



The Youth Empowerment Project
The Academic Watch



The Arab Culture Association

Annual Summary Report 2011-2012

Monitoring discrimination, racism and political oppression against
Palestinian Arab university students in the Israeli universities and
colleges during the 2011-2012 academic year November 2012.



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November 2012

Published By: The Arab Culture Association

General Supervision: Dr. Rawda 'Atallah

Preparation: Kholood Ershied

Yara Sa'di

Mtanes Shihadeh

Nida' Nassar

Weaam Baloum

Khulood 'Anabtawi

Rabeea Eid

Editing: Eyad Barghuthi

Design: Eman 'Odih

Translated from Arabic by: Suhail Matar - ROAA Translation

Special thanks goes to: Zein Fahoum

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Arab Culture Association's

Phone: 04-6082352

email: aca1998@gmail.com

website: www.arabca.org

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About the Project

The Academic Watch

The Academic Watch Project is an initiative which emerged from the Arab Culture Association's (ACA) Youth Empowerment Program – a program focused on fostering the leadership abilities of Palestinian Arab Youth to effectively produce social and political change. This initiative stems from a monitoring project which the ACA commenced a few years ago. In the original project, the ACA issued several crucial reports on the racism and militarization in the Israeli academia.

The Watch Project seeks to expose the racist and discriminatory policies, processes and declarations, against the rights and freedoms of Arab students in Israeli post-secondary institutions. Using a system of reporting and providing a forum for students to document instances of discrimination, racism and the underlying militarization of these institutes, the Project aims to bring attention to these issues at the local and international level. Exposing these discriminatory policies and practices is vital in highlighting the connection between the Israeli academia and the state's security and occupation systems but more importantly, laying the foundation to eradicate the issue.

The ACA assembled a group of Palestinian Arab university students, attending different universities and colleges. These students were given legal and journalistic training, then set up and activated a page for the «Academic Watch», on the social networking website, Facebook. This provided an optimal interactive space for reporting and discourse. These students also prepared a number of special reports on the major cases of discrimination against Arab students, which will be published during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Today, the network of activists in the Academic Watch will be working on expanding their network beyond academia. This will entail the inclusion of more students interested in changing today's academic reality and to ultimately put an end to the policies and practices that perpetuate the state's ongoing militarization and discrimination within Israeli academic institutions. . The network will also motivate and encourage the general student community to do the same type of documenting on this matter, and will raise the awareness about a student's rights and liberties. Bringing together the values of equality and justice, with the struggle against discrimination and racism, provides the necessary framework in building a case to pressure policymakers in the academic institutions to make a change.

Throughout the entire duration of the project, the Arab Culture Association provides legal support and consultation through professional legal accompaniment.





1.0 Introduction

This report is the first in a series to be released throughout the 2012-2013 academic year on the discriminatory practices and policies in Israeli post-secondary institutions. This report summarizes instances of racist and discriminatory actions within Israeli academia evidencing the nondiscretionary infringement upon the rights of Arab Palestinian students. All of the cases mentioned in this report have been publicized in various media outlets and exposed by active student movements. The intent of this report is to gather and deliver this information in a concise and cohesive manner thereby encouraging more students to monitor, document and expose future violations through the Academic Watch.

This report shows that the 2011-2012 academic year saw more aggressive oppression of freedom of expression and of the organization of cultural and political activities by Arab students.

This is particularly true for Palestinian Nakba commemoration activities in the middle of May 2012, during which university administration or the official student unions prohibited the organization of any Arab cultural and political activities – be it by preventing the entrance and hosting of leading political and societal figures, by excluding activities from the campus or even by prohibiting the organization of an artistic or cultural festival.

Additionally, this report documents the blatantly racist practices of Im Tirtzu, an extreme right-wing pro-Zionist student

movement, which has been an effectively oppressive tool in threatening the rights and freedoms of Arab students in Israeli universities. This movement has become increasingly active in all universities, and evidence in this report shows Im Tirtzu's general incitement of Arab students, as well as the activists who support them, in every initiative or activity held by Arab students, especially commemorating the Palestinian Nakba, the Palestinian prisoners' cause, or the hosting of leadership figures. In addition, this report highlights a number of phenomena and notable events that took place during the previous academic years, most prominently the phenomenon of exacerbating racism of all kinds against Arab students in the Safed (Zefat) Academic College, in addition to the militarization phenomenon that is taking over the state's academic institutions.

This report will be followed by a series of specialized reports dealing with the cases of discrimination against Arab students and the militarization in the Israeli universities and colleges. Meanwhile, our work continues with the administration of the "Academic Watch" page on Facebook and with the network of field activists. The Watch Project strives to harness all of this information in order to better expose the racism, discrimination and political oppression exercised against Arab students, as it is the most important step to eradicating such racist and discriminatory practices.



