



palestine **NEWS**

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Winter 2012



2011 death toll: 180

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Cover image: A protest in New York over the killing of Mustafa Tamimi.

Photo: Richard van der Aa, Demotix.

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Freedom riders challenge apartheid buses

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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

Talks: what is their significance?

By Betty Hunter

December saw a flurry of meetings between leaders of Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad, seeking to make their reconciliation agreement a reality. Then 2012 began with a meeting in Jordan between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators with the Quartet and the King of Jordan (see p7).

Both events could be seen as positive steps, but the Jordan talks may simply be the latest manoeuvre to sabotage Palestinian hopes of reconciliation and dissipate the tangible international support following the approach to the UN by the PLO to achieve statehood.

After the first meeting between President Abbas and Khaled Meshal, Israeli spokesperson, Mark Regev, repeated his usual mantra saying the deal with Hamas was proof that Abbas was not interested in peace. Soon after came the invitation from the Quartet to talks in Amman.

This is US election year and commentators agree that President Obama will do nothing on the Palestine/Israel issue as it is fraught with danger for his re-election campaign. The US spokesperson at the talks, Victoria Nuland, said merely: "We've called on both sides not to set preconditions, not to negotiate in public... We are encouraged that they are both coming to the table, that they're talking directly. We think that's the best path forward." A holding operation will suit both the US and Israel. Meanwhile Israeli colonisation continues unabated.

What measures have the Israelis taken to indicate they are serious about peace? Have they stopped killing Palestinians? Have they stopped settlement building? Have they ended the siege of Gaza?

The initiative to go to the UN for recognition of Palestinian statehood brought public support from the vast majority of countries. Even some of those who were equivocal like the EU have recently taken action with the 27 foreign ministers submitting a protest over demolitions and other activities of the Israeli government in Area C of the West Bank. Even the United States strongly objects to the building of the "Mevaseret Adumim" settlement as it will finally succeed in dividing the West Bank in two and separate off East Jerusalem.

President Abbas should mobilise this support and refuse

to follow the agenda of Israel and the US. He has threatened to take new measures against Israel if the negotiations fail but, after the way that Israel responded to the Palestinian UN initiative, he could simply go ahead with his reported "diplomatic campaign that aims to put Israel under 'a real international siege.'" The international solidarity movement is eager for leadership to come from Palestine.

In the Hamas/Fatah reconciliation, first agreed in May last year, there have clearly been obstacles from both sides but the talks in Cairo in December must be seen as highly significant. Hamas has said it will accept a state on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and a process for elections has been agreed.

Concrete measures are being taken to consolidate the agreement for Hamas to join the PLO and establish confidence. Fatah officials are visiting Gaza for meetings, political prisoners on both sides are being freed, and Palestinian tax revenues released by Israel have been allocated to ease the dire economic situation there.

But the response of Hamas to the Jordan negotiations was predictable. "We consider these meetings a blow for national reconciliation, especially as we agreed in Cairo to face Israel's settlements, wall, and attacks together," Hamas leader Ismail Radwan said.

What is the priority for the Palestinian people? After decades of pointless talks with Israel, surely the answer must be national unity.

In a letter penned in jail in January to the Palestinian people, Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti, said peace negotiations with Israel are finished "and there is no point to make desperate attempts to breathe life into a dead body."

He said the movement should focus on building and reforming Palestinian institutions and peaceful resistance. Calling for 2012 to be considered the year of peaceful popular resistance, he urged an international and Palestinian boycott of Israeli goods.

Leaders of the Arab revolutions should promote the unity of the Palestinian people and democracy in Palestine. 2012 should see a united Palestinian leadership calling for a campaign of peaceful mass protests in Palestine and international boycott, divestment and sanctions – actions aimed at the implementation of international law and self determination for the Palestinian people.

Mustafa Tamimi, 28, was killed by a tear gas canister (ringed) fired at close range at a demo in Nabi Saleh.

The state of Israel killed 180 Palestinians in 2011, including 21 children, according to the PLO. That is nearly four times higher than the rate of all kinds of homicides in England and Wales.

Also in 2011, 3,300 Palestinians were detained. Israel approved the construction of 26,837 settlement units, including 1,664 in Occupied Jerusalem. Almost 4,000 acres of Palestinian land was confiscated. 495 houses were demolished. 18,764 olive and fruit trees were uprooted.



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Settler violence skyrockets

By Diane Langford

Settler violence on both sides of the Green Line has risen drastically over the past year. The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that violent attacks by settlers have escalated by over 50% in

2011 compared to 2010 and by over 160% compared to 2009.

And since the armed, fanatical and unrestrainedly aggressive gangs of terrorist settlers are almost never prosecuted – indeed are protected by the IDF – they are becoming ever more blatant.

In September dozens of them hung Israeli flags and posters with slogans such as: “We

will slaughter all Arabs,” “This is the land of our fathers and forefathers,” and other racist diatribes on the roads around their colonies in the southern part of the West Bank. Settlers also camped in Palestinian farmlands and orchards south of Bethlehem, preventing the residents from reaching their own lands.

Private militias

Attacks on themselves, their property and livestock are an everyday fact of life for Palestinians forced to endure the presence of 500,000 armed colonists living in fortified stockades in the occupied West Bank. The UNOCHA identified over 80 Palestinian communities with a combined population of nearly 250,000 vulnerable to settler violence, including 76,000 at high risk.

In East Jerusalem settlers who have taken over Palestinian homes are increasingly protected by armed private security guards. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel identified a state-funded firm of 350 private security guards which protects 2,000 settlers. Two Silwan youths were murdered by this militia without any charges being brought.



Armed settlers near Nablus, July

Murder, wounding, arson, poison

Here are some of the attacks by settlers over the past couple of months:

■ In November a settler killer rammed Abdul Muttaleb Hakim with his car, killing him instantly. Israeli police called to the scene reportedly made no effort to identify the murderer.

■ The following morning a group of Israeli settlers set three cars ablaze near Hebron. They fired tear gas at a family in Ertas village, near Bethlehem. A ten year old child was taken to hospital after being rendered unconscious by the gas.

■ On December 7 villagers from Bruqin reported armed gangs from Ariel colony appropriating and destroying their lands.

Industrial waste and sewage water was pumped into the village, spreading poison and air contamination. Ground water was polluted, killing trees, crops and wildlife.

■ Shepherds and farmers are especially vulnerable to settler violence as are their sheep, cows, horses and camels. Settlers have opened fire on flocks of sheep, mown down animals with their cars and sprayed poison on grazing grounds. In November they set fire to a tractor belonging to a Nabulsian farmer, after trying to attack him.

■ On December 3 settlers from Elon Moreh and Gideon opened fire on farmers and attempted to steal cattle from Salem village. A large group of young Palestinians repelled the attackers who retreated under the protection of the IDF. On December 5 a 60 year-old shepherd was kidnapped and 50 of his sheep stolen by residents of Yitzhar. Days earlier another shepherd had been violently assaulted by settlers from Itamar as he worked his land east of Nablus.

■ Hundreds of settlers stormed the Nablus village of Asira al-Qibliya overnight on December 12. Over 200 settlers from Yitzhar threw rocks at Palestinian homes. “They were armed and wearing black uniform as if it was an organized militia,” a resident told Ma’an News Agency. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees found that in October, over 53 per cent of settler attacks had taken place in the Nablus district.

■ On December 13 occupation soldiers stood by as settlers vandalised St John the Baptist church, near Jericho. Scores of “hilltop youth” rampaged across the Jordanian border and tried to establish an outpost. Settlers have attacked members of Christian Peacemaker Teams with clubs and stones and, in Jerusalem, sprayed death threats at the offices of Settlement Watch director, Hagit Ofra.



Israeli children given weapons training

The majority of the West Bank's 2.5 million Palestinians live in Area A where the Palestinian Authority exercises security control under the Oslo Accords and where settler attacks are fewer. Most settler violence is in Areas B and C, indicating that the attackers know where the line is drawn and are therefore capable of being contained if there was a will.

Yousef Munayyer of the Palestine Centre collected daily reports of settler attacks covering the period 2009–2010 (Video and transcript, *When Settlers Attack: Understanding Settler Violence against Palestinian Civilians*). Evidence shows that seven settlements accounted for over half of the violence.

"If you could crack down on those seven areas then you'd eliminate 50 per cent of these attacks or at least a significant portion," he said. He added that while Israel holds the government of Gaza responsible for "anything coming out of Gaza," there is little discussion of the responsibility of the Israeli government for violence perpetrated by settlers against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, although Israel is obligated under international law to protect civilians in areas it occupies.

A government of settlers

Police stations are located inside settlements, discouraging Palestinians from filing complaints. Shin Bet Jewish section officers, responsible for dealing with extremist groups, are settlers themselves. "This is a government of settlers and its programme is one of settlement. This, naturally, encourages this arrogance and these attacks," says Maher Ghoneim, the Palestinian Authority minister monitoring Israeli settlement activities.

What are called "price tag" attacks – the phrase is often sprayed on walls after an attack of vandalism – spike when settlers perceive a challenge, no matter how feeble, to their illegal land grabbing, such as the short-lived, misnamed "moratorium" on settlement building. The run-up to the Palestinian bid for UN recognition was another excuse for intensified violence and revealed the state's symbiotic relationship with its colonies: settlers were given weapons training and were issued with tear gas canisters and stun grenades.

An army spokesman said: "The IDF is holding an ongoing professional dialogue with elements in the settlement leadership, with the routine security personnel, and is investing many resources in training forces, from a defensive standpoint and in readiness for possible scenarios."

Attack dogs provided

The commander of the platoon responsible for defending each settlement went on patrol with the chief security officer of the settlement. Training sessions were held at a military installation near Shiloh. Reuters reported that settlers were given attack dogs from the Civilian Dog Handlers Battalion of Judea and Samaria. The



Settler learning to handle an attack dog

Burning farmers' bank accounts

By destroying olive trees in the West Bank, settlers have cost Palestinian farmers over \$500,000. Oxfam, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees estimated that olives collected in 2011 would produce half the oil of the 2010 harvest.



Olive trees destroyed at Qusra, September

"Burning an olive tree is like burning a farmer's bank account," said Oxfam director Jeremy Hobbs.

The UNOCHA reported that over 2,500 olive trees were destroyed in September, and 7,500 in 2011.

Since 1967, 800,000 olive trees have been destroyed resulting in a loss of around \$55 million to the Palestinian economy, according to a report by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of National Economy and the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem.

Israeli NGO Yesh Din reported that in 97 incidents of tree destruction documented between 2005 and 2010, no court cases have been brought against culprits.

Aside from settler attacks, tens of thousands of olive trees have been uprooted to make way for Israel's wall, and nearly one million more are caught between the illegal wall and the Green Line. Farmers are denied access to thousands more because they are close to the colonies.

The olive industry supports the livelihoods of approximately 100,000 Palestinian families. Union of Agricultural Work Committees official Omar Tabakhna says farmers don't want to be dependent on aid handouts.

"They want to work on their land and earn money from a product they are proud of. In order for them to do this, we must ensure that their rights are upheld."



Fighting an arson attack, Burin, June

dog-training centre is in Tapuach, home to Yekutiel (Mike) Guzofsky, right hand man of Kach founder, the late Rabbi Kahane. (See Deborah Lutterman's report and video at Reuters online.)

