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Our secretive university administrators who would collaborate with Israel while ignoring Palestine

Robert Boyce

Late last November, in great secrecy, a delegation of ten UK universities (eleven including an affiliated medical and dental school) travelled to Israel to discuss 'research priorities and potential collaboration between British and Israeli scholars ...in preparation for Brexit,' according to a single report in Jewish News reprinted from The Times of Israel.

BRICUP, learning of the delegation's visit, enquired of the professional body, Universities UK, if it was responsible and were told it was not. BRICUP then enquired of the Minister for Universities if he was responsible, but received no reply. BRICUP therefore wrote to the vice-chancellors or principals of the universities named in the report, as follows:

Dear Sir/Madam

We understand that you or a representative of your University participated in the UK Universities delegation to Israel in November 2018. In the interests of collegial transparency, we would be most grateful if you could provide us with the following items of information.

1. As you no doubt know, the transfer by an Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies is illegal

under the Fourth Geneva convention 49(6), and classified as a war crime by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 8.2(b)(viii). Accordingly, this action by Israel is regarded as illegal by the British Government, the [United Nations Security Council](#), the [United Nations General Assembly](#), the [International Court of Justice](#), and the [High Contracting Parties](#) to the Fourth Geneva Convention. It follows that collaboration with institutions built wholly or partly on illegally appropriated land, including Ariel University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, may itself constitute being an accessory to a war crime. Does the delegation intend to permit or encourage collaboration with any such institution?

2. Israel indirectly controls the Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza, and makes professional life at these universities as difficult as possible. In the past year it has carried out several armed raids on these universities and deliberately excluded many, possibly most, academics at these universities who do not hold permanent residence permits. This includes many Palestinians whose families were made refugees by Israel and who travel, therefore, on Jordanian, Lebanese or other passports. Did the delegation take the time to visit any Palestinian universities during their tour? Is it prepared to recommend preferential arrangements with Israeli universities while ignoring the plight of the Palestinian universities whose needs are far greater?

3. Israel systematically discriminates against Americans of Palestinian origin seeking to enter the country (<https://jru.usconsulate.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/entering-exiting/>), and on at least one occasion it has refused admission to a UK post-doctoral student of Palestinian origin seeking to participate in a British Council-funded research project. Is the delegation prepared to recommend a UK-Israel university partnership, knowing in advance that it can be expected to involve racial discrimination against some UK citizens?

4. Was the delegation aware of the numerous contributions that Israeli Universities make to Israel's illegal colonisation of Palestinian land? If so, does it have in mind mechanisms to prevent British universities, in their collaboration with Israeli universities, from any association with these serious breaches of international law?

5. Did the delegation take the opportunity to make representations to their Israeli hosts concerning the illegality and severity of the

Yours etc.

The universities participating in the delegation were Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, King's College London, Lancaster, Manchester, Queen Mary's University of London (and the affiliated London School of Medicine and Dentistry), Queen's College Belfast and Warwick.

Of the ten, four confirmed that they had indeed participated in the delegation. One stated that its delegate did not visit either Ariel or the Hebrew University, while leaving it unclear if other delegates did so or not. Another reported that its delegate also intended to visit An-Najah University in the Occupied Palestinian Territories after visiting Israel, although it seems that in this regard it was acting alone. These exceptions aside, none of the respondents directly addressed any of the questions in BRICUP's letter. The spokesperson for the University of Manchester vice-chancellor curtly refused even to divulge who had organised or led the delegation.

At a time when Israel for the nth time is the subject of credible accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity (see the interview with Dr Tarek Loubani on page x in this issue), it is little short of scandalous that any UK university administrator should seek closer relations with state supported institutions in Israel, and moreover to do so while ignoring Palestinian universities which struggle to function in face of Israel's deliberately obstructive policies.

But perhaps the most important point is what did not happen last November. It may be fanciful to suggest it, but it is just possible that the other hundred-odd UK degree-giving institutions heeded their conscience and chose not to participate at all in the aforementioned delegation.

Ariel University degrees

Richard Seaford

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Ariel University, built on stolen Palestinian land and closed off to the local inhabitants, was the subject of [an article](#) in last November's Newsletter (126).

The resolution below has now been passed unanimously at a General Meeting of Exeter UCU. It should be uncontroversial, as it simply states a fact. And yet it can serve as a basis for publicising the issue on other university bodies such as the Admissions Department, the Ethics Committee, and the Senate to ensure acknowledgement of the obvious, that the University should not be - or be seen to be - complicit in lawbreaking.

If you are interested in pursuing this winnable and potentially significant initiative, please note that nobody can hide behind the body that evaluates foreign degrees for UK Universities (NARIC). I have a statement from NARIC (11/09/2018) that *'we do not oversee recognition; universities – all of which are NARIC subscribers – are fully responsible for their admissions and none is obliged to accept NARIC's opinions.'*

Resolution

Exeter UCU notes that Israeli settlements in occupied territory constitute a breach of international law, as is affirmed by (among others) the British Government, the United Nations (Security Council and General Assembly), the International Court of Justice, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention.

Exeter UCU notes therefore that, because Ariel University is built in a settlement, for the University of Exeter to recognise degrees from Ariel University, or to collaborate with Ariel University in any way, would be complicity in the breaking of international law.



Political solutions: Just Peace in Palestine

Les Levidow, Jewish Network for Palestine (JNP) and BRICUP

Seven decades after the Nakba, the whole of Palestine remains directly or indirectly under Israeli control, with no movement on final state negotiations, and with more than four million Palestinians living under illegal military rule, with no human, political, property or other rights. The now-normalised, meaningless support for the 'Two-State Solution' is just a cover for continuing the status quo.

