

Letter from Palestinian students and academics to the academic community of UC Chile

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) and the Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) call on the students' representatives and the entire academic community of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (UC) to end the university's institutional links with Israeli universities due to their deep involvement in Israel's system of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid.

As Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who strongly supported the academic boycott of Israel, once said:

“It can never be business as usual. Israeli Universities are an intimate part of the Israeli regime, by active choice. While Palestinians are not able to access universities and schools, Israeli universities produce the research, technology, arguments and leaders for maintaining the occupation.”

We urge all Chilean universities to support the Palestinian pursuit of freedom, justice and equality by, first and foremost, refusing to have any relations with Israeli universities that are instrumental in denying the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We echo the 2005 Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) call of Palestinian Civil Society, including Palestinian academic and student associations, to non-violently pressure Israel to bring about its compliance with its obligations under international law, by calling on academic associations worldwide to isolate Israel's academic institutions as was done to South African universities under apartheid.

As a global and inclusive human rights movement, valuing intersectionality between struggles and categorically rejecting all forms of discrimination and racism, including anti-Semitism, the BDS movement targets the Israeli regime of oppression as well as companies and institutions that are complicit in and benefit from its serious and persistent violations of international law.

We are deeply concerned about the Catholic University of Chile's links with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Institute of Technology - Technion. Both universities are deeply involved in Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people, including racism against Palestinian students and suppression of academic freedom.

The Hebrew University is a paradigmatic and well-documented case of institutional complicity in Israel's violations of international law. For instance, the land on which some of its Mount Scopus campus buildings and facilities were expanded was illegally acquired through Israel's 1968 illegal confiscation of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem, which is recognized by the United Nations as part of the occupied Palestinian territory. By moving Israeli staff and students to work and live on occupied Palestinian land, the Hebrew University is in grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Conventions.

In 2014, the Hebrew University actively supported Israel's massacre of Palestinian civilians in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. A notice circulated throughout the institution at the time, for example, announced its effort to collect goods for Israeli soldiers according to demands set by the Israeli occupation forces.

Furthermore, the University is complicit in the unequal treatment of Palestinians, including those who are citizens of Israel.

The Technion also has a massive record of complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. One of the glaring examples is its tight partnership with Elbit Systems, a leading Israeli weapons manufacturer that produces drones used and tested against civilians in the Gaza Strip. Elbit has not only participated in the construction and surveillance of Israel's apartheid wall, considered illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004, but also in the construction of the wall along the United States - Mexico border.

Caterpillar's D9 bulldozers, used by the Israeli forces to illegally demolish Palestinian homes and farms, are equipped with a remote-control function developed by Technion. The Institute also rewards its students who perform their compulsory military service; its students and academics who participated in the Israeli assault on Gaza in 2008-2009, that murdered more than 1200 civilians, including 434 children, received even extra benefits.

These are just a few examples of how deeply involved, by active choice, Israeli academic institutions are in Israel's decades of occupation and colonization of Palestinian land, systematic discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel and the denial of the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Ending the international complicity with such violations is a fundamental step to achieve Palestinian rights. It is also an ethical obligation that UC is called upon to heed.

The University of Johannesburg has fulfilled this ethical obligation when in 2011 it terminated its agreement with the Ben-Gurion University in Israel.

So did major US-based academic associations, including the American Studies Association, African Literature Association, National Women Studies Association, among others.

The worldwide endorsement of the academic boycott of Israel has grown substantially in recent years, including by the senate of the University of Barcelona, the Teachers' Union of Ireland, the Law students at the University of Chile, the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom, and by thousands of Brazilian, Argentinian, British, Spanish, French, South African, Irish, among other, academics and researchers.

Our struggles for justice and human rights unite us. International solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for justice today intersects with struggles for racial, gender, economic, environmental and other forms of justice.

To conclude, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu once wrote in support of the Palestinian call for BDS:

"If we cannot, at the very least, heed the appeals of Palestinian society, to refrain from undermining their peaceful resistance and aspirations for a life without oppression, we will be abandoning our moral obligations. In situations of oppression, neutrality means taking the side of the oppressor."

We hope conscientious students, academics and staff of UC will pressure the university to heed our appeal.

Sincerely,



**Palestinian Students'
Campaign for the Academic
Boycott of Israel**

الحملة الفلسطينية
للمقاطعة الأكاديمية
والثقافية لإسرائيل



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for the Academic & Cultural
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