

CANCEL YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE ROUND TABLES TOUR - TAKE APARTHEID OFF THE MENU -

To the attention of:

The Fat Radish, New York
Chefs Phil Winsor & Ben Towill

Stazione di Posta, Rome
Chef Marco Martini

Osteria Mozza, Los Angeles
Chefs Nancy Silverton, Mario Batali and Joe Bastianich

Craft, London
Chef Stevie Parle

The Cinnamon Kitchen, London
Chef Raju Ramachandran

Ron Gastrobar, Amsterdam
Chef Ron Blaauw

Tragaluz, Barcelona
Chefs Alain Devahive and Jose Santiago

Fruehsammers, Berlin
Chefs Peter and Sonja Frühsammer

Milos, Athens
Chef Costas Spiliadis

We, the undersigned civil society groups, are writing to you regarding your **planned participation in the Round Tables Tour culinary event taking place in Tel Aviv** from November 1-21, 2015 [1]. We urge you to reconsider your involvement in this initiative aimed at using *haute cuisine* to mask Israel's denial of Palestinian basic rights.

Just over a year ago, Israeli tanks, fighter jets and gunboats were pounding the besieged Gaza Strip, killing over 2100 Palestinians, including more than 500 children, in just the latest of what have tragically become periodic massacres carried out by the Israeli military. Along with homes, hospitals, schools and factories, Israeli attacks destroyed farms, greenhouses, water wells, orchards, crops and livestock [2].

Israeli army snipers regularly fire upon Palestinian farmers in Gaza and frequent military incursions destroy crops. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented 534 land incursions and 544 shooting incidents between 2006 and 2013, killing 179 civilians and injuring 751 [3]. Documents obtained via a court battle show Israel used cynical calorie calculations to determine the number of truckloads of food allowed in through its illegal blockade of the coastal enclave, placing Palestinians in Gaza on a starvation diet [4].

In the occupied West Bank, research by the Israeli organization Kerem Navot details how Israel is using agriculture as a means for wholesale theft of Palestinian land. Since 1997, agriculture in illegal Israeli settlements has increased in area by 35 per cent, while cultivated Palestinian agricultural land has dropped by one third [5].

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that, according to United Nations reports, **only 35 per cent of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation are food secure** [6] with Israel's illegal wall and settlements appropriating large swathes of land for Israelis whilst ghettoizing Palestinians and denying them livelihoods[7].

Palestinian citizens of Israel, which make up 20 per cent of the population, hardly fare any better. Palestinian communities are being forced off their land as part of Israel's ongoing ethnic cleansing. Israel refuses to recognize 176 Palestinian towns and villages within its internationally-recognized borders, many predating the creation of the state, denying them even the most basic of services such as water and electricity. Israeli bulldozers regularly demolish entire villages leaving families homeless.

And though you will have no problem traveling to Tel Aviv, roughly 7 million Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons resulting from Israel's ongoing ethnic cleansing are denied the right to return to their lands as guaranteed under International Law [8].

As we write this letter, **tens of thousands of Palestinians, especially young people, are rising up in mass mobilizations against the Israeli regime of oppression** that has continued their entire lives, and that of their parents. Israel has responded in typical fashion to the protests, initially sparked by settler attacks on the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem, by firing live ammunition at protests killing and injuring Palestinian activists, conducting raids arresting hundreds of Palestinian youth and children, carrying out punitive demolitions of Palestinian homes and locking down entire Palestinian neighborhoods.

While the Round Tables event is presented as a "fruitful dialogue about culture, economy, and social issues," it is instead an appalling use of the time-honored tradition of sharing culinary experiences as a means for **whitewashing widespread violation of Palestinian fundamental rights**, including the right to food.

In fact, among the partners of the American Express-sponsored event are the Israeli ministries of Tourism and Foreign Affairs and the municipality of Tel Aviv. Israeli ministries have for years been involved in the **"Brand Israel" project, aimed at using culture and the arts as a way of distracting from its horrendous Human Rights record** in order to create a positive image [9]. Tel Aviv, a city itself built on top of four destroyed and ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages as well as the historic Palestinian city of Jaffa, is the center of Israel's regime of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid and deeply complicit in whitewashing Israeli violations of Human Rights and International Law. And event partner Golan Heights Winery operates in an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights in direct violation of International Law [10].

In 2005, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations called for **boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as a means for putting pressure on Israel until it ends its Human Rights violations**, which have continued undeterred and in complete impunity for decades [11]. As part of this call, international artists, performers, academics, and even chefs, are urged not to perform in Israel. The list of those heeding the call continues to grow [12].

By choosing to cook in the privileged bubble of Tel Aviv, surrounded by millions of Palestinians living under Israeli oppression, not only will you be knowingly disregarding this principled call from the oppressed, **you will also become complicit in Israeli violations of Palestinian Human Rights** and the perpetuation of Israeli occupation, apartheid and settler colonialism.

Respecting the Palestinian BDS call is the best way to ensure that Palestinians, in the words of famed South African anti-apartheid campaigner and BDS supporter Archbishop Desmond Tutu, are not reduced to “picking up crumbs of compassion thrown from the table of someone who considers himself [their] master,” but rather have “the full menu of rights.”

We urge you not to lend your culinary talents to mask Israel’s crimes. **Please cancel your participation in the Round Tables event** until everyone has a place at the table.

Considering the urgency of the question, we would appreciate it if you could provide a response by Monday, 26 October.

Signed:

Signed:

Land Defense coalition (LDC), **Palestine**
Palestinian Farmers Union (PFU), **Palestine**
Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network/Friends of the Earth-Palestine, **Palestine**
Stop the Wall Campaign, **Palestine**
Alternative Information Center (AIC), **Palestine/Israel**
Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from within, **Israel**
Frauen in Schwarz (Wien), **Austria**
Grupo de acción por palestina, **Chile**
Grupo de Acción por Palestina, **Chile**
Juventud Árabe por Palestina de Valdivia, **Chile**
AK Nahost Berlin, **Germany**
AKtion Gerechter Frieden Nahost, **Germany**
BDS Berlin, **Germany**
BDS Hamburg, **Germany**
Deutsch-palästinensische Gesellschaft , **Germany**
Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost, **Germany**
Palästinakomitee Stuttgart, **Germany**
ACS - Associazione di Cooperazione e Solidarietà, **Italy**
Associazione Casale Podere Rosa (Rome), **Italy**
Associazione Culturale Sogni di un Mondo Diverso, **Italy**
Associazione senza paura - Genova, **Italy**
Associazione Stelle Cadenti, artisti per la pace, **Italy**
Assopace Palestina, **Italy**
BDS Italia, **Italy**
BDS Sardegna, **Italy**
Comitato per non dimenticare Sabra e Chatila, **Italy**
Comitato Pistoiese per la Palestina, **Italy**
Comitato varesino per la Palestina, **Italy**
Confederazione Cobas, **Italy**
Coordinamento BDS Roma e Provincia, **Italy**
Coordinamento Nord Sud del Mondo, **Italy**
Donne in Nero / Women in Black, **Italy**

Forum Italiano dei Movimenti per l'Acqua, **Italy**
Forum Palestina, **Italy**
Friends of the Palestinian Red Crescent, **Italy**
G.A.MA.DI. (Gruppo Atei Materialisti Dialettici), **Italy**
Gruppi Informali, **Italy**
Italian Communist Party, **Italy**
Italian Jews against Israeli Occupation, **Italy**
Lo Sguardo di Handala (Rome), **Italy**
Luisa Morgantini, former VP European Parliament, **Italy**
Rete Radiè Resch – Gruppo di Salerno, **Italy**
Rete Radié Resch di solidarietà internazionale, **Italy**
Rete Radié Resch Varese, **Italy**
Rete Romana di Solidarietà con il Popolo Palestinese, **Italy**
Salaam Ragazzi dell'Olivo Comitato di Trieste, **Italy**
Servizio Civile Internazionale, **Italy**
U.S. Citizens Against War - Florence, **Italy**
U.S. Citizens for Peace & Justice - Rome, **Italy**
ULAIA ArteSud onlus, **Italy**
Un ponte per..., **Italy**
Article 1 Collective, **Netherlands**
docP, **Netherlands**
Nederlands Palestina Komitee (NPK), **Netherlands**
BDS Slovenia, **Slovenia**
Red Solidaria contra la Ocupación de Palestina (RESCOP), **Spain**

