



US Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel

<http://www.usacbi.org>

July 15, 2012

To:

Chancellor Linda P.B. Katehi, University of California, Davis,
President Louis Agnese, Jr., University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX,
President Lawrence Biondi, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO,
President Karen Haynes, California State University San Marcos,
President Elliot Hirshman, San Diego State University,
Chancellor Dorothy Leland, University of California, Merced,
Chancellor Harvey Perlman, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
President Beverly Tatum, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA,
Chancellor Randy Woodson, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC.

Dear Presidents and Chancellors,

It has come to our attention that you participated in a recent delegation of U.S. university presidents to Israel (July 1-9, 2012), the purpose of which was to bolster bilateral academic exchange and cooperation with Israeli universities, and to explore opportunities for academic and research collaboration between your universities and Israeli universities.ⁱ

We are writing to urge you, in the strongest possible terms, not to pursue institutional relationships between your universities and Israeli universities, and to discontinue any existing institutional relationships that might already exist. We ask you instead to honor the call for the worldwide academic and cultural boycott of Israel, initiated in 2004 by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and supported by the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.ⁱⁱ

Four Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and Mairead Maguire have described Israel as an apartheid state,ⁱⁱⁱ and this description has been supported by the Russell Tribunal^{iv} and the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa.^v Far from being the exemplar of “a richly diverse country” or representing “Martin Luther King’s ideals of equality, integration, peace, collaboration and the value of education,” Israel is founded upon discrimination, ongoing ethnic cleansing, and the segregation of access to infrastructure, resources and even education. Indeed, the racist nature of the state of Israel is so extreme that University of Miami president Donna Shalala, who participated in a delegation similar to yours, was detained, interrogated, and humiliated at Ben-Gurion International Airport, in July 2010, simply because of her Arab ethnicity.^{vi}

Israel’s institutions of higher education are not innocent in relation to this systematic regime of segregation and discrimination, occupation and ethnic cleansing. To give only a handful of examples, Tel Aviv University, which you visited, currently has some 55 joint projects with the Israeli military, especially in the “innovative” field of electro-optics that directly serve and supply the occupation. Hebrew University is built on and continues to expand into occupied East

Jerusalem, from which Palestinians continue to be “transferred”, despite its internationally recognized status as the future capital of any independent Palestinian State. Academics in Technion and other institutions have been directly engaged in furnishing the hydrological and demographic surveys that have guided the construction of the separation wall and the illegal settlements on the West Bank. Technion has been directly involved in the development of a remote-controlled “D9” bulldozer used by the Israeli army to demolish Palestinian houses in acts of collective punishment or ethnic cleansing. All Israeli academic institutions are involved in structural discrimination against Palestinian students.^{vii}

Earlier this year, a delegation of US professors went on an alternative tour, organized by USACBI, and witnessed the impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people. They wrote eloquently of their experiences, and their commitment to sever ties with Israel until it abides by international law, in a widely-circulated statement.^{viii}

Returning from that delegation, the eminent African American historian, Robin Kelley commented in an account of his visit there on “the efforts Israel puts into and invests in normalizing the situation there.”^{ix} He is correct: the gradual recognition in the media and among an increasing segment of the US and global public of the nature of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, supported by ample documentation of Israel’s egregious abuses, has dealt a serious blow to Israel’s image in the West. As a result, the Israeli government has launched a rebranding campaign (“Brand Israel”), to fix its image, with no attempt to alter the policies that have tarnished this reputation.^x Delegations such as yours are part of this government campaign, which seeks to distract attention from its violations of international law and of the Palestinian people’s inalienable human rights, by shining a very partial light on Israel’s academic and cultural accomplishments.

Under these circumstances, the establishment of institutional links between your universities and Israeli universities would be de facto recognition and support of Apartheid and colonialism. It would be the moral equivalent of supporting South African institutions during its Apartheid era, and would place you on the wrong side of history.

We urge you to resist the temptation to collaborate with Israeli academic institutions until Israel satisfies the requirements of international law and universally recognized human rights. And we encourage you to inform yourself more fully of the nature of Israel’s discriminatory regime and occupation. The signatories of this letter write on behalf of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, a representative of which would be happy to meet or talk with you to clarify our concerns. We can be reached at usacbi@usacbi.org.

Sincerely,

Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, San Francisco State University

Angela Y. Davis, University of California, Santa Cruz

Gina Dent, University of California, Santa Cruz

Nada Elia, Antioch University- Seattle

Richard Falk, University of California, Santa Barbara and Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine for the UN Human Rights Council

Jess Ghannam, UC San Francisco

Sherna Berger Gluck, California State University, Long Beach

Anna Guevarra, University of Illinois, Chicago

Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Spelman College

Robin D. Kelley, University of California, Los Angeles

David Klein, California State University, Northridge

David Lloyd, University of California, Davis

Frederick C. Moten, Duke University

James Petras, Bartle Professor Emeritus, Binghamton University

Edie Pistoletti, California State University, Northridge

Mona Philips, Spelman College

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Laureate

Waziyatawin, University of Victoria

For the Advisory Board and Organizing Collective of USACBI, the United States Campaign for the Cultural and Academic Boycott of Israel, <http://www.usacbi.org>

ⁱ <http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/General+News/131662/Leading-US-University-Presidents-to-Explore-Innovation-%26-Academic-Collaboration-with-Israel.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=868>

ⁱⁱⁱ Carter; Mandela; Tutu; Maguire

^{iv} <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/south-africa/south-africa-session-%E2%80%94-full-findings/cape-town-session-summary-of-findings>

^v http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Media_Release-378.phtml

^{vi} <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/08/07/1765823/um-shalala-treated-as-security.html#storylink=cpy>

^{vii} http://www.epacbi.eu/sites/default/files/Economy_of_the_occupation_23-24.pdf

^{viii} <http://www.usacbi.org/2012/01/us-scholars-delegation-calls-for-academic-and-cultural-boycott-of-israel/>

^{ix} <http://mondoweiss.net/2012/02/a-level-of-racist-violence-i-have-never-seen-ucla-professor-robin-d-g-kelley-on-palestine-and-the-bds-movement.html>

^x <http://forward.com/articles/2070/israel-aims-to-improve-its-public-image/>