

Stephen Gong
Executive Director
Center for Asian American Media

Dear Mr. Gong:

The US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI), and the undersigned groups and individuals, are deeply dismayed and disappointed that CAAM is sponsoring the Israel China film festival on June 26-28 at the San Francisco Public Library, as part of the Israel-China Festival this year.

CAAM's official partnership in this program with the Israeli consulate, and thus with the Israeli government, is extremely troubling. It implies CAAM's endorsement of the Israeli state's illegal military occupation, annexation of land, home demolitions, and collective punishment and displacement of Palestinians, all of which have been condemned globally and in hundreds of UN resolutions. Israel has inflicted military assaults on Palestinians using brutal and disproportionate violence and illegal chemical weapons, such as during the massacre in Gaza in 2008-09 that killed 1400 Palestinians. Israel has constructed a Wall that not only restricts Palestinian life and livelihood and divides families but has also annexed Palestinian lands; the Wall has been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice. Israel has enacted systemic and often legally sanctioned discrimination against its Palestinian citizens because they are non-Jews, leading Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and many other international human rights activists to liken Israeli policies to those of apartheid; for some, they are even worse than those of apartheid South Africa. Israel continues to deny hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees their right of return as enshrined in international law. Israel's violations of human rights are simply too many to recount in a brief summary. However, they are by now well documented and increasingly challenged by the growing boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement around the world and in the U.S., one that is supported by leading artists and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds.

If you are not aware of the BDS movement, it is not too late for CAAM to join this global struggle for human rights. Palestinian civil society has called on the international community to engage in an academic and cultural boycott of Israel:

"Given that hundreds of UN resolutions have condemned Israel's colonial and discriminatory policies as illegal and called for immediate, adequate and effective remedies, and Given that all forms of international intervention and peace-making have until now failed to convince or force Israel to comply with humanitarian law, to respect fundamental human rights and to end its occupation and oppression of the people of Palestine, and In view of the fact that people of conscience in the international community have historically shouldered the moral responsibility to fight injustice, as exemplified in the struggle to abolish apartheid in South Africa through diverse forms of boycott, divestment and sanctions" (www.pacbi.org).

The US Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI) was founded in response to this call from Palestinian civil society and was inspired by the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency, and resistance to injustice and oppression. While those who attempt to silence critics of Israel often hurl gratuitous accusation of anti-Semitism at any one who dares to challenge the Israeli state, the boycott is an effective, antiracist campaign and will continue until Israel ceases its violations of human rights. USACBI opposes cultural programs that are sponsored by the Israeli state and are increasingly used to whitewash Israel's violations of international human rights and war crimes and to legitimize its illegal occupation and apartheid practices.

In its attempt to undermine the rapidly expanding BDS movement, Israel has resorted to the "Brand Israel" campaign and has spent millions of dollars to improve its public image through cultural programming and outreach to diverse communities. The CAAM festival seems to be another example of this discredited propaganda campaign. None of the featured films address the Israeli occupation nor racially discriminatory and segregation policies that target Palestinians, nor indeed Palestinian experiences in any form. There are by now many films that powerfully document the situation on the ground in Israel, made by Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers. None of these films are being shown at this festival. In fact, the festival seems to be an attempt to evade an honest and open discussion of the reality of Israel and to forge an alliance with the Chinese and Asian American community on the backs of silenced Palestinians.

In addition, we are troubled by the self-professed attempt of the Israel China Festival to co-opt Chinese and Asian American communities into celebrating the "continued vitality" of two "global leaders" and the "remarkable economic nexus which has formed between Israel, China and Silicon Valley," erasing any discussion of human rights abuses, labor exploitation, and occupation. While we do not oppose the exploration of cultural traditions or common histories, we strongly object to an alliance between Israel and China that is built on the censorship of histories of settler colonialism or of occupation.

We strongly believe that Asian American community organizations and individuals should stand in solidarity with those challenging occupation, apartheid, warfare, and colonialism, and not engage in the normalizing of oppression. In addition, we are deeply concerned about the partnership of Chinese American and Asian American cultural organizations with an anti-Palestinian program, rather than with antiracist and anticolonial projects that stand for social justice and human rights for ALL.

We ask CAAM: will you take a principled stand against occupation, colonization, and apartheid?

