

## **Israeli Universities Boycott**

It is obvious that people who live under occupation will search for ways to change their situation and gain freedom. The Palestinian people, as everybody knows, have been living under the Israeli occupation for more than 50 years. Palestinians are also subject to the British emergency laws that were developed at the end of the Second World War in 1945 and are being used by Israel until today. One method of unarmed non-violent resistance is boycott. There are different forms of boycott, such as boycott of certain products or boycott of everything that is part of the occupation and the occupiers.

The Palestinian people have used and still are using armed resistance as one way of resisting the occupation. Despite the fact that the United Nations has acknowledged the right of all people to resist occupation, there is much international criticism of this method of resistance. As awareness about different resistance methods is rising, many groups and organizations have started relying on non-violent resistance in Palestine; some are based upon faith, others are responding to different international calls, and of course one of these methods is the boycott of Israeli goods and organizations, especially the ones who do not take a position against the occupation and its practices. We at the Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (CCRR) call for a boycott of those Israeli organizations that support the occupation's policies and practices against the Palestinians; an occupation, which does not have an ethical position nor does it work with human values. Therefore, we support the idea of boycott, but not a general one. There are some Israeli academics who criticize the occupation policy, call and work for ending the occupation and try to build balanced relations with Palestinians not based upon the occupied-occupier relationship. They work with the same values, ethics, and principles that call for ending the occupation. This means that there are some Israelis who are in the same line of thought like us and thus we do not think it is a good idea to boycott them.

There are other Israeli academics who until now have not taken an official position against the practice of occupation. There is one university that established a college in the occupied Palestinian land in 1967. I think that the position should be based upon ethical and human bases. It should be based upon our basic principality, morals, values, and ethics as academics. Is the academic or the intellectual just a job in science, sociology, or politics? Is the work of an academic only a form of passing information and skills or is it also about values, ethics, morals, and principles? I do not believe that there is any academic that does not have human values and ethics which recognize the right of people to have their own identity, the right of self-determination, and the right to freedom. If the academic supports the occupation or does not take a position against the occupation, then we do not have any common ground to talk upon. I cannot talk to anyone about physics, mathematics, or sociology if he does not recognize my humanity, my right to freedom, and my right to liberation. I do not think that we can talk to someone who does not condemn the closing of academic institutions or condemn using schools for military purposes or killing students. I cannot talk to someone who does not condemn the wall, which prevents students from reaching their schools and teachers from reaching their

students. We cannot talk to academics who do not condemn the killing of a whole family on the Gaza beach.

I think that the most important thing for me is that an academic has the same principles, morals, and values and agree upon ethics to talk. I have no problem or objection to talk to any Israeli academic who believes in the same values, morals, and ethics as I do. They need to accept the responsibility of talking and acting to stop the oppression of the Palestinians and to stop the occupation which will be the first step to stopping all kinds of violence in the area which will in turn contribute towards reaching a peace agreement, which will eventually lead to reconciliation between the two peoples.

If we boycott the Israeli academics who work against the occupation and toward the Palestinian cause, we weaken them and their voice. If we boycott them, we silence their voice within Israel because we would take away their legitimacy. We have to strengthen the critical voices inside Israel in order to encourage them to continue their cause. They receive a lot of criticism from their society, so if the Palestinians start boycotting them as well, as part of the whole group, then why should they continue to speak up?

In addition, critical voices from inside a society are very important for causing change. Change can happen more easily when it comes from the inside and not forced by the outside. Therefore we feel it would be a huge mistake to silence those agents of change.