



A Word on “Hasbara” [Public Diplomacy]

The Academic Institutions Recruit in Order To Market Israel May 2013



arab cultural association

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The publication of this report is part of the The Arab Culture Association’s Ar-Rased Project and the Youth Empowerment Programme, both sponsored by the Open Society Foundations.



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The Universities at the Service of the Government and the Army

Many Israeli universities and colleges have recently added to their various subject and programs a course on Hasbara (a Hebrew word that means explanation), which is an Israeli term that relates to the diplomatic, media and political representation of Israeli positions.



The Hasbara courses declare that they aim at providing students with tools and skills of marketing Israel and its policies through internet site and social networks and are considered a source of proud to these universities.

These courses constitute a clear contradiction to the academic values of conduct that rely on political and critical independence and freedom of thought, and also show the extent of the involvement of these universities in the political, military and diplomatic policies of the government.

The purpose of this paper is to uncover the content of the Hasbara courses and programs in Israeli academic institutions, their sources of finance and their connection with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Diplomacy and other international right-wing Zionist movements.

Jerusalem.

Ambassadors of Aggression on the Web



The University of Haifa started a course called “Ambassadors on the Web” in 2012¹, and the first course was considered a huge success, as one can see in the ad.² for the second course this year (2013). One can see from the ad. that the university brags

the achievements of the course, among them the establishment by its graduates of a “War Room” in order to support the Israeli army and its latest aggression against the Gaza Strip on social networks.

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Eli Avraham, from the Media Department in the University of Haifa and one of the founders of Ambassadors on the Web,³ says in an interview about the course ⁴, “when false claims are made about Israel, such as labelling it an apartheid state, people need to be equipped with knowledge and tools to speak out against those claims.” Avraham then goes on to say, “The main idea is that this is about how to use the new media to reclaim Israel’s narrative and promote Israel’s point of view” David Hurwitz, another initiator of the course, says in another news

¹The news item about the beginning of the first course in the University of Haifa’s official website (in Hebrew)

wordpress.haifa.ac.il/?p=3912

A news item about the course (in Hebrew)

<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/245625>

²A news item by the University of Haifa about the Ambassadors’ course on its Facebook page (Hebrew)

[facebook.com/univ.haifa.ac.il/posts/224914787654824](https://www.facebook.com/univ.haifa.ac.il/posts/224914787654824)

The ad. for the second course

<http://www.agudahhaifa.co.il/content/%D7%AA%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%A9%D7%92%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%AA>

item about the course on the official web site of the University of Haifa, “the public opinion is the real battle today. That has been evident during the Turkish [Freedom] Flotilla where it was clear that we are facing a network of organizations in the world that operate against Israel and spread false information. Israel is being portrayed as a major oppressor of human rights, and the soldiers of the Israeli army are being portrayed as cold-blooded killers. The official ministries try to cope with this situation by using their own tools: The spokesman of a ministry can issue an official statement while we can, as students, form personal relations and give first-hand information. As young men who live in this country, we have a real chance to make a difference.”⁵

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The narrative of the above mentioned speakers reflect the lack of academic notion in the “Ambassadors on the Web” course and reveals its real purpose: To recruit students in order to directly market Israel.

A Battalion of Ambassadors in Israeli Universities

The “Ambassadors on the Web” is not the only available course of its kind in Israeli academic institutions: The University of Tel Aviv has been operating in the last two years a course called “Ambassadors

³The Ambassadors on the Web page in the site of the University of Haifa

<http://shagririm.haifa.ac.il/index.php/about-us>

The course Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/shagririmhaifa>

⁴An interview with Eli Avraham on the Hasbara course at the University of Haifa

<http://www.cjnews.com/campus/haifa-u-course-teaches-web-hasbara-strategies>

⁵<http://wordpress.haifa.ac.il/?p=3906>

Club,” and the academic center in Ar’eil [Ar’eil University] also provides a similar program that offers training and qualification. The National Union of Israeli Students [NUIS] also provides a



program of Hasbara that aims at fighting “anti-Semitism and delegitimizing the State of Israel.” Each participant in this program receives a grant of 2,000\$ in return to writing comments and letters in social network sites for five hours a week. The various [student] associations also stress the importance of marketing Israel in the world. For example, the students’

union in the University of Haifa published an ad. asking students to market Israel “properly” even when they are on a trip abroad⁶. Perhaps the most prominent academic association in the field of Hasbara is the Herzilya College which provides an annual program for more than two hundred students from thirty countries. The program includes lectures in media, economy and history in order to “arm the students with the latest surveys and data and to teach them how to present the Israeli narrative.”⁷