Foreign extremists are eager to get in on the violent act. The French Jewish Defence League website announced: "The JDL is organising 19 to 25 September a solidarity trip with our Israeli brothers living on the land of our ancestors Judea and Samaria. This trip is for militants with

military experience. The aim of this expedition is to lend a hand to our brothers facing aggression from Palestinian occupants and thus to enhance the security of Jewish cities in Judea and Samaria."

The Gilad Shilat prisoner swap prompted settlers at Yitzhar – a colony that receives half a million dollars annually from the Israeli government

and tens of thousands from the New York-based Central Fund for Israel – to put a price of \$100,000 on the head of Hani Jabber, a newly-released prisoner. In the middle of the Israeli-controlled H2 sector of Hebron, posters circulated emblazoned "Kill him" while recorded messages in Arabic were sent to the phones of local Palestinians. Kiryat Arba councilman, Benzi Gopstein, told Ynet, "If you see him, you know he's going to kill you, so jump the gun. Don't be a sucker."

Refusing to die in silence

Mohammed Khatib of the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee said: "If anyone needed further proof that Palestinians cannot count on Israeli authorities to prevent settler violence, recent events show beyond doubt why we need to organise to defend ourselves."

In September, Refusing to Die in Silence was launched, a volunteer campaign composed of Palestinian, Israeli and international activists. The first location chosen for patrol was the Ein al-Qaws spring, near the village of Nabi Saleh, where settlers from Halamish threatened to take over the water supply and oust residents from their lands. Here, during a peaceful demonstration on International Human Rights Day, December 10th, Mustafa Tamimi, aged 27, died after a soldier fired a tear gas projectile at his head.

British firms who fill their shelves with settlement goods, estate agents who advertise properties for sale in West Bank colonies and governments who do nothing but ally themselves with Israel, are complicit in this escalating, unchecked terrorism against unarmed civilians.

Mosque torching

Since 2009, when Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu formed the most right-wing government in Israel's history, extremist West Bank settlers have set fire to more than half a dozen Palestinian mosques reported **Jonathan Cook** in October.

In recent months settler vandals burnt a mosque in Al Mughayyir village, near Ramallah, in June and wrote racist graffiti on walls. In December vehicles were torched and burning tyres thrown into the entrance of a mosque in Bruqin; a mosque in Qasra, south of Nablus, was fire-bombed and racist slogans were daubed on the walls and terrorists tried to set a mosque ablaze in Jerusalem and daubed slogans including "A good Arab is a dead Arab," "price tag" and "Mohammed is a pig," on the walls.

Despite the rapid rise of these pogrom-style tactics by Jewish terror groups, Israel's security services have yet to catch a single suspect. The extremists' impunity now appears

to have emboldened them to turn their attention to holy places belonging to Israel's Arab citizens.

In October a mosque in the Bedouin village of Tuba Zanghriyya in the Galilee was torched and at an ancient mosque in Ma'alul village near Nazareth settlers removed stones and spray-painted slogans on the walls.

Netanyahu professed himself "outraged" by the attack in Tuba Zangariya. He said it violated Israel's "supreme values" of freedom of religion and worship and called on the security services swiftly to catch the perpetrators. But critics pointed out he had failed to condemn similar attacks in the West Bank.

Jafar Farah, of Mossawa, an advocacy organisation for the 1.5 million-strong

Palestinian community in Israel, said it was an intensification of the extremists' efforts to derail what was left of the peace process.

"Their agenda is to complicate the political situation by trying to provoke violent conflict between Arabs and Jews in Israel," he said. "They want us to react. Then they can claim that the Arabs are trying to drive the Jews into the sea and that no political solution is possible."



"Mohammed is a pig" daubed on Jerusalem mosque, December

Reconciliation – and new peace talks

By Gill Swain

Elections are to be held on 4 May for the Palestinian Authority leadership after Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders moved to join the Palestine Liberation Organisation and permanently mend the rift between them.

The officials, including Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal, PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Shalah, met in Cairo and formed a restructured Central Elections Commission to supervise the elections for presidency, parliament and Palestinian National Council.

But the leaders decided to postpone a discussion about forming a unity government until after January 26 which will mark three months from the day the international Quartet presented its initiative to resume the Israel-Palestinian peace talks.

This looming date bore some fruit in the long-stalled “peace process” and as PN went to press, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were meeting for a second round of face-to-face talks. The first round – the first meeting between the two sides for 15 months – took place in Amman in early January.

In that meeting Israeli negotiator, Yitzhak Molho, agreed to look at the Palestinians’ final status proposals on borders and security arrangements. It was the first time under PM Binyamin Netanyahu that an Israeli representative has agreed to receive such documents, which was interpreted as a rare glimmer of progress. Molho said that Israel would produce its own proposals in response.

According to the Quartet’s initiative, all sides should refrain from taking provocative unilateral steps to make it possible to renew peace talks. But while the PA put its UN statehood bid on hold, Israel has continued relentless construction in the West Bank settlements and allowed settlers to carry out violent acts against Palestinians with impunity.

Even on the day the talks were taking place, Israeli authorities issued three new tenders for nearly 300 housing units in East Jerusalem, out of the 500 units whose construction the Housing Ministry announced in December.

Meanwhile Fatah and Hamas are working on resolving the issues of political detainees held by both sides and passports for Gaza residents – Hamas supporters were previously denied documents by the PA. Fatah official, Nabil Shaath, said that there

were only around 40 people in Palestinian jails for their political activism.

Senior Fatah sources also said that Hamas leader, Khaled Meshal, instructed the group’s military wing in November to cease attacks on Israeli targets. Hamas had already refrained from launching rockets from Gaza.

Both Fatah and Hamas have agreed to focus on a popular struggle along the lines of the Arab Spring. Meshal said that grassroots action had “the power of a tsunami.” He added: “We and Fatah now have a common basis that we can work on, and that is popular protest, which expresses the power of the people.”



Hanna Braun: an inspiring life

Hanna Braun 1927–2011

Tributes were paid worldwide to Hanna Braun who died just weeks after publishing her autobiography: *Weeds Don't Perish: Memoirs of a Defiant Old Woman* (reviewed in autumn's *Palestine News*).

This testimony to the power of the awakened human conscience, chronicling a life committed to anti-racist education and campaigning, is a must-read. The book's launch at the Tottenham Palestine Literature Festival was introduced by Ghada Karmi, who said Hanna was “an inspiration to both Palestinians and Jews. Her courage and outspokenness as an anti-Zionist campaigner should be a model especially for all those Israelis

and Jews afraid to take a stand against the oppression of their state. She was unique, irreplaceable.”

Taken to Palestine in 1937, Hanna participated in Israel's creation before becoming



“a true friend of the Palestinian people,” as Reem Kelani says. “By her presence as a survivor of the Holocaust in which most of her relatives perished, a former member of the Haganah and an ex-Israeli, Hanna reminded us that ours is a struggle against injustice in its many forms. She lost so much in Germany, the land of her birth, and yet eschewed the Zionists’ vision of a future built at the expense of another people. Rare in this life are people of such honour and determination as Hanna.”

A tireless activist, Hanna played a major role in PSC, co-founding Coventry's

branch in 1984 and organising, writing, speaking and demonstrating for decades. Sarah Irving writes of “the privilege” of working with this “amazing” woman during 2001's ISM West Bank visit. “Then in her mid-70s, Hanna did a fantastic job of diverting Israeli soldiers trying to harass Palestinian villagers; they never seemed to know quite what to do with this tidy little woman who could have been their grandmother.”

Hanna is hugely missed for her political passion, humour and zest, and as a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. At her funeral her daughters honoured the complexity of their mother's difficult, fractured life as well as her steadfastness, affirming that “the world is a very different place because Mum lived in it, spoke of her life, reached out to people, charmed, harried and hassled people and just kept going.”

As her friend Gaby Forrell wrote: “Not everyone is anti-everything that is morally incorrect: racism, class, homophobia, xenophobia. But Hanna was.” This defiant spirit lives on wherever people strive for justice, equality and peace.

Frankie Green



Prisoners out, prisoners in

By Gill Swain

There was great joy at the release of 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, and many of those freed immediately set about getting married, building homes, enrolling in college and trying to rebuild their lives.

Yet even while the celebrations were going on, the Israeli Occupation Forces were rapidly refilling their jails. Analysts revealed that, during 2011, a massive 3300 Palestinians were detained – that is an average of 276 per month, or nine people every single day.

The prisoners' support group, Addameer, revealed on December 15 that since the first phase of releases on October 18, when 477 Palestinian political prisoners were freed, almost as many – 470 – new arrests had been made. Political activists taking part in regular peaceful protests at sites such as Bil'in, Nabi Saleh, Beit Ummar, Al-Ma'asara, Kufr Qaddum, Al-Walajah, East Jerusalem and the South Hebron Hills were especially targeted.

In addition to these arrests, the IDF used extreme violence to disperse demonstrations, resulting in the death of 28 year old protestor Mustafa Tamimi from Nabi Saleh on December 10. Mustafa was fatally injured when hit by a teargas canister in the head fired at close range from the back of an Israeli army vehicle.

Addameer's analysis revealed that Israel has stuck to its usual pattern of failing to respect all the elements of the agreements it makes with Palestinians over prisoner releases. Only 27 of the 35 women held at the time of the exchange deal were included in the

“Political activists taking part in regular peaceful protests were especially targeted”

first batch of prisoners despite Israel agreeing to free them all. In the second phase of releases, of 550 prisoners on December 18, only six of the by then 11 women in detention were freed. In addition, only 55 children of the over 100 in Israeli jails were released.

In the first phase of the deal which was struck between Israel and Hamas in mid October, the list of those to be released was mutually agreed. But in the second phase the Israeli authorities selected the names. Addameer discovered that 65 percent of these prisoners were due for release anyway by the end of 2012, including 100 with release dates in December 2011 and January 2012.

Sahar Francis, director of Addameer, said that “whether in Oslo or concluded with the Palestinian Authority or in exchange for a soldier, Israel systematically uses prisoner release agreements to release prisoners with the shortest sentences.”

Crucially, 205 of the prisoners in the first phase were not reunited with their families. Forty one were deported abroad and the rest transferred to the Gaza Strip, both of which actions are against international law. In the second phase, all were released to their homes.

The 470 Palestinians arrested between October 18 and December 12 include about 70 children, mostly from Shuafat refugee camp in Jerusalem and Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem. The IDF continues to use brutal methods of arrest, including the use of undercover forces, commonly known as *musta'arabeen*, who



Released prisoners carried by cheering crowds. Photo: Addameer

disguise themselves as Palestinian civilians to ambush people at their homes or work places.

Some newly freed prisoners have been given start-up grants of up to \$10,000 by the PA or Hamas or been helped with housing. But many are still subject to regular harassment by Israel's Shin Bet security service. Fifty-two prisoners were released under strict security measures and must check in regularly with the authorities but many others have been summoned for questioning.

On December 1, Israeli Prison Service statistics showed there were at least 4,420 Palestinian political prisoners still in jail. And that figure did not take into account the clutch of people detained every day simply for peacefully demanding basic human rights.

On December 27, the third anniversary of the beginning of Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip, Addameer repeated its condemnation of the Israeli policy that denies prisoners from Gaza family visits.

In June, 2007, as part of its policy of treating the Gaza Strip as an enemy entity following the Hamas election victory in 2006 and the capture of Gilad Shalit, Israel banned the family visits. In addition, from November 2009, Israel has effectively prevented these prisoners from receiving money from their families to buy basic necessities.

