

BRICUP NEWSLETTER

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The Medical Committee for Palestine

and

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel

will hold a panel discussion on

ABUSES OF MEDICAL CARE UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Chaired by Sir Iain Chalmers, Oxford,

Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole St,
London, W.1

on Tuesday 29 April, 2008 at 6.15 - 9.00

Hadas Ziv, Miri Weingarten, and Ruchama Marton, will describe the difficulties patients, hospitals and medical personnel are facing under Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. They will describe their unsuccessful appeals to the Israeli High Court, and the silence of the Israeli medical establishment in the face of systematic violations of human rights against Palestinians. Invited participants include: the BMA Ethics Committee, the BMJ and the Lancet, the Guardian and Independent newspapers. Please contribute £5 at the door.

If you plan to attend or have other queries please contact Prof. Colin Green
(c.j.green@imperial.ac.uk; 020 8869 3265) or
Dr Derek Summerfield
(derek.summerfield@slam.nhs.uk;
020 3228 5121).

Related meetings will be held at Hampstead Town Hall on April 28th, in Brighton on April 30th and in Exeter on May 1st. Please 'phone or email the organizers as above for details.

UCU News

In December an official UCU delegation, which included the union's president Linda Newman, visited the West Bank to see the circumstances on Palestinian campuses at first-hand. Our colleagues met academic staff and representatives of the Palestinian Federation of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE). In March, the UCU NEC passed the following resolution on Palestine and the Occupation; this will be put to Congress in May. The resolution reads as follows.

“Conference notes:

- Continuation of illegal settlement, killing of civilians and the impossibility of civil life, including education;
- Humanitarian catastrophe imposed on Gaza by Israel and the EU;
- Apparent complicity of the Israeli academy;

Conference affirms that:

- Criticisms of Israel or Israeli policy are not, as such, anti-semitic;
- Pursuit and dissemination of knowledge are not uniquely immune from their moral and political consequences.

Conference resolves that:

- UCU widely disseminate the personal testimonies of UCU and PFUPE delegations to Palestine and the UK, respectively;
 - The testimonies will be used to promote a wide discussion by colleagues of the appropriateness of continued education links with Israeli academic institutions;
 - UCU facilitate twinning arrangements and other direct solidarity with Palestinian institutions;
 - Ariel College, an explicitly colonising institution in the West Bank, be investigated under the formal Greylisting Procedure.”
- [from Philip Marfleet]

The Palestinian academic campus tour.

The long-awaited UCU speaking tour by Palestinian academics will take place between April 20 and 30. There will be 18 meetings at campuses from Glasgow to Bristol. This tour is the outcome of a resolution that was passed overwhelmingly at UCU Congress last year; it is part of the international movement to support Palestinian efforts to maintain education under Israeli occupation. It is also an opportunity for Palestinian academics to travel beyond the occupied territories, where they are confined by road blocks and closures, and are often unable even to move between campuses. There will be two groups of lecturers from Bethlehem University, Bir Zeit University and An-Najah National University - members of the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees. The delegation will also hold discussions with officials of UCU and the TUC.

The campus meetings will be open to UCU members only. If you are a UCU member but you do not have an onsite meeting please check the list below to identify an event in your area.

April 21 - Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, York.

April 22 - Sussex, Brighton, Sunderland, Durham

April 23 - Kent, North East London, Glasgow Caledonian

April 24 - Cambridge, Bristol

April 25 - East London, Lambeth

April 28 - Warwick, Birmingham

April 29 - SOAS/ UCL/ Birkbeck / Institute of Education

Full details of locations and times will be posted on the UCU website,

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3092>

or contact -

Paul Bennett (pbennett@ucu.org.uk),

Brian Everett (beverett@ucu.org.uk) or

Linda Newman (lnewman@ucu.org.uk).

All BRICUP supporters who are also members of UCU are urged to attend these meetings and to support our colleagues from Palestine.

[from Philip Marfleet]

The PACBI column.

Covering up Crimes with “Culture”

In our last column, we reported on the Palestinian civil society campaign urging international civil society, particularly institutions and individuals working in the arts, academia, sport, trade unions, and communities of faith, to boycott the "Israel at 60" celebrations wherever they are held in the world. The statement was issued on March 30, 2008, and was endorsed by all key Palestinian civil society organizations, both in Palestine and in the diaspora [1].

As the date of the official celebrations in Israel approaches, it becomes clear that the extravaganza will culminate in Israel itself with as strong an international presence as Israel can muster. Not only have European heads of state been invited to the official celebrations, but efforts have also been underway to attract prominent performers, writers, and other cultural figures to lend credibility to the state-organized celebrations. PACBI has addressed appeals to a number of performers, such as Bono [2] and Bjork [3], urging them not to accept invitations to perform in Israel at a time when it persists in its cruel siege of and war crimes in the Gaza Strip, continues to expand settlements, and proceeds undeterred in its reign of terror in refugee camps, villages, and cities.

The latest Israeli attempt to mask these stark facts on the ground and to relegate the memory of the Nakba to oblivion is the upcoming International Writers' Festival in Jerusalem, hosted by the state and mainstream Israeli cultural organizations, and timed to coincide with the celebrations. What is most baffling is the apparent acquiescence of prominent international writers in this latest effort to shore up Israel's image, and to naturalize Israel's place in the global cultural scene as a sponsor of the arts and culture. In particular, we are surprised that Nadine Gordimer, Russell Banks (who visited Palestine on a solidarity visit a few years ago), and Niall Williams would allow themselves to be used in this most cynical way. Israel's Writers' Festival is not a normal writers'

gathering. It is a highly politicized event, and we have every hope that the writers concerned will refrain from granting legitimacy by their participation to a state that has no respect for international law or basic human rights. The Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem has issued an appeal calling “on those who are working for social justice, along with Palestine solidarity groups from around the world to contact the participating authors, particularly those from their home countries, and encourage them to boycott this event in solidarity and support of a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis.” [4] PACBI supports this call.

Israel’s 60th anniversary is above everything else a celebration of 60 years of Palestinian dispossession and Israeli apartheid. Taking part in any form in these celebrations is tantamount to complicity in perpetuating Israel’s crimes against the people of Palestine.

[1]http://www.pacbi.org/announcements_more.php?id=706_0_5_0_M

[2]http://www.pacbi.org/press_releases_more.php?id=674_0_4_0_C

[3]http://www.pacbi.org/letters_more.php?id=708_0_3_0_C

[4]http://www.alternativenews.org/news/_english/_boycott-the-international-writers-festival-in-jerusalem-20080410.html

Medical education in Palestine

....from Colin Green

The first intifada in 1987 coincided with the collapse of the Soviet bloc each causing major upheavals in secondary and further education of Palestinians. Up to that time, Palestine medical undergraduates were taught mostly in Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Rumania, Egypt, Jordan or Iraq but the sudden restriction on travel by the Israelis and loss of free scholarships overseas changed that pattern almost overnight. With the exception of a few Palestinian doctors who had returned from further training in Jordan, the UK, France or USA, the quality of healthcare

provision in the Occupied Territories fell well short of acceptable standards. Even with the numbers of poorly trained doctors available there were still only 1/1200 population compared with 1/420 in UK and Israel. The number of well qualified specialists (e.g. cardiology, cardiac surgery, orthopaedics, pathology) was tiny.

After much discussion with some exceptional Palestinian colleagues, I was asked in 1991 by Medical Aid for Palestinians to carry out a feasibility study in the West Bank to see if the case for setting up a Palestinian Medical School was viable. I recommended that not only was it possible, it was absolutely essential. We concluded it should be a new Faculty in Al Quds University, sited on the Abu Dies campus, and have Al Makassed, Augusta Victoria, St Lukes and St John’s Hospitals as affiliated teaching hospitals in Jerusalem and others in Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron and Gaza outside. Eventually, after years of wrangling both internally and with the Israelis, the first cohort of 32 medical students were admitted in October 1994.