⁶The Ad. of the University of Haifa Students' Union calling for marketing Israel in the world

<http://www.agudahaifa.co.il/content/%D7%94%D7%A1%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94-%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%AA>

⁷An explanation about the Herzliya College program
<http://standwithus.co.il/programs.asp>

At the end of the course, each participant receives “a qualification certificate” approved by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Hasbara projects took the lead during the last aggression against the Gaza Strip, when also the Students Union in the Herzilya College⁸ also formed “a war center” that aimed at spreading messages in social networks that support the Israeli army and its aggression in coordination with the ministries of media and public diplomacy. The “war center” received information directly from the Israeli army and the Prime Minister’s Office.

Finance by the Government and Other Right-Wing Movements



A closer look on the Hasbara courses would reveal much resemblance, almost compatibility, with the Government, and the Israeli tight-wing in general in terms of agenda, narrative and financing resources.

⁸From the Hebrew Ynet news website, on Nov., 16, 2012

The Hasbara courses in the Haifa University and the Arneil institution are provided by the Ministry of Media and “Public Diplomacy (Hasbara)”, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the American right-wing organization “Stand With Us” finance the course in Tel Aviv University and the Herzilya College. Stand With Us is an American organization with a Zionist agenda that caters toward spreading the Israeli narrative in the world. It has been involved many times in spreading hatred against Palestinians and Muslims and initiated various racist campaigns, such as attempting to market Israel “as the only democratic and safe haven for queers in the area.”⁹

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In addition, these programs and courses cooperate with and are financed by right-wing organizations. For example: the course Ambassadors on the Web in the University of Haifa cooperates with the ministries of media and foreign affairs, Stand With Us, Taglit (a Zionist program that aims at attracting Jewish youth to visit Israel and immigrate to it), the ICC-Israel on Campus Coalition (an organization that operates against other organizations that support the Palestinian cause in American universities), and CoHaV -the union of organization for making Hasbara to Israel.¹⁰

This kind of cooperation is reflected in the content of the course “Ambassadors on the Web”, the lecturers, and the meetings held between students and international Zionist delegations. It is also

⁹ In accordance with Stand With Us’ campaign to market Israel as a supporter of queers. The campaign has been revealed and opposed in the campaign called Pinkwatching Israel <http://www.pinkwatchingisrael.com/>

¹⁰ The parties taking part in Ambassadors on the Web <http://shagririm.haifa.ac.il/index.php/about-us>

reflected in the participation of members of these organizations in the board of the course and in setting the curriculum. The board is composed of a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a representative from the Ministry of Media, a representatives from CoHaV and former ambassadors and Government Spokesmen¹¹.

The finance given by the Israeli ministries of foreign affairs and media and by Stand With Us to the courses indicate that the universities have turned into tools in the hands of the Israeli Government in order to recruit the students for marketing wars, the occupation and racial segregation, instead of being platforms for elaborating a scientific, critical and human narrative and places for producing objective researches. This is even more evident in the contents of the programs and courses.

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The Title Reveals the Content

The Hasbara courses in Israeli universities and colleges depend on speakers and lecturers who come from various ministries and local and international Zionist organizations. The Hasbara course in the Arneil academic institution can serve as a good example in this regard.

The curriculum¹² sets two targets for the course: (1) spreading Hasbara and propaganda information by the trainees (2) the students would cause a double media echo in order to spread

¹¹ The advisory board for Ambassadors on the Web <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=368544849918599&set=a.169593229813763.29451.169589089814177&type=1>

¹² The Hasbara curriculum in the Arneil academic institution <http://buz.arieluc.org/node/208>

the information available in the Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs.

