



A citizen of Israel at home

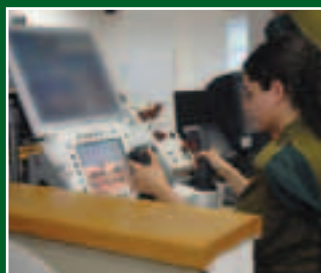


PHOTO: JOSEPH DANA

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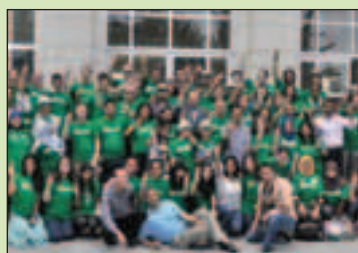


Cover image: Bedouin woman with her destroyed home, 10 August 2010. Credit: Joseph Dana. www.josephdana.com

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palestine NEWS

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- Campaigning against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people
- Supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights including the Right of Return in line with UN resolution 194
- Promoting Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice
- Opposing Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states
- Opposing anti-semitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state

No signing away of Palestinian rights

By Betty Hunter

Thousands of words have already been written about the current stage in the never ending “peace process,” a process in which the goal of peace recedes continually, based as it is on the blatant omission of international law as documented in UN resolutions, the Goldstone Report and the ICJ advisory opinion on the apartheid wall.

Indeed the United Nations is increasingly used simply as an arena for lecturing Palestinians and the Arab world about the need for more concessions while the US influence ensures carte blanche for Israeli acts of war.

The goals of the three protagonists are not compatible. Palestinian leaderships have sought modestly to establish a sovereign state on the 1967 borders with a just solution for the refugees and East Jerusalem as a capital. Israel’s purpose is to prevent this by prevarication, using the security argument while it grabs more land and more control of resources. Every US administration’s stated goal is to be an “honest broker” but their imperative always turns out to be to win the next round of elections and Obama has proved no exception.

The influence of the Israeli lobby cannot be denied when a US President who boldly started his term with a demand for a settlement freeze, two years later cannot achieve a two month extension on a moratorium. The “secret” letter to Netanyahu, widely reported in Israel (see p6), offers military control of the Jordan Valley for an extension of the “freeze” which never really happened in the first place (see p4).

And this while purporting to broker peace negotiations in the glare of worldwide expectations. In addressing the UN, President Obama denied the inequality of the parties and put Israeli lives above those of Palestinians by omitting any mention of the war on Gaza or the murderous attack on the Freedom Flotilla.

If the imperatives driving both the Israeli and US administrations are domestic then so too must be the imperative of the Palestinian negotiators. The Palestinian people, oppressed by over sixty years of dispossession, exile and occupation, look for improvements — not betrayal. The lessons of Oslo are there for all to see and there must be no further signing away of Palestinian rights.

Israel’s relentless accretion of “facts on the ground” must not be legitimised in any deal. The increasingly voracious aggression of settlers (many of whom want to establish a society where women are subservient and gays not tolerated); the Israeli government’s demolitions of homes in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and inside the 1948 borders; the continual killing and injuring of

Palestinians resiliently trying to build their lives under occupation and the squeezing of the people behind the apartheid Wall all demonstrate the reality of ethnic cleansing.

In Netanyahu’s speedy dismissal of the US administration’s duplicitous proposals there must surely be a recognition that the intentions of the Israeli government are to reject everything other than a subjugated Palestinian administration and people.

The latest government attack on the Palestinian citizens of Israel is the approved amendment to the Citizenship Law according to which anyone requesting Israeli citizenship will have to declare loyalty to Israel as a “Jewish and democratic” state.

This amendment is described by columnist, Nahum Barnea, in the *Yedioth Aharonoth* Supplement on October 8: “The proposed law doesn’t just seem racist; it is racist. It compels non-Jews to declare they will be loyal to the Jewish state, but does not demand the same of Jews. Jews are exempt, because the Haredi rabbis are not willing to declare their loyalty, not to the Jewish state and certainly not to the democratic state. The results are harsh. It’s still not the racist Nuremberg laws, but it smells the same.”

As the pressure mounts on the Palestinian leadership to ignore its own people and to exclude representatives of the legitimately

elected Hamas government, brave activists from every part of the political spectrum and from around the world unite to oppose the expansionist actions of the settlers and their army.

In this situation the role of the international solidarity movement is clear — we are the fourth protagonist. Our work must be to expose the true narrative of Israel’s ethnic cleansing. And our message must be emphatic: we expect nothing less than a refusal to capitulate and we believe this can best be achieved through unity.

Our goal is to help create the opportunity for the Palestinian people

to achieve real justice through self determination. And we are increasingly succeeding in de-legitimising Israel in the eyes of the world by our actions. Internationally people are achieving breakthroughs in their campaigns, big and small, like the success at this year’s TUC on BDS (see p17) and the Californian food co-op which has banned Israeli products.

Across Europe complicit companies like Veolia and Carmel Agrexco are being effectively targeted and dockers and transport workers have taken action in South Africa and Scandinavia. The creativity of the supporters of the Palestinian people is echoing the maxim of the peace movement: ‘Let a thousand flowers bloom’.

As these actions of support for Palestinian rights grow it will be increasingly untenable for political leaders everywhere, even US politicians, to ignore the international community’s demand for justice under international law for the Palestinian people.



Israeli peace plan, by Carlos Latuff

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Construction — destruction

By Gill Swain

The US and European governments were humiliated yet again when Israelis settlers enthusiastically celebrated the end of the so-called “settlement freeze” on 26 September, right in the middle of the peace talks. But in fact the freeze never actually happened in the first place.

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) issued construction figures in August apparently showing that only five new housing units had been started in the settlements since January. But the freeze did not include halting construction that had already been issued a permit and the statistics showed that in fact at the end of June 1,980 housing units were in the process of being built.

In addition, according to *Peace Now*, there is a widespread phenomenon in settlements of building without permits and of establishing caravans. And the data supplied by local authorities is often inaccurate. *Peace Now* conducted its own count based on aerial photos and site visits and concluded that during the freeze around 600 new housing units were started and another 167 caravans were established.

Writing in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* at the end of September, the director of *Peace Now*'s Settlements Watch Project, Dror Etkes, used the CBS's statistics slightly differently. He said they showed that at the end of 2009 the number of housing units under construction in the settlements amounted to 2,955. Three months later, at the end of March 2010, the number stood at 2,517. “We are therefore talking about a drop of a little more than 400 housing units — some 16 percent of Israeli construction in the West Bank over that period.”

He added that “not only did construction in settlements continue over the last ten months, and vigorously, but also that a relatively large part of the houses were built on settlements that lie east of the separation fence, such as Bracha, Itamar, Eli, Shilo, Maaleh Mikhmas, Maon, Carmel, Beit Haggai, Kiryat Arba, Mitzpeh Yeriho and others.”

Etkes said that the “real story behind the PR stunt known as



Construction starts in Revava settlement, 27 Sept.
Photo: Peace Now

the freeze” was that in the six months before it began in November 2009, dozens of new building sites sprang up, especially in the more extreme settlements east of the fence. In the first half of 2009 they started to build 669 housing units but in the second half no fewer than 1,204 units went up — an increase of some 90 percent in construction starts.

“That is a summary of the ‘Israbluff’ behind the freeze. All that was left for the politicians to do in the past few months was — wearing expressions of sorrow — to invite television crews every few months to film how the administration’s inspectors were destroying some miserable hut built in contravention of the freeze order.”

Ten days after the “freeze” ended, *Ha'aretz* reported that bulldozers were working furiously on the construction of 350 new housing units in settlements. They included Kedumim, Ariel, Gush Etzion, Adam, Kiryat Arba, Matityahu, and Nili. In addition a member of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel reported that 20 new mobile homes were installed in the Revava settlement on September 23 and settlers held a big celebration on September 27.

“The story for the Palestinians has been destruction and displacement on a massive scale”

Danny Dayan, head of the Yesha Council of Settlements, told *Ha'aretz* that “construction in Judea and Samaria is resuming normalcy. After ten wasted months, that only caused harm and didn't benefit anybody, we are returning to routine.”

The construction of a new road for settlers in Hebron has been ordered by the Israeli Minister of Transportation, Israel Katz. The 1300 metre apartheid road — barred to Palestinians — will link the first settlement built after the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Kiryat Arba, with the centre of Hebron, cutting through the crowded area of Haret Jabber. Dozens of historical homes will be destroyed



A grieving family made homeless in Al Araqib.
Photo: Activestills.org

and a new separation system will be constructed. Palestinian residents of the area will have a “choice” — to leave or live in this new miserable situation.

Meanwhile the story for the Palestinians has been destruction and displacement on a massive scale. The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported a huge rise in the demolition of Palestinian homes in July.

This followed an Israeli government order in early July to West Bank military officials to “increase enforcement against illegal Palestinian construction” in Area C. By the end of July over 230 structures had been destroyed since the beginning of the year, more than half of them in July alone. This made over 1100 Palestinians homeless, including 400 children.

In the Jordan Valley, OCHA reported the IDF demolished the village of Al Farisyia twice in ten days; first on July 19 and again on August 5, destroying 116 structures and displacing 129 people, including 63 children. They also destroyed the shelters for 1000 sheep and stole the sheep and damaged water tanks and irrigation pipes provided by Oxfam.

“The hillside looked as if a natural disaster had taken place,” said Oxfam’s water and sanitation advocacy officer, Cara Flowers, after visiting the site. “With no access to shelter, water or fodder for their herds, an entire community is being forced to leave its land.”

In the Negev the Bedouin village of Al Araqib was completely destroyed at least four times and defiantly rebuilt each time with the help of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists. One especially chilling aspect of the destruction was that the hundreds of riot police who smashed their fellow Israeli citizens’ homes were accompanied by busloads of cheering young civilians.



Young destroyers lounging on Al Araqib residents’ furniture

These turned out to be Israeli high school students who had volunteered as members of the police civilian guard. They were sent into homes to bring out furniture and belongings and several residents reported they smashed windows and mirrors and defaced family photographs. Then they lounged around on the furniture in plain sight of the owners and whooped and cheered when the bulldozers destroyed the homes.

This is an appalling, if not surprising development, as American academic and Middle East expert Dr Lawrence Davidson commented: “The incorporation of Jewish youth into the racist and destructive pattern of behaviour exhibited in this incident is almost inevitable. You simply cannot raise up generation after generation within an environment of officially sanctioned racism and not get many of the young seeking confirmation of their place in the community through unjust socio-political actions.

“We can expect to hear more about this sort of officially organised youth thuggery in Israel. It is a logical tactic for the state to use, particularly at a time when the country is

becoming increasingly criticised and isolated. Nor is this sort of thing historically unique. Reading about this incident one can see intimations of the youth organisations of Fascist Italy and Spain, Nazi Germany, and Communist China during the Cultural Revolution.”

“The incorporation of Jewish youth into the racist and destructive pattern of behaviour... is almost inevitable”

Al Araqib, a few kilometres north of the Negev’s main city, Beersheva, has become a symbol of the struggle by the Bedouin to stay on their land and retain their traditional way of life. Human rights groups warned that the demolitions, which have also been taking place on a smaller scale in many other of the “unrecognised” villages, were the opening shots in a long-threatened campaign by the Israeli government to begin the forced removal of the state’s 180,000 Bedouin citizens from their ancestral lands.

The day after the village was first razed, Hebrew media sources revealed that Israel is planning to house 10,000 Jewish families in the Negev and the Galilee in place of destroyed Arab villages. Around \$30 million has been allocated to intensify the building of settlement outposts and the plan envisages the construction of 30 such outposts over the next four years.

But the Bedouin are fighting back. In a test case before the Israeli courts, 68-year-old Nuri al Uqbi claims the right to return to a patch of 82 hectares in the Negev that he says has belonged to his family for generations. Nazareth-based journalist, Jonathan Cook, reports that Mr al Uqbi has “stacks of bulging folders of tattered and browning documents, many older than the state of Israel itself,” to support his case.

He argues that his father, Sheikh Suleiman al Uqbi, and the other villagers were tricked out of their land by the authorities in 1951 when they were told that they would have to relocate “temporarily” while military exercises were carried out in the area. After years of fruitlessly appealing to the government over the land confiscation he launched his legal case five years ago.

Tom Segev, an Israeli historian, told Cook that the historical documents presented by Mr al Uqbi “raise a fundamental question: Who does this country belong to?” The lawyers and witnesses were not just “arguing over a plot of land. They are arguing over the justness of Zionism.”

Such high stakes may explain why, as the judge, Sarah Dovrat, considers her verdict, Israel has speeded up plans to plant a “peace forest” over Mr al Uqbi’s land, paid for by the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

Until now the main obstacle in their way has been a small village which was re-established a decade ago by Bedouin families who, rather than pursue Mr al Uqbi’s legal route, simply reoccupied the land. Its name — Al Araqib.



Rebuilding Al Araqib, August. Credit: Joseph Dana

Bedouin women rise up

By Mary Clay

Jerusalem saw a new kind of demonstration in August when 700 Bedouin women travelled from their villages in the Negev to protest against Israel's brutal policy of ethnic cleansing by means of demolishing their homes.

Prompted by the widely publicised razing of Al Araqib and relentless destruction in many more of the 45 "unrecognised" villages in the Negev which has attracted less attention, this was the first time ever that women from the traditionally conservative Bedouin community had taken part in a mass demonstration.

It was organised by the Sidreh Association, a non-profit organisation established in 1997 to empower and educate Bedouin women living in Israel and to improve their economic prospects. It runs the Lakiya Negev Weaving Project which produces high quality rugs, bags and cushion covers using local wool.

"We have a lot of problems in our community but in her home a woman has always felt safe," the Project's general manager, Khadra El Sanneh, told *Palestine News* on a recent visit to London. "When her home is knocked down, she feels everything has gone. That's why the women decided they must do something."

Hala Abu Shareb, the Project's marketer who was travelling with Khadra on a mission to raise funds and awareness of how the



Bedouin women's demo



Khadra El Sanneh (left) and Hala Abu Shareb

Bedouin community is suffering from Israeli racism, said that four or five houses are being demolished in different villages every day, along with shelters for animals.

**"Four or five houses
are being demolished
in different villages
every day"**

"Each time, the people build again even if it is only a tent or simple shelter," said Hala. "We take a lot of visitors to Al Araqib to help the people and encourage them to be strong but I think it is not enough. All organisations must work together to challenge the government."

Israel's policy towards its 180,000 Bedouin citizens is to destroy their traditional way of life based on herding sheep and goats, drive them off the land and force them to live in the "recognised" villages, in order to colonise the land with Jewish settlements.

No services of any kind are provided to the unrecognised villages where half the

population live. However Lakiya, though on Israel's map, is not much better off. "There is a clinic and schools but for any specialist service like an eye doctor, you have to go to the main town, Beersheva, where everything is in Hebrew. They don't understand Arabic — except humous and falafel," said Khadra, showing a flash of humour.

"There is no transport between our villages. If you want to go anywhere, you have to go into Beersheva and out again. They cut off the water all the time. Sometimes we go for a whole month without water. When the grass grows, they come over in aircraft to kill it with a chemical spray.