1.1 Updates on Militarization

All reported cases of violations of Arab students' rights and student groups in Israeli academic institutions mentioned in this report, constitute a part of the ongoing militarization process of these institutes. The militaristic character of these institutes has manifested itself in many ways. Here are some of the developments which have taken place during the past year:

- **The majority of the members of the academic tracks and the administrative boards in the Israeli post-secondary institutions are reserve soldiers, members of the army personnel, or the general security ("Shin Bet") personnel.**

In January 2011, General Ami Ayalon was appointed head of the administrative board of the University of Haifa. In 1992, Ayalon had been appointed head of the Israeli navy and was promoted to Colonel. In 1996, he moved on to become the head of "Shin Bet", the General Security Services.

- **The renewal of an academic contract between the University of Haifa and the Israeli army**

Under the provisions outlined in this contract, Israeli soldiers can learn on a specially developed academic track to obtain a Master's degree in five years. The University's rector, Ben Artsi, stated that the University of Haifa was proud to continue being "academic home for the security forces." It is worth noting that the University of Haifa has, for many years, been providing special programs for Israeli army units, such as the Havatsalot military intelligence unit. The soldiers who belong to these unit walk around campus in their army uniform, brandishing their weapons. This makes the militarization process more visible and

gives it an air of legitimacy, making such behavior the norm in the Israeli academic institutes for higher education.

- **The Hasbara Fellowship Programs**

Hasbara is a term used to describe public diplomacy or relations. In the past year, the University of Haifa introduced a new program called the Hasbara Fellowship – a program primarily concerned with the management of Israel's public relations in media and in the international arena in general.

Tel Aviv University also offers a similar degree called the Ambassador Club. This program is financially assisted by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the right-wing American Institute, Stand With Us.

The academic institute in Ari'el offers a similar joint program with the Ministry, in which students receive training courses.

The Association of Students' Union also offers its own Hasbara program, aimed at fighting against "anti-Semitism and the



delegitimization of Israel", where each participant receives two thousand dollars in return for publishing comments and messages on social networks for five hours per week.



2.0 Cases from the 2011-2012 Academic Year

2.1 Ari'el University Centre of Samaria

During the last academic year, the Israeli government approved the recognition of an academic college located in the settlement “Ari’el”, in the occupied lands of 1967, making Ari’el University Center of Samaria the ninth recognized Israel University.

The history of the settlement “Ari’el” dates back to 1978. The orders for its establishment were outlined by the Israeli Minister of Agriculture at the time, Ari’el Sharon. The settlement was built on the lands of the province “Silfit”, and is situated in the northern West Bank. Today, Ari’el is the fourth largest settlement in the West Bank, housing 17,849 inhabitants. In addition to the continued illegal confiscation of lands in order to expand the settlement, residents of neighboring Palestinian villages suffer from water and air pollution, causing diseases and damages to plants, crops and animals in the surrounding region.

Formally known as the “Judea and Samaria Academic Center, the University Center was built in Ari’el, in 1982, and was a regional branch to Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv. It is considered to be the largest Israeli post-secondary institution, attended by approximately 14,000 students, offering 24 different fields of study, in addition to many research centers, including a center for the research and development of weaponry for homeland security.

In 2001, the Sharon administration decided to promote the college’s status to a officially recognized university. According to the administration, the reason for doing so is two-fold Firstly, it addressed the need for reinforcing the higher education

system in the region, and secondly, the desire to support the settlement blocs in “Judea and Samaria” (land within the Occupied West Bank) by transforming the city of Ari’el into an academic hub.

The Council for Higher Education, a civil board consisting of academic figures and headed by the Minister of Education, heavily opposed this decision. However, the objection, was rendered invalid, as the college was located in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the Israeli Board for Higher Education. The College, rather, belonged to the Higher Education Council of “Judea and Samaria”, which is a council which primarily consists of members of the army and the security forces, and headed by the Army General in charge of the region. Thus, it was clear that that the decision to transform the college into a university center did not have academic motives, but was instead politically charged, aimed at perpetuating the occupation and support the settlements, especially given that the board which supported and encouraged this initiative is an integral part of the Israeli security and occupation agenda.

In September 2012, the Israeli government approved the proposal of Gideon Sa’ar, the Minister of Education, to promote the Ari’el Academic College to a University, despite the objection presented by the Council for Higher Education and the Board of the Heads of Universities.



2.2 Safed (Zefat) Academic College:

The 2011-2012 academic year witnessed a grave escalation with respect to the dire situation of Arab students attending Safed (or Zefat) Academic College. This is in addition to more violent and racist assaults in the city and more violations of the students' rights, in particular regards to political participation.

