



September 24, 2012

Mr. Thom Mayne
Morphosis Architects, Incorporated
153 West 27th Street, Suite 1200
New York, New York 10001

Dear Mr. Mayne:

It has come to our attention that your firm has been awarded the bid to design the first academic building on the proposed Cornell-Technion campus on Roosevelt Island. We are writing to let you know that many in the architecture community, as well as students at Cornell University, academics, human and civil rights organizations in the United States and abroad, and Roosevelt Island residents, are deeply troubled by the Cornell partnership with the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, an Israeli university that is strongly implicated in the oppression and subjugation of the Palestinian people. Considering the renowned status of Morphosis in the world of architecture, the ethical and professional credentials of your firm may be at stake due to your participation in this project. Hence, we urge you to reconsider your involvement in the CornellNYC Tech project based on the following information.

The Technion is a research university that collaborates with the Israeli government to develop technology vital to Israel's oppressive and aggressive operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Palestinian people are enduring the longest military occupation in modern history, in which every aspect of Palestinian life is controlled, regulated, and policed through use of soldiers, tear gas, tanks, and the illegal Separation Wall that divides people's land. Israeli research institutions such as the Technion provide the research and development as well as the strategies and planning behind Israel's military occupation. The Technion is not just linked to the occupation but deeply complicit with it, working hand in hand with Israel's military. Israel's brutal occupation has been clearly condemned by the United Nations and human rights organizations for its persistent breaches of international law and human rights.

Although many of us would like to believe in the innocence of academic institutions in light of the advancements they may provide, we cannot ignore what Cornell's partnership with the Technion represents for the contemporary struggle against apartheid. We ask Morphosis Architects to join us in the present-day struggle against Israeli apartheid and ethnic cleansing, by reconsidering and ultimately declining participation in the CornellNYC Tech project. We invite you to take a closer look at the Technion's record of complicity in Israel's violations of international law:

againstcornelltechnion.wordpress.com

- The Technion boasts a partnership with Elbit Systems, one of Israel's largest private weapons manufacturers. Elbit manufactured the drones that Israel used during its bombing of civilians in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008-09. This collaboration has played a leading role not only in the construction and surveillance of the Separation Wall in Palestine, but also along the U.S.-Mexico border through its subsidiary, Kollsman.
- The Technion trains its engineering students to work with companies dealing "directly in the development of complex weapons in the process of researching their academic theses" [1]. In one example involving Elbit Systems, the reward has been the funding of research grants upwards of \$500,000 to Technion students conducting research [2].
- One of Technion's most notorious projects resulted in the development of a remote-control function on the Caterpillar's 'D9' bulldozer, which is "used by the Israeli army to demolish Palestinian houses and farms and the development of a method for detecting underground tunnels, specifically developed in order to assist the Israeli army in its continued siege on the Gaza Strip" [3].
- The Technion has deep relations with Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, one of Israel's largest government-sponsored weapons manufacturers famous for its "advanced hybrid armor protection system" used in Israel's Merkava tanks [4]. Technion has developed an "MBA program tailored specifically for Rafael managers" that further solidifies the connections it has forged between academia and Israel's military-industrial complex [5].
- The Technion has granted Israeli army reservists who participated in the Israeli massacre of Gaza in 2008-2009 "academic benefits in addition to the usual benefits for reservists" [6]. In fact the Technion practices racial discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel under the pretext that they do not serve in the military, by granting military-specific scholarships.

While many of the above points may seem isolated, they represent actions undertaken at the expense of Palestinian life. You may be aware that an international appeal has been issued to halt the collaboration between Cornell and the Technion [7]. This appeal was issued in response to a Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israeli businesses, organizations, and institutions implicated in crimes against humanity and other violations of international law.

In light of this appeal, Morphosis Architects' participation in the CornellNYC Tech project not only implicates the firm's professional practice in international crimes and legal violations, but renders it likewise subject to negative publicity and potential boycott.

We urge you not to risk jeopardizing Morphosis Architects' reputation with further involvement in the CornellNYC Tech project, until Cornell disassociates from the Technion, an Israeli institution that is "directly implicated in war crimes" [8].

At every moment in history we face conflicts in which people must choose silence or find the strength to struggle against what they know is wrong. We therefore ask that Morphosis

Architects join us in sending a firm message that the Cornell-Technion Partnership is unacceptable.

Sincerely yours,

New Yorkers Against the Cornell-Technion Partnership (NYACT)
 Roosevelt Islanders for Accountability & Transparency (RIACT)
 Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR)
 Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine
 Cornell University Students for Justice in Palestine
 John Jay College for Criminal Justice Students for Justice in Palestine
 Hunter College Students for Justice in Palestine
 Brooklyn College Students for Justice in Palestine
 Jews Say No!
 JVP-Westchester
 Arab American Forum
 Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance
 Muslim Solidarity Committee, Albany, NY
 Adalah-NY
 WESPAC Foundation
 Committee for Open Discussion of Zionism (CODZ)
 U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI)
 Boycott Against Israeli Apartheid Campaign Vancouver
 Labor for Palestine
 New York City Labor Against the War
 Coalition to Defend the Egyptian Revolution
 Campaign for Peace and Democracy
 Occupy Wall Street – Global Justice Working Group
 New York City War Resisters League
 International Socialist Organization (ISO)

Sources:

[1] Uri Yacobi Keller, *The Economy of the Occupation: A Socioeconomic Bulletin* (Jerusalem: Alternative Information Center, 2009), p. 10,

http://usacbi.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/economy_of_the_occupation_23-24.pdf.

[2] *Ibid.*, 10-11.

[3] *Ibid.*, 9.

[4] “Structures of Oppression: Why McGill and Concordia Universities Must Sever their Links with the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology,” 4,

<http://www.tadamon.ca/wp-content/uploads/Technion-English.pdf>.

[5] *Ibid.*, 3-4.

[6] Keller, 12-13 (see link above).

[7] See: <http://www.usacbi.org/2011/12/open-letter-to-cornell-university-dont-collaborate-with-apartheid/>.

[8] See: <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1829> ; and <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/in-opposition-to-cornell-university/>.