

# BRICUP Newsletter 132

May 2019

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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## In search of an apology – work in progress

### *James Dickins, Professor of Arabic, University of Leeds and Chair of Leeds Palestine Solidarity Campaign*

On June 11, 2018, I was attacked by a number of people on the Facebook group, which described itself as the “facebook arm” of the [Centre for Jewish Studies](#) at Leeds University, the Director of which is Dr Eva Frojmovic. One member of the group was so outraged by this behaviour that they alerted me to the material, which was subsequently taken down by members of the group, but not before screenshots of it had been made. I noted the following exchanges.

*“What do folks think about the Leeds branch of the PSC being chaired by a professor at this university. Is that okay?”*

*Reply: “NO”*

*“Is the PSC a) ‘just’ political b) ‘just’ racist or c) both?”*

*“[...] this is still not good if the professor teaches Jewish and pro Israeli students”*

*“It is very concerning that young students who really don’t have much idea what is really going on are being brainwashed”*

*“Professor of Arabic. That raises additional questions about teaching”*

*“Have you sort [sic] guidance from JSoC or CAA[...]? ([Campaign against anti-semitism](#))? They monitor activities at universities, especially when it might involve PSC groups, etc.”*

Eva Frojmovic did not control the discussion in any way, but encouraged further similar contributions as follows *“Thank you so far. Keep it coming, folks. I am listening. Would more people like to contribute?”*

I argued in my subsequent complaint to Leeds University that this implied that I should be sacked from my job as Professor of Arabic at the University of Leeds (since the only logical alternative, that I should be removed from my position as chair of Leeds PSC, fell outside the domain of interest of Eva Frojmovic and her Facebook interlocutors). I also argued that the Facebook discussion implied that I was a racist and/or anti-semite. I further argued that this was an attempt to initiate a process of illegitimate interference in my teaching.

Following an initial complaint from myself to Leeds University on June 19 and subsequent

discussions with senior University officials, I put in a formal complaint to the University on July 24, 2018. This argued that Eva Frojmovic had used Leeds University resources in a manner that constituted bullying, harassment and defamation of myself, and that could bring the University into disrepute or legal challenge. I asked the University to take disciplinary action against her for making use of her University affiliation and the University domain name to seek to engage others, including academics from outside institutions, in a dialogue focused on undermining the reputation and integrity of another University employee - myself. I also argued that as a Leeds University student society, JSoC (Jewish Society) is wholly inappropriate for seeking guidance over teaching at the University.

I asked the University to require Eva Frojmovic to sign a letter in which she apologised unreservedly for initiating and encouraging a discussion in which it was claimed and/or insinuated that it is unacceptable for me to be both a Professor at Leeds University and the Chair of the Leeds Palestine Solidarity Campaign; that I am a racist and/or anti-semite; and that the Palestine Solidarity Campaign is racist and/or antisemitic. I asked for her to agree to the contents of the letter being made public. I asked the University to require the Leeds Centre for Jewish Studies and Antisemitism in Contemporary Culture to display in a clearly legible notice at the top of its Facebook page “The Leeds Centre for Jewish Studies and Antisemitism in Contemporary Culture accepts that support for Palestinian rights, as defined under international law, is not antisemitic”. I also asked the University to observe its policy on dignity and mutual respect which explicitly prohibits harassment, bullying and victimisation; and to take account of its policy on Freedom of Expression, which includes amongst its limiting factors, ‘the protection of the reputation or rights of others’. In doing so, I argued, the University would be fulfilling its duty of care to myself as an employee and protecting the reputation of both myself and the University of Leeds.

On January. 7, 2019, almost seven months after my original complaint, I received an official response from Leeds University. As the contents of this are private and confidential, I cannot discuss them here, except to say that there are still a number of issues with the University which I do not feel it has yet dealt with satisfactorily..

