

**Against the Arts of Occupation!  
Cancel the "Israel" space at the Biennale in Venice!**

As the Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign we are appalled to see that this year's edition of the Biennale at Venice has become a platform for the glorification of war crimes and colonial-military conquest, dressed up as art.

The "Israel" space in the "Biennale Architecture" section shows a horrifying mixture of violations of Human Rights, international law and the most fundamental ethic norms of post world war II arts.

The exhibit "LIFE SAVER - Typology of Commemoration in Israel - Architecture and Society" includes a representation of the "Memorial of the Negev Brigade" and the "Museum of the Palmach history."

Palmach, the Zionist paramilitary and terror force banned even under the British Mandate Authorities, developed and implemented a major part of the attacks against the 513 Palestinian villages that were destroyed and depopulated in 1948 during the Nakbe. This was at the base of the construction of the state of Israel and led to the expulsion of over 800,000 Palestinians. The Negev brigade, created out of the Palmach, is today part of the Israeli occupation army and has implemented the ethnic cleansing of the historic city of Ramle and ensured the expulsion of over 110,000 Bedouins from the Negev(Naqab).

The exhibit glorifies the "heroes" of the Israeli secret services with a reproduction of the "National Museum of the Fallen of the Israeli Intelligence Services". There is insufficient space here to list all the "extra-judicial" assassinations and instances of torture this force is executing almost daily against the Palestinian population and others

For all those interested in violations of International Law and UN resolutions, the exhibit offers the representation of the "Memorial of Ammunition Hill for the Six Days War", built on land occupied in 1967. Since then the hill has been the site of the Zionist colonization of Jerusalem, most symbolically the two police headquarters built on illegally occupied Palestinian land. With other colonies, Ammunition Hill forms a double ring of Israeli around the Palestinian presence in their capital, illegally annexing agricultural and residential space.

The colonial Israeli settlements, created for Jews only on occupied Palestinian land demonstrate particularly clearly the use of architecture within racist Israeli policies. New settlements are constantly being constructed on Palestinian land. Only last Monday, Ehud Olmert approved the construction of 690 new homes for Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank. The project of settlement finds its natural fulfillment in the construction of the Apartheid Wall. The project of the Wall aims to steal

some 48% of West Bank land, imprisoning Palestinian cities and communities literally in ghettos behind razor wire or up to 9 meter high cement walls.

The official presentation of the event legitimizes a social and cultural ethos based on permanent war against the indigenous Palestinian population: "the justification of the Israelis wars legitimates the loss of lives in the past and their possible loss in the future; the continuation of unconditional cooperation between the military and defense establishment and the individual citizen."

What is not said is that the complicity of all sectors of Israeli society contributes to the loss of lives among the oppressed, occupied and expelled people. What is not commemorated are 60 years of expulsion, assassinations and the occupation of the Palestinian people at the hands of the state of Israel.

The official presentation actually states: "The creation of those buildings and their architectonic design confirm existing myths and social decrees within the particular context of the Israeli society." In the myth of the land without people, the indigenous Palestinian population is excluded and negated with the same determination with which the political strategists plan our vanishing behind cement walls.

It is unsurprising that the Israeli government has chosen to present an exhibit of this kind, as it bases itself on these myths and glorifications just as much as on its war economy.

Neither is it surprising that the Israeli government and Jewish National Fund have sponsored this event. The "agencies" (*NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS*) name is misleading as this Zionist Para-state institution has contributed since its inception significantly to the theft of Palestinian land, to the expulsion of the inhabitants from these lands and Israeli colonization.

We refuse, however, to believe that the cultural and moral values of Italy can be reconciled with this exhibit. We believe that that the organizers of the Biennial must recognize that cooperation with the state of Israel means complicity with the propaganda of the occupation and the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their land.

Together with a series of Palestinian academic and professional organizations we call for the immediate cancellation of the "Israel space". We are not asking for a "soft" version of the exhibit that hides the truth expressed in the current exhibit, but a refusal to present Israeli architecture.

We ask the world of culture, academia and the Italian civil society to mobilize and to oppose this abuse of cultural spaces at the service of the occupation.

While the "Israel" space at the Venice Biennale celebrates the colonial, military and racist use of architecture until the 19th of November, from the 9th to the 16th of that month in over 30 countries in the world movements and organizations will mobilize for the 4th annual week of campaign against the Apartheid Wall.

Over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations have united to give out a call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel on the 9th of July 2004, the date of the first anniversary of the ICJ decision calling for the dismantling of the wall that today is almost forgotten.

We ask all conscientious people and organizations to unite in calling for the dismantling of the "Israel" exhibit and to work for an end to international complicity with the rhetoric and the reality of occupation, apartheid and expulsion.