

## Presentation

Sari Hanafi

First, let me say clearly that I apologize to friends and colleagues here in Lebanon and at AUB for any offense or distress I might have caused. No matter the outcome of this town hall meeting, know that I will comply with a more consensual understanding of the boycott and normalization with Israel. Knowing that we are committed to a common cause should open up the space we need for a vigorous yet respectful conversation on the issue of academic boycott and the publication of my recent book, *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*.

This book provides a detailed analysis of structure and mechanisms of the occupation regime and the ways in which Israel deploys technologies of power and systems of control to maintain its stranglehold over the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I co-edited this activist and academic work with two anti-Zionist Israelis, Adi Ophir and Michal Givoni. It is a subversive book that concentrates on the illegality of the occupation regime. This is made clear from the very beginning of the work. Allow me to cite from the introduction:

The attempt made here to examine the occupation as a unique political configuration derives from a belief that such an inquiry is essential for forming effective resistance to the occupation and for coming to terms with the real prospects of bringing it to an end.

Let me cite what Profs. Ilan Pappé, Ghada Karmi, and Ruba Salih (from the University of Exeter), Nadje Al-Ali (from SOAS), Anies Al-Hroub from Cambridge and representative of Cambridge Palestine Society and other profs. there (who invited me last week to their universities to talk) wrote in a letter of support that I received and I transmit it to Huda and Khalil: “As *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.” After reading it, Azmi Bishara recommended that this book be translated into Arabic at the Center for Arab Unity Studies.

So, while this book is the outcome of very professional and scholastic research, it has a very committed goal – an activist one of resistance.

Since its publication, a smear campaign was waged against it by pro-Israel organizations. The book featured prominently on a website ‘monitoring’ academia in Israel called Israel-academia-monitor. Its detractors condemned it as a publication intended to ‘delegitimize Israel’.

Before I address the recent charges against the book from individuals at AUB, I would like to give the context and background of how this book came to fruition. This background is essential to understanding the purpose of this volume and my personal involvement in it.

I lived in Ramallah and Jerusalem from 1999 to 2004. In 2001 the Palestinian NGO Network decreed in no uncertain terms that we – as Palestinian activists and academics – can cooperate with sympathetic Israelis if our endeavor advances the cause of an end to the occupation. At that time I was director of Shaml, and I fully abided by that decision. During these years, international donors funded (through The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute) one workshop entitled ‘The Politics of Humanitarianism in the Occupied Territories’, which many Palestinian human rights organizations and scholars such as Mustafa Barguthi attended. The objectives of this workshop were focused more on advocacy than academia. Van Leer hosted several meetings and granted fellowships to Adi Ophir and to some of his Ph.D. students – some of whom also contributed to the book under discussion. All the scholars involved in the project believed that Israeli educational institutions are under an obligation to explicitly oppose the normalization of the occupation, and such opposition was among the project's aims. The two editors I worked with have maintained for years an extremely clear position in favor of ending the occupation and recognizing the refugees’ right of return. Adi Ophir, in particular, has received a great deal of grief, including much hate-mail and many threats, on account of his commitment. Of course Palestinian participants have not received a penny neither from Van Leer nor from donors. It was just part of our commitment.

Three years later, in 2004, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was established, and I was one of the first to sign on to it. From this point forward, I severed my collaboration with this research group, which of course continued working without me. In the same year, I left for France and then to Lebanon. In 2005, we agreed to publish a book about the occupation regime based on contributions of people from the research group and outside it. We contacted Zone Books in New York and via email did all the editing work. There was no clear overlap between the research project and the edited volume of articles published by Zone Books. Some, but not all, of the authors whose studies have been published in the book were members the research group; many of the scholars that took part in the group's meetings have not contributed articles to the book; part of the issues that were studied in the research group were not eventually developed in the volume. The book project was undertaken autonomously by the three editors in conjunction with Zone Books. I do not believe that I violated the PACBI guidelines, though I do acknowledge that some ambiguity or error our part may have contributed to this, namely in the book’s acknowledgement regarding the source of funding for this research project. Some have suggested that the book and the research project were funded by an Israeli institution. Let me say definitively that it was not. Again, I apologize precisely for this.

