

23 May 2016

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe
Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis
New Scotland Yard
Broadway, London SW1 0BG

Sent via email: Bernard.hogan-howe@met.police.uk

Re: antisemitism as defined in the *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*

Dear Commissioner

We are deeply concerned about the College of Policing 2014 document, *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*, especially its implications for organisations such as ours, seeking to promote respect for international law in Palestine by protesting against Israel's violations.

As you may be aware, the majority of the Palestinian people were forced to flee their homes when Israel was created in 1948. Israel subsequently refused to allow more than a few thousands of the approximately 750,000 refugees to return. In the following 69 years it has expelled many thousands more Palestinians from their homes, while extending its control over the whole of historic Palestine and even beyond. Since 1955 the United Nations General Assembly has adopted more than 77 resolutions censuring Israel for its actions towards Palestinians; likewise since 2006 the UN Human Rights Council has condemned Israeli actions in more than 45 resolutions.

Of course, antisemitism should be treated as a race hate crime. But the *Hate Crime Operational Guidance* has a section on antisemitism conflating this with criticism of Israel (or of Zionism), thereby regarding such criticism as a potential crime of race hate.¹ This extraordinarily broad description may have a chilling effect on those of us who seek to implement the United Nations resolutions, since it is nearly impossible to do so without criticising Israel. Many of us also support the boycott of Israeli goods and of Israeli government-sponsored propaganda initiatives, since we believe that such voluntary, non-violent action provides a crucial way for civil society to oppose Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights.

¹ Appended is our letter to the College of Policing, elaborating our objections to the Guidance document.

If your officers apply the Guidance document in the pursuit of their duties, then they may judge that our actions constitute a race hate crime. We therefore urgently request:

- a reassurance that your officers will not regard criticism of Israel/Zionism as relevant to hate crimes, much less to the criminal law; and
- a meeting with you (or senior Metropolitan police officers) to clarify any confusion between such criticism and antisemitism.

Yours sincerely

Abbas Ali, Inminds

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead, chair, British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)

Ilan Pappé, Professor of History, Fellow of the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, the University of Exeter

Les Levidow, Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC)

Massoud Shadjareh, Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Secretary, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG)

Rob Ferguson, Jewish teacher, Newham NUT