

Strategies to Combat the Academic Boycott of Israel

For Israeli Scholars Going on Sabbatical, Attending Conferences Overseas or Studying Abroad

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The Comper Center

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Executive Summary

The worldwide Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel, known as BDS, began to operate over a decade ago. It seeks to set public opinion against Israel and to undermine the Jewish state's very right to exist. As part of their activity, supporters of the BDS movement promote an academic boycott of Israeli institutions of higher education by leveling false accusations. Anyone who is familiar with Israeli academia and its openness, its numerous achievements and its contribution to the country's industry, social and intellectual life, science and economy, as well as to the marginal groups in Israeli society, cannot fail to be surprised by the attempts to boycott it. Nevertheless, and despite the false arguments propagated by those who drive the academic boycott, the phenomenon is gaining ground and momentum. Underlying the justification for boycotting Israeli academia and its staff is the perception that Israel is an apartheid state that deliberately and consistently deprives people of their fundamental human rights, and enlists the help of its academic institutions to maintain discrimination on the basis of nationality while restricting Palestinians' freedom of movement and right to higher education. This guide is intended to assist in countering the arguments that serve to justify the academic boycott and to offer Israeli faculty and students who are likely to encounter BDS activists on campuses in Europe and North America effective and informed ways of confronting them.

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Introduction

***“You can fool all the people some of the time,
And some of the people all the time,
But you cannot fool all the people all the time.”***

Abraham Lincoln

- The initiative to boycott Israeli academia is supported by a well-oiled machinery of resources, budgets and activists.
- This guide is intended to offer ways of countering the arguments of the boycott advocates, which rest on lies, distortion of facts, and basic anti-Semitism.
- Numerous countries worldwide implement contentious policies in various areas, but it is only Israel’s academia that is boycotted.
- Boycotting Israel’s academic community is illogical; anyone who is familiar with Israel’s institutions of higher learning knows that they maintain a standard of freedom of expression and of movement worthy of emulation.

Ever since the UN’s World Conference Against Racism held in Durban in 2001 and the founding of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005, various bodies and organizations around the world have sought to impose a comprehensive boycott of the State of Israel in numerous fields. The aim of the boycott is to disseminate an image of Israel as a pariah state and to bring about a cessation of economic, commercial, cultural, political and tourism ties with it, in the hopes that this will deal the Jewish state a mortal blow. Within this overall framework, recent years have witnessed increasingly strident calls to boycott Israeli academia, which have resonated on campuses in Europe and North America (Gerstenfeld, 2003; Lasson, 2005). It has become clear that the initiative for this boycott is supported by a well-oiled machinery of resources, budgets and activists, courageously confronted by a handful of Israeli diplomats, academics and Jewish organizations. The people who promote the boycott and persuade

academics throughout the world to join their activity operate in the guise of activists who are promoting human rights, justice and equality. It is, however, quite obvious that most of these activists have no interest in fostering these principles, and are dedicated to denigrating Israel and portraying it in a negative light (Gerstenfeld, 2003; Newman, 2008).

This guide is intended to offer ways of coping with arguments in favor of the boycott, most of which are based on lies, on the distortion of facts and of history, and on pure anti-Semitism. It is worth noting that the imposition of sanctions is considered an act of violence, since supporters of the measure believe that one should boycott everyone who fails to agree with them on the preferred solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anyone who is familiar with Israel's institutions of higher learning knows that they covet freedom of expression, and that many of their staff and lecturers fearlessly criticize government policy on various issues (Nelson and Brahm, 2015).

Numerous countries are accused of depriving minorities of their rights, killing their citizens, and curbing freedom of movement and expression among certain groups, yet it is only Israel's academic institutions that are boycotted, and academic personnel around the world eagerly join the call. The American Association for Women's Studies, for example, decided to impose an academic boycott on Israel because of its treatment of the Palestinians – but not on Saudi Arabia, although its human rights record and treatment of women in particular are far worse (Taub, 2015). Those who seek to combat the boycott should remember that singling out Israel's academia stems from ignorance and at times from anti-Semitism. Jews (and Israel as a Jewish state) are judged by standards different to those by which others are assessed. And since other states perceived to be “occupiers” are not boycotted, the imposition of sanctions on the Jewish State alone is in fact a type of anti-Semitism (Newman, 2008; Rose and Rose, 2008). Having been fed distorted media reports on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many academics in Europe and North America have been quick to support this boycott, some motivated by anti-Semitism and others by the misperception that by doing so they are helping to end the conflict or are supporting freedom and justice in the world. And yet, we don't see the great majority of these academics raising their voices against extreme forms of injustice perpetrated worldwide (Newman, 2008; Nelson and Brahm, 2005; Yakira, 2015; Yemini, 2014).