Upon its publication, PACBI criticized the book for having violated the PACBI guidelines. However, after Adi Ophir and myself wrote to the directors of the campaign and explained to them the chronology of our research –as I have just explained to you – PACBI was quick to issue a statement clarifying that neither the book nor its editors should fall under the boycott. In

addition, publisher has accepted to add an errata page in the volumes that are still in storage correcting and making precision about the acknowledgement.

Let me cite again from the letter of support of Ilan Pappé and others

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.

Finally, concerning my speaking tour in UK universities, I was invited by the International Apartheid Week (IAW). It is organized by a group of faculty and students seeking to promote the boycott and divestment movements. The SOAS Palestine Society, in particular, has organized academic debates on Palestinian issues for more than 10 years. Thanks to them, the boycott movement has grown greatly in the UK. During my meetings with students and faculty in London, I was happy to hear that many had read the book and commended its arguments. Precisely, Adi Ophir and I were invited to talk about the topic “Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the OPT” at LSE and then alone I was invited to Leeds for talking about the same topic. I was invited alone also to King College at Cambridge and to Exeter to present the book.

Some of the organizers of the local, Lebanese Apartheid Week have said that this speaking tour of mine violated the boycott, yet this contradicts the position of the international boycott movement, which found that my tour promoted the boycott and BDS movements. I understand that some were offended when they saw my university affiliation at AUB juxtaposed with Ophir’s Tal Aviv University affiliation, and I regret this. However, speaking engagements with such a panel are not uncommon, nor are they usually criticized. Reema Hamammi, for example, who is one of the founders of PACBI toured US universities with Oren Yiftachel, and her affiliation to Birzeit University was printed next to Yiftachel’s Ben Guerin University affiliation in the program. For this to change would require institutional support and a decision on whether to feature Israeli or Palestinian scholars. We all know if Palestinians refuse to attend a shared panel, they are effectively silencing themselves and not the other side.

As a political sociologist working on issues of Israeli technologies of power, I will continue to find myself writing and working in ‘gray areas’, but again I reiterate that in the future I will be very careful to take into account the way some of AUB community will understand the boycott, including complying to the Lebanese law. At the end of the day, we all share a common goal; to support the boycott movement and to oppose normalization with Israel.

I think we should discuss calmly how to define the grey areas. Let me very briefly give some examples:

Some could say that an encounter with Anti-Zionist Israelis will open the door to all Israelis, but does this hide an intellectual laziness to distinguish between those who are anti-zionist and willing to be a part of a resistance to Israeli colonial project? While I allow myself to publish an anti-colonial book, whose work began while I was in Palestine, I would not allow myself to start such work while at AUB. In the same vein, I would be critical of an article or a book in physics co-authored by two scholars from, say, AUB and Tal Aviv university. So it is extremely important the way AUB community will direct the argument to the content of the boycott and not to its form and in that direction to distinguish between Jewish, Israeli, and Zionist. Some questions can be raised: should we argue with criticism that AUB has invited Azmi Bechara to AUB few years ago while he was member of Knesset? Should we avoid any contact with people like Ahmad Saadi, an elegant scholar and activist from BGU or Ilan Pappé, just because they are Israelis, even though they are anti-Zionist? Or should we argue for no contact with Zionists (even if they are not Israelis, like for example Daniel Pipes)? Can we say clearly no to any Jewish boycott – (for example Noam Chomsky or Finkelstein)?

Finally, one must remember the purpose of this text and others like it is to work directly towards the goals of BDS. We are also trying to reach a wide audience as possible. Fortunately or unfortunately, we know from experience that we have a larger audience when we represent more “sides.” At least in instances like these, the other side is one that is critical of the Israeli occupation and is not giving counterarguments to our ideas. Beyond that, it is important to keep in mind that Israeli scholars have access to archives and documentation that we do not that have proven useful to us in our fight against Israel – Pappé, Yehouda Shenhav.