



OPPRESSION IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

On the support of Israeli academic institutions and students unions for the assault on Gaza during November 2012, and the suppression of anti-war demonstrations by Palestinian students.



arab cultural association



OPPRESSION IN THE SHADOW OF WAR
On the support of Israeli academic institutions and
students unions for the assault on Gaza during
November 2012, and the suppression of anti-war
demonstrations by Palestinian students

Published By: The Arab Culture Association
General Supervision: Dr. Rawda 'Atallah
Preparation: Yara Sa'di
Editing: Eyad Barghuthi
Design: Eman 'Odeh
Special thanks goes to: Zein Fahoum

The publication of this report is part of the The Arab Culture Association's Ar-Rased Project and the Youth Empowerment Programme, both sponsored by the Open Society Foundations.



Arab Culture Association's
Phone: 04-6082352
email: aca1998@gmail.com
website: www.arabca.org

New Heights of Suppression

Israel promotes that their institutions are based on academic values however this does not truly correlate with the demonstrated militarization of the institutions, nor the educational content that is devoted to promoting the Zionist ideology. The reality is that these academic institutions more resemble research and development centres serving respective policy fields of the state. Even worse is they boast their close ties with the Israeli military institution and compete with each other in how closely bound they are. This support is highlighted particularly during the periods of increased Israeli assaults on Gaza and other Palestinian or Arab areas, regarding peaceful Palestinian demonstrations which do not exceed the conditions of the academic institutional regulations. From these examples, it is clear that the rights and freedoms that these institutions claim to uphold are targeted to a specific group of students – particularly those who support the Zionist agenda.

This report serves to shed light on this issue using examples from existing university policy and the actions of the police against Palestinian student demonstrations protesting the most recent attack on Gaza during November 2012, also known as Operation “Pillar of Defense.”

As Israeli academic institutions have shown their boundless support for the attack and their support for the Israeli military, the suppression of Palestinian students has reached new heights. This report will expose the most flagrant incidents that occurred during Operation “Pillar of Defense” in universities and colleges with a specific focus on Haifa University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Attack on Gaza – “Pillar of Defense”

The Israeli oppression that was executed by the Israeli military was named “Operation Pillar of Defense.” The attack on Gaza Strip occurred from November 14th to 21st 2012 and was launched with the assassination of Ahmed Jabari, the Hamas Chief of the Military. According to Al-Dameer Human Rights Association, 155 people were killed in the attack, among them twelve members of the Al-Dalu family including five children on November 18th. These casualties were in addition to the hundreds of injured civilians, demolished homes, schools, and infrastructure on account of the incessant bombing of Gaza.

University of Haifa

On November 15th, 2012, Palestinian students assembled to observe a minute of silence in solidarity with Gaza and its martyrs. The peaceful protest was met by widespread condemnation and followed by a bullying of university students and a wave of incitement and intimidation.

Haifa’s Mayor: Stop the evil propaganda!

These protests were also denounced in a letter written by Haifa’s Mayor, Yona Yahav. In his letter to the University president, Amos Shapira, Yahav, wrote:



“It’s good that educational institutions allow for democracy and freedom of expression for various political and social stands. However, cynical abuse of this natural right in order to advance the ideology of terrorist organizations, who hail the killing of children and innocent civilians, is beyond the scope of human values and decency... I expect a firm denunciation by the university administration of

this behaviour, and an action in all possible means to prevent radical and negative elements from disseminating their evil propoganda on the campus.”

¹www.arabicweb.aldameer.org/?p=4045 Al-Dameer Human Rights Association

This letter and the response of the university have proven the lack of independence of the academic institutions not only from the military sphere, but the political as well. It also exposes the stance of the Mayor of the so-called “city of co-existence” regarding the most basic freedom of expression, specifically on the matter of opposing murder and war.



5

University Administration: We support the army and prevent provocation on campus.

Concurrently, the university administration issued a formal statement in support of the Israeli military saying, “University of Haifa supports the soldiers of the IDF in defending the state and sends its condolences to the bereaved families in Kiryat Malachi. The university administration took and will take all legal measures in order to prevent any provocation on the campus.”

The Students’ Union: The behaviour of the Palestinian students is provocative and we support the army.

