

March 7, 2009

TLVFEST / Yair Hochner
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Dear Yair:

After much wrestling with these difficult issues, I've come to a decision: I can't show *Fig Trees* in your festival, and I can't go forward with my proposed film shoot in Israel.

This choice has been very difficult to make. As I've said before, I have great respect for the work you're doing, and know what a struggle your festival faces to keep going. I want to be very clear: my decision isn't in opposition to your festival, which has done much to promote the voices of global queers, or to you, who have done much to get queer films made and shown in your city. Instead, I feel I must join the many Jews and non-Jews, Israelis and Palestinians, queers and otherwise, who are part of the growing global BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement against Israeli apartheid. I've come to the conclusion that, in this moment, to not take this stand is unthinkable, impossible.

Why this moment? I could answer: Another Palestinian home bulldozed in East Jerusalem. Palestinian children recovering slowly from phosphorous burns. Civilian killed on Friday in Gaza by Israeli soldiers. Child born at checkpoint, because ambulance was held for three hours. These were some of today's headlines, but they're also eerily reminiscent of so many headlines, over so many decades. Is this moment more intolerable? By what yardstick?

The Israeli apartheid forum this week, and particularly Naomi Klein's speech, helped clarify my thoughts. Her words took me back to the BDS movement of the eighties, against South African apartheid, and the first 16mm film I ever made, which was in support of that struggle, clips of which are included in *Fig Trees*.

The cultural boycott worked in South Africa's case, and led directly to the sweeping changes and activism that *Fig Trees* celebrates in song. Therefore, in the spirit of the film, and those activists, I don't feel there's a choice any longer. Like you, I yearn for the morning when this horrendous conflict will end, with a lasting, just peace. I yearn for the afternoon when this growing BDS movement can be declared obsolete, because it's no longer necessary. I yearn for the evening when we can together attend screenings of *Fig Trees* and other sexy new queer operas, Palestinian and Israeli, in both Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

With respect,

John Greyson