"I bought under a dunum of land from the government to build my house for 60,000 shekels (£10,000) in 1996. There is still no road built to it. I pay for electricity and water, but I still have no sewage service. We hear that Israel is a 'democracy' all the time, but we don't feel it."

Over 90% of Bedouin women are unemployed and some 80% of those over 40 are illiterate. Sidreh works with them at different levels, firstly providing essential services such as education and health, then teaching them lobbying and advocacy skills and how to work with the media.

Obama's offer — keep the Jordan Valley

President Barack Obama offered in a secret letter to Binyamin Netanyahu to allow Israel Defence Force soldiers to control the Jordan Valley — nearly a fifth of the West Bank — even after the establishment of a Palestinian state if Israel would agree to extend the settlement "freeze" by just two months.

Obama offered an extraordinarily generous list of favours in addition: that the US would veto any UN Security Council proposal on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the next year, would not seek any more settlement freezes and would make the future fate of the settlements part of a final status agreement with the Palestinians. They would allow Israel to continue controlling the borders of the Palestinian territories, would provide Israel with enhanced weapons systems and increase its billions of dollars

in annual aid and would create a regional security pact against Iran.

The contents of the letter were revealed in September by David Makovsky of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a close associate of Dennis Ross, Barack Obama's chief advisor on the Middle East. Netanyahu was reported to have declined the US offer. According to the Israeli media, officials in Washington are privately incensed by Netanyahu's rejection.

Sidreh was the first organisation of its kind to create a sustainable income-generating project by transforming women's traditional weaving skills into a successful business. The Lakiya Weaving Project now involves over 100 women and sells its products all over the world.

A literacy programme has taught over 1400 women, more than 60 women have completed high school through the Continuing Education Programme, over 1600 women have taken part in a leadership and rights awareness programme and the Association produces the first women's newspaper in the Negev, distributing 11,000 copies a month to 50 villages.

The Association encourages visits from Jewish Israelis. As a result Khadra and Hala were very aware of the distorted view of their community portrayed in the Israeli media. "All the time they say the Arabs want to take their land. And the government says the Bedouin come from Egypt or Jordan and the land is not our land," said Khadra.

"But the Arabs were there before the Jews came and we have the witnesses and the evidence to prove it. In Al Araqib, for instance, you can see the graves dating back long before 1948.

"The Negev is desert and we are Bedouin. A desert without Bedouin — I cannot imagine it. It is not a big desert so everyone knew where the water was and people had the land that they used based on the water sources. Then the Israelis came and took from us our simple life. What is happening to us is very like what happened to the American Indians."

"A desert without Bedouin — I cannot imagine it"

Khadra often hears accusations that her community is backward, that they practice polygamy and have enormous families and that women are oppressed. "I tell them — look at Sidreh. We established this organisation without any men or support from the government. If you give us simple services, we can fight the problems.

"If we have education and economic development so women can work, then it will be normal to have four or five children instead of ten. But if a woman is stuck in

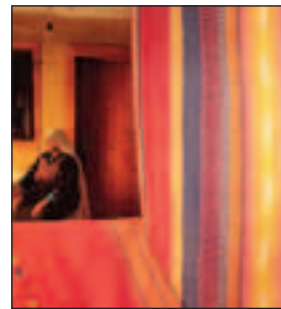
the house, she has many children so that she can feel she is creating something.

"We don't want a revolution in our community. We are proud of where we come from. We want to take what is good in it and make that grow. All our achievements encourage us to do more."

Khadra declared that the Bedouin will never give up their dedication to a simple, rural way of life. "Everyone can choose their way of life — why can't we?"

"We need the support of Jewish people in Britain and around the world to push the Israeli government to give us our rights. If they believe in democracy, they must do the right thing."

Sidreh has opened a Visitors' Centre and they host groups and individuals for meals, special events and workshops. For more information and to view the Weaving Project's catalogue, see www.lakiya.org



Busting the Gaza siege

After a frustrating two week wait in Syria, the Convoy to Gaza finally got the go-ahead from the Egyptian authorities and were sailing towards the port of Al Arish as *Palestine News* went to press.

The convoy started out from London on September 18 and drove through France, Italy, Greece and Turkey before arriving in the port of Latakia in Syria on October 2. They were joined by two other convoys, one from Morocco and Algeria and the other originating in Doha and travelling through the Gulf states and Jordan.

That added up to 147 vehicles with 380 people from 33 countries stretching from New Zealand and Australia to Canada and the United States, carrying educational and medical aid worth around £3 million, including £250,000 worth of antibiotics for the UK.

Negotiators from the Convoy met Egypt's ambassador to Syria in Damascus. They were told Egypt was not completely opposed to their plan to take the aid by sea to Al Arish and then drive it the 20 miles to the Rafah border crossing into Gaza, but they had to meet a list of 16 conditions, compared to the nine imposed on the last land convoy.

"All the aid had to be sorted out, re-boxed, shrink-wrapped, put on pallets and loaded into the vans, so we worked hard," said Amena Saleem, the PSC's media and fund-raising officer, who is with the Convoy and has been writing a blog.

The volunteers were sharing concrete huts in a camp formerly used by Palestinian refugees forced from their homes in Haifa and Acre in 1948.

"We organised a cultural event one evening with people from different countries singing or performing. It brought everyone together," said Amena. "The mood in the camp was really high. Nobody got fed up with the waiting. We were all completely determined we would get the aid into Gaza."

As the Convoy passed through Turkey the volunteers visited the graves of four of the murder victims of the *Mavi Marmara*. They stood with the brother of the youngest victim, Furgan Dogan, and said prayers just nine days before what would have been his 20th birthday. They also met Chetam, widow of Chetin Topcuoglu, who was with him as he died, and put red carnations on his grave.

"It was very moving to meet them and other survivors of the *Mavi Marmara*," said Amena. "I was impressed by their courage and their determination that we should get into Gaza and break the siege."

In other siege-busting attempts, the British-flagged Jewish Boat to Gaza, the *Irene*, with nine people on board including a holocaust survivor, a bereaved parent and two journalists, was violently seized while in international waters by Israeli forces in September.

The captain, Glyn Secker, recalled a "sight which will remain with me for the rest of my life." A navy frigate, two gunboats, two landing craft and four high powered ribs "speeding towards us at perhaps 35 knots, with their bow waves and wakes flashing in the sunshine."

As the commandos boarded, Glyn held tight to the boat's wheel. Two commandos



Sorting the aid in Latakia

prized him away from it and threw him to the floor. Itamar Shapira tried to shield the Israeli Channel 10 reporter's camera from the soldiers and was dragged to a military boat and forced to the floor. "I did not give up until one of them pushed his fingers deep into the artery in my neck," he said.

Meanwhile, his brother, Yonatan, was hugging Rami Elhanan, an Israeli who lost his daughter, Smadar, to a suicide bombing in 1997. Yonatan said a soldier with a taser "threatened if I did not let go (of Rami) they would hurt me, then tasered me on my right shoulder and shot twice — it was very painful — but not as painful as the next shot where he pulled aside my life jacket, put the gun on my chest and fired. My whole body lost control and I convulsed like a fit, I let out a high pitched scream."

The Israelis told the media there was no violence and no resistance during the takeover of the *Irene*.

Prisoners' families protest

By Rada Daniell



As soon as the bombing of Gaza City stopped, the demonstrations held by prisoners' families resumed. Every Monday morning in front of the International Committee of the Red Cross large numbers of mainly women turn up holding pictures of their loved ones.

While serving with the International Solidarity Movement in Gaza earlier this year, I used to go along with my colleagues. I got to know most of the women well and wrote down the stories of their sons, husbands and brothers.

Ever since Hamas took control of Gaza, following its election victory in 2006, Israel has banned families from the Strip from visiting their loved ones in Israeli jails, in violation of international human rights conventions which say all prisoners are entitled to visits.

More than a decade ago a group of Gazan prisoners' wives and mothers got together to put prisoners into the political limelight with Yasser Arafat becoming a particularly committed ally.

They chose to demonstrate in front of the ICRC office in Gaza City because the organisation has a worldwide mandate to ensure prisoners' rights are upheld. "They had no experience of politics and campaigning but they soon learned," Gaza journalist Hasan Jaber told me.

And they learned well. Some of them, like Um Jaber Shah and Um Ibrahim Baroud, who are still activists and leaders of the movement, acquired iconic status as "mothers of all prisoners." They started negotiating with politicians whom they persuaded to set up a Government Ministry for Prisoners and to award all prisoners a soldier's salary. They also became international spokespersons and ambassadors of Palestinian prisoners.

Um Jaber, for example, "adopted" dozens of prisoners who had no families and some foreign fighters for the Palestinian cause who were captured. She spent decades visiting them in prisons across Israel publicising their conditions and negotiating with prison authorities for their rights.

The protestors' perseverance was amazing — they were anywhere where there was an opportunity to publicise the plight of their loved ones. They appeared at demonstrations against the so-called "buffer zone" Israel illegally imposes along the Gaza border

and at events mourning the murders of the Flotilla volunteers.

They would gladly pose for pictures — I learned there is none of the camera shyness women of Gaza sometimes display because they hoped that their dearest would catch a sight of them on prison TV or in the newspapers and see that they were not abandoned.

"They had no experience of politics and campaigning but they soon learned"

Apart from the four year-long ban on prison visits, the women told me that communication with their prisoners was difficult and unpredictable. The only links were via messages conveyed by the ICRC but they were not reliable. They travel for months and many are never received. Replies are rare — those who had received one were easily identifiable at the Monday protest by their tearful faces.

Women from this grass roots spontaneous movement have become a formidable political force and have carved for themselves a unique political position. They are able to be critical of all political parties and are particularly loud in their calls for unity between Hamas and Fatah.

"All political parties want to be associated with the prisoners' families," said Hasan Jaber. "Prisoners and martyrs are emotive subjects for Palestinians. They also attract lots of media attention and are good PR for politicians."

Prisoner stories

Majdi Al Masri's mother, Zakiyya, said her son was a Palestinian policeman, now aged 27. He has spent four years in Israel's Rimon prison accused of shooting a soldier but has never been charged.

She visited him only once more than three years ago and keeps in touch by ICRC messages which take on average two months to arrive each way. Majdi is not allowed to make phone calls.

Zakiyya told me that she misses him terribly. The worst thing was that they did not know how long he would be in prison because he has not been charged.

Shadi Abu Hussein's mum, Wafa Dahmaq, always looked desperately sad at the protest. She has not seen her son, who is in the Negev prison, for seven years. She rarely gets ICRC messages from him and has never been allowed to phone him.

He studied pharmacy in Yemen and was on his way home when he was arrested, allegedly because he did not have a valid travel permit.

Wafa told me with the tears rolling down her face that her son is due to be released soon but the Israelis were going to deport him to Yemen. She said she missed Shadi so much that her "heart felt no happiness since he was imprisoned."

She said: "Shadi is always in my mind. Wherever I go I look at people and I think that I might see him, that he might just turn up. I am an optimist, this is why I come to the ICRC. I have no choice. I cannot give up."

Unnecessary and incredible violence

A fact-finding mission appointed by the UN starkly condemned Israel's attack on the Gaza aid flotilla in May, saying it "betrayed an unacceptable level of brutality."

In a 56-page report published in September, the three-person panel said: "The conduct of the Israeli military and other personnel towards the flotilla passengers was not only disproportionate to the occasion but demonstrated levels of totally unnecessary and incredible violence."

"It betrayed an unacceptable level of brutality. Such conduct cannot be justified or condoned on security or any other grounds. It constituted grave violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law."

The Israeli government claims the soldiers who boarded the *Mavi Marmara* and killed eight Turkish activists and one Turkish-American acted in self defence. But the panel concluded that there was "clear evidence" of wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment and wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health — all crimes under the Geneva Convention.

The panel was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council and was chaired by Justice Karl Hudson-Phillips, a former judge of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. He was aided by Sir Desmond de Silva, QC, who was chief prosecutor of the Sierra Leone War Crimes Tribunal, and Shanthi Dairiam, human rights expert from Malaysia and former member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

They interviewed 112 witnesses in Geneva, London, Istanbul and Amman but the Israeli government refused to co-operate. Their report judged Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip to be "unlawful" because there was a humanitarian crisis there and added that it was "totally intolerable and unacceptable in the 21st century."

In a factual description of what happened when each of the six ships in the flotilla was intercepted, the report states that no arms or weapons were taken on board any of the vessels except for a few catapults. When it appeared that Israeli forces intended to board the *Mavi Marmara*, a very small group of passengers armed themselves with pieces of wood and iron cut from the ship's railings.

There was no evidence that any gunfire was directed from the *Mavi Marmara* towards the boats bearing Israeli soldiers. However, both live ammunition and non-

lethal fire were used from helicopters while the soldiers were descending to the ship's deck.

Presenting the findings to the Human Rights Council, Justice Hudson-Phillips said: "Six of the deceased were the victims of summary executions, two of whom were shot after they were severely injured and could not defend themselves."

The panel expressed the hope that there would be "swift action" by the Israeli government to help victims to be "compensated adequately and promptly."

Some passengers and the Human Rights Legal Aid Fund have launched a fundraising



Gazans with a memorial to the dead of the flotilla

campaign in order to ensure that cases are launched to make the UN's findings enforceable in international courts.

Mary Nazzal-Batayneh, Chairperson of the Human Rights Legal Aid Fund, said: "This is a huge first step, however, we all still have a lot of work to do to make sure that these cases are pursued in court, securing genuine sanctions for the perpetrators and civil and criminal remedies for the survivors."

"As we all know, Israel has ignored UN criticism in the past and will continue to do so unless we take action to hold them genuinely to account. The nature of the attacks on the flotilla, against international passengers, creates unique legal opportunities to do so."

A separate panel of enquiry into the Gaza flotilla attack appointed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon presented an initial progress report in September which set out its understanding of its tasks and its working methods.

This panel is chaired by Geoffrey Palmer, former prime minister of New Zealand. Vice chair is the ex-president of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe, and the other two members are Joseph Ciechanover from Israel and Özdem

Sanberk from Turkey, both diplomats. It agreed unanimously that it would examine the reports of the national investigations into the incident being produced by Israel and Turkey.

Some of the witness accounts given to Geoffrey Palmer's panel are available at <http://tinyurl.com/35ep9pw>

IDF confirms Goldstone findings

Ever since Judge Richard Goldstone produced his authoritative report into Israel's Operation Cast Lead bombardment of Gaza in 2008–9, he and his work have come under vicious attack from Israel and its apologists.

But in the summer the IDF's own investigations into the operation, conducted in an effort to derail the Goldstone report's referral to the International Criminal Court, have confirmed a majority of the most damning incidents identified by Goldstone as war crimes.

The Gaza Operation Investigations Second Update confirms over 20 incidents including:

- the use of white phosphorus in urban areas
- the murder of two unarmed Palestinians carrying white flags of surrender
- the Al-Fakhura Street incident: Israeli mortar fire at a site adjacent to a UN Relief Works Agency compound which resulted in multiple civilian deaths
- the use of innocent Palestinians as human shields: The Goldstone report described an incident involving a man known as AD/03. The Update identifies AD/03 and confirms this episode along with others
- Al-Samouni family massacre: two houses of the Samouni family were attacked, killing 23 people. The IDF prevented emergency services from reaching the wounded for three days. Now the subject of a military investigation
- firing on Al Maqadmah and other mosques during prayer time

Two voices from Israel

Haneen Zoabi, born in Nazareth in 1969, became the first woman to be elected to the Knesset on an Arab party list in 2009. She represents Balad (National Democratic Assembly). She was on board the *Mavi Marmara* when it was attacked by Israeli commandos. Afterwards she was physically assaulted by Jewish MKs in parliament.

