

Swedish Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel Newsletter No 18, 14 May 2013

This newsletter is published by the Action Group at the Royal Institute of Technology for Boycott of Israel in collaboration with Isolera Israel (BDS Sweden). It provides information not only about academic and cultural boycott but also about BDS in general in Sweden and internationally. You can find old issues of the newsletter at: <http://psabi.se/>. Also check the website of the Isolera Israel Sweden <http://isoleraisrael.nu/>. Here you find newsletters about BDS in Swedish.

■ **Eurovision Song Contest: *Israel, welcome back when Palestine is free!***

The Eurovision Song Contest is to start this week in Malmö, Sweden and Israel is participating in one of the semifinals. Together with the Palestine Network the Malmö BDS group is organizing a commemoration of the Nakbah on the 15th, while street activities are planned for the 16th of May. Special songs have been composed against Israeli occupation and in solidarity with Palestine. Daniel Sestrajic, the president of the local district of the Left Party and one of the leading politicians in the Malmö City Council has made a public statement against Israel's participation in the contest. In face of media criticism he said that one cannot provide any exceptions from international law, adding that music cannot be separated from politics. Read more: <http://isoleraisrael.nu/?p=1149>.

■ **The Social-Democrats in Stockholm decided to support BDS**

At the annual meeting of the Social-Democratic district of Stockholm at the end of April it was decided to support a motion by Social Democratic Friends of Palestine demanding boycott, disinvestments and sanctions against Israel. This is a decisive step in the struggle for freedom and justice in Palestine. Read more (in Swedish): <http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/Webben-for-alla/Partidistrikt/Stockholm/Vart-parti/Stockholms-arbetarekommuns-arsmote-2013/>.

■ **Umeå University asked to cancel contract with G4S**

The BDS group in Umeå (north Sweden) recently met the leadership of the Umeå University in order to explain why its contracts with the security company G4S should not be renewed. Anna Birve of the BDS group says that the University Director found it reasonable that international law should be respected when contracting security companies. He promised to present the case to the Vice-Chancellor and investigate the legal possibilities not to renew the contract, which expires by the end of 2013 (procurement being made by a central government body on behalf of many state institutions). Anna and her colleague showed the UNICEF report about children in Israeli detention and the report about G4S by Who Profits.

■ **Swedish diplomat published book on Apartheid in Palestine**

Recently the former Swedish diplomat Mats Svensson published the book: *"Crimes, Victims & Witnesses - Apartheid in Palestine"*. The 295-page book is a collection of over 150 images (with accompanying narration) from the author's recent four-year stay in Palestine-Israel. In the preface he writes: *"In Palestine the occupation has been deepened, the colonialism is a fact on the ground and Palestinians are living under the most effective apartheid rule"*. Read more: <https://www.facebook.com/events/108072199367789/?ref=22>.

■ **Documentary film *Gatekeepers* shown on Swedish TV**

The Oscar nominated film *Gatekeepers* was shown on Swedish TV at the end of April. In the film a number of former heads of the infamous security police Shin Beth openly explain how they infiltrate Palestinian civilian organisations, torture captured suspects and attack vehicles without knowing whether these contain terrorists or not. The film can be seen at: <http://urplay.se/Produkter/175199-Varlden-Gatekeepers>.

■ **Irish teachers vote to "*cease all cultural and academic collaboration with Israel*"**

At its annual congress at the beginning of April, the Teachers' Union of Ireland voted for a comprehensive academic boycott of Israel. The union called on members to "*cease all cultural and academic collaboration with Israel, including the exchange of scientists, students and academic personalities, as well as all cooperation in research programmes*". The motion also called for the

Irish Congress of Trade Unions to “*step up its campaign for BDS against the apartheid state of Israel*” Read more: <http://electronicintifada.net/tags/ireland-palestine-solidarity-campaign>.

■ **Stephen Hawking joins academic boycott**

The famous physicist Stephen Hawking has pulled out of a conference hosted by Israeli president Shimon Peres in Jerusalem as a protest at Israel's treatment of Palestinians. In a statement he said that his withdrawal was based on advice from academic contacts in Palestine. By participating in the boycott, Hawking joins a growing list of British personalities who have turned down invitations to visit Israel, including Elvis Costello, Roger Waters, Brian Eno, Annie Lennox and Mike Leigh, writes The Guardian, see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/may/08/stephen-hawking-israel-academic-boycott>. The statement gave echoes in Swedish media, for instance Dagens Nyheter, which wrote that the academic boycott of Israel is growing: <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/akademisk-bojkott-av-israel-vaxer>.

■ **University of Sydney student council passes academic boycott resolution**

On 10 April, the Student Representative Council at the University of Sydney passed a resolution calling on the university administration to cut ties with Israel's Technion University, an educational institution that has close ties to the weapons manufacturing companies whose weaponry is used against Palestinians under military occupation. Read more: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/53818>.

■ **Historic decision to support boycott of Israeli academic institutions**

The Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) recently voted at their annual meeting in Seattle for a resolution in support of the boycott of Israeli academic institutions. Read more: <https://mail.google.com/mail/?shva=1#label/BDS/13e2da5abc12c227>.

■ **UC Berkeley student senate passes divestment bill**

In the middle of April the student senate at the University of California at Berkeley voted in favour of a bill calling on the UC administration to divest from companies which profit from Israel's occupation. Read more: <http://www.dailycal.org/2013/04/18/asuc-senate-passes-divestment-bill-11-9/>.

■ **Oberlin Students Vote for Divestment**

May 5th, Oberlin College Student Senate in Ohio voted to divest from a set of 6 companies that profit from the occupation and oppression of Palestinians. Oberlin College Students for a Free Palestine (SFP) presented a resolution calling for divestment and a supporting petition. Read more: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/oberlin-students-vote-to-endorse-divestment-resolution/>.

■ **Scottish union congress endorses campaign against G4S**

As 3 000 Palestinian political prisoners refused meals and demonstrations were held to mark Palestinian prisoners day, international activists held solidarity protests and events in cities across the world. In at least 11 countries, actions and events focused on the British-Danish security company G4S. Read more: <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/michael-deas/prisoners-day-marked-global-actions-against-g4s-scottish-union-congress-endorses>.

Dick Urban Vestbro, Prof Emer, dickurba@gmail.com

The Action group at KTH for boycott of Israel, <http://psabi.se/>

Member of the coordination committee of BDS Sweden, <http://isoleraisrael.nu/>