On January 19, 2019, Eva Frojmovic, wrote a letter to me in her capacity as Director of the

Centre for Jewish Studies in which she said, *‘I am very sorry that you were upset by comments made in the closed Facebook group “Leeds Centre for Jewish Studies and Antisemitism in Contemporary Culture between the 11 and 19 June 2018. [...] I have never accused you of being either anti-semitic or racist, nor would I do so. I have never called for any interference in your teaching, let alone any other action against you, and certainly not for your dismissal. I regret if you found that my remarks could be understood as having such a meaning.’*

As this clearly does not address my complaint against her participation in the offences satisfactorily either, I intend to take both these issues forward and I hope to be able to report further in a subsequent edition of the BRICUP newsletter.

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## BDS NEWS

### Texas anti-BDS law ruled unconstitutional by federal trial court

*Robert Wintemute*

Texas is among 25 states that has enacted bans on participation in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. In our April issue we [reported](#) that a federal judge had blocked enforcement of the Texas law that requires contractors to certify that they don’t support a boycott of Israel. Here Robert Wintemute (*Professor of Human Rights Law, King's College London*) provides a legal commentary on the issue

On 25 April 2019, in *Bahia Amawi v. Pflugerville Independent School District*, the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas (Austin Division) issued a preliminary injunction, which prohibits the defendants (the Attorney General of Texas, three public school districts, and two public universities) from “enforcing [House Bill] 89, codified at Tex. Gov. Code § 2270.001 et. seq, or any ‘No Boycott of Israel’ clause in any state contract”. For a press release, see <https://www.aclutx.org/en/press-releases/court-rules-texas-anti-boycott-law-unconstitutional-protects-first-amendment-right>. For the full text of the Court’s Order (56 pages), see [https://www.aclutx.org/sites/default/files/4-25-19\\_bds\\_order.pdf](https://www.aclutx.org/sites/default/files/4-25-19_bds_order.pdf).

House Bill 89 provides that “[a] governmental entity may not enter into a contract with a company [including an individual running an unincorporated business as a for-profit sole

proprietorship] for goods or services unless the contract contains a written verification from the company that it: (1) does not boycott Israel; and (2) will not boycott Israel during the term of the contract”. The five plaintiffs who challenged this Texas law were a speech pathologist, a translator, two high-school-debate judges, and a radio reporter, who wished both to contract with public school districts or public universities, and to boycott Israel in different ways.

The Court found that “under [NAACP v.] Claiborne [US Supreme Court, 1982], political boycotts are protected speech ... protected by the First Amendment [to the US Constitution]”. House Bill 89 is “a content- and viewpoint-based restriction on speech. It is a content-based restriction because it singles out speech about Israel, not any other country. And it is a viewpoint-based restriction because it targets only speech ‘intended to penalize, inflict harm on, or limit commercial relations specifically with Israel, or with a person or entity doing business in Israel or in an Israeli-controlled territory’”, but not “contractors who boycott Palestinian companies or companies that engage in reverse boycotts of BDS participants”.

Texas argued that House Bill 89 “is a ‘standard anti-discrimination measure’ prohibiting discrimination on the basis of national origin”. The Court rejected this argument, finding that House Bill 89 is “a viewpoint-based restriction intended not to combat discrimination on the basis of national origin, but to silence speech with which Texas disagrees ... The statute’s plain text makes its purpose obvious: to prevent expressive conduct critical of the nation of Israel, not discriminatory conduct on the basis of Israeli national origin.” The Court also found that “Plaintiffs are likely to establish that H.B. 89 imposes an unconstitutional condition on public employment by requiring contractors to cease and refrain from engaging in constitutionally protected speech”, and that “H.B. 89 requires contractors to declare support for Israel. Particularly in light of the well-known Israel-Palestine conflict and the fact that H.B. 89 is referred to by its sponsor, the governor, and news media as the ‘anti-BDS bill’, the certification that one does not and will not ‘boycott Israel’ is a ‘political or ideological message’ the First Amendment prevents Texas from compelling”. The Court concluded: “[T]his case is about whether Texas may prohibit boycotting the State of Israel as a condition of public employment. It is not about the merits of the significant and

contentious public debate surrounding the relationship between Israel and Palestine ... The statute threatens 'to suppress unpopular ideas' and 'manipulate the public debate through coercion rather than persuasion'. ... This the First Amendment does not allow."

