

ATTENTION EDITORS – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MAY 28, 2012
[Press Release from
BIN – Boycott Israel Network
BRICUP – British Committee for the Universities of Palestine]

PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS THWART DRACONIAN SECURITY AT GLOBE ISRAELI STATE THEATRE PERFORMANCE – BREAKING NEWS

+ Shakespeare’s Globe in security lockdown to defend Israeli National Theatre

+ Israeli Embassy orchestrates propaganda campaign against growing support for cultural boycott

+ Repeated interruptions

Despite unprecedented security at Shakespeare’s Globe for Monday’s performance by Israeli National Theatre, Habima, pro-Palestinian campaigners succeeded in . . . unfurling a banner and staging a mute protest against illegal colonisation and settlement. Protesters were manhandled by security staff out of the theatre on London’s Bankside, where Habima – which entertains colonists illegally settled on Palestinian land - was performing the Merchant of Venice in Hebrew as part of the Cultural Olympiad.

Just before the interval 15 demonstrators stood up with Palestinian flags and a banner. Demonstrator Veronica Simpson said “Security was unnecessarily aggressive. We were just making a peaceful protest about Israel”. One demonstrator had her glasses broken. One man was handcuffed and arrested. Pro-Israel audience members shouted abuse, and some physically attacked demonstrators.

After the interval two members of the audience introduced some adapted texts from Shakespeare “Hath a Palestinian not eyes.... if you prick us do we not bleed” and “Avaunt and quit my sight – Apartheid” before they were removed.

Previously six protesters displayed a large banner and several smaller ones they had smuggled into the theatre. The banners carried the slogan “Israeli apartheid leave the stage”. “We tried non-violently to convey the message that culture may not be used to give a civilised gloss to a state that perpetrates human rights abuses,” said Zoe Mars, a protester. Audience members left the performance because they were disgusted by the rough treatment of the peaceful and silent demonstrators.

There were other smaller demonstrations by members of the audience

Protesters’ ingenuity was tested by airport style **security checks** including “extensive searches of bags and audience members”. The theatre box office was closed by 4 pm, photographic equipment was banned and any bag larger than a modest sized purse had to be checked into a special left luggage facility.

Israeli Embassy attempts to undermine the protests with a Twitter campaign in support of Habima fizzled out when their efforts were leaked to pro-Palestinian activists. An embassy circular suggested using the hashtag #loveculture, because it “won’t be taken at first glance as a political statement.”

“This is proof positive that as far as the Israeli state is concerned, culture and political propaganda are indivisible,” said Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, cultural working group coordinator of the Boycott Israel Network.

“This campaign is not an attack on individual artists, we are not censoring the content of their work nor are we concerned about their ethnicity or the language they speak. As with South African sport in the apartheid era, this is about refusing to allow culture to be used to whitewash oppression.”

Israeli, Palestinian and British human rights campaigners, backed by respected figures in theatre and the arts, have urged the Globe over recent months to withdraw its invitation to Habima which is complicit in the state’s human rights violations and illegal colonisation of occupied land.

Campaign supporters such as film maker Ken Loach and actors David Calder and Miriam Margolyes say Habima uses its art to normalise an unacceptable situation. Their complicity “makes a mockery of their claim to freedom in their work,” says Loach.

For further information contact:

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. This campaign went public with an [open letter published in The Guardian](#) (March 29), signed by David Calder, Trevor Griffiths, Jonathan Miller, Mark Rylance, Emma Thompson and Harriet Walter, along with 31 others.
2. See video statements from actors [David Calder](#), [Miriam Margolyes](#) and [John Graham Davies](#).
3. [Statement](#) from filmmaker Ken Loach and from Palestinian writer [Dr Ghada Karmi](#).
4. Photos and video from protesters.
5. Palestinian theatre company, Ashtar, based in Ramallah in the Occupied West Bank, staged *Richard II* in Arabic at the Globe on May 4 and 5. In a [post-performance discussion](#), artistic director Iman Aoun revealed that she had been strip searched on leaving Tel Aviv airport to travel to London. She and other members of the company explained their support for the cultural boycott of Israeli institutions.
6. Video: [“Hath a Palestinian not eyes?”](#)
7. Israeli President Shimon Peres recently [cited boycotts](#) as a key reason why Israel may be obliged to make peace.
8. Foreign Secretary William Hague [last month condemned](#) Israeli settlement activity, saying; “As the Occupying Power of the Palestinian Territories, the Israeli government has an absolute requirement to uphold international law and to fulfill its commitments.”

9. Content of **Israeli Embassy circular** mobilising Twitter support for Habima:
An Important Message from the Israeli Embassy - MAY 29TH/HABIMA
THEATRE COMPANY

Importance: High

Dear Liverpool Jewish Community Members,

As part of the campaign around Habima's performance at the Globe this coming week, we are aiming to get something relevant trending on twitter. After careful consideration, we have decided to use the hashtag **#LoveCulture** as it is short enough to fit on a substantial tweet and won't be taken at first glance as a political statement.

To get something trending on twitter, we need it to be a sudden occurrence.

Therefore, we will start tweeting with **#LoveCulture** at 08:00 UK Time (which is GMT +1) on Tuesday 29 May (please do not start before this time as it will dilute the possibility of this actually trending).

(If you do not have twitter, please email acailler@live.co.uk before Tuesday 29th May and

Adam will advise you what/how to use twitter)

Due to the rules twitter has, please refrain from using additional hash-tags, sending multiple tweets with only minor changes as they won't be counted and please make sure that your tweets are relevant, as again not complying will result in tweets not being counted.

Examples of tweets that you can use (please try and edit them) are:

- **Great to see @HabimaTheatre celebrating the Cultural Olympiad @the_globe...all the world's a stage #LoveCulture**
- **Fantastic seeing the foremost Hebrew speaking theatre company perform the Merchant of Venice @the_globe #LoveCulture**
- **Was great to hear @edvaizey enjoyed watching @HabimaTheatre...did he understand any of it though? #LoveCulture**
- **Jealous of all those off to see sold out @HabimaTheatre at @the_globe tonight...last night was great #LoveCulture**

If you are using a twitter client such as TweetDeck or HootSuite, there is an option to schedule tweets to be sent at a predetermined time.

Please feel free to send this on to **trusted** contacts with twitter.

If you have any questions please contact pr-asst3@london.mfa.gov.il or elliott@thejlc.org.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach