

Letter from Palestinians in the UK, Gaza and the West Bank to Radiohead

"Performing in Israel is a slap in the face to Palestinians"

15th July 2017

Dear Radiohead

We are Palestinians in the UK, but also Palestinians in Gaza in the West Bank, in the 1948 territory and in the wider diaspora. We live as refugees forced into exile or as people under a ruthless Israeli military occupation and system of apartheid. And some cases we live as both.

Your decision to play in Israel is a slap in the face to Palestinians across the world. It is a betrayal of all social justice movements who seek international solidarity when confronted with decades of violent racism oppression and continued erasure.

We ask you to take a moment and think what it is like to live in Gaza where even a child as young as eight has had to endure three brutal Israeli bombing campaigns. Think what it must be like to live in perpetual exile in refugee camps sometimes only a few kilometres from home and yet forbidden from returning. Think what it must be like to live under an intricate system of apartheid that forbids you from travelling on certain roads, living in certain places and even accessing fundamental resources such as water.

In your response to the BDS calls you stated; "Music, art and academia is about crossing borders, not building ones". And yet the only people creating borders in Palestine are Israel and its allies. Millions of us are imprisoned behind walls and barriers and if we want to cross we have to beg our occupiers for permission which is often denied to us. Everyday Palestinians in Gaza are dying because they cannot leave the outdoor prison Israel has created and access lifesaving medical care. Everyday Palestinians are stopped at checkpoints, harassed, turned away and sometimes even shot. We know borders very well, Radiohead.

Your excuses echo the ones used by artists in the 1980s who took money and crossed the anti-apartheid boycott picket line to perform for whites in South Africa. Based on your responses to BDS, we wonder if you too would have performed in Sun City while Nelson Mandela and others rotted in Robben Island prison? Hundreds of South African organisations and trade unions support BDS, recognising in Israel a system of oppression they know all too well. Indeed many South Africans who have visited Palestine concluded that the situation is "worse" than apartheid. Among them is Desmond Tutu who avidly endorses the cultural boycott. You've accused us and our supporters of throwing around the word "apartheid" as if we don't know the reality that we are living every day. Do you also think South Africans do not recognise apartheid?

When our supporters tried to bring to your attention our call for justice and equality, you called them, "fucking people" and stuck your middle finger up at them. These people were not just allies of Palestinians who have fought tirelessly for our freedom, they were also Radiohead fans. Fans who have seen you engage with politics and various causes for social justice around the world over the decades. Fans who have seen you promote the work of Naomi Klein. Yet Naomi Klein understands that the global social justice movements around the world and the movement for Palestinian freedom cannot be separated. This is why she endorses the cultural boycott of Israel.

Another one of the retorts to BDS by Thom, was that it was offensive to band member Jonny who is married to an Israeli. In 2015 Jonny played in illegally occupied East Jerusalem. The annexation of East Jerusalem is recognised under international law as illegal and is accepted as such by even Israel's staunchest allies. Yet Johnny went ahead and performed in total disregard or awareness of international law. This is what is offensive.

Let us once again remind you of our daily reality. We are segregated, held and humiliated at hundreds of checkpoints, we watch our houses be demolished, we are denied freedom of movement, equal access to water, healthcare, education and face a separate discriminatory legal system. We live under Israeli F16s and Elbit Drones, we face Merkhava tanks, and electricity cut to three hours a day. This, Radiohead, is known as apartheid and ethnic cleansing.

You'll be performing for an audience that will be mostly Israelis who have served in the Israeli armed forces that are slaughtering our people; 1400 Palestinians in 22 days in the winter of 2008-9 then more than 2200 in 50 days in 2014, including over 500 children.

We are the abused, the imprisoned, and the occupied and we expect people of integrity to show solidarity and to not patronise us. We will not stop fighting for justice and we will remember those who stood with us when it was not fashionable to do so, who refused to entertain apartheid. And as with South Africa, history will judge you when we have our freedom.

Palestinian Students Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel, Gaza

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Yara Hawari, PhD student, Exeter Uni, UK

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Diana Alghoul, journalist, London, UK

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Dima AlShami, student, London, UK

Jasmine, student, London, UK

Samir Eskanda, musician, London, UK

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Yousef Mama, Nurse, Gaza, Palestine

Ahmed Ammori, Finance analyst, UK

Amani Kayed, student, Ramallah, Palestine

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Shahd Abusalama, Soas University, UK

Toqa Z, Uni of Leeds, UK

Enas Mohammed, student, Palestine university, Gaza

Beth Jamal, student, Cambridge university, UK

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Caaron Butt, carer, Walsall, UK

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Beleigh Jbara, Lawyer and legal consultant, London, UK

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Doaa Althalathini, PhD student, Plymouth, UK

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Nowsheen Khondoker, student, London, UK

Hazem Anuhabibi, student, university of Sussex, UK

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Lobna Mohammed, student, Islamic university of Gaza

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Hala Raed, student, Manchester, UK

Bara Abulula, student, UK

Dana Amin, Medical Technologist, Palestine

Nour Zaher Tamnous, student, Gaza, Palestine

Muhammad Y. Sammour, Gaza, Palestine

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Shams Akram, student, Palestine

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Shaima Ziara, Hamad bin Khalifa uni

Abdel Abdalla, sales rep,

Abdulrahman Al-Mohammad, student, UK

Nagham Shaker, Manchester, UK

Yousef, student, London, UK

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