As a result, the 443 current prisoners from Gaza in Israeli jails are completely isolated from the outside world. They are even prevented from knowing about major family events such as the deaths of close relatives.

Israel's policy has been widely condemned internationally but not by its own courts. In December, 2009, the High Court ruled against two petitions filed by Palestinian and Israeli human rights organisations protesting the legality of the policy. The court held that the right to family visits in prison is not within the “framework of the basic humanitarian needs of the residents of the Strip, which Israel is obligated to enable.”

Addameer argues that this ruling contravenes the right to family visits entrenched in international law. And it says the ban is designed to demoralise and punish prisoners' families, and by extension the general population in Gaza, for their political choices in 2006 and for the capture of Gilad Shalit. This makes the policy a clear case of collective punishment, which is a war crime.

Prison made us stronger

By Pam Bailey

Israeli authorities did virtually everything to obliterate prisoners' connections to their culture, families and fellow prisoners. Their methods included prohibiting visits for months at a time, forcing repeated moves to disrupt any new-found friendships and imposing solitary confinement, sometimes for years at a time.

Some men crack. One freed prisoner I met during my recent trip to Gaza had been isolated for 15 years; he seemed unable to sustain a conversation with anyone else, instead muttering softly to himself virtually nonstop.

But what also stands out despite these unimaginable hardships is prisoners' tenacity in finding small, yet powerful ways to resist and hold on to their sense of identity and purpose. This is the story of Samer Abu Seir and Loai Odeh – two men who met in prison and have remained friends ever since. They speak for so many others.

Abu Seir grew up in East Jerusalem and joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine when he was 16. When he was 22, his PFLP cell killed two Israeli soldiers. He wasn't personally involved but he was arrested and brutally interrogated. He eventually signed a paper "confessing" to facts the Israelis already knew and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

In the 24 years that followed, Abu Seir figured he was moved to every one of Israel's prisons. At one point, he was kept in solitary confinement for three and a half years.

Although family visits were supposed to be permitted every three months, that "privilege" was often revoked. Even when visits were permitted, the process was humiliating. His mother and siblings had to pass through many checkpoints to get to the prison, followed by hours of waiting and intrusive body searches.

Despite everything, Abu Seir and his fellow prisoners kept resisting. "The purpose behind Israel's imprisonment is to isolate us from our ethics and morals, to cause internal conflict, to make us think about surrendering to get better treatment," he explained. "We lived in prison, yes. But the prison didn't live within us."

The prisoners – usually grouped eight to a section – elected a leader who found inventive ways to network with other representatives. When the leaders chose to take a stand – whether it be through a petition or hunger strike – they did it as a group, with no exceptions.

"Life in prison just made us stronger," he said. "When you go on a hunger strike, and go without food for days and days, you find abilities and a strength you didn't know you had. When it comes to defending our very identity and culture, Israel will never be stronger than we are."

Loai Odeh was "radicalised" when he was arrested at just 11 for waving the Palestinian flag on the streets of East Jerusalem.

"We lived in prison, yes. But the prison didn't live within us"

"When it comes to defending our very identity and culture, Israel will never be stronger than we are"

He was eventually imprisoned for 28 years during the second intifada.

"You start feeling weak if you feel abandoned and the Israelis did everything they could to make us feel that way," Odeh said. "The biggest challenge is to be able to resist yourself, to defeat the longing for freedom and your family. I looked for small ways to re-assert my own sense of identity and control. Like, when the guards prohibited smoking while waiting for families on visit days, I decided to quit smoking. I quit that day, so my enemy would not win."

Although the West Bank is their home, the two men were not allowed to return there on their release and were instead transferred to the Gaza Strip. After a brief visit was allowed for their mothers, they are now alone, learning to fit into yet another new community.

"I want to finish my bachelor's degree, find work, start a family," said Abu Seir. "But my fellow inmates who remain will always be in my mind. We cannot rest until they are free as well."

Odeh, who is struggling to be reunited with his fiancée, a Palestinian living in Haifa, added that he can never truly rest until he returns to his real home, in Jerusalem. "Jerusalem will always be my ultimate dream," he said. "And I will never stop seeking my return."

A longer version of this article was first published by the Electronic Intifada



Loai Odeh, left, and Samer Abu Seir.
Photo: Shahd Abusalama, EI

Bedouin driven from their lands

Israel is planning mass expulsions of some 60,000 Bedouin Palestinians in one of the biggest ethnic cleansing operations of modern times. The government plans forcibly to transfer 27,000 from their homes in Area C of the West Bank to make room for the expansion of the massive illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. And in September the cabinet approved plans to sweep around 30,000 Bedouin off their ancestral lands in the Naqab (Negev) in Israel to allow for Jewish settlement.

Here **Dr Mansour Nsarra** examines the plight of the Israeli citizens in the Naqab who face misery because of their race.

The plans approved by the cabinet of the Israeli government would "relocate" 30,000 of the Bedouin who managed to remain on their land after more than two thirds of their people were uprooted during the establishment of Israel.

The struggle between Israel and its Naqab Bedouin citizens is about a state bent on Judaising the land by dispossessing its indigenous inhabitants, on the one hand, and indigenous land ownership rights, on the other.

The Bedouin once were a flourishing community of some 90,000 people who lived around the city of Bir al-Saba (Beersheva). After the establishment of Israel, military rule was imposed on them but after that came to an end in 1967 the Bedouin story of dispossession still continues until today.

According to Turkish and British archival reports, previous governments in Palestine recognized Bedouin land claims. When Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, and Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner for Palestine, met Bedouin sheikhs in 1921, they recognised Bedouin land ownership according to specific customs and tribal laws.

Israel's land grab from the indigenous people started as early as 1949. Almost all their land was seized by the state using a set of legal manoeuvres such as the absentee property law and the land acquisition laws of 1953.

By the 1950s, the majority of the remaining Bedouin (11,000) was expelled from the western part of the Naqab into a small enclosed military reservation north east of Beersheva (and became "internally displaced" citizens).

Since then, these remaining members of the community have consistently chosen to achieve land recognition through legal means. Yet Israeli courts have never recognised even one of the thousands of claims the Bedouins have made on their historical land.

These cases are ongoing. The most recent was that of the village of al-Araqib. After years of legal discussions in the Beersheva district court, the land claims of the village were not recognised despite the fact that the residents of the village hold deeds

dating back to the time of Ottoman rule. In July, 2010, the Israeli authorities, accompanied by the Israel Lands Authority (ILA) and more than 1,300 police, demolished the village.

In an amazing display of steadfastness, the people of al-Araqib rebuilt their village with their own hands. In response, the state razed the village yet again. At the time of writing, the village has been rebuilt 29 times and has become a symbol of the struggle between the indigenous peoples of the Naqab and the state.

Such steadfastness has posed a fundamental challenge to an Israeli government seemingly unable to understand the nature of the people power unleashed in the region.

Despite the expulsions that have taken place, today Bedouin citizens of Israel number more than 200,000 and constitute one-third of the Naqab's population. Half of them live in 46 "unrecognised" villages (ones Israel does not recognise as legal) which have no basic services like housing, water, electricity, education and health care. The rest live in townships that the state established for them in the 1970s in an aggressive policy of forced sedentarisation.

Successive new Israeli governments have formulated plans for dealing with the Bedouin land ownership question, or "problem" in the Israeli state's lexicon, in the Naqab. But no government has applied universal principles of human rights to resolve the dispute. Now it appears that Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu is in the process of adopting extreme measures to achieve a final solution to this "problem."

The Bedouin are seeking 600,000 dunams (150,000 acres) of land to be registered in the state registry as a small portion of their



“Israeli courts have never recognised even one of the thousands of claims”

historical land. In December 2007, Ehud Olmert's administration established the Goldberg Commission which was tasked with finalising the status of Bedouin land claims.

A report submitted in 2008 recommended that half of the claims on agricultural lands they currently occupy should be granted: around 200,000 dunams (50,000 acres) to be listed as Bedouin territory in the land registry bureau, plus the Goldberg Commission recommended the recognition of a limited number of the unrecognised villages.

In January 2009, the government formed a team tasked with the implementation of these recommendations, headed by Ehud Praver, chief of the Policy Planning Department within the PM's Office. The Praver panel offered 27 percent of the Bedouin claim, which the people rejected.

The Bedouin argued that the Goldberg and Praver recommendations would mean another catastrophe (Nakba) for them and continued to campaign for full recognition of their 46 villages and all the land claimed by them.

Meanwhile, in response to the recommendations, Yisrael Beiteinu, a right-wing party headed by foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, urged the government to cancel the “offer” and reduce the amount of land to be recognised altogether. Right-wing members of the Knesset and local Israeli council leaders in the Naqab came out against a plan of dividing the Naqab.

Shmulik Rifman, head of Ramat Negev Council, stated that Netanyahu's government was taking a major risk, explaining that if “they don't finalise the Bedouin settlement it will be very hard to enhance Jewish settlement in the Negev. This must be addressed if one wants 700,000 Jews in the Negev.”

This pressure from Israeli right-wing politicians paid off. Modifications to the recommendations of the Goldberg report were made, including the reduction of the amount of land available to Bedouin communities and of the compensation offered to them to leave their land. The stance of the Israeli right-wing parties reflects the growing anxiety of the authorities to secure the Naqab for Jewish settlers. David Rotem, a Yisrael Beiteinu member of the Knesset, recommended employing 300 civil police to enforce what amounts to the state's dispossession of Bedouin communities so as to stop their “encroachment” on “state” land and building “illegally.”

The Bedouin campaign against the implementation of the Goldberg and Praver recommendations includes organising protests in Arab villages across the country, boycotting the government plans at different levels and organising demonstrations in Jerusalem.

Despite the continued weekly house demolitions, the Bedouin continue to raise the banner, demanding their villages and land claims be recognised. The facts clearly indicate that the indigenous peoples of the Naqab do not meekly submit to state oppression and that they are not going away.

Dr. Mansour Nsara teaches Middle East politics and international relations at the University of Exeter.



Protesters in Al Araqib. Photo: Activestills

Sent to the refuse dump

The first phase of the forcible transfer of Bedouins in Area C in the West Bank to the east of Jerusalem was due to start as we went to press in January when some 20 communities, comprising 2,300 people – two thirds of them children – were to be kicked out of their simple shelters on the hillsides and transported to a site near the Abu Dis refuse dump.

Reporter Yolande Knell on the BBC News website in November interviewed Ghadara Jahalin as she sat on a rug surrounded by her grandchildren in a camp made up of tents and metal shacks which has no running water or electricity.

“Nobody can stop them (the Israelis). This is their project and they will implement it no matter what,” said Ghadara. “They will push us to somewhere where we won't be able to survive.”

On the other side of the busy road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho, Israel's largest settlement, Ma'ale Adumim, fills the horizon. “You can see we are trapped between the settlements, their power cables and the road. We used to have wells, now we can't reach them. We can't plant anything so there is no pasture for the goats and sheep.”

The Israeli authorities say the planned relocation of the families to al-Azariya will give them better access to resources and services. And a Civil Administration spokesman suggested to the BBC the plans were not final. He said the Jahalin tribe “are illegally located without the required permit.” And he added: “Talks are being conducted with the heads of the Jahalin tribe to find a solution that would suit them.”

