

THE RUSSELL TRIBUNAL ON PALESTINE

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP) is yet another effort in the global campaign to delegitimize Israel and promote boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against it. The RToP has been denounced as “another milestone in the history of intellectual dishonesty...[and].... virulent bias.”¹

Anti-Israel groups organized the RToP in March, 2009, shortly after Israel's war against Hamas ended. Modeled on similar “international people's tribunals” that began with the widely criticized Russell Tribunal on Viet Nam in 1966, the RToP's goal is to coerce the international community to punish Israel by accusing international actors of being complicit in Israel's alleged crimes. The RToP tries to portray itself as an official tribunal, but like its predecessors, it was not formed by any official international body with legal authority, and it has no legal standing.²

At a 2012 event in London, RToP coordinator Frank Barat said that **200,000 people should die** to achieve a one state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.³

The RToP planned five sessions, each designed to promote a different aspect of BDS:

- **Barcelona, March, 2010: Political/diplomatic boycotts.** The RToP called for European countries to end their political relations with Israel. It focused on “complicities and omissions of the European Union and its member states” with Israel's alleged violations.⁴ “It urged that ‘the existing legal actions in the context of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS)... be stepped up and expanded within the European Union’ and that Israeli officials visiting the EU be prosecuted or extradited.”⁵
- **London, November, 2010: Economic boycotts.** The RToP judged that international corporations that had commerce with Israel were complicit in Israel's alleged “violations of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and war crimes”⁶ and should sever their economic relations with it.
- **Cape Town, November, 2011: Convicting Israel of the crime of Apartheid**
- **New York, October, 2012: Political/diplomatic sanctions.** The RToP will expose “the complicity... of the [UN] and [US] in the... continuous violations of the rights of the Palestinian people by Israel.”⁷
- **TBA, February, 2013: Concluding session.** The fifth session will present the RToP's final conclusions.⁸

Key Facts

The Tribunal was established by and receives support from leading anti-Israel forces.

- The RToP was established by Palestine Liberation Organization official Leila Shahid, The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and anti-Israel professor Nurit Peled.⁹
- The RToP receives funding through the WESPAC Foundation, the financial sponsor of Adalah-NY: The New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel and other extreme anti-Israel organizations.¹⁰

The Tribunal is not an official body. It was not organized by an international body with legal authority, and it has no legal standing. It is recognized as a biased, juridical farce.

- The original Russell Tribunal on Viet Nam had had no legal standing, and had been denounced as a “juridical farce” even by veteran anti-Israel activist Richard Falk.¹¹ Largely financed by North Vietnam, the Tribunal indicted the U.S. for the Viet Nam War, but no witnesses were called to present the U.S. point of view.¹²
- Judge Richard Goldstone wrote that “It is not a ‘tribunal.’ The ‘evidence’ is going to be one-sided and the members of the ‘jury’ are critics whose harsh views of Israel are well known.”¹³
- Elliot Abrams denounced it as “another milestone in the history of intellectual dishonesty...[and]... virulent bias, and Hollywood-style self-aggrandizement.”¹⁴
- One journalist who attended the Cape Town conference reported that “Not only was I not allowed to ask any questions, but in attempting to raise issues of concern, I was thrown to the floor, dragged out of the conference and threatened with more violence.”¹⁵
- Another journalist described the Cape Town session as “lurid political theater.”¹⁶

The goal of the tribunal is to mobilize public opinion and civil society against Israel in order to implement BDS.¹⁷

- Stated aim of the tribunal is to identify the parties responsible for the failure to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, condemn them, “in full view of international public opinion,” and, “contribute to the mobilization and... involvement of civil society in all the states concerned on the question of Palestine.”¹⁸
- The goal is not to determine whether Israel is guilty of the alleged crimes, which is taken as a given, but rather to mobilize the international community to implement BDS.

The jury and witnesses are well-known anti-Israel extremists.