We are confident that this guide, which lays out the accusations leveled at Israel's academia and offers well-argued responses anchored in proven statistical data, will serve Israeli academic members of staff who go on sabbatical or attend international conferences, as well as Israeli students planning to study in Europe and North America, where they are most likely to come across organizations and delegates who encourage the boycott. The guide is intended to assist anyone searching for ways to respond to the unfounded accusations constantly leveled at Israel in an informed, intelligent and appropriate manner.

We thank the three reviewers who read this publication for their useful comments and insights, which have helped us improve it greatly.

Principles of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel*

The worldwide BDS movement was initiated by Palestinian civil society organizations that assembled in 2005 and called for a boycott and sanctions to be imposed on Israel in response to its “crimes.” In 2007, the Palestine National Council was founded to enable “people of conscience to play an effective role in the Palestinian struggle for justice.” According to the movement’s manifesto, Israel is conducting ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and is following a policy of racial discrimination, colonization and military occupation, and has for many decades deprived the Palestinians of their fundamental rights to freedom, equality and self-determination. The movement claims further that despite international condemnation of Israel’s policy, the international community has failed to force Israel to accept responsibility for its deeds and to act according to the basic principles of international law, and thus Israel continues to commit its crimes at will. The movement’s leaders declare that the boycott will not be lifted until the 1967 occupation of the territories is ended and the wall (erected between Israel and the Palestinian territories to prevent terrorist incursions) is dismantled, and until Israeli Arabs are granted full equality, and the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes is put into effect (Kasher, 2004; Yakira, 2015). They declare further that the boycott is directed at products and companies that profit from the violation of the Palestinians’ rights, and extends to sports groups, cultural bodies and academic institutions, which, so they claim, contribute to perpetuating the ongoing oppression of the Palestinians. On the strength of the explicit declarations of the movement’s leaders, it is patently clear that it seeks to bring an end to the present-day State of Israel, and to deny its right to exist as a Jewish state (Newman, 2008; Yakira, 2015).

The movement’s spokespersons claim that it is nothing more than a protest movement, a collection of organizations and peace activists that oppose the occupation and are acting to help realize the rights of the Palestinians. Yet upon analyzing their declarations it becomes obvious that this is far from the truth. From the pronouncements of Omar Barghouti, one of the movement’s leaders, we learn that it is not the occupation that poses the problem, but Israel itself. Another leading

figure, Ali Abunima, maintains that “the two-state solution is intended to rescue Zionism,” and he thus advocates a single-state solution (Yemini, 2015A). The BDS movement consistently seeks to demonize Israel and anything associated with it, including the Israeli academia, in the hope that they will be perceived as tainted elements (Yemini, 2015a; Yakira, 2015; Butler, 2006).

Accusations and Arguments Levelled at Israel's Academia and Suggested Responses

In the following section we lay out the principal arguments that serve the BDS movement in its quest to persuade public opinion and to promote the academic boycott, and suggest ways to counter these assertions.

- 1. Israel is an apartheid state. Israel's institutions of higher education discriminate against Arab students and faculty. Just as in the past an academic boycott was imposed on South Africa and contributed to the fall of the racist regime, so too should we impose an academic boycott on Israel in order to end this discrimination.**

Counter arguments:

- Anyone who compares Israel to South Africa's apartheid era fails to understand what it meant to live in an "apartheid state."
- Among the graduates of Israel's institutions of higher education are Arab politicians, mayors, judges and physicians.
- There is no discrimination between Jewish and Arab students on Israeli campuses. On the contrary, affirmative action is applied in order to help Arab students to gain entrance to universities and to receive material and financial assistance.
- Adaptation programs are offered to Arab students on campuses. They receive assistance in their studies throughout their period of study and special scholarships are made available to them.

Any comparison between Israel and South Africa indicates a deep ignorance of what an "apartheid state" really is. Contrary to South Africa's apartheid regime, which deprived its black population of basic civil and human rights such as the right to vote and the right to a basic education, to medical care and to higher education, in the democratic state of Israel the right to equality is entrenched in the Declaration of Independence. Israel's Arab citizens enjoy exactly the same right as its Jewish citizens to vote and to stand for election. The party that represents most of Israel's Arabs is the third largest in the Knesset, and other parties also include

