

Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Gideon Levy speaks in Manchester | p.1 |
| Announcement of a lecture | |
| The Punishment of Gaza | p.1 |
| The PACBI Column | p.2 |
| The Militarization of the Israeli Academy | |
| From BRICUP to Neve Gordon | p.4 |
| An open letter to the Board of the | p.4 |
| Melbourne International Film Festival | |
| Financial support for BRICUP | p.6 |

Gideon Levy speaks in Manchester

Gideon Levy, the award-winning and internationally acclaimed Israeli journalist, who has been reporting from the Occupied Territories for over 20 years, will be speaking in Manchester on Thursday 19th August at

a meeting which is being sponsored jointly by BRICUP and Manchester PSC. Gideon Levy was one of the guest speakers at BRICUP's first public meeting which was held in London in November 2008. His personal presence is as powerful as his writing and he is guaranteed to provide a valuable insight into attitudes of the Israeli general public to the Israel/Palestine conflict, and the driving forces behind their government's policies. BRICUP is therefore grateful to Manchester Palestine Solidarity Campaign for making it possible to offer our many supporters in Manchester the opportunity to hear what he has to say. Please see the announcement below for details and pass them on to anyone you think would be interested, and get in touch if you would be able to help at the meeting itself or have any suggestions to offer about how BRICUP can increase its presence on the Manchester campuses.

An announcement by Manchester Palestine Solidarity Campaign in association with The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)

The Punishment of Gaza

a lecture by

GIDEON LEVY

at

**ROOM 1, THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
MANCHESTER**

at 7pm

on THURSDAY AUGUST 19th 2010

Note: This lecture is a part of Gideon Levy's speaking tour to launch his new book of the same title. Levy is an award-winning and internationally acclaimed Israeli journalist. He has been reporting from the occupied territories for the Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz, for over 20 years. Levy's work combines piercing political analysis with a journalist's drive to tell the stories of those suffering under the Israeli occupation. Levy humanises the victims of war, to tell us their names, their birthdays and what they ate for breakfast. Yet Levy does not speak primarily to, or for Palestinians. His aim is to hold a mirror up to Israeli society, asking Israelis to face up to the everyday brutality of the occupation and to ensure that neither Israelis nor their international supporters can ever say "we didn't know".

The PACBI Column

The Militarization of the Israeli Academy

Many academics around the world were shocked at the recently enacted Israeli Knesset bill that that will provide one year of free tuition to any discharged soldier (reservist) who studies at an institution of higher learning in the Galilee, the Naqab (Negev), and the illegal Israeli colonies in the occupied West Bank. In June 2010, and in preparation for the Knesset vote, the Israeli cabinet approved the draft legislation; Prime Minister Netanyahu was quoted as saying, "The need to aid discharged soldiers and promote the periphery is part of the national consensus." [1] This overt use of higher education institutions to buttress Israel's settler-colonization of the Palestinian land, however, is anything but new. Since the creation of the state of Israel on the ruins of Palestinian society, the deep partnership between the academy and the military-security establishment has been emblematic of the widely militarized Israeli society.

One of the more remarkable features of Israel is the normalization of the military in almost every facet of life. The ubiquitous presence of the military is unremarkable and not cause for comment or controversy among the public, including intellectuals, artists and public figures. In a highly militarily mobilized country, raising concerns about the militarization of the educational system goes against

the grain, against the national consensus which views the overbearing military presence as a natural, even necessary, part of the fabric of "civic" life. Among academics, discussions on the autonomy of the university do not usually take into consideration the high level of integration between the academy on the one side and the military and weapons industry on the other, as the latter have always been a staple feature of life at Israel's major universities. The entrenched complicity of the Israeli academy in planning, promoting and justifying Israel's colonial and apartheid policies is hardly debated.

The vociferous public controversy surrounding Palestinian filmmaker Nizar Hassan is a case in point. In November 2007, a year after the Israeli army's massive and lethal assault on Lebanon which left more than one thousand Lebanese killed, Hassan, an instructor at Sapir Academic College in Sderot in southern Israel, asked a student who came to his class in military uniform not to wear it next time in class. The public campaign of slander and vilification against Hassan that ensued says volumes not only about the veneration of the military in society but also its normalization within academic institutions. The college president instructed Hassan to apologize to the student, adding, "you must refer to your obligation to be respectful to the IDF uniform and the full right of every student to enter your classroom in uniform." [2]

It is thus no surprise that the above mentioned bill in the Knesset has passed without any ado in Israel. The fact that the new law went unremarked is a strong indicator that Israel's higher education institutions are so overwhelmingly integrated into the military and security establishment that it is not worthy of comment. A lone act of protest against this law came from the Gush Shalom movement. However, the protest shows the limits of the critique of state and society by the Israeli "peace forces" which by and large do not object to the militarization of the academy and do not support Israel's full compliance with its obligations under international law in regard to ending the system of racial discrimination inside the State or allowing the Palestinian refugees to exercise their UN-sanctioned right to return to their homes.

In a letter to the Committee of University Heads in Israel, Gush Shalom warns that the Government's sponsorship of this law may add "considerable impetus" to the "growing worldwide movement of academic boycott against Israeli universities." The silence of Israel's academic institutions in response to it, the statement rightly notes, will deepen their "complicity with the occupation." The only other concern raised in this protest is that a law on aid to released soldiers which would also "help the peripheral areas" will in fact provide "special benefit and encouragement" to academic institutions in the "settlements of Ariel, Elkana and Alon Shvut." [3] Missing from the statement is any mention of the fact that the complicity of Israel's academic institutions extends well beyond apathy towards the mentioned colony-colleges to cover a much wider range of domains, where the academy plays a key role in providing the rationale and justification – and often the plans -- for ethnic cleansing, extra-judicial killings, colonization and dehumanization.

It is PACBI's opinion that the complicity of academic institutions with the Israeli occupation and the larger system of apartheid and colonial oppression of the Palestinian people is not limited to Ariel College or the handful of academic institutions in Israel's illegal colonies in the occupied West Bank—interestingly missing the Hebrew University Mount Scopus Campus, the first "colony-college" to be built by Israel. The protest of Gush Shalom, thus, remains well within the national consensus in Israel which does not question the fundamental partnership between the universities and the military-security apparatus that denies the Palestinian people its right to self determination and other fundamental rights.

The partnership between the academy and the military has taken many forms. One is the earlier classic colonial model of scholars serving interchangeably in the academy and as advisors and administrators in the military-security establishment. Acquiescing to, even encouraging, academics to serve in the reserve forces annually within a specific age group is another important aspect of that complicity. Yet another has been the tradition of the integration of army personnel and institutions within the universities, such as in the Talpiot and Psagot schemes of the "academic reserve" program at several major universities. The most

critical arena where this collusion is manifest is the robust cooperation between research universities and the weapons industry, which directly implicates the academy in supporting the commission of war crimes and other grave violations of international law. Some of these facets of integration are analyzed in two excellent reports by the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem and the SOAS Palestine Society. [4]

There has been no palpable protest in Israel against the complicity of the academy with the army and related institutions, even after the massive assault on the Gaza Strip in the winter of 2008-2009, when the Israeli army unleashed the full force of its lethal arsenal upon the civilian population and infrastructure of Gaza, destroying scores of schools and university buildings, among other civilian "targets" as part of its "Dahiya Doctrine" of disproportionate force developed by Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) . [5] While this criminal assault galvanized many international solidarity groups and invigorated the movement for BDS around the world, it seems to have had the opposite effect in Israeli academia: business as usual, or worse. One particularly telling and representative example is that of Haifa University, long falsely marketed as a "liberal" institution that promotes "coexistence," which at the height of "Cast Lead" displayed a huge Israeli flag on its 30-story tower, almost literally "wrapping itself with the flag," as a sign of support for Israel's war on Gaza and to show that the University "stands behind the soldiers," as stated by its president. It is not just the Israeli government and Knesset that stand behind the soldiers, after all.

Notes:

PACBI

[1]

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/Spoakesman/2010/06/spokestudy060610.htm>

[2] Jonathan Cook, "[Academic freedom? Not for Arabs in Israel.](#)" The Electronic Intifada, March 5, 2008.

[3] http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/press_releases/1280217335/

[4] Alternative Information Center, "[The Economy of the Occupation: Academic Boycott of Israel](#)," October 2009.; and SOAS Palestine Society, "[Urgent Briefing Paper: Tel Aviv University-a Leading Israeli Military Research Centre](#)." February 2009.

[5] SOAS, *ibid*.

A letter to Neve Gordon from BRICUP

August, 2010

Dear Neve Gordon

I am writing to you on behalf of BRICUP, the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine, to offer our support to you and your colleagues in the higher education system who have signed the petition to the Minister of Education, Gideon Saar, in support of freedom of speech in Israeli academia.

We appreciate that the signatories hold a range of differing views about the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine and in particular about BDS, but that all are united in their opposition to any limit being placed on freedom of expression on the basis of support for boycott, or any other political opinion. We therefore welcome this action being taken by so many of your number in support of the right to freedom of thought and expression, which lies at the heart of all true civilized democracies.

As you may know, BRICUP was established in 2004 to establish support for the academic boycott within the UK university teachers union UCU, and among the British academic community more generally. BRICUP actively engages with similar groups throughout Europe and worldwide. We are also keen to build relationships with Israeli academics who, like us, recognise the need for outside pressure on Israeli society, through BDS, in order to bring about a situation in which a just and sustainable outcome in Israel/Palestine can be achieved. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and talk with like minded Israeli colleagues on any forthcoming visits to the UK. Our contact address is below

We wish you luck with your campaign

Monica Wusteman

On behalf of the BRICUP Committee

Contact us at contact@bricup.org.uk

An open letter to the Board of Melbourne International Film Festival

The following letter concerns the refusal of the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) to withdraw a film when the film makers objected to the MIFF accepting funds from Israel.

The letter follows:-

A young Jewish Australian activist recently informed us that the MIFF received funding from the state of Israel. As such you will be aware we made an attempt to withdraw our film *Son of Babylon* from your festival. We were truly surprised that the festival failed to inform us of this vital information when requesting our film - a Palestinian co-production, bearing in mind that controversy shook your festival in 2009 when Ken Loachs film *Looking for Eric* was removed for the same reason. The discovery was made during *Son of Babylon* special screening at Sarajevo IFF in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of Srebrenica and whilst the director Mohamed Al-Daradji was visiting the ICMPS (International Commission for Missing Persons) facilities in Bosnia as part of our associated IRAQS MISSING CAMPAIGN.

Upon hearing this news, Mohamed, Atia (our Iraqi producer) and I took immediate action by emailing your festival on Saturday 24th July at 01.49am, 2010. In the email we requested MIFF to cancel the screening of *Son of Babylon* on the 26th July 2010, stating that we felt duty bound not to have any association with the state of Israel until they respect the human rights of the Palestinian people. Yet despite our request your festival sent us an email on the 26th July 2010 at 06:54 (note: 29 hours later) the day of the screening refusing to cancel the screening.

For the second screening of *Son of Babylon* on the 28th July 2010 we had hoped that your festival would respect our wishes, given that you had more time. However your festival director Richard Moore outrageously requested that we pay \$4450 for your festival not to screen our film (we reminded him that he didn't hold to ransom *Looking for Eric* in 2009). In turn we reiterated that we had revoked any rights MIFF had been previously granted to screen the film and offered to reimburse the festival any monies they had paid our agents along with shipment costs. Your festival ignored this request and we hasten to guess that this was due to the fact on our later discovery that our agents in fact did not charge your festival to screen the film. After the second screening went ahead without our consent we tried to obtain some remedy and requested that your festival, as a gesture of goodwill, donate the proceeds from our screenings to charity. Richard Moore's response to this was *I have no intention of donating the admissions of the film to a charity of your choice. I don't see any point in corresponding further on this matter.* It is truly saddening that MIFF takes this stance and has made no attempt to compromise or appease the situation in even a small way.

Please know that we are not against Jewish or the Israeli people and filmmakers. I am of Jewish decent myself and recently directed the short film *Kosher* about a young Jewish boy. What we are against is the Israeli government's ongoing human rights violations against Palestine and the seizure of and sanctions on Gaza. Not forgetting the 2008/9 War on Gaza. Through boycotting cooperating with any organisations that deal with the state of Israel we try to follow the example Australia proudly set in the 1980's when Mr. Rod Webb, The Sydney Film Festival Director, refused to accept any sponsorship or screen films from an apartheid South Africa. As a result of this and similar boycotts working together it inspired a nation to change and brought about the release of Nelson Mandela. This is the power of belief and it is encouraging to see we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Richard Moore commented: *For the record I find your comparison between Israel and an apartheid state odious!*

Son of Babylon took us over four years to make, it wasn't easy and we are still fighting to this day with the films associated IRAQS MISSING CAMPAIGN to have the murder of 1,000,000 + missing people in Iraq be recognised as a genocide by the United Nations. This recognition will bring justice to the many victims and aid the rebuilding of a peaceful Iraq. As such and as long as Israel continues to perpetrate crimes against humanity, neither my colleagues nor I wish for us our social impact films to be associated with Israel. When Israel respects human rights, we will of course be proud to screen our films in conjunction. Our hope is that in speaking out about this issue with MIFF we have demonstrated that actions taken by institutions like yours that work against the goodwill of humanitarian filmmakers are downright unacceptable and we are happy to know there is shared solidarity from our fellow filmmakers like Paul Laverty and Ken Loach on this issue.

From the last email we received from your festival on the 3rd August 2010, we are regrettably coming to the unfortunate conclusion that this matter may not be resolved by communicating directly with you and that legal proceedings against the festival may be inevitable. We would of course, be very reluctant to take this course of action but as we mentioned in an earlier email to your festival director it should not be underestimated our resolve with both Jewish and Palestinian Human Rights organisations that are behind us to ensure that your festival does not profit from its blatant disrespect of filmmakers wishes. Nevertheless with a view to making some tangible progress in resolving this matter, we publicly place the onus on you, the Melbourne International Film Festivals Board to take positive steps and settle the issue contained within this email by donating the proceeds of our screenings to a mutually agreed charity.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerest regards,

Isabelle Stead Producer: *Son of Babylon* and on behalf of the team: Director Mohamed Al-Daradji & Producer, Atia Al-Daradji

Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

Recent meetings and lobbying activities have been expensive. We need funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that a busy campaign demands.

Please do consider making a donation .

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

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 much better if people pledge regular payments by standing order.

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

More details can be obtained from treasurer@bricup.org.uk

Follow BRICUP on twitter

twitter.com/bricup

BRICUP is the **British Committee for the Universities of Palestine**. We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are always welcome. Email them to: newsletter@bricup.org.uk