



27 November 2018

Dear Conference Delegates,

**Update: Statement issued by the Palestinian Solidarity Group**

On Thursday last week we received a statement written by a group that is comprised of several Palestinian Solidarity groups asking us to withdraw the participation of Israeli academics whose abstracts were accepted for presentation at our forthcoming conference next week. [You may read the statement via this link: [Pro-Palestinian activists call for Israeli academics to withdraw from Stellenbosch conference](#)]

Since the publication of this statement, I, in my capacity as Chair of the Conference Committee and its lead organizer, have been in conversation with three members of the group, Roshen Dadoo, Armien Abrahams and Umesh Bawa. I have also been in contact with the Israeli academics, and they have all since rescinded their participation at the conference and will no longer be part of the programme.

Last night, I received another statement from the group as part of our on-going dialogue. This second statement points out that in terms of the guidelines of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), our conference falls outside the call for a boycott. To quote:

Our action is led by the advice we have received from the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). They pointed out to us that this conference does not fall within the call for a boycott in terms of their guidelines. However, the lack of representative Palestinians and the number of Israeli participants points up a pro-Israeli bias. They state that “The only Palestinian speakers are deeply involved in normalization.”

We would like to point out that from its inception, the conference was organized as an event that would focus attention on the impact of violence and oppression across generations globally, and examine the different strategies that various countries have used to deal with these repercussions of history that reverberate over several generations. For this reason, the oppression of Palestinian people is always on our minds when organising these conferences, and in the past (this is our fourth conference on these themes) we have had Palestinian delegates who managed to find their way to attend our conferences through difficult encounters with visa problems. None of the Israeli participants we invited to speak at the conference represents the position of the state of Israel against Palestinians. Nor do they represent an “institutional” position. On the contrary, they are academics who have been engaged in research and interventions that have involved disrupting the Israel narrative, nurturing a group of young students who are moving in fields that are beginning to challenge the status quo.

The call to boycott is an important one. The problem is whether a distinction can be made to permit an Israeli academic to take part whose work clearly exposes, rather than normalizes, experiences that are painful and traumatic. Clearly, the rationale for the boycott does not call for the exclusion of someone whose work

unambiguously exposes the very conditions that led to the call for a boycott, and the statement quoted above from the Palestinian Solidarity Group confirms this.

We have an exciting programme next week and almost 350 people from 23 countries have registered for the conference. Discussions are based on the great work that many of you are doing across several continents from New Zealand, Australia, to South America, Asia, the United States, Europe and the African continent. We have much to learn from one another and on behalf of the organisers of this important conference, I look very much forward to welcoming you to Stellenbosch University.

Sincerely,

*Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela*

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**Chair of Organising Committee**

***Recognition, Reparation, Reconciliation:***

***The Light and Shadow of Historical Trauma***