Background



In October, 2012, the Rabbi of Safed, Shmuel Eliyahu, organized “an urgent meeting under the title The Calm War “: Fighting Degeneration in the Holy City of Safed. The rally was held in the cultural hall in city, and was attended by about 400 people. During the assembly, it was claimed that the downfall of Jews in Safed is caused the city's college, in which the majority of the students are Arabs who rent houses in the city. Before the rally, a letter signed by 18 religious Jewish figures, led by Rabbi Eliyahu and most of whom were from Safed, was released calling on the city's residents not to let their apartments to non-Jews, because

whoever “sells or leases an apartment to a non-Jew, causes the prices to go down.” At the end of the letter, it was stated that “the neighbors and the acquaintances of anyone who leases to non-Jews should give him a warning. They are then entitled to make the matter public, to stay away from him and to withhold from doing any business with him and from inviting him to take part in religious occasions.”

In an interview for the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv, Rabbi Eliyahu said, “their [the Arabs] conduct is not nice.” He also added that if the Arabs behaved as guests, there would not be a problem, but “when the Arabs behave as though they were the landlords, trying to enforce their way of life, then, from a religious point of view, it is not allowed to let them houses. If there are more than three Arabs in the neighborhood, this means that the Jews are handing them their places in the city's center. Jews must not run away from Arabs; they should drive the Arabs away.”

Following the Jewish clergymen's statements, it has become hard for Arab students to lease apartments in Safed and they have been exposed to an increased number of cases of racist harassment. Reports of a large groups of racist, religious Jews from Safed assaulting the students' dormitories in the city's college, located in the city's center are frequent. On October 23rd, 2011, an anti-Arab group was responsible for stoning the students' dormitories, causing extensive damage. During March 2011, they also burnt cars belonging to Arab students. Jewish landlords have also reported to have received threats, as in the case of 89 year-old Eli Tzipiali, who leased an apartment to some Arab students. Consequently, a condemning public statement was released against him, threatening to burn down his home.



30 October 2011: Kicking Arab students out of their apartment because of a Hakham's threats

A landlord evicted six Arab students studying at the Safed Academic College, and originally from Biq'atha (a village in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights), from their apartment, in spite of a legitimate signed lease contract for their residence. This happened after one of Safed's Hakhams – hakham a term which often refers to someone who is a wise or learned person, or a title given to a rabbi among Sephardic Jews – pressured the landlord to evict the six students.

15 January 2012: A violent and racist assault against three Arab students in Safed

An extremist, rightist gang assaulted three Arab students, who attend Safed College, named Bilal and Yousef Mahameed and Ali Abulheja. The gang is reported to have thrown stones at the three, hitting them in their heads, and their backs, and harassed them with curse words and racist slurs.

In the students' testimony regarding the attacks, Yousef Mahameed explains, "We were assaulted just because we are Arabs and for no other reason. We were walking around the public streets when, without any notice, nine racists attacked us ferociously. As a result, we sustained a variety of wounds: I received a blow to the back by a big rock, while my two friends were also hit by rocks - Bilal received one to the head and Ali received another to the face. We must not keep quiet about this... we have come here to study and we will not be intimidated by their attacks... We will continue our studies here and graduate."

Bilal Mahameed says: "It is true that the situation is concerning and that racism is rampant. Unfortunately, the police and the college's administration are unable to protect us. We demand a swift intervention in order to find a solution to such assaults.

Today it is rocks but tomorrow it could be bullets."

Ali Abulheja: "We demand that the police work toward providing us with protection. We demand the same of the College's administration. How long can they remain silent? Is it until more serious crime is perpetrated? The situation is very dangerous and nowadays, every student in Safed's Academic College thinks twice before leaving his dormitory; the situation is intolerable."

April 2012: The Safed Student Union amends its constitution making the military or civil service a prerequisite for running for elections for the union's presidency

At the end of April, the Safed Student Union approved an amendment to its constitution which blatantly declares: one cannot run for the union's elections unless one is a discharged soldier. Despite attempts by the union's members to keep it hushed, word on the amendment was leaked to the student body. The Student Union's 16 members, who belong to the Jewish list Takhles, approved the suggestion of the Union's President Asaf Cohen, to amend Article 35(c) of its new constitution in such a way that any candidate running for the Union's presidency in the next elections must have completed at least 24 months of military or civil service. This exemplifies the bureaucratic and racism-based exclusion of the Arab students – who in this case, form the majority of the study body given that nearly all Arab students do not do military or civil service.

Following this, on May 8th, 2012, The Adalah Center, the legal center for Arab minority rights in Israel, submitted a request to the Unions' Registry asking it not to approve the amendment, seeing as this article excludes the Arab students and prevents them from running for the elections for the Union's presidency solely based on their ethnic background, a move which is considered an inadmissible infringement upon their right to equality and a discrimination against these students based on

Safed (Zefat) Academic College

their ethnic pertinence. The infringement upon the Arab students' right is even graver if one considers the fact that they form the absolute majority of the students in the College, where their percentage reaches 60%. Moreover, forbidding 60% of the students from running for the student union's presidency in the college is a severe violation of their rights to be elected and to elect, in addition to their right to express their opinions by voting to a person who will represent them and their ideas and outlooks.

