

Policy: Palestine Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

PACBI Overview

The Palestinian-led movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is endorsed by a comprehensive majority of Palestinian civil society organisations and unions. It aims to empower civil society to act in support of Palestinian rights and to end international complicity with Israel's grave and persistent crimes against the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, (PACBI), which is part of the broader BDS movement, advocates for a boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions for their deep and persistent complicity in Israel's denial of Palestinian rights as stipulated by international law.

Initiated in 2004 and inspired by the cultural boycott campaign against apartheid South Africa, PACBI encourages cultural organizations and associations to act on the Palestinian call for boycott, as a contribution towards upholding international law and furthering the struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

Cultural institutions and their communities are part and parcel of the ideological scaffolding of Israel's regime of occupation, settler-colonialism, and apartheid against the Palestinian people. Culture is a central plank of Israel's normalisation project and Israeli cultural institutions (including performing art companies, music groups, film organizations, writers' unions and festivals) are well-funded by the state and encouraged to collaborate internationally as a deliberate strategy to improve Israel's standing internationally. Notwithstanding the efforts of principled individual artists, writers, and filmmakers, these institutions are clearly implicated in supporting, justifying and whitewashing Israel's occupation and systematic denial of Palestinian rights.

PACBI is institutional and does not target individuals as such. Committed to freedom of expression as stipulated in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), PACBI rejects, on principle, boycotts of individuals based on their opinion or identity (such as citizenship, race, gender, or religion).

Why should Book Works support?

On 31 January 2025 the UN urged state parties to the Genocide Convention to abide by their obligations to prevent genocide, and irreparable harm to the people in Gaza, and stressed the ‘critical role that civil society plays to give effect to this ruling’. As such, we recognise our responsibility as an institution that is part of civil society to act within international law, and ensure that where possible we advocate, raise awareness and mobilize against abuses of Human Rights and Genocide.

There has been a growing call from many artists we work with for action by institutions to be taken. Groups such as Artists for Palestine UK, WaWOG, Cultural Workers for Palestine, and ANGA, have called for international solidarity and an end to institutional silence. Supporting PACBI will mean we join over 150 cultural institutions in Scotland have recently signed up to the boycott of Israel and endorsed PACBI (Art Workers for Palestine Scotland 13 January 2025).

Book Works has never worked with a state-funded Israeli institution, nor to our knowledge an institution complicit with the occupation of Palestine.

In February 2024, we launched a fundraising campaign for Medical Aid for Palestinians. Our decision to launch the poster project *What Did You Do... (2024)* identified our role as a free press and platform for solidarity in the art world. Rather than merely sell or donate work, we aimed to provide a space for artists to express their responses to the violence and demands for a ceasefire, justice, and end to occupation. We hoped that this would function as part of a process that exerted pressure on other peer and larger arts organisations to do the same, and break the institutional silence on this issue.

Book Works’ charitable objectives state that our mission is ‘to advance education for the benefit of the public in the visual arts, particularly books which may be recognised as art works in their own right’, and we recognise the historical role that that artist led groups, connected with artists books have played in similar (if often more direct) actions – Artists for Democracy, Art Workers Coalition, GAAG, West East Bag. Our practice and educational role extends the history of artists book makers and publishers, who have used the printed form to make deliberate critical, radical and non-conforming statements in the art world, in solidarity with the oppressed. We also recognise that these histories and contexts frame our response to the attacks on and oppression of Palestinian visual artists, Palestinian galleries and museums, publishers and bookshops.

Policy Commitment

We are committed to upholding the universal right of freedom of expression, and oppose arbitrary censorship. We reject on principle boycotts of individuals based on their identity (such as citizenship, race, gender, or religion) or opinion.

Following PACBI guidelines we therefore agree to abide by the PACBI call for boycott and show solidarity to the Palestinian call for justice and liberation by following these guiding principles:

1. We will not work, collaborate with or take commissions from:
 - a. Complicit cultural institutions in Israel.
 - b. Cultural institutions funded by the state of Israel, or any official Israeli body.
 - c. Organisations that are directly involved in supporting, or promoting Israel.

Unless proven otherwise, we accept that these are complicit in maintaining the Israeli occupation and denial of basic Palestinian rights, whether through their silence or actual involvement in justifying, whitewashing or otherwise deliberately diverting attention from Israel's violations of international law and human rights.

2. If funded by any of the above (1 a-c) we accept that the boycott could apply to:
 - a. Cultural products
 - b. Cultural events
 - c. Normalization projects, that is cultural activities, projects, events and products involving Palestinians and/or other Arabs on one side and Israelis on the other (whether bi- or multi- lateral) that are based on the false premise of symmetry/parity, or equality of responsibility between the participants. We accept that these projects do not challenge the status quo, but instead contribute to its endurance, unless:
 - i. The Israeli party in the project recognizes comprehensive Palestinian rights under international law; and
 - ii. the product or event is one of "co-resistance" rather than co-existence.
 - d. Public debates between Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis are also excluded from the boycott if organized without any cooperation with Israel, its lobby groups, or its complicit institutions.
3. We will not participate with or in research or other fact-finding study tours that are funded by Israel, its complicit institutions, or its international lobby groups.

Duration of policy

We will support the cultural boycott of Israel until Israel is in compliance with the three basic demands outlined in the 2005 BDS Call, and endorsed by: The Palestinian political parties, unions, associations, coalitions and organizations below represent the three integral parts of the people of Palestine: Palestinian refugees, Palestinians under occupation and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

Limits of policy

To end their collusion in Israel's regime of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid and become non-boycottable, Israeli cultural institutions must fulfil two basic conditions:

1. Publicly recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as enshrined in international law (including the three basic rights in the 2005 BDS Call); and
2. End all forms of complicity in violating Palestinian rights as stipulated in international law, including discriminatory policies and practices as well as diverse roles in whitewashing or justifying Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian human rights.

For further information about PACBI guidelines, policy documents, and a list of pledges by artists supporting the cultural boycott of Israel, [click here](#).

In all the following, "product" refers to cultural products such as films, artworks, plays, among other art forms; "event" refers to film festivals, conferences, art exhibits, art performances (including music and dance), tours by artists and writers, among other activities.

Actions

1. Book Works will make public a statement of support on our website, and circulate this policy on request.
2. Book Works will make public this pledge on its social media channels and inform PACBI of its support.

3. Book Works will circulate the policy with all new contracts and to all existing staff.
4. Book Works commits to continuing our work in education and solidarity within the organisation and as part of our public programme.

For further information see: <https://bdsmovement.net/pacbi/cultural-boycott-guidelines>