

**An open letter to his Excellency Ambassador of PLO Envoy to South Africa Mr. Ali
Ahmed Halimeh**

From the Students of Palestine

Your Excellency Ambassador **Ali Ahmed Halimeh**

Ambassador of PLO Envoy to South Africa

Occupied Palestine, August 10th 2010

We address you from Occupied Palestine urging you to cancel your participation in an event hosted by the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) entitled “Towards Peace in the Middle East –The Status of Current Democracy” at the University of the Witwatersrand on Thursday 12 August 2010. SAUJS is a Zionist body known for its public support of Israel’s occupation and apartheid policies. We view your participation in an event hosted by this staunchly Zionist group as antagonistic to the values of our people, and it cannot be subsumed under the framework of diplomatic duties, as SAUJS is neither a governmental nor parliamentary organization. The Palestine solidarity movement in South Africa rightly views this group as part of the Zionist lobby, which is known to work relentlessly to support Israel and whitewash Israel’s crimes.

SAUJS considers Zionism as one of its three main pillars -in addition to “Jewish Identity” and “South Africa”- as is mentioned on their website. This ensures SAUJS’s unconditional support for apartheid, and Israel’s killing and ethnic cleansing policies, which have led to the displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians, and suffering caused by 62 years of ongoing Nakba. SAUJS fails to uphold values of human rights and international law as it has not condemned Israel’s war of aggression on Gaza in the winter of 2008/2009. SAUJS supported Israel’s attack on the Freedom Flotilla and described it as a ‘terrorist convoy’ meant to deliver “weapons and explosives,” which is contrary to the opinion of the international community and the United Nations’ viewing Israel’s attack on the Freedom Flotilla as a breach of international law.

The Palestinian Student Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI) was founded in May 2009, following Israel’s Gaza massacre, [1]. Supported by all student blocs in Palestinian Universities, PSCABI called on people of conscience around the world to boycott Israeli organizations, and Zionist organizations supporting Israel’s occupation, colonization and apartheid [1]. This past April, in commemoration of the 62nd anniversary of the Nakba, Palestinian youth issued a unified call against all forms of normalization with Israel [2]. In this call, all major Palestinian student unions and blocs have asserted their “right to resist Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people in accordance to international law” and their rejection of

normalization with Israel on economic, political, cultural and academic levels, as normalization legitimizes Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and provides a false sense of normalcy in the relationship with Israel; an oppressive entity which continues to steal Palestinian land, and deny refugees their UN-sanctioned right of return.

In the united call against normalization, Palestinian youth state their opposition to whitewashing Israel's public image through normalization activities, and insist on the importance of boycotting all joint activities with Israeli and Zionist groups that do not recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Such normalization activities give a false image of two equal 'parties' while ignoring the root cause of the problem- Israel's occupation and apartheid. Palestinian student groups also refuse to succumb to pressure from Israel and its apologies who often argue that we should engage in activities that "convince" Israel of Palestinian rights. Palestinian students reiterate their commitment to resisting oppression using all legitimate and legal means available to them.

The united call against normalization comes in support of the Palestinian Civil Society call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS), which was endorsed by over 170 civil society coalitions, networks, and unions including the coalition of national and Islamic forces, all Palestinian trade union federations, the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition, and the Palestinian NGO network, and numerous other coalitions, unions, networks, and campaigns representing the overwhelming majority of Palestinian civil society [3].

Based on the above, we urge you, your Excellency, to cancel your participation in the event organized by the Zionist SAUJS union. Out of commitment for our inalienable rights and the unity of our people, and in rejection of dealing with Israel as a normal state, not one of occupation, colonization, and apartheid we urge you to refrain from dealing with SAUJS and all other Zionist groups as long as they support Israel's oppression of our people.

Signed by:

Palestinian Student Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel in Gaza*

Al-Quds University - Student Council

Birzeit University - Student Council

An-Najah University - Student Council

Hebron University - Student Council

Bethlehem University- Student Council

Arab American University in Jenin - Student Council

Palestine Technical College in Arroub - Student Council

* PSCABI is supported by all student blocs in Gaza

[1] <http://www.pacbi.org/atemplate.php?id=64>

[2] <http://bdsarabic.wordpress.com/2010/04/29/موقف-الشباب-اللسطيني-الموحد-ضد-التطبيع>

[3] <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52#Arabic>