

## AN OPEN LETTER TO NADINE GORDIMER

*from the British Committee  
for the Universities of Palestine  
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Sunday 13 April 2008

Dear Nadine Gordimer:

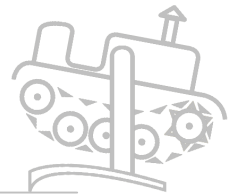
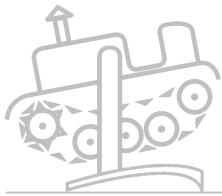
Many of us who paid attention to, and valued, your writing during the dark days of apartheid are dismayed to see that you are participating in the International Writers' Festival in Israel in May.

It can only send a dispiriting message to the Palestinians that a writer of your moral standing and international renown is prepared to appear in a city at least half of which is under illegal military occupation by a state founded on ethnic cleansing. ('Ethnic cleansing' isn't just our term -- it's what Israeli historian Ilan Pappé says he has finally accepted is the most accurate description for what Israeli forces did to the Palestinians in 1948.)

Think of a Palestinian villager in the occupied West Bank -- hemmed in by Israeli army roadblocks, cut off from her fields by the Wall, the water in her wells drained by a nearby settlement, some of her sons and daughters in prison without charge or trial, her other children unable to leave the village to go to school. There are hundreds of thousands like her. In this context, isn't it a contradiction to be sitting in occupied Jerusalem, discussing the morality and responsibility of 'the writer' with Amos Oz?

We take it as given that you still believe everything you said during apartheid times about the responsibility of the writer not to ignore injustice, and about your hatred of racism. But how does your visit square with this? By taking part in an event substantially funded by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, you will be lending credibility to the state that has for decades subjected Palestinian towns and villages to collective punishment, that boasts of its extrajudicial killings, that carpeted south Lebanon with cluster bombs in 2006 when the ceasefire had already been agreed (the list truly is endless).

In one of your essays you describe Professor John Dugard as a friend. You must know that in his capacity as UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, John Dugard unequivocally denounced the wrongs inflicted on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. His doing so has not brought Palestinian suffering to an end. But he did, to his great credit, unmask the systematic cruelty of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians.



The whole of Palestinian civil society has called for a cultural boycott of Israel. Please don't give the Israeli establishment, the Israeli press, the whole Israeli PR machine, the prize they want — your apparent condoning of their policies.

Your reputation as a figure of conscience is world-wide. Your withdrawal from the May event will have a great impact on an Israeli public largely in denial about the cruelties it perpetrates. Please don't go.

Yours sincerely,

***Professor Hilary Rose***

***Professor Steven Rose***

***Professor Jonathan Rosenhead***

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