

## IN THE FACE OF ACADEMIC BOYCOTTS,

What the UK Government Can Do:

### A POSITIVE ACTIONS REMEDY (PAR)

In view of the difficulties facing the Palestinian Academia as a result of the continuing occupation, and which U.K. academics are protesting through an initiative to boycott the Israeli Academia, it is suggested that the U.K. Government lead a Europe-wide positive intervention based on the principles of peace and parity which the EU upholds, by extending exceptional assistance to support Palestinian Higher Education. An alternative to boycott policies –a “*Positive Action Remedy*” (**PAR**)- initiated by the UK Government can help in more than one way, not least by setting a practical example of a win-win strategy: the Palestinian Academia can be provided with an exceptional assistance program to help it overcome the restrictions imposed by occupation, without subjecting the Israeli Academia to international punitive measures.

The following is a list of possible areas where the UK Government (in cooperation with UK academics and academic institutions) can lead an international initiative aimed at compensating for the academically stifled conditions obtaining under occupation (while new budget lines need to be established to cover these items, existing mechanisms such as the British Council, Higher Education Links, DFID, etc. can be drawn upon to implement some or all of them):

\***Budget-Deficit:** PA has been unable for the past two years to contribute its subsidy to Higher Education, estimated at \$20 million annually, causing universities to run at a deficit.

\***Action:** Reactivate direct EU financial assistance (halted after the establishment of the PA) to Palestinian Universities, as of this forthcoming academic year.

\***Research Fund:** There are no special funds (whether from the PA, the private sector, or from the university budgets) allocated for research (to

develop infrastructure, provide human-resources support, etc.). Available funds are reserved for running-costs.

**\*Action:** Establish a special fund for research in relevant areas (i.e., with direct impact on economic development).

**\*Physical Access:** Students/Teachers unable to reach universities/classrooms.

**\*Action:** A PA-areas-wide network of video-conferencing/internet facilities can be established (e.g., internet cafes run by EU/and-or British Council in each village/town center) for free-use by university students.

**\*Scholarship Support:** Universities unable to support academic upgrading of its staff (MA to PhD level).

**\*Action:** Provide scholarships at UK and European universities (e.g. through British Council).

**\*Research networking:** Universities unable to support sabbaticals to encourage research etc.

**\*Action:** Provide post-doc Fellowships at UK universities.

**\*Limited data-banks/libraries:** Universities unable to support wide access to data banks/electronic journals (libraries etc.).

**\*Action:** Either subscriptions to data banks can be subsidized or universities can provide Palestinian counterparts with access through a certain number of assigned codes.

**\*Medical training:** limited resources to train medical students (e.g. decreasing FQMS funds to subsidize clinical teachers at local hospitals as well as to support exposure to hospital training at international facilities)

**\*Action:** Subsidize clinical/hospital staff; internships at UK hospitals, PhD training, via FQMS if needed.

**\*Human Support:** limited expertise –Palestinian universities are a first-generation experiment, therefore with limited academic experience and areas of knowledge.

**\*Action:** Subsidize a systematically-run “academic train-service”, bringing British academics on short trips (1-4 wks) to Palestinian universities to interact with colleagues in counterpart departments. British visitors can give general lectures, teach pre-arranged modules in set courses, review curricula and course-outlines with colleagues, discuss pedagogic issues, offer research

partnership opportunities, etc. In this framework, support can also be offered to develop PhD Programs for outstanding female students who are prevented by their families from studying abroad.

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Finally, a word about IPSO (the Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization):

This joint Israeli-Palestinian Science organization, with an international board of world renowned scientists and scholars, including one Abel laureate and seven Nobel laureates, is headed by Professor Torsten Wiesel, also a Nobel prize recipient. IPSO was set up several years ago specifically to encourage joint, peer-reviewed research by Israeli and Palestinian scientists. So far, IPSO has succeeded in funding eleven research projects, mostly in the hard sciences and medical and health fields, for a total cost of \$2 million dollars. IPSO has also approved another twenty similar projects submitted jointly by Israeli and Palestinian scientists, at an estimated cost of about \$5 million. IPSO has tried unsuccessfully in recent months to raise funds to support this new generation of excellent research projects. One proactive way to counter boycotts is to support such cooperation. One way for the U.K. government to support academic cooperation is to support IPSO's joint research projects.

Submitted by:

Sari Nusseibeh/Professor of Philosophy/al-Quds University

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