In response to the query submitted by Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi, the Unions' Registry denied having performed any amendments to the inner system of the general Student Union's Association in Safed Academic College.

On May 9th, student movements in the United Kingdom released a statement, condemning the decision of the general student union in Safed Academic College. The statement, signed by more than one hundred leaders of student movements in the academic institutes in the UK, emphasized the importance of granting equal opportunities for Palestinian and Jewish students in the higher academic institutes in Israel.

July 2012: Preventing the students from renting rooms in the student dormitories during the summer semester, under the pretext of hosting a foreign delegation

The Administration of Safed Academic College decided to prevent students from renting rooms in the student dormitories during the summer semester, claiming that the College will be hosting a foreign delegation in its student dormitories. Additionally, the College offered a meager refund of 200 NIS for those students whose rent contracts were near expiration during that month, in return for moving out by July 20th.

The Western Galilee College

2.3 The Western Galilee College - Acre:

24 April 2012: Wetting the benches in the Western Galilee College in order to force Arab students to stand up in memory of the Israeli Army's "fallen" soldiers

The administration of the Western Galilee College in Acre, ordered that the wooden benches in the college's yard be soaked with water, in order to prevent Arab students from sitting down during the sounding of the siren and the commemoration ceremony held for the Israeli army's fallen soldiers, on the eve of the Israeli Independence Day. According to the students' testimonies, the College's gates and the doors to the lecture halls were locked during the ceremony. Some of the Arab students sat on the ground in protest.

The Dean of Students, Dr. Yehuda Ben Simon, admitted in a public declaration that these measures were taken at the behest of the administration in order to create, in his own words, a "sterilized compound" and confirmed that it will be repeated the following year.





2.4 The Hebrew University - Jerusalem:

March 2012: The Hebrew University prohibits the screening of "Jenin Jenin" and summons activist students to appear before the University's Disciplinary Board

The Hebrew University summoned activist students belonging to the "Students' Front" to appear before the University's Disciplinary Board, on account of having organized an evening on the University's campus, which included the screening of "Jenin Jenin," directed by Palestinian filmmaker Muhammad Bakri. The Board penalized the students by forcing them to pay a portion of the costs of the security guards who were present during the evening; it also warned them against breaking the university's rules in the future.

The Students' Front in the Hebrew University screened the film during an on-campus event attended by the movie's director, Muhammad Bakri, even though the University had prohibited the Front from doing so. As a result, the "security" personnel initiated a blackout in the screening hall, before the screening ended. The officials in the University justified their decision to enforce a blackout in the screening hall by saying that "the court has proclaimed that the movie is based on lies and slander; therefore, the University cannot permit the screening of the movie on its campus, so as not to be an accomplice in the distribution of slander."

22 May 2012: The Hebrew University prevents the organization of the fifth Palestinian Cultural Festival

The administration of the Hebrew University prohibited the student movement Watan from organizing the fifth Palestinian Cultural Festival on campus, which was intended to be held on

May 30th, 2012, in the Frank Sinatra yard on the Mount Scopus campus, as it has during the four years. The explanations prohibition for the prevention included many weak excuses and unfeasible demands, summarized in the following:

1. The University demanded that Watan display the idea and the content of the festival to the Israeli police in order to get its approval and that the movement acquiesce to the possibility of the police being on site during the festival.
2. The Hebrew University demanded that Watan hand in permits, obtained from a variety of external institutions and organizations, which were not required of the student movement in past years. These parties included: the Israeli police, a number of departments in Jerusalem's municipality, the Red Shield of David, the fire department and the Ministry of Health, in addition to issuing a life insurance policy for all those attending the festival. It also demanded a large number of permits provided by experts in engineering, in addition to many other permits, such as one from the Business Licensing Department, a transaction which costs tremendous amounts of money and requires months of running around between different governmental offices and municipal departments. It is important to note that the University did not demand these permits of any other (non-Arab) organizations that had held large festivals and rallies on campus since the beginning of the year.
3. The University has tried to intervene, in a way which seemed inadmissible to the movement, in the number and the type of students who can attend the festival; it limited the number of students allowed to attend the event to 450-600 students, on the condition that they only be students of the Hebrew



Universities - any Arab students from other Israeli colleges would not be allowed to enter the University's campus on Mount Scopus on the day of the festival, just for being Arab.