The Students’ Union published a statement similar to the university administration, claiming, “[the] Arab students’ behaviour was provocative, inciting and hurtful... and that they condemn it and calls upon the university to plan an event of support for the IDF.”

Dean of students prohibits public student activities for two weeks.

On November 18th, 2012, the Dean’s Office issued a statement banning all public on-campus activities for two weeks; an act that was determined by the Association of Civil Rights in Israel² as a breach of freedom of speech. It should be noted that the Dean’s order turned into a systematic practice by the university whenever there is political tension in the region. However, this prohibition affects only the Arab student organizations while the activities that support the army, are subject to the constitution of the General Union which differs from that of the General Student Union. In response, the Arab Student Board initiated a protest in front of the university on the November 19th. More than five hundred students participated in this protest demanding Israel to end its assault on Gaza. MK Haneen Zo’bi and MK Mohammed Barakeh also joined the protest.

6

Demonstration in support of the military, despite the ban with the University President in attendance.

The same day of the banning of public activities on November 18th, but prior to its official announcement, pro-Zionist students and staff held a protest in support of the Israeli army’s attack on Gaza, where many of its participants chanted racist slogans, including “death to Arabs.”³ Surprisingly in attendance was none other than the University’s president Amos Shapira, who explained, “I’m

²www.acri.org.il/he/?p=24506 the Association of Civil Rights in Israel’s

³electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/dancing-israeli-students-chant-death-arabs-rally-backing-gaza-slaughter Dancing Israeli students chant “Death to the Arabs” at rally backing Gaza slaughter |the Electronic Intifada

here because I'm an Israeli, president of an Israeli university, sixth generation in the country, a former soldier and now individuals from my family are soldiers... Of course I identify with the residents of southern Israel and IDF soldiers, this flag is my flag.”⁴

This protest was heavily criticized by MK Haneen Zo'bi. In a letter



to the President of the university, she urged him to cancel the protest supporting the Israeli army due to its instigative nature against the Arab students and describing them as the “fifth column.” MK Zo’bi also highlighted that the Palestinian students have the right to support their people against the aggressive policies and called for respecting and practicing the freedom of speech.

At the end of this demonstration, far right-wing MKs Aryeh Eldad and Michael Ben-Ari, along with extremist provocateurs Itamar Ben-Gvir and Baruch Marzel, visited the campus. It should be stressed that the University of Haifa has repeatedly prevented certain Arab political leaders including MK Haneen Zoa’bi, Sheikh Ra’ed Salah, and Jewish left-wing activists such as Sa’ar Sickli, from visiting the campus.

⁴www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4307666,00.html | Ynet 18\11\2011

Incitement to social network: Petition to punish Arab students and targeting a specific activist



The malicious provocation also spread throughout the social networks. Racist comments and petitions were widely posted and attracted

thousands of anti-Arab hate comments. One example is a petition signed by more than 2300 people⁵ which called for the punishment of Palestinian students who observed a minute of silence at the University.

In another case, a post was spread regarding a specific Palestinian student activist at Haifa University. Calls were made for “Jewish students” to report her personal information in order “to deal with her in a way that is commonly used with Arabs.” Furthermore, people were asked to report her profile page on Facebook in attempt to deactivate her account. The student responded by filing a complaint to the police against the perpetrators, which led to the opening of a lawsuit on two grounds: conspiring to commit murder and inciting others, as well as the collection of information with the intent of causing harm.

⁵www.atzuma.co.il/haifauniversity A petition calling for the punishment of Palestinian students who observed a minute of silence at the University

Likud Member to Parliament: Make these ungrateful students bear the consequence of their actions.

MK Ayoob Kara of the Likud, the ruling party, added his own contribution to this matter in a form of an opinion letter published on November 22nd in Ma'ariv newspaper. ⁶ In dealing with Palestinian students who observed a minute of silence, Kara suggested that:

“According to the law not much can be done. However, in practice, each one of these students should know that he will be punished for being ungrateful. The punishment will not take a legal form; rather it will come in the way he will be treated by all, from the students around him up to the Dean. Next time when he will need a consideration such as photocopying the lecture which he did not attend for being sick, or that he will ask for a scholarship since his parents can no longer support him, or when he will ask to defer the deadline for an essay, or when he will ask an extra time to finish his exam or when he will apply for a doctoral degree or when he ask for similar things, this ‘bereaved’ will know that his ungratefulness has a price. He will know that in this world there is an eye for eye...”