Arab members of parliament. Arab citizens can choose to serve in the army, serve as judges and ambassadors in Israel's diplomatic corps, and work as physicians and as university lecturers. Many Muslim Arabs are to be found in key positions in the civil service, such as members of parliament and government ministers. Among these are Ghaleb Majadla, who served as Minister of Science, Culture and Sport in 2007; and Knesset members Aiman Odeh, who serves as chairman of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and heads the Joint Arab List in the twentieth Knesset, Dr. Ahmad Tibi, Jamal Zahalka, and others. Justice Saleem Jubran serves on the Israeli Supreme Court (Reinhold, 2007; from the Knesset's website: <http://www.knesset.gov.il>). Many Arab judges preside over court hearings at different levels, in addition to Justice Jubran. Another Arab judge, George Kara, headed the panel of judges that convicted the former state president Moshe Katsav. This is certainly not something that could have happened in apartheid-era South Africa. It should be noted that no one maintains that the Arab sector does not suffer a lack of resources and budgets for various reasons, but the situation of Israel's Arab citizens is very different to that of black South Africans under the apartheid regime. And one should remember that similar disparities between the majority population and minorities are to be found in western countries (Yemini, 2014; 2016). In any event, the Israeli government has recently begun implementing its decision to invest 15 billion shekels over five years to assist the Arab sector (Heruti-Sover, 2015).

Top Arab leaders in Israel, as well as Arab mayors and academics, are graduates of Israeli universities and other institutions of higher education. Dr. Ahmad Tibi, for example – deputy speaker of the Knesset and Member of Knesset representing a faction within the Joint Arab List and former advisor to Yasser Arafat – is a physician who graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. MK Hanin Zoabi graduated with a degree in philosophy and psychology from Haifa University and completed a master's degree in communications and journalism at the Hebrew University. MK Zoabi taught communications at the Oranim Seminar and in various schools and served as an inspector at the education ministry. Professor Alian Al-Krinawi is president of the Achva College in the Negev. Professor Majed Al-Haj was deputy president of Haifa University. The historian Professor Mahmoud Yazbak served as head of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Haifa University. Professor Mona Maron is head of the Department of Neurobiology at Haifa University. The chairman of the board of Israel Railways is the accountant

Hussam Bishara, a graduate of the Hebrew University, and the director of Nahariya Hospital is Massad Barhoum, a graduate of the Technion School of Medicine. And by the way, Omar Bargouti, one of the leaders of the academic boycott campaign, studied at Tel Aviv University (Shiftan, 2002).

There is no discrimination of Arab students on Israeli campuses. In many instances affirmative action is applied to assist Arab students to gain entrance to leading Israeli academic institutions. This takes two forms. **The first is direct affirmative action** – allocation of a certain percentage of places to Arab students in the various faculties and easing entrance requirements in particularly competitive departments. And the second is **indirect affirmative action** – by means of special preliminary adaptation programs in which Arab students are assisted during the course of their studies and are also offered special stipends according to their socio-economic status and their place of residence.

The Council for Higher Education, in conjunction with the Education Ministry and the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druze and Circassian Sectors, offers a variety of scholarships to students belonging to these groups as well as a special program for Arab doctoral students engaged in research at Israel's universities. This is a three-year stipend that covers living expenses, along with a research grant.¹ This stipend program, worth 300 million shekels over six years, is part of a comprehensive program run by the Council for Higher Education designed to make higher education accessible to the Arab society. It seeks to raise the proportion of Arabs enrolled in higher education by focusing on the quality of induction and studies through providing an inclusive and continuous service to the Arab student, beginning with raising awareness of undergraduate studies, through counseling and directing appropriate candidates to higher education and assisting them to adjust to undergraduate studies, and finally by encouraging outstanding students to proceed to advanced studies and absorbing outstanding faculty members (Council for Higher Education, 2013). A further example is the Otto Werner Scholarship, awarded by the Jewish-Arab Center together with the Friends of Haifa University in Germany to outstanding female Arab students enrolled in advanced degrees. The scholarship aims at promoting female Arab students who excel in their studies and in other areas, and to enable them to develop professionally and academically and to nurture among them communal and social leadership.

1 See the council's site: <http://che.org.il>

Israel's efforts to promote higher education among the country's Arab population extends to activity in high schools. In 2014 the "Education for a Career" program operated in almost one hundred high schools in the Arab sector, in which Druze, Circassian and Arab school children participated in workshops that equip them with information, guidance and preparation for a career. The program is designed to enhance their awareness of the possibilities available to them in the higher education system and in the employment market. In addition, the Irteka Foundation grants some 650 scholarships worth 13 million shekels per year with the aim of making higher education, particularly disciplines in demand in the job market, more accessible to Arab youngsters whose families cannot afford to send them to university or college (Regev, 2014).

