Since the beginning of 2012, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has recorded the destruction of more than 7000 Palestinian olive trees;

Please reply to: BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London WC1N3XX

email: bricup@bricup.org.uk
www.bricup.org.uk

- applauded when Israel's Supreme Court [upheld](#) the authorities' refusal to allow five women from besieged Gaza to travel to universities in the occupied West Bank to pursue master's degrees in gender studies. This decision, on September 28, allows Israel to continue to treat Palestinians from Gaza who wish to travel to study in the West Bank as 'enemy citizens';
- paid no visible attention when the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) [reported](#) on September 5 that 'food insecurity affects two of every three Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory...The economy has lost access to 82 per cent of [West Bank] ground water, and more than two thirds of its grazing land. In Gaza, half of the cultivable area and 85 per cent of fishery resources are inaccessible'.

Ohad Naharin, we could go on. Are you really willing to allow yourself and your dancers to be used as 'ambassadors' for a culture built on systematic dispossession and repression? What does the artistic freedom of yourself and your dancers mean, when it's used as international cover by a state that's essentially trying to force out the indigenous Palestinian population? Can you shepherd your performers onto stages across England this November – financed by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Israeli ambassador or his entourage in the best seats – and feel peace of mind?

'Don't dance with Israeli apartheid' – that's what protestors in Edinburgh urged on you and Batsheva. We say the same thing. You can at least decline Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding, and state publicly that Batsheva will not be used to cover up the Occupation. We hope you will.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth
Mike Cushman
Professor Adah Kay
Professor Jonathan Rosenhead

London, 22 October 2012