Signed,

Organizations

US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI)
Al Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition
The Arab Film Festival
National Coalition of Arab Americans
Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC), San Francisco
Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative, College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University
Bay Area Labor Committee for Peace & Justice
Davis Committee for Palestinian Rights
Friends of Palestine-Wisconsin
Wisconsin Middle East Lobby Group
Berkeley Women in Black
San Francisco Women In Black
Students Allied for Freedom & Equality (SAFE), University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
US Palestinian Community Network (USPCN)
Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT!)
14 Friends of Palestine, Marin
Free Palestine Movement
International Solidarity Movement - Northern California
Global March to Jerusalem - North America
South Bay Mobilization for Peace and Justice
American Muslims for Palestine
Middle East Study Group, Contra Costa
Hilton Head for Peace, Hilton Head, SC
St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee
National Lawyers Guild-Free Palestine Subcommittee
Peace in the Precincts – Sacramento
United Methodists' Holy Land Task Force
Bay Area Women in Black
InterDenominational Advocates for Peace, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Interfaith Community for Palestinian Rights, Austin, Texas
Sacramento BDS

Individuals

Dr. Chris Abbyad, Clinical Assistant Professor, Rafic Hariri School of Nursing,
American University of Beirut, Lebanon
Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, Associate Professor of Race and Resistance
Studies/Ethnic Studies and Senior Scholar, Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and
Diasporas Initiative, College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University
Nosheen Ali, UC Berkeley

Hatem Ahmed Bazian, Asian American Studies, UC Berkeley; Co-Founder, Zaytuna College; National Chair, American Muslims for Palestine
Dalit Baum, Global Exchange
Paola Bacchetta, Associate Professor, Department of Gender and Women's Studies, UC Berkeley
Ece Algan, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies, California State University -- San Bernardino
Don Bustany, *Middle East in Focus*, KPFK Radio
Judith Butler, Professor, Rhetoric and Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley
Donald B. Clark, for Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice and Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility, United Church of Christ, Pleasant Hill, TN
Gina Dent, Associate Professor, UCSC
Dr. William L. Dienst Jr., family and emergency room physician/Free Gaza movement, Omak, WA
Huma Dar, Lecturer, Asian American & Asian Diasporas Studies Program, Ethnic Studies Department, UC Berkeley
Angela Y Davis, Professor Emerita, UCSC
Walt Davis
Max Elbaum: Editor, War Times/Tiempo de Guerras
Hedy Epstein
Rita Erickson, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Richard Falk, Professor Emeritus, Princeton; Global & International Studies, UC Santa Barbara
Gloria Fearn, Stockton, CA
Manzar Farooq, History Professor, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA
Virginia Feldman, Portland, OR
Hassan Foua, Northern California Friends of Sabeel; Board Director, The Israeli Committee Against House Demolition; The Tree of Life Foundation; and Council for the National Interest
John Frazier, New Yorkers Against Cornell-Technion (NYACT) campaign
Nouri Gana, Associate Professor, Comparative Literature, UCLA
Dr. Jess Ghannam, UCSF
Angelique Gonzales: Executive Director, SOUL School of Unity & Liberation, Oakland, CA
Steve Greaves, Educator, California
Susan Green, Break the Silence Media and Arts Project
Joyce F. Guinn
Zoe Holder
Xandra Ibara
Mary Izett, Lafayette CA
Liz Jackson, Berkeley California, co-chair of the National Lawyers Guild Free Palestine Subcommittee
Remi Kanazi, Spoken Word Poet

Joyce Kaysar
Robin D. G. Kelley, Professor of History, UCLA
David Klein, Professor, Mathematics, California State University-Northridge
Janet Kobren, 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla
Dennis Kortheuer, History, California State University, Long Beach
Michael Letwin, Labor for Palestine; Former President, Association of Legal Aid Attorneys/UAW Local 2325
Maxwell Leung, Assistant Professor, Critical Studies Program, California College of the Arts
David Lloyd, Professor, English, UC Davis
Barbara Lubin, Executive Director, Middle East Children's Alliance, Berkeley
Sunaina Maira, Professor, Asian American Studies, UC Davis
David Mandel, Member, Jewish Voice for Peace
Kathleen M. Moore, Professor and Vice Chair, Religious Studies, UC Santa Barbara
Monami Maulik, Executive Director, Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM), New York
Gerald Lenoir, Executive Director, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Oakland
Jose Esteban Munoz: Professor, Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University
Dorothy Naor, Israel
Marcy Newman, Educator, Beirut, Lebanon
Rupal Oza, Director, Women and gender studies program, Hunter College, CUNY
Susan Scott, Inverness , CA , Co-chair, National Lawyers Guild - International Committee*
Edie Pistolesi, Art, California State University-Northridge
Ismail Poonawala, Professor of Arabic & Islamic Studies, UCLA
Paula Rainey, Alameda, CA
Junaid Rana: Associate Professor and Associate Head, Department of Asian American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Dr. Roshni Rustomji-Kerns
Tom Sartwell
Ibrahim Soudy
Judith Stevenson, Director, Peace and Social Justice Program; Assistant Professor, Human Development, California State University-Long Beach
Sunera Thobani, Associate Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada
Nabil Wahbeh, Activist
Dorothy Wonder
Zeina Zaatari, Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa, Global Fund for Women

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