

The River

Issue 1, September 2024

“We put our public values into practice.” – UvA Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Dear comrades, colleagues, collaborators in genocide,
A warm welcome to this new academic year, where
business shall absolutely not continue as usual.
Did you really think that we would disperse
and disappear on a summer breeze? Sorry to
disappoint, but we are the fresh air in this stinking
institution, and we invite you to breathe in
deeply and to let out a collective scream, chant,
wail or even a laugh – whatever it takes to
bring humanity into the space between these
cold brick walls.

If you are not (yet) with us, and if you
are feeling nostalgic for the status
quo, perhaps you can start by
asking yourself the question, is
your gezelligheid hiding genocide?

Interview with a Reader

What have you been reading recently?

Men in the Sun, by Ghassan
Kanafani

What is it about?

It's a story about three
Palestinian men, who are
trying to leave a refugee
camp in Iraq and cross the
border into Kuwait for work.

How was it?

Beautifully written, and painful
of course. Through Kanafani's
descriptions, I really got a sense
of the different motives each
character had for taking this
dangerous journey and their lack of
other options.

What stood out for you?

This book felt so relevant to today that
I had to keep consciously reminding
myself that it was actually published
in 1962. So in this way, it was a very
powerful reminder of how long the
Palestinian struggle has been going on,
and how so many generations have been
shaped by (and lost to) these inescapable
external forces.

Who would you recommend it to?

Anyone who enjoys connecting to history
through prose and well-written characters. It's
quite short, so very accessible in that sense.

If rascality is going to get us what we want, we will
use it; because we are dealing with corrupt people,
we have to be rascally with them. – Fela Kuti

In
order
for me
to write
poetry
that isn't
political

I must
listen to the
birds
and in order to
hear the birds
the warplanes
must be
silent.

– Marwan Makhoul

Anti-Anti-Anti-BDS

As part of our commitment to representing all
voices in this zine, we have decided to present
you, dear colleagues and students, with the
best arguments against boycotting Israeli
education institutions, ranked from 1 to 4 (plus
an extra one for the road):

In top place, we have: why should I care? This is
a great answer! As someone studying or working
within the Dutch educational system, indeed why
should you care? Really, why?! Honestly, what
difference does it make to you if your institution
is breaking international law? Dutch education is
nothing more than a product, don't forget! And
who really cares if the provider of this product is
actively facilitating and enabling genocide? Plus,
we all know that the Netherlands is only hosting the
ICJ and ICC because the weather is so shit here, that
there is nothing better to do than to claim an interest
in international law. And anyway, laws are made to
be broken – am I right?! (High five).

In second place, we have chosen: Israel is the only
democracy in the Middle East. Of course this is a
great answer – as long as there are elections that half
the population living under Israeli sovereignty can vote
in, then it is democratic enough to create an apartheid
system like South Africa once celebrated. Plus a genocide
like our big neighbour to the east! Let's be honest,
democracy is the perfect cover for human rights violations,
so no need to boycott as long as the cover is on. Good
one, we love it! Just keep saying it to anyone claiming Israel
is committing a genocide: yes, but Israel is a democracy!

The third best answer, in our humble opinion, is: oh but our
history and our guilt. Exactly. 100%. You should definitely
stay silent and not say anything, for this is far safer and
more respectful. We all know the famous rule: if you or
your ancestors are a victim of one crime, you have a free
pass to commit whatever crime you want. So how dare you
say a word against Israel? Let them get on with it! Are you
antisemitic or what? As a descendent of those who lived
through WWII, haven't you learnt the importance of silence
in the face of genocide? Silence is zen. We all love silence.

In fourth place: Israel is not doing anything wrong. Yes, great
point! We love a bit of denial. So what if there are a few dead
children, some unidentified human animal remains, some
hospitals, homes, schools destroyed. No big deal. Let's be
real and look at the figures: there are more than 1 billion
children on this planet, so why should we focus on these
20,000 dead children? This is entirely biased and we
can't accept that. People die every day. If Israel didn't
kill them first, they would have eventually died anyway
after 60 or 70 years. This focus on Israel only comes from
antisemitism. Plus, if you didn't watch the news then really,
would there even be a genocide? The real problem is the
news, actually.

And finally, a bonus answer!: Israel has the right to defend
itself. Admittedly, this one has been used a lot lately and
many people have debunked it, especially the Palestinians
living under Israeli sovereignty. Of course, no state has the
right to defend itself from the people under its own sovereignty,
but whatever, of course you can keep using this argument. We
all know that the world is stupid and it will accept anything you
(yes you, the educated person) say, without daring to argue back.
How can anyone argue with such a meaningless sentence? This is
precisely why we like it.

So let's not boycott Israel and instead act as if nothing is happening.
As they say: the best way to get rid of poverty is to get rid of all the
poor people. Let's happily imagine the peace that will come when all
Palestinians are gone (and then the Muslims, and the immigrants, and
the Black people, and the Jews, and the queers, and the disabled, and
the elderly...).

We are sure that you have other brilliant answers, so please do share
them with us and we will try our best to include them in the next issue.

**Support for
Palestinian rights, voices, and culture can take various forms;
it can be about protesting, educating oneself through books and documentaries,
engaging with communities and organisations. It can, as inspiringly demonstrated by
ASCA, be about boycotting, divesting and sanctioning as an (educational)
institution:**

ASCA Statement on Collaborations with Israeli Institutions and International Corporations Complicit in Atrocity Crimes

19 July 2024

This statement is issued by the Directors of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA).

It is made in the context of ASCA's longstanding support of research critical of oppressive regimes and ASCA's conviction that research cannot be politically neutral. The statement took shape following consultation of the ASCA Board and the ASCA research community. The statement does not speak for all ASCA researchers. We will continue to facilitate events that provide space for critical engagement with politically sensitive issues from different perspectives and positionalities.

This statement concerns only the activities that ASCA as a research school finances and/or actively facilitates from its annual operational budget.

ASCA will not collaborate with Israeli institutions, including academic ones, and with Israeli and international corporations structurally complicit in atrocity crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This decision follows upon the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ Order of 26 January 2024) that found the risk of the state of Israel committing genocide to be plausible and the situation that Palestinians face to be catastrophic with a risk of irreparable harm. It further comes against the backdrop of a political climate in the Netherlands wherein the advocacy of human rights for Palestinians is increasingly criminalised or trivialised, and of continued military actions by the Israeli Defence Force in Gaza that have led to its entire educational infrastructure being destroyed and thousands of teachers, administrators and students being killed.

For many decades, the question of Palestine has been the subject of rich and nuanced knowledge production – by Palestinian, Israeli and international scholars, international

institutions, NGOs, as well as ASCA researchers. Since October 2023, ASCA has facilitated a series of academic activities on the longer history and context of the ongoing violence, seeking to bring this knowledge to the wider university audience and ultimately contribute to an informed public opinion.

We uphold the right to academic freedom for all and believe this statement does not conflict with such freedom as it only concerns potential collaborations with the Israeli state, complicit institutions and corporations, and their official representatives. It does not concern individual scholars affiliated with or employed by Israeli academic institutions – it concerns institutional complicity, not identity. We recognise the unique positionality of ASCA scholars with Israeli citizenship and the complexities they must navigate. We will take particular care in supporting these scholars.

In anticipation of the new UvA guidelines for collaborating with third parties (samenwerking met derden), ASCA commits to the following, within its remit as a research school embedded in a larger institution:

- 1- ASCA will not enter into any collaborations with or invite to any of its activities Israeli state officials or official representatives of Israel-lobby groups or complicit institutions or corporations.
- 2- ASCA will not procure goods and services from any corporations that provide materials for or are complicit in the violence.
- 3- ASCA will continue to support initiatives by its research community that foster critical knowledge production, debate, and public education about Palestine and Israel.
- 4- ASCA will stand in solidarity with Palestinian scholars as well as all scholars who face threats to their academic freedoms because of their stance on Palestine and advocate for their inclusion in scholars at risk schemes.
- 5- ASCA will not discriminate against any individual scholars, including those from Israel, when they apply for positions, fellowships, grants or other funding.

<https://asca.uva.nl/shared/subsites/amsterdam-institute-for-humanities-research/en/news/2024/07/statement.html>

Shout Out!

Een universiteit wil sociale rechtvaardigheid doceren maar niet leven: mooi om zien, dergelijke hypocrisie.

Dear K, I changed my number and didn't tell you. We used to meet and get worked up together about bullshit bureaucracy, the unethical ethics committee and the social injustices of our department. When I tell you that I see these same patterns on a wider scale now with Palestine, you shut down. What do you expect?, you ask me, this is just how the world is. I don't know what I expected from the world, but I didn't expect this apathy from you, and it hurts.

Rondom ons staat de politie en worden studenten gearresteerd. Zij eisen aandacht voor een genocide. Een decaan verlaat het gebouw want het weekend begint.

I am told that the dean is working tirelessly on issues of social safety. She says she is working daily to find the right balance between what is required and what is just. Perhaps if she tried to join these two together she would feel less tired.

Hurt? Angry? Frustrated? Shout out! Send us your anonymous shouts and we will publish a selection in the next issue.

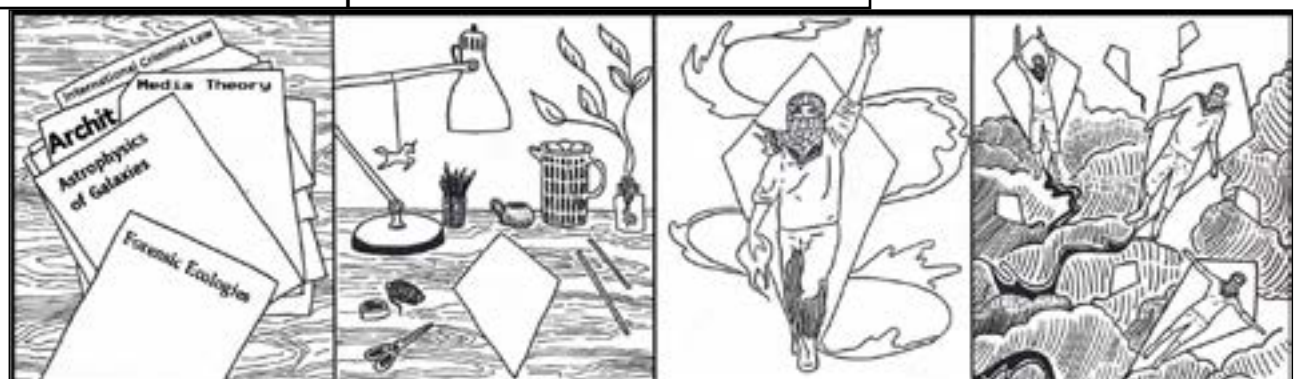
Join
us on
6 September at the
Roeterseilandcampus
to demonstrate against
UvA's complicity in
the genocide in
Palestine.

**more details on
our website**

cut
this
part
into a
stencil



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Contributions? theriverzine@proton.me



HOW TO TURN YOUR ACADEMIC PAPERS INTO KITES