Acceptance of Arab students by academic institutions. According to data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics for the 2012-13 academic year, the universities with the highest proportion of Arab students were Haifa (36.6%) and the Technion (21.3%). In third place was Bar-Ilan University, which caters mainly to religious Jewish students, with 20.4% (Blumenfeld, 2014). Moreover, the official data of the Council for Higher Education indicate that the proportion of Arab students who gain entrance to institutions of higher learning is steadily on the increase. In the 1999-2000 academic year, Arabs constituted 10.1% of all students in Israel's academic institutions, and this figure rose to 14.1% within five years. In the universities, the proportion of Arab undergraduate students rose from 9% in 1999-2000 to 16.5% in 2014-15, a percentage that is not far off the proportion of Arabs in the population (CHE, 2015). It is worth noting that universities sometimes accept Palestinian students who wish to study in Israel.

Absorption of Arab faculty. The number of Arab academics who join the faculty of institutions of higher education in Israel has increased steadily over recent decades. Arabs are admittedly still under-represented on the teaching staff of these institutions, as are Jews of Mizrahi or Ethiopian origin, and as are women. Yet these disparities are a function of the various divides within Israeli society, which have steadily narrowed over the years (Avraham, 2013). We should note that minorities are under-represented in academia in many countries, but these do not draw criticism from around the world. An interesting example is that of the United Kingdom. An article in the *New African* magazine reports that only 50 of the more than 14,000 academic staff in British universities are black, namely 0.36% of all

lecturers, while the proportion of black people in England and Wales is eight times higher (for details, see Avraham, 2013). The article cites numerous testimonies of racial discrimination, and relates the stories of lecturers who chose to emigrate to the USA to pursue their academic careers. The logic that underlies the boycott of Israel's academia should thus induce a call to boycott Britain's academia, which applies a latent form of racial discrimination by hindering the advancement of black lecturers because of the color of their skin. The British media, quick to criticize others, have paid little attention to this topic. No demonstrations have taken place to protest the phenomenon, British lecturers are not widely boycotted, and no call to boycott Britain's academia has been made. Indeed, one may find inequality in various parameters in numerous enlightened countries, yet none of them is accused of applying a policy of apartheid; only Israel is measured by different and far more stringent standards (Avraham, 2013; 2014a). In any event, a country that sought to enforce apartheid would presumably not make higher education accessible to its minority populations and enhance their presence in and integration to its academic institutions, as does Israel in order to encourage higher education in the Arab sector.

2. Israel's academia and its academic staff cooperate with the occupation regime, support its discriminatory practices and policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians, fail to condemn infringements of the Palestinians' human rights, and refrain from calling for an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Counter arguments:

- We find instances of cooperation between academia and the regime in every country, since military personnel study at the universities and the armed forces fund various research projects and utilize scholarly academic knowledge derived from the universities. Such cooperation is unexceptional worldwide.
- Israeli academics hold very diverse political views on various issues; many of them express support for the Palestinian camp in the Israeli-Arab dispute and openly criticize the policy of the Israeli government.

In every democratic country we find disagreement on a variety of political issues and it is only natural that the universities, which are research and teaching institutions, refrain from intervening in contentious issues such as the relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The accusation that Israel's academia cooperates with the occupation is a sweeping, inaccurate and downright false assertion. Israeli academics hold a great variety of opinions, extending to both extremes of the political spectrum, and many of them side with the Palestinians and openly condemn the Israeli government's policy. Israel is a democratic state and its citizens enjoy wide latitude of freedom of expression. Numerous pronouncements and written tracts that fiercely attack the positions and policy of the regime find free expression both in the media and in academia. This is evidenced in the large number of academic staff found among leading supporters of campaigns waged against what is perceived as official government policy on various issues; of particular note is the critical stand of Israeli academia on the relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

And yet various elements around the world are endeavoring to promote a boycott of Israel's academic institutions because of their alleged cooperation with what is termed "the occupation" (Nelson and Brahm, 2015). A brief example suffices

to demonstrate the different standard by which Israel's academia is judged. In May 2013, the British Guardian reported on a visit by Bashar Assad to Damascus University, and TV coverage of the visit displayed the warm reception he received from students and faculty alike (Avraham, 2014a). This event should have evoked a call to boycott Syria's academia, which cooperates with a regime responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, but no such call was forthcoming of course. A boycott could equally have been imposed on other universities in Arab countries because of their staffs' acquiescence to the discrimination of women and religious and other minorities. The discriminatory practices toward the Palestinian refugees who settled in Arab countries after they fled or were driven out of Israel in 1948 should likewise have led to calls to boycott these countries (only Jordan has granted citizenship to the Palestinians, who to this day are deprived of basic rights in the other Arab countries).