- Network composed by 43 organisations: Asociación Al-Quds de Solidaridad con los Pueblos del Mundo Árabe (Málaga), Asociación Andaluza por la Solidaridad y la Paz – ASPA, Asociación de Amistad Palestina-Granada «Turab», Asociación Hispano Palestina Jerusalén (Madrid), Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos de Andalucía, Asociación Unadikum, BDS Catalunya, BDS Madrid, BDS País Valencià, Castelló per Palestina, Comité de Solidaridad con la Causa Árabe (Madrid, Asturias), Comité de Solidaridad con los Pueblos – Interpueblos (Cantabria), Comunidad Palestina en Canarias, Comunitat Palestina de Catalunya, Comunitat Palestina de València, Coordinadora de apoyo a Palestina (La Rioja), Ecologistas en Acción (Confederal), Fundación IEPALA, Fundación Mundubat, Asociación Palestina Biladi, Anticapitalistas, Komite Internazionalistak (Euskal Herria), MEWANDO (Euskadi), Movimiento Solidaridad Internacional Catalunya – ISM Cataluña / Valencia, Mujeres en Zona de Conflicto – M.Z.C., Mujeres por la Paz – Acción Solidaria con Palestina (Canarias), Paz Ahora, Paz con Dignidad, Plataforma de Solidaridad con Palestina (Sevilla), Plataforma Palestina Ibiza, Plataforma Solidaria con Palestina de Valladolid, Red de Jóvenes Palestinos, Red Judía Antisionista Internacional -IJAN, Sodepau, Sodepaz, Sodepaz Balamil, Taula per Palestina (Illes Balears), UJCE (Unión de Juventudes Comunistas de España), Grupo de Cooperación Sevilla Palestina, CERAI (Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional), BDS Alacant (dentro de BDS País Valencià), Palestina Toma la Calle, Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel

Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel (CPCI), **Catalonia, Spain**

- Network composed by 14 organisations: Rumbo a Gaza, Junts-Associació Catalana de Jueus i Palestins, Comunitat Palestina de Catalunya, NOVACT, BDS Catalunya, Pau Sempre, SUDS, Servei Civil Internacional de Catalunya (SCI-Cat), Centre Euro Àrab de Catalunya, En Lluita, Unadikum, Pallasos en Rebeldía, Asociación Cultural Arte & Maña and International Solidarity Movement (ISM) Catalunya

Red Antisionista de Sevilla, **Spain**
Centro Cultural Palestino Biladi, **Basque Country, Spain**
Revolta Global-Esquerra Anticapitalista, **Catalonia, Spain**
Unadikum, **Spain**
Vent, associació cultural, **Spain**
BDS Switzerland, **Switzerland**
BDS Zürich, **Switzerland**
Bernese Vigil for a just peace in Israel / Palestine, **Switzerland**
Artists for Palestine UK, **United Kingdom**
Cambridge Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **United Kingdom**
Camden Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **United Kingdom**
Camden Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **United Kingdom**
Inminds, **United Kingdom**
Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, **United Kingdom**
Merton PSC, **United Kingdom**
Northern Women for Palestine, **United Kingdom**
Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **United Kingdom**
Stop G4S, **United Kingdom**
York Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **United Kingdom**
Association of Palestinian Communities in Scotland, **Scotland, United Kingdom**
Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, **Scotland, United Kingdom**
Adalah-NY; the New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel, **United States**
CODEPINK Women for Peace, **United States**

Notes:

- [1] <http://www.roundtablestour.com/en>
- [2] <http://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/agriculture-post-war-gaza-strip-18-09-2015>
- [3] <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/palestine-under-fire-report-en.pdf>
- [4] <http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/publications/redlines/redlines-position-paper-eng.pdf>
- [5] <http://972mag.com/resource-how-agriculture-is-used-to-take-over-west-bank-land/84993/>
- [6] <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/food-insecurity-palestine-remains-high>
- [7] <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1677.pdf>
- [8] http://www.badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/publications/Q&A-en.pdf
- [9] <https://electronicintifada.net/content/behind-brand-israel-israels-recent-propaganda-efforts/8694>
- [10] <http://www.whoprofits.org/sites/default/files/WhoProfits-IsraeliWines.pdf>
- [11] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>
- [12] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/cultural-boycott>
<http://www.bdsmovement.net/successes/>