4. The Hebrew University demanded that Watan provide them with a list of their sources of funding for the festival and that the movement issue permits for the festival, both as necessary conditions for the approval of the event. These requests were justified by the University citing the possibility that Watan could have received funding from sources which the University's administration considered unacceptable. The justification has implied undertones of discrimination on the basis of race, given that these requests were not made of other non-Arabs organizations.

It is worth noting that Watan mentioned in a statement on the matter, that during the dispute about holding the festival, a University official declared: "I am the landlord here - I decide whether your cultural day will be held in the kitchen or in the living room, and you should know that this year it will not be held inside the University's walls."

April 24th, 2012: Im Tirtzu movement publishes photos of Arab students who participated in demonstrations, in addition to instigating comments on its Facebook page. Under the title "Arabs on Independence Day: Show Solidarity with Terrorists" (referring to the Palestinian prisoners), Im Tirtzu published on its official Facebook page photos of

students who had participated in a demonstration in support of the Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike. The publication included a bloodthirsty instigation and open calls for harming the Arab students who had taken part in the demonstration, and for expelling them from the university. The page was filled with hundreds of racist comments on the demonstrating students' pictures, such as: "They should be burnt", "Death to Arabs", "Go to Gaza", "Terrorists", "Sons of Murderers", "This is the Hebrew University, not the Arab University... go to Beer Zeit," "They should be kicked out of the university," "Scum," "Sons of whores," "Hypocrites," "May they burn in hell," "They should be killed," and "Saboteurs."

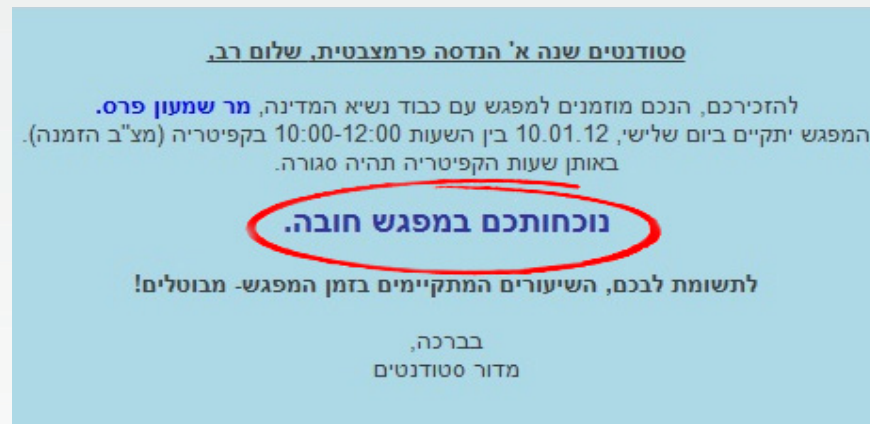




2.5 Hadassah College - Jerusalem:

January 18th, 2012: The banishing of Arab students from Jerusalem after they had called for boycotting a talk by Peres

The occupation police in Jerusalem decided to banish three Arab students, who attend the School of Engineering for seven days, accusing them of provocation. After the court had refused the prosecutors' request to extend their arrest, the police informed the students Khaleel Gharra, from Jatt, Ra'fat



Sha'ban, from Majd Elkroom and another student from the town of 'Arrabih, of their decision to banish the students from Jerusalem until January 25th, 2012, subjecting them to house arrest, preventing them from talking to other Arab students and accusing them of racist instigation.

The story goes back to the repercussions that took place following the invitation extended to the Israeli president, Shimon Peres, to give a talk in the School of Engineering in Jerusalem. A group of Arab students wrote in one of the

Facebook groups that they plan not to participate and declared that they refuse the obligatory attendance forced upon them by the College; a discussion about the matter ensued between the Arabs, between their (Arab) representative and the College.

At the end of March, the occupation police arrested Gharra during a demonstration marking the 36th anniversary of the Palestinian Land Day, in the Damascus Gate area in Jerusalem. Photos and videos recorded of the demonstration show how the occupation forces commenced a violent attack against the peaceful demonstrators, and the brutal way in which Gharra was arrested. Attorney 'Alaa' Mahajnih said that "the arrest is purely political and is aimed at deterring and intimidating the Palestinian youth."





2.6 University of Haifa:

November 15th, 2011: The student union in the University of Haifa prevents the distribution of the Fasl Almaqaal paper, accusing it of provocation.

The General Student Union in the University of Haifa prevented the distribution of the newspaper Fasl Almaqaa (including its special addition dealing with the opening of the new Academic year) on campus, under the pretext that it might contain inciting material. This occurred in spite of the agreement previously reached, which decided a distribution table would be set up so that the paper could be handed out to Arab students, just as the Hebrew papers do. The Union withdrew from the agreement at the last moment claiming that the Dean of Students must approve the paper's distribution in advance. Upon the prohibition, Fasl Almaqaal addressed the Dean to inquire about the incident, to which the Dean replied that he had no knowledge of it, and that it did not have anything to do with him but rather the decision solely relied on the approval of the Student Union.