Over 200 families were re-located from the same area in the 1990s, some by force. Of these, more than 85% report they had to abandon their traditional livelihoods. UNOCHA says such removals contravene international humanitarian law and “further endanger the Bedouin's way of life.”

UNOCHA has produced a new fact sheet on the plight of the Area C Bedouins: <http://tinyurl.com/c2bh7qt>



West Bank Bedouin. Photo: Mahmoud Illean, Demotix

Area A: includes major Palestinian cities with no Israeli presence. Covers 17% of the West Bank and holds about 55% of its population.

Area B: covers 24% of the West bank and holds 41% of its Palestinian population. The PA has civilian control while Israel has total military and security control.

Area C: covers 59% of the West bank and includes 4% of its population. Israel has full control here with the exception of the main Palestinian population centres. This is where most Israeli colonisation in terms of the largest settlements, military training zones, etc, is concentrated.

Palestinians living in Area C face severe discrimination particularly in housing. A UN survey in 2008 found that 94 percent of building permit applications by Palestinians were denied by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Solidarity among the olives

By Jenny Kassman

It was a gloriously hot sunny October day, perfect for harvesting olives, and Adnan was telling us about his childhood: how he used to play with his friends and cousin, Karim, in the hills around Burin, a Palestinian village situated in a picturesque valley near Nablus in the West Bank where he lived with his parents and 13 brothers and sisters.

"I know every stone of these hills. We used to run up and down them," he was saying. "In the early 1960s, Burin was a thriving agricultural community of over 12,000 inhabitants who earned their living from the oil produced by over 70,000 olive trees, by rearing sheep and cows and by cultivating wheat and sesame."

Far from the rain and traffic of North London, I had joined people from different parts of the UK to spend two weeks living in Burin and harvesting olives on the hillsides around the village. Starting work at about 7.30am and ending at 5pm, we were reliving our youth by climbing ladders and trees, after which we gleaned, winnowed and tipped the olives in sacks. That day, as usual, we took our lunch break seated on a tarpaulin with Adnan, Karim and other workers and tucked into flat bread, falafels, hummus, crisp cucumber, tomatoes, fried aubergines, yoghurt, nuts and other delicacies. There was an old black kettle for making delicious sweet sage or thyme tea.

A mobile phone rang and the atmosphere changed as suddenly as if an electric charge had shot through us. "There are five Israeli settlers on the way down armed with guns," warned Adnan. "We'll fight them off. You stay here." Our role was to remain, knowing that the presence of foreign activists sometimes prevented violence by Israeli settlers. The young Palestinian men with Adnan started to gather stones and run up the hill. We saw crowds of other men from the village, mostly young, doing the same as they came swarming up the hillside.

We collected our rucksacks and gathered up the food, drink and equipment then stood in a row to await the settlers, my legs the nearest to jelly that I had ever experienced...

It was over as quickly as it started. Apparently the settlers, seeing the number of defenders, had changed their minds about attacking Palestinians and returned



Jenny hard at work

up the hill. We went back to our olive picking trying to focus on resuming the conversations and banter that had been so abruptly interrupted.

I had come to Burin in a group of 17 from the UK who wanted to lend a hand during the olive harvest and show support and solidarity to Palestinian farmers living in one of the areas worst affected by aggressive settlers. We were linked to the International Women's Peace Service. I am retired and being Jewish myself, and with a family history of attacks and displacements, I saw my presence there as a way of resisting what is being done in my name. The same need is evidently felt by the large number of Jewish Israeli activists whom we met there.

Burin is overshadowed by two constantly expanding settlements, Yitzhar and Brakha, on the tops of the hills overlooking the village. Both settlements were first built in the early 1980s. They are populated by religious extremists who, judging from their pronouncements and leaflets, want to drive out the Palestinians as they claim the land

is theirs by a God-given (literally) right. The hillsides on which we were working led up directly to one of these settlements.

When we settled down again, Adnan resumed his account: "Today it's too dangerous for us Palestinians to roam the hills. Although Burin's population has risen to 25,000, just 3,000 of us live in the village itself. Most of the others have gone abroad, including all my brothers and sisters. We don't grow crops anymore and the few sheep we have left are now confined to the village. The cows have almost gone, water sources have been poisoned and 14,000 olive trees have been destroyed in the past ten years. Settlers have burnt down 500 of Karim's trees."

Another farmer I worked with, Salim, half of whose olive trees had been torched by settlers, was forbidden by the Israeli authorities to plough and fertilise the ground between his remaining trees. Close by was land lying abandoned after he was forbidden to continue cultivating wheat and sesame. The reason? Because his land was too near Bracha.

The olive harvest is one of the periods when Palestinian farmers are most prone to Israeli settler attacks. Farmers whose lands are situated nearest to the settlements must gain official permission from the Israeli authorities to access them. They are allowed to do so two or three times a year for short periods, with three days usually granted for the olive harvest. Despite the farmers' wishes, we were prevented from entering their lands by Israeli soldiers who told us they would protect the farmers.

The form this protection takes is decidedly questionable. One farmer, Bashir, whom we were forbidden to accompany, was harvesting his olives when a settler approached and started to photograph him repeatedly with his mobile phone. After asking him several times to stop, Bashir placed his hand over the phone. He was arrested immediately by an Israeli soldier. The settler alleged that Bashir had attacked him two years previously and he had photos to prove it, so Bashir was taken away and interrogated by a female military official who repeatedly asked him where he came from. Each time he answered "Burin" she slapped his face, telling him there was no such place. She wanted him to say the Hebrew name for Nablus: "Shechem."

The following day, the Israeli army telephoned Bashir's mother to say he would



Jenny with young olive pickers

be released if she paid bail of 1,700 shekels (about £367) which she had to borrow. (Our group had a whip round on hearing the news).

Adnan's son, Mohammed, told me about how a group of about ten settlers came to Burin in September armed with guns and stones. Some shot at houses, donkeys and horses while others threw stones, breaking windows and damaging cars. Sometimes Palestinians are killed in these attacks, not only by the settlers, but by the Israeli army which always appears on such occasions. In the nearby village of Asira two brothers, Nasir, 18, and Rachid, 14, had been killed within the past five years, Nasir by an army sniper (his body has never been returned to the family) and Rachid by a settler.

We felt privileged and moved by the warmth and friendship we received from the villagers of Burin— their kind words and gestures, the invitations to visit their homes. Most, if not all, knew I was Jewish and it made no difference to them. These were courageous and resilient people who refused to leave their country so that Burin

would survive and they were endeavouring to live normal lives against all the odds. Many people asked us to describe our experiences when we returned to the UK as they felt the media overlooked the fear, tension and danger that framed their lives. So I will end this article with a message from Karim, an unemployed farmer whose livelihood depends on his olive trees: "In Europe, people think of us as terrorists and warmongers. We want them to come to Burin and meet us. They will see that we are a well-educated people who care about our families, homes, land, health and education. We are no different from anyone else. Please tell the people in your country the truth about us."

(All names have been changed.)

Jenny Kassman is a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a signatory for Jews for Justice for Palestinians

Destruction on an industrial scale

Israeli settlers cost Palestinian farmers over \$500,000 this year and cut oil production by half compared to 2010 by destroying olive trees in the West Bank, according to estimates by Oxfam, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees.

Over 2,500 olive trees were destroyed in September, and 7,500 this year, UNOCHA reported. And since 1967, 800,000 olive trees have been uprooted resulting in a loss of around \$55 million to the Palestinian economy, according to a report by the Palestinian Authority Ministry

of National Economy and the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem.

Research by the Israeli NGO Yesh Din revealed that in 97 incidents of tree destruction documented between 2005 and 2010, no court cases have yet been brought against culprits.

Aside from settler attacks, tens of thousands of olive trees have been uprooted to make way for Israel's wall, and nearly one million more are caught between the illegal wall and the Green Line separating Israel from the West Bank. Thousands more trees are off limits to farmers because they are close to illegal settlements in the West Bank, Oxfam noted.

Olive picking tours

There are a number of different ways you can join in the olive harvest in Palestine, for instance by going on a trip specifically for the purpose, making it part of a wider-ranging educational tour or adding a few days picking to a more conventional holiday.

One of the largest groups is the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) of the East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA of Palestine and the Alternative Tourism Group. www.jai-pal.org

The olive product importing company, Zaytoun, works with the International Women's Peace Service. www.zaytoun.org

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) requires a minimum two week commitment from volunteers.

www.internationalsolidarity.org

Rabbis for human rights will place people as and when they are needed. www.rhr.org.il

General tourism to Palestine is becoming increasingly better organised. For help and advice, first consult the official tourism site: www.travelpalestine.ps

Other established organisations that can help with tours, accommodation and much else include:

Alternative Tourism Group: www.atg.ps

Tours in English: www.toursinenglish.com

The Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies: www.sirajcenter.org

US troops going to Israel

A website called Whiteout Press, dedicated to publishing news it says is "blacked-out, covered-up or censored," reported in January that the US military is preparing to send thousands of US troops, along with US Naval anti-missile ships and accompanying support personnel, to Israel.

The sources of its story are mainstream media outlets in Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted US Lt.-Gen Frank Gorenc, Commander of the US Third Air Force based in Germany, who visited Israel in December to confirm details for "the deployment of several thousand American soldiers to Israel."

The move is apparently in response to a perceived threat to Israel from Iran. And while American troops will be stationed in Israel for an unspecified amount of time, Israeli military personnel will be added to EUCOM (United States European Command) in Germany.

The US is reportedly taking its THAAD, Terminal High Altitude Area Defence, and ship-based Aegis ballistic missile systems to Israel. The deployment comes with "the ultimate goal of establishing joint task forces in the event of a large-scale conflict in the Middle East."

See the Whiteout Press report at: <http://tinyurl.com/73vr5de>.

Sabre-rattling over Iran

By Diane Langford

A report by the UN's nuclear watchdog on Iran's nuclear programme prompted a new batch of strident sabre-rattling from Israel with reports that preparations were underway for an imminent attack.

It immediately became obvious that Israel had planned well in advance to exploit the findings of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report which indicated Iran has secretly worked for years on developing a nuclear warhead and might still be doing so.

A series of military events coincided with the publication of

the report in November: a long-range Jericho III missile – capable of reaching deep into Europe and Asia – was test-launched, the air force took part in NATO drills in Sardinia and an exercise in civilian readiness carried out around Tel Aviv caused beachgoers to flee in panic to their cars on hearing sirens.

Meanwhile the media helped stir up the hype. British and US government and military officials briefed journalists that Israel was planning to launch a strike against Iran's suspected nuclear sites, probably with logistical support from the US. One senior Foreign Office official told the *Daily Mail*: "We're expecting something as early as Christmas, or very early in the new year."

Yet many powerful voices in Israel believe an attack on Iran would be suicidal madness. In an article in *Al Akhbar*, Jonathan Cook reported that the warnings of attacks followed a fortnight of reports in the Israeli media of bitter feuds within the Israeli government and with Israel's security chiefs over the plans.

PM Binyamin Netanyahu, defence minister, Ehud Barak, and foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, are said to be strongly in favour of action but both the current and recently retired heads of all the main military and intelligence services are lined up against them.

The only one who has gone public is Meir Dagan, until a year ago head of Israel's spy agency, the Mossad. Earlier in 2011 he stated that an attack on Iran was the "stupidest thing I have ever heard." Then in October he declared that Iran could not develop a nuclear bomb for at least another three years and suggested there was no evidence Tehran had decided to develop military uses.