Supporters of the boycott repeatedly claim that Israeli universities cooperate with the army of occupation, either by running special study programs for the military, or by developing advanced hardware and technological inventions that assist in "oppressing the Palestinians and perpetuating the occupation." As noted above, there is cooperation between academia and the regime in most countries, as military personnel study at universities, and the military funds research projects and relies on scholarly knowledge produced in the universities. In the USA, for example, the army operates recruitment agencies on campuses as well as programs adapted to the needs of the military, and many military personnel are thus enabled to acquire an academic education. The demand that universities in Israel issue a public call to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories is unrealistic. This is a highly complex political issue, and an attempt on the part of Israeli universities to intervene in it would be highly problematic and indeed inappropriate for them. It is as unwarranted to demand this as it is to demand that universities in the USA or in England call on their governments to end the war in Afghanistan or in Pakistan or in Iraq.

3. The infrastructure and conditions for research available to Palestinian students and academic staff are inferior to those available to Israeli academics. Israel does not provide budgets for Palestinian universities and restricts their activity by, inter alia, closing them down on the orders of the military.

Counter arguments:

- The situation and living conditions of the Palestinians have improved under Israeli rule in all areas.
- In 1967 there was not a single academic institution on the West Bank and Gaza. Under Israeli rule dozens of such institutions have been founded.
- Under the Oslo Accords, Israel is no longer responsible for Palestinian academic institutions, which are supposed to be funded by the large sums of money that the Palestinian Authority receives from a number of donors, primarily from the European Union and the USA.

Contrary to the prevalent assertion, the Palestinians' situation and living conditions have actually improved under Israeli rule. In the Gaza Strip, for example, life expectancy has risen from 48 years in 1967 to 72 years in 2000. According to data published by the International Health Organization, the World Bank and other international bodies, a marked improvement in the Palestinians' lives under Israeli rule has been registered on every humanitarian parameter, among which are access to clean sources of water, a drop in child mortality, increased literacy, and a rise in the level of education. Living conditions in the Palestinian Authority are far better than those in Arab and developing countries. The Palestinians are the best educated among Middle Eastern and North African countries (Yemini, 2014).

In 1967 there was not a single academic institution on the West Bank and Gaza (Yemini, 2015b). Under Israeli rule many institutions of higher education have been founded (Yemini, 2015a). Furthermore, most of the territory called "Palestine" is today under the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and under the Oslo Accord of 1993, Israel is no longer responsible for funding Palestinian academic institutions. These are supposed to be budgeted by means of the considerable sums of money that the PA receives from its many donors, chief among them the European Union and the USA. If there is a lack of infrastructure in Palestinian

institutions, they should endeavor to bring about a change in the priorities of the PA with regard to the allocation of budgets.

Academic freedom and freedom of expression are safeguarded on Israeli campuses. At the numerous symposia and conferences hosted by Israeli universities, one hears opinions from all points on the political spectrum, articulated by Jewish and Arab participants alike. Israeli academia cooperates with various institutions around the world, including its Palestinian counterparts, and does not boycott the academic institutions of any country, even those that call for Israel's destruction. In 2006, for example, Iran applied for permanent membership in the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB). Even though Iran calls for the destruction of Israel and denies the Holocaust, acting on purely professional considerations the Israeli delegation voted to accept Iran into the organization (Reinhold, 2007).

According to data published in 2011, no fewer than 15 institutions of higher education were operating within the jurisdiction of the PA (these include universities operated by the Palestinian regime and private colleges), in which no fewer than 196,625 students were enrolled and some 5,900 academic staff were employed (Abu-Orabi, 2013).

4. By erecting the separation wall and barriers throughout Judea and Samaria, Israel restricts the freedom of movement of Palestinian academics and denies them access to nearby academic institutions.

Counter arguments:

- The security fence was built to prevent illegal infiltration of terrorists into Israel's territory. Had infiltrators from Judea and Samaria not committed terrorist acts in Israel, there would have been no need to erect the fence, and the movement of Palestinians could have remained unhindered.
- Construction of the security fence led to a marked reduction in the number of attacks. Like any other country, Israel has the right to protect its citizens' security. Nonetheless, great pains are taken not to impinge on the freedom of movement of the Palestinian residents.
- Among those who perpetrated terrorist attacks in Israel are students who studied at Palestinian academic institutions.

Construction of the security fence in Judea and Samaria began in 2002. Owing to the topographically and demographically challenging terrain, the fence runs between Arab and Jewish villages. To facilitate crossings between the separated domains, checking and transit installations were erected, which are manned by Israeli security forces. These were installed in order to enable residents of Judea and Samaria to enter Israeli territory to work, receive medical treatment and maintain contact with family members, while at the same time preventing illegal infiltration to Israel, and in particular that of terrorists who endanger the security of Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike. Construction of the security fence led to a marked reduction in the number of attacks. Like any other nation, Israel has the right to defend its citizens' security. Nevertheless, it makes an effort to limit restriction of the freedom of movement of the Palestinian residents. The security fence prevents terrorists from entering Israel to carry out attacks there. Since the erection of the fence virtually no incursions into Israel have occurred across its operational sections. The fence is thus not intended to make life difficult for Palestinians, but rather to prevent acts of terrorism (Reinhold, 2007). Were it not for terrorist attacks, there would be no need to build this fence and Palestinians could have been free to cross over as they did in the past.

Among the perpetrators of acts of terror in Israel are students who studied in Palestinian academic institutions. Some acted alone, while others were sent on their mission by organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Brigades (Yemini, 2015b). A female student at Bir-Zeit University and journalist named Ahlam Tamimi was involved in one of the most infamous of these terrorist actions, the suicide attack on the Jerusalem Sbaro restaurant in 2001 in which 15 people were murdered. Palestinian students have likewise taken part in the wave of stabbings that began in autumn 2015. Israel has greatly reduced the number of barriers in place in Judea and Samaria, which function solely to prevent terrorist attacks and not to curb the freedom of movement of Palestinian academics.

5. Israeli academic institutions were built on occupied territories

Counter arguments:

- The Palestinians view all of Israel as “occupied territory,” and it thus follows, so they claim, that all of Israel’s academic institutions were built on occupied land.
- This claim is unfounded. In the same vein one may claim that universities in the USA were built on land appropriated from the native Americans or that Spanish universities were built on the grounds of Muslim universities that operated in the era of the Muslim conquest.

The Palestinians believe that the entire state of Israel is “occupied territory,” and thus that all of Israel’s academic institutions were built on occupied land. The land on which universities were built in Israel belongs to the state and was allocated to the construction of universities. The Arabs, who rejected the 1947 UN Partition Plan and went to war under the auspices and with the encouragement of the Arab League, cannot complain about being deprived of their land after losing the war (Yemini, 2015b). This assertion of theirs is groundless, and is comparable to the claim that American universities were built on land appropriated from native Americans, or that Granada University in Spain – which was constructed on the grounds of the Muslim university founded there during the Muslim conquest that ended in 1492 – is located on Muslim land. There are nine universities and dozens of colleges in Israel scattered all over the country so as to make higher education accessible to all citizens, including Arabs. It is no accident that an OECD survey conducted in 2012 that covered all countries placed Israel second on a scale of education, with 46% of its population having an academic degree. It should be noted that all institutions of higher education in the country accept all its citizens, be they Jews or Arabs.

The only Israeli university established in Judea and Samaria is Ariel University. Opinion among Israelis on its activity is divided, since many believe that Israel should not build on territory in the West Bank. However, we should bear in mind that Israel considers Judea and Samaria to be “disputed areas,” whose future is yet to be decided, and experts on international law cannot agree about the rights to ownership that apply to them, nor about the right to build on them. Both Jewish and Arab students study at Ariel University and live together in the same university lodgings. Moreover, in a letter published in the Ha’aretz daily in 2005, a number of Israeli Arab mayors commended the role played by this university in the education of Arab students (Reinhold, 2007).

6. Only an academic boycott of Israel can lead to an improvement in the situation of the Palestinians.

Counter arguments:

- This is an erroneous assertion, since the boycott merely nurtures the Palestinian refugees' illusion of return and encourages the Palestinian leadership to remain entrenched in its positions and belief that outside intervention will help them found a state. This perpetuates the dispute.
- Supporters of the boycott in fact oppose everyone who believes in the two-state solution.
- Not only Israel's academia is hurt by the boycott, but also its students and members of staff, including Israeli Arabs. Moreover, encouraging the Palestinians not to cooperate with Israel compromises their development and that of Palestinian academia, and stands in the way of their benefiting from the vast and valuable knowledge produced in Israel's academic institutions.
- As do numerous Palestinians, the chairman of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, opposes the boycott.

We should by all means respect the Palestinians' desire for independence, but one must understand that the boycott movement's primary demand is neither to end the occupation nor to bring about a two-state solution, but rather to implement the Palestinians' "right of return" to Israel within the 1949 borders, namely the return of millions of Palestinian refugees that would spell the end of Israel in its present form. The leaders of the boycott movement, including Omar Barghouti, declare that this is their goal. The boycott, therefore, constitutes the greatest obstacle to a peace accord based on the two-state solution, since it nurtures the illusion of return entertained by the Palestinian refugees and reinforces the entrenched standpoints of their leadership, and its belief that only through outside intervention will they be able to found a state, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the dispute. Supporters of the boycott in fact oppose everyone who believes in the two-state solution.

