

Hugo Berlyn
Editor
BBC News and Sports Interactive

31 December 2009

Dear Mr Berlyn

We have received your reply to our complaints about the BBC News online report of 18 December of the meeting we, BRICUP and SOAS PalSoc, jointly organised in SOAS on 4 December. Your reply answers none of the many and serious criticisms we each made of the report.

At no time has anyone from the BBC contacted BRICUP about the meeting to ask for our comment and the request to SOAS PalSoc required an answer within 30 minutes – an impossible turnaround time for a student society, especially out of term time. There was no need for such pre-emptory demands as this was not a breaking news story that had to be filed within tight deadlines.

You refer to a report in the Jewish Chronicle, this is not a newspaper that neither is disinterested in this matter nor comes to it without a clearly articulated and public agenda. You also see the Board of Deputies and the Zionist Federation as interested parties but not the chair nor any of the speakers at the meeting.

You refer in your reply to amending the article to take account of the differing views of what had happened at the meeting but not to amending the article in view of what was clearly audible on the video of the meeting, made available immediately after the meeting on the internet by the meeting organisers.

As the BBC has not admitted publically that the first report contains glaring and serious errors, copies of that article are still circulating and being referred to as evidence of malfeasance by the organisers, causing serious harm and deflecting attention from the purpose of the meeting, Israel, the Palestinians and Apartheid: the case for boycott and sanctions – a purpose never referred to in either version of the story.

We therefore request you revisit our original complaints and address the points we made in detail. We therefore ask the BBC to make a public statement that the original story contains multiple errors of fact and make unjustifiable claims and is a piece of journalism of which falls far short of their expected standards. So that reproduction of the article or uncritical reference to it can be contested by ourselves and the BBC.

Mike Cushman
for BRICUP

Elian Weizman
for SOAS Palestine Society