What drives the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict? This question is answered in a new lecture series: '**Beyond the Settler-Colonial Project**'. The series is sponsored by the SOAS Palestine Society and the newly-formed Jewish Network for Palestine (JNP; see below). The first event – **Political Solutions: Just Peace in Palestine** – was held on 25 March.

Political Solutions: Just Peace in Palestine- a report

Emperor's New Clothes

Professor Neve Gordon (Queen Mary University of London) started with the fable about The Emperor's New Clothes. As all the townspeople are told, it would be foolish not to see that the Emperor is wearing a beautiful robe, so everyone praises it accordingly. Eventually a young boy points out the obvious. This fable serves as an instructive analogy with the official storyline about the Israel-Palestine conflict since the 1967 Occupation.

As Neve Gordon explained, a 'two-state solution' has been made impossible by Israel intensively colonising the West Bank – firstly with new immigrants, and later with Orthodox Jews, who have a much higher birth rate than any other group in the area. Each time negotiations are announced, moreover, Israeli-Palestinian violence subsides and so more Israeli Jews take up the financial incentives to settle in the West Bank. Major donors to Palestine (especially the EU) continue to fund 'state-building' projects, despite half-knowing that a Palestinian state cannot happen. As ways beyond the settler-colonial apartheid project, he described several proposals

from within Israel, in particular: both communities should have equal status and parity of esteem.



Credit: Carlos Latuff,

<https://latuffcartoons.wordpress.com>

Dr Ghada Karimi described how the settler-colonial project has fragmented and dispersed the Palestinian people. They want the option to live in dignity in their homeland; this would require the Right of Return. All this was pre-empted by the 1993 Oslo Accord. The Palestine National Authority has always been subordinate to the Israeli regime yet pretends to be a government and sucks people into such illusions, e.g. by appointing 'Ministers' and soliciting recognition of a Palestinian state. Such illusions help Israel to continue its colonisation project. Rather than pretend to have a government, Palestinians should form the leadership of an occupied people resisting the occupier. Palestinians should demand equal rights for all in a single democratic state.

After the two talks, discussion considered many issues. There were recurrent analogies with the anti-apartheid struggle that eventually helped to end the South African regime after three decades. That experience has some similarities but also great differences with the Israel-Palestine context. Western governments have become strong allies of the Israeli regime, for several reasons, e.g. Palestine as a laboratory for weapons testing, Israel as a central partner for high-tech military-security technology, and identification with Israel for an Islamophobic agenda. The BDS campaign has been a significant means to pressurise the Israeli regime -- symbolically through the boycott stigma, and materially through the disinvestment campaign. Modest successes have provoked a fierce, well-funded anti-BDS campaign, deploying false allegations of antisemitism. The BDS campaign will continue to be a crucial means of weakening the Israeli regime and the West's support for it.

Let us return to the fable, whose retelling often omits the end:



"But he hasn't got anything on!", the whole town cried out at last. The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, "This procession has got to go on." So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all.

Noblemen still hold high the train....

Credit: alamy.com

Likewise, despite hardly anyone regarding a two-state solution as practicable, most politicians speak as if its denial would be foolish: 'This procession must go on'. The cover story is needed by the many political forces which (passively or actively) collude with the Israeli settler-colonial project, especially Western governments, politicians and the Palestine National Authority. Beyond debunking the illusion, we have a greater task to undermine their active collusion, while counterposing realistic democratic alternatives.

For Neve Gordon's analysis of the 'two-state solution', see these two articles: '[How Israel's Occupation Shifted](#)'; and '[Western Interests, Israeli Unilateralism, and the Two-state Solution](#)'.

JNP's agenda

The lecture series is organised by Jewish Network for Peace (JNP), which emerged from discussions with the US organization Jewish Voice for Peace. In 2017 JVP contacted some London supporters to suggest that they organise locally, leading to the more ambitious aim of a national organisation modelled on JVP. From amongst JVP's UK members, about 500 people expressed interest to join.

In September 2018 JNP's inaugural meeting, attended by over 60 people, adopted several aims which include: promoting political support for the BDS campaign, as well as for the Palestinian

Right of Return; advocating a democratic secular state in all of historic Palestine, as the only just remedy for the Zionist settler-colonial project; working towards a wide-ranging progressive coalition of UK Jewish and other organisations in support of a negotiated, just solution in Palestine; and influencing the public debate in the UK. JNP has also started outreach to Muslim and Christian groups.

Early this year, JVP in the US adopted a [statement](#) opposing Zionism; this will be considered by JNP.

The lecture series continues with Professor Gilbert Achcar speaking on his book, [The Arabs and the Holocaust](#). **Details: 6pm Weds 24th April at SOAS, Paul Webley Wing, 1st floor Room SALT. More information will be available on JNP's [Facebook page](#).**

Pro-Palestine students denied university access during Queen's visit

Editor

See the report in the [Middle East Eye](#) on Wednesday March 20th by **Amandla Thomas-Johnson**; also [a Guardian report](#) on the issue on 22nd March,

Pro-Palestine students at Kings College London reported that they were denied university access over security concerns during a visit by the Queen on the 19th March.

Ten students said they were barred from all campuses, libraries and cafes and unable to attend exams, work shifts, classes and assessed presentations because of their political activity. This claim appears to be supported by comments made by a senior university official, who said that students were blacklisted based on CCTV footage. The corporate-style electronic entry gates at King's College makes it easy to lock students out by turning off their electronic ID cards.

