



Newsletter

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Editorial

Since its recognition as a member university in the Union of Arab Universities in 1978, An-Najah National University has been endeavouring to offer quality educational opportunities to a large number of Palestinian youth. All through its mission An-Najah National University has faced huge difficulties caused by the Israeli Occupation. From 1987 to 1991, An-Najah was closed by a military order banning entrance to the university campus by faculty and students. In 1992, the university was besieged by the Israeli armed forces, trapping students and faculty for three consecutive days and nights without food, and under the threat of the university being stormed if four "wanted" students refused to surrender. Some international parties intervened to lift the siege and the four students were deported to Amman.

Since the eruption of the second Intifada in September 2000, An-Najah students have become an easy target of the Israeli armed forces. Students have faced all types of harassments and torture: 56 students have been killed by the Israeli armed forces, several hundreds have been imprisoned and thousands are harassed and detained daily at the checkpoints before they are given permission to pass. Such atrocities are affecting the academic performance of our students and the general well-being of their academic, social, and economic life.

These realities have prompted us at the Public Relations Department to bring these violations of human and educational rights to the attention of people in the international community. We believe that there are people in every part of the world who do not condone prejudice, injustice, apartheid, and the walling in of others depriving them from easy access to the most vital of their daily activities.

We believe that our students are entitled to the right to education and to a safe educational environment. We, therefore, intend to tell the true story of the suffering of our students and faculty members seeking the impartial judgment of all intellectuals, students and academics of the world. We also believe that through education we can create an environment suitable for mutual understanding and cross-cultural communication and cooperation.

Ignorance, poverty and diseases are human enemies in all cultures and they negate all possibilities of peaceful coexistence, democracy and tolerance; teach and learn, therefore, we must.

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Academic Boycott



Demonstration against the occupation in London's Trafalgar Square on 9th June 2007

Delegates of the UK's University and College Union (UCU) annual conference voted 158 to 99 in favour of a consideration of an academic boycott against all Israeli higher education institutions. The motion was tabled in response to a call in 2005 for a boycott by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. The UCU vote calls for its members to 'consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions' and for a tour of UK campuses by Palestinian academic and educational trade unionists.

Ahmad Badr, the Student Council Leader of An-Najah National University, welcomes the votes, "All members of the Student Council support the notion of an academic boycott of Israeli institutions." Similarly, the Student Council of Birzeit University representing 7,600 students also declared its support for the boycott. Last year, it succeeded in replacing all Israeli products on campus with Palestinian ones or other alternatives.

The vote calls for a discussion of a boycott and not an actual boycott as yet. Even so, there has been an outpouring of complaints from UK, Israel and USA. Tony Blair, while he was still Britain's Prime Minister, urged British academics to abandon the boycott because it does 'absolutely no good for the peace process'. The foreign and education

ministers of Israel are setting up a task force made up of representatives from both ministries, trades unions and other professional unions to prepare a public relations campaign against the introduction of boycotts in the UK. In the USA, Professor Dershowitz, the prominent lawyer and Harvard law professor, has threatened to 'devastate and bankrupt' those he believes are acting against Israeli universities. He has enlisted a team of 100 lawyers to break the boycott.

These complaints target a group of academics who are going to discuss the possibility of a boycott. There is no certainty that in the end they will vote in favour, yet already moves to intimidate the discussion have begun.

Supporters of the vote are pleased that it has reinvigorated debate about the occupation of Palestine. Dr Caroline Lucas, the UK Green Party MEP, stresses that the vote calls for a consideration of boycotting Israeli universities. It does not target individuals, but institutions, 'While some Israeli academics have spoken out against state oppression of the Palestinian people, their institutions have failed to condemn the violations of academic freedom that occur'. The secretary of the British Committee for Universities in Palestine, Steven Rose, defends the vote as 'merely a specific tactic, a non-violent weapon..., one form of protest' against the occupation. Lisa Taraki of Birzeit University says that the vote is not a punishment of Israeli academics, but it assumes that they 'can be pressured to act to bring about change'.

For more on academic and cultural boycotts, see <http://www.pacbi.org/>

Déjà vu? Another boycott?

Two of the UK's unions, UNISON and T&GWU, both passed motions to impose sanctions against Israel. UNISON, the public service workers union with 1.3 million members voted for an investigation of a consumer boycott against Israeli products and divestments of pension funds assets from Israeli companies wide. In a show of solidarity, it also passed a separate motion to call upon Israel to end the occupation, allow refugees to return, remove the Separation Wall and withdraw to 'its 1949-67 borders'. The Transport and General Workers Union with over 750,000 members, called for a boycott of Israeli goods.



Source: http://www.yayacanada.com/boycott_barcode.jpg

The swell of support for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel is welcomed. Even if it only serves to buoy the debate of Israel's policies and practices in the occupied territories, the calls and the pressure they apply are all moves towards guaranteeing the right to education for Palestinian students.