13 March 2012: Administration and Security Board summons accuses students of disrupting public order after a demonstration calling for improved transportation for students to the University

The Administration and Security Board in the University of Haifa summoned ten students belonging to the cadres of the Democratic Students' Rally to appear before the Disciplinary Board. Upon facing the Board, these students were accused of demonstrating and of disrupting public order, after having organized and participated in a students' demonstration where

they demanded that the University's administration and the Afifi Bus Corporation organize and create a comfortable and high-capacity means of transportation between the University and the Arab cities and villages in order to provide better student access to the University.

3 May 2012: The University of Haifa's administration prevents Sheikh Ra'ed Salah from entering the university's campus in order to commemorate the Palestinian Nakba

The University of Haifa's Administration turned down the request submitted by the student group IQRA, in which the group asked to invite Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, leader of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, to hold a talk before the student body on the 65th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. The Administration justified its refusal of the group's request by recalling the violent confrontations between rightist groups and the Arab students' groups brought about by Sheikh Salah's previous visit. Furthermore, they cited that the conduct of Sheikh Ra'ed Salah was considered disruptive of public order and is unlawful.

16 May 2012: The University of Haifa prevents Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi from participating in a students' activity against racism, on the anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba.

The University of Haifa's Administration prevented Member of Knesset (MK) Haneen Zoabi, who belongs to the Democratic National Rally party, from giving a lecture titled "No to Racism," on the 65th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. The refusal came as part of the University's prevention policy of all forms



of activities organized by Arab students during that period. However, the administration allowed MK Zoabi to participate in a general students' festival on May 28th, 2012, dealing with the exacerbating racism against Arab students and their student movements.

20 May 2012: The University of Haifa removes the Arabic language from its official logo

The University of Haifa removed the Arabic language from its redesigned logo, launched to celebrate the 40th anniversary of its establishment, even though Arabic did in fact appear



in the older versions of the University's logo.

This move was met by denunciation by several parties including: Arab members of Knesset, the

Arab Culture Association, the Arabic Language Academy, the head of the Arabic Language Department in the University, the Literature Department in the University and many others. They all demanded that the Arabic language be reinstituted in the logo. However, the University refused and considered the case to be sheer fabrication.

24 May 2012: The Arab Culture Association demands that the Arabic Language be reincorporated in the official logo of the University of Haifa

The Arab Culture Association sent an urgent note to Prof. Aharon Ben Ze'ev, President of the University of Haifa, in which it demanded that he intervene directly and swiftly in order to cancel the decision to take the Arabic language off the new official logo of the university, which was launched in celebration

of the 40th anniversary of its establishment and which only included writings in Hebrew and English.

The Association's letter stated that "the decision to take the Arabic language off of the University's logo is, without a shadow of a doubt, a severe infringement of the rights of Palestinian students, lecturers and employees in the University to dignity and equality with respect to their culture and language and an infringement of their right to self-expression. No one can ignore the symbolic meaning of this decision which ignores the cultural and historical heritage of the Arabic language and obliterates the importance of using this language."

The letter added that "the importance of the Arabic language among the Palestinian students in the University is derived from the standing of the Palestinian citizens in the country in general, as a native collective who has been living in these lands since before the creation of the State. Unfortunately, this decision reflects the general situation, in which the Hebrew language dominates the space and marginalizes the Arabic language. This policy ignores the needs of the Palestinian minority for a collective affiliation necessary for the self-fulfillment of its members and for the formation of their individual identities." In its letter, the Association claimed that removal of the Arabic language from the logo "... is a clear deviation from the obligations the academic institutes have to protect the basic values and the right to self-expression and to consolidate the values of tolerance and human rights."

In addition, the Association attached to its letter, a petition signed by hundreds of students from the University of Haifa, who account for about a quarter of the total student population in the University.

2.7 Tel Aviv University:

22 December 2011: Tel Aviv University Administration

asks its lecturers to spy on their students

According to a report published in the newspaper Ha'aretz, Tel Aviv University asked its lecturers to spy on their students who participate in protests and demonstrations and to supply information about them to the University's security department. As reported in Ha'aretz, a letter sent by the head of the Security Unit at Tel Aviv University to the lecturers stated that he "would be grateful for any information you can provide about the students as soon as possible, as long as they include the following data: full name, ID number and phone number."

This letter was sent to lecturers in the History, Philosophy and Literature departments. Included with the letter was a link to a YouTube video showing students on campus inviting their colleagues to join them in the protest demonstrations they were initiating at the University. The head of the Security Unit in the University also asked the lecturers to provide some tips to identify the students who appear in the video, "so that they can be recognized on campus grounds as well."

The newspaper further stated that the University's security department had sent threatening letters to the participating students, warning them that in the event that they went forward in participating in the demonstrations, they would suffer severe punishment for their actions. The head of the security department also told one of the students that the University's security follows student activists on Facebook. The head of the department of Philosophy at Tel Aviv University, Prof. Eli Freedlander, commented on the letter sent by the

security unit by saying that he "heavily objects to the letter sent by the security unit; there is no room for the secret police on a university's campus."

14 May 2012: Preventing the commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba from taking place on the University's campus, and the surrounding of students who participated in the activity by rightist groups and the police

Hundreds of Arab and leftist Jewish students in Tel Aviv University, along with their political leadership, lecturers and artists held an activity commemorating the Palestinian

Nakba. This event organized by the Students' Front, the Zokhrot Association and the Taraabot movement, outside the University's campus. However, on the day of the event, the



demonstrators were faced by police barricades and hundreds of rightist demonstrators in opposition.

Tel Aviv University had initially given permission for the organizers to hold





the event on campus grounds, specifically in the Naftali building on campus (the Faculty of Sociology), but the security decided that the event was to be moved to the Anteen yard for, as they described, security purposes. They also placed some very strict conditions for the organizers, including the prohibition of raising any flags or slogans, prohibiting the use of megaphones, any chants or the distribution of any material. Another imposed condition was that the organizers must take it upon themselves to provide the security for the event, under the pretext that the University's security cannot provide protection for the demonstration at the expense of the University, because that would constitute an infringement of the Palestinian Nakba Law – a law which prevents any institute from receiving financial aid from the State for, participating in, or contributing to any event that has to do with the commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba.

In response, the organizers submitted an objection to these conditions to the University's rector, who replied that he is unable to intervene in the measures enforced by the University's security. It is also worth noting that following the media hype generated by the organization of the event, the Minister of Education, Gideon Sa'ar, contacted Tel Aviv University's rector and demanded that the University prohibit the organization of the event because it was in direct violation of the Palestinian Nakba Law, a demand to which the University's rector did not comply.

Dozens of members from the Zionist Im Tirtzu movement and other extremist individuals – led by extremist, right-wing members of Knesset – also held their own demonstrations.

During their protest, the right-wing supporters committed several acts of provocation inclusive of: holding up Israeli flags and burning the Palestinian flag, cursing the Arab and Jewish participants using obscene curse words and gestures, calling for Arabs to go away, describing the Jews who support the Palestinian cause as “traitors” and describing the Palestinian Nakba as a “lie.”

The rightist individuals held their demonstration despite the fact that they were not given permission to do so by the University's security. They also used megaphones and sirens in order to disrupt the ceremony, and the University's security did not intervene to stop them – although this is the same body which had prohibited the organizers of the Palestinian Nakba event from doing so.

According to eyewitness account, the right-wing demonstrators actively sought to sabotage the event, including attacking stage display and destroying signage. Arab students made attempts to stop them, however this only further agitated the situation as the rightists started to attack the Arab students. A particularly disconcerting case involved Rami Haidar, a student attending the university and present during the event. As the violence escalated, Haidar was targeted by the rightist demonstrators, and the police immediately arrested him, and not those who sought to attack him.



14 May 2012: Tel Aviv University prevents the President of the "Yusuf As-Siddiq" Institute from participating in IQRA's activities for the commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba

The administration of Tel Aviv University notified the representative of the IQRA bloc in the University of its intention to prevent the hosting of Sheikh Nidal Abu Sheikha, the president of the Yusuf As-Siddiq Institute, whose participation had been planned during the activities the bloc was organizing for the commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba and in solidarity with the prisoners. Sheikh Nidal Abu Sheikha was supposed to give a speech about the prisoners in the jails, explaining their suffering and calling on the students to support them.

Muhammad 'Umar, a representative of IQRA, said: "Every time IQRA organizes events commemorating national issues, it encounters difficulties and challenges posed by the Universities, which claim to be protecting freedoms. However, these attempts cannot erase the Palestinian Nakba from our memories and will not prevent us from expressing our solidarity with our brave prisoners."

24 May 2012: Tel Aviv University forbids the Students' Assembly movement from holding an activity regarding the Palestinian Nakba, which was to be attended by Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi

Tel Aviv University refused to grant the Students' Assembly movement the necessary permits for holding an activity in commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba, in which Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi, in which she was invited to participate.

The movement's statement regarding this refusal stated, "Tel Aviv University, after having exercised all forms of oppression against the active Arab political movements on campus, has now come to putting obstacles in front of the Students' Assembly by forbidding the movement from holding an activity in commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba. The event was



supposed to take place on May 22nd, and MK Haneen Zoabi was supposed to give a talk during the event. The pretext given for the refusal was that the requested date coincided with a conference held for the University's donor parties, even though the campus had witnessed the organization of many other activities that same week."