Drawn from Action Palestine and KCL Justice4Cleaners, a fair-wage campaign for cleaning staff, they said in a statement: "*The students affected by this are all core organisers of campaigns that have established themselves as effective, successful and resistant to university apathy and reaction.*"

Coming one day into Israeli Apartheid Week, the incident raises fresh questions about the increased securitisation of universities and tolerance of dissent on campus. In response to complaints over their action, the administration issued the following statement to staff and students:

‘Any event involving high profile guests, as a university we need to consider minimising movement through parts of the campus. At times on Tuesday some buildings were not accessible. We acknowledge and apologise for the fact that this caused some disruption.’ The University has now commissioned a *‘full and independent review of the arrangements to assess the processes that were followed’*.

The following letter is currently gathering signatures from KCL staff and students

To: Professor Edward Byrne- President and Principal, Professor Nicola Phillips- Vice-President and Vice-Principal (Education).

On 19th March 2019, no less than ten politically active King’s College London students were blocked from entering the University on the occasion of a visit by the Royal Family to open Bush House. This ban included all campuses, libraries and cafes, and prevented students from attending exams, work shifts, classes and assessed presentations. No students were alerted ahead of time this would be happening. A tweet released on the KCL account on the same day at 14:39 claimed that for security reasons "some of our buildings were inaccessible." However, we understand that rather than, or in addition to, certain buildings being inaccessible to all, particular students were banned from all buildings. Campus security told students that KCL had been advised by Metropolitan Police to ban students who are considered a potential security threat during the visit, and student names were allegedly passed on to the Metropolitan Police by KCL Security with no evidence of law-breaking, and without their knowledge or permission.

As KCL staff and students, we are deeply concerned by this preemptive act of exclusion from campus of students without just cause. This constitutes an alarming securitization of campus and an act of profiling of students based not on any evidence that they are guilty of wrongdoing, but rather a suspicion that they might potentially commit harmful acts at some point in the future. None of the students subject to this exclusion have any record of university misconduct. Such profiling of students is based on the political viewpoints and racial and national identities of

students, and violates the commitment of KCL to providing a safe and inclusive academic community and campus for all. Additionally such exclusion is in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and appears to contravene the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

At a time of heightened racism in the UK and globally, Tuesday's events appear to evidence a policy of racial profiling that targets students of colour. Barring students of colour from university buildings suggests that the College's professed concern about the 16.1% BME attainment gap is window-dressing for an institution that treats BME students with contempt and suspicion.

Card readers at campus entrances have been installed as a security measure, ostensibly to 'protect' the student body. While this logic is already questionable insofar as it ensures the university remains an elitist and exclusive space, we find it now being used against the students, presumably to safeguard the College's reputation. It also suggests that management's limited engagement with students running political campaigns to date has been a sham - arguably, the meetings held have been a data-gathering exercise. This spurious use of 'security' encourages a culture of fear, suspicion, mistrust, and functions as a blanket reason for all kinds of repressive measures.

We ask for an explanation of the process by which this decision was taken, an apology from the KCL administration to these students, and a commitment not to engage in such acts of unjustified profiling and exclusion again.

Signed

BRISMES writes to Universities UK about the IHRA definition of Anti-semitism

To Professor Dame Janet Beer: President,
Universities UK

24 January 2019

Dear Professor Beer,

I write on behalf of the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) following a number of discussions within the BRISMES Council and the wider organization concerning the UK government's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and its dissemination to UK universities in February 2017.

BRISMES was founded in 1973 to encourage and promote the study of the Middle East in the United Kingdom. It is the leading UK association in this field, publishing the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies and has hundreds of academic, student and professional members worldwide.

The IHRA definition of antisemitism, adopted by the UK government in December 2016, states:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

This is followed by 11 examples of contemporary antisemitism. Some of these examples of contemporary antisemitism refer specifically to Israel and are the source of concern for BRISMES. With respect to our mission, we condemn without reservation antisemitism and any form of racism and pledge to support UK universities' efforts to eliminate this. At the same time, we wish to bring to your attention the concerns of our members that the IHRA definition with its examples is being used to undermine freedom to teach and research on Israel and Palestine without fear of being accused of antisemitism.

Whilst universities have an obligation to prevent hate speech on campuses, they also have an obligation to ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. There are already cases in which the IHRA definition has been used to close down discussion of Israel that is not *prima facie* antisemitic. This is despite the

fact that the IHRA definition is non-legally binding. For example, in 2017, the University of Central Lancaster banned an event entitled ‘Debunking misconceptions on Palestine’, claiming that it contravened the IHRA definition adopted by the government.

Even where universities do not directly intervene to ban or block discussions of Israel, nonetheless, by suggesting that criticisms of Israel may be antisemitic, the IHRA definition creates a chilling atmosphere for many of our members who teach and research on matters concerning Israel and Palestine, as well as their students. The University and College Union (UCU), noting that the IHRA definition had been used to ‘intimidate academics who are engaged in activities that are critical of the policies of the Israeli government but that are not anti-semitic’, voted to disassociate itself from the IHRA definition at its congress in 2017.

