

# “Professors for Israel” try to Shut down Leading Medical Journal The Lancet

By [Jonathan Cook](#)

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*Academia is far from the bastion of free thinking and free speech it would like to claim for itself, as a newly confected “row” involving the leading medical journal The Lancet confirms.*

Recently Southampton University in the UK caved in on hosting an important conference examining Israel and international law, following an intensive campaign of intimidation from Israeli apologists.

Now some 400 medical professors are blackmailing Reed Elsevier, publishers of The Lancet, by threatening to boycott its publications unless the company sacks editor Richard Horton – or as they duplicitously phrase it, “enforce appropriate ethical standards of editorship”.

By refusing to publish papers or peer review them, the professors, including five Nobel winners, hope Reed Elsevier will capitulate from fear that such a boycott might bring it to its knees.

Why target Horton? Because he has committed the cardinal sin of transforming what was once a sleepy academic publication into a journal dealing seriously with global health issues, including – and here’s the rub – reporting on the medical implications for Palestinians of Israel’s occupation, especially its attack on Gaza last summer.

According to the eminent professors, this is “stereotypical extremist hate propaganda” and “dishonest and malicious material that incites hatred and violence”.

What the professors would like is for The Lancet to follow the medical establishment’s traditional Three Wise Monkeys approach: they see, hear and speak no evil when it comes to Israel’s oppression of Palestinians, including its [documented torture](#), even of children, in its prisons, overseen by Israeli doctors.

Much is at stake here. Very gradually, the space to have an honest and critical debate about Israel is opening up in places where once it was almost impossible, including in the media, in academia and even among the conservative medical community. Those committed to protecting Israel at all costs are desperate to shut down those spaces. It is important that we don’t let them succeed.

There are signs that the apologists’ hand is weakening. Note that Southampton University was so incapable of justifying its decision to shut down the conference on academic or ethical grounds, it was forced to lie and claim that, despite [police assurances](#) that they could cope with any protests, the conference could not go ahead because of “safety concerns”.

Therefore, we should support Horton and The Lancet and make sure Reed Elsevier understands that there is also a price to pay if it capitulates to the authoritarian professors. It is good to see that a rival set of medical academics has already written to Reed Elsevier in support of Horton and The Lancet [here](#).

[www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/major-medical-journal-lancet-under-attack-for-extremist-hate-propaganda-over-its-coverage-of-the-israelipalestinian-conflict-10199892.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/major-medical-journal-lancet-under-attack-for-extremist-hate-propaganda-over-its-coverage-of-the-israelipalestinian-conflict-10199892.html)

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