

Palestine Solidarity Campaign



Annual Report 2007



Introduction: Political developments in 2007 and PSC's response

Over the last year the Israeli government deepened its occupation of the Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip. For the Palestinian people, the 2006 election of Hamas continues to be an excuse for the world to ignore the aggression and illegality of the Israeli occupation. Israel's siege of Gaza and its incursions into the West Bank and increased settlement building are condemned by humanitarians, UN spokespersons and authoritative institutions worldwide, yet governments including our own have been complicit in Israel's collective punishment and flouting of international law. International aid for Palestinians has been tied up with conditions, and often does not reach the people or is used to build projects which are then destroyed by Israel at the first opportunity.

The huge efforts for a Palestinian Unity Government made by representatives of all sections of the Palestinian political spectrum, representing 96 per cent of the Palestinian electorate and backed by the Arab states, failed as sections of the traditional leadership were wooed by Israel and the West into the continuing boycott of the elected Hamas leaders. A third of the elected members of the Palestinian Authority, including ministers, have been abducted and imprisoned by Israel. The US further undermined Palestinian unity by providing weapons to exacerbate internal conflict, Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007, which Israel used as a justification of its intensification of the siege of Gaza and the collective punishment of its people.

Israel, having destroyed the PA institutions developed under the leadership of secular national political figures since the Oslo Accords,

is now attempting to separate the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. The declaration by Israel that Gaza is 'hostile territory' and the siege illustrates to all the intentions of the Israeli state to deliberately create a humanitarian disaster in order to further fragment the Palestinian people and prevent the creation of a Palestinian state in any other guise than a Bantustan client state.

When President Bush held talks with Abbas and Olmert in Annapolis in November 2007 he reiterated his support for a state. However immediately afterwards the actions of the Israeli government, in building more settlements to cut off Jerusalem from the Palestinians, yet again confirmed that the Israeli government is no partner for peace.

While people died because the blockade denied them medical assistance, and essential food aid was prevented from entering Gaza, there was a shameful silence from many world leaders. The World Bank, OCHA, Christian Aid, Oxfam and other authorities provided information about the devastation, and illustrated the futility of pouring in money while there is no possibility of trade and economic activity, and the occupation continues. Meanwhile Israel's military attacks and assassinations continue in the West Bank and Gaza.

Today more than 7 million Palestinian refugees remain exiled around the world, many in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza, and no attempt has been made to include the refugees themselves in the peace process or to find a durable and just solution to their plight.

It is only by international pressure and action that the Israeli government can be stopped from carrying out its expansionism and the destruction of all Palestinian aspirations for justice and a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. The importance of international solidarity

work in creating this pressure must not be underestimated.

The PSC continued to focus on bringing pressure on the British government to change its policy of complicity with Israel. There has been no apparent change since Gordon Brown took over as Prime Minister. We have worked with our honorary chair, Jeremy Corbyn MP and other parliamentarians on raising the issue through EDMs and debates, and held meetings in the House of Commons. We have had letter writing campaigns and an 'End the Siege' postcard campaign. Local branches have organised lobbies of local MPs, notably Margaret Beckett and Hilary Benn.

Nationally and locally, the excellent work of PSC members is helping to change consciousness in Britain. The Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns are continuing, with nationally coordinated actions and many local initiatives, such as the protest at the England/Israel football match at Wembley. The links which many branches have with Palestinian villages, towns and refugee camps continue to develop successfully. Members have responded to the End the Siege of Gaza Campaign with vigils and events all over the country.

The first PSC trade union delegation in January 2008 was very successful and should enable us to develop our work in the trade union and labour movement. It should be followed by other specialist delegations.

PSC started the year committed to working with as many organisations as possible to bring the injustice perpetrated against the Palestinian people to the fore in Britain. We did this through the Enough! coalition. The EC, staff and members across the country worked diligently to do this and we had a successful rally and demonstration on 9th June and a lobby of parliament on 28th November.

Increasingly PSC is being asked to contribute to international solidarity events as our work is seen as good practice. We have taken part in these whenever this will be beneficial and with regard to costs. Our international conference in October brought together activists from Palestine and around the world to discuss building an international anti-apartheid movement for Palestine. The conference served to help coordinate future activities with a focus on BDS. Such events are an opportunity to learn about the complexity of the situation inside Palestine as well as the different conditions in other countries working for Palestine.

PSC is working successfully in a wide range of milieu including trade unions, student groups, faith organisations, community and peace groups. This is possible because we maintain our position as a solidarity movement that self-determination is the fundamental principle for which we campaign, along with an end to occupation, a sovereign Palestinian state, Jerusalem as the capital, and the right of return of the refugees.

Activities and achievements in 2007

Increasing numbers of people in Britain are acknowledging the injustice being perpetrated against the Palestinians. As support has increased, so has PSC's ability to inform, educate and bring about a change in consciousness.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem

On 9 June, 10,000 demonstrators showed their support for the Palestinians living under occupation in a march and rally held to mark the 40th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. The rally, which took place in Trafalgar Square, was organised by the Enough! coalition. The speakers at the rally included the Palestinian Ambassador to Britain, Manuel Hassassian, members of the Palestinian government, trade unionists, faith leaders, celebrities and an Israeli refusenik. Ismail Haniya delivered a video message to the crowd as Palestinian prime minister.

Lobbying parliament

This year the lobby was held as part of the Enough! campaign. In the largest lobby on Palestine to date, over 150 Members of Parliament were contacted on 28 November 2007 in the call for justice for the Palestinians. Over 500 people from all over Britain and all walks of life came to make their point to their representatives. The lobby focussed on the following issues:

- o ending the isolation of Gaza
- o calling on Israel to abide by international law
- o bringing down the illegal wall
- o respecting Palestinian democracy

The lobby was followed by a PSC public meeting with speakers including MPs, faith leaders and trade unionists.

The international conference "End Israeli Occupation — Freedom for Palestine: Building a New Anti-Apartheid Movement" was organised by PSC on 6–7 October in London

The purpose of the conference was to explore methods of coordinating an effective campaign. From the outset it was agreed that the basis of the campaign should be:

- Self-determination for the Palestinians
- An end to occupation
- Dismantling of the Apartheid Wall and settlements
- Right of return of refugees
- Full recognition of the democratically elected Palestinian government
- The right for Palestinians to live peacefully without Israeli aggression
- The release of Palestinian prisoners
- Lifting of the siege on all Palestinians

The conference was attended by approximately 70 delegates representing organisations from 13 countries from North America, Europe, the Middle East and South Africa. Twelve delegates from Palestine represented organisations from across the political spectrum, grass root networks and non-government organisations (NGOs). On the first day sessions were held on 'Palestinian expectations of the international solidarity community and the campaign in 2008' and the second was on 'Key issues for solidarity in 2008'. The day ended with a very well attended public session. During the second day, the delegates focused on campaign tactics in working groups. The full report may be downloaded from the website, or contact the office.

Public meetings

PSC has held several public meetings with a large number of high profile speakers including: the PLO Foreign Minister Farouq Kaddoumi; Bishop Riah of Jerusalem; Mustafa Barghouti, Palestinian

Minister of Information; Ilan Pappé, historian and academic; Prof. Manuel Hassassian the General Delegate to the UK, MPs including Richard Burden, Jeremy Corbyn, Sir Gerald Kaufman, Phyllis Starkey and writers and academics such as Marwan Bishara and Khaled Hroub. Many public meetings have also been organised by the PSC branches across the country.

PSC executive committee members and patrons, and branch members have spoken at a wide range of events across the country, raising awareness of the issue of Palestine.

Cultural activities

This year PSC set up a cultural advisory committee, to plan activities and events to promote Palestinian culture, to raise awareness about Palestine and to raise funds for PSC. In December our annual Christmas concert, "Voices for Bethlehem" was held in Bloomsbury Central Baptist church to a packed audience, with seasonal readings by patron and author, Ahdaf Soueif, and wonderful music from traditional English Choir the London Finzi Consort, Palestinian singer Amira Dibsy, and Firas Jabloun, oud player. A number of events have been planned for 2008, including a dabke performance, a concert and an art exhibition.

Protests

PSC staged a vigil outside the Royal Courts of Justice in support of the case brought against the British government by Saleh Hasan a farmer from Bethlehem whose land was confiscated

using military equipment provided by the UK. Unfortunately the case was not successful, but it highlighted the issue of arms related licenses to Israel.

Actions on Gaza began in December, in coordination with other groups including the British Muslim Initiative, the Palestinian Forum of Britain, Stop the War Coalition and Jews for Justice for Palestinians and will continue on a regular basis until the siege on Gaza is lifted.

PSC remains ready to respond quickly to events as they arise.

Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign

PSC branches and members worked on a number of BDS initiatives throughout the year. PSC supports the academic boycott, welcoming the resolution passed at the UCU conference for a debate on this, and was disappointed at the attempts to stifle this debate. PSC welcomed the NUJ motion in support of boycott and was disappointed at the reversal of this motion. PSC also welcomed resolutions passed by UNISON and the T&G on BDS.

PSC held a day of action at Carmel Agrexco in February 2007 and in February 2008 against the import of Israeli flowers for Valentine's Day. PSC members also protested against the Israel-England match in Israel in March and at the Israel-England Euro 2008 football match at Wembley in September. The branches and members have continued the boycott Israeli goods (BIG) campaign, refusing to buy Israeli





goods until Israel abides by international law which remains a crucial part of our ongoing campaign to raise awareness. Many branches hold stalls across the country urging shoppers to also boycott Israeli goods.

Some branches have also been lobbying their local councils to stop contracts with Veolia, which is responsible for building the light railway link between Jerusalem and the settlements. PSC members joined a vigil against the opening of a diamond store by Lev Leviev, a prominent Israeli settlement developer, in London. Members in various churches have continued to pursue the issue of disinvestment, and the imposition of sanctions remains a key PSC demand in our work in parliament and the European Union.

PSC has also continued to maintain the www.bigcampaign.org website, which contains information and articles about BDS.

Media

PSC issues regular press releases stating our position on developments related to Palestine. PSC also responds to events and biased reporting in the press, with letters frequently appearing in the national press from the PSC Executive Committee, branches and members of PSC. PSC has an email media group to counteract media bias and organise responses to articles. This has resulted in a more coherent

response to media stories, with letters appearing more frequently in the press from PSC members. PSC has also initiated and organised letters to the Guardian and other media outlets from patrons, MPs, doctors, celebrities and others on the Gaza siege and other issues. Executive members have spoken to the press and appeared regularly on programmes particularly on Islam Channel and Press TV.

PSC and BIG also helped to achieve coverage of Israeli settlement goods being imported to Britain on ITN.

Website

The new website was launched in January 2008. www.palestinecampaign.org is a comprehensive source of information for both the newcomer and the experienced campaigners. Regrettably significant problems with the technical aspects of the website still need to be addressed, and the finalised version will be available by the end of March 2008.

Campaign materials

Palestine News, PSC's quarterly magazine which provides comment and analysis on the situation in Palestine, reports on the campaign, book reviews, cultural news and updates on branch activities, continues to be well received: more than 90% of the readers of Palestine News who responded to a questionnaire said they were very pleased with the magazine and didn't wish to see any major changes — though some useful suggestions were made. The Autumn/Winter issues were combined which enabled us to economise a little at a time when our finances were overstretched. The need to increase our sales of the magazine remains an issue which we hope branches will help with.

PSC brought out the revised *Palestine — The Case for Justice*. PSC also continued to widely

distribute free factsheets on the Basic Facts, the arms trade, the settlements, Boycott Divestment and Sanctions, and prisoners. The factsheets are now also available for download on the PSC website.

PSC also produced flyers on current issues such as the siege on Gaza.

A trade union education pack was produced. It is a valuable resource for any presentation on Palestine for all audiences and is available for sale from the office. A professionally produced CD, it includes: a Power Point presentation; educational material on Palestine; a bank of resources: maps, key documents, a timeline; electronic version of PSC's *The Case for Justice* pamphlet; short film clips on: the Wall; destruction of olive groves; Hebron and the settlers; brutality of Israeli army; film on Palestinian workers in Israeli industrial zones and much more. It also includes membership and affiliation forms, and information on PSC's merchandise.

Merchandise sales

PSC merchandise is now overseen by a volunteer, which has greatly improved our ability to manage stock and orders. Merchandise is an important way of promoting the Palestinian issue and raising the profile of the campaign. As well as publications, PSC sells clothing and accessories, greetings cards, Christmas cards and calendars. PSC's 2007 Christmas card, featuring a photograph from Bethlehem by Palestinian photographer Steve Sabella was very popular. PSC also sells CDs, DVDs and books which are often not available from other sources.

Stalls

PSC has held numerous stalls at various events such as festivals, including the Coin Street festival, conferences and public meetings

throughout the year. The stalls provide an opportunity to distribute PSC factsheets and other campaign materials, sell PSC merchandise and Palestinian fair trade goods, and talk to people about the campaign, recruit new members and raise funds.

Marking 25 years of campaigning

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of PSC, a dinner attended by 100 past and present activists and supporters of PSC was held at the Lebanese Lounge in September. The diners enjoyed excellent food and music from Firas Jubran and Reem Kelani, while reminiscing about the years of campaigning, and vowing to continue until Palestine is free.

Sponsored walk in Abergavenny, Wales

To help fund our increased level of activity, a sponsored walk was held in June in a very wet Wales, with nearly 50 walkers from all over the UK participating. £20,066 was raised, and this has been used to develop PSC's new website and to fund campaigning material. We hope the walk will be an annual event. The next one will be in the Peak District on 21-22 June, and is being organised by the northern branches. We hope the weather will be better!

Branches

Two new branches have been established in Southampton and Lancaster, and the total number of branches across the UK is now 39:

- Bradford
- Brent
- Brighton & Hove
- Bristol
- Bucks & Berks
- Cambridge
- Camden
- Cheltenham
- Cardiff
- Dorset
- Durham
- East London
- Exeter
- Glasgow
- Hackney
- Halifax
- Haringey
- Hereford
- Huddersfield
- Kingston & Richmond
- Lambeth & Wandsworth
- Lancaster
- Leicester
- Liverpool
- Manchester
- Newcastle/Tyneside
- Norwich
- Nottingham
- Oxford
- Plymouth
- Sheffield
- South East London
- West Kent
- West London
- West Midlands
- West Sussex

- Wolverhampton
- York

Branch forums were held in Manchester, Bristol and London to discuss the work of branches, and had good attendances. Regular London branch forums were initiated in order to strengthen coordination and share resources among the London branches.

All the branches have been very active over the year. The following branches submitted these accounts of their activities for the Annual Report. For more details about branch activities across the country, visit our website.

Brighton and Hove (BHPSC)

BHPSC has maintained a high profile locally as well as supporting national events and campaigns. Luckily 3 of our 4 MPs are active in tabling and signing EDMs on Palestine and Caroline Lucas MEP has spoken at one of BHPSC's public meetings. BHPSC maintains links with the Palestine group at Sussex University and local peace groups. Members have joined in demonstrations against EDO, a local arms factory which manufactures equipment used against civilians by the Israeli air force, and participated in Boycott Caterpillar actions. A number of members are also part of the Tubas Friendship and Solidarity Group, which while twinning with Tubas and the Jordan Valley is a strong campaigning group on BIG and sends regular delegations to Palestine who report back to local schools and peace groups.

PSC supporters run a regular Saturday stall in the town centre, and are currently holding vigils for Gaza attracting good press coverage. A series of public meetings included the launch of the ENOUGH campaign, a showing of *The Iron Wall* and meetings with speakers on Palestine issues. BHPSC publishes a monthly information newsletter. A lobby group works on the BIG campaign, monitors the media to comment on

/object to their coverage of Palestine, resulting in a lively exchange of views on the Letters page of our local press. BHPSC has run fundraising events, including a very successful Palestine Music Evening, which was very well supported by the local Palestinian community and enabled us to donate money to the national campaign and other campaigning bodies. We hope to develop links with local trades unions.

Bristol

Throughout 2007, Bristol PSC maintained regular stalls dispensing information and selling olive oil, in the streets and at the Bristol Islamic Fair. There have been attempts to gently persuade the local branch of Fresh and Wild to cease trading with Israel, and sell Palestinian goods instead. There were five days of activity and films at the Great Green Gathering, Somerset. Bruce Kent and Betty Hunter were invited to talk at a public meeting in the city centre. The group supported the premiere of local member Ed Hill's film, *Return to Palestine*, at the Cube Microplex, local independent cinema.

Bucks/Berks

Bucks/Berks PSC held regular stalls in Reading throughout the year. Monthly branch meetings gave the opportunity for numerous public screenings of campaigning films. The branch also did film screenings for church groups, Reading International Festival and Reading University's Social Justice week. Once again working with members in Dorset our stall represented national PSC at the UCU, CWU, Tolpuddle TUC Festival and AMICUS national conferences. Talks were also given to local union branches and at Reading University. Regular lobbying was maintained with Reading's two MPs. Branch members participated in the Agrexco demo, the National demo, Wembley football demo, PSC's sponsored walk as well as seeing four of the area's MPs at Parliament on PSC's November Lobby Day. Friends of Wadi Fuqeen, the twinning group within

the branch held fundraising stalls throughout the year to raise funds for our twin village in the West Bank and are now looking forward to bringing over representatives from the village in 2008. Christmas saw a number of activities centred on Bethlehem and the New Year's already kicked off to a packed public meeting with the branch co-sponsoring a speaker from the Israeli New Profile Group on a national tour.

Co. Durham

In February, Sarah Roy, a Harvard academic who has written about the economy of Gaza, spoke at Durham University with a moving personal and professional account of the hardships faced by Palestinians under occupation. Speakers from Co. Durham PSC also spoke at a well-attended meeting at Teesside University. In March we held a Palcrafts / PSC stall at Durham Fairtrade market. In April, we welcomed the Vanunu Freedom Ride to Durham, together with local MP Roberta Blackman Woods. The cyclists, raising awareness of the continued persecution of Israeli peace activist and nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu, enjoyed a trip (+bicycles) into the Cathedral and a reception and accommodation at St. Chad's College. They were also escorted from Alnmouth and into Darlington by local cyclists, as they made their way from Faslane to London and the Israeli Embassy. In June, we generated some local press publicity about the Enough! Campaign, focussing on the 40th anniversary of the occupation. In July, we held a stall at the Miners' Gala in Durham with a special focus on football, as England and Israel were due to play each other in the qualifying round for the European cup. We also enjoyed a Garden Party, hosted by Barbara and Derek Cattell which raised £341.35 for Medical Aid for Palestinians. In September, *Paradise Now* was shown at the Durham film club. In October, we held another Palcraft Fairtrade stall in Durham and in November, PSC speakers addressed pupils at Durham Johnson school.

Working in partnership

PSC works in partnership with numerous organisations, which have similar aims and objectives, nationally and internationally. PSC is a member of the Joint Committee for Palestine (JCP) in the UK, the European Coordinating Committee for Palestine (ECCP) and the International Coordinating Network for Palestine (ICNP). The international conference held by PSC in October brought many of these organisations together to plan for 2008.

Here are some of the alliances and activities in 2007:

The Enough! Coalition

Throughout 2007, PSC worked with many organisations through the Enough! Coalition, which was set up to mark 40 years since the 1967 war. The advantages of working as a broad mainstream bringing in charities, community organisations, faith groups, trade unions and others in raising awareness of the occupation were clear to us. We put immense resources into the coalition in terms of the time of executive members, volunteers and staff, and finance. The result was a successful launch event in January, the demonstration in June and the lobby of Parliament in November.

During the year it became clear that the parameters of the coalition were very restrictive — for example some of the community organisations and campaigns were unhappy with the limited messages which could go out in the name of Enough! When we tried to put out press releases and letters in the name of Enough! the procedure was unwieldy and we missed opportunities which PSC would have dealt with speedily, for instance over Gaza.

There was also confusion for our members in that the coalition agreed to only three national events, and a series of local events in April. Some PSC branches attempted to build Enough! events. Trade unions affiliated to PSC felt that PSC should be the conduit for their work on Palestine. All of the Enough! events have always been undertaken by PSC and so the coalition did not seem to bring a substantial change.



It was understood that agreement on a political framework for the 60 year commemoration would be even more problematic, and the Enough! Coalition was only envisaged to last for the year of 2007. However we continue in our approach to working collaboratively with as many organisations as possible in 2008 and afterwards, and have built up positive relationships with many organisations. We are already meeting with other organisations on the May 10th rally and demonstration.

Trade unions

Over the last year the PSC has taken important steps forward in the development of the campaign within the trade union movement. In the last year a number of new affiliates have joined the campaign. The total number of unions now affiliated nationally is 19 (17 if you count all UNITE sections as one) — ASLEF, BECTU, BFAWU, Connect, CWU, FBU, GMB, NUM, NUT, PCS, RMT, TSSA, UCATT, UCU, UNISON, UNITE (Amicus) UNITE (TGWU), UNITE (CYWU), UNITY.

These unions represent more than 80% of the trade union movement.

The numbers of regional and local affiliations has also been increasing steadily and will form a part of the focus for the work in the coming period.

Thanks to the work of staff at the PSC Office and volunteers the conferences of many trade unions were covered with a meeting and stall leading to increased recruitment of individual members. There were invitations to address a number of union branches and international schools for example including NUT associations, NUM, Northern Region TUC, Southern and Eastern Region TUC, UNISON London Region and UNITE (CYWU) Young Workers event. In addition articles were written for a number of union journals including PCS Magazine and The Miner.

Following on the decision of the AGM to ratify the establishment of the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) which is open to all nationally affiliated trade unions, the TUAC meets on a regular timetabled basis every two months to discuss how the campaign can be developed amongst trade unionists. A key initiative that TUAC was responsible for was the production of the PSC Education Pack with the support of UNISON, UNITE and PCS. For details see campaign materials above. The Powerpoint presentations included in the pack were trialled at a number of union branches and national schools and were developed on the basis of comment and advice from a number of unions.

PSC organised its first national trade union delegation to Palestine with national representatives from PCS, TSSA, UCU, UNISON and UNITE (TGWU). The delegation was very successful both politically and organisationally and further delegations are already in preparation.

Work in the Christian communities

Work amongst Christian communities in the UK has continued through the year, with Executive member Sue Plater and York PSC Chair following up opportunities. Patrons Garth Hewitt and Bruce Kent continue to contribute ideas and hope to develop these in the coming year.

2007 began with a successful speaking tour by Bishop Riah Abu el Assal, former Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and a powerful speaker. He began at the Houses of Parliament, and then spoke in York, Liverpool, and Manchester, with additional visits to the Mosque in York and to meet with the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu.

The year included a presence at the Greenbelt Festival — where Betty Hunter was a speaker on a panel on campaigning. Many individual church members continued to lobby their leaders, and also took part in Enough! events and the Lobby of Parliament. The Bishop of Winchester spoke at the public meeting after the lobby of Parliament.

Many churches used the Christmas period to highlight the wall, using the new olive wood nativity which has a wall across it barring the wise men from entry. Publicity surrounding this reached the national press, and Amos Trust (who were importing the nativity) were overwhelmed with orders.

Students

PSC continued to campaign in 2007 to make the case for solidarity with the Palestinians throughout the student movement.

Khaled Al Mudallal, a Palestinian student studying at Bradford, brought the shocking reality of the siege of Gaza home to students when he became one of the over 700 students prevented from leaving by Israel in summer 2007. A broad

campaign was launched, which involved the PSC, lecturers' union UCU, NUS Black Students' Campaign and Bradford University Students' Union, and after serious campaigning and legal appeals, he was able to return to Bradford in December. His case was widely covered in the press including the Guardian and Independent. Since his return to the UK, Khaled has been active speaking at PSC and other events on the campaign to end the siege of Gaza.

Students' unions across the country have active Palestine groups, frequently organising meetings, freshers fayre stalls, and other actions including mock checkpoints, and passing progressive policy on Palestine in their union. PSC provided campaign materials, such as factsheets and merchandise to student groups for use at freshers fayres. PSC had a stall and fringe meeting at NUS conference, held in March 2007, and organised supportive conference delegates against a motion subscribing NUS to the EUMC definition of anti-semitism, which classes some criticisms of Israel as racist. When this motion was unfortunately passed, PSC issued a statement voicing concern at the vote.

In November, PSC organised a successful student day school at the London School of Economics, hosted by the LSESU Palestine Society and featuring speakers such as Dr Manuel Hassassian, Jeremy Corbyn MP and Dan Judelson of Jews for Justice for Palestinians.

Members of the executive have spoken at meetings in universities across the country and it is a priority for 2008 that we promote the cause in Palestine in as many universities and colleges as possible. The General Secretary addressed a students' activist conference in Manchester and a SOAS conference on Palestinian Academic Freedom and Support for Universities of Palestine.

Students were heavily mobilised around the calls to end the siege of Gaza made by PSC and others in January and February 2008.

In the coming year PSC will be working hard to support student groups in asserting their right to speak in support of the Palestinians and in defence of fundamental human rights, mobilising the student movement to call for an end to the illegal occupation.

External conferences and meetings

In August, the General Secretary and Director attended the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society In Support Of Israeli-Palestinian Peace held at the European Parliament in Brussels. The General Secretary spoke to the conference in the session on "Fortieth anniversary of the occupation: Building on action taken by civil society and moving forward; Connecting with worldwide peace and social movements".

The call for action that came out of the conference included a call for an end to the siege on Gaza, a strengthening of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, marking of 2008 as the 60th anniversary of the Nakba and the upholding of international law.

The Chair and General Secretary attended meetings of the European Coordinating Committee on Palestine (ECCP). We are keen to coordinate with other international groups as much as possible and will continue our involvement..

The PSC Chair spoke at the two day Interpal conference in London on "Confronting the Continuing Palestinian Humanitarian Crisis".

Patrons

In January 2008 PSC welcomed our new patron, Ilan Pappé, historian and author of "The ethnic cleansing of Palestine". Ilan took a post at Exeter University this year, and we are delighted to welcome him to the UK. Ilan has spoken on many occasions across the country. His work in restoring the correct narrative of the historical events, particularly at the time of the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, is vital to our campaign.

PSC was saddened by the death of our patron, Lord Gilmour of Craigmillar, who was a long term supporter of the Palestinian people.

