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## **The UK University and College Union's double moral standards**

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At its annual conference on May 28, 2008, the University and College Union, the largest trade union of academics and related staff in the UK, proposed a vote to reintroduce an academic boycott of Israel. The proposed motion asked members "to consider the moral and political implications of educational links with Israeli institutions, and to discuss the occupation with individuals and institutions concerned, including Israeli colleagues with whom they are collaborating."

Israel's academia has been targeted in recent years by the UCU, which regards imposing a boycott as taking a moral stand against the "Israeli occupation" of Palestinian territories and as a way of exerting pressure on the Israeli government. The motion reportedly demands that Israeli academics denounce Israel's policy as a condition for normal academic contact. Silence is perceived as complicity, even though academicians play no official role in decision-making in Israel.

The adoption of high moral standards is praiseworthy. However, the UCU's position toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is inconsistent. In sharp contrast to its harsh criticism of Israel, it has never condemned the Hamas government's terrorist policy or the daily terrorist attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israeli targets.

The UCU's moral standard is double. Following a decision by its Congress 2007, Palestinian academics were invited to take part in a speaking tour of UK universities and colleges. Four

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members of the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees attended meetings across the UK in April 2008, representing the Palestinian universities of Bir Zeit (Ramallah), Al-Najah (Nablus) and Bethlehem. The UCU-PFUUPE discussions concentrated on promoting cooperation and supporting Palestinian academic institutions, ignoring the strong Palestinian terrorist organization presence there.

During the second Intifada Al-Najah University was rightly called the Suicide Bombers' University, and hundreds of Al-Najah students are operatives of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the PFLP and other Palestinian terrorist organizations. Scores became suicide bombers and involved in terrorist attacks against civilian Israeli targets. The student union at Al-Najah has traditionally been controlled by Hamas and its activists use the university's facilities to preach radical Islamic ideology and recruit new members. In recent years, student union chairmen have also held high positions in Hamas's terrorist-military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Qais Adwan for example. Hamas students, brandishing guns and wearing explosive belts, used to organize demonstrations at the university to extol suicide bombings, including those committed by their peers.

Hamas is also proud in its strong presence in Bir Zeit University. On April 23, 2008 Hamas published an official announcement praising its student organization, the Islamic Bloc, for its remarkable achievements in the student union elections. Hamas students from Bir Zeit and Bethlehem Universities were involved in terrorist attacks against Israel, including dispatching suicide bombers to carry out attacks in Israeli cities.

The situation is the same in all the Palestinian academic institutions in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. The Islamic University in Gaza is controlled by Hamas. The University's president, Jammal Al-Khoudari, was officially supported by Hamas in his campaign for election to parliament in 2006. Prominent deans and professors are well-known Hamas leaders, such as Dr. Nazzar Abd Al-Qadir Rayyan, Dr. Atef Adwan, Dr. Ahmed Abu Halabia, Dr. Yunis Al-Astal, Dr. Saleh Al-Riqab and Ismail Radwan.

Rayyan also served as commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in the northern Gaza Strip. His son Ibrahim, 17, carried out a suicide bombing attack in the Israeli community of Elei Sinai on October 2, 2001. When Dr. Rayyan was informed of his son's death he said (according to the Hamas Website), "Today Ibrahim's wedding is taking place. He is the first *jihadist* in my family. I'm proud of him and his deeds, because the nation needs more [sacrifices]... Ibrahim is a man, although young. I would expect any youngster like him to make the same sacrifice and even more for the sake of the nation. He was raised on the love of *jihad* and *istishhad* [martyrdom for the sake of Allah]."

Palestinian universities are a breeding ground for the terrorist organizations. The decision to improve relations with the Palestinian universities while considering a boycott of Israeli institutions should raise questions about the UCU's moral standards and genuine motives.