Moreover, the Hasbara program in the University of Tel Aviv includes meetings with former advisors of the Prime Minister, current and former speakers of the Israeli occupation army, head of Palestinian Media Watch and vice president of Central Fund for Israel¹³ which finances the students organization Im Tirtzu¹⁴, which caters toward oppressing Arab students and non-Zionist, leftist lecturers¹⁵ and also finances the “Hanano” organization for defending Israeli terrorists.¹⁶

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¹³The connection between Central Fund for Israel with Im Tirtzu

www.hahem.co.il/friendsofgeorge/?p=1346

¹⁴Im Tirtzu is a right-wing racist student movement that forms in the last years a threat on Arab students and their right of political activity in the universities. It is also a tool of suppression for non-Zionist and leftist lecturers. This organization is active in all universities in incitement against Arab students in general and their political activists in specific. They move against any Arab political activity, especially the Al-Nakhbah anniversary, the ordeal of the prisoners and when Arab students host Arab political figures. This organization has also catered toward closing down the political science department in the University of Ben Gurion in Beersheba for observing it as “harmful to Zionism.”

¹⁵An article about the contents and financing of the Hasbara course in the universities of Haifa and Tel Aviv

www.hahem.co.il/friendsofgeorge/?p=2847

¹⁶An article about Hanano

<http://www.hahem.co.il/friendsofgeorge/?p=2240>

Hasbara as Hasbara

In addition to recruiting students for the purpose of marketing Israel, the program is also a false promotion of the universities themselves and the state. Many news networks aired programs about the course as a narrative of coexistence in Israel. For example, a report published in March 2013 was entitled, “Muslim, Druze and Jewish students band together to improve Israel’s global image.”¹⁷

OPS & BLOGS > David Gurevich



Muslim, Druze, and Jewish Students Band Together to Improve Israel’s Global Image

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¹⁷ <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/muslim-druze-and-jewish-students-band-together-to-improve-israels-global-image/>
<http://www.jpost.com/InJerusalem/ArtsAndCulture/Article.aspx?id=309464&prmur=ospPNLnMsogHMz%2FBt3oysnXdghKrZqzS6HDusMI0mW1f5sqMdXwWzbCZQ%2BoocCKh>

Epilogue

These programs reveal the following: First, The deterioration in Israeli's image in the media and its inability to face the campaigns to boycott it (which is a prominent component in the Hasbara program), to the extent that it needs to recruit students in order improve its image. Second, these courses indicate the fact the Israeli academic institutions are tools in the hands of the Government and serve the policies of the state, in terms of resources and content and that they are remote from the narrative of academic values. As a result, these courses turn the Israeli universities and colleges to places that show little acceptance of different political views and of Arab students in specific.

About the Project

The "Academic Watch" project sprouted from the "Youth Empowerment" program in the Arab Culture Association (ACA). The "Academic Watch" aims at exposing the racist and discriminatory policies, processes and declarations, in addition to the prejudices to the rights and freedoms of the Arab students in the Israeli academic institutions, thereby also shedding some light on the connection between the Israeli academia and the security and occupation systems, by monitoring and documenting all forms of discrimination, racism and militarization, exposing them locally and internationally and lobbying for putting an end to them. Moreover the "Academic Watch" is an interactive space created on the social media, provides legal and journalistic training for students and publishes reports in Arabic and English.

What can be done?

Since their establishment, Israeli universities and colleges have been marketing themselves as upholders of freedoms and of academic values. Some universities, such as the University of Haifa, even pride themselves for providing an atmosphere of coexistence on campus. However, this does not reflect reality, as these academic institutes have evidently oppressed the freedom of expression of Arab students and groups and function as research centers for the projects of the Israeli army.

Undoubtedly, and as it has been documented in this report, these institutes have not and will not admit to exercising oppressive policies. The Arab students who face this reality on a daily basis must continue to document these violations in order develop a clear and cohesive picture that will expose the truth about academic institutes in Israel.

The key to the success of the Academic Watch Project is your contribution:

- Monitor any racist declarations by university or college lecturers;
- Monitor any violations of students' rights and freedoms on campus, regardless of whether they target individuals or groups and of whether they are committed by the university or by student unions or movements.
- Monitor the projects and scholarships whose conditions include civil or military service.
- Monitor any militarization projects or phenomena.

Monitor so we can successfully fight against racism



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