

September 20, 2010

Over 650 academics and cultural workers have endorsed USACBI!

The USACBI is pleased to announce that we have reached that critical number. Endorsements by US academics and scholars recently crossed 500, and there are now 150 cultural workers who have also endorsed USACBI! This is a major victory for the growing academic and cultural boycott of Israel, and for the movement for justice and equality in Israel, as defenders of the status quo in Israel have repeatedly observed that the legitimacy of the state of Israel in the global court of public opinion is threatened by the boycott movement.

USACBI calls on academics, students, and cultural workers (artists, filmmakers, writers, journalists, poets) to (1) endorse our call for academic and cultural boycott, if they have not done so already, by sending an email to uscom4acbi@gmail.com, and invite as many others as possible to do so (see our website for more information); and (2) join us in mobilizing with the expanding boycott and divestment movement in the US. There are several ways in which you could support the campaign! If you would like to get involved, please write to us at uscom4acbi@gmail.com. To see who is currently on our Organizing Collective or Advisory Board, check out our website at <http://www.usacbi.org/>.

USACBI at the US Social Forum in Detroit, June 2010



Nada Elia, member of the USACBI Organizing Committee, **Rana Barakat**, member of the BNC (Boycott National Committee) and PACBI, and **Nadine Naber**, faculty member at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, co-facilitated a workshop on the academic boycott during the People's Movement Assembly (PMA) at the United States Social Forum

(USSF). Participants in the workshop discussed responses to the standard accusation that "an academic boycott flies in the face of what the academy does best, namely create dialogue," as we analyzed the complicity of the Israeli academy in the suppression of human rights, and in the violation of faculty's academic freedom and the students' freedom to receive an education. Hence a boycott of these institutions—until academic freedom is achieved—does not disrupt dialogue, but rather aims at creating it, where it currently does not exist.

The participants expressed a desire for greater visibility for USACBI and were interested in the possibility of a national conference. Most wanted to move from silence into language and action (to use Audre Lorde's image), and to translate their endorsement of the call for BDS into something more concrete. Responding to this interest, USACBI sent out a call asking people around the country to work with us to form local chapters and we are also working on planning a national USACBI conference in spring, 2011.

Report on BDS activities at the US Social Forum

The USACBI workshop at the US Social Forum was one of a large number of workshops, training sessions and discussions pertaining to BDS, demonstrating the centrality of the Palestine question and BDS as a growing movement for the left.

The US Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) organized two People's Movement Assembly (PMA) sessions and BDS was a central part of both. The first PMA hosted a presentation from UC Berkeley's Students from Justice in Palestine (SJP). The student track in particular discussed how the US Social Forum and the USPCN conference can help student organizations who work for Palestine to network and share resources. The second PMA brought together over 20 national campaigns as well as social justice organizations to strategize on how to expand the BDS movement across the US and emphasize BDS as a core part of the social justice movement. American Muslims for Palestine organized a student workshop for SJP chapters from around the US where students were debriefed on BDS campaigns at Hampshire and UC Berkeley and discussed how to start their own BDS campaigns.

Adalah-New York and CODE PINK discussed their boycott campaigns targeting specific Israeli products, and the Bay Area Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid highlighted their work encouraging consumer boycotts in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Minnesota Break the Bonds Campaign discussed strategies to implement state-level campaigns divesting from Israeli bonds. Lastly, the Labor for Palestine Campaign organized a workshop for workers to collectively achieve three demands for labor organizing in the United States: 1) divestment of labor from Israeli state bonds; 2) boycott of Israeli goods, and support of workers' refusal to handle Israeli cargo; and 3) breaking of ties with the Histadrut (Israeli Federation of Labor, a founding party of the State of Israel and part of the current Israeli government).

Update written by Dina Omar, SJP-UC Berkeley Alumna.