Academics employed on temporary contracts as well as students are particularly susceptible to self-censorship out of fear that any sort of accusations, even if false and malicious, could jeopardize their future ability to obtain permanent employment. In this respect, the IHRA definition undermines academic freedom and freedom of speech. In particular, the example that states that it may be antisemitic to ‘deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour’ risks stifling open discussions concerning the conditions under which Israel was established, Israeli state policies, Zionist ideology and their ongoing implications for Palestinian human rights. A number of legal and other experts have found the definition to be deficient on a number of grounds. In March 2017, Hugh Tomlinson QC stated that ‘The IHRA “non-legally binding working definition” of antisemitism is unclear and confusing and should be used with caution’. Similarly, Geoffrey Robertson QC issued an opinion on 31 August stating that ‘the definition does not cover the most insidious forms of hostility to Jewish people and the looseness of the definition is liable to chill legitimate criticisms of the state of Israel and coverage of human rights abuses against Palestinians’.

The above considerations are strong evidence for our view that the IHRA definition is incompatible with principles of academic freedom, and likely to stifle freedom of speech in the university system. We urge you therefore to consider UUK's position on the matter, to issue a public statement representing the grave concerns of BRISMES,

and to disseminate our concerns to UK universities.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Laing, BRISMES President

Cc Vivienne Stern

Leeds University (Students) Union forum votes on the IHRA definition of antisemitism

Editor

Earlier this month, a panel of 15 students voted on student-proposed ideas that the Leeds University Union (LUU) could implement to combat anti-Semitism. This included the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism and its list of examples.

At the forum, there was debate both for and against adopting all of the examples listed with the IHRA definition. Ten students voted for the idea and 5 students voted against it, demonstrating a clear majority in favour, but not the technical majority of 75% required to pass an idea into policy within LUU's democratic system. The Student Executive declared its intention to continue to combat antisemitism on campus and further their support for the Jewish student community.

This event was followed by hostile reports in the [Yorkshire Evening Post](#), [Guardian](#), [Tab](#) (student newspaper) and [Jewish Chronicle](#) (almost certainly originating with Leeds JSOC, which put the IHRA motion forward). These reports were confirmed by those present to be quite inaccurate.

A number of people have written letters to these organs, putting the record straight – but none of these letters seems to have been published.

Students at 30 UK campuses demand end to complicity in Israel apartheid

See report in the Middle East Monitor [here](#)

Students at more than [30 UK universities](#) are taking action on their campuses today “to protest their institutions’ complicity in Israel’s violations of human rights”,

This national day of action occurred during the internationally-observed Israeli Apartheid Week as part of PSC’s ongoing “Apartheid Off Campus” campaign, which “seeks to highlight how universities’ investment and partnership policies tacitly support and enable Israel’s ongoing violations of international law and human rights”.

One example being highlighted by students is the University of Manchester’s ongoing investment in the company [Caterpillar](#), “which supplies the armoured bulldozers for the Israeli army to demolish Palestinian homes, schools, olive groves and communities”. The protest is part of a three-year campaign against the university’s investments in Caterpillar. In February, students [occupied](#) a meeting of the Board of Governors, demanding that the university divest.

Providing care on the front line and in the hospitals of Gaza: an interview with Dr Tarek Loubani

Ahmed Abbas, Secretary of the (French) Association of University Teachers for the Respect of International Law in Palestine - AURDIP.

Translation by Robert Boyce, BRICUP Secretary

The weekly ‘Great March of Return’ demonstrations have been organised by Palestinians in the Gaza strip since 30 March 2018 to demand the right of return for the millions of Palestinian refugees to their towns and villages which are now incorporated into Israel, and to demand an end to the land, sea and aerial blockade of the Gaza strip which Israel has imposed for the past twelve years. The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), among others, have characterised this lock-down as a form of ‘collective sanction’ and have called on Israel to lift the illegal blockade which severely limits the movement of people and most exports and imports including basic commodities. Passage through the Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel, Jordan and beyond is restricted to what the

Israeli army calls ‘exceptional humanitarian cases’, that is to say mainly individuals who are severely ill and their carers as well as important businessmen. Additionally, since 2013 Egypt has imposed severe restrictions at the Rafah crossing and closes it much of the time.

The demonstrations reached their peak on 14 May 2018, the day the United States embassy was transferred from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem and just before the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba when Palestinians commemorate the expulsion and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of their people during the conflict that led to the creation of the state of Israel. That day, Israeli forces killed 59 Palestinians: an appalling example of excessive force and the use of live ammunition against demonstrators who did not constitute an imminent threat to the perpetrators.

The UN’s independent Commission of Enquiry into the demonstrations in Gaza in 2018 issued its [report](#) on Thursday 28 February 2019. The president of the Commission, Santiago Canton of Argentina, stated that ‘the Commission has reason to believe that Israeli soldiers committed violations of international humanitarian law and human rights during the Great March of Return. Some of these violations may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity and should immediately be investigated by Israel.’ The report stipulated that ‘the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that elite Israeli marksmen fired on journalists, health professionals, children and handicapped persons while they were clearly recognisable as such.’

In [Paris](#) during a speaking tour that will take him to Tunis and London, Dr Tarek Loubani, a Canadian-Palestinian emergency physician and professor at the University of Western Ontario, agreed to comment on the UN report and describe the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza. He is one of the best-informed observers of the situation inside Gaza, having visited over 25 times in recent years and provided care in its hospitals and on the front line during the Great March of Return. He was interviewed in Paris on 7 March by Ahmed Abbes, mathematician and secretary of the Association of University Teachers for the Respect of International Law in Palestine (Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine or AURDIP).

A.A : You have been visiting Gaza for more than eight years. Can you describe to us the state of

health care and how it has changed as the result of the Israeli blockade?