⁶www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/417/552.html?hp=54&cat=872&loc=10

An opinion letter published on 20111122 in Ma'ariv newspaper by MK Ayoob Kara.

Regarding ungratefulness

The repeated description of the Palestinian Arab students, politically active against the war the occupation and the policies of oppression, as “ungrateful” implies a great deal about the speaker. This description considers the rights and freedoms of the students have been granted to them as a “favour.” This favour is conditioned by loyalty to Zionism, its agenda and flag, and as a “kindness” which is taken advantage of by an unpleasant, evil, anti-war and murdering people, who should be silent and punished for such irritating “silent” protests and peaceful demonstrations for human rights.



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



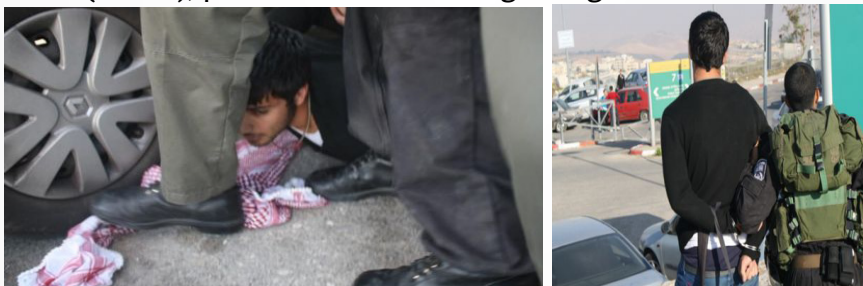
Palestinian students in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem attempted to hold daily demonstrations at the campus' entrance.

These peaceful protests faced both, a large number of police personnel and counter-demonstrations by pro-Zionist activists, whom were mainly members of Im Turtzu.

Violent suppression by the police to the Palestinian student demonstration and three students arrested.

On November 20th, the police brutally attacked Palestinian students who participated in the demonstrations resulting in the arrest of three: Majd Hamdan, Rashad Ashtiyye, Adham Amoraï⁷. The students were dismissed by the Israeli court the next day. The counter-demonstration in favour of the attack on Gaza was not addressed.

Maisa Irshid, a lawyer in the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), published an article regarding the behaviour of the



police towards the anti-war protestors⁸. In her article, she argued that it is not the first time that students were suppressed on the campuses; yet the brutality and aggression has reached, on this occasion, a new level. Moreover she pointed to different modes of suppression of male and female students. The suppression of male students takes the form of overpowering by binding their hands tightly behind their back, pushing them with their face to the floor, stepping in an intimidating manner beside their heads and kicking them. As for female students, the suppression takes the form of strongly pulling them from their hair.



On November 29th, the police arrested a student who had been released just nine days earlier, claiming that he did not arrive to an additional investigation. This was in spite of the fact that he was never officially notified. Moreover, the police did not show the student the arrest warrant. The Palestinian student movement at the Hebrew University prepared a letter to be sent to the Dean's office, which claims that the silence of the University's official on the violence carried out on campus implies that the University condones these acts.

⁷ www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=T6e2v915Mrs 5:45- 14:20

⁸ www.tinyurl.com/d519gt6 Maisaa Irshed article .

Other Universities and Colleges:

On November 21st, Palestinian students in the **Technion Institution of Technology in Haifa** initiated a protest condemning the war in Gaza. Pro-Zionist students promptly organized a counter protest in support of the Israeli army⁹.

Tel-Aviv University banned a protest activity, which Palestinian students planned, citing “security reasons”, although several similar activities were permitted in the past¹⁰.

The student union at **Herzeliyya College**¹¹ created a “war room” for the spread of messages in the social media supporting the Israeli army and its attack. For that end, more than 70 overseas students were recruited to “market Israel” and its war. This “war room” coordinated its activities with the Ministry of Information and “Hasbara” and received information from the Israeli military and the Prime Minister’s Office directly. One of its outcomes was the “Israel Under Fire” Facebook page¹².