- The 14 members of the “jury” are all well-known anti-Israel activists, including Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Cynthia Mckinney, John Dugard, and Ronald Kasrils, among others.¹⁹
- Only four of the jurors have any claim to knowledge or professional expertise in law; the others are actors, writers, and activists.²⁰
- The witnesses include activists from Code Pink, the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, and numerous other organizations leading the global campaign against Israel.²¹

- ¹ Elliot Abrams, "Another Effort to Destroy Israel," *Weekly Standard*, Nov. 5, 2011 at http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/another-effort-destroy-israel_607792.html
- ² Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Home," op cit.
- ³ Russell Tribunal, "Frank Barat, coordinator of RToP, interviews Alice Walker for the New Internationalist...", *Twitter*, August 23, 2012, at <http://twitter.com/russelltribunal/status/238629458746155008>; Richard Millet, "Anti-Israel activist Antony Loewenstein: 'Six Million Should die,'" *StandWithUs*, August, 23, 2012, at http://standwithus.com/app/iNews/view_n.asp?ID=2418
- ⁴ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Barcelona Session," March 1-3, 2010, at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/barcelona-session>
- ⁵ Elliot Abrams, "Another Effort to Destroy Israel," *Weekly Standard*, Nov. 5, 2011 at http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/another-effort-destroy-israel_607792.html
- ⁶ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "London session," November 20-22, 2010, at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/london-session>
- ⁷ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "New York Session," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/future-sessions>
- ⁸ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Final Session," n.d. at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/final-session>
- ⁹ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "How we operate," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/about-rtop/how-we-operate>; Henry Norr, "Nurit Peled-Elhanan's moving reflections on the occupation's 45th birthday," June 15, 2012, at <http://mondoweiss.net/2012/06/nurit-peled-elhanan-moving-reflections-on-the-occupations-45th-birthday.html>
- ¹⁰ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Support Us," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/support-us>; Adalah-NY, "Donations to Adalah-NY," n.d., at <http://adalahny.org/civicism/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=1>; The Palestine Freedom Project, "Donate," n.d., at <http://palestinefreedom.org/support/donate>; Brooklyn for Peace, "Israel-Palestine Committee," n.d., at <http://brooklynpeace.org/brooklynforpeace/committees/israel-palestine/?p=55>; Israeli Apartheid Week, "IAW 2010 New York (archived)," n.d., at <http://apartheidweek.org/node/543>
- ¹¹ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, Judith Apter and Judith Apter Klinghoffer, "International Citizens' Tribunals," *PALGRAVE*, 2002, at <http://books.google.com/books?id=6OcpzG7iNtoC&lpq=PA196&dq=international%20people%20tribunals&pg=PA134#v=onepage&q=juridical%20farce&f=false>
- ¹² "Russell's Tribunal," *Montreal Gazette*, May 11, 1967 at <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1946&dat=19670511&id=HkMjAAAIBAJ&sjid=HbkFAAAAIBAJ&pg=3600,2586562>
- ¹³ Judge Richard Goldstone, "Israel and the Apartheid Slander," October 31, 2011 at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/israel-and-the-apartheid-slander.html?_r=2&ref=opinion
- ¹⁴ Elliot Abrams, "Another Effort to Destroy Israel," *Weekly Standard*, Nov. 5, 2011 at http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/another-effort-destroy-israel_607792.html
- ¹⁵ Janis Just, "An Open Letter to the Russell Tribunal," Nov. 8, 2011
- ¹⁶ Rudi Massyn, "Lurid political theatre," *The Citizen*, Nov. 6, 2011 at <http://www.citizen.co.za/citizen/content/en/citizen/opinion-columnists?oid=237574&sn=Detail&pid=146826&Lurid-political-theatre>
- ¹⁷ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Home," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/>
- ¹⁸ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Home," op cit.
- ¹⁹ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "The Jury," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/about-rtop/jury>; NGO Monitor, "The Jury for the Russell Tribunal on Palestine – Are they Impartial?" *Russelltribunal.com*, July 27, 2012, at <http://russelltribunal.com/jury.html>
- ²⁰ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "The Jury," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/about-rtop/jury>; NGO Monitor, "The Jury for the Russell Tribunal on Palestine – Are they Impartial?" *Russelltribunal.com*, July 27, 2012, at <http://russelltribunal.com/jury.html>
- ²¹ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "London Session Programme," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/london-session/programme>; Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Conclusions of the first International Session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine," n.d., at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CONCLUSIONS-TRP-FINAL-EN-last.pdf>; Russell Tribunal on Palestine, "Cape Town session," November 5-7, 2011, at <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/sessions/south-africa>