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## **Sheffield Hallam University Students Union (SHUSU) and UCU branch vote on BDS**

*Peter Jones, Department of Humanities, Sheffield Hallam University*

On January 2019, Sheffield Hallam University Students Union voted decisively to support the Palestinian cause by endorsing the BDS movement. The motion states that the Union 'resolves to:

- 1) Publicly endorse and support the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) and to explain this decision to students through an email to all students and on the union website.
- 2) Work with students to publish a report regarding academic, corporate and economic links between the student union and university with Israeli companies and institutions that participate in Israel's violations of international law.
- 3) Lobby the University to sever all commercial or investment relationships with companies that participate or are invested in Israeli violations of international law, including Caterpillar, Rolls-Royce, HP and military companies that supply Israel such as BAE Systems.
- 4) Lobby the university to divest from all companies associated with Israel's violations of International Law and the Universal Principle of Human Rights.
- 5) Mobilise a campaign, if necessary, for the university to sever its financial and institutional links with companies and institutions which are complicit with the oppression of Palestinian human rights, assisting by organising a petition, lobbying the university, printing leaflets and posters, and supporting/expanding the current campaign organising committee.
- 6) Sever contracts between the Student Union and any companies/institutions affiliated with Israel's regime.
- 7) Encourage academics and campus unions to support the campaign.'

Following SHUSU's lead, **Sheffield Hallam University UCU branch** at its May 2019 meeting passed overwhelmingly a motion calling on the university to honour its own admirable commitments to ethical business principles and to:

*'urgently investigate and withdraw where necessary from all business connections at whatever level and at whatever point in the supply chain with companies or organizations whose business relationships in or with Israel directly or indirectly contribute to and facilitate the aggressive and discriminatory actions of the Israeli government and armed forces in relation to the Palestinian people'.*

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## **Update on anti-BDS motions in Germany : petition calling on German parties not to equate BDS with anti-semitism**

*Rebecca Gould*

Amos Goldberg (Hebrew University) and Yaara Benger (Max Planck Institute) have initiated a petition signed by numerous prominent scholars, calling on German Parties not to equate BDS with anti-semitism. Below, we print their "**Update on anti-BDS motions in Germany**" followed by the text of the petition. Scholars can read, and view the signatories and sign [here](#)

Three anti-BDS motions were tabled in Germany and put to the vote on Friday May 17, 2019. Unfortunately, one of them was approved. It concerns a joint motion by CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and Bündnis90/Die Grünen, of which a translation can be found online in German [here](#). This is a blow to the struggle against the occupation and a strong boost to the Israeli government. The motion will reverberate far beyond Germany. Some organization within Germany such as [Jewish Voice for Peace in the Middle East](#) have already started experiencing the effects of this motion.

At the vote, several members of parliament expressed reservations about the motion. Two such explanations of vote are enclosed: by MPs who supported the motion, but with reservations, and by MPs who abstained or voted against the motion. Another explanation of vote by three CDU MPs is available [here](#) (in German). It contains this sentence: "*We are also strongly committed to the universal right to freedom of expression which is protected in both Germany*



*and Israel. Legitimate criticism of the policies of the Israeli government must not be discredited as allegedly anti-Semitic and not be unduly restricted. We take the concerns of Israeli civil society in this regard seriously.”*

Before the motion, dozens of Jewish and Israeli scholars issued the enclosed call, urging the parties in Bundestag not to support let alone table motions which equate BDS with antisemitism. Online, you can find the English version of it [here](#) and the German version [here](#).

This statement clearly inspired the explanations of vote mentioned above. It was referenced by several newspapers. Haaretz launched it prominently in two news articles ([here](#) and [here](#)). Below is an overview of several German media that mentioned it, too. For those reading German, please also see this [article in Der Spiegel](#), which discusses the divisions within and among parties, as reflected in the vote and in the explanations to it.

Unsurprisingly, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu warmly welcomed the approval of the motion by the Bundestag. [On twitter](#), he said: *“I congratulate the German Bundestag on the important decision branding the boycott movement (BDS) as an anti-semitic movement and announcing that it is forbidden to fund it. I hope that this decision will bring about concrete steps and I call upon other countries to adopt similar legislation.”*

Other than that Netanyahu claims, the motion is not legislation. However, it still does severe damage to Germany’s liberal-democratic order, which will resonate far beyond.

The ball is now rolling towards the German government, which will have to respond to the motion. This fundamental struggle is far from over and is certainly not limited to Germany

For more information, contact: [Amos Goldberg](#) or Yaara Benger ([yaara.benger@gmail.com](mailto:yaara.benger@gmail.com))

**See, also, this article by Shir Hever on the Real News Network**

[German Parliament Criminalizes Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement](#)

## **Eurovision campaign**

### **And the winner of Eurovision in apartheid Tel Aviv is...**

#### ***From the BDS Movement***

As Eurovision proceedings come to an end in apartheid Tel Aviv, the winner is already clear: the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights.

Having claimed for months that tens of thousands of tourists would travel to apartheid Tel Aviv for the contest, Israeli organizers now admit that only around 5,000 to 7,000 -- a fraction of the expected visitors -- had arrived, a clear sign of the success of the year-long worldwide BDS campaign.

We have together succeeded in preventing Israel’s regime from using Eurovision, the world’s biggest non-sports televised event, to artwash its crimes against Palestinians, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The year-long BDS campaign to boycott Eurovision hosted by apartheid Israel went beyond expectations, winning new support for our human rights movement and building principled links with anti-racist, feminist, LGBT+ and other struggles.

That’s why the BDS movement for Palestinian rights is the true Eurovision winner!

Read the full analysis [here](#).

And, finally, see an example of the more creative side of the successful Eurovision campaign [here](#)

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### **No academic business with Ariel University- campaign news from Leeds University**

On May 2nd, the Leeds University branch of general meeting passed the following resolution at their general meeting, with 34 in favour, just 1 against, and 7 abstentions:

"Leeds UCU notes that Israeli settlements in occupied territory constitute a breach of international law, as is affirmed by (among many 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.

Leeds UCU notes therefore that, because Ariel University is built in a settlement, for the

University of Leeds to recognise degrees from Ariel University, or to collaborate with Ariel University in any way, would be complicit in the breaking of international law."

**NOTE:** A similar motion was recently passed unanimously by the Exeter University branch of UCU,

### **The Italian Society for Middle East Studies (SeSaMO)**

See [this article](#) (More academics join boycott against Israel's Ariel University) in [Global Edition](#) by Chiara Cruciati

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

**NYU's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis Pledges Non-Cooperation with [study abroad program in Israel](#)**

(New York, NY) By a majority vote, faculty in NYU's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis have passed a resolution that pledges non-cooperation with the university's study abroad program in Tel Aviv. Citing the obligation to uphold the university's Policy of Ethical Conduct on non-discrimination and equal opportunity, the faculty declared non-cooperation with the program until the Israeli state both ends its restrictions on entry based on ancestry and political speech, as well as adopts policies granting visas for exchanges to Palestinian universities on a fully equal basis as it does to Israeli universities. Members of the department as well as the NYU community at large have been impacted by these policies and so their right to academic freedom and movement has effectively been constrained.

The passage of the resolution comes after a year-long campaign initiated by undergraduates and graduate students within the department. The student campaign called on the department's faculty to take action in response to the restrictions placed upon individuals of Palestinian descent or those who speak critically of the Israeli state. Recent amendments to Israel's Law on Entry single out several groups, among them Jewish Voice for Peace, which have chapters with large student memberships on NYU's campus. The resolution, which prohibits the use of department resources for faculty teaching or exchanges at the Tel Aviv site, acknowledges that the operation of the program is in apparent

violation of core university values. According to Andrew Ross, a professor who directs the department's American Studies Program, "the faculty took this step in recognition of university policy and to protect the department from complicity with these forms of racial, religious, and political profiling."

"This historic vote is the culmination of a student-led initiative," reported Rose Asaf, a senior in the department, and president of NYU's chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace. "We the students asked our department to not cooperate with a wing of the university that discriminates against us students ideologically, racially, and religiously. And they answered. This is the outcome of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty coming together, recognizing a problem, and acting."