Cook says that position accords with the 2007 estimate of 16 US intelligence agencies which found no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons programme. An updated estimate this year has not been published, apparently because it confirms the earlier assessment.

Iran has long claimed it is only seeking to establish a civilian nuclear energy programme, as it is entitled to do as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel, which is estimated to have close on 300 nuclear warheads, has not signed the Treaty.

Palestinian commentators discussed the issue at a meeting of the Centre for Political and Development Studies in Gaza. Dr

Ibrahim Abrash, political adviser to Gaza PM Ismail Haniya, doubted Israel would act without the green light from the USA.

Dr Ghassan Michel Rubeiz, a Palestinian blogger at Arabist.com, warned that an attack on Iran might enable the Jordan-is-Palestine scheme favoured by elements in the Israeli Cabinet. He asked: "What pretext could be created to rationalise driving the Palestinians out of the West Bank and into Jordan?"

This is not the first time Israel's racist obsession with demography has been linked to the prospect of a nuclearised Iran. In 2006 Ephraim Sneh, an Israeli defence minister, expressed horror at the thought that "most Jews would prefer not to come here with families, and Israelis who can live abroad will... Ahmadinejad will be

able to kill the Zionist dream without pushing a button."

Many observers agreed that the warnings have been orchestrated to pressure the international community into imposing harsher sanctions on Iran. Professor Rashid Khalidi told *Ha'aretz* in December that Israeli leaders are "cynically and irresponsibly" drumming up fears of Iran in order to maintain Israel's dominance over the region. Going to the heart of the matter, he added: "The idea that Israel is under any existential danger is fantasy."

But *Ha'aretz's* military correspondent, Amos Harel, warned that even if Netanyahu's belligerent behaviour is bluff, there is a danger of bringing about "a self-fulfilling prophecy."

The reported opposition to an attack on Iran by influential figures like Meir

Dagan means that going it alone would pose high political risks to the Israeli government should things go horribly wrong. Yet sadly, as ever, Israeli public opinion supports extreme action. In May, 71 percent backed the US launching a strike while a poll in November showed 41 percent supported a lone Israeli operation.

An examination of Iran's nuclear capabilities should be matched by the spotlight also being turned on Israel's large arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The PSC has produced an authoritative factsheet, *Israel's Weapons of Mass Destruction*, which can be downloaded from the website. The PSC joins CND in calling for a nuclear-free Middle East.



Palestinian Christians ask: Why do church leaders forsake us?

By Bernard Kilroy

As the dwindling number of Palestinian Christians celebrated the peace of Christmas, they have become disillusioned with Church hierarchies outside. Yet unison with them could have immense leverage on the international scene.

The latest stage began in 2009 when the group "Kairos Palestine," imitating its namesake against South African apartheid, issued a proclamation that the Israeli occupation is a sin and called for support. In unusual solidarity it was signed by the leaders (ie bishops and patriarchs) of all twelve Churches in Palestine. In December Kairos Palestine held a second conference in Bethlehem where it intensified its Call and openly criticised some overseas Churches for directly or tacitly supporting the Israeli occupation. Why the rift?

In a BBC radio interview in June, 2011, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, blamed the pressure facing Palestinian Christians not on the Israeli Occupation but on Muslim extremism. This caused consternation among Palestinian Christian groups like Kairos and Sabeel, who protested vigorously.

Then in July at Lambeth Palace, alongside the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Dr Vincent Nichols, Dr Williams co-chaired a closed conference of some 90 invitees about Palestinian Christians. It excluded UK groups sympathetic to Kairos who felt it was stage-managed to achieve a diplomatic accommodation with the Israelis, perhaps via the Chief Rabbi.

The Occupation ignored

Later, in December, in parallel with the Kairos conference in Bethlehem, Dr Williams opened a debate in the House of Lords and yet again gave the impression that Palestinian Christians are a minority faced with the problems of a Muslim majority de-stabilised by extremists. He spoke of "the tragic situation in the West Bank" without mentioning the Occupation, remarking with unintended irony that "the task of those outside is not to impose their own agenda."

What of UK Catholics? At Lambeth in July, the Latin (ie RC) Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dr Fouad Twal, was one of the small number of Christians from Palestine invited. He and his companions spoke movingly about the Occupation but their testimonies did not figure in the Archbishops' summing up. Indeed, Dr Twal's plea that "the only authentic pro-Israel position is one that is also *pro-Palestinian* and *pro-peace*" was unfortunately misquoted by Dr Nichols as "being pro-Christian is also being *pro-Israeli* and *pro-peace*."

The apparent Canterbury-Westminster accord has left open the Vatican's attitude, although one of its cardinals (Tauran) attended Lambeth and passed on the Pope's blessing on the Conference. Previously, Palestinians got some encouragement during the Pope's state visit to Israel in 2009. The Pope was facing a diplomatic bind: opinions that a Bavarian pontiff should apologise for the Holocaust which many say was assisted by Vatican reticence after its Konkordat with the German Third Reich in 1933.

Nevertheless in front of Israel's President, the Pope called for "a sovereign independent homeland [for the] Palestinian people... to live in dignity and to travel freely," earlier having celebrated a papal

mass photogenically beside the Apartheid Wall. Has the Vatican attitude shifted since?

No meeting with Kairos

A signal should come from an annual January meeting in Jerusalem of selected Catholic bishops from Europe and North America. The Vatican set up this "Holy Land Coordination" (HLC) ten years ago to offer solidarity to the Church in the Holy Land. To date, alas, HLC communiqués have merely affirmed their solidarity. The

2011 meeting did not find it possible to meet Kairos Palestine, nor did it discuss persuading pilgrimage groups to meet the "Living Stones" – ie Palestinian Christians – though bishops had been lobbied on this idea and it was later adopted at Lambeth. However, for 2012 there has been no prior agenda published. All in all, Palestinians will feel the HLC is no real help.

Kairos Palestine and other support groups cannot fathom what is going on with these faraway Church leaders on whom their fate hangs. They see in Dr Williams someone of intense sensitivity and courage avoiding being prophetic by confronting injustice. Does he still feel it necessary to redeem the Holocaust this way? Or has he been beguiled into thinking the Israelis will not again refuse a residence permit to a bishop (or officials) or will relax their confiscation of church lands?

Is he attempting some "Wisdom of Solomon" bid at peacemaking? His speech in the Lords could have challenged Israel and public complacency; it will be seen by Palestinians as part of a tacit concordat not to criticise Israel.

Meanwhile, though the Vatican expected to achieve a bargaining position by recognising the state of Israel in 1993 it has been outmanoeuvred by the Israelis prevaricating ever since over the terms of the signed "Fundamental Agreement," including the tax status of Church property.

So collusion at the cruelty of colonial Occupation at the first Christmas looks set to continue.



Christians at the Church of Nativity, Bethlehem

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Fox, Werritty, Gould... and Mossad

The official inquiry which led to the resignation of former defence secretary, Liam Fox, over his friendship with lobbyist, Adam Werritty, failed to examine what the pair may have been up to when they attended a dinner in Tel Aviv. This article by **Jonathan Cook**, first published in Al Akhbar English, sheds light on how the Israel lobby goes about its business.

Last February, Liam Fox and Adam Werritty attended a dinner in Tel Aviv with a group described as senior Israelis. According to reports in the British media, the Israelis were representatives of the Mossad, Israel's spy agency, while Fox and Werritty were accompanied by Matthew Gould, Britain's ambassador to Israel. A former British diplomat has claimed that the topic of discussion that evening was a secret plot to attack Iran.

Little was made of the dinner in the inquiry report by Sir Gus O'Donnell, the cabinet's top civil servant. However, a spate of new concerns were subsequently raised including questions about the extent of Fox and Werritty's ties to Israel and the unexplained role of Gould.

Craig Murray, Britain's former ambassador to Uzbekistan until 2004, when he turned whistle blower on British and US collusion on torture, said senior British government officials were profoundly disturbed by the O'Donnell inquiry, seeing it as a "whitewash."

Two well-placed contacts alerted Murray to Gould's central role in the Fox-Werritty relationship, he told al-Akhbar. He said he has pieced together evidence that Fox, Werritty and Gould met on at least six occasions over the past two years or so, despite the O'Donnell inquiry claiming they had met only twice. Officials were present at none of these six meetings and no record was taken of any of the discussions.

The Foreign Office has refused to respond to questions about the Tel Aviv dinner. Officials will not say who the Israelis were, what was discussed or even who paid for the evening.

The real concern among government officials, Murray said, is that Fox, Werritty and Gould were conspiring in a 'rogue' foreign policy – opposed to the British government's stated aims – that was authored by Mossad and Israel's neo-conservative allies in Washington.

This suspicion was partially confirmed by a report in the *Guardian* in October which cited unnamed government officials saying they were worried that Fox and Werritty had been pursuing what was termed an "alternative" government policy.

Murray said the Tel Aviv dinner was especially significant. His contact had told him the discussion had focused on ways to ensure Britain assisted in creating favourable diplomatic conditions for an attack on Iran.

The British media have cautiously raised the issue of apparent Israeli links to Fox and Werritty. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that the pair secretly met the head of the Mossad and the *Independent on Sunday* claimed that Werritty had close ties to the Mossad as well as to "US-backed neocons" plotting to overthrow the Iranian regime.

“The concern is that Fox, Werritty and Gould were conspiring in a ‘rogue’ foreign policy”

The IoS reported the response from a foreign office spokesman: "The FCO has total confidence that Matthew Gould has acted appropriately at all times and at no stage was he acting independently or out of line with government policy."

The O'Donnell report revealed that Werritty's many trips overseas alongside Fox had been funded by at least six donors, three of whom were leading members of the pro-Israel lobby in Britain.

The donations were made to two organisations, Atlantic Bridge and Pargav, that Werritty helped to establish. The advisory board of Atlantic Bridge, which Werritty founded with Fox, included William



Liam Fox at his wedding with his best man, Adam Werritty

Hague, the current foreign minister, Michael Gove, the education minister, and George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

According to the O'Donnell report, Werritty joined Fox on 18 of his official trips overseas and the pair met another 22 times at the defence ministry.

The *Guardian* reported that Fox's staff repeatedly warned him off his relationship with Werritty but were overruled.

Despite these concerns, Gould, one of the country's most senior diplomats, appears to have cultivated a close relationship with Werritty as well as Fox. According to Murray's sources, Gould and Werritty "had been meeting and communicating for years."

O'Donnell's report mentions another meeting between Fox, Werritty and Gould, in September 2010. On that occasion, Gould met Fox in what a foreign office spokesman has described as a "pre-posting briefing call" – a sort of high-level induction for ambassadors to acquaint themselves with their new posting.

Werritty was also present, according to O'Donnell, "as an individual with some experience in... the security situation in the Middle East." His participation at the meeting was "not appropriate," O'Donnell concluded.

Murray said such briefings would never be conducted at ministerial level and certainly not by the defence minister



Matthew Gould, UK ambassador to Israel

himself. He added that a senior official in the defence ministry had alerted him to two other peculiar aspects of the meeting: no officials were present to take notes and the conversation took place in the ministry's dining room, not in Fox's office.

"As someone who worked for many years as a diplomat, I know how these things should work," Murray told al-Akhbar. "So much of this affair simply smells wrong."

It has also emerged that Gould met Fox and Werritty earlier than previously known – before Gould was appointed ambassador to Israel. The foreign office has refused to answer questions about this meeting or to respond to a parliamentary question tabled by MP Jeremy Corbyn. All that is known is that it must have taken place before May 2010, when Fox was appointed defence minister.

The trio were also together shortly before the Tel Aviv dinner, when Fox made a speech at the hawkish Herzliya security conference in a session on the strategic threat posed by Iran. Plus Fox and Gould were photographed together at a "We believe in Israel" conference in London in May 2011. Werritty was again present.

The murky dealings between Fox, Werritty and Gould, and the government's refusal to clarify what took place between them, is evidence, said Murray, that a serious matter is being hidden. His fear, and that of his contacts inside the senior civil service, is that "a neo-con cell of senior [British] ministers and officials" were secretly setting policy in coordination with Israel and the US.

Gould's unexamined role is of particular concern, as he is still in place in his post in Israel.

Murray has noted that, in appointing Gould, a British Jew, to the ambassadorship in Israel in September last year, the foreign office broke with long-standing policy. No Jewish diplomat has held the post before because of concerns that it might lead to a conflict of interest, or at the very least create the impression of dual loyalty. Similar restrictions have been in place to avoid Catholics holding the post of ambassador to the Vatican.

Link to Labour

It emerged in January that Werritty also met Matthew Gould in September, 2009, when Gould was principal private secretary to David Miliband, then Foreign Secretary in the last Labour government.

This was among the full list of meetings released by the Foreign Office as a result of Freedom of Information request from Craig Murray. The disclosure is the first link between Werritty and the Labour government and was not included in Sir Gus O'Donnell's report.

Murray told *The Independent*, which reported the link, that it "proves beyond doubt that Werritty/FCO contacts were much more extensive than have ever been admitted."

Eye on the web

● Map of settler violence

There are some great tools available from **Al Haq**, the Palestinian human rights NGO, for presentations to newcomers on the situation in the OPTs.



One is an **interactive map of settler violence** which presents incidents reported and documented by Al-Haq's field researchers. The most common attacks on Palestinians include physical assault, intimidation, arson and stone-throwing.

The map is updated regularly and also displays other aspects of the Israeli occupation including the illegal settlements, the Wall, checkpoints and administrative zones.

<http://tinyurl.com/6rmfckz>

● Virtual tours

Other **Al Haq** videos combine visual documentation with satellite imagery to create virtual tours of human rights violations in the OPTs. Each tour is designed to recreate the experience of making a field visit, providing everyone with the opportunity to see the on-the-ground reality of the occupation.

There is a powerful one on the building of the Wall on Palestinian land and the resulting severe restrictions on movement resulting in loss of livelihoods:

<http://tinyurl.com/6lo6odq>

Also a virtual tour of the "buffer zone" unilaterally declared by Israel inside the Gaza Strip: <http://tinyurl.com/7lhpa7y>

● Interview with Nurit Peled-Elhanan

Alternate Focus interviews Nurit Peled-Elhanan, Professor of Language and Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and author of *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*.



She argues that the textbooks used in Israel's school system are laced with a pro-Israel ideology, and that they play a part in priming children for military service. She reveals how the books marginalise Palestinians, legitimise Israeli military action and reinforce Jewish-Israeli territorial identity.

<http://tinyurl.com/863uooop>

Bicom paid the bills

Adam Werritty's flights and hotel bills were partly paid for by Atlantic Bridge, an Atlanticist think tank founded by Liam Fox in 1997. One of its primary sources of donations was the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (Bicom).

In June, 2010, the Charity Commission ruled that Atlantic Bridge failed to meet its guidelines to qualify as a charity and ordered that its activities "must cease immediately." The *Guardian* reported that, eight days before this ruling, Werritty helped set up Pargav Ltd with the same registered address as Atlantic Bridge.

Pargav, which took over the role of funding Werritty's jet-set lifestyle, received £147,000 in donations from Tory party supporters and businessmen. One of them, the *Guardian* reported, was Poju Zabłudowicz, owner of Tamares Real Estate and chairman of Bicom.

• campus watch

KCL and Ahava

Students and academics swung into action when it was announced that Kings College London is participating in EU-funded nanoparticle research with Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories Ltd, which profits from an illegal settlement on Palestinian land.

They called on KCL immediately to withdraw from the project, reject the grant

it had received and take steps to ensure that the university does not find itself in a similar position in the future. An e-petition was widely publicised and attracted huge support.

Student Union president, Hannah Barlow, arranged a meeting with KCL principal, Rick Trainor and Maxine Taylor, head of external relations. The College later issued a statement saying that KCL was a minor partner in the project.

"King's is supplying risk communications expertise on the project and has no involvement with Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories. The project... aims to identify the potential risks to the environment and human health by free-engineered nanomaterial and is a significant piece of research."

The College added that they are currently working on a transparent statement of principles regarding research funding.

A fitting memorial for Samira Hassassian

A scholarship at Bethlehem University is to be set up in memory of Samira Hassassian in recognition of her commitment to education and her years of dedicated teaching.

The Perpetual Endowed Scholarship in the name of the late wife of Professor Manuel Hassassian, the Palestine Ambassador to the UK, is being set up by the University and the Association of Palestinian Communities (UK).

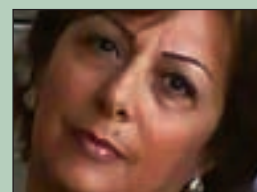
Contributions can be sent to Friends of Bethlehem University, Mr. Issa Tahhan, Special Pilgrimages Ltd, 55-57 Queens Road, Southend, Essex SS1 1LT. Tel: 0800 371 972; email: info@special-pilgrimages.co.uk.

Online donations can be made at: www.bethlehem.edu/donateonline

Samira's moving last poem has been set beautifully to music by Nizar al Alisa and is available for £8 from: Betty Hunter c/o PSC PO Box BM, PSA London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Association of Palestinian Communities and mark them "Samira Hassassian Scholarship" on the back. All proceeds will be donated to the scholarship fund.

Poem

By Samira Hassassian



I do not know why I say,
How to say,
What to say,
But I shall say.

I do not want to return to Palestine in a shroud
Yet I do not want to be buried
Except in my homeland's soil
Beneath the lemon tree
In the shade of the olive tree
In the vineyards that my loving father cherished
In my country my grave shall be
And in my land I will enjoy my afterlife
My beloved ones return to the homeland
But not in a shroud.

A study day on *The Promise*

By Sharen Green

THREE hundred sixth-formers in Sherborne, Dorset, tackled the Israel-Palestine issue in a study day based on acclaimed Channel 4 series, *The Promise*. The Bishop of Sherborne, Dr Graham Kings, chaired discussions with the series' maker, Peter Kosminsky.

The story interweaves the history of Britain's involvement in the founding of the State of Israel with current events, seen through the eyes of Erin, an 18-year-old girl retracing events in her grandfather's diary. It explores the little-known experiences of British soldiers serving in Palestine in 1947-48 and confronts the present-day reality of occupation.

The Gryphon Church of England School hosted the event and students from Sherborne School, Sherborne School for Girls and Catholic independent girls' school, Leweston, were also invited.

A member of Jews for Justice for Palestinians and two Ecumenical

Accompaniers (EAs) put the day together, aided by Sherborne Palestine Support Group. Rabbi Danny Rich, the UK's Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, and Dr Hammadi Nait-Charif from Bournemouth Islamic Centre also took part.

Students heard the Palestinian Christian perspective from Anne Clayton, representing Sabeel, questioned the EAs on their human rights work, spoke to Glyn Secker who captained the Jewish boat to Gaza and heard how Diana Nelsen became a Jewish dissident. Dr Hassan Qasrawi, a Palestinian refugee, talked about growing up under the British Mandate.

Mr Kosminsky told the students he was surprised to be invited to spend a whole day discussing the programme. "That's never happened to me before – and I'm very touched and flattered that you would not only do that, but that you would devote so many hours of your day to thinking carefully about the issues that we tried to raise," he said.

Dr Kings commented: "I am deeply impressed by the profound engagement and

sharp questions of the students. It has been an extraordinary day of innovative, animated learning for us all and a joy to share with Peter, Danny and Hammadi."

Rabbi Rich said, "The situation in Israel-Palestine, past and present, is a complex one and it was a privilege to work with sixth-formers who were attempting to understand the dilemmas which follow from history."



The day's speakers. Photo: Michael Ford

In the footsteps of Abraham

The UK Friends of Abraham's Path was launched in December with the aim of helping people learn about, travel on and give support to the route. **Louise Sibley** explains how this new charity promotes the dream of building, through experiencing the Path, greater understanding, dialogue, respect and friendship among people of different cultures and faiths.

It takes a lot of work to set up a long distance walking trail – from route surveys and mapping to seeking the approval of the local authorities, waymarking, training local guides and establishing places of rest along the way. So, however attractive the benefits in terms of ecotourism and improving a subsistence local economy, it takes determination to create a trail of any significant distance.

The added challenges of bringing into being a trail that is designed to cross country borders in the testing territories of the Eastern Mediterranean have nearly overwhelmed the Masar Ibrahim al Khalil (Abraham's Path). Yet the dream lives on and new sections of the Masar are still being opened.

The vision for the Masar is a route of cultural tourism following the trail of Ibrahim/Abraham which will bring the traveller into direct contact with small communities. The story begins at Harran in Turkey, from where Ibrahim is said to have been called by God to begin his wanderings. It reaches across the ancient lands of Canaan, down through the Jordan Valley and surrounding lands, into Egypt and back to Beersheva where his final years were spent. It finishes with his burial in Al Khalil/Hebron.

There is no actual historical or archeological evidence of his wanderings but a memory of the great patriarch resonates throughout the area. And following the Masar will deliver an experience of his landscape, his life as a nomad and his time.

The trail – which one day it is hoped will be a continuous route – is not a coherent path. There are some long distance walking sections and some site visits and there are spurs in line with Ibrahim's supposed wanderings (for example to Jericho) and his returns to certain areas. Sometimes following ancient shepherd paths, at others traversing modern tarmac roads, the traveller may finally wind up in Hebron at the burial place of Ibrahim, Sarai and Jacob. With such an endpoint – in a West Bank city that can be seen as the apotheosis of a troubled humanity – the trail has the potential to become a modern pilgrimage within the spiritual context of a unifying symbol for the faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The goal of the UK Friends, which celebrated its inception at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in London,



is to create a community of walkers who will experience cultural differences through respectful eyes. Walking shifts perspectives. In this region it brings the experience of the hospitality that is at the heart of the region and the story of Ibrahim/Abraham. And by encouraging and helping travellers visit an area so often adversely affected by tourist anxiety, the charity hopes also to give local communities the opportunity to tell their own stories to a wider audience.

“The trail has the potential to become a modern pilgrimage”

So what is on offer and what will the charity do? At present there are segments of a walk existing in Turkey and Palestine, each offering up to ten days or about 150+ km of walking. In Jordan there is a 10–30 km rural trail in a remote region. Finally, in the Negev area of Israel, over 100km of trail is opening up this year passing through marginalised desert villages.

Many parts of the trail cover places little known, remote from the usual tourist facilities and little visited to date. All segments are, or will be soon, supported by local homestays, travel co-ordinators and guides to show the way and ease the culture shock between travellers and locals.