T.L : The health situation in Gaza is dire and getting worse. Since the Great March of Return, a slowly unfolding disaster became a clear and present catastrophe. The blockade eliminated the health care system's ability to manage day-to-day health needs long before the March began.

Patients with chronic conditions such as kidney disease and diabetes were already suffering from a lack of appropriate equipment like dialysis machines and medications required to manage their conditions. Patients with cancer were - and remain - completely at the whim of an Israeli security apparatus that Palestinians accuse of trading access to lifesaving cancer treatment for intelligence information and security interrogations from cancer patients.

Whether intentional or not, the blockade stops essential medications and medical equipment from entering Gaza. It prevents Palestinian health personnel from traveling freely to train outside, and international health personnel like me from traveling freely to provide care and training inside Gaza. It also degrades and eliminates essential infrastructure that any health system needs to survive, like electricity and clean water.

There was a brief window of hope when Egypt elected its first democratic government. Health conditions improved significantly until a military dictatorship overthrew the government and returned Egypt to the status of junior partner in the Israeli blockade. This period gives us an insight into how capable Gaza is of developing its own health care system and taking care of its population when it is not being actively prevented from doing so.

A.A : Numerous NGOs involved in the defence of human rights such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the UN High Commission for Refugees, have strongly condemned the heavy civilian casualties during the Great March of Return demonstrations. The [documentation](#) compiled by the al Mezan Center for the Defence of Human Rights confirms that since the start of the demonstrations 251 Palestinians have been killed. Attacks on the demonstrations have however also resulted in a very large number of injuries. According to doctors in Gaza, most of the serious injuries encountered have been to lower limbs and particularly knees, and are typical of war wounds which have not been observed since the assault on Gaza in 2014. What have you seen as an

emergency physician in the hospitals and on the front line in Gaza?

T.L : I witnessed Israeli snipers shooting civilians at very close range, and then had to tend to their wounds along with paramedics of the emergency services. All the patients I treated were wounded with live ammunition, though of course a large number were also injured by the profuse use of tear gas. Approximately 60 per cent of injuries were to the lower limbs, which is unusual. Most gunshot wounds in trauma centres such as the one I work at in Canada are seen in the chest, which is the largest target area and said to be the priority target for law enforcement officers trying to disable an imminent threat.

Another disturbing observation is that there appears to be a new type of bullet being used against civilians that creates an injury pattern that is destructive and unique. This type of bullet causes near-amputation of the lower limb that it strikes and creates abnormally large exit wounds. This injury pattern has been described by [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) and others over the past year. Despite having worked in three active war zones and treating hundreds of war-related traumas, I have never seen this type of injury pattern from a gunshot.

A.A : Do you think that the Israeli army has deliberately intended to cause a large number of civilians to be permanently handicapped?

T.L : I am not in a position to speculate on the intention of Israeli soldiers or the orders they receive. However, the disproportionately large number of people shot through one or both legs by snipers at close range is deeply concerning and warrants an independent investigation to determine if the Israeli army is using live fire to handicap civilians, but only in cases where there has been no threat to life or limb of the soldiers or other civilians.

A.A : The report of the independent UN Commission of Enquiry into the demonstrations in Gaza in 2018 states that 'the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that elite Israeli marksmen deliberately fired on health professionals while they were clearly identified as such'. It mentions your case: 'on 14 May Israeli forces fired on Tarek Loubani, a Canadian-Palestinian doctor, while he was with paramedical ambulance personnel wearing their hospital uniforms. The bullet passed through his two legs'. Could you describe the circumstances in which you were wounded?

T.L : The UN report is important in trying to prevent future attacks on medical personnel, who should be protected at all times by all parties, including during war, but especially when they are treating civilians.

I was attending to wounded patients on the front lines of the Great March in May along with professional and volunteer paramedic teams. Since I was the only physician on the line, I deployed to severe cases that might need highly skilled immediate lifesaving intervention that the paramedics were not trained to provide.

We were all seasoned field medics. I have provided care in Iraq in 2004 and 2005, in the West Bank during multiple incursions and attacks in 2002 and 2003, in the Gaza Strip during the wars of 2012 and 2014, during street protests in Cairo in 2013 when over a hundred civilians were massacred, and during violent and non-violent protests in Canada over the past two decades. My colleagues provided care for years or decades before that day, most of them caring for severely injured victims of war during the wars of 2008, 2012, 2014 and the flare-ups in between.

The paramedic teams were separated from the protestors and clearly marked in high visibility clothing or - as in my case - hospital uniform.

There was a lull in the protests. Nobody was moving erratically, and I was standing still at the time, facing partly away from the protest site. I was shot through both legs just below my knee. The bullet passed between a nerve and artery bundle and the bones of my leg. Had it hit either, I would have suffered severe disability or perhaps even an amputation.

After I was shot, I was treated in a field hospital before being transferred to a secondary hospital, since my condition was not as severe as others. They were so busy that I sewed up my own leg and was sent home within an hour to make room for other victims.

My rescuer when I was shot was a senior paramedic named Musa Abuhassanin. He was shot in the chest by an Israeli sniper during a subsequent rescue that day. Other paramedics were not allowed to approach him for approximately half an hour, and he died shortly after being evacuated from the field. He left behind 4 children, a wife, and a large family.

Musa and I were two of nineteen medics or paramedics wounded by Israeli snipers on 14 May. Prior to this, no medical personnel had been shot or wounded. This raises the possibility that

Israeli rules of engagement changed to include shooting medical personnel, which would be concerning and - as the UN notes in its report - a war crime.