She talks to **Hilary Wise** about her life and work.

What brought you into politics?

I realised from an early age I couldn't have a normal life, living in freedom in a society where one is allowed to be aware of one's history. To do this, I knew I would have to attempt to change the system.

There are so many inequalities and injustices. Take my home town, Nazareth. It should be a cultural capital for Palestinians within Israel. But we don't have the right to develop our cities, physically or culturally — there is no university there, for example.

85% of our land has been taken and Nazareth is actually shrinking, compared to the neighbouring Jewish town. That has only a third of the population of Nazareth but three times the land. That town can develop freely and much more of the national budget is devoted to it.

What other kinds of discrimination do you fight against?

There are huge inequalities in terms of jobs, in both the public and private sectors. For instance, our share of government jobs is only 6.7%, although we are 18% of the population. 50% of the Palestinian community is living below the poverty line.

In the education system far less is allocated per student in Palestinian schools and only 6% of university students are Palestinian. We cannot study our own history. This means that Jewish as well as Palestinian Israelis are being prevented from knowing the true history of their country.

Have things got worse recently?

A third of the entire legislation of Netanyahu's government has been devoted to laws and regulations further restricting Palestinian rights. Hence they are blocking



Haneen Zoabi being screamed at by a 'colleague'.

any possibility of real democracy. Recently they've turned to persecuting Israeli NGOs that want to suggest an alternative to the present system.

How are Palestinian Israelis presented in the media?

Studies show that only about 2% of media coverage relates to the Palestinian community. Of that, 75% is negative: we are presented as being a security risk or a demographic threat. As you know, 93% of our land has been taken since 1948 and that continues. But when we hold a demonstration protesting against land confiscation the media present us as 'invaders,' trying to take 'state' land.

As far as my own work goes, such as my campaign for women's employment rights, that has never been covered in the media. They only became interested in me after I took part in the flotilla to Gaza.

What does the Balad party stand for?

Our vision is one of 'full identity and full citizenship' within Israel. But of course equal citizenship is impossible in the framework of an avowedly Jewish state. The state doesn't recognise either my identity or my full civil rights.

We are for the right of return for Palestinian refugees, full withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of an independent, viable sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza.

What would the relationship of that state be to the state of Israel?

We don't want to see two states segregated along racial or religious lines. Within the '48 boundaries we want to see a state for all its citizens, irrespective of race and religion.

Eventually the two states might develop closer links and become a single binational state, though this is not yet a practical programme. Of course, with all the settlements in the West Bank, Israel is making the creation of a viable Palestinian state almost impossible.

A question you must often be asked: Who do you represent?

I represent a democratic vision for all Israelis. It so happens that it is Palestinians who are the victims of a deeply undemocratic system. But my politics are based on ethics, not ethnicity. I represent the universal values of justice, equality and freedom.

What have your relations been like with the Jewish Members of the Knesset?

Before the *Mavi Marmara* incident we would perhaps exchange polite greetings, occasionally discuss a specific issue; we do after all work in the same building. But relations have never been cordial. After the *Mavi Marmara* some MKs engaged in threats and personal attacks and made very racist and sexist remarks. There was a vote of 34–16 to deprive me of my parliamentary privileges.

Some MKs who take a more 'liberal' view of the Palestinian community still do not recognise us as a people. They just support things like greater equality in the allocation of the budget and improved employment prospects; that is, they want to narrow the socio-economic gap — as with Ethiopian immigrants and other

(cont. on p12)

Gideon Levy is a leading columnist with the Israeli daily newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, the most widely read Israeli newspaper in the UK. He talks to **Hilary Wise** from a liberal Jewish perspective.

***Ha'aretz* has a relatively small circulation in Israel. Why is that?**

Ha'aretz does not really address a mass audience but traditionally it has played an influential role. In the past it used to be very influential with the political and economic elite.

The printed media is under a lot of pressure in Israel, as elsewhere. But God forbid that *Ha'aretz* should disappear. It's the last bastion of real professional journalism in Israel; the rest are total propaganda.

The popular media are the biggest collaborators with the Occupation. They play an ongoing role of dehumanising the Palestinians, of ignoring what's happening in Israel's back yard.

The media largely provide what the general public want — and they don't want to know what's actually going on.

Are you invited to appear on mainstream Israeli TV?

I participate in a popular weekly debate programme and others from time to time. In Israel there is great freedom of expression; the problem is that there is huge self-censorship — and censorship is much worse if it's voluntary than if it's imposed. The media serve the same purpose as the education system; they both propagate the same nationalist narrative.

You were brought up as a Zionist. What changed your views?

Going to the Occupied Territories as a young reporter, and documenting what I saw there.

Before that, you worked with Shimon Peres [then leader of the Israel Labour party] for four years. What's happened to the Israeli left?

It collapsed completely after the beginning of the Second Intifada. And this raises the question, how solid was it in



the first place? It's easy to be a 'peacenik' during the heady days of the Oslo accords and so on. It's about sticking to your views in the hard times — and most did not. After the massacres in the Lebanon in 1982, 400,000 Israelis took to the streets to protest. After Operation Cast Lead* there were scarcely 400. There are some individuals and groups who still struggle but they are very much marginalised.

A recent survey suggested that most Israelis would like to see the prosecution of journalists critical of the military establishment. Could that happen?

Absolutely. It's already starting, with the NGOs. At the moment I have complete freedom — but I certainly don't take that for granted.

Have you personally been threatened?

All the time, but I don't take it too seriously. I was shot at in the West Bank by trigger-happy soldiers, at a time of great tension in 2003, but I don't think I was being targeted. Fortunately I was in a bullet-proof car.

Do you think that the shift to the right is due not just to the Intifada but also to the influx of Russians immigrants?

I don't think so. They are not yet really active in political life, apart from voting for right-wing parties. They are in fact quite segregated from the mainstream of Israeli society.

But they vote in people like Lieberman [the Foreign Minister]?

I'm more afraid of the so-called centrist and less obviously extreme right-wing parties. Lieberman is a declared racist, extremist, nationalist etc; but with him, what you see is what you get.

The political tone is really given by parties like Likud and Kadima; they are perceived as being more centrist but behind this they are just as nationalistic as Lieberman.

How effective is pressure from outside Israel?

Very hard to tell. Pressure can work both ways. Remember, Israel did 'pay the price' for the occupation during the Intifada, when there were suicide bombings, but it only had the effect of making people more right-wing and more nationalistic.

Public opinion abroad is moving — the turning point I think was Cast Lead. People are now much less tolerant of the Occupation.

There is a real need to keep up pressure from the outside: from the inside nothing will move.

But there are movements in Israel, like Boycott from Within, and active NGOs

Of course, but they are small and they are being delegitimised, targeted. Ironically, the information brought to Israel's own (admittedly limited) inquiry into Operation Cast Lead was actually provided by these NGOs, and the IDF recognised this at the time.

You have said that the vision of a two-state solution is rapidly receding. Is the formation of a single, truly democratic state a possibility?

I doubt it very much, there is so much bad blood. I don't see the Palestinians being accepted as equal human beings, let alone equal citizens. I hope I'm wrong — but I don't see it working.

What is the point of the latest round of 'peace talks'?

The government is doing it just to please Washington. This is a government that does not believe in peace with the

(cont. on p12)

(Haneen Zoabi continued)



disadvantaged immigrant groups. But they deny our unique position as the indigenous people of the region. They don't agree that there is discrimination, for example, in relation to seizure and ownership of the land. You can make no historical claims. That is an absolute taboo topic.

The right to seek to redefine the basic ideology of the state is also taboo. That is why Azmi Bishara [former leader of the Balad party] has now to live in exile.

There is a form of blackmail at work here. In order to gain your civil rights you must give up your identity as a Palestinian. If I even use the word 'Palestinian' in the Knesset, I get shouted down.

“If I even use the word 'Palestinian' in the Knesset, I get shouted down”

Tell me about your interrogation, after you were abducted on the *Mavi Marmara*.

My immunity as an MK didn't protect me. My interrogators accused me of being violent, of cooperating with terrorist organisations, of risking the lives of Israeli soldiers, of preventing the army from doing its job, and so on. Their arrogance and irrationality were just breathtaking.

It was totally absurd — as if I was the one who had boarded the ships in international waters, killed people and kidnapped them. I replied that I would like to see those responsible for these crimes brought to justice.

But I should add I've had many messages from Jews worldwide supporting my role in the flotilla. I feel I do represent the international consensus, in attempting to break the siege. And I would do it again.

What next?

When I go back I will appeal against the withdrawal of my parliamentary privileges, using all possible legal avenues. I know the aggression will continue. I've already been told openly: We want to get rid of you, to get you out of the Knesset.

In a sense the attacks are not personal. Particularly since the beginning of the second Intifada, it has been official policy to try and silence us. Having failed to 'domesticate' us and get us to give up on our identity, they will try and exclude us physically from the political scene.

Some MKs make political capital out of their attacks, as when the Ministry of the Interior said I should be stripped of my Israeli citizenship. There are no legal grounds for this — but it is something that goes down well with the media and the public.

Whatever happens, I'll continue to fight for equal rights for all citizens — for true democracy in Israel.

(Gideon Levy continued)

Palestinians. It's an ongoing masquerade of a peace process going nowhere. Israel has no intention of pulling out of the West Bank. If some (non-viable) Palestinian state were to be set up, it would not last.

Do you think Israel might 'go it alone' and bomb Iran, even without a green light from the US?

Possibly. If the American administration is not sufficiently forceful, then it could happen.

In the past, Israel has succeeded in this kind of operation, but with Iran it would be much harder. If it failed, the outlook could be horrendous — worse than anything we've seen in the Middle East. Even if it succeeded, it would only postpone the Iranian nuclear capability for two or three years. It is not a solution.

Israel's instinct seems to be to respond always with more and more force...

As with the flotilla. It shows Israel learnt nothing from the Cast Lead operation and the reactions to it.

Does Israel not care about world opinion?

Less and less. That's the danger. The US could be effective of course, but they remain passive.

If you could give advice to the Palestinian leadership, what would that be?

First of all, get united. This political and geographical separation is absolutely fatal. And I'd have advised Abu Mazen not to go into the talks. But of course there was almost irresistible pressure on him. After the inevitable failure of the talks — what then?

Should Israel talk to Hamas?

Sure they should, but first perhaps Europe should give up on this exclusion of Hamas; they simply followed the US blindly in applying the sanctions.

Do you go to the US often?

Rarely; I am not invited. But I go to Canada, where there are many more organisations for a just peace in the Middle East. Though even in the US there is a shift in public opinion.

Throughout Europe I can see that there is a huge and growing disparity between public opinion and government attitudes.

You lead a pretty stressful existence. What do you do to unwind?

I come to London!

* From December 2008–January 2009, when over 1400 Palestinians were killed in Gaza.

Gideon Levy's new book, *The Punishment of Gaza*, published by Verso, is out now.



The Spot-and-Shoot Game — remote-controlled killing

By Jonathan Cook

It is called Spot and Shoot. Operators sit in front of a TV monitor from which they can control the action with a PlayStation-style joystick.

The aim: to kill terrorists.

Played by: young women serving in the Israeli army.

Spot and Shoot, as it is called by the Israeli military, may look like a video game but the figures on the screen are real people — Palestinians in Gaza — who can be killed with the press of a button on the joystick.

The female soldiers, located far away in an operations room, are responsible for aiming and firing remote-controlled machine-guns mounted on watch-towers every few hundred metres along an electronic fence that surrounds Gaza.

The system is one of the latest “remote killing” devices developed by Israel’s Rafael armaments company, the former weapons research division of the Israeli army and now a separate governmental firm.

According to Giora Katz, Rafael’s vice-president, remote-controlled military hardware such as Spot and Shoot is the face of the future. He expects that within a decade at least a third of the machines used by the Israeli army to control land, air and sea will be unmanned.

The demand for such devices, the Israeli army admits, has been partly fuelled by a combination of declining recruitment levels and a population less ready to risk death in combat.

Playstation mentality to killing

Oren Berebbi, head of its technology branch, recently told an American newspaper: “We’re trying to get to unmanned vehicles everywhere on the battlefield so we can do more and more missions without putting a soldier at risk.”

Rapid progress with the technology has raised alarm at the United Nations. Philip Alston, its special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, warned of the danger that a “PlayStation mentality to killing” could quickly emerge.

According to analysts, however, Israel is unlikely to turn its back on hardware that it has been at the forefront of developing — using the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and especially Gaza, as testing laboratories.

Remotely controlled weapons systems are in high demand from repressive regimes and the burgeoning homeland security industries around the globe.

“These systems are still in the early stages of development but there is a large and growing market for them,” said Shlomo Brom, a retired general and defence analyst at the Institute of National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University.

Women press the buttons

The Spot and Shoot system — officially known as Sentry Tech — has mostly attracted attention in Israel because it is operated by 19- and 20-year-old female soldiers, making it the Israeli army’s only weapons system operated exclusively by women.

Female soldiers are preferred to operate remote killing devices because of a shortage of male recruits to Israel’s combat units. Young women can carry out missions without breaking the social taboo of risking their lives, said Mr Brom.

The women are supposed to identify anyone suspicious approaching the fence around Gaza and, if authorised by an officer,



execute them using their joysticks.

The Israeli army, which plans to introduce the technology along Israel’s other confrontation lines, refuses to say how many Palestinians have been killed by the remotely controlled machine-guns in Gaza. According to the Israeli media, however, it is believed to be several dozen.

The system was phased-in two years ago for surveillance, but operators were only able to open fire with it more recently. The army admitted using Sentry Tech in December to kill at least two Palestinians several hundred metres inside the fence.

The *Ha’aretz* newspaper, which was given rare access to a Sentry Tech control room, quoted one soldier, Bar Keren, 20, saying: “It’s very alluring to be the one to do this. But not everyone wants this job. It’s no simple matter to take up a joystick like that of a Sony PlayStation and kill, but ultimately it’s for defence.”

Audio sensors on the towers mean that the women hear the shot as it kills the target. No woman, *Ha’aretz* reported, had failed the task of shooting what the army calls an “incriminated” Palestinian.

Civilians killed by remote-control

The Israeli military, which enforces a so-called “buffer zone” — an unmarked no-man’s land — inside the fence that reaches as deep as 300 metres into the tiny enclave, has been widely criticised for opening fire on civilians entering it.

In separate incidents in April, a 21-year-old Palestinian demonstrator was shot dead and a Maltese solidarity activist was wounded when they tried to plant a Palestinian flag in the buffer zone. It is unclear whether Spot and Shoot has been used against such demonstrations.

Another piece of hardware recently developed for the Israeli army is the Guardium, an armoured robot-car that can patrol territory, navigate through cities, launch “ambushes” and shoot at targets. It now patrols the Israeli borders with Gaza and Lebanon.

Its Israeli developers, G-Nius,



Reclaiming the land

By Georgina Reeves

On the eastern edge of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, lies Oush Ghrab — meaning ‘crow’s nest’ in Arabic. Once a military base, it has been taken back by the local community and is now a successful venue, restaurant, garden and recreation area.

