

Tina Schultz

From: Cheryl Moose [cherylmoose@comcast.net]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2007 3:49 PM
To: board_ed@yahoogroups.com
Cc: 'Views'
Subject: Response from Mona Baker/St Jerome Press

From: Mona Baker [mailto:mona@monabaker.com]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2007 6:35 AM
To: president@rid.org
Cc: Graham Turner; Lorraine Leeson; Ken Baker
Subject: RID Letter of 16 October

To: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.

Attention: Cheryl Moose, RID President
Matthew H'Hara, Acting Executive Director

21 October 2007

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter of the 16th concerning the RID diversity statement and my position (and St. Jerome's) on the boycott of Israeli institutions.

I do of course understand that it would be very difficult for an institution like RID, at least at this stage, to be seen to condone a boycott of Israel. It took some 25 or 30 years for the boycott of Apartheid South Africa to be formally adopted by most academic and professional institutions around the world, though many individuals had been putting it into practice since the early 1960s and more intensively since the mid 1970s. Individual and institutional positions will inevitably diverge considerably at this stage of the boycott campaign.

I understand and respect your statement on linguistic diversity. These are precisely the principles many of us see as providing strong justifications for the boycott. It is because Palestinian academics, professionals, deaf children and adults are reduced to being invisible ghosts that we have to fight to give them a voice, indeed to simply remind our colleagues that they exist even though they never meet them at conferences or see them published. Palestinian academics and professionals are harrassed on a daily basis, denied visas to pursue their study abroad, arrested, tortured, and those in Gaza cannot even get pens and notepads now to pursue their education, let alone publish in international journals. Deaf children and adults in Gaza cannot get hearing aids <http://alanhartdiary.blogspot.com/2007/10/deaf-world-for-deaf-children.html>.

While applauding the RID stance on linguistic diversity, I wonder what it means for RID "To actively foster an inclusive environment" and to commit "to establishing and maintaining a diverse, accessible, civil and supportive environment" if it is prepared to ignore the massive Israeli assault on Palestinian society, including deaf adults and children as well as academics and professionals? Who is this inclusive environment accessible to and supportive of? Does support extend to Palestinians, and if so does the RID propose to alert its members to the grave violations of their educational and human rights?

I appreciate that these are difficult questions for an organisation like RID to address, and I can assure you they are not posed in a provocative spirit but in a genuine attempt to explain why more and more individuals like

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myself, political parties like the Green Party in the US and in Britain, and trade unions like some sections of CUPE in Canada and UNISON in the UK, among others, are advocating all forms of cultural and academic boycott as a non-violent means of drawing attention to the extreme horror being inflicted on our colleagues in Palestine on a daily basis. Ronnie Kasrils (one of the leaders of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and incidentally a Jew) has recently described the situation in the West Bank and Gaza as "worse than apartheid". "I try in vain", he says, "to recall anything quite as obscene in apartheid South Africa" (see the Mail and Guardian, 21 May 2007, http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?area=insight/insight_comment_and_analysis/&articleid=308966).

I trust that this message and my personal statement which you have helpfully provided a link to on your website will enable your members to assess the St. Jerome position and their own involvement on an individual basis as a matter of personal conscience. If, however, you feel that further clarification is needed I would be more than happy to explain any aspect of the boycott to the RID board or its membership.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this message and let me know whether you would like a hard copy sent by post.

Best regards,

Mona Baker

Personal website: www.monabaker.com
Resources for Translation Studies:
<http://www.monabaker.com/tsresources/>

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