A.A : Since 2014 you have promoted three important projects to ameliorate the condition of hospitals in Gaza: [Empower Gaza](#), [Glia](#) and Keys of Health. Could you briefly describe them and give your opinion of the difficulties they face?

T.L : Gaza is a place with capable people and plenty of natural resources. The blockade has taken away the ability of Gazans to use their resources to ensure excellent healthcare for their people. [Empower Gaza](#) is a project that aims to install solar power on all public hospitals, clinics and health centres in Gaza. This would break the dependence of the health care system on Israel's decisions to permit or forbid the entry of diesel fuel. As well, it would ensure that in its post-liberation period, Gaza's hospitals contribute to an environmentally sustainable future.

The [Glia](#) project seeks to [create medical devices](#) that are at least as high quality as the premium brands they replace. However, these devices are easily manufacturable locally, creating both jobs and a culture of independence and technological innovation. Our marquee project is a USD\$3 stethoscope that has been validated to be as good as the USD\$250 Littmann Cardiology III - one of the market leaders in stethoscopes. Through this project, we also created tourniquets that are used in the Great March to treat wounded patients.

Keys of Health is a sister project that trains Palestinian doctors in specialized medical skills in Canada so we can improve and build the infrastructure in Gaza.

A.A : How could people contribute to these projects?

T.L : There are many ways to contribute to the improvement of health care in Gaza. Organizations such as Medical Aid for Palestine, Terre des Hommes and Médecins Sans Frontières are excellent organizations to support with easily accessible funding drives.

If people would like to contribute directly to our projects, we are seeking funding and engineering experience for the Glia project to create medical devices such as an electrocardiogram and a dialysis machine. Donations can be made through our website: <https://glia.org> and our newly launched patreon: <https://patreon.com/glia> as well as to Keys of Health and Empower GAZA projects.

NEWS FROM US CAMPUSES

Brown University Passes Student BDS Vote

[Brown University](#) is a private Ivy League research university in Providence, Rhode Island. On 21st March, students voted in a campus referendum, initiated by [Brown Divest](#) to call on the school to “divest all stocks, funds, endowment and other monetary instruments from companies complicit in human rights abuses in Palestine.” Sixty nine percent voted for the measure with 31% opposed. Below is their announcements of the referendum result

Dear Brown University Community,

It is with immense honor and excitement that we announce the successful passing of the Brown Divest referendum today on March 21st, 2019. The referendum passed with 69% of the vote, and the voter turnout today was one of the highest in the history of elections held by the Undergraduate Council of Students: 3,076 students voted. Today is a historic day for Brown as we take an emboldened and clear stand against the university’s complicity in human rights abuses in Palestine and in similar systems of oppression across the world.

Today, we join other universities such as Swarthmore, NYU, UCLA, George Washington University, and others who have had similar successful campaigns. We also become the first Ivy League university to pass a divestment referendum on Palestine and look forward to seeing others follow our lead.

This referendum not only represents a decisive stance on this issue, but a years-long mobilization and unification of a diverse coalition of student groups around this campus. This campaign would not have been possible if we had not united as a community.

The members of Brown Divest view this referendum neither as a beginning nor an end of our struggle for justice. We will continue this momentum and come together as a community to hold the administration accountable to the outcome of this referendum.

Brown Divest

Open letter in support of Swarthmore Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and their BDS campaign

In October 2018, the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at Swarthmore liberal arts college in Philadelphia launched its BDS Movement. Recently, the organizers of the campaign have experienced online harassment from right-wing social media accounts. This open letter below in support of the SJP has been gathering signatures from US academics and human rights and religious organisations.

We, the undersigned, affirm our unequivocal support for Swarthmore Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and their Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign at Swarthmore College.

This past month, student organizers at Swarthmore have faced targeted online harassment from right-wing social media accounts for their work in solidarity with Palestine. This harassment is not happening in isolation and is no accident. Rather, it is part of a deliberate strategy we see on campuses across the country to intimidate and silence those who organize in support of Palestinian lives and dignity.

While Islamophobia, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, and all forms of injustice are on the rise across the country and the world—and must be vigorously challenged—we deplore these tactics that target movements for justice, falsely and maliciously accusing those organizing for justice in Palestine with anti-Semitism. Indeed, we know that this harassment happening at Swarthmore and on other college campuses across the country is not really about rallying against the rising tides of anti-Semitism; in fact, this kind of unethical behavior does a disservice to the effort to challenge anti-Semitism when it does arise. We also know that this intimidation disproportionately and deliberately targets Palestinian, Black, Indigenous, and Muslim communities.

Above all, we know that this intimidation will not stop the students at Swarthmore, on colleges across the country, or any of us from continuing to organize together as a movement for justice and dignity for all peoples.

To the students at Swarthmore and to all students on campuses across the U.S. who seek a more just world, we've got your back.

The full list of signatures is available [here](#)

Pitzer College Council Approves Resolution Suspending Study Abroad Program with the University of Haifa

Pitzer College is one of 5 undergraduate colleges in the Claremont Consortium of seven highly selective institutions of higher education in Claremont, California. On March 14th, the [Claremont Students for Justice in Palestine](#) made the following announcement..

On Monday March 14th, 2019, Pitzer College Council voted to conditionally suspend Pitzer College's exchange program with the University of Haifa. This is a historic vote, as it makes Pitzer College the first college in the country to suspend a study abroad program in Israel based on its gravely discriminatory policies towards Palestinians and in a settler-colonial state that continues its egregious violations of human rights.