On November 18th, the Palestinian Students’ Union in The **Max Stern Yezreel Valley College (YVC)** distributed a pamphlet in support of Palestinians and called for a protest against the war on Gaza. The pro-Palestinian demonstrations occurred but not without a counteraction from the opposition. Following the protest of some pro-Zionist students, the police decided to end the Palestinian protest¹³.

A few days later, the General Student Union published a statement saying that the protest organized by the Palestinian union “passed the red lines” and it aimed to damage “the co-existence and peaceful atmosphere which prevailed in the college.” Thus, it acted without delay and initiated a protest in support of the south and the Israeli military and organized a visit to army bases. The head of the General Union Rami Rozen, thanked personally the students who participated in these activities and called to punish the provocateurs¹⁴.

⁹ www.arabs48.com/?mod=articles&ID=96001

¹⁰ www.arabs48.com/?mod=articles&ID=96005

¹¹ www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4306545,00.html 16-11-2012

¹² www.facebook.com/IsraelUnderFireLive?fref=ts “Israel Under Fire”

¹³ www.alarab.net/Article/498308

¹⁴ www.alarab.net/Article/498849

From the Memory of War and Suppression The 2009 assault on Gaza

In December 2008, Israel launched an attack against the inhabitants of the Gaza strip, using a combination of tactics



including artillery, military incursion and air-strikes. The order by Israeli government caused the death of hundreds of civilians, among them more than four hundred children; as well as the damage and the destruction of no less than 14,000 Gazan houses, leaving thousands of Gazan Palestinians homeless.

The University of Haifa, for example chose to express full support of the attack on Gaza, as the University president declared it “stands behind the IDF soldiers.” In addition, the university lit up the windows

of the main building to display the Israeli flag in support of the Israeli attack, in addition to many other activities which were shared proudly on a special website.

Within the university, oppression of Palestinian support was manifested in the suppression of voices and peaceful demonstrations against the attack on Gaza. For example, during one non-violent demonstration, the university summoned a number of special units of police to end the demonstration. As a result, many students were injured, while others were arrested and brought to court with no just cause. Notably, in front of the pro-Palestinian demonstration, there was another in favour of the attack on Gaza in which the university’s Students’ union took an active part – this demonstration was not addressed by neither the police nor the university.

The discrimination evident in such a selective use of violence represents a pattern which has been repeated on several occasions. During the last week of this particular war, the oppression of Palestinian students reached new levels. In the following pages, we present the incidents which occurred during Operation “Pillar of Defense” in the various universities and colleges, with a special focus on the University of Haifa and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Final words

The most recent assault on Gaza on further proves the ties between Israeli academic institutions and its ongoing support of the Israeli military and its ongoing aggression against Palestinians. The aforementioned cases are just a few examples of the connection of Israeli academic institutions with the state and its policies which suppress, incite, and inflict harm to the students' freedom of speech. Additionally, Israeli academic institutions provide student reserve soldiers with various privileges and scholarships. This report raises serious questions regarding the freedom of speech that these institutions claim to provide; moreover, it shows the support by the Israeli colleges and universities of the attacks and wars that Israel has waged on the Palestinian people for decades.

About the Project

The "Academic Watch" project sprouted from the "Youth Empowerment" program in the Arab Culture Association (ACA). The "Academic Watch" aims at exposing the racist and discriminatory policies, processes and declarations, in addition to the prejudices to the rights and freedoms of the Arab students in the Israeli academic institutions, thereby also shedding some light on the connection between the Israeli academia and the security and occupation systems, by monitoring and documenting all forms of discrimination, racism and militarization, exposing them locally and internationally and lobbying for putting an end to them. Moreover the "Academic Watch" is an interactive space created on the social media, provides legal and journalistic training for students and publishes reports in Arabic and English.

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 develop a clear and cohesive picture that will expose the truth about academic institutes in Israel.


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.

Monitor so we can successfully fight against racism

 FaceBook | www.facebook.com/alrased.academic

 Twitter | www.twitter.com/AlrasedAcademic

 Email | aca1998@gmail.com

 website | www.alrasedproject.wordpress.com