Oush Ghrab has been the source of much misery in the past to the residents of Beit Sahour. Originally an outpost of the British military during the mandate years, it passed to Jordanian control and then Israeli following the Six-Day War in 1967.

In recent times, it provided the Israeli army with a well-situated base from which to attack and control the Bethlehem district. During the second Intifada, Beit Sahour was regularly shelled from here. Dozens of homes were destroyed or damaged and many families were forced to leave.

Then, on April 27th 2006, the Israeli army unexpectedly pulled out all forces overnight and Palestinians immediately began the process of reclaiming what was Beit Sahour’s land. Some locals stripped the base of anything that could be removed before the mayor of Beit Sahour, Hani Al-Hayek, took control. The municipality closed the entrance and started repairing the water infrastructure.

The municipality decided to develop the area into a community space for everyone in the district to enjoy. Plans were drawn up to create a public park. Staff worked in co-operation with Decolonizing Architecture, an organisation that helps communities reclaim spaces degraded by the occupation.

Funds were initially given by Caritas Jerusalem and USAID but were then stopped for political reasons. Al-Hayek says the municipality doesn’t need any further funding anyway as the park has become a sustainable project in its own right. It has created employment and turns a modest profit.

But despite owning the land, the community of Beit Sahour has little real control over the space; it is in Area C and is constantly at risk. Israel decides what can and can’t be built there. Plans for a

paediatric hospital, a facility desperately needed in the district, have been refused by the Israeli authorities.

The more militant elements of the settler movement are demanding that Oush Ghrab be re-occupied and have made several incursions since 2006. They want to build a settlement, linking Jerusalem and the illegal settlement of Har Homa to the north with the Gush Etzion settlement bloc to the south.

Today, Oush Ghrab is a thriving park emboldened with community spirit. But, like everywhere across Palestine, that community has the ever-present threat of interference and violence from the state of Israel and settlers alike hanging over it.

Georgina Reeves is a writer who splits her time between Bethlehem and London and is a co-founding trustee of Ahdaf, a charity supporting Palestinian students.



A climbing tower and tennis court in the new park

(cont. from p13)

have called it the world’s first “robot soldier.” It looks like the imaginary “robot-armour” worn by soldiers in the popular recent sci-fi movie *Avatar*.

Rafael has produced the first unmanned naval patrol boat, the “Protector,” which

has been sold to Singapore’s navy and is being heavily marketed in the US. But Israel is most known for its role in developing “unmanned aerial vehicles” — or drones, as they have come to be known. Originally intended for spying, they are increasingly being used for extrajudicial executions from thousands of feet in the sky.

Drones tested on Gazans

In February Israel officially unveiled the 14 metre-long Heron TP drone, the largest ever. Capable of flying from Israel to Iran and carrying more than a ton of weapons, the Heron was tested by Israel



A remote-controlled Guardium robot car

in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead when some 1,400 Palestinians were killed.

More than 40 countries now operate drones, many of them made in Israel, although so far only the Israeli and US armies have deployed them as remote-controlled killing machines. Israeli drones are being widely used in Afghanistan.

Smaller drones have been sold to the German, Australian, Spanish, French, Russian, Indian and Canadian armies. Brazil is expected to use the drone to provide security for the 2014 World Cup championship, and the Panamanian and Salvadoran governments want them too, ostensibly to run counter-drug operations.

Despite its diplomatic crisis with Ankara, Israel was recently reported to have completed a deal selling a fleet of 10 Herons to the Turkish army for \$185 million.

Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*, Pluto Press, and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair*, Zed Books. His website is www.jkcook.net

■ A version of this article originally appeared in *The National*: www.thenational.ae

Cultural boycott — the right tactic

Dave Randall,
guitarist for Faithless
and creator of his own
band, Slovo, explains
why he believes artists
should boycott Israel

Israel is the regional centre for all things cool, sexy and Western — or so its government PR machine would like the world to think. Tel Aviv is promoted as a hedonistic, libertarian party city, frequented by many of the world's best known bands and DJs.

This manufactured image matters to Israel. The implicit message is that the country is liberal and progressive. Music fans can dance, drink and pop pills long into the night, blissfully distracted from the immeasurable suffering endured by Palestinians living just 40 miles down the road in Gaza. In effect, music helps to drown out the cries of the oppressed in a society wilfully in denial of its role as oppressor.

International DJs and musicians should no longer be complicit in this crime. Faithless last performed in Israel in June 2005. I invited my friend, Palestinian producer and rapper Jad Abbas (aka Boikutt), to be my guest at the gig.

He declined, explaining that Israeli checkpoints meant the short journey to the venue from his home in Ramallah would be almost impossible. He added that, as a supporter of the cultural boycott of Israel, he would prefer our gig wasn't happening at all.

At the time I knew of no Western bands who had joined the boycott. The only thing I felt able to do was donate my personal earnings from that show to Medical Aid for Palestinians. Even with that small gesture I was quite isolated — only two other band members pledged to do the same.

Since then awareness of the true face of Israel and the suffering and humiliation to which Palestinians are subjected has become far more widespread, particularly in the wake of the siege of Gaza. The mood among many musicians is changing and prospects for the cultural boycott are better now than ever before.

Those of us who are serious about engaging in the struggle for a better world need good strategies and tactics. The tactic of cultural boycott isn't always a



PHOTO: DAMON HOPE

good one. I am opposed to the occupation of Afghanistan by coalition forces, but to ask my colleagues to boycott Afghanistan, Britain or the US would be meaningless.

You cannot effectively boycott somewhere you never go to (Afghanistan), somewhere you have to go to (Britain), or somewhere with such a big domestic music industry that your decision would go completely unnoticed (US). That's not to say that there aren't lots of other things musicians can do and have done to support the Stop the War movement, but boycott is not one of them.

Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine, by contrast, is one example of a situation

where the cultural boycott — as part of a wider strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions — is the right tactic.

Of course many musicians explicitly talk about political change when onstage in Israel. And some think that the boycott punishes the wrong people. Music fans, they argue, are among those most likely to oppose their government's policies. But bands, including Faithless, have been visiting Israel and singing about peace and unity for more than a decade. The situation for the Palestinians has only got worse during that period.

No matter how progressive your particular fans may be, gigs do not take place in a political or economic vacuum. Beyond your fan base, a gig in Israel can only too easily be interpreted as an endorsement of business as usual in the apartheid state.

So Maxi Jazz and I decided that we should join the boycott. When we did so we faced considerable pressure from management and others in the music industry to change our minds. News that other artists were drawing the same conclusions we were gave us confidence to stand our ground.

In truth, most of the opponents of the cultural boycott lack knowledge of what is really going on in the region. Or they simply do not care about the suffering of the Palestinians. Those of us who do care should join the Wall of Silence campaign and publicly support the cultural boycott of apartheid Israel.

Musicians & DJs campaign for the cultural boycott of Israel

The Wall of Silence campaign has been set up by me, British rapper Lowkey and the Ramallah based rapper, Boikutt.

We have one declaration:

Not one note of music will be played within Israel until every last piece of its apartheid wall is removed, the blockade of Gaza is lifted, and Israel withdraws from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We are DJs and musicians and we love music. We welcome musical projects and collaborations that cross borders. We will continue to welcome our Israeli colleagues to join us in our concerts, clubs, recording studios, parties, homes and lives — unless they allow themselves to be used to promote Israel.

And we encourage all musicians to visit and perform in the Occupied Territories — the West Bank and Gaza.

www.wallofsilence.org



Israeli insults rewarded by EU embrace

By David Cronin

Israel has directed a stream of insults towards its Western allies and protectors in the past 12 months, and has been rewarded with short-lived rebukes followed by an even closer embrace.

A group of foreign ministers representing the EU's five largest states — including William Hague — was told to stay away by Israel in September because they were going to urge Binyamin Netanyahu's government to extend the ten-month moratorium on building settlements in the West Bank.

Within a few days of this snub, the EU's foreign policy chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton, recommended that Israel should be designated a new "strategic" partner for the Union. The fact that Israel had once again bombed Gaza that same week, killing three civilians, did not appear to trouble her.

Ashton's proposal is designed to put Israel on a similar ranking with far bigger economies like the US, Japan and China in terms of how it is prioritised by EU officialdom. Her move follows last year's acknowledgement by Javier Solana, her predecessor as head of EU diplomacy, that no country outside the European continent had closer relations with the Union than Israel. According to Solana, Israel's participation in various EU-run programmes has made it a de facto member state of the Union.

Israel's insult to the foreign ministers followed the murder of the leading Hamas figure, Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, who was shot dead in a Dubai hotel in January by assassins presenting themselves as British, Irish, German and French citizens. After a British investigation concluded that there were "compelling reasons" to believe that Mossad, the Israeli secret service, had used fraudulent versions of ID cards belonging to Britons living in Israel, an Israeli diplomat was expelled from the UK.

"The EU has become an accomplice to genocide"

The expulsion has turned out to be tokenistic. The European countries whose passport systems were abused had an opportunity to censure Israel in a more meaningful fashion when a vote on its bid to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development took place in May. None of them were prepared to exercise their veto so Israel was admitted into this elite club for industrialised countries, receiving a "very significant seal of approval," as Israel's finance minister, Yuval Steinitz, observed.

Then there was the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla when Israeli commandos shot dead nine peace activists on board a ship belonging to Turkey, a country engaged in formal, if protracted, talks aimed at its accession to the EU. Although some EU states condemned the attack, none of them took any concrete measures against Israel.

This pattern echoes the response of US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who accused the Israeli government of delivering an "insult to the United States" when it announced the planned construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem while vice president Joe Biden was visiting the Middle East in March.

While her comments might have upset some of the wealthy Zionists who had previously bankrolled her election campaigns, Clinton soon resumed her usual practice of fawning to neo-cons. Later the same month she told the annual conference of AIPAC,



Baroness Cathy Ashton

the most powerful pro-Israel lobby group in Washington, that her devotion to Israel was "rock solid, unwavering, enduring and forever."

Why is Israel being treated with kid gloves by our governments? Privately, Brussels officials say that the EU needs to be on good terms with Israel because it is the kind of hi-tech economy that they wish Europe to emulate.

The same officials are less willing to recognise that many of the Israeli innovations they profess to admire were developed through cruel experiments in which the Palestinian people were treated as lab rats.

Israel is the leading foreign participant in the EU's multi-annual "framework programme" for scientific research, which has been allocated €53 billion (£44.2 billion) between 2007 and 2013. Among the Israeli firms pocketing EU grants are Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries, the manufacturers of pilotless drones that were used to inflict terror on civilians during Israel's three-week bombardment of Gaza in late 2008 and early 2009.

Israel's treatment of the Palestinians meets the definition of genocide enshrined in a 1948 UN convention: a crime designed to destroy a national, ethnic or religious group by causing serious physical or psychological harm on members of that group or by imposing intolerable conditions of life on them.

Under the terms of an "association agreement" with Israel that came into effect in 2000, the EU is legally obliged to sanction Israel for systematic abuses of human rights. Not only has the Union refused to honour that commitment, it is actively supporting the arms companies that profit from the murder of innocents. It is no exaggeration to conclude that the EU has become an accomplice to genocide.

■ David Cronin's book *Europe's Alliance With Israel: Aiding the Occupation* can be pre-ordered on www.plutobooks.com Publication date: November 20.

David Cronin is a journalist specialising in European politics. In March 2010, he received widespread coverage over his attempt to put Tony Blair under citizen's arrest for war crimes.



Unanimous vote for boycott

By Hugh Lanning

The trade union movement in Britain sent its strongest ever message of support for the Palestinian people in September when the TUC's Annual Congress unanimously passed a motion calling for a boycott of settlement goods and disinvestment from companies who profit from the Israeli occupation and illegal settlements.

This historic commitment was re-affirmed fully by a statement from the General Council uniting the trade union movement to campaign for peace and justice for Palestinians with concrete steps for pushing the campaign forward within the unions on boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association moved the Congress motion which was seconded by GMB and supported by UNISON, PCS and the Fire Brigades' Union. It builds on the motion carried at last year's Congress to campaign for a boycott of goods from the illegal settlements.

The hard-hitting and detailed motion gave the TUC a much broader mandate. It instructed the General Council **"to work closely with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to actively encourage affiliates, employers and pension funds to disinvest from, and boycott the goods of, companies who profit from illegal settlements, the Occupation and the construction of the Wall."** This is a significant step forward in solidarity, and reflects growing public awareness that action must be taken to end Israel's violations of international law.

Last year was good; the decision by the TUC Congress reverberated around the world. This year is better for two reasons: first we have a clear policy to target all those profiting from the occupation. Secondly, it is better because we are united.

Now is the time to contact your local trade union branches



Voting at the TUC

and organise joint actions. Many national unions have clear policy calling for an end to Israel's violations of international law, an end to the blockade of Gaza, ending arms trade with Israel and promoting a boycott. We are in a better position than ever to discuss with union branches and regions how we can best work with them.

A great place to start is to encourage your local trade union branches to be involved in PSC's week of nationally co-ordinated BDS action which takes place from November 6 to 16. This is being organised in response to a global call to action from Palestinian unions and civil society organisations.

Now is the time to "jump together" and work with other organisations and the trade unions to mobilise the growing BDS movement.

■ The PSC website has details of national union policies as well as the full text of the TUC resolution. See www.palestinecampaign.org

Packed meetings at party conferences

By Ruqayyah Collector

The sea-change in solidarity with Palestine that took place at the TUC also permeated the party conference season this year, reflecting the growing movement for peace and justice.

A packed fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference listened to Israeli Knesset member, Haneen Zoabi, talk about the racist nature of the Israeli state.

She was joined at the meeting by MPs Richard Burden and Andy Slaughter, Unite Joint General Secretary, Tony Woodley, and Hugh Lanning who spoke as both Deputy General Secretary of the PCS union and as Chair of the PSC. The fringe meeting was organised by PSC and Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East and was hosted by Unite.

Following his election as Labour Party leader, Ed Miliband condemned the attack on the flotilla, called for an end to the blockade of Gaza and for Israel to recognize a Palestinian state.

At the Liberal Democrat Party conference, the PSC's Director of Campaigns and Operations, Sarah Colborne, focussed on war crimes when she spoke at a fringe meeting organised by Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine and CAABU. Sarah described her experience on board the *Mavi Marmara* and detailed the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel.

Also speaking was Carla Ferstman of Redress who explained why universal jurisdiction was necessary given the extreme difficulties for victims of war crimes to achieve justice by bringing cases against suspected war criminals in their own countries.

At a PSC fringe meeting at the Green Party conference, Alex Phillips, a survivor from the Mavi Marmara and a volunteer on the Viva Palestina convoy last December, spoke about the siege on Gaza. The West Midlands PSC branch looked after a stall at the conference in Birmingham throughout the weekend.



Left to right: Carole Regan, Sarah Colborne, Hugh Lanning, Ruqayyah Collector

Complaints investigated

The deluge of complaints from PSC members about the Panorama programme, *Death in the Med*, has led to the BBC launching an investigation under its Editorial Guidelines on Impartiality and Diversity of Opinion.