We hope that this vote encourages institutions around the world to follow Pitzer's lead and cut complicity with the Israeli occupation. It is important we recognize the hard work and support that goes into this win. Thank you to all the students, comrades, faculty, and organizations that have put their time and energy to make this a reality. We hope that President Oliver will uphold the democratic decision reached at the College Council and implement the suspension.

Although today we celebrate this historic win, we must fight the injustices that continue here on Pitzer College's campus, and globally. This is one step towards the liberation of Palestine, and we are endlessly honored to take it with you all.

There can be no academic freedom under occupation!

In solidarity,

OTHER INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Volkskundemuseum in Vienna cancels event with Ronnie Kasrils-former minister in Nelson Mandela's government

FROM The Palestinian BDS National Committee ([BNC](#)), which leads and supports the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for Palestinian rights.

See article [here](#)

A Vienna museum, Volkskundemuseum, has cancelled an event on Palestinian rights at which the former minister in Nelson Mandela's government, Ronnie Kasrils, was scheduled to speak ([Video by Ronnie Kasrils](#)). Kasrils is a renowned South African anti-apartheid activist of Jewish descent, and his address was scheduled for the [March 29 event](#) as part of the annual Israeli Apartheid Week ([IAW](#)). Human rights advocates immediately condemned the cancellation, and called for the event to be reinstated.

The museum caved in to pressure from Austria's Israel lobby. The cancellation comes amid Israel's ongoing repression of the peaceful Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights. Two IAW events scheduled in France this week were also canceled.

More than [80 IAW events](#) in 40 cities across Europe, North America and Palestine have been scheduled to date. With events still to be finalized in Asia, Africa and Latin America, IAW is expected to be held in more than 200 cities worldwide this year.

The organizers of the event, [BDS Austria](#), were informed that the Museum canceled the event because the Vienna City Council adopted a resolution in June 2018 not to cooperate with the BDS movement. Anti-BDS measures being promoted at the local and national level in Europe, prompted by Israel's far-right government, aim to stifle freedom of speech and silence debate on Palestinian rights.

Ronnie Kasrils said:

I strongly condemn the Vienna museum's cancellation of a public meeting I was to speak at for Israeli Apartheid Week. Exactly 59 years ago today the Sharpeville massacre took place, compelling me to stand up for human rights in my country, following in the footsteps of Chief Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. As a result I was banned by South Africa's apartheid government from attending meetings, and anything I said could not be published. How disgraceful that, despite the lessons of our struggle against apartheid and racism, such intolerance continues to this day, stifling freedom of speech and association.

The Vienna Museum should welcome Israeli Apartheid Week, and discussion of the anti-racist Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality. BDS is a peaceful form of applying pressure to encourage the Israeli government to abide by innumerable United Nations resolutions. Exactly that kind of pressure led to the demise of apartheid in South Africa.

A spokesperson for the event organizer, BDS Austria, said:

We are not surprised by the Vienna City Council's repression or their growing relations with Israel's apartheid regime. They are silencing democratic debate and criminalizing all human rights groups, even Jewish ones, that are in solidarity with Palestine. Palestinian academic Edward Said was invited to Vienna shortly before his death and then disinvited due to the Israel lobby's pressure. We will not be intimidated by this. We remember Edward Said's words: It is a just cause, a noble idea, a moral quest for equality and human rights.

Chief Mandla Mandela, ANC Member of Parliament and Nelson Mandela's grandson said:

The truth cannot be silenced! We deplore the venue cancellation for the scheduled Israeli Apartheid Week event at the museum in Vienna, Austria. This type of censorship was deployed by the South African Apartheid regime and as South Africans we condemn this act of repression. We will talk against all acts of racism and apartheid. We will continue to fly the Palestinian flag and speak against Israeli apartheid, aggression and occupation from the streets if we are denied venues. We will not be silenced and I call on activists all around the world to be spurred on and continue the struggle until we end the unjust occupation and until Palestine is free.

The German organization Jüdische Stimme, Jewish Voice for a Just Peace, recently awarded a peace prize in Germany, said:

As a Jewish organisation we face, worriedly, the criminalisation of voices in defense of Palestinian rights all round the world. This pressure is even greater in German-speaking countries where growing alliances with the Israeli state and its narrative undermines all other voices, including Jewish ones, which dare to criticise Israel's racist policies.

We sent a letter to the museum director when we learned that the event was threatened with cancelation. We are appalled that this cancelation was announced, and call again for the event to go forward.

In Paris, only two days before a planned IAW event on March 20, the University Sciences Po emailed the student organizers informing them their event had been banned. L'Intersection, the anti-racist group organising the event with Palestinian speaker Rania Madi, [condemned](#) this cancellation. An IAW event scheduled for March 22 in Montpellier, France was also cancelled.

..... **Palestinian peace activist denied entry to U.S. for speaking tour**

Osama Lliwat from Combatants for Peace arrived in the US to join a Jewish-American member of the organization for a speaking tour in synagogues, churches, and university campuses across the United States. They were to talk about the power of nonviolence and bringing an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, he was sent back to Palestine after being extensively questioned by American border authorities about his political affiliations and about the funders and leadership of the group for which he works

See full details in [this article](#) by **Edo Konrad** in +972 online magazine on March 4th

..... **German Jews for Palestinian rights receive a peace prize— and are dismissed as ‘the wrong kind of Jews’**

In the February, we reported on [the appeal](#) BRICUP had received from Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East (EJJP) about the

opposition to their being awarded the Göttingen University Peace Prize. An update on the aftermath to this award can be found in [this article](#) by Jonathan Ofir in Mondoweiss on March 17th.