People wishing to walk are advised to get in touch with the UK Friends who will provide information and, if possible, contact with a path walker volunteer (someone who has already been out there) for advice and inside knowledge. The UK Friends does not set up trips but it does plan to co-ordinate some expeditions each year, with a focus on students. Just as important, the UK Friends is planning to hold events in the UK to help recreate some of the experience, raise funds and, with its St Ethelburga's partner, work on dialogue in travel.

The full Masar may take years to come into being. But an in-depth experience is available now both to experienced walkers and to novice travellers. It may not be the easiest choice for an annual break but it could prove the most rewarding and enlightening.

■ info@abrahamspath.org.uk

BDS is going ballistic – and so are the Israelis!

By Betty Hunter

Ten years ago the PSC launched the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign and in 2005 Palestinian civil society made the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and is now leading the international campaign. The global success of this campaign can be gauged by the reactions of the Israeli government, making laws to restrict individuals and organisations supporting boycott, keeping internationals out and generously funding a concerted campaign that attempts to silence the most effective activists and organisations supporting Palestine.

It is very difficult for Palestinians in the OPTs to refuse to buy Israeli goods since Israel has destroyed the Palestinian economy and controls all imports and exports. But in Bethlehem this Christmas, mayor Victor Batarseh was unequivocal, saying that the international community should boycott Israel until it accepts Palestinian independence.

"Boycott Israel culturally, educationally, in sports and in trade and Israel will make peace in six months. Believe me," he said. The official policy of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority calls only for boycotting goods produced in settlements but clearly the Palestinian people demand more from us.

"Boycott Israel culturally, educationally, in sports and in trade and Israel will make peace in six months"

Spectacular successes are piling up even though many individuals, companies and organisations refuse to admit that trading and working with Israel has become a toxic issue and give "economic" or "commercial" reasons for their decisions to withdraw. But the Israelis know that every rejection, every cancellation of a performing artist, every lost contract, means that the message is being received loud and clear by people of conscience across the world – *Israel is a pariah state violating international law and we will take action for Palestinian rights despite the cowardice of our governments.*

Inspiring action in France

French activists have come up with a number of stunningly effective direct actions aimed at supermarkets in the last couple of years. In November they de-shelved huge amounts of Israeli avocados and oranges in a Carrefour megastore in Montpellier and marched through the aisles shouting "Boycott Israel," "Israel is criminal, Carrefour is an accomplice," and other Palestine solidarity slogans.

Many shoppers expressed support but the activists have been faced with a relentless campaign from the Israeli lobby to have them branded as anti-semitic and criminalised with the result that the cause of Palestine is now a hot topic which is exercising many judicial minds and reaching new sections of the French public.

The case of racism against French Senator, Alima Boumediene, and another activist after their protest against Israeli goods at



a Carrefour supermarket north of Paris collapsed in 2010 but throughout 2011 more cases came before the courts.

In December, 12 activists from a group called Boycott 68 were acquitted on charges of "inciting discrimination and racial hatred" in the eastern city of Mulhouse. And in July, Olivia Zémor, co-founder of the Coordination Group Calling for a Just Peace in the Middle East, was cleared of charges of discrimination against the Israeli nation and incitement to racial hatred brought by the French government and four associations of the Israeli lobby.

A tribunal looking at the issues raised by the case upheld the acquittal and stated: "Criticism of a State or its policies cannot be regarded, in principle, as infringing the rights or dignity of its nationals, without seriously affecting freedom of expression in a world now globalised, whose civil society has become a major actor."

Belgian filmmaker Chris den Hond has released an 18-minute documentary about the BDS movement, including inspiring footage of the mass actions in France and interviews with Lisa Taraki, professor at Bir Zeit University, and Omar Barghouti, founding member of the BDS campaign: <http://electronicintifada.net/tags/chris-den-hond>.



Olivia Zémor

Cultural boycott

There is no question that cultural action goes to the heart of supporters of Israel.

The outcry following the disruption of the performance of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra at last summer's Proms could be

likened to the uproar caused when Peter Hain and supporters dug up the cricket pitch as part of the anti-apartheid "Stop the Seventy Tour."

The criteria for action must always be: what is the most effective way to win support for the case for the Palestinians? Increasingly people with interests in every cultural field are finding answers to that question.

Now an exciting new voice has joined the cause – Punks Against Apartheid. They have launched a website "to bring together punk artists in support of Palestine" and signed up bands from the US and UK whose reach is global.

The venture began with an online demand, supported by artists, musicians and solidarity activists worldwide, to legendary punk rocker and social justice activist, Jello Biafra, and his band, the Guantanamo School of Medicine, to cancel their performance in Tel Aviv last June, which they did. See www.punksagainstapartheid.com.

There have been other victories, such as renowned singer-songwriter Natacha Atlas cancelling her concert. Atlas, who has Egyptian, Moroccan, Palestinian and Jewish roots and won a BBC music award in 2007 for her fusion of Arabic and Western styles, initially planned to go to Israel and argue the case, but changed her mind.

"I would have personally asked my Israeli fans face-to-face to fight this apartheid with peace in their hearts, but after much deliberation I now see that it would be more effective a statement to not go to Israel until this systemised apartheid is abolished once and for all," she said.

Tuba Skinny, a traditional jazz and blues band from New Orleans, cancelled their appearance at the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat in August. The current campaign to persuade Jane Birkin to withdraw from performing in Israel must be supported.



Natacha Atlas

Swedish academics sign a call

If culture is one Achilles' heel for Israel, then the other is academia. In Sweden, 218 academics and students signed a call in October for an academic boycott of Israel.

The initiative for the call was taken at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm which has an ongoing agreement with Technion, the leading Israeli technical university. Technion collaborates closely with the Israeli military forces, its researchers act as advisors to the military and work closely with the country's biggest weapons producer, Elbit, in developing new types of drones.

This action aimed at Israeli academic institutions is increasing the pressure for the European Union to restrict its grants for Israeli research. In Norway 100 prominent individuals have signed an appeal to the same end.

Universities in the US, Canada, South Africa and Britain are increasingly engaging in debates on boycott and students are demanding more action. ULU, the biggest student union in Europe – the united union of London's 20 universities and colleges, comprising 120,000 students – has decided to support boycott.

A European network for academic and cultural boycott was formed last year. See www.epacbi.eu.

"ULU, the biggest student union in Europe, comprising 120,000 students, has decided to support boycott"

Spreading beyond Europe, the academic boycott movement recently reached Chile where the Catholic University of Santiago cancelled at one day's notice a seminar entitled "The Israeli experience, an example of innovation and enterprise," with guest speaker Yossi Smoler, Scientific Director in Israel's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour. BDS campaigners felt sure that their mobilisation to prevent Israel whitewashing its image through pseudo scientific or cultural events had played a role.

Complicit companies

Tenacious, meticulous and patient work of dedicated activists has started to achieve amazing results against businesses which profit from the misery inflicted by the Israeli occupation. Carmel-Agrexco has declared bankruptcy and the Veolia story gets better and better (see p26). But there are many more companies awaiting our dedicated pursuit.



The campaign against Ahava, an Israeli cosmetics company partly owned by and located in the illegal settlement of Mitzpe Shalem, saw the Covent Garden store close in September and shortly afterwards John Lewis decided to stop stocking the beastly brand.

But one of the most striking victories has come in France where a major bank, BNP Paribas, has decided to close its Israeli branch and downgrade its operations to a representative office, resulting in 50 layoffs. BNP Paribas has been operating in Israel since 1995, financing major projects and involving French companies in investment. The management says the decision was the result of damage caused by the Greek financial crisis. But it is the only one of its worldwide branches to close.

Think Israel – Think Israeli Occupation

One of Israel's tactics to win support is its massive campaign to attract western tourists. When the Guardian and the Observer printed lavish three page advertisement features from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, fronted by a map obliterating the existence of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the PSC and its supporters sprang into action immediately. After only a few days, the newspapers apologised and agreed not to publish such misleading copy again.

Advertising material which wipes the Occupation off the map is unacceptable and we are waiting for the judgment of the Advertising Standards Association. The "Think Israel" campaign must become our "Think Israeli Occupation" campaign.

In Brief

JNF BOARD MEMBER QUILTS OVER EVICTIONS

Seth Morrison, a member of the board of the Jewish National Fund in Washington, DC, and a major fund-raiser for the organisation, has resigned his position and severed all ties over its drive to force Palestinians out of their homes in East Jerusalem to make room for Jewish settlers.

In a letter printed in the *Jewish Daily Forward* in December, he explained that some of his earliest memories were of dropping spare change in the JNF's iconic little blue boxes. His commitment to "building a safe and secure Israel" had not changed. But, he said: "What has changed is a sense of betrayal I have at learning that JNF is a force in preventing long-term peace."

His action was prompted by a subsidiary of the Israeli branch of JNF launching eviction proceedings against the Sumarin family of the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, using the Absentee Property Law. The children of the original owner, Musa Sumarin, were declared absentees after his death, even though there were other family members living in the home, and in 1991 the Israeli government transferred the property to the wholly-owned JNF subsidiary, Himnuta.

Morrison wrote: "I have learned that the action on the Sumarin home is not an isolated case. JNF has gained ownership of other Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and, in many instances, then transferred these properties through its subsidiaries to Elad, a settler organisation whose purpose is to "Judaize" East Jerusalem.

"In my eyes, the expulsion of the Sumarin family is a violation of human rights. But it is also part of the systematic transfer of Palestinian property to ideological settlers who wish to put facts on the ground that hinder a lasting peace agreement."

Following a protest by at least 1,300 American Jews, the JNF postponed the eviction. But, Morrison wrote, "I felt I had to resign now because senior people at JNF made clear to me that they still plan to get the Sumarin family out and transfer the property to Elad."

SOLAR PLANT TO BE DESTROYED

A military order announcing its imminent demolition was slapped in November on a set of solar panels installed by a Spanish NGO in coordination with Al-Najah University in Nablus in the village of Imneizil in the South Hebron hills that supplies power to 40 families, a health clinic and a school.

Imneizil is off the electricity, water and sewage networks due to military restrictions on Palestinian development in Area C and the solar panels, installed two years ago at a cost of 365,500 euros, are its only source of power.

The Israeli military refused to grant a building permit for the panels but Rabbis for Human Rights appealed against the demolition arguing that they did not require a permit and that electricity is a basic humanitarian need. Yet, after 39 appeals, the order remains.



The prospect of being cut off again horrifies Mohammad Yousef, Imneizil School's headmaster. "Without electricity, the educational process comes to a standstill," he says. "There is the computer, the printer. Maybe you have a documentary film to show the students. You become unable to provide educational materials."

Article 23 of the Hague Convention of 1907 states that, "it is especially forbidden (for the occupier) to destroy or seize the enemy's property, unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war."

ISRAEL'S ATTORNEY GENERAL: "I CAN'T DEFEND LAWS."

Proposed legislation to restrict foreign governments' donations to NGOs is unconstitutional, Israel's Attorney General, Yehuda Weinstein, has warned. In a letter to PM Binyamin Netanyahu, he wrote that "if these bills become law, I won't be able to defend them against the petitions that will be submitted to the High Court."

The two bills in question were submitted by Knesset members Ofir Akunis (Likud) and Faina Kirshenbaum (Yisrael Beiteinu). Weinstein wrote that both were disproportionate. "They deal a harsh blow to a long list of constitutional rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of association and the right to equality."

In international forums, he noted, Israeli representatives boast of the country's active civil society and human rights organisations, as these are essential elements of a democratic state. "It's true that these organisations' activities don't always accord with the Israeli government's positions. But they are an important voice that shouldn't be silenced."