ISIS Campaign



USACBI, joined by 15 members of the Anti-Racist Network, University of Southern California's SJP, Women in Black, the National Lawyers Guild, and assorted individuals responded to the International Society for Iranian Studies' (ISIS) decision to host a speaker from Ariel University, located in a settlement in the West Bank, in its conference:

<http://usacbi.wordpress.com/2010/05/30/usacbi-demonstrates-against-recognition-of-settler-colonial-university-by-academic-conference/>

The two-pronged approach included petitioning, letter writing, and a

demonstration. The president of ISIS issued this letter in response to campaign efforts:

<http://usacbi.wordpress.com/2010/03/03/international-society-for-iranian-studies-hosts-israeli-settler-from-ariel-military-university/>

USACBI's Response to Racial and Religious Discrimination in the UC System

The Muslim Student Union at UC Irvine has officially been suspended for one quarter (Fall 2010) due to a demonstration that was organized in Spring 2010 in protest of a speech given by the Israeli ambassador, Michael Oren, on the college campus. Several of the students who participated in the demonstration, who are mostly Arab and Muslim, are also facing disciplinary action by the office of student conduct. In response to this racial and religious discrimination in criminalizing political protest by the UC Irvine administration, USACBI issued the following statement condemning the punishment of individual students and the demonization of the MSU for acceptable forms of protest. <http://usacbi.wordpress.com/2010/07/13/statement-condemning-disciplinary-action-against-the-irvine-11-and-the-recommendation-to-suspend-the-uc-irvine-muslim-student-union/>

Divestment in US Higher Education

USACBI has formed a Campus Organizing Committee to coordinate with student groups across the country on academic boycott and to support the growing divestment movement that has undergone several important developments since the founding of USACBI.



US University and College divestment campaigns in chronological order:

- 1) Hampshire College successfully passed its divestment resolution in February, 2009 <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10304.shtml>
- 2) UC Berkeley re-launched its divestment campaign in Fall 2009, introducing its divestment resolutions to the UC Berkeley senate in Spring 2010. The resolution was initially passed but subsequently vetoed by the Senate President. The senate body then failed to overturn President Smelko's veto: www.caldivestfromapartheid.com
- 3) In April 2010, Georgetown, Divest!, a group on the Georgetown University campus, launched a letter writing campaign to the University president. In late April, the group received a letter in response, indicating the administration's failure to comply with the groups' suggested guidelines for socially responsible investment: <http://georgetowndivest.wordpress.com/>
- 4) UC San Diego, launched its divestment campaign in the midst of campaigning at UC Berkeley. The resolution was ultimately tabled indefinitely in the student senate at the end of the Spring semester: www.ucsddivestforpeace.org
- 5) In June 2010, Evergreen State College (TESC) students voted to pass two resolutions. One of the resolutions called for the divestment of school funds from companies which profit from Israeli occupation and the other was to ban the use of Caterpillar equipment on Evergreen's campus: www.tescdivest.org

Please contact us if you're a student or divestment organizer interested in coordinating with us to support campaigns on your campus or working together on academic boycott related activities.

Other Updates and Related Campaigns

California Divestment Initiative



USACBI has endorsed and is actively supporting California's *Israel Divestment Campaign*. The immediate goal of the campaign is to qualify a ballot initiative called the *Divestment of State Retirement Funds from Israel Act* so that it can appear on the statewide ballot.

The California Divest from Israel Ballot Initiative was approved for signature gathering by the California Attorney General (AG) on September 2. The initiative, if passed, will require California's public retirement systems, the State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) and the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), to sell stocks held in companies that support Israeli settlements or provide military equipment and services to the State of Israel. In order to qualify the Divest from Israel Act

for the next statewide ballot, 434,000 signatures must be gathered within a 5 month time period once the initiative is ready for signature gathering (September 2010).