Army Bases in Israeli Universities

For more details see the [report](#) by **Yaniv Kubovich** in Haaretz, March 24th

The army's latest request for bids to host its elite academic programme (Havatzalot) for future intelligence officers contains numerous conditions that university officials say are extreme and would “*undermine the academic fabric and the privacy of students and faculty.*”

The Havatzalot program has until now been hosted by the University of Haifa, but sources who have seen the tender documents issued in October say they are much more demanding in terms of the army's intervention in content, conditions and even personnel.

In theory, the institutions should be rushing to contend for the prestigious programme: it would bring hundreds of students who have undergone meticulous screening and who, upon completing their military service, would be expected to enter key positions in high-tech and in the country's political and financial leadership, bringing prestige to the university. Tuition fees are also guaranteed.

But the conditions make for chilling reading. The security requirements include armed guards around the clock in all the areas used by the soldier-students. The winning university will be required to install security cameras that cover the living and staff quarters as well as the communications installation and the IDF will be permitted to install additional security and computer systems accessible only to them. There will also be a permanent military unit present.

Another controversial requirement is that the university must submit to the IDF the personal details of anyone the university employs to secure the outer perimeter of the soldiers' living and administrative quarters, as well as the maintenance employees. According to the documents seen, the IDF can demand the

replacement of anyone employed in the soldiers' compound if they don't pass a security screening.

Some 600 students and dozens of IDF staff members are expected to take part. They will be easily identifiable as they will be wearing army uniforms and may be carrying their personal weapons, a fact which, according to another university representative *"causes a marked pedagogical difficulty and makes it difficult for the students to integrate socially into university life."*

There are also very strict rules about the living accommodation (separation by year, gender, seniority etc) but one of the most troublesome demands as far as the universities are concerned relates to the relationship between the teachers and students. This, according to one university official, will pose *"an ethical problem"* with the IDF insisting that course lecturers provide the IDF with details about student achievements, including grades and attendance records. The commander of the program will be able to speak to the faculty about students without their knowledge.

Upcoming Meeting

Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU and the University and Colleges Union present

Education under siege: The experience of Universities in Gaza

Dr Mona Jebril, Cambridge University

Chair: Nita Sanghera, UCU Vice President)

6.30pm, Thursday 11th April

Elvin Hall, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way (UCL)

RSVP Eventbrite [here](#) to attend this event.

In this talk, Dr Mona Jebril will discuss her doctoral research on the impact of the siege and conflict on higher education in Gaza. Her presentation will explore the recent history experienced by Gaza universities and will also examine how this is evolving in the shifting socio-political context of the Arab world. The lecture is based on Dr Jebril's original research on the development of Palestinian higher education within the broader regional context of the Arab Spring from a Palestinian perspective.

[Mona Jebril](#) lived, studied and taught in the

occupied Gaza Strip for more than 22 years. She is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge, working on a Global Challenge Research Fund project, which aims to build sustainable capacity, partnerships and research on health in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Palestine. In 2017, Mona completed her PhD in Education from the University of Cambridge, as a Gates Cambridge Scholar. Previously, Mona studied completed an MSc in Higher Education at the University of Oxford where she won the Said Foundation Second Prize for academic and personal achievement. Dr Jebril has a significant experience as a teacher and trainer at state schools and as a lecturer at two of Gaza's universities. She is also a co-founder of two centers and a scholarship programme in Gaza. Mona has produced four films from her PhD thesis, and has written a number of articles for academic journals, blogs and newspapers.

Nita Sanghera is Vice President of the University & College Union (UCU) and Access to Higher Education lecturer at Bournville College. She is the first black woman to be elected to the post of UCU Vice President.

This event is made possible thanks to the generous support of the Estate of the Late Sarah Hayward and Interpal.

OTHER ACADEMIC BOYCOTT CAMPAIGNS

Association of Academics for the Respect of International Law in Palestine ([AURDIP](#)).

See their latest newsletter [here](#)

Belgian Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel ([BACBI](#))

See their March newsletter [here](#)

US Campaign for the academic and Cultural of Israel ([USACBI](#))

Sign the commitment by UK Scholars to human rights in Palestine

This commitment, which has been signed by over 700 academics across UK's higher education system, is not to accept invitations for academic visits to Israel, not to act as referees in activities related to Israel academic institutions, or cooperate in any other way with Israeli universities.

It is a response to the appeal for such action by Palestinian academics and civil society due to the deep complicity of Israeli academic institutions in Israeli violations of international law. Signatories [here](#) have pledged to continue their commitment until Israel complies with international law, and respects Palestinian human rights. For more information, and to sign, go to <http://www.commitment4p.com>

BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK or by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at

Sort Code 08-92-99

Account Number 65156591

IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91

BIC = CPBK GB22

If you use the direct funds transfer mechanism, please confirm the transaction by sending an explanatory email to treasurer@bricup.org.uk

Notices

Speakers: We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are welcome.

Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk

Register as a supporter of BRICUP

You can register as a supporter of BRICUP and of the academic and cultural boycott of Israel [by completing this form](#).

We recognise that many individuals may wish to support our aims by private actions without wishing to be publicly identified. Supporters receive our regular newsletter by email and receive occasional emails giving details of urgent developments and of ways to support our activities. We do not disclose the names of our supporters to anyone outside BRICUP or share them with any other organisation.

Financial support for BRICUP

We welcome one-off donations, but we can plan our work much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order.

You can [download a standing order form](#) here.

One-off donations may be made by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, at BRICUP, BM