A patrons' tea was held this year with patrons and friends. It was an occasion to discuss the work of PSC, and explore how we can develop it further. We are grateful to our patrons for their advice and support throughout the year, and their contribution to the running of the campaign.

AGM and executive committee

In 2007 the AGM was held on 10 March and attended by over 100 members. The speakers were the Palestinian Delegate to the UK, Manuel Hassassian, the Mayor of Ramallah, Janet Michael, a representative of the British Muslim Initiative, and Ruth Winters, Jeremy Corbyn and Hugh Lanning. New appointments to the executive committee were Stephen Bolt, Zina Jardaneh, Kamel Hawwash, Miriam Scharf, Monica Wusteman, and George Woods. Two members of the Trade Union Advisory Committee, Joni McDougall and Hugh Lanning, also joined the Executive Committee.

The executive committee met 6 times during the course of 2007.



Membership

Membership figures as at January 2008 are 3160 and affiliated organisations are 202. Increasing the membership of PSC will be a key priority focus for 2008. It is expected that the new website, and increased national activities will help to draw new members in, but it is the work of the branches which is crucial in recruiting supporters to the cause of Palestine and we hope that membership will increase substantially this year.

We are very sorry that our honorary member, Peggie Preston died in November 2007. She had

dedicated her life to many causes including anti-apartheid, Vietnam and Palestine. Right to the end, Peggie could be seen at almost every event in London, whatever the weather.

National office

The new Director was appointed on 10 March and a new Finance Officer in November, joining the Administration Officer and Branch and Events Campaign Officer. This has increased the capacity of the office to build the campaign. Systems have been improved with the installation of a server and a new accounting package, and the networking and development of the membership database.

Officer meetings are held on a fortnightly basis, and enable strong links between the office and the Executive Committee.

Much of the work in the office is done by volunteers, who manage the merchandise, the membership database, organise conference stalls and fringe meetings, and send out mailings, answer the telephone and help with general administration work. PSC sends a big thank you to the volunteers, without whom we would not be able to function.

Finance and Fundraising

In the financial year September 2006 to August 2007 £191,113 was raised, and expenditure was £218,814. This means that there was a shortfall of £27,700 during this financial year. Expenditure was increased through the appointment of extra staff and the improvement to office systems, and it is expected that this investment will have a long term benefit. In addition, PSC has increased the level of its campaign activities over the year. The sponsored walk raising over £20,000 was a successful fundraising event (see above), and the 25th anniversary dinner and the Christmas

concert also raised funds. Branches have also contributed to fundraising, raising over £1500 in 2006–7, and over £1500 so far in this financial year, a great response to the appeal to branches to help to raise funds for the national campaign.

A fundraising strategy for 2007–8 has been developed, and a number of fundraising events have been planned, including: the Christmas concert, the Zaytouna Dabke concert and a sponsored walk. In October, in the next financial year, PSC will hold its second art exhibition, and a concert. The fundraising strategy also includes distribution of the prospectus, which was developed as a fundraising tool (copies available through the office), development of the new website to attract membership and donations, fundraising through branches, and regular fundraising appeals through membership mailings and the media. The 100 Club, consisting of members who commit to donate £100 per year, now has over 150 members, and this helps us to ensure our core costs are covered.

Please see our separate financial report for more details.



Plans for 2008

2008 marks a very significant anniversary – the sixtieth year of the Nakba (the Disaster) – in which the Palestinian homeland was partitioned. The two thirds of the entire population who were expelled in the 1947–49 war were unable to return, and most have lived in exile as refugees to this day. PSC will join Palestinians and other international solidarity organisations to mark this year, focusing on the apartheid nature of the Israeli state, and calling for justice for Palestinian refugees, for those living under occupation or living as second class citizens within Israel.

PSC will also continue to respond to current events — which in early 2008 consist of campaigning to end the siege of Gaza and respecting Palestinian democracy — and ensuring that the crucial demand to end Israeli occupation continues to be supported by the broadest possible forces.