The UCU, UNISON and T&GWU votes join forces with similar calls for boycott and sanctions made by other groups recently, some of which are listed here:

1. Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine – 200 British and Israeli architects and academics signed a manifesto calling on Israeli architects and planners to cease being “partners in social, political and economic oppression” in the occupied Palestinian territories.
2. The Ontario division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees - voted to support an international campaign that is boycotting Israel over its treatment of Palestinians.
3. Aosdána – the Irish academy of artists voted in favour of a motion that calls for artists and cultural institutions to reflect deeply before engaging in any cooperation with Israeli cultural events or institutions.
4. Howard University in Washington - the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University voted overwhelmingly to call on the university's Board of Trustees to divest from Israel.
5. British medical doctors – 130 doctors signed a letter published in the Guardian newspaper calling for the Israeli Medical Association to be expelled from the World Medical Association because the IMA is failing to uphold international medical ethics because it refuses to criticise Israeli practices in the occupied territories.
6. National Union of Journalists – elected delegates voted in favour of a motion to boycott Israeli goods in response to Israel's actions in Lebanon last year and its continued actions in Palestine.
7. The Canadian Action Party / Part action canadienne – members of the political party endorsed a call to campaign for a boycott, divestments and sanctions against Israel.
8. Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities – called upon the Arab Antiquities Authority to boycott archaeological teams willing work with Israel on excavations near the Haram Al Sharif in East Jerusalem.
9. Norway's Socialist Left Party (SV) – one of Norway's three governing parties Party voted to support sanctions against Israel.
10. Irish academics – 61 academics called for a moratorium on the support given the Israeli academic institutions by the EU until Israel abides by UN resolutions and ends the occupation.

The Road to Graduation



Wasef Khateeb on his graduation day

Over 2,000 students celebrated at the beginning of June as they received their certificates proudly announcing their academic achievement. Amongst them was Wasef Khateeb, completing his Bachelor's degree in English. Wasef's achievement beside that of his peers may appear unremarkable, but he won his accolade in spite of living in no-man's land – the area between the Wall and the Green Line.

Surrounded on three sides by Israeli settlements and on the fourth by the Wall, Wasef's village is cut off from its neighbours. It lies in what is known as the seam zone – West Bank land that has been lassoed by the Wall so that it is now continuous with Israel. Being a Palestinian ID holder, Wasef

has to prove his identity by a special permit to pass through the gate between the seam zone and the West Bank. That is, when the gate is open. The brief and irregular opening hours often prevented him and his cousins from attending classes.

And if that was not hard enough, his journey between the Wall and An-Najah University was punctured by checkpoints, both permanent and flying. In 2003 on his way to university, he and his cousins

were stopped by some Israeli soldiers who took away their ID cards, forcing them to walk a detour to the nearest checkpoint to pick them up. Pleading to allow his cousins to go directly to the university, a shorter route, Wasef was shot in the leg by one of the soldiers. He was unarmed and it was an unprovoked attack. He spent 11 days in hospital.

Wasef is now a graduate, and no longer has to make the hazardous journey to the university. Yet, his cousins still make the trip. If they can endure what must seem improbable to outsiders, they too will celebrate their graduation in the years to come.

Denial of Entry

Several cases of students being denied access by Israeli authorities to further study have arisen in recent weeks. The Israeli High Court of Justice ruled that Wisam Madhoun could not be granted passage from his home in Gaza to study for his PhD in environmental science at Tel Aviv University. In Jenin, a student who had to attend an interview in Jerusalem for a scholarship to study at New York University was told that the price of the permit to enter Jerusalem from the West Bank was to inform on the people from his village and campus.

'Cooperate' and get the permit or stay where you are, was the offer from the Israeli official. In another case, a fresh Nablusi graduate wishing to extend his musical instrument repair skills on a course offered in Jerusalem was flatly denied permission to go to the city. These cases highlight the strict control that the Israeli occupation has over the mobility of students to attend courses for which they have been accepted.

Getting the message out

Saed Abu-Hijleh, An-Najah National University lecturer, has a stack of name cards four times the size of a deck of playing cards. He collected these on a whistle-stop lecturing tour of seven universities in the UK where he portrayed the impact of occupation on education through lectures, presentations, discussions and poetry-readings. Each card contains the contact details of an individual who is interested in the plight of higher education in occupied Palestine.



Saed Abu-Hijleh addressing a meeting at the London School of Economics

'The tour was an amazing example of the power of networking', Saed said. To set up the tour, he was already in touch with a huge network of people and now he has expanded it even further.

'Living under siege means that An-Najah has little direct contact with outsiders, and so I developed the idea of a speaking tour', Saed explained. Liaising with friends of An-Najah, his schedule took him to the London School of Economics, and the Universities of Manchester, Newcastle, Durham, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. The titles of the lectures included 'Palestinians' Right To Education', 'Political Geography of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Future Prospects', 'Education as Resistance: A Palestinian Pedagogy' and 'Palestinian Universities Under Occupation'.

