

Boycott Israeli Academic Institutions

Education is a vital aspect of human lives and it provides the sole means for people to better themselves intellectually, and thereby broaden their future prospects in an increasingly technical world. Israelis are able to exercise academic freedom unhindered, and have access to educational institutes in almost every state in the world. However, the Israeli government is denying this basic right to education to an entire generation of young Palestinians.

In order to redress this balance and force the Israeli government to change its policies, we call on all academic institutes worldwide to ban all Israeli academic institutions. Each institute must ask itself: Is it morally acceptable to conduct academic business as usual with the institutions of a state that is engaged in the wilful destruction of the Palestinian people?

“Everyone has the right to education.” Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

FACTS ABOUT PALESTINIAN EDUCATION

Physical attacks on staff and students

Between 2000-2004:

- 501 pupils were killed, over 8,000 were injured and 318 were arrested by the Israeli army.
- 17 teachers and staff were killed and 71 arrested.

Closures of Schools

In the same period, 1,289 schools were closed for at least 3 consecutive weeks.

Restriction on Freedom of Movement

Even before the Aqsa Intifada, hundreds of students from Gaza registered with West Bank universities were not allowed to attend classes. Restrictions are much worse now. For example, the only remaining passable road to Birzeit University has been destroyed twice in the last two years and is routinely closed to all Palestinians by an Israeli army checkpoint. There are no credible security reasons for this closure as the road does not lead to Israel or to any Jewish settlements.

In 2001-2002, approximately 50% of school children and 35,000 employees in the education sector were prevented from reaching their schools by checkpoints and curfews enforced by live fire.

Repression of peaceful demonstrations

On March 12th 2001, in one of many similar incidents, Israeli troops fired on unarmed Birzeit students and staff demonstrating in support of academic freedom, injuring several protestors and killing one.

Disruption of exams

Exams that are crucial to students' academic progress were disrupted by curfews in June and July 2002. Several exams were cancelled and many students were unable to attend.

In at least one school, soldiers invaded a classroom and forced students to leave during an exam.

Terrorist attacks on schools

A Jewish group associated with illegal settler communities has been responsible for several bombings of Palestinian schools in recent months. No arrests have been made by the

highly efficient Israeli security forces in connection with these terrorist incidents.

Propaganda attacks on the Palestinian education system

These often involve exaggerated or invented claims about the contents of Palestinian textbooks. A central feature is the assertion that any accurate description of Palestinian history constitutes "incitement" against the state of Israel.

Wider attacks on academic freedom

Supporters of Israeli policy in the United States have started a campaign of vilification against academics who insist on telling the truth about the Middle East. The McCarthyite "Campus Watch" campaign (www.campus-watch.org) compiles dossiers on US academics whose views they disagree with and encourages students and others to press for disciplinary action to be taken against them.

In England, motions have been passed in Liverpool and Birmingham universities banning criticism of Israel by speakers on campus.

The Boycott Debate

The aim of this boycott is to highlight the issue of denial of Palestinian academic freedom and to encourage a mass campaign among the worldwide academic community, including Israelis, in support of Palestinian educational rights.

The campaign is not directed against individual academics who are Israeli but official contacts and collaborations with Israeli state institutions.

Effect of the boycott on the peace process

The Israeli government refuses to negotiate and therefore a worldwide campaign is

needed to pressurise it to end the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land. This is the purpose of the boycott.

Compared to the almost total shutdown of Palestinian education as a result of Israeli policies, the effects of this campaign on Israeli academic freedom are trivial. However, the campaign can effectively address the major issue of a generation of young Palestinians who are being denied their right to education.

Action Points

1. Refuse to participate in official contacts with Israeli universities.
2. Refuse to attend conferences in Israel.
3. Refuse to take part in research collaborations with Israeli colleagues.
4. Refuse to serve as a referee for publications submitted from Israeli institutions.
5. Refuse to act as an external examiner for degrees conferred by Israeli institutions.
6. If you choose not to boycott, challenge Israeli academics on the issue of the de facto worldwide academic boycott of the Palestinians. Ask them what they are doing to address the issue.
7. Support the campaign for economic sanctions on the Israeli university system.
8. Write to bodies administering grants in your field letting them know of your support for Palestinian education and your opposition to supporting the apartheid Israeli state in this way.
9. Try to establish collaborations with Palestinian academics. When this is prevented, write in protest to the government of Israel.

10. Urge your institution to make a public statement similar to that of Marie Curie University in Paris.

"It is always the oppressor, not the oppressed, who dictates the form of the struggle"

Nelson Mandela (Long Walk to Freedom)

"We do not seek to be victims nor do we seek to be heroes. All that we want is to be ordinary."

Mahmood Darwish (Palestinian Poet)

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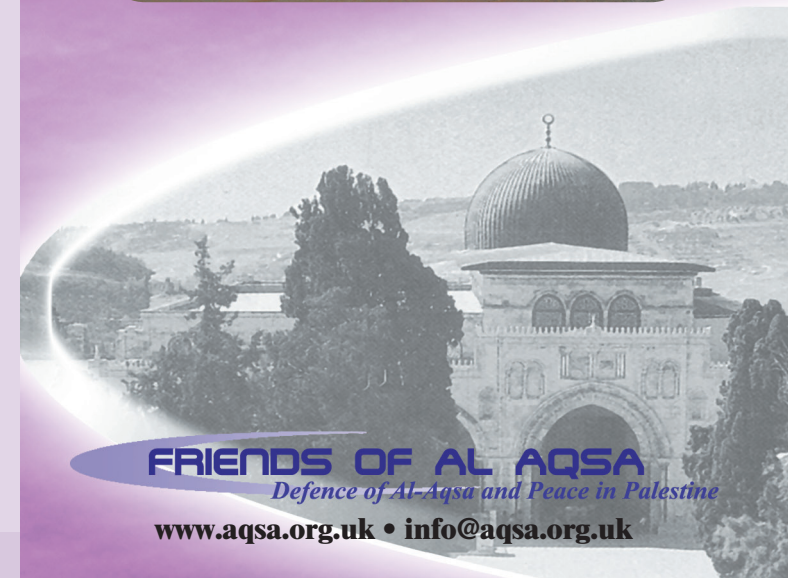
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