

The **Academic Friends of Israel**

16 January 2006

Dear Colleagues,

Details of two events for you:

1. Know it when you see it: Today's Antisemitism

Mark Sunday 12th March in your diaries, the Academic Friends of Israel looks forward to seeing you at our conference in London "**Know it when you see it: Today's Antisemitism.**" Our aim is to help people understand today's antisemitism and know when legitimate criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism. Speakers include: Professor David Cesarani-Royal Holloway College, Mark Gardner –CST, David Hirsh – Engage and Mitch Simmons–Union of Jewish Students. Full details to follow shortly.

2. The Bar Ilan International Conference on Academic Freedom and the Politics of Boycotts on the 25 -26th January 2006.

The conference will examine all aspects of academic freedom as well as the context of the boycott efforts within the framework of the ongoing political struggle in Britain. Speakers from Britain include Michael Yudkin, Anthony Julius, Jon Pike, David Hirsh, Jane Ashworth, Melanie Philips, Jeremy Newmark and Ronnie Fraser. For more information read the press release below and the conference invitation which is attached.

Regards,

Ronnie Fraser

Academic Friends of Israel

Bar-Ilan to Host International Conference on Academic Freedom and the Politics of Boycotts

Ramat Gan, Israel: Following the successful campaign to persuade the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) to rescind its proposed boycott of Bar-Ilan and Haifa universities, the International Advisory Board for Academic Freedom (IAB) has scheduled an international conference on Academic Freedom and the Politics of Boycotts to be held at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan on January 25-26, 2006.

"The principles of academic freedom and equality among members of the scientific community have a long and revered history" said Prof Gerald Steinberg, Chair of the Conference Committee. "The right to follow the research trail and search for knowledge without regard to whose interests and power may be threatened is not an empty slogan to be tossed away by political and ideological fashion".

The conference will examine aspects of academic freedom in the broadest sense, including the origins and conceptual development and the debate regarding legitimate limitations and exceptions. Presentations will discuss the changes in the status of academic freedom in a number of countries, from Europe (West and East) and North America to the Middle East, to China. The second day will focus on political dimensions, beginning with an examination of the complex boundary between political and academic freedom, and the question of whether those who advocate academic boycotts in support

of political agendas are, in fact, seeking to curtail the rights of free speech of those who have different views.

Other panels will examine the context of the boycott efforts in the framework of the ongoing political struggle in Britain and elsewhere related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including examination of the factors that gave rise to and sustained these efforts singling out Israel, the role of anti-Semitism, the "Durban" strategy, links to the divestment campaign, and the role of powerful NGOs. Finally, the roundtable that will close the conference will examine the strategies that were employed in response to the boycott vote, and the implications of these efforts for future such efforts. The Conference organizing committee plans to publish the conference proceedings on the internet and in print form.

Conference panels include diplomats, such as the British Ambassador Simon McDonald and the European Ambassador Ramiro Cibrian – Uzal. Outstanding scholars appearing include: Prof. Alan Dershowitz from Harvard Law School, described by Newsweek as America's "most peripatetic civil liberties lawyer and one of its most distinguished defenders of individual rights"

(<http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/dershowitz/biography.html>);

Adv. Anthony Julius, former lawyer for Princess Diana and author of "Anti-Semitism in the UK", who helped with the boycott reversal, and represented Professor Deborah E. Lipstadt, participating in the conference as well, in her famous case against David John Cawdell Irving, British Holocaust denier;

Anne Bayefsky, senior fellow with the Hudson Institute, and a professor at Touro College in New York, who is known for her human rights website www.bayefsky.com (launched 2003) dedicated to enhancing the implementation of the human rights legal standards of the United Nations;

Prof. Asa Kasher from Tel-Aviv University, winner of the Israel Prize for Philosophy, 2000.

The Conference's Honorary Board includes world known authors A.B. Yehoshua, Professor of literature at Haifa University and Amos Oz, Professor of literature at Ben Gurion University.

For further information on the upcoming conference and for interview coordination contact:

Ofir Frankel, Manager, International Campaign for Academic Freedom

E-mail: fofir@netvision.net.il;

Website: http://www.biu.ac.il/rector/academic_freedom/

Office of the Rector,

Bar-Ilan university,

Ramat-Gan 52900, Israel

Patron: The Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks

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