

**OPEN LETTER TO GIL SCOTT-HERON****16 April 2010**

Dear Gil Scott-Heron:

Those of us for whom 'Winter in America' was one of the great premonitory songs of the 1970s are so glad to have you back. It was harrowing to see you swallowed up for a time 'in a nation that just can't stand much more'.

But Gil Scott-Heron, please, tune your old struggle antennae a little more finely. You've agreed to play a gig in Tel Aviv on May 25. Tel Aviv is not a neutral location. Whose ghosts stalk the streets if not the ghosts of the Palestinian society that was smashed to smithereens in 1948? It's not for nothing the Palestinians call what happened to them in 1948 the Nakba – the Catastrophe. In the Barbie club in Tel Aviv, you'll be playing for their conquerors – the victors. It's like playing for Andrew Jackson in Alabama in 1814, or Robert E. Lee at Harpers Ferry – only even worse...

Because, for the Israeli government, the war against the Palestinians is not yet over. Just this week, Israel has promulgated two military orders which, says Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, 'will allow army officers to carry out mass expulsions' of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories (Ha'aretz, 12 April 2010). Some of those army officers might be in the Barbie on May 25 – you won't know.

But what you have in your hands right now is the power to act publicly in support of the Palestinians. They're asking musicians and other performers not to play in Israel. 'From South Africa to South Carolina' – you've always made it clear that struggles are connected. And you surely know that what you think and say matters to a lot of people. Please, don't lend your credibility to a state still practising ethnic cleansing. Please don't go.

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