

**PRESS RELEASE – 4th February 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Boycott group promises to disrupt Israeli “greenwash”

The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP) has condemned an environmental exhibition and lecture series being hosted by the Zionist Federation on 9th February, dismissing it as "greenwashing the occupation".

The ZF promises "a series of lectures by top [Israeli] scientists" for school students, entitled "Israel and the Environment 2010", along with an exhibition on "solar energy, water management and desert agricultural development". The evening event for the general public, "Israel Blue White and Green", features a special guest appearance from botanist David Bellamy.

BRICUP has written to Bellamy urging him to pull out, saying that he should be "outraged ... at the prospect of Israel presenting itself (especially to relatively unformed minds) as a champion of environmentalist virtues" and accusing the ZF of trying to "greenwash" Israel's reputation. It lists a catalogue of Israel's environmental crimes, including dumping untreated sewage and waste water from West Bank settlements onto Palestinian agricultural land; uprooting over 1½ million olive trees, and creating sewage lakes by destroying Gaza's waste treatment system.

The letter has 97 signatories, predominantly UK academics but also including Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire, Clare Short MP, two peers and three prominent Israeli academics. The 83 British academics include 41 full Professors.

Last year BRICUP, which campaigns for the boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions, made front-page news when it staged a protest outside the ZF's event for schoolchildren at the London Science Museum, drawing attention to the domination of Israeli science by the military. The group is planning a similar non-violent protest at this year's event.

According to Professor Mohamed El Gomati of the University of York Electronics Department, Israel's untreated sewage from its settlements in the West Bank is being dumped into the valleys, polluting Palestinian agriculture and water sources. "This is adding environmental vandalism to the illegality of the occupation" he said.

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Professor David Pegg of York University said, "Israel's illegal West Bank settlements have been stealing Palestinian water, and their over-pumping is drastically reducing the level of the water table. This is the opposite of environmentally responsible behaviour".

Professor Pegg drew attention to Amnesty International's report last year entitled "Troubled Waters – Palestinians denied fair access to water", which states:

"The inequality in access to water between Israelis and Palestinians is striking. Palestinian consumption in the OPT is about 70 litres a day per person – well below the 100 litres per capita daily recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) – whereas Israeli daily per capita consumption, at about 300 litres, is about four times as much. ... Access to water resources by Palestinians in the OPT is controlled by Israel and the amount of water available to Palestinians is restricted to a level which does not meet their needs and does not constitute a fair and equitable share of the shared water resources. Israel uses more than 80 per cent of the water from the Mountain Aquifer, the only source of underground water in the OPT, as well as all of the surface water available from the Jordan River of which Palestinians are denied any share."

Furthermore, BRICUP members pointed out that according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its "Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip following the escalation of hostilities in December 2008 - January 2009", drinking water in Gaza is now saline, with high levels of nitrates, causing methemoglobinaemia (blue baby syndrome) in young children.

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead of the London School of Economics, who visited Gaza shortly before the Israeli bombardment, expressed astonishment at the staging of these events: "For Israel to be held up as the environmental 'good guy' while it is destroying the environment of the West Bank and Gaza is like Machiavelli posing as a supporter of open government".

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. For further information contact:
Prof. Jonathan Rosenhead 07969 961775
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2. The ZF is planning events on Feb 9th - one during the day for school pupils in years 11-13, and one in the evening for the general public. The daytime event is called "Israel and the Environment 2010"; the evening one is "Israel: Blue White and Green". Israeli environmental scientists will talk about "the advances Israeli scientists have made to helping the planet". These events are listed on the ZF website. <http://www.zionist.org.uk/index.php?id=39&event=233>

3. BRICUP can be contacted at info@bricup.org.uk. Its website is at www.bricup.org.uk.
4. The Amnesty International 2009 report “Troubled Waters - Palestinians denied fair access to water” can be found at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/027/2009/en/e9892ce4-7fba-469b-96b9-c1e1084c620c/mde150272009en.pdf>
5. The Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel can be found at www.pacbi.org.
6. The full text of BRICUP’s letter to David Bellamy is attached.