For more information on the bill and to sign the petition: <http://www.israeldivestitureforum.org/>

Arizona Boycott Letter

In response to Arizona state's racist legislation, HB1070 and SB 2281, USACBI issued the following open letter of solidarity with the Arizona boycott:

<http://usacbi.wordpress.com/2010/07/01/open-letter-in-support-of-the-boycott-of-arizona-by-the-u-s-campaign-for-the-academic-and-cultural-boycott-of-israel/>

Update from Artists Against Apartheid (AAA)

Artists Against Apartheid (AAA) is one of the endorsers of USACBI and works closely with us to organize around the cultural boycott. AAA is an international alliance committed to equal rights, justice, and the elimination of apartheid. AAA's work organizing for freedom in Palestine-Israel expanded during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, while Israeli forces perpetrated documented war crimes against civilians captive in the Gaza Strip. In coordination with the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), AAA issued its Declaration of 2010, stating its commitment to the Palestinian-led BDS Movement, and specifically the cultural boycott as it applies to artists worldwide. AAA's endorsers already hail from over 20 countries, and all artists are invited to endorse the Declaration, join the alliance, get involved in collective organizing against apartheid by visiting <http://join.artistsagainstapartheid.org>.

US Artists Support Boycott of Israeli Settlements

More than 150 American actors, writers, directors, and other artists signed a letter of support for Israeli actors who declared they would not perform in the West Bank. The American signatories include Cynthia Nixon, Mandy Patinkin, and actor and writer Wallace Shawn. The Israeli actors caused a storm when they released a petition stating they would not perform in the West Bank, prompted by reports that the theater companies were planning performances at the new cultural center in Ariel. The American letter notes that Ariel is one of the largest settlements in the West Bank and calls it illegal by any standard.

The signatories said that most of them faced daily compromises with things they found unacceptable, and that when a group of people decided they would make no more compromises and found the strength to refuse, this inspired them. The occupation is an obstacle to hope and a just and sustainable peace for Israelis and Palestinians, they added.

See: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/u-s-actors-back-israeli-boycott-of-west-bank-theater-1.312393>

Please see PACBI's statement putting the Ariel boycott in context:
<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11510.shtml>

Israeli Academics Support Boycott by Cultural Workers

More than 150 Israeli academics say they will no longer lecture or work in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. In a letter, they said they supported the recent decision by a group of actors and others not to take part in cultural activity there. The academics said that acceptance of the settlements caused "critical" damage to Israel's chances of achieving peace with the Palestinians.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11141774>

Campaign to Boycott Hewlett-Packard (HP)

On September 6th, 2010, a flash demonstration took place in Emeryville, California against HP's complicity in Israel's occupation of Palestine, organized by the Bay Area Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid (BACEIA). Below is an excerpt from the campaign flier:



“Comrades...Start the school year right -- Think Before You Ink!

Hewlett-Packard (HP) Enterprise Services sells the *Basel System* to the Israeli government. The *Basel System* biometrically scans and identifies Palestinians at checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza, preventing Palestinian people from moving freely on their own land. These checkpoints prevent students from getting to school, workers from making a living, and families from meeting and accessing medical care. Checkpoints are one aspect of Israeli Occupation and Apartheid, and the daily life for Palestinians.

It is in these ways that Hewlett-Packard profits from Occupation and Apartheid - both of which are **illegal** under international law.

Join the Bay Area Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid (BACEIA) and our allies in letting HP know that their "socially responsible" rhetoric will **NOT** hide the blood that is on their hands.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”

News from Palestine

Right 2 Education Campaign and BDS Conference at Birzeit University (West Bank)

After Birzeit's three day international BDS conference on, July 27-28, the Right2Education campaign is launching an internationally coordinated week of action scheduled for the week of November 15th, 2010. Right to Education week will take place in numerous locations throughout the country on college campuses. The aim of the week will be to spread awareness about rights to education in Palestine through discussions, films, distribution of literature, and most importantly, a speaking tour given by Palestinian students from Palestinian universities. To find out how you can participate in Right to Education week, please contact right2edu@birzeit.edu or by phone, (0)2-298-2059. See: <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/> for more information on the campaign.