Saed highlighted how the right to education is violated under occupation and the eroding effects of occupation on Palestinian society. Having lost his mother to an Israeli sniper and having spent time in jail, he gave a realistic and sincere rendering of the situation.

Whilst in London, Saed signed on the behalf of An Najah's Student Council a twinning agreement with the Student Union of the London School of Economics. Originating from the desire to advocate for the right to education for Palestinian students, LSE's Student Union forged the agreement so the two universities can stand in solidarity.

Saed also met the British Committee for Universities of Palestine who were influential in securing the UCU vote for a consideration of an academic boycott against Israeli academic institutions. He explained how the boycott is a useful tool to apply pressure on Israel to comply with UN resolutions and international law.

Beyond comprehension

By Sondus Sherim

Rami Shana'a, a student at An-Najah National University, 25, was the latest student to be killed by Israeli soldiers. Rami was still working in his family's butchers shop in the centre of Nablus at 9pm on 2nd June when Israeli soldiers swept through the area. They claimed the life of Rami, shooting him in the head, killing him instantly. This, the 56th student of An-Najah to be killed by Israeli military since 2000, is another example of the brutal action by the occupation forces.



Commemorative pictures of Rami posted around Nablus shortly after his death

Birzeit student is executed 'by mistake'

By Right to Education Campaign, Birzeit University

On the 29 May, the 22 year old sociology student, Omar Abu Daher, was summarily executed by the Israel forces on the main high street of Ramallah. He was in his 4th year of study.

At around 5:40pm, Omar had finished eating at the popular Nazareth falafel

restaurant when he saw a white Ford van stopped in front of the restaurant. He recognised this as an undercover operation by the Israeli *mustaarabeen* (Arab-looking intelligence officers) and began to walk in the other direction.

Plain-clothed officers jumped out of the van and Omar began to run. They shot him in the legs and back and he fell over. Ilias Hreesh, the owner of a store directly opposite the

place where Omar fell, said he saw everything clearly, "He was alive when about 8 soldiers wearing civilian clothes reached him. One of them shot him directly in the head at a pointblank range. They left him bleeding for 30 minutes and prevented any help from reaching him."

The soldiers could have easily arrested him had they wanted to do so. Instead, they carried out yet another extrajudicial execution,

illegal under international law.

In the end it turned out that Omar worked for the Presidential Guard and the undercover officers had not come for him. His was yet another life lost to the impunity under which Israel operates.

You can watch a clip of footage made by medical staff and journalists who tried to reach Omar. It was distributed by the Information Minister, who also happened to be in a nearby building when it happened.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6ELayoGFgg>

Campaign news

Joint efforts

The Right to Education Campaigns at Birzeit University and An-Najah National University are streamlining their efforts to build a stronger campaign. The first joint project was the 'Students Take A Stand' photographic exhibition in 2006, where the photographs taken by students from both institutions are displayed in an exhibition being toured around universities in Europe. Building on these promising foundations, a joint website promoting a nationwide campaign is in the pipeline. It will have links to the individual campaigns but it will unite efforts under one banner. Other institutions of higher education in Palestine are invited to join the campaign.

Contact The Right to Education Campaign at righttoeducation@najah.edu or Right2edu@birzeit.edu.

Checkpoint Project

The Right to Education Campaign at An-Najah National University is launching the Checkpoint Project in July. It is well known that the students and staff of An-Najah are subjected to the time-wasting and humiliating procedures at checkpoints. Thousands of people daily are delayed, harassed and worse, but as yet no-one has attempted to quantify this misery so that an accurate account of the amount of time wasted, the types of humiliation suffered and the frequency of flying checkpoints can be regularly reported. Working with volunteer students, the Checkpoint Project aims to collect



regular information on the processes and hindrances posed by checkpoints. This will then lead to the establishment of a systematic process for reporting violations against the right to education at both Birzeit and An-Najah Universities later in the summer.

Birzeit students support UNISON boycott motion

In a statement, the Right to Education (R2E) Student Committee of Birzeit University welcomes the motion passed by UNISON, the biggest trade union in the UK.

“We congratulate UNISON on their courageous move to speak out against the Israeli policy of tyranny and isolation of Palestine, especially at a time when the international community is silent and vicious witch-hunts were carried out against those who dared speak up.

As Palestinian students we are suffering from an economic blockade which has impoverished our communities, checkpoints which humiliate us and steal our time daily, pass-systems which prevent us from seeing our families and immigration controls which stop many of us from leaving and prevents international students from accessing our universities. We call on academics and students worldwide to seek the facts and speak out!”

The R2E Student Committee also points out that the academic boycott is an institutional boycott that does not prevent Israeli academics from speaking or publishing their work. It is not a witch-hunt. It requests the suspension of institutional links and calls for Israeli academics to speak up against the breaches of humanitarian law and basic human rights committed in their name. The message the Committee’s students want to get across to Israeli academics is simple:

“The situation is intolerable. There is currently no outside pressure reining-in Israeli state practice in the occupied territories. Change must come before worse atrocities are allowed to happen.”

Right to Education Campaign at An Najah National University

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