The programme by reporter Jane Corbin, broadcast in August, claimed to show the “truth” behind Israel’s attack on the Gaza aid flotilla in May which resulted in the death of nine Turkish men aboard the largest ship, the *Mavi Marmara*.

PSC members were appalled at the extremely biased reporting in the programme which portrayed the activists on board as violent terrorists who set out to attack Israeli soldiers. In a detailed critique, the PSC asked a series of questions, including:

- Why was Israel’s “right” to board the ship presumed throughout the programme?
- Why did the programme fail to mention that Israel’s siege of Gaza has been declared illegal by the UN?
- Why did Jane Corbin not mention the bombs, rockets and white phosphorus dropped on Gaza by Israel during Operation Cast Lead when she did speak of the “thousands of rockets” fired from Gaza into Israel?

- Why was the Israeli evidence of how and when they killed the activists unquestioned?
- Why were the autopsy reports — which reveal that each victim was shot several times at close range — not used, or even mentioned?
- Why were there no interviews with any of the British activists or any of the journalists who were on board the ship?

Members who followed through to Stage Three of the BBC’s complaints process received a letter from Complaints Director, Colin Tregear, informing them that their complaint will be investigated and setting out the detailed guidelines under which the investigation will take place.

He said he would consider complaints against the section of the BBC’s Charter which covers achieving impartiality. He would also look at complaints in the light of sections on “Controversial Subjects” and guidelines on “Accuracy.”

- You can still watch the programme at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00thr24>
- See the PSC website on how to complain: www.palestinecampaign.org, or phone 020 7700 6192

Check out Wikipedia

Whatever the outcome of the complaints process, the BBC’s biased programme will be used by Israeli propagandists as if it were established fact. Check out the Wikipedia entry on “Gaza flotilla raid” which includes the passage: “A UNHRC fact-finding mission described six of the nine passengers’ deaths as ‘summary execution.’ However, a BBC documentary concluded that Israeli forces had acted in self-defence against extreme, premeditated violence perpetrated by a group of hard core IHH activists.”



Later in the entry the section on “Flotilla motives” is almost entirely the Israeli view, including the charge that “the ship carried 75 mercenaries with links to al-Qaeda and other terror organisations, who carried \$10,000 apiece on their persons.”

If you look up “Operation Cast Lead” in Wikipedia, you get re-directed to an entry headed “Gaza War.” Calling it a “war” implies a conflict between two armed forces, rather than a murderous assault by the world’s fifth largest army on a largely defenceless civilian population.

Israel’s “hasbara” campaign to control its media image took a new turn in August when a course was run in Jerusalem on the “Zionist editing” of Wikipedia entries.

The course was organised by the Yesha Council which represents West Bank settlers and was attended by 80 activists. Its director, Naftali Bennett, told a reporter that the aim of the course was to make sure that information in the online encyclopedia reflected the worldview of Zionist groups. For example, he said, “if someone searches ‘the Gaza flotilla,’ we want to be there; to influence what is written there, how it’s written and to ensure that it is balanced and Zionist in nature.”

The Yesha Council announced a prize for the “Best Zionist Editor” — the person who over the next four years incorporates the most “Zionist” changes in Wikipedia. The lucky winner will receive a trip in a hot-air balloon over Israel.

Repression against BDS activists in France

A significant victory was won in France when all charges were dropped as the trial opened of MP Alima Boumediene-Thiery and her fellow accused, Omar Salouti, for “incitement to racial hatred” and “discrimination against the Israeli nation” after they took part in a BDS action in the Paris region last year.



The prosecution was part of a concerted campaign against BDS lobbyists in France after the French government asked all French judges to condemn boycott actions against Israel. Another BDS activist, Sakina Arnaud, has already been found guilty of “racial hatred” and “discrimination” for having put a “Boycott Apartheid Israel” sticker on an Israeli product.

Also five BDS activists are being taken to court by five pro-Israeli organisations for having distributed a leaflet calling for boycott and for wearing the green t-shirts that state “Free Palestine” and “Boycott Israel.”

The plaintiff in this latest trial were Zionist lobbyists, Sammy Ghozlan, who boasts that he has filed more than 80 complaints against BDS activists, and William Goldnadel. The case was dismissed after Ms Boumediene-Thiery’s lawyer detailed the irregularities they had committed.

The next trial will take place in Mulhouse on November 29. And on October 22 Sakina Arnaud’s sentence will be announced by the Bordeaux tribunal. French BDS activists are calling for support. They would like people to organise protests in their respective countries, for example in front of the French Embassy, send messages of support to those prosecuted and write to the state prosecutor: Monsieur le Procureur de la République près du Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris: Palais de Justice 14, quai des Orfèvres. 75001 Paris.

- For more information see: www.europalestine.com

Rosemary's baby

In July the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* published what appeared to be a stunning revelation — prominent personalities of the extreme Right were declaring they accepted the idea of a “one-state solution” in which the Palestinians would be full citizens. Veteran Israeli journalist and peace activist **Uri Avnery** comments on this strange turn of events.

Since I witnessed the rise of the Nazis during my childhood in Germany, my nose always tickles when it smells something fascist, even when the odour is faint. When the debate about the “one-state solution” began, my nose tickled.

Have you gone mad, I told my nose, this time you are dead wrong. This is a plan of the left. It is being put forward by leftists of undoubted credentials, the greatest idealists in Israel and abroad, even certified Marxists.

But my nose insisted. It continued to tickle.

Now it appears that the nose was right, after all.

This is not the first time that a kosher leftist plan leads towards extreme rightist consequences. That happened, for example, to the ugliest symbol of the occupation: the Separation Wall.

When “terrorist” attacks multiplied, leftist politicians offered a miracle solution to the problem: an impassable obstacle between Israel and the occupied territories. The right opposed the idea vehemently. To them it was a conspiracy to fix the borders of the state and promote the two-state solution, which they saw (and still see) as an existential threat to their designs.

But suddenly the right changed its tune. They realised that the wall offered a wonderful opportunity to annex large tracts of West Bank land and turn them over to the settlers. And that is what happened: the wall/fence was not put up along the Green Line, but cuts deep into the West Bank.

Now the rightists have discovered the one-state solution. My nose is tickling.

One of the first was Moshe Arens, former Minister of Defence and a fanatical Likud member. He started to talk about one state from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River in which the Palestinians would be granted full rights, including citizenship and the vote.

I rubbed my eyes. Is this the same Arens? What has happened to him? But this apparent mystery has a simple solution. Arens and his companions are faced with a mathematical problem that seems insoluble: turning the triangle into a circle.

Their aim has three sides: (a) a Jewish state, (b) the whole of Eretz Israel, and (c) democracy. How to combine these three sides into one harmonious circle?



Moshe Arens



Fanatical settlers and their IDF protectors

Between the sea and the river there now live about 6.5 million Jews and 3.9 million Palestinians — a proportion of 59% Jews to 41% Palestinians. This number does not include, of course, the millions of Palestinian refugees who are living outside the country.

The proportion is rapidly changing, as the Palestinian population is doubling every 18 years. One can predict with almost mathematical precision when the Palestinians will constitute the majority — it's a matter of years rather than decades.

“The Palestinian population is doubling every 18 years”

The inescapable conclusion: one can reconcile between any two of the three aspirations, but not all three at once: (a) a Jewish state in the entire country cannot be democratic, (b) a democratic state in the entire country cannot be Jewish, and (c) a Jewish and democratic state cannot include the entire Eretz Israel.

Therefore the Right is looking for another logic that would allow the creation of a Jewish and democratic state in the entire country and have discovered the one-state solution.

The rightists quoted in the *Ha'aretz* article do not hide their reasons for adopting this line: they want to obstruct the setting up of a Palestinian state which would mean the end of the settlement enterprise and the evacuation of scores of settlements and outposts. They also want to put an end to the growing international pressure for the two-state solution.

Among some leftists in the world the news was greeted with great joy. They pour scorn on the Israeli peace camp and heap praise on the Israeli right. What magnanimity! What readiness to break out of the box and adopt their opponents' ideals! Only the right will make peace!

But if these good people would read the texts, they would discover that it ain't necessarily so. To be precise, it's the very opposite.

All of the six rightists quoted in the article are united on a number of points which deserve consideration.

First: they exclude the Gaza Strip from the proposed solution. Gaza will no longer be a part of the country. Thus, the number of Palestinians will be reduced by 1.5 million.

Second: the one state will, of course, be a Jewish state.

Third: the annexation of the West Bank will take place at once, so that the building of settlements can go on undisturbed.

“The one state will, of course, be a Jewish state”

Fourth: There is no way to grant citizenship to all Palestinians immediately. The author of the article summarizes their positions thus: “a process that will take from about a decade to a generation, and at its conclusion the Palestinians will enjoy full personal rights, but the state will remain, in its symbols and spirit, Jewish... This is not a vision of ‘a state belonging to all its citizens’ and not ‘Isratine’ with a flag combining the crescent and the Star of David. The one state still means Jewish sovereignty.”

It is worthwhile to listen well to the explanations provided by the initiators themselves (emphasis added by me):

Uri Elitsur, former director general of the Judea and Samaria Council (the leadership of the settlers, known as “Yesha”): “I speak of a Jewish state which is the state of the Jewish people, and in which there will exist an Arab *minority*.”

Hanan Porat, a founder of Gush Emunim (the religious settlers’ leadership, and the man who called upon the Jews to rejoice after the Baruch Goldstein massacre in Hebron): “I am against the automatic citizenship proposed by Uri Elitsur, which is naïve and could lead to grievous consequences. I propose the application of Israeli law to the territories in stages, first in the areas in which there is (already) a Jewish majority, and within a time-span of a decade to a *generation* in all the territories.”



Hanan Porat

Tzipi Hutanbeli, a Member of Parliament on the extreme fringe of Likud: “On the political *horizon* there must be citizenship for the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria... That will happen *gradually*... This process must take place over a long time, perhaps even a generation, in the course of which the situation on the ground will be stabilised and the symbols of the Jewish state and its character will be anchored in law... The question mark hovering over Judea and Samaria will be removed... First comes my deep belief in our right over Eretz Israel... At this moment we speak about conferring citizenship in Judea and Samaria, *not in Gaza*. Let it be clear: I do not recognize political rights of Palestinians over Eretz Israel... Between the sea and the Jordan there is room for one state, a Jewish state.”

Emily Amrussi, a settler who organises meetings between the settlers and the Palestinians of the neighbouring villages: “Don’t describe me as one pushing for the ‘one state.’ In the end we may arrive there, but we are still *very far from there*. Let’s talk first about one country... We don’t talk about citizenship, but in terms like relations between neighbours... *First* let them become my good neighbours, and *then* we shall give them rights... In the *far future*, it will be necessary to move towards citizenship for everybody.”

The regime described here is not an apartheid state but something much worse: a Jewish state in which the Jewish majority will decide if at all, and when, to confer citizenship on some of the Arabs. The words that come up again and again — “perhaps within a generation” — are by nature very imprecise, and not by accident.

But most important: there is a thunderous silence about the mother of all questions: what will happen when the Palestinians become the majority in the One State? That is not a question of “if”, but of “when”: there is not the slightest doubt that this will happen, not “within a generation” but long before.

This thunderous silence speaks for itself. People who do not know Israel may believe that the rightists are ready to accept such a situation. Only a very naïve person can expect a repetition of what

happened in South Africa, when the whites (a small minority) handed power over to the blacks (the large majority) without bloodshed.

We said above that it is impossible to “turn the triangle into a circle.” But the truth is that there is one way: ethnic cleansing. The Jewish state can fill all the space between the sea and the Jordan and still be democratic — if there are no Palestinians there.

Ethnic cleansing can be carried out dramatically (as in this country in 1948 and in Kosovo in 1998) or in a quiet and systematic way, by dozens of sophisticated methods, as is happening now in East Jerusalem. But there cannot be the slightest doubt

that this is the final stage of the one-state vision of the rightists. The first stage will be an effort to fill the entire country with settlements, and to demolish any chance of implementing the two-state solution which is the only realistic basis for peace.

In Roman Polanski’s movie *Rosemary’s Baby*, a nice young woman gives birth to a nice baby, which turns out to be the son of Satan. The attractive leftist vision of the one-state solution may grow up into a rightist monster.



Uri Avnery

Eye on the web



● Settler leader mows down children in hit and run

A shocking video on YouTube shows David Be’eri, the leader of the Jewish settlers trying to take over the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, deliberately driving his car into two Palestinian boys and sending them flying.

The incident happened during protests that followed Friday prayers on October 8. A group of young kids, including eleven year old Imran Mansur and Iyad Gheit, aged ten, were throwing stones. Be’eri, leader of the hardline Elad organisation, charges the boys and, in a sickening scene, one of them is hurled over the bonnet and on to the roof of the car while the other is knocked sideways.

Both boys were badly hurt and were rushed to hospital. The incident was recorded by photographers and journalists. Be’eri fled the scene.

<http://tinyurl.com/3ytvo98>

● Map of settlement activity

Americans for Peace Now have prepared a detailed map of settlement activity in the West Bank which can be downloaded as an iPhone app. The map is organised in several layers that show different kinds of data such as the year a settlement was established and its population.

When APN posts news stories about events in the West Bank, they will now include a link that takes you directly to the location. You can then explore the area so you can understand the news in context.

www.peacenow.org/map.php

● New list of settlement products

A much larger list of settlement products, updated as of May this year, is available. It is in pdf format and needs to be downloaded but it is worth the trouble. <http://tinyurl.com/33t5klo>

● Israeli documentary on BDS

A documentary shown on Israel’s Channel 10 TV about the effectiveness of the BDS campaign, particularly in the UK, was very interesting and encouraging. It featured contributions by PSC members. <http://tinyurl.com/35ynmgw>

• campus watch

Viva Palestina University

By Mary Robertson, SOAS



This summer over one hundred pro-Palestinian activists from all over the world met in Lebanon for a week of seminars, activities and discussions on the history, culture and politics of Palestine.

The first annual Summer University of Palestine was organised by Viva Palestina Arabia, an arm of the Viva Palestina movement registered in Lebanon. It took place at the Lebanese International University in West Bekaa, Khyara, and opened with lectures from world-renowned speakers.

Norman Finkelstein sparked ferocious debate by arguing that Zionism, as a form of ethnic nationalism, is not inherently racist. We also had a lively debate over the relative merits of a one or two state 'solution.' Dr Ghada Karmi raised the concern that the 'facts on the ground' are making an independent Palestinian state increasingly unviable.

Other speakers included Kevin Ovenden, survivor of the Gaza flotilla attack, whose hero's welcome reflected the enthusiastic support for the Gaza convoys, and Dr Ali Fayad, Lebanese Member of Parliament. Dr Fayad warned that because of Israel's desire to redeem its military reputation following defeat in the 2006 Lebanese war, a new attack on Lebanon is imminent.

Our discussions combined facts and information with the tactical issues confronting solidarity movements in different countries. Making international links with young pro-Palestine activists was particularly valuable. Our collective action and cooperation will be important for pushing the movement forward — from organising blockade-busting convoys to isolating Israel through boycott, divestment and sanctions.

However, what sticks in my mind even more are our visits across Lebanon, including to a memorial to the victims of the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacre of Palestinian refugees and to a former Israeli prison that was liberated by Lebanese villagers in 2000 and bombed to rubble in 2006 — Israel's attempt to destroy this symbol of Lebanese resistance.

Without doubt most memorable was our visit to Lebanon's border with Israel. Several layers of fencing and UN peace-keepers in their iconic blue hats separated us from the Rift Valley. It was quite something to see the land over which so much blood has been shed and on which so many lives still depend: several people were moved to tears.

No amount of reading or discussion can substitute for seeing sites of Israeli aggression first-hand or for talking with Palestinians about their experience of living under occupation or in refugee camps in Lebanon.

As a way of learning more about the Palestinian struggle, building relationships with other activists from all over the world

and witnessing the material consequences of Israel's actions in the region, the Summer University was a fantastic experience. I've come home both better educated and more determined.

If you want to register for the next university, contact Alice at alicear@vivapalestinaarabia.org

Students challenge NUS stance on Palestine

By Kanja Sesay, NUS Black Students' Officer, and Fiona Edwards, PSC Student Officer

For a growing number of young people in Britain today, Palestine has become the touchstone issue of global justice. In many ways it has galvanised young people as the anti-apartheid movement inspired previous generations.

A YouGov poll following Israel's attack on the Gaza flotilla showed that 51% of British young people think the siege on Gaza is wrong against 17% who supported it. At the same time an increasing number of Palestine Solidarity Societies have been created on university and college campuses across the country.

Despite this surge in support for Palestine following Israel's 2008–9 assault on Gaza, the National Union of Students — an organisation which represents seven million people — continues to side with war criminals. In a statement released after the flotilla attack, the NUS leadership failed to condemn it clearly. The statement merely called for "Israel to launch an immediate, credible and independent investigation into the killing by its armed forces of at least ten activists on the flotilla convoy."

This is part of an ongoing pattern. The NUS refused to call for a ceasefire during Israel's war on Lebanon or condemn its assault on Gaza. Instead it condemned students who occupied their campuses in protest and disaffiliated from the biggest mass movement of our age, the Stop the War Coalition.

Last December NUS President, Wes Streeter, had a high profile meeting with Tzipi Livni, who was Foreign Minister at the time of the Gaza bombardment, in Israel, having not lifted a finger to express support for Palestinians fighting for justice.

There appears to be a concerted attempt within the NUS to restrict debate on Palestine. The European Union Monitoring Committee definition of anti-Semitism — which has been rejected

(cont. p22)



Student occupation at the LSE, 2009

Actions with impact

Many branches enthusiastically rolled out the PSC's "Boycott Israeli Dates" campaign to persuade people not to buy dates produced in the illegal settlements to break their fast during Ramadan.

Members, particularly in urban areas such as **Leeds, Bradford, West London, Kingston, Camden, Guildford, Milton Keynes, Brent** and **West Midlands** made a great impact by handing out "check the label" cards outside shops, mosques and Muslim community centres. "We had a huge response," said one member. "It was an excellent way to open up the discussion on the wider issues of occupation and colonisation."

West London

designed a card of their own and handed out 5000 of them. Salim reports:

"Many, many people told us they already boycotted Israeli produce." **Brent**

branch covered all the larger mosques after Friday prayers for four weeks and gave out

about 4000 cards. A point to bear in mind for next year: retailers have to be contacted several months before Ramadan as they place their orders well in advance.

Hackney found Ramadan a particularly good time to create links with the local Turkish community and involve them in their monthly film nights, with guest speakers.

Fundraising for the convoy

Speakers from May's flotilla to Gaza continued to be welcome guests at branches around the country, giving a boost to fundraising for this autumn's convoy. **Liverpool** alone collected £10,000. Perhaps the most imaginative idea comes from **Southampton**, who raised £1000 with a sponsored car wash! They were also overwhelmed with offers to take part in their fundraising concert; they could really pick and choose among the many groups and singers wanting to show their support for Palestine.

As an alternative to a speaker, **Camden** strongly recommends the film *Journey Through Thorns*, about one young man's life in Gaza, produced and presented by the UK-based Palestine Trauma Centre (www.ptcuk.org): "Great for any branch wanting to have a ready-made meeting that carries a powerful message about the siege of Gaza, and how the Palestinians survive."



Talking to shopkeepers in Bradford

Demos targeted by fascists

The weekly demonstrations outside the Ahava shop in London's Covent Garden, which markets beauty products from the Dead Sea in the occupied West Bank, have been met in recent months by an aggressive crowd of Zionists supported by the extreme rightwing England Defence League. Members of what they call "the EDL, Jewish division" also wrapped themselves in an Israeli flag at a demo in **Birmingham**.

Brighton branch carried out a series of BIG actions in local supermarkets involving stickering and dumping baskets of Israeli goods whilst chorusing a relevant script. In Waitrose they also pitched a tent to represent a settlement. At Sainsbury's they were astonished to be told by the manager they had every right to voice such opinions. "After 15 minutes he asked us to continue outside (still on their premises) and brought us all tea or coffee!"

Virtually all branches hold regular BDS demos at their local supermarkets. **Norwich** branch is also writing protest letters to Sainsbury's about them selling maps of the world which declare Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel — something to look out for in all supermarkets and bookshops.

Several branches, including **Brighton**, demonstrated outside their local BBC offices to protest at the highly biased Panorama programme on the *Mavi Marmara* and many members supported the protest by writing letters and signing petitions.



Protesting at the BBC in Brighton

Linking campaigning to culture

An exhibition of Gazan children's art made after Israel's vicious bombardment between December 2008 and January 2009, called "Loss of Innocence" and compiled by Rod Cox, has been put on display by a number of branches and has created a tremendous emotional impact.

In **Aberystwyth** Rod gave a talk about how the pictures

(cont. from previous page)

by the British government twice — is the official policy position of the NUS. This limits legitimate criticisms of Israel and its adoption by the NUS is an attempt to prevent discussion of Israel's crimes.

But there are growing numbers taking a stand within the NUS in solidarity with the Palestinians. The NUS Black Students' Campaign, representing a million students of African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean descent, has a long standing record of mobilising people to support the Palestinians, most notably by taking part in the Viva Palestina convoys to Gaza.

In addition this year the NUS Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Campaign passed a policy that declared "solidarity with

the oppressed people of Palestine" and "to respect the democratic decisions of the Palestinian people" in an unprecedented breakthrough.

Student Palestine Solidarity Campaign is organising monthly meetings where key activists can share ideas, co-ordinate actions and get involved with PSC's national initiatives. We discuss issues ranging from the situation facing the Palestinians to practical action we can take to build the broadest possible student Palestine solidarity movement.

■ To find out more please get in touch: students@palestinecampaign.org

communicate the children's experience of death and destruction and the loss of their childhood. Elizabeth Morley reports: "When we hear of people suffering our hearts go out to them; we reach into our pockets and we want to help. When the victims are Palestinian, we find obstacles to giving aid, and what is worse, even to voicing our compassion. What, asked Rod, are Palestinians to make of it — that when *they* are injured, the world seems to look the other way?"

The exhibition was shown in **Cambridge** in October and **Milton Keynes** hopes to get it in the city's main library in January. If other branches want it, the best thing is to contact Anne Candlin, who has the diary: anne.candlin1@btinternet.com

Sheffield hosted a wonderfully successful dabke dance performance by young people from the Lajee centre in Aida refugee camp and **Cambridge** staged a concert with the acclaimed singer, Reem Kelani, talented pianist, Bruno Heinen, and popular African rhythms local band, Matoke. **Hereford** plans a season of films at the local arts centre this autumn and Southampton will be introducing their community to some of the most central and urgent issues facing Palestinians with their conference "Day for Jerusalem /Al Quds."



Young dancers from the Lajee Centre

Victory! Mike Leigh shuns Israel

Following a letter from Betty Hunter to distinguished film director, Mike Leigh, urging him to cancel his planned visit to Israel as guest of the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School, he replied: "Thank you for your recent letter and wise counsel regarding my proposed trip to Israel. You are absolutely right, of course, and I have now cancelled the visit. With best wishes, Mike Leigh."

Organisers thrilled by success of festival

The young dabke dancers from the Lajee Centre were the stars of the terrific *Discover Palestine* festival held in **Halifax** in July which involved the local community in varied and imaginative ways.

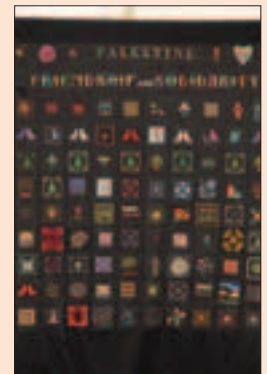
After being given a civic welcome by the mayor of Hebden Royd, (the Palestinian flag was flown over Hebden Bridge Town Hall for the week-long festival) the dancers stayed with families in Calderdale and shared their skills with young people in the schools.

The renowned Palestinian singer, Reem Kelani, threw herself wholeheartedly into the festival running workshops in primary schools and leading a choir of youngsters in a performance of Palestinian songs for their proud parents and teachers. Her concert was the unforgettable highlight of the festival as the young people from the Lajee Centre sang and danced with her at the end of the show, to rapturous applause all round.

Palestinian embroidery was another key theme for *Discover Palestine*. Hundreds of local people got involved through workshops and house groups held in the months leading up to the festival in a project to produce two "friendship wall hangings" composed of squares of Palestinian cross-stitch embroidery. In the process links were forged with a women's embroidery co-operative in Bethany/Azariah.

The festival also featured an exhibition of children's art, entitled *This is Where I Live*, which blended pictures by children in Gaza and the West Bank with artwork produced by children in Calderdale schools in response to these images, a photography exhibition and a chance to try Palestinian food and crafts.

One of the festival organisers reports: "We are thrilled at the way such a wide cross section of people got involved in the activities, the friendships that were formed, and the potential for future links with Palestine. As the young dancers from Lajee Centre affirmed, cultural resistance can be very powerful!"



Checkpoints at Greenbelt

The annual Greenbelt Festival over August Bank Holiday weekend at Cheltenham Racecourse is a gathering of over 20,000 people of all ages. Most have a connection to the church so it is a great place to persuade the church community to get involved in action.

In 2009 a decision was taken to feature Palestine as a central Festival campaign for three years. 2010 was the second of these years, and Palestine was definitely on the agenda. Replica bits of 'the wall' were dotted around the site, daubed with slogans setting out facts — numbers killed in Gaza, amount of water available to Palestinians in the West Bank, numbers of checkpoints etc. In one place a checkpoint was constructed and those aiming to pass were challenged.

The speaking programme included well-known names — Jonathan Kuttub from Palestine, PSC Patrons Ilan Pappé, Bruce Kent and Garth Hewitt, Brian Klug from Independent Jewish Voices, Ben White from Just Peace for Palestine Campaign, Dr Swee Ang and Clare Short, whose session on lobbying drew a large crowd (6-700) with the audience queuing to ask specific questions on the best way to lobby in their constituency.

BDS was mentioned in every session, with all the speakers promoting it strongly. A panel on boycott, which included some

who were uncomfortable with it as a campaigning tool, ended with an overwhelming vote to request the Greenbelt Trustees formally to adopt BDS.

In the meantime, it was clear that those who had been at the various sessions over the weekend were already convinced and the work within churches to increase boycott action and lobbying moved forward considerably over the weekend.

Sue Plater



Fundraising idea

Aberystwyth branch chair Sue Young reports amazing results from devoting part of her car boot sale stall to displaying PSC material and merchandise through the summer. She made an eye-catching "Whatever happened to Palestine?" banner with pie charts showing the dwindling of Palestinian

territory. For the Convoy Appeal she painted "Aberystwyth Gaza Convoy Appeal" on a big tarpaulin banner and made it the backdrop to the stall.

There's a new group in Southport.
Contact: bruceburgess2010@yahoo.co.uk

Dump Veolia Campaign

By Angus Geddes

The waste management company, Veolia, has signed a principled agreement to sell its shares in the Jerusalem Light Rail to the Israeli transportation co-operative, Egged, over a five year period.

This marks a substantial victory for the international campaign to boycott the company which has cost it millions of dollars. However, Veolia will still be complicit in the Light Rail project for the coming five years so the pressure must be kept up.

In the UK the campaign to persuade councils to stop using Veolia for its waste management and other contracts is gathering pace. There was a fantastic breakthrough in June when Swansea Council resolved to exclude Veolia from all future contracts. Since then the main action has been in London, Edinburgh and Hampshire.

A **Veolia London Action Group** has been formed to coordinate local campaigns across the capital. These include **Richmond, Ealing** and the South London Waste Partnership boroughs of **Croydon, Kingston, Merton** and **Sutton**, all with waste management contracts to be awarded in 2011 that we can be sure Veolia will bid for.

The Group is putting together a strong case, with initial contacts with councils already made. In Richmond a legal challenge assisted by a member of Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights is in the offing. At the Group's request, PSC has written to the Olympics Minister demanding that Veolia is excluded from contracts for services to the 2012 Olympics. Plans are afoot to encourage trade union involvement in the London campaign.

The London Group has also been protesting at the Natural History Museum and BBC Wildlife Magazine engaging Veolia to sponsor the Veolia Environment Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition and Exhibition. After a well supported demo in April, another one is planned for October 23 outside the Museum.

Scottish PSC mounted a well prepared lobby of **Edinburgh** City Council which decided to refer the issue for further consideration. Three councils are being lobbied in Hampshire, all with rubbish contracts due for award in 2011. **Southampton** and **Portsmouth & South Downs** PSC branches are involved. A local PSC member is challenging Portsmouth City Council, represented by a LPHR lawyer. **Winchester** City and **East Hants** Councils are going for a new joint contract for rubbish collection and street cleaning.

Despite a demonstration in Winchester and being bombarded with emails and letters, the two councils went ahead with including Veolia in the short-list of companies invited to tender but there is plenty of time for more campaigning.

Several councils have tried to fob off campaigners with the contention that the 1988 Local Government Act prevents them from excluding a company for non-commercial reasons. But councils are wrong to say that they have a duty to exclude any non-commercial consideration. The act lists a number of specific non-commercial considerations that cannot be taken



Anti-Veolia demo in Winchester

into account, but none of them are relevant to the grounds for excluding Veolia.

These are that Veolia is complicit in Israel's violation of international law through its tramway and bus services linking Israel's illegal settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank to Israel and its landfill site in the occupied Jordan valley taking refuse from both Israel and settlements.

Recent new developments strengthen the case for excluding Veolia. In April 2010 the UN Human Rights Council declared the tramway and its operation to be illegal (A/HRC/RES/13/7 of 14 April 2010). The resolution was passed 49 to 1, with the UK, France and all the EU members of the council voting in favour. The operation of the tramway is precisely what Veolia has a contract to do.

Veolia is recruiting operators for the tramway through an advertisement requiring Hebrew to mother tongue standard, no mention of Arabic. Full army or civic service is also required, i.e. no Palestinians — discrimination that is illegal even in Israeli law.

Veolia Environment, the parent company, is not beyond giving false information to defend its position. In reply to a British engineering company querying whether its contract with Veolia met its business ethics policy, Veolia Environment flatly denied that its bus routes served illegal settlements. In fact it has come to light that Veolia operates four such services not just the two identified earlier.

The campaign continues, with challenges to other councils besides those described here. We intend developing stronger links with trade unions. Workers in Veolia companies could be instrumental in putting pressure on their management. We must make sure we convince the public and ordinary councillors that what Israel and Veolia are doing is just plain wrong.

