



Timothy Walker

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Paris, September 22, 2011

Dear Timothy Walker,

We are writing to express our dismay upon learning that four members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra have been suspended for nine months for signing a letter in the *Independent*, protesting a proms invitation to the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, seeing the latter as "perhaps Israel's prime asset" in the so-called "Brand Israel" campaign. The only fault of cellist Sue Sutherley and violinists Tom Eisner, Nancy Elan and Sarah Streatfeild was to exercise their freedom of conscience in support of a controversial position. It is outrageous to see the LPO assert the right to censor the public speech of its members.

The claim that the four musicians, by identifying themselves as LPO members, were somehow associating the LPO with their signatures does not stand up to scrutiny. Citizens of a democracy should be free to identify themselves with a cause without fear of reprisals on the part of their employer. The suspension is not only contrary to democratic principles, it sets a dangerous precedent with regard to labor law and established rights of free speech.

As a reaction to decades of oppression and to the failure of all attempts at peace, and taking inspiration from the South African struggle against apartheid, the Palestinian people have called on artists of conscience to join the movement of Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, in order to end the longest conflict in recent history. The BDS campaign asks for nothing more than the application of international law: ending the settlements, the occupation, the blockade of Gaza, and dismantling the Wall; ending apartheid for the Palestinian citizens of Israel; and the right of return for all refugees.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra should be proud to host artists who have joined this non-violent call to boycott Israel, and in this way help to bring about equality of rights and justice in Palestine-Israel. The LPO should reconsider its decision and reinstate these musicians.

We remain at your disposal for any further information.

The French BDS Campaign

<http://www.bdsfrance.org/>

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