

Exeter, 5th of March 2010

Prof. Sari Hanafi was invited to the Israel Apartheid Week to lecture at several UK universities about the occupation regime. However, his UK tour was abruptly interrupted by the news that a campaign was mounting against him at the American University of Beirut, where Sari teaches and where he enjoys the esteem of both colleagues and students for his proven commitment as a scholar and as passionate defender of Palestinian rights.

The campaigners accuse Sari of having violated the academic boycott and of having conducted research activities and publication that promote “normalization” with Israel. The ground for this allegation is that the Van Leer foundation is acknowledged in the book for having supported financially part of the research that led to the publication of the edited work. “The Power Of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy Of Israeli Rule In The Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

We, colleagues from British universities who invited Sari Hanafi in the light of his long term proven and undoubted scholarly commitment to the Palestinian cause, feel it is our responsibility to utter our deep discomfort with the above mentioned events.

While it is true that the Israeli scholars received an initial financial support from Van Leer to sponsor one of the workshops that led to the publication of the edited book, none of this financial support went to the Palestinians involved in the workshop. The Palestinian Academic Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) is neither boycotting the book nor its editors and made it clear in a statement that the “The Power of Inclusive Exclusion” should be praised for its clear anti-zionist tones and for its contribution to the final aim of ending the occupation. The Pacbi itself stated “...Neither is this a call to boycott the book or its editors and contributors, many of whom we know to be principled supporters of Palestinian rights. It is very clear that the merit of the book itself is not the issue. The main and only issue is the violation of the PACBI Guidelines for the International Academic Boycott of Israel [3] inherent in the research project that led to the production of the volume. The project under which the research group worked was supported and funded, at least in its founding stage, by the Van Leer Institute, as stated in the first pages of the book itself. That is the only relevant and public statement available. The Van Leer Institute, despite claims made for it, is not exempt from the academic boycott, as the PACBI statement explains”.

In our view, the book could not, and must not, be seen as a violation of the Palestinian Academic Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). The small role played by the Van Leer foundation must not obfuscate the clear academic and political contribution of the volume, which is to illustrate the responsibilities of the Israeli regime of occupation in the Palestinian plight.

We recognize that the boycott is an extremely sensitive area, and that in the context of working against the occupation, as academics and activists, we may incur in grey areas that are often impossible to avoid. However, we strongly sense that a normative and literal application of the rules may sometimes produce paradoxical outcomes, as the campaign and petition against Sari Hanafi demonstrates. We therefore would like to express all our solidarity with our colleague Sari Hanafi and hope that his clear and politically crystalline political and scholarly efforts in promoting knowledge and political awareness of the Palestinian rights may be soon rehabilitated

Signatures

Prof. Ilan Pappé, University of Exeter

Dr. Ghada Karmi, University of Exeter

Dr. Ruba Salih, University of Exeter

Dr. Michael Dumper, University of Exeter

Prof. Gerd Nonneman, University of Exeter

Dr. Nadjé Al-Ali, SOAS

Dr. Rosabel Martin-Ross, Cambridge University Palestine Society Co-President

Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, University of Cambridge

Dr. Jameel Zayed, Cambridge

Mr. Manar Makhoul, PhD candidate, University of Cambridge

Ms. Rosabel Pauline Martin-Ross, University of Cambridge

Mr. Sohail Jannesari, University of Cambridge

Mr. Jameel al-Zayed, University of Cambridge

Mr. Abdullah al-Jeffery, University of Cambridge