If you want to get involved, or need more information, contact PSC to be put in touch with the campaign organisers.

In Brief

BIL'IN PROTEST ORGANISER ABDALLAH ABU RAHMAH JAILED

Abdallah Abu Rahmah was sentenced on October 11 to 12 months in prison, plus six months suspended for three years and a fine of 5,000 shekels, for his involvement in his village's non-violent struggle against the wall.

In the sentencing, the judge cited as a mitigating factor the non-implementation of an Israeli High Court ruling which declared the current route of the wall on Bil'in's land illegal.

Abu Rahmah, coordinator of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements, was arrested in December last year. He faced the ridiculous charge of arms possession based on the fact he had amassed a collection of spent tear gas canisters and bullet casings as evidence of the IDF's violent response to unarmed demonstrators. One consequence was the death of his cousin, Bassem Abu Rahme.

The military court cleared him of this charge and of stone throwing but convicted him of organising illegal demonstrations and incitement. It did so based only on testimonies of children who were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night and denied their right to legal counsel, and despite acknowledging significant ills in their questioning.

The use of draconian anti-free speech military laws to silence Abu Rahmah has caused outrage around the world. The EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, previously expressed her deep concern "that the possible imprisonment of Mr Abu Rahmah is intended to prevent him and other Palestinians from exercising their legitimate right to protest." The sentencing hearing was attended by diplomats from the United Kingdom, the European Union, Belgium and Germany and representatives of UNSCO and Human Rights Watch.



Photo: Activestills.org

LETHAL WEAPON USED AGAINST PROTESTORS

During the sentencing hearing of Abdallah Abu Rahmah it was revealed that the IDF continues to use the Ruger 10/22 rifle to disperse protests even though it was prohibited by the military advocate general.

The state submitted to the court an expert opinion by Major Igor Moiseev, who served as the Binyamin Brigade's operations officer for two years. Detailing the cost of ammunition fired in Bil'in and Nil'in from August 2008 to December 2009, it noted that the army used Ruger bullets that cost a total of 1.3 million shekels. Moiseev described the Ruger as a "non-lethal weapon."

The military advocate general in 2001, Maj. Gen. Menachem Finkelstein, prohibited the use of Ruger bullets because they were potentially lethal. When Abu Rahmah's lawyer, Gabi Laski, inquired if Moiseev knew of this, he replied that he was not aware of such an instruction.

The IDF reverted to using the Ruger against protesters in 2009, killing a teenager in Hebron in February and a protester in Nil'in in June.

TOM HURNDALL KILLER RELEASED



The soldier convicted of killing British peace activist Tom Hurndall was released from jail on 8 September. Hurndall, 22, who was working with the International Solidarity Movement, was shot in the head as he escorted Palestinian children across a live-fire zone in Rafah, Gaza, in April 2003.

The soldier, Taysir Hayb, was convicted of manslaughter in 2005 and sentenced to eight years but was released after serving only six years. The Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, reported that "a Southern Command military tribunal headed by Col. Erez Porat decided to release Hayb after all three panel members ruled that he had been sufficiently rehabilitated."

In an interview with the *Guardian*, Hurndall's mother, Jocelyn, said, "From the moment that Tom was shot, we said it wasn't about the soldier, who is a small part of the machinery, but about the responsibility of the Israeli army and its lack of accountability over civilian killings. To say that the soldier has reformed is to miss the point — the British government needs to hold Israel accountable for its actions."

ISRAELI SOLDIER CONDEMNS OCCUPATION

Serving Israeli soldier, Omer Shoshan, 19, was jailed for 20 days in September for leaving his post and issuing a statement condemning the occupation.

Shoshan, from Yehud, near Tel Aviv, said in his statement: "I refuse to be part of the Israel Defence Forces, an army that occupies and oppresses a Palestinian population on a daily basis, which undermines the chances to achieve peace, and thus also Israel's security, and which corrupts the moral and democratic character of the state."

"For more than 40 years the IDF has been daily oppressing the Palestinians in the occupied territories and denying them their most basic rights to live normally... The very fact that any simple soldier serving beyond the Green Line has power over the lives of local residents and can force them to do as he pleases



is illegal and undemocratic and obtains the exact opposite of what it is supposed to — it produces more terrorists, increases hatred towards us and undermines any realistic chances for peace.

“So what purpose does this oppression really serve? Only one — perpetuating the Israeli settlements in the West Bank which are illegal in their own right and which are the obstacle to reaching a compromise between the two peoples...”

“I believe that in a country that claims to be a democracy, it is good and even necessary for each of us to voice criticism and indignation when the country is wrong. The IDF is an organisation that fights for interests that I don’t believe in, performs anti-democratic and immoral actions and seriously undermines the chances to achieve peace. I am no longer willing to be part of it.”

Letters of support can be sent to Shoshan at messages2prison@newprofile.org

MURDER BY SETTLER GUARD

Simmering tension in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem erupted in September and resulted in the deliberate murder of a Palestinian by a guard hired by fanatical settlers to protect the homes they have taken over from long term residents.



Israeli police fire tear gas at demonstrators in Silwan. Photo: Joseph Dana

Trouble broke out in the early hours of the morning according to a report by blogger and film maker, Joseph Dana. He interviewed Silwan resident, Abdallah Rajmi, who told him: “I went to my roof to see what was happening and I saw three settler guards with ‘small weapons’ approach a group of young Palestinian men,” referring sarcastically to the guards’ large Uzi assault rifles. “The guards began shooting the men and everyone in Silwan woke up.

“I could not believe my eyes. I saw a man lying in his own blood and dying. The settler guards had just shot him in cold blood and watched him dying. He was there, on the ground, for one hour until an Israeli ambulance arrived on the scene, of course they would not allow any of us to get near him.”

The dead man was named as Samir Sarhan, aged about 30 according to news reports, and the father of five children. As we went to press there has been no news of any arrests in connection with the death.

US ACTIVISTS TARGET TAX

The gangster Al Capone was famously only brought to book over his tax affairs and now activists are using the same tactic against the private funds raised in the US to support Israeli settlements.

It is estimated that tens of millions of dollars reach the settlements in the form of charity contributions that enjoy tax-exempt status under the US’ Internal Revenue Code. According to a July 2009 report by the International Crisis Group, the Hebron Fund alone raises an average of \$1.5 million a year to support Jewish settlement in the city.

An examination by journalist Alice Sperti of IRS documentation identified at least 32 similar organisations (see <http://tinyurl.com/3yn6eh9>). She says the groups, mostly Jewish but also Christian-Zionist, often adopt a particular community of settlers and for the most part claim on their tax forms to be contributing to charitable or educational projects.

Neil Strauss, son of a Canadian father and an Israeli mother, grew up between Canada and the settlement of Efrat and is now a legal researcher for the Washington-based American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and a supervisor of the Free Palestine subcommittee of the National Lawyers Guild.

Strauss runs workshops inviting volunteer law students to look for violations of tax regulation rather than broader political questions of international law. “The IRS is staffed by professional tax people and bureaucrats are less susceptible to Zionist political pressure than elected officials,” he said, explaining that turning to the IRS is “easier than challenging support to Israel, which is a political issue.”

Since March 2009, the ADC has filed official complaints exposing the alleged illicit practices by ten of these organisations. “The law is pretty clear,” Strauss said. “If these laws were applied honestly, these organisations would not have tax exemption.”

BOY BEGS POLICE NOT TO TAKE HIS DAD

A Sky News cameraman captured the distressing scene of a five-year-old Palestinian boy crying hysterically and trying to stop Israeli soldiers arresting his father for “stealing” water from an illegal settlement.

Khaled Jaber, chased barefoot after his father wailing “baba, baba.” A Border Police officer carried the boy away while his father, Fadel, was bundled into a police car.

Israeli forces raided the family home in Hebron after accusing them of taking water from the settlement of Kiryat Arba to water their crops. The angry Palestinians said they had

documents to prove they are registered with the Palestinian Water Authority and are paying for the water they use. They said it was the second time in a month police have removed their irrigation pipes.

After the clip was shown round the world, the Israeli Border Police said the family “chose to make cynical use of a five-year-old boy” and that “he was well instructed and directed.”

Fadel Jaber’s brother-in-law responded: “It is an outright lie. A boy sees his father and uncle getting beaten and being treated like dogs, and this is a natural reaction. Who could tell a small child to go and confront grown soldiers?” Judge for yourself whether you think little Khaled was acting. <http://tinyurl.com/3xzpybf>



BRITISH JEWS SUPPORT TWO STATES

A survey of British Jewish attitudes to Israel conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research was published in July. It found that 95 per cent of British Jews have visited Israel at least once — compared with just 40 per cent of American Jews, according to the last major survey of them in 2007.

The most interesting finding was the dovish views on the Israel-Palestine conflict held by many British Jews. More than half — 52 per cent — thought Israel should talk to Hamas, while 78 per cent voiced support for a two-state solution.

Meanwhile a survey conducted by US-Jewish group, the Israel Project, revealed American support for Israel is waning. One of the questions the survey asked was: “Does the US need to support Israel?” In August, 2009, 63% of Americans polled answered yes; in July this year only 51% agreed.

Another question was: “Is the Israeli government committed to peace with the Palestinians?” In December, 2007, 66% of respondents said it was but by June, 2009, the figure had dropped to 46%.

Gaza artists defy the siege

Over 20 mainly female artists co-operate in the Yibna Artists Forum in Rafah, Gaza, to create artwork with scarce materials in defiance of the siege and Israeli bombing. Their stunning work was smuggled out and showcased by Islington Friends of Yibna (IFY) in an exhibition called *Memories from Gaza*.

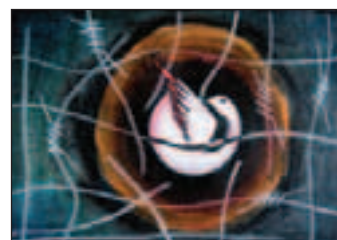


A woman holding the flag of struggle

The exhibition — the first to be held outside Gaza — was in Islington Town Hall in North London and was visited by hundreds of people. The responses were incredible. One of the entries in the visitors' book by a London artist read: "Heart rending. Emotion tends to overwhelm, but REAL art is going on here. Aesthetics in the service of communication of the otherwise unbearable. The artists' courage puts us to shame. Congratulations to the exhibition organisers."

The exhibition is available for display across the UK. The IFY is facilitating an auction of the original paintings and is selling prints, postcards and greetings cards. The proceeds are being sent to Gaza: 40% goes to the artist and the rest is shared among the members of the Yibna Artists Forum.

■ Contact: Michal: 07953 572475
Rob: 07977 490415
Yael: 07880 731865
info@IslingtonYibna.org
www.IslingtonYibna.org



Trapped dove — available as a greetings card

Geographies of Light

by Lisa Suhir Majaj
Del Sol Press

Born in Iowa in the USA, the poet Lisa Suhir Majaj was raised in Amman, Jordan, and educated in Beirut, Lebanon, during the war years. After evacuating out of Beirut in 1982, she lived in the US for 19 years before moving to Nicosia, Cyprus, in 2001. She won the Del Sol Poetry Prize in 2008.

The fact that the author has lived in no fewer than five countries provides some explanation as to why 'geographies' might be an important theme within her poetry. Indeed *Geographies of Light* takes as one of its principle subjects the mental, physical, ethical, political and cultural 'geographies' of Palestine.

The opening poem, 'Reunion,' is in some ways one long extended metaphor but also a statement about poetry itself; the poetry we are about to read and consume. This poem warns us that bitter beans flavour every sweet sip. They declare that even the most lyrical, sensuous and beautiful moments of the poetry that is to come are brewed from the 'coarse' taste of experience.

Geographies of Light attempts to think, articulate and preserve the experience of real, physical and communitarian protest (and its clear necessity) alongside the equally necessary individual complexity of emotion and memory that constitutes the individual within communitarian protest.

The poems also argue that just living, preserving one's own complex humanity, under the hell of occupation, becomes a form of protest in itself, and a form of protest that is well supported by strategies and the spaces of expression perhaps only available to poetry. *Geographies of Light* is an important book and well worth a read.



Steve Willey

Midnight on the Mavi Marmara

Edited by Moustafa Bayoumi
OR Books

An impressive list of 46 contributors has been drawn together in this book to recount the dramatic and tragic events on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla ship, the *Mavi Marmara*, plus analysis of the background to those events and some of the immediate consequences of them.

The introduction is provided by Moustafa Bayoumi, author of the award winning 'How Does It Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America.' This is followed by essays by established commentators ranging from Ali Abunimah to Haneen Zoabi.

The most famous contributor is Henning Mankell, the Swedish author of the 'Wallender' books, who watched the Israeli commando raid from on board another ship in the flotilla. Former US marine, Ken O'Keefe, was on board the *Mavi Marmara* and describes taking part in the resistance to the Israeli act of piracy.

The book is divided into six sections looking at aspects such as the blockade of Gaza and reaction inside Israel as well as the broader picture. It was put together rapidly after the flotilla murders so most of the essays are drawn from previously published sources. It provides a broad picture and analysis of the Palestinian tragedy in informative and well-written bite-sized chunks.

■ Special offer for PSC members — buy the book through a link on the PSC website and get a 15% donation to PSC funds plus 15% off the cover price! www.palestinecampaign.org

Or claim the discount through OR books. Use the code 'MIDNIGHT15' at the check-out: http://orbooks.mybigcommerce.com/cart.php?action=add&product_id=101



The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown

by Afif Safieh
Saqi Books

Afif Safieh served as Palestinian General Delegate in London, Washington and Moscow from 1990 to 2008. During his time in London, PSC worked alongside Afif, organising and cooperating on many campaign initiatives. We benefited extensively from his experience, vision and political insight.

His recent book is a series of interviews, articles and lectures spanning three decades and which centre on the Palestinian struggle for independence. Its publication is particularly significant given the current talks between Abbas and Netanyahu with the issue of settlements being a central question.

If anyone was labouring under the illusion that settlements were a recent phenomenon then Afif quickly dispels this idea. As early as the 1980s when Afif is asked a question about "settlement colonies" and what they represent, he states that "it was under the aegis of the Israeli Labour Party that the policy of creating settlement colonies in the occupied territories was begun in 1967. General Dyan... called this process 'rampant annexation.' Under Manachem Begin and the Likud, it just galloped. But the main difference resides in nothing more than the rhythm."

The central issues of the settlers and the status of Jerusalem are referred to constantly throughout the book with analyses of who the settlers are and what part of Israeli society they represent. Afif rightly refers to Israel as constituting "the last colonial project — accomplished paradoxically in the age of decolonisation."

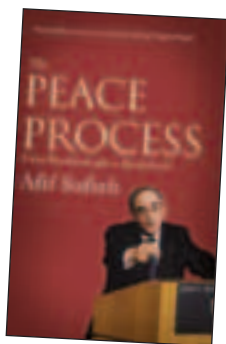
However, the book deals with many more issues such as the debate about anti-semitism and Zionism and the relationship between the two and the role of the US both ideologically and politically.

I was particularly interested in Afif's analysis of how he believes change may come about so that the Palestinians have their own state. He identifies three areas. The most interesting scenario is one which requires a "profound change coming from inside Israel." It would be interesting to hear more from Afif on this particular subject.