Moreover, the boycott of Israel's academic institutions hurts its Arab citizens as well, and hinders cooperation with academic institutions in the Palestinian Authority and abroad, and with Palestinian academics. Not only Israel's academia

is hurt by the boycott, but also the students who study and the staff employed in its institutions, including Israel's Arab citizens, on whose behalf the advocates of the boycott claim to be operating. Encouraging the Palestinians to shun cooperation with Israel curbs their development and that of their academic institutions, and makes it difficult for them to enjoy the benefits of the vast amount of knowledge produced in Israel's academic institutions. Further to this, Israel's universities are among the leading research institutions in the fields of technology, medicine, agriculture and other areas crucial to the advancement of developing nations. Non-cooperation with them is thus liable to harm Palestinian peoples' lives and quality of life (Reinhold, 2007).

Supporters of the boycott have on several occasions stressed that they represent the Palestinians and that the BDS movement strives to ameliorate their quality of life and to bring about the establishment of the state of which they dream. Yet many Palestinians understand that the boycott of Israel is unnecessary and futile, and have thus failed to support the movement. Among them is the chairman of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, who has on two occasions rejected the call for a blanket boycott of Israel for fear of the damage this would do to the Palestinian economy (Sasson, 2015). Prof. Seri Nuseiba, responsible for the affairs of Jerusalem on the PA executive and president of Al-Quds University, said the following in this context:

"A pro-Palestinian international academic boycott of Israel is self-defeating: it would succeed merely to weaken the strategically important bridge by means of which the state of war between Israelis and Palestinians could be ended, and thereafter the Palestinians could have their rights returned. Rather than burning this bridge, the international academia should do all in its power to reinforce it" (Reinhold, 2007).

7. Israel restricts and violates academic freedom in Palestinian universities

Counter arguments:

- Under the Oslo Accord, Israel is incapable of violating academic freedom in Palestinian universities since they were placed under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority.
- The PA itself is primarily responsible for violating academic freedom in the institutions under its jurisdiction.

While Israel's universities have persistently sought to promote reconciliation between the two peoples in various ways, some of the Palestinian universities have not been passive observers of the violent actions taken by Palestinians. For example, the umbrella organization of Palestinian non-governmental organizations (PNGO)² refused to promise that US aid money would not be channeled toward terrorist activity. Moreover, in 2003 an exhibition hosted at Bir Zeit University displayed terror attacks conducted in Israel along with words of praise for the assailants (Reinhold, 2007).

The assertion that Israel violates the academic freedom of Palestinian universities is another that bears no relation to reality. The Oslo Accord stipulates that Israel has no authority and thus no power to violate the academic freedom of Palestinian universities, since these are under the jurisdiction of the PA. It is, in fact, the PA itself that consistently impinges on their academic freedom, after they were placed under the direct control of the PA in the later 1990s. In 1999 the Palestinian human rights monitoring group released a report on academic freedom under the Palestinian Authority, and the PA's policy and activity pertaining to violation of this freedom and the freedom of expression and of association. The report commented on the appointment and deployment of security officers on campuses, whose presence violates all three aforementioned freedoms. It further noted the use made of students to monitor their fellows on campuses (Reinhold, 2007)

2 Information retrieved from the organization's site: <http://www.pngo.net>

8. Israel fails to encourage cooperation with Palestinian academia

Counter arguments:

- Israeli universities are at the forefront of cooperation with the Palestinians on research, projects and publications in many fields of knowledge.
- Israeli universities and colleges run numerous programs that promote cooperation between Jews and Arabs.

Israeli universities assiduously cooperate with the Palestinians on research, projects and publications in many fields of knowledge, including geo-hydrology, water engineering and policy, and the development of various infrastructures (Tal-Spiro, 2011). Following are a few examples in other areas:

1. Al-Quds University and Haifa University are currently cooperating on a project to develop diagnostic and prognostic tests for learning disabilities among Palestinian and Israeli youngsters.
2. The Israeli Palestinian Science Organization (IPSO) was founded in 2005. It is led by two co-directors (an Israeli and a Palestinian), and its executive committee is an international scientific council that includes an Israeli and a Palestinian member. The organization's goal is to promote Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences. Its primary function is to locate research grants, to initiate research projects, and to supervise them. The organization helps to fund joint research projects on many topics. A necessary condition for receiving its support is that at least one Israeli and one Palestinian scholar be employed on every research project. It is worthy of note that IPSO generally does not work with individual scholars but rather with research institutions, primarily universities.
3. EcoPeace Middle East (formerly Friends of the Earth Middle East) is an NGO that publishes scholarly articles on water and sewage, some written by the organization's employees and others by academic scholars. The element common to all the articles is that both the research and the writing are the product of partnership between Palestinians and Israelis.

