



A Global Intifada: In Defense of Academic Freedom

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The Union of Professors and Employees of Birzeit University defends the right of all Palestinian scholars and scholars worldwide to live and work in freedom. The genocidal war against our people and the settler colonial state waging the war attacks the very notion of life and freedom. Across the globe, we are witnessing the results of this fascist campaign brutally attempting to silence and erase any and all voices who speak about and for our just struggle. Getting free in Palestine is now a global intifada centered in academic institutions and led by students. We are part of reclaiming university campuses to spaces of learning, knowledge and the politics of justice and freedom. From Turtle Island to Palestine, students and academics are fighting for life in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

The war on Gaza has targeted every Palestinian life and every Palestinian institution, including all universities across the geography of the small strip of land in Gaza and hundreds of scholars from Beit Hanoun to Rafah. Universities in the occupied West Bank are daily targets of settler violence and are in a state of siege. In Palestine, from the river to the sea, all Palestinian students and academics have been targeted.

The importance of BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) is never more urgent than now as we confront the greatest atrocity of this century in the genocide against Gaza and Palestine. The history of Zionist universities is a history of military occupation of the land of Palestine. From their inception in the early part of the twentieth century, Zionist academic institutions have been the catalyst for the military plans to ethnically cleanse the entirety of Palestine. Throughout the last century, these institutions continue to play a central role in the military occupation. This includes the so-called academic departments that housed the very seeds of “Plan Dalet,” the Zionist plan to conquer Palestine and forcibly transfer the Palestinian people to violently fulfill their myth of an empty land. These institutions’ core role in the settler colonial project has been a primary cornerstone of their existence. Their relationship with the military and its technologies of surveillance, as well as their close ties with the state and its criminalization of Palestinian existence, is a well-known story. Given the clarity of this history, Zionist claims towards academic freedom or democracy of higher education is a vulgar lie.

Students’ demands for “Divest and Disclose” on campuses throughout many universities across the globe are a clear indication that the struggle for life and justice in Palestine is a universal struggle. The global intifada will no doubt continue to grow and campuses across the world, including in the Arab world, will gather and scream in the face of fascism.

As Mahmud Darwish famously proclaimed: “From this day on, he who does not become a Palestinian in his heart will never understand his moral identity.” No one is free unless everyone is free. We are all Palestinians.