Initially, a Dean Dr Nael Shihabi was appointed and proved excellent in starting up the School. Because of the intifadha, it was felt that secondary education standards had dropped to such an extent that even students entering with very high Tawjihi results (over 95%) needed a two year foundation course before moving into a conventional 2 year pre-clinical 3 year clinical medical course. Both the Dean and I were keen on an integrated, systems based, problem-based course right from the beginning but with the existing Palestinian teaching staff as well as the expatriate teachers we had to recruit, this proved a bridge too far. The School still runs (in common with most of the developing world) a conventional course.

The School has faced enormous economic and political problems. Since the second intifada these are if anything worse and worsening. Nevertheless, the quality of students (60% women, 40% men) is incredibly high. The charity we started in London in 1995 (the Foundation for Al Quds Medical School or FQMS) to support the Faculty has since raised some £5 million and enabled students to come out to Jordan, Egypt,

Belgium, Sweden and the UK for electives of 8-10 weeks as well as paying for visiting lecturers, external examiners and video-conferencing equipment to go into Palestine. The first doctors graduated in 2001 (25 in number) and we have now graduated over 220 excellent young professionals. These do one year internship in OT hospitals, then 2-3 year residencies.

We have also organized postgraduate placements in London, Southampton, Paris, Amman, Irbid and the USA. Seven have completed PhD's, several have gained MRCP or FRCS, and four are training in the UK in pathology, cardiology, general surgery and neurosurgery before honoring their contract to go back to Palestine and make up the deficits in specialist health provision.

The Faculty of Medicine has been so successful that *all* universities in Palestine now want their own independent Schools. From what was started in Abu Dies in 1994 in a garden shed we now have huge facilities in Abu Dies, Nablus, the Islamic University in Gaza, and too in Al Azhar University in Gaza City. The intake of students and output of doctors now far exceeds the service need, the postgraduate training facilities and the economic support possible for them. The lack of planning is criminal (but no worse than the last decade in the UK). Young Palestinian doctors will now have to seek higher training overseas, in other words are trained for export. The upside of that dynamic is that like so many skilled Palestinians before them (particularly civil engineers) they earn overseas then remit money to their families at home.

One other aspect of medical education driven by necessity has grown out of the Apartheid Wall and pass system whereby students, doctors, patients and Faculty teachers find it increasingly difficult to meet face-to-face. Telemedicine, video-conferencing and webcast, internet e-learning is developing apace. We are now planning a Palestinian Health Sciences Education Centre in Ramallah which will provide e-learning resources for *all* healthcare professionals, doctors, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, laboratory technicians and allied professionals. In fact the pilot project has started and is funded. If

successful, I hope it will provide a model for similar centres to be established globally but of particular importance in transitional economies and developing economies.

In conclusion, medical education in Palestine is thriving. My experience with the young people has been absolutely inspirational for me. Do they succeed in spite of their massive problems or because of them? They deserve all the help that BRICUP can give them.

THE NEXT ISSUE of the BRICUP Newsletter will include an article by Derek Summerfield with the title:-

Israel: Torture, doctors and the Israeli Medical Association.

BRICUP needs your financial support

As the pace of boycott activity increases we need your financial support. We are spending most of our reserves on a substantial, and well overdue, redesign of our website. We need funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that an ever busier campaign demands.

You can make a one off donation

- by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, at BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK
- by making a bank transfer to BRICUP
Sort Code 08-92-99
Account Number 65156591
IBAN = GB20 CPBK 0892 9965 1565 91
BIC = CPBK GB22

Like all organisations, while we welcome one off donations, we can plan our work better if people pledge regular payments by standing order. You can download a standing order form from www.bricup.org.uk/documents/StandingOrder.pdf
If you need more details contact treasurer@bricup.org.uk

Comments and suggestions concerning the Newsletter are welcome. Email to newsletter@bricup.org.uk