



February 13, 2009

Dear Friend,

Over the past few months, you have heard the mainstream media accounts of Israel's most recent massacres of Palestinian people; you have pieced together the diluted news reports of Israeli terror, knowing perhaps as you do so, that the "facts" that you hear on the news are but a miniscule scratch on the surface of a truth so horrific that it seems unreal. As writers and as artists, we carry a responsibility to bear witness to the truth from which the world wishes to avert its gaze. We hold in our craft not only the power of our voices to document Israel's war crimes and register the deepening stain of blood on its hands, but also the obligation to use those voices to tell Israel that artists and cultural workers will not be complicit in its crimes: until Israel honors international law and ends its brutal policies of repression against Palestinians, we cannot carry on business as usual.

We would like to invite you to join an evening of discussion among artists and cultural workers on Friday March 6, 2009, 7pm at Judson Memorial Church. This panel discussion, *The Art of Resistance: Culture and the Boycott of Israel*, is an opportunity for you to join other members of New York City's arts and culture community to learn about the growing international campaign for the cultural boycott of Israel and how this campaign contributes to a just, equitable future for Palestinians and Israelis.

In August 2006, over 350 Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers and artists appealed to their colleagues of good conscience to boycott film festivals, public venues, and institutions supported by the government of Israel and to end cooperation with Israeli cultural and artistic institutions that have refused to take a stand against Israel's ongoing illegal occupation. This call was publicly supported in an open letter, published in the *Guardian* newspaper (15 December 2006), by authors, filmmakers, musicians, and performers across Europe and North and South America. Inspired by the successful boycotts of South African art institutions during apartheid, cultural workers across the world have chosen to take a similar principled stand against Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

As we watched Israel's horrific attacks on the people of Gaza, we were painfully reminded that governments around the world remain silent when faced with Israel's persistent violations of international law. While the United Nations and international human rights organizations repeatedly censure Israel's illegal actions, they have not been able to hold Israel accountable for its actions nor to prevent further violence. The time has come for a strong movement of ordinary, conscientious people and organizations to help Israel decide, as Naomi Klein recently put it, that its endless war is too costly.

We hope that on Friday, March 6, you can attend this very special occasion for the arts and culture community to envision, together, the path to a just peace.

Sincerely,

John Berger and Ahdaf Soueif

The Art of Resistance: Culture and the Boycott of Israel will be held as the closing panel of the international Israeli Apartheid Week taking place in New York City and more than forty cities around the world. For more information on Israeli Apartheid Week and a full schedule of the week's events in New York, please visit www.apartheidweek.org. Panelists for *The Art of Resistance* are Ahdaf Soueif, Omar Barghouti, and Remi Kanazi; Professor Moustafa Bayoumi will moderate.