Advocating for ACBI

This short video interview with Omar Barghouti is a great introduction to the BDS movement and to USACBI. It addresses the basic questions of why people should join the boycott and counters misinformation and distortion of its goals:

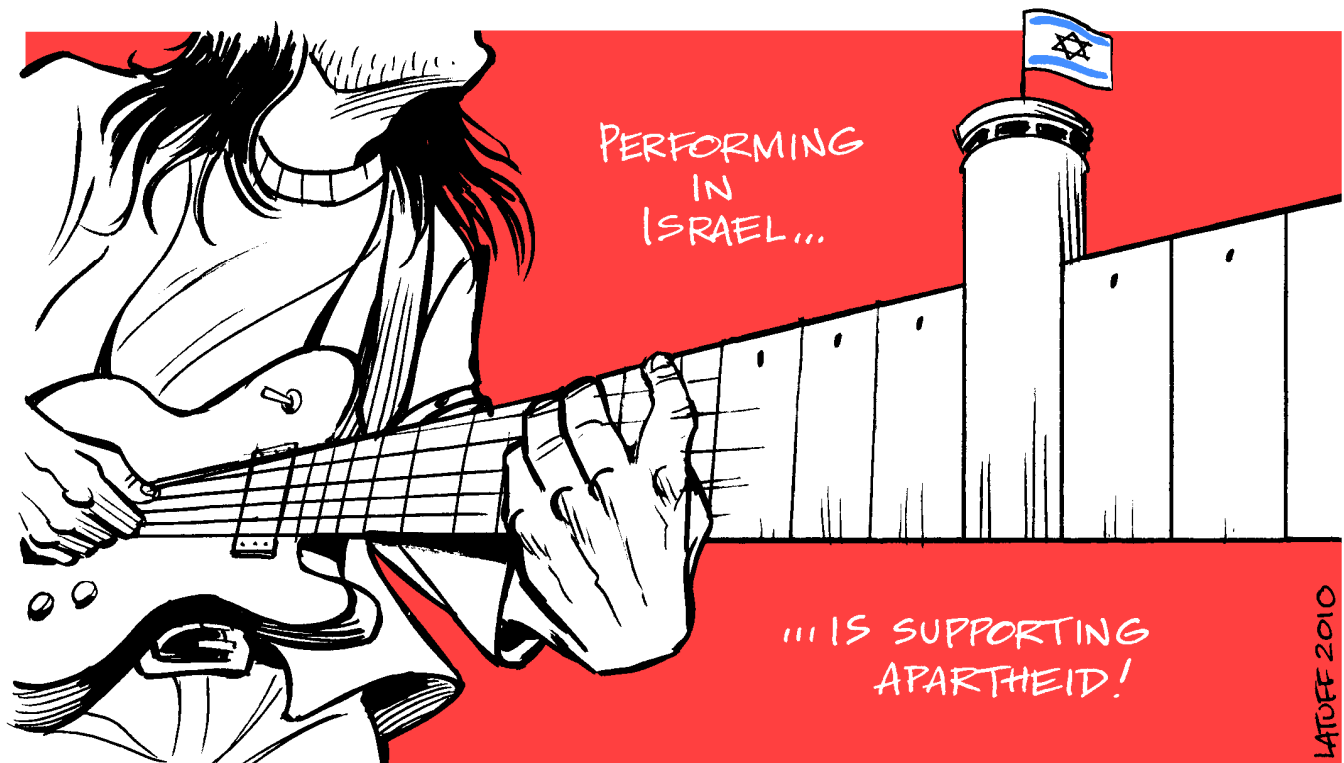
http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=5547

Upcoming Events: Watch out for ...



USACBI is sponsoring a speaking tour this fall. Lisa Taraki, a founding member of PACBI from Birzeit University in the West Bank, will be speaking at a number of universities in the US in late October and early November 2010. Check our website for more information:

<http://usacbi.wordpress.com/>.



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff