

## CUNY Chancellor, College Presidents and Deans: No to “Scholars as Apartheid Builders”

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It has come to our attention that earlier this month, a delegation of [high-level administrators](https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2022/04/26/statement-from-chancellor-matos-rodriguez-on-scholars-as-bridge-builders-visit-to-israel/) (<https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2022/04/26/statement-from-chancellor-matos-rodriguez-on-scholars-as-bridge-builders-visit-to-israel/>) from the City University of New York (CUNY) visited several complicit Israeli institutions, including universities, under the slogan of “scholars as bridge builders.” The delegation had a single and perfunctory meeting with a group of non-academic Palestinians, and it is noteworthy that they did not meet a single member of any Palestinian university.

The Right to Education Campaign at Birzeit University, the Union of Employees and Academics at Birzeit University, the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUPE), and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) all

condemn this visit and call out CUNY management's whitewashing of Israel's regime of military occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid and its relentless attack on Palestinian higher education.

For many decades Palestinian academics have documented how Israel's regime of oppression constitutes a regime of apartheid as defined under international law. Human rights organizations, including [Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/) (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>), [Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution) (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>) as well as Israel's most prominent human rights organization [B'Tselem](https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid) ([https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101\\_this\\_is\\_apartheid](https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid)), have all issued detailed reports concluding Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid. Notable US academic associations have reached the same conclusion.

As Palestinian academics, we have seen our universities repeatedly [bombed](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/overview-repair-and-reconstruction-schools-gaza) (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/overview-repair-and-reconstruction-schools-gaza>), [raided](http://www.aurdip.fr/army-incursion-the-recent-attack.html?lang=fr) (<http://www.aurdip.fr/army-incursion-the-recent-attack.html?lang=fr>), [shut down for years](https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/01/world/israelis-say-an-arab-university-can-reopen.html?) (<https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/01/world/israelis-say-an-arab-university-can-reopen.html?>) on end, and [ransacked](http://www.alhaq.org/component/content/article/85-field-updates-2015/999-special-focus-palestinian-universities-subject-to-iof-attacks) (<http://www.alhaq.org/component/content/article/85-field-updates-2015/999-special-focus-palestinian-universities-subject-to-iof-attacks>) by the Israeli military, and we have seen our academic freedom systematically suppressed. We have endured the indignities of Israeli military checkpoints, restricting our right to movement within the occupied Palestinian territory and [preventing us from traveling](http://www.usacbi.org/2011/06/barghouti-struggle-equal-right/) (<http://www.usacbi.org/2011/06/barghouti-struggle-equal-right/>) abroad. Israel's restrictions also prevent international colleagues from [teaching](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9767) (<https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9767>) at our universities and block lab equipment and even textbooks from reaching our universities.

Israeli universities are complicit in designing, implementing, justifying and whitewashing this Israeli regime of oppression and its grave violations of international law. They produce the research, the knowledge, and the technical tools that enable Israel's ongoing denial of Palestinian rights, unlawful policies of forcible displacement, home demolition, apartheid walls, wanton killings, theft of land, water and natural resources, as well as the destruction of livelihoods and the uprooting of trees.

For instance, Tel Aviv University, which was visited by CUNY's delegation, hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which boasts of having developed the so-called [Dahiya Doctrine](http://imeu.org/article/the-dahiya-doctrine-and-israels-use-of-disproportionate-force) (<http://imeu.org/article/the-dahiya-doctrine-and-israels-use-of-disproportionate-force>), or doctrine of disproportionate force. Adopted by the Israeli military, the Dahiya Doctrine [calls for](http://pacbi.org/pics/file/SOAS-Palestine-Society-Paper-TAU-Military-Complicity-Feb-2009.pdf) (<http://pacbi.org/pics/file/SOAS-Palestine-Society-Paper-TAU-Military-Complicity-Feb-2009.pdf>). "the destruction of the national [civilian] infrastructure, and intense suffering among the [civilian] population."

Ben-Gurion University (BGU) has strong ties with the Israeli military establishment. BGU hosts the Homeland Security Institute whose [partnerships](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/hsi/Pages/international_collaborations.aspx) ([https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/hsi/Pages/international\\_collaborations.aspx](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/hsi/Pages/international_collaborations.aspx)) include Israel's top weapons companies and the Ministry of Defense. The Israeli military is building a [technology campus](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/1.aspx) (<https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/1.aspx>) next to the BGU campus aimed at furthering the ties between the military and BGU. As a brigadier general at the ribbon cutting ceremony put it, it will "reinforce the army's operational capabilities."

Israel has launched a number of attacks and raids on Palestinian universities which have led to the arrest of many students and staff. The latest attack on [Birzeit University](https://www.birzeit.edu/en/right2edu) (<https://www.birzeit.edu/en/right2edu>) was in January 2022 which led to the arrest of five students and to the injury of several students by Israeli bullets. Since 2004, the Birzeit campus has been the scene of 14 raids, four of them in the past two years alone. Around 1,000 of the university's students have been arrested, among them 20 women. Currently over 60 students are detained in Israeli prisons. The arrests continue on an almost daily basis as we write.

These systematic attacks are part and parcel of Israel's oppressive colonial policies that aim to wreck the solid foundations of Palestinian education. They not only violate the human rights of students and staff, they also undermine democratic principles of diversity, pluralism, and freedom of speech upheld proudly by Palestinian universities. Aside from constituting a war crime, firing at students inside a university campus aims to traumatize students and sow fear and deep anxiety among them.

We reject and condemn the project of "building bridges" with Israeli universities that support a colonial regime of apartheid, and we protest the visit by CUNY administrators who we believe have contributed to the prolonging of this apartheid regime. We call upon CUNY academics to stand in solidarity with Palestinian universities and support our right to education. We urge students and staff at CUNY to pressure the university to cut institutional ties to Israel's apartheid regime and all the universities that are complicit in its grave human rights violations. This is the time to strengthen the global movement for isolating and holding apartheid Israel accountable, as was done against apartheid South Africa, rather than enabling its apartheid regime.

## Signatories

The Right to Education Campaign at Birzeit University

Union of Employees and Academics at Birzeit University

The Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUBE)