

Forging Solidarity, taking a stand on Palestine

International Critical Geography Group votes by an overwhelming majority to endorse Academic Boycott of Israel in its seventh conference

PRESS RELEASE

13 October 2015 – This past summer the International Critical Geography Group ([ICGG](#)) convened its seventh conference in the occupied city of Ramallah, Palestine. Following a two-decade tradition and nearly three years of preparation, the [conference](#) brought together scholars and activists committed to combating social exploitation and oppression. This was our first gathering in the Middle East, one that was transformative for participants. Together we opened up a new vista for critical geography that is both timely and long overdue. Our five days (and six nights) [program](#) was packed with inspiring and thought-provoking engagements anchored around the theme *Precarious Radicalism on Shifting Grounds: Towards a Politics of Possibility*. Breaking the limits of existing academic paradigms, we shared analysis of the mounting crises of capital, space, bodies and nature and explored ways to turn them into moments of political possibility by reconnecting scholarship with solidarity and struggle.

Altogether four hundred scholars, activists and members of the public from over forty countries energetically took up issues on and beyond the violent frontlines of class, gender, race, sexual, and colonial divisions. Yet we also took critical steps beyond discussion and debate of our intellectual work towards concrete collective action. Before attending the conference, every participant that registered already agreed to a [political statement](#) that supports basic Palestinian rights. By endorsing this statement, they acknowledged the power asymmetries and injustices that define Palestinian life and stood on the side of the oppressed. Through the political statement the conference shed any false facade of normalcy and openly acknowledged the realities of settler colonial oppression and racial discrimination. Palestine is, after all, not an abstract geography and no conscientious meeting can place itself above the politics that define this context. More importantly, during the final session, conference participants voted overwhelmingly for a strong [resolution](#) drafted by the ICCG 2015 Organizing Team to sign onto the [Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott](#) and the broader [Boycott Divestment and Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) campaign against Israel. The ICCG Steering Committee also unanimously supported the resolution.

The attached document *Forging Solidarity, taking a stand on Palestine* is more than a resolution. It is both a political statement in solidarity with the anti-colonial struggle of our Palestinian comrades and the agenda for a new paradigm in critical geography that radically expands the International Critical Geography Group's founding [statement of purpose](#). The widespread Palestinian anger and protests we are witnessing throughout historic Palestine in response to Israel's intensification of a long history of ethnic cleansing, house demolitions, land theft, repression and imprisonment, remind us that there is an urgent imperative for action to end injustice in Palestine. Building on the momentum generated by the conference and this resolution we aim to open up serious discussion about BDS and the academic boycott of Israel within the Association of American Geographers (AAG), the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), the International Geographical Union (IGU), and other geographical societies to bring them on board. It is time to further the work of decolonizing the discipline of geography and we can do this by consolidating and carrying the conference insights and this resolution into our work as scholars, teachers and change makers.

ICCG 2015 Organizing Team

Read the Statement online in English: www.iccg2015.org/resolution-english

Read the Statement online in Arabic: www.iccg2015.org/resolution-arabic

For further information please write to connect@iccg2015.org

Forging Solidarity, taking a stand on Palestine

Statement of the 7th International Conference of Critical Geography, ICCG 2015

WHEREAS:

Palestinians have been and continue to be subject to a long century of European and US imperialism, Zionist settler colonialism, occupation and apartheid that takes on a painful array of manifestations including but not limited to: ethnic cleansing, expulsion and dispossession; Israeli aerial and maritime attacks and massacres in the Gaza Strip; ongoing house demolitions, land theft, racist laws, loyalty tests, checkpoints and the wall, cultural appropriation, a Kafkaesque bureaucracy that encompasses the tiniest details of everyday life and a denial of the right of return for Palestinians in exile.

And Whereas:

In response to these conditions, Palestinians are engaged in a longstanding courageous transnational struggle for liberation, sovereignty, self determination and the right of return. One that is deeply embedded in a broader internationalist and anti-colonial history and supported by vibrant solidarity movements pressuring Israel and its political allies for the decolonization of Palestine.

And Whereas:

The Israeli state has consistently pursued policies aimed at the destruction and theft of Palestinian manuscripts, journals and books, closure of Palestinian universities, mobility restrictions on staff and students, destruction of educational infrastructure, systematic discrimination against Palestinian students, arrest and deportation of local and international academic staff. The arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and assassination of Palestinian academics and allies and the targeting, decapitation and closure of both academic and cultural institutions that serves to stifle academic research as well as political dissent on campuses and beyond.

And Whereas:

Israel's academic establishment (specifically the discipline of geography) is an intimate and complicit part of the Israeli regime, by active choice. In particular, Universities, Colleges and research centers, many built on Palestinian land, play a central role in the occupation of Palestine through Research and Development in the service of the Israeli Armed Forces; Israeli military training; development of weapons and military doctrines deployed against Palestinians.

And Whereas:

More than 170 of the most representative Palestinian unions, organizations and political parties have joined together to call for global solidarity and action through the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel to pressure for an end to the occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights; a recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and the respect, protection and promotion of the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties.

And Whereas:

Holding the 7th ICCG in Palestine signals critical geographer's commitment to a global decolonial movement by breaking the isolation imposed on Palestinians as a result of Zionist settler colonialism. It is thereby an expression of our desire to cultivate both scholarship and praxis at key sites of political contestation in the current moment of danger, transition and fundamental social change.

And Whereas:

The ICCG statement of purpose A World To Win! [1] is a manifesto for critical geographers that calls for: developing the theory and practice necessary for combating social exploitation and oppression; refusing the self-imposed isolation of much academic research from the political conditions of the time; joining with existing social movements outside the academy aimed at social change; demanding and fighting for social change aimed at dismantling existing systems of capitalist exploitation, oppression on the basis of gender, race and sexual preference, imperialism, national chauvinism and environmental destruction.

And Whereas:

In this spirit, the political statement of the 7th ICCG [2] acknowledges these urgent political realities on the ground and declares support for the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle. As Desmond Tutu reminds us, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor".

And Whereas:

Academics across disciplinary and geographical boundaries have declared support of the International Palestinian campaign of Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) [3] and joined the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) [4]. These include: The Association for Asian American Studies, American Studies Association, Critical Ethnic Studies Association – for a complete list please see the page on International Boycott-Related Initiatives on the PACBI website [5].

And Whereas:

In the current moment the BDS campaign is the primary focus of international Palestine solidarity efforts as other forms of international intervention, brokerage, treaties, and negotiations have, to date, failed to make Israel comply with international law, and end its violence and repression of the Palestinian people.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The ICGG and ICCG 2015 supports the Boycott National Committee (BNC) and the Palestinian people in their anti-colonial struggle by endorsing BDS against the state of Israel until the material liberation, sovereignty, self-determination, and full implementation of the right of return of the Palestinian people are achieved.

Further:

We support PACBI and join the boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions, which are complicit with the oppressive practices and settler colonial project of the Israeli state. As per the PACBI guidelines this means, among other things, not working or partnering with any Israeli academic institution, their representatives or anyone functioning on behalf of the Israeli government.

Further:

Our stance on BDS and the academic and cultural boycott is part of a broader commitment to anti-capitalist, decolonial, anti-racist, feminist and queer social movements and struggles around the world against growing social, economic and political precarity, rising authoritarianism, encroachment of fundamental rights, dispossession, structural adjustment in the south and north, revanchism, ongoing colonization of public space, land and resources, the privatization of the commons, as well as structural and state-sanctioned violence against racialized, gendered, queer bodies, and other targeted bodies and communities.

Further:

To activate this resolution and further the work of decolonizing the discipline of geography and the academic community as a whole we urge the Steering Committee of ICGG and conference participants to stimulate discussion on BDS and the academic boycott of Israel within geographical societies, organizations, and disciplinary bodies towards the adoption of a supportive political stance by groups such as the Association of American Geographers (AAG), Royal Geographical Society (RGS), the International Geographical Union (IGU), etc.

Further:

That the ICGG reaffirm its principles and commitment to radical scholarship and praxis by encouraging and enabling spaces of political and conceptual possibility for critical geographers in solidarity with ongoing socio-political, economic and environmental struggles around the globe. This can take the form of working groups, solidarity committees and/ or other forms of scholar-activist engagement during and in-between its regular conferences.

Further:

The first of these working groups will lead the implementation of this resolution on BDS and the Academic Boycott of Israel within the ICGG and the broader geographical and academic community.

Notes

- [1] <http://internationalcriticalgeography.org/statement-of-purpose/statement-of-purpose-en/>
- [2] <http://iccg2015.org/call/>
- [3] <http://iccg2015.org/conference-statement/>
- [4] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108>
- [5] <http://pacbi.org/einside.php?id=67>