**Who:** NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis

**What:** Departmental pledge of non-cooperation with NYU Tel Aviv

**When:** Thursday, May 2nd 2019, 2:00 PM

**Where:** NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, 20 Cooper Square, New York, NY

**Contacts:**

**Andrew Ross**, Director of American Studies  
[andrew.ross@nyu.edu](mailto:andrew.ross@nyu.edu)

**Dean Saranillio**, Director of Undergraduate Studies  
[dean.saranillio@nyu.edu](mailto:dean.saranillio@nyu.edu)

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

See their latest newsletter [here](#)

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

See their May newsletter [here](#) and their Cultural newsletter [here](#)

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### **News from [ECCP](#) (The European coordination of committees and associations for Palestine)**

BRICUP is a member of The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP) - a network of 42 European committees, organizations, NGOs, unions and

international solidarity movements from 19 European countries, dedicated to the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and equality. This is one of their latest initiatives – a letter which has been gathering more signatures from researchers and academics.

## **European researchers and academics and Israel's participation in Horizon Europe**

### **A letter to**

*Ms. Federica Mogherini - High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy To Mr Carlos Moedas - European Commission, DG for Research and Innovation*

Dear Ms. Federica Mogherini, Dear Mr. Moedas, and colleagues,

We researchers and academics from Europe are writing to you in order to express our deep concern about the participation of Israel and its military companies in EU Research Programs. While we write, new Israeli raids flare up and the smoldering remnant of Gaza protesters of the Great March of Return, already forgotten and forsaken. More than 270 unarmed civilians were killed during the March of return, including women, children and persons with disabilities and thousands more were injured [28.939, of whom 7.247 by live fire]. They were only demanding their rights enshrined in international law: end of the illegal blockade and for the right of return to their ancestral homes from which they were expelled.

A report of the United Nation's Independent Commission of Inquiry published earlier this year concluded that the Israeli army might have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity by indiscriminately killing health workers, journalists and unarmed protesters who did not pose any imminent threats to the soldiers.

Relentless violence rages again after 11 years of inhumane siege and three military assaults that shattered the fabric of normal life. Gaza is declared to be uninhabitable by 2020 according to a report by the UN but this "environmentally defined" deadline reflects only the intentionality of an imposed series of emergencies, followed each time by a further decrease in health, energy, food independence and commerce after each episode of armed aggression since 2007.

The hermetic siege combined with the systematic large scale military destruction is slowly

strangling nearly the two million inhabitants of Gaza. None of the basic civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and power plants, was ever sufficiently rebuilt after each of the three military assaults due to severe restrictions by the blockade. Electricity is available only a few hours a day, 98% of water is not drinkable, and many hospitals periodically stop functioning due to lack of medication, spare parts of machinery, electricity and fuel. Permission for patients to leave in order to receive life-saving treatment elsewhere has been continually declining in time. Tools for education, number of teachers, and rebuilding of schools are severely impaired. The inhabitants of Gaza have been consistently denied basic human rights and human dignity.

The disproportionate use of force on the civilians amounting to war crimes has also been systematic throughout all, long and short term, military operations, including the almost daily assaults to fishermen and agricultural workers.

These facts have been meticulously documented in authoritative reports by the UN and human rights organizations and widely condemned by the international community. Yet Israel's policies of aggression and repression have continued.

This ongoing impunity is allowing Gaza, the world's largest open air prison, to be used as a military testfield. In each offensive Israel deployed, tested and perfected new high-tech military weapons and surveillance systems. These new cutting edge high-tech products are exhibited and sold as "battle-tested", an exclusive label Israeli home land security industry boasts. Israel became the world's top arms exporter per capita. This grave violation of human rights is thus highly profitable for Israel's war industry disclosing an other side of the claim of "only self-defense" and the interests beyond the lack of measure in the aggressions on Palestinians of Gaza.

Nonetheless, in spite of continual and serious breaches of international law and violation of human rights, and regardless of the commitment for upholding human rights of European countries, Israel enjoys an exceptionally privileged status in dealing with Europe also through the Association Agreement and has been receiving grants from the European Commission in the area of research and innovation (FP7 and its successor Horizon 2020).

Funds are granted even to Israeli arms producers such as Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. (IAI), the producers of lethal

drones that were used in the Gaza military assaults against civilians, together with numerous academic institutions that have close ties with Israeli military industry.

We appeal to the European Union to impose a comprehensive military embargo on Israel, as long as Israel continues to blatantly violate human rights. We are deeply disturbed that public funds contributed by European tax payers are channeled to a country that not only disregards human rights but also uses most advanced knowledge and technology for the very violation of human rights.

**We believe that knowledge and innovation should serve progress in humanity and society, not to develop dual use or military research of a country that has a record history of grave human rights violations.** This is not compatible with the values Europe upholds.

In 2017 more than 150 European trade unions, political parties, human rights organizations and faith groups from over 16 European countries issued a call urging the EU to uphold its legal responsibilities and exclude Israeli military companies from EU Framework Programs.

We support Amnesty International call for a military embargo on Israel issued last year following the attacks on the unarmed protesters of the Great March of Return using maiming bullets and brutal means by the Israeli army, unnecessary in that context.

Youth of Gaza appealed to you to stop funding Israeli manufacturers of weapons and surveillance system that guard their open-air prison, maimed them and destroyed their future. In support of their outcry we call upon European Union and European Commission to suspend the Association Agreement with Israel and exclude Israel as an eligible partner for Horizon Europe (successor of Horizon 2020), as long as it refuses to comply with the rules of international law. We also share the concern of B'Tselem, Israeli human rights organization, which stated *“If the international community does not come to its senses and force Israel to abide by the rules that are binding to every state in the world, it will pull the rug out from under the global effort to protect human rights in the post-WWII era.”*

**Signatories\*:** Dr. Nozomi Takahashi, Center for Inflammation Research, VIB-Ghent University, Belgium

Prof. Marc Van Ranst, Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Transplantation, KU Leuven, Belgium

Dr. Leander Meuris, Medical Biotechnology, VIB-Ghent University, Belgium

Prof. Tarek Meguid,

Prof. Em. John Dugard, Universities of Leiden and the Witwatersrand (UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2001-2008)

\* Institutions are added for identification purposes only. All signatories have signed the letter in personal capacity

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## OTHER NEWS

### **Empty chairs in Amman as Gaza doctors are denied permits to medical conference on Palestine**

The 10th Annual [Lancet Palestine Health Alliance](#) (LPHA) conference titled “Health of Palestinians inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory” was organized by the [Institute of Community and Public Health](#) at Birzeit University in collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut. It was hosted by the Jordan University of Science and Technology. See a [full report](#) of the meeting in Mondoweiss .

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### **Political neutrality in academic medicine- a recent exchange of letters in the Lancet**

#### ***Derek Summerfield***

On May 4th, the following [letter](#) from Gideon Paul, Elad Asher and Eli Lev appeared in the Lancet . This perverse letter contests the term Occupied Palestinian Territories and is using the Lancet to make political propaganda for a foreign power. The term, Occupied Palestinian Territories, is used officially by the UN, EU, the International Court of Justice, and other international agencies

#### ***The original letter***

We question the use of an important medical research paper as a platform for making a political statement. [Dehghan and colleagues](#) include “occupied Palestinian territory” as one of the 21 participant countries in their study. We presume this is referring to the areas that are described as West Bank and Gaza in official World Bank documents.



It is not our intention to reopen the debate relating to the long-standing Arab–Israeli conflict. However, it is our opinion that academic research should be a vehicle for international collaboration and a means to build bridges between nations with different cultures, irrespective of underlying geopolitical conflicts, and it should not be divisive.

The term occupied Palestinian territory is a political statement with intentional prejudice. The West Bank and Gaza are disputed territories with an unresolved legal status. Since the end of the Turkish Empire and the British Mandate for Palestine, these territories have not been under the recognised de jure sovereignty of any state. Only the UK and Pakistan recognised the occupation and annexation of the West Bank by Jordan, which ended in 1967. According to international law, use of the term occupied requires there to be an internationally recognised legal entity whose territory is occupied. Here, there is no such entity. The World Bank categorisation, which does not specify sovereignty, is definitive. Therefore, use of the word occupied in the term occupied Palestinian territory is incorrect and is inconsistent with international law.