Afif's wealth of experience in dealing with governments and their representatives, his intellectual rigour when answering questions and giving his thoughts and opinions on many issues and his humanity, all add to the quality of this book.

To order copies of *The Peace Process* by Afif Safieh, visit the www.alsaqibbookshop.com or call 0207 229 8543.

Carole Regan



Al-Ghurba: A photographic exhibition by Inzajeano Latif

Up-and-coming photographer, Inzajeano Latif, whose work includes the signature image for the 2010 Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery, had an exhibition at the Arab British Centre this summer which aimed to show the diversity of Palestinian people living in the UK.

Portraits included **Jamil Bullata** who was born in Jerusalem and left there to study accounting in the UK in 1964 but was unable to return after the 1967 war. The rest of his family is dispersed in France, Canada, the US and one brother in London.

Now retired from being a chartered accountant Jamil serves as Honorary Treasurer and board member of organisations including The Arab British Centre, Action Around Bethlehem, Children with Disability (ABCD), Friends of Birzeit University (FoBZU), Rediscovering Palestine, Legal Assistance for Palestinians Trust, The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust and The British Arabs Association.

On being Palestinian, Jamil says: "When I left Jerusalem I did not think that I was going to end up in a situation of forced exile. After all this long time in the Diaspora, I still feel deeply rooted in Palestine because, among other matters, of my own life experiences, memories and family lore that has been part of my culture and childhood. Palestine without its Palestinians is more serious than that of a Rome without a Pope, or a Canterbury without an archbishop."

Another portrait is of **Dima Hamdan** whose grandfather took his family from Umm Khaled — now known as Netanya — to Tulkarem in 1948 to escape the fighting. He returned the

next day only to find that a new border had been drawn. In a matter of 24 hours, his home and farms no longer belonged to him.

Dima's mother was forced from her Tulkarem home in 1967. She and hundreds of others were put on buses and dropped off at the Allenby Bridge. They were told to "walk to Jordan."

Dima was born in Kuwait and obtained a British passport in 2009. That enabled her to travel to Palestine for the first time and visit her grandfather's hometown. All the Arab homes of Umm Khaled have been demolished, except for the mosque built by her great grandfather, Salah Hamdan. His name was engraved on the mosque stone, a photo of which can be found on www.palestineremembered.com. Today the mosque has been plastered in white and converted into a family home. Dima knocked, but no one answered.

■ www.inzajeano.com

Maha Rahwanji



Jamil (top), Dima (bottom)

Worth a thousand words



Grade school Guernica, by Erica il Cane

The last few months have seen the publication of two books which present the Palestinian narrative in vividly graphic form.

William Parry, in his book, *Against the Wall — the art of resistance in Palestine* (Pluto Press), gives us searing close-ups of the Wall as it snakes its way through the Occupied Territories, telling the story of lives warped and wrecked by its progress. But the real focus is on the Wall as a gallery of street art — highly wrought and crude, polemical and surreal, harrowing and funny.

Most of us are familiar with Banksy's images: the dove in a flak jacket, the windows opening onto idyllic landscapes, the little girl being carried aloft by her balloons. His organisation, Pictures on Walls, brought many artists to Palestine, who in turn inspired other artists from around the world, including Palestinians, to proclaim the truth about Israel's colonisation on this vast public canvas.

Many are defiant: the Wall crumbling as a cartoon figure touches it with his finger; Guernica-style fists raised above the huge slogan: 'To exist is to resist!' The multilingual graffiti range from the

scrawled 'I want my ball back!' and 'CTRL + ALT + DELETE' to a hundred metre long piece of beautiful calligraphy appealing to Israelis to look into their own history.

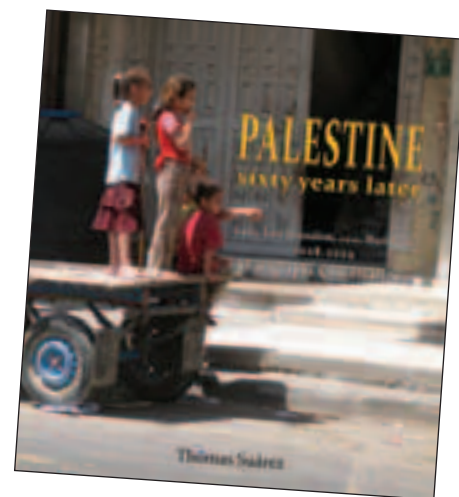
Parry's strikingly beautiful photographs do justice to his subject — both the art and the people. If you know anyone who remains to be convinced of the obscenity of the 'security barrier' and the spirit of the Palestinian people, give them a copy of this book.

In Tom Suarez' compelling book, *Palestine sixty years later* (Signature Book Printing), we are taken on a journey through the Occupied Territories from Gaza to Jerusalem and the West Bank. Bleak shots of bomb craters and Israeli watchtowers contrast with kids riding camels on the beach or a centuries-old olive grove in the evening sunlight.

The text is essentially a series of detailed captions that elaborate on the images: a shot of a roadside coffee vendor carries a comment on the segregated highways of the West Bank, while one of little girls making their way to school leads into a brief description of the harassment they face

daily by violent settlers.

By the end of the book you have been introduced to all aspects of the occupation, from the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem to the levelling of villages in the Jordan Valley. You also come away with an enduring impression of resilience and superhuman patience in the face of the Israeli juggernaut.



Similar feelings are evoked by watching Anne Paquier's powerful eight minute film, *Gaza, August 2010*.

She is a photo-journalist who has worked for many years in the Occupied Territories, documenting all aspects of life. Her film relies almost totally on the images which carry only the briefest subtitles to remind us of some of the facts and figures of Operation Cast Lead. The soundtrack consists mostly of resistance songs in Arabic and English.

Again it is the children who really catch the photographer's eye: playing joyfully on a makeshift swing, waving from the windows of a half-bombed home, collecting chunks of concrete for rebuilding, filling jerricans with water, solemnly naming their relatives killed in the bombing and sniping.

Paquier reminds us that the killing goes on: we meet a family of five children whose mother was killed this July by an Israeli tank shell (scarcely a mention of this in the western media, of course), as their home is near the Israeli-declared 'buffer zone.' It happens to be on some of Gaza's best agricultural land, reduced by 35% by this most recent form of collective punishment.

The camera follows a peaceful demonstration by some brave young people who venture out into this no-man's-land to remove razorwire and to plant a Palestinian flag.

The film can be viewed on tinyurl.com/2bqan6w. For more of Anne's work see her blog: chroniquespalestine.blogspot.com and the website www.activestills.org.



Artwork by Sam3, with added graffiti

Hilary Wise

One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse

by Ali Abunimah
Metropolitan Books

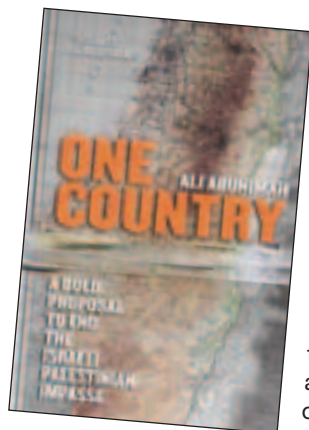
Ali Abunimah is well known to PSC members as co-founder and editor of the Electronic Intifada website. He is one of the hardest-working and most respected Palestinian activists. His book is a highly convincing, eloquent, passionate and humanistic exposition of the case for a single, democratic, pluralistic, bi-national state in the land of Palestine.

Given that the two-state solution has dominated the political landscape for the last two decades and that those opposed to it were "relegated to the political wilderness," it is refreshing to see the idea of a single united Palestine starting to regain some currency.

Regardless of what people thought of the two-state solution 10 or 15 years ago, it's hard to deny that Israeli manoeuvring and intransigence have made the idea decidedly less plausible now. Apart from anything else, the number of settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank has more than doubled since 1993 to over half a million.

Abunimah believes that any strategy for peace based on two separate states is doomed to failure. In his view, the last two

decades of the "peace process" have mainly served as a carrot dangled in front of the Palestinian people and the world while Israel has continued its expansion into the West Bank with minimal international criticism.



The alternative proposed in *One Country* is a Palestine-Israel "formed by the free and consenting union of two principal national communities, Israeli Jews and Palestinians, which each have multiple subcultures, shared histories, and sometimes irreconcilable narratives binding them to the country. Citizens of the state can call it a Jewish state or a Palestinian state if they wish to identify it as such."

Abunimah draws on parallels with South Africa and Ireland in order to show that, given the right circumstances, an approach based on unity is possible. He writes: "The fact is that today there are two communities who have a right to life, freedom, and absolute equality no matter what happened in the past or continues to happen in the present. If we start from this premise, reconciliation becomes conceivable, even possible."

Abunimah's book, provocative and controversial, thoughtful and important, provides a valuable contribution to the discussion on how to create a lasting and just peace in the land of Palestine.

Carlos Martinez

The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation: Repression Beyond Exploitation

By Shir Hever
Pluto Press

Shir Hever is an economic researcher based at the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem and this book uncovers the economic impact of the occupation for both Israel and Palestine. I found it compelling and I think other campaigners will find much of use and interest here.

It starts with a general background chapter on the Palestinian economy which is then followed by five chapters, each focussing on a different aspect: the impact on both Israel and Palestine of international aid; inflation in the OPT; the economic cost of the occupation to Israel; trends in the Israeli economy; and a case study of the Wall in Jerusalem.

Each of these chapters is an absorbing and in-depth study of the occupation in economic terms with extensive reference to data and research. For example, in the chapter on International Aid, Hever dispels the myth that the Palestinians are the recipients of the highest per capita aid in the world, showing instead that 'in any given year,' between 5-15 other countries received more, including Israel itself.

Palestine is, nevertheless, one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world with catastrophic implications for the development of its economy. As many of the aid goods and services destined for the OPT are bought in or via Israel there are clearly some benefits to the Israeli economy but its aid-dependency presents Israel with other problems.

The chapter on the economic cost of the occupation to Israel describes a complex picture of the cost to the Israeli economy where security costs and settler subsidies massively outweigh any profit. While Hever is clear that it is the Palestinians who are suffering most, he also outlines how their resistance is costing the Israeli economy dear.

The final section of the book is a series of chapters where Hever applies the economic theories of Marx, Veblen, Bourdieu and Sen to the occupation. He considers, not just the monetary value of the occupation, but also the effect of "social capital," a concept he says

helps explain the behaviour of working-class Israelis in supporting an occupation that hinders their own economic development.

In conclusion, Hever addresses the question of a just settlement. By carefully weighing-up the costs and benefits of both one and two state solutions, Hever makes a strong case for one bi-national state whilst acknowledging the many obstacles in its path.

Kiri Tunks



Mark Thomas walks the Wall

Comedian Mark Thomas, a veteran of anti-war protests and campaigns against the arms trade, walked the entire length of the Separation Wall this spring, along with cameraman Phil Stebbing, to make a film and live presentation about the experience. His show, "Walking the Wall," is on at several London venues from October to December. It should be an engaging, funny and sad introduction to the situation in the West Bank.

■ Details: www.markthomasinfo.com/section_gigs/default.asp



Stories from our mothers

A book and a film, both called *Stories From Our Mothers*, about women's lives in Palestine under Israeli Occupation, have been launched by the Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association.

The book, edited by Nandita Dowson and Abdul Wahab Sabbah, is a collection of stories that women told during two exchange visits involving British women going to Palestine and Palestinian women coming to Britain.

It focuses on the Palestinian women's stories but the British women also contributed stories, comments, reports and photographs. The book concludes with some of the lessons drawn by the women together and ideas for future activities. The film of the exchange visits provides a great starting point for a discussion on twinning activities.

■ Book price £10, film price £8, p&p extra. Order from contact@camdenabudis.net

Gifts made by women in Hebron

Women in Hebron, a Palestinian women's embroidery cooperative, produces handbags, purses, bracelets, scarves, dresses, cushion covers and wall hangings.

Over 120 women from communities in the Hebron area employ their age-old traditional skills to make beautiful things. They do not have any education or other source of income. We pride ourselves on being the only independent, female run and managed shop in The Old City of Hebron.

Christmas is coming up and traditional Palestinian embroidery would be very special gift!

See our range of products at www.womeninhebron.com



Online Arab film and music shop

Interested in quality film and music from the Arab region and Diaspora? Then go to the new online shop launched by the Zenith Foundation, known for our London Arab Film Festival.



The collection includes the contemporary and the classical. Several of the films and music have been produced on DVD and CD for the first time at our request. Most are restricted in their availability.

"A new generation of Arab film-makers are creating work that challenges audiences both at home and abroad."

— *The Guardian*

www.zenithshoponline.com

UK volunteers for ICAHD house rebuilding project

Volunteers are needed in April 2011 to rebuild a demolished home in Al Walaja, near Bethlehem.

The Amos Trust is looking for 25 people to work with local Palestinians, the Holy Land Trust and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD).

The trip will give you first hand experience of Palestinian life under occupation. This is the perfect opportunity for you and your community to respond to the question "What can I do?"

For more information see: <http://tinyurl.com/37eekkr>



Support drama therapy in Gaza

Az Theatre is looking for donations to support a drama therapy programme in Gaza being carried out by a small theatre company, "Theatre for Everybody," in conjunction with community mental health organisations in Gaza.



■ Donate online via Justgiving. Or send a cheque made out to Az Theatre to: Jonathan Chadwick, 55 Windsor Road, London, N76JL

■ Or pay directly into the "Az Theatre Ltd" account taking care to give "Breathing Space" as the payee reference. Account Number: 70249033 Sort Code: 20-44-86

■ Or ring 01544 260087 and donate by card.

www.aztheatre.org.uk

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Join PSC / make a donation

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Affiliation fees for trade unions and other organisations are: £25 local; £50 regional; £100 national.

To cover the additional costs of overseas membership please pay the equivalent of US\$35 in your local currency

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign Winter Concert 2010

An evening of theatre, poetry
and music

Tuesday 7 December 2010
7pm

Seven Jewish Children

by Caryl Churchill

First performed at the Royal Court Theatre,
London, 2009

Performed for PSC by acclaimed West End and
television stars: Anna Carteret, David Calder,
Andrew Jarvis

Directed by Peter Collins

Love Amidst the War and Isiah

Written and performed by:

Jean 'Binta' Breeze

Songs from the Homeland

Performed by the Layali Tarab Arabic Band

A stunning and beautiful mix of Palestinian music
and songs

Red Cable Sunday

Contemporary classical piano



CREDIT: PAULA COX WWW.PAULACOXART.COM

**Venue: The Polish Centre, 238-246 King Street,
Hammersmith**

Map: <http://tinyurl.com/polishcentre>

Tickets on sale now!

PSC Members and Concessions: £12

Non-members: £15

How to book:

- Call the PSC office on 020 7700 6192 to pay by card
- Or send a cheque made payable to PSC, to PSC, BOX BM
PSA, London, WC1N 3XX

When paying by cheque, please state clearly how many
tickets you require, and include a full name and email address/
telephone number.

■ More information: www.palestinecampaign.org



Lobby to mark the UN day of Palestine

24th November 2010

House of Commons

- **No change to Universal Jurisdiction**
- **End the siege of Gaza**

Make an appointment to see your MP

More information at www.palestinecampaign.org/lobby-2010