4. The Jewish-Arab Research Institute at Haifa University furthers research and writing related to coexistence within Israel and the life shared by the two peoples who live side-by-side in this land. The institute is headed by Prof. Rassem Khamaisi, and is staffed by Jewish and Arab scholars.
5. Israeli universities run numerous programs and activities designed to encourage coexistence between Jews and Palestinians, and between Jewish and Arab students, such as the multicultural dialogue program at Bar-Ilan University and the “school-mate” program at Haifa University. These programs bring together Arab and Jewish students to participate in weekly workshops designed to develop leadership and social responsibility, and to nurture sensitivity and tolerance toward the needs and concerns of others. The students help each other learn the other’s language and to deal with learning difficulties associated with language and other barriers. Similar programs operate in other colleges and universities.

Summary

- It is illogical to boycott academic personnel because of their government's policy. Just as one should not boycott British or American academics because of one's opposition to their countries' military operations around the world, there is no logic in boycotting the Israeli academia.
- The academic boycott of Israel is immoral, illegal and discriminates between it and other countries. The boycott constitutes a barrier to peace, compromise, dialogue and coexistence.
- To combat the boycott more effectively, an adequately funded authority must be established to recruit experts in various areas to help initiate cooperation with academic institutions and scholars worldwide; to bring speakers from Israel to universities abroad; and to recruit academics in Israel and abroad who are willing to actively oppose the boycott.
- Imposing an academic boycott on Israel may well lead to the imposition of such a boycott, for various reasons, on further countries, and this would deal a blow to academic freedom. Assessing research work and articles according to the national affiliation of the scholars and authors smacks of racism and could have a destructive impact on academia worldwide.

Anyone familiar with Israel's academia and who is aware of its openness, its many achievements, its involvement in Israeli society, and its leaders' endeavors to reach out to minorities and peripheral groups, can only wonder at the underhanded attempts to vilify it by various means. In this guide we have laid out the arguments offered by those who seek to promote the academic boycott of Israel, and have proposed counter arguments. It transpires that most of the arguments put forward by proponents of the boycott are basically flawed and bear no relation to reality. Furthermore, we should remember that boycotting academics because of their government's policy is completely illogical. Just as it makes no sense to boycott British or American academics because one opposes their countries' military actions throughout the world, so is it illogical to boycott the Israeli academia.

In any event, the Israeli academic who wishes to confront advocates of the boycott effectively should broaden his or her knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Thus far, Israel has been slow to respond to the academic boycott. To render the campaign against the boycott more effective, a dedicated authority should be established and equipped with adequate resources. Such an authority would coordinate the patterns of action to be taken against the boycott among the universities, recruit experts in different fields and utilize their services, initiate cooperation with academic institutions and scholars around the world, arrange talks given by Israeli lecturers at universities abroad, and work toward recruiting academics in Israel and abroad to combat the boycott phenomenon. This authority would monitor actions taken against Israel's academia in various countries, locate bodies and organizations amenable to cooperation on this issue, promote cultural, scientific and academic ties between Israel and foreign academic institutions, conduct research, offer coping strategies, workshops and training to academic personnel who show an interest in acquiring such skills, and issue booklets and guides.

While engaging with the academic boycott one should remember that such a boycott flouts the universal principle of academic freedom, and is, in fact, a form of violence that threatens to impose on one sanctions and a boycott until one accepts the opinion of its advocates. The boycott is an unacceptable means of seeking to change an opinion or a policy. One knows when and how it begins, but cannot know how it will end. There have even been cases of Israeli academics who support the boycott initiative being ostracized at conferences or having their articles rejected by journals merely because the author was an Israeli. Boycotting Israel's academia may eventually lead to the imposition of similar boycotts on other countries, and this would surely deal a blow to academic freedom. Judging research work and articles by the nationality of the scholar or author would have a disastrous impact on the world's academic system. And worse, in recent years we have witnessed how anti-Israel activity on campuses in Great Britain and the USA has sparked an increase in anti-Semitism, manifested, inter alia, in the disruption of events organized by Jewish students and threats to their lives.

The attempt to vilify Israeli academia is motivated by evil intent. It is an insult to one's intelligence, runs counter to logic, truth and justice, and it thus behooves us to combat it by every means.

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<http://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/.premium-1.2610427>

Links to the internet sites of organizations that address the academic boycott

- The Academic Friends of Israel: <http://academics-for-israel.blogspot.co.uk>
- The Coordination Forum for countering antisemitism:
www.antisemitism.org.il/?lang=en
- BDS cookbook: www.stopbds.com
- Amcha: www.amchainitiative.org
- Stand with Us: www.standwithus.com
- MESA: www.mesana.org
- ASA: www.theasa.net
- Bricup: www.bricup.org.uk