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Open Letter to the University of Vienna, Institute for African Studies

We, the undersigned, condemn the interference by the Austrian Students' Union (ÖH), the Jewish Austrian Students' Union (JÖH) and others in a lecture series organized by the Institute for African Studies, the research platform Mobile Cultures and Societies and the Association Dar al Janub.

The Institute for African Studies already hosted Dr. Greg Thomas, associate professor for Black Studies and Literature in English from Tufts University on 29th of May 2018. Professor Thomas gave a talk titled *The Complete Fanon: African Revolution, Black Power Movement, and Neo-colonial Imperialism*.

Another lecture is scheduled for the 21st of June. It will be given by former Black Panther member Dhoruba bin Wahad, who will reflect upon the Black Panther struggle and his 19 years of imprisonment in the US.

The attempt to prevent both lectures is based on the argument that the Association Dar al Janub supports the Palestinian-led international Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement for freedom, justice and equality for the Palestinian people. Therefore—according to the argument—the association should not be allowed to hold events at the University of Vienna or even just to engage in cooperation with various departments and academic staff.

We strongly believe that such efforts violate academic freedom and the right to free speech at the University of Vienna.

The invitation of Greg Thomas and Dhoruba bin Wahad aims to open up the academic space to engage with Black Civil Rights activists, their community struggles for justice and equality and their histories. These histories are entangled with transnational solidarity campaigns which include the BDS movement, as Angela Davis reminded us in her talk at the University of Vienna on the occasion of its 650th anniversary in 2015.

As much as we respect and support the democratic value of student unions to actively participate in debates about University politics and events planned on campus, we are deeply concerned about the attempt to prevent the upcoming lecture by Dhoruba bin Wahad and to exercise pressure on the Institute of African Studies to withdraw from cooperation with Dar al Janub.

We urge the University of Vienna and the board of the Institute of African Studies to support open discussions and the upcoming event.

Signatures (in chronological order, as of 14 June 2018):

- Dr Nick Evans, University of Cambridge
- Max Leak, Oxford University (Alumnus)
- Jonathan Rosenhead, Emeritus Professor, Department of Management, London School of Economics
- Professor Dr. Richard Seaford, University of Exeter, UK
- Dr Les Levidow, Senior Research Fellow, Open University, UK
- Dr Anne Alexander, University of Cambridge
- Tom Hickey, University of Brighton, UK
- John Chalcraft, Professor of Middle East History and Politics | Government Department, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- Jonathan M Woodham, Emeritus Professor of Design History, Brighton
- James Dickins, Prof. of Arabic, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
- Dr Patricia McManus, School of Humanities, University of Brighton
- Dr Don Crewe PhD, School of Social Sciences, Leeds Beckett University, UK
- Dr Mette Wiggen, School of Politics & International Studies (POLIS), University of Leeds
- Dr Rasha Soliman - University of Leeds
- Professor Matt Meyer, Senior Research Scholar, UMass/Amherst Resistance Studies Initiative; UN representative, International Peace Research Association
- Dr Lori Allen, SOAS, University of London
- Dr Theodore Koulouris, Senior Lecturer in Media Theory, School of Media, University of Brighton
- Ruth Orli Moshkovitz, University of Vienna (alumna)
- Dhoruba al-Mujahid bin Wahad, former member of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army
- Prof. Neve Gordon, Marie Curie Fellow, School of Law, Queen Mary University, London
- Bob Brecher, Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Brighton UK
- Dr Robin Dunford, School of Humanities, University of Brighton
- Ray Bush, Professor of African Studies and Development Politics, POLIS, University of Leeds
- Barnaby Raine, Columbia University

- Dr Clint Le Bruyns, Director, Theology and Development Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- Prof. Marwan Rashed, Sorbonne Université, department of Philosophy
- Mag. Peter Unterweger, Secretary, Int'l Metalworkers Federation, ret.
- Herman De Ley, Emeritus Professor, University of Ghent, Belgium
- Naor Ben-Yehoyada, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University
- Dr Sam Durrant, Associate Professor in Postcolonial Literature, School of English, Leeds University
- Dr Ghada Karmi, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, UK
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- Javier Barquin Ruiz, Associate Professor, Departament Didáctics and School Planning, Faculty of Education, Malaga University, Spain
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- Josef Pampalk, PhD, retired lecturer at Dept. African Studies, University Vienna
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- Dror Warschawski, Research Associate, CNRS, Paris, France
- Wilhelm Langthaler, author and activist
- Isabel Frey, Junior Researcher, VUmc, Amsterdam
- Iris Hefets, Psychoanalyst, Berlin, Germany
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- Dr. Daniel Winkler, Ass.-Prof., Romanistik, Universität Wien
- Mag. Dr. Arno Sonderegger, Privatdozent, Senior Lecturer, Institute of African Studies, University of Vienna
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- Mag. Elke Christiansen, StudienService Institut für Internationale Entwicklung

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- Doris Ghannam, activist, Berlin

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- Peter Eglin, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University Waterloo, Canada
- Professor Lila Abu-Lughod, Department of Anthropology/Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality, Columbia University, New York
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