2.8 Ben Gurion University – Beer Sheba:

2 December 2011 Banning the screening of “Bil’in, Habibti” in Ben Gurion University

The Students’ Association in the Ben Gurion University banned the screening of the documentary film, “Bil’in Habibti”, in which the director, Shy Carmeli Pollack, documents the struggle of I’billin’s residents against the Israeli Apartheid Wall. The movie received many Best Documentary awards. The alleged reason for the banning the film was that it was “too political.” A number of members from the Directors’ Association condemned the decision of the Students’ Association and demanded that the movie be screened in the University.

15 May 2012: The Dean of Students in Ben Gurion University refuses to celebrate “Arab Art”

Yacov Afik, the Dean of Students in Ben Gurion University, refused a request submitted by the Arab Students’ group, Jam’itna, to hold an artistic and cultural Arab festival, parallel to the Students’ Day celebrations organized by the General Student Union. Jam’itna had already completed all of the necessary planning and organization for the event, in compliance with the General Student’s Union, when they were informed of the Dean’s decision. The Arab students’ group filed an appeal to the University’s President, Prof. Rivka Karmi, in which they requested that the refusal be reconsidered and ultimately revoked – but it was to no avail. Despite the fact that the group made it clear that the activities of the

Student’s Day Festival were not compatible with the cultural particularities of the Arab students in the Negev – or the fact that they are completely void of any form of Arab art – the decision was still upheld.

For the last two years, Professor Karmi had promised Arab students that she would do her best to increase activities aimed at Arab students, because she was certain that such activities were non-existent on campus. Nevertheless, the discriminatory reality with which the Arab students face not only persists, but instead becomes more difficult year after year.

Students fed up with the situation expressed their anger toward the Dean’s behavior through Facebook and by talking to the different forms of media. This was and still is an ongoing effort to remedy the unjust and racist practices and harassment, to which the Arab students in Beer Sheba, and in all other colleges and universities across the country, find themselves subjected to on a regular basis.



2.9 Beit Berl College:

March 2012: The exclusion of Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi from a feminist conference

Leftist and feminist activists and organizers protested against the racist exclusion of Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi from a conference titled “Where am I? Gender perspectives regarding space politics: The Annual Feminist Conference in Commemoration of Dr. Vicky Shiran”. The event was to be held in Beit Berl College on Monday, March 19th, 2012. The objection to exclude MK Zoabi was expressed in a letter sent to the College’s President and the Head of the Administrative Board, and in the form of a petition distributed among the leftist and feminist activists. Additionally, many feminist activists, such as the President of Ahoti, Shula Keshet, and the President of the Women Against Violence Organization, Aida Tuma, chose to withdraw from participating in the conference, following the exclusion of MK Zoabi.

The protest letter submitted by the feminist activists considered that “preventing the participation of MK Haneen Zoabi as a legitimate speaker - as though the mere act of giving her an opportunity to speak necessitates the invitation of another speaker from the extreme right - is a dangerous and unfortunate step, which can be filed under the wave of anti-democratic attitudes, manifested in the suppression of the general public of Palestinian citizens in Israel and in the racist practices against them.” The final part of the letter demanded that Beit Berl College release “a public apology to Member of Knesset Haneen Zoabi and to the public in general.”



3.0 What can be done?

Since their establishment, Israeli universities and colleges have been marketing themselves as upholders of freedoms and of academic values. Some universities, such as the University of Haifa, even pride themselves for providing an atmosphere of coexistence on campus. However, this does not reflect reality, as these academic institutes have evidently oppressed the freedom of expression of Arab students and groups and function as research centers for the projects of the Israeli army.

Undoubtedly, and as it has been documented in this report, these institutes have not and will not admit to exercising oppressive policies. The Arab students who face this reality on a daily basis must continue to document these violations in order to develop a clear and cohesive picture that will expose the truth about academic institutes in Israel.

With the documentation and publication of such racist and oppressive offenses, such as those mentioned in this report, as well as exposing the Israeli agenda of increasing the militarization of society through academic institutions, our goal is to reach out to the academic and human rights institutes around the world. Exposing the truth regarding the treatment of Arab students in Israeli post-secondary institutions is a pivotal stride in influencing and bringing about change in the opinion of international academia. Ultimately, taking these measures

provides the means to apply the necessary pressure that must be placed upon these universities and colleges to change the treatment of and policies regarding Arab students.

The key to the success of the Academic Watch Project is your contribution:

- Monitor any racist declarations by university or college lecturers;
- Monitor any violations of students' rights and freedoms on campus, regardless of whether they target individuals or groups and of whether they are committed by the university or by student unions or movements.
- Monitor the projects and scholarships whose conditions include civil or military service.
- Monitor any militarization projects or phenomena.

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