The future status of the West Bank and Gaza will be determined by ongoing dialogue and negotiation. Within the medical community, it is essential that academic institutions and researchers remain apolitical and do not use publications as a means of identifying with a political agenda.

This perverse letter contests the term Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is using the Lancet to make political propaganda for a foreign power. The term is used officially by the UN, EU, the International Court of Justice, and other international agencies. In response, the following letters have been sent to the Lancet, but have not to date been published.

### **1. From Dr Owen Dempsey**

Dear Editor,

In their letter of May 04, 2019 Paul et al suggest that: 'the term occupied Palestinian territory is a political statement with intentional prejudice' and should be avoided in medical academic papers.

However, the term 'disputed territories' is only used by the government of Israel, and is always used in the service of Israel's political aims.

The Occupied Palestinian Territories is the name used by the United Nations, the International

Court of Justice, and other international agencies. And, it is clear that to not call the West Bank 'Occupied' is to express a political agenda that is complicit with Israeli racial apartheid, the military occupation, settler colonisation and, not least, the harms the occupation is causing to health. The World Bank does not have the mandate, expertise or authority to warrant the assertion made by the authors that the term 'disputed territories' is 'definitive'.

If the perspective taken on the West Bank is that the population and the land are: a) under an illegal military occupation - illegal because it transgresses international laws governing the responsibilities of an occupying power to the people of the land it occupies; and b) undergoing illegal appropriation by settler colonisation - then it is only right and just for academics, and journals such as The Lancet, to recognise and to name this land as the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

### **2. From Dr Uri Davis ( PhD Anthropology) The Palestine National Council.**

Dear Editor and Deputy Editor,

A friend brought to my attention the piece recently published in your journal ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30027-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30027-3)) alleging that since the end of the Turkish Empire and the British Mandate for Palestine the West Bank and Gaza "have not been under the recognised de jure sovereignty of any state. Only the UK and Pakistan recognised the occupation and annexation of the West Bank by Jordan, which ended in 1967."

May I point out that by signing the armistice agreement with the Hashmite Kingdom of Jordan on 3 April 1949 Israel too recognized the de jure sovereignty of the Hashemite Kingdom over the said territories.

Sincerely

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### **Israel and the anti-Semitism playbook in Great Britain and the grassroots.**

*A forum held by the [Middle East Research and Information Project](#) (Merip)*

Merip is a non-profit independent research group established in 1971, that has released reports and position papers on various Middle East conflicts. Its most prominent publication is Middle East

Report, which is published both online and as a print magazine.

This event was a round table discussion with Neve Gordon and Lynne Segal from the UK, and Kristian Davis Bailey and Olivia Katbi Smith from the US, held to discuss the role of accusations of antisemitism in disarming criticism of Israel.

They take a long, hard look at what the Merip describe in their introduction as attacks aiming to “vilify the messenger in order to discredit the message”. The continuing attacks on Congressional critics of Israeli policies like Rep. Ilhan Omar for their alleged antisemitism appear culled from the same playbook that Israel’s supporters in Great Britain have used to tarnish Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn over the past few years: vilify the messenger in order to discredit the message.

This tactic has also been widely used at the grassroots level in the United States where increasingly successful Palestinian rights activists have been subject to vitriolic personal criticism, including the frequent charge of antisemitism, for advocating for Palestinian rights or their criticism of Israel. In our continuing discussion of this issue (see our roundtable on the [manufactured controversy](#) over Ilhan Omar’s tweets) we asked two commentators from Great Britain and two from grassroots activism in the United States to respond and reflect on what is behind this tactic and why now it is being deployed in each context. A virulent antisemitism is clearly on the rise and must be confronted, but as the participants in this roundtable pointed out, conflating criticism of the Israeli government’s policies with antisemitism undermines the fight against actual antisemitism as well as the other forms of racism and bigotry with which it is intimately connected today.

**Find the forum [here](#) on the Jewish Voice for Labour website**

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## **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>

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## **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](mailto: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 BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK or by making a bank transfer to BRICUP at Sort Code 08-92-99

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