KICK OFF FOR PALESTINE

As the still suffering people of Gaza mark the third anniversary of Israel's murderous Operation Cast Lead which killed 1400 Palestinians, including around 400 children, Viva Palestina is finalising plans for a Kick Off for Palestine campaign to construct sporting venues in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Gaza has a large youth population and local authorities and civil society organisations across the Strip asked Viva Palestina to sponsor the building of four playing fields, with irrigated grass pitches, surrounding running tracks and associated facilities, plus the roofing and completion of a gymnasium/sports hall.

An appeal is being launched to raise £350,000 and sports clubs in the UK are being encouraged to twin with similar clubs in Gaza. All labour and tendering will be drawn from within the Gaza Strip, ensuring that these projects also help to rebuild the battered economy. For more details see www.vivapalestina.org

29 CHILDREN SHOT

On 13 December 2011, 13-year-old Nedal was shot in the shoulder while trying to help out his desperately poor family by collecting scrap metal from wasteland about 400 metres inside the border between Gaza and Israel.

Nedal became the latest statistic in the 29 cases of children shot from Israeli control towers in the border fence documented by Defence for Children International-Palestine between 26 March, 2010, and 13 December, 2011. In each case the children were collecting building material or working between 30 to 800 metres from the border fence.

Nedal, who describes his family's financial situation as "very harsh," and his cousin, Ahmad, both school drop-outs, were

trying to earn 30 or 40 shekels from scavenging scrap metal from the Erez industrial zone. "We were not alone. There were around 30 collectors my age," he said.

The Israeli army has unilaterally and illegally imposed a 300 metre live fire zone within the Gaza border, but due to a severe lack of job opportunities and a shortage of construction material



Nedal

entering Gaza from Israel, hundreds of men and boys scavenge for building gravel and other items amongst the destroyed buildings close to the fence.

Nedal said: "Suddenly, shooting erupted from one of the observation towers. I was about 400 metres away from the border fence. The collectors started running because of it. I got scared. I turned around and started running away from the border. I kept running fast because the shooting was intensive.

"I ran about ten metres when I felt something hitting me on the back of my left shoulder, and I felt my left arm had been paralyzed. I looked at it and saw my shoulder bleeding, and realised I had been injured by bullets from the observation towers."

According to the UN, since the beginning of 2010, at least 38 Palestinians have been killed and 372 injured by Israeli forces in the arbitrary live fire zone adjacent to the border with Israel and imposed at sea. *The targeting of civilians is absolutely prohibited under international law, regardless of circumstances.*

DCI-Palestine launched an appeal for people to protest to their MPs and the Israeli embassy over the shooting of Nedal. For more info see www.dci-palestine.org

DIASPORA JEWISH STUDENTS EXPLORE HEBRON

A group of Diaspora Jewish rabbinical students, rabbis, educators and lay readers launched a project to raise awareness about the current situation in Hebron through the lens of Jewish text and identity.

The group set up Project Hayei Sarah after spending time in the West Bank city and finding themselves "grappling with the difficult realities we encountered there." They say that in the light of "violations of human dignity in Hebron, many in the name of Judaism," they want to educate Jewish communities about the complexities of their relationship to the city, generate communal conversations about the current situation and spark action towards "a reality in Hebron that is reflective of our highest Jewish ideals."

More than a dozen videos including students' personal reflections on their experiences were published online and students held an event in Jerusalem creating a new forum for the opening of a debate amongst the Diaspora Jewish student community about the current reality in Hebron.

To see the videos and find out more visit www.facebook.com/projecthayeisarah

RUSSELL TRIBUNAL FINDS ISRAEL GUILTY OF APARTHEID

The third session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, held in Cape Town in November, found that Israel subjects the entire Palestinian people to an institutionalised regime of domination amounting to apartheid as defined under international law.

The state of Israel is legally obliged to respect the prohibition of apartheid contained in international law. In addition to being considered a crime against humanity, the practice of apartheid is universally prohibited.

The RToP made several recommendations. They included a call for global civil society to replicate the spirit of solidarity that contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa, including by making national parliaments aware of the findings of the Tribunal and supporting the BDS campaign.

IMPACT OF HOME DEMOLITIONS ON CHILDREN



Drawing of a home demolition in Jenin by 16-year-old Alaa Ameen Hamdan

The impact of home demolitions on children is devastating, according to a report, *Broken Homes*, prepared by the Palestinian Counselling Centre, Save the Children and the Welfare Association, all based in Jerusalem.

Knocking down a family home not only destroys a physical structure, it also tears down the family structure, increases poverty and vulnerability and ultimately displaces a family from the environment that gives it cohesion and support. This has long-term physical and mental health consequences, the report says.

Their authors' research shows that children who have seen their homes destroyed "fare significantly worse on a range of mental health indicators, including: withdrawal, somatic complaints, depression/anxiety, higher rates of delusional, obsessive, compulsive and psychic thoughts, attention difficulties, delinquency, violent behaviour – even six months after the demolition." In addition, children's educational achievement and ability to study deteriorate.

See the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/7z33tgc>.

VOLVO AND HYUNDAI EQUIPMENT USED IN DEMOLITIONS

Israeli forces protected the Volvo and Hyundai equipment that was used to demolish three homes in Beit Hanina, occupied East Jerusalem, on November 24. The photo is a screenshot from the video of the action made by Haitham Katib. The destruction left 20 people homeless, including six children.

Since 1967 around 2,000 homes have been demolished in East Jerusalem, according to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN). The number of outstanding demolition orders for East Jerusalem is estimated at up to 20,000.

ICAHN estimates that about 25,000 Palestinian homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories were demolished between 1967 and 2010.



NEW EVIDENCE IN TRISTAN ANDERSON CASE

Newly discovered video footage shows the Israeli army in Nilin village the day in 2009 when US activist Tristan Anderson was shot in the head with a high velocity tear gas canister and left permanently disabled, according to his legal team.

Anderson, who is hemiplegic – almost entirely paralysed on his left and dominant side and blind in his right eye – and his family have filed a civil suit against the Israeli military for the injury he sustained. Hearings were to begin in Jerusalem in November but were delayed only days before the start when new video footage emerged.

Lea Tsemel, an Israeli human rights lawyer who is representing Anderson, told Charlotte Silver for the Electronic Intifada: “The footage shows the army in the village the day Tristan was shot. All of us [the state and lawyers] were surprised by the new evidence and wanted to investigate it before we go forward.”



Now lawyers representing Anderson in a separate, criminal, case will submit the footage to the State Attorney's office. “We believe that the evidence supports the immediate re-opening of the investigation and we hope that investigation will yield enough evidence to lead to the filing of an indictment before a criminal court,” said Emily Schaeffer, a lawyer with Michael Sfar's law office, who have taken on the case.

For Anderson and his partner, Gabby Silverman, with whom he lives in Oakland, California, the trial is not about weeding out a few bad apples, but challenging a regime that has never been held accountable.

“Palestinians die at protests all the time — no one will even talk about it. But people will talk a little about Tristan,” Silverman noted.

The canister that hit Anderson is called “extended range tear gas” and is made by the US company, Combined Systems, Inc, which makes “non-lethal” and “less-lethal” weapons. But what makes this weapon particularly dangerous is that it has an internal mechanism that propels it forward, significantly increasing its impact. “It's like firing a small missile,” said Sarit Michaeli, spokesperson for Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem.

Michaeli said this kind of tear gas, which has come to be known as “bad gas,” was first used by the IDF in Israel's Operation Cast Lead attack on Gaza. One month after Tristan was shot, a similar missile killed Bassem Abu Rahme during a demonstration in Bilin.

According to statistics gathered by Palestinian human rights organisation, Al Haq, 57 Palestinians have been killed at demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the second intifada began in September 2000.

PEACE ACTIVISTS' RADIO SILENCED

Israeli police and the Communications Ministry cut off the broadcasts of Kol Hashalom radio station in November, claiming that they are pirate broadcasts. When station manager and former

Knesset member, Mossi Raz, was called into a police station for questioning, he made clear to his interrogators that he did not intend to broadcast illegally and gave instructions by telephone to end broadcasts until further instructions.

Kol Hashalom – translated as All For Peace – was established by Israeli and Palestinian peace activists and has been broadcasting for seven years from

East Jerusalem, using broadcasting equipment in Ramallah and an operating license from the Palestinian Communications Ministry.

The operators claim that their offices are subject to Palestinian law and therefore the Communications Ministry does not have the authority to shut them down. They say they have never before been asked to stop broadcasting or to acquire an Israeli license.



Mossi Raz

Raz is certain the closure is part of a general attack on peace activists. “Of course there is an attack here that is not only on us. If someone came to the conclusion that this isn't legal, then after seven years there are different ways to go about it,” he said.

I, 1,000 GRAVES TO BE DUG UP

The Israeli authorities are planning to exhume 1000 additional graves in the historic Islamic cemetery of Ma'man Allah in occupied Jerusalem, according to Dmitri Dalyani, a member of the Fatah Movement's Revolutionary Council.

According to reports from the al-Aqsa Foundation for Endowments and Heritage, digging equipment and a large number of workers were seen in November entering the fenced off area of the cemetery earmarked by the Los Angeles based Simon Wiesenthal Centre to build a so-called “Museum of Tolerance.” The actual excavation site is covered over using thick material while security patrols have been significantly stepped up.

In June bulldozers destroyed an estimated 100 tombs in the middle of the night. Remains were collected, stored in iron boxes and taken away on trucks, according to reports. The Israeli Magistrates Court ruled in May against objections to the destruction.

The cemetery has also been subject to Jewish attacks – see picture of an attack in July. In October extremists set fire to a large cypress tree and destroyed about 15 graves. Russian slogans were found on some of the broken tombstones.

Large numbers of bodies have been buried in the cemetery over a period of around 1400 years. Dalyani said that “the crimes of aggression against the graves, particularly in the Ma'man Allah Cemetery, which is of religious and historic distinction, exists within the framework of the historic and cultural falsifications carried out by the Occupation since its establishment, and that its ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people extends to also include the dead.”



Jerusalem campaign growing

The “Act Now for Jerusalem” campaign, launched by the PSC last year, has gathered support from thousands of people who have signed our petition calling for an end to the destruction of Palestinian life and culture in the ancient city.

The petition will be presented to Parliament this spring. Meanwhile MPs are being asked to sign an Early Day Motion which calls on the government to take steps to ensure that the Israeli authorities respect the rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem as well as Israeli citizens and the freedom of worship of all faiths.

The motion – EDM number 2436 – was tabled by PSC patron, Jeremy Corbyn, at the time of our lobby of Parliament in November – **please ask your MP to sign it!** We will encourage all the MPs who sign to participate in a parliamentary debate on Jerusalem to be held shortly after the petition has been submitted. We will also be raising awareness of the crisis facing the Bedouin people – threatened with forced expulsion from their lands – both inside and outside Parliament.

The Jerusalem campaign is supported by a wide range of organisations including Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, Amos Trust, Friends of Al Aqsa, Friends of Sabeel, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights and Pax Christi. It aims to focus attention on the growing crisis and the abuse of human rights in the city and to exert pressure on our government.

So far the government has refused to recognise Israel’s unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem. It has condemned illegal settlement building but we want it to take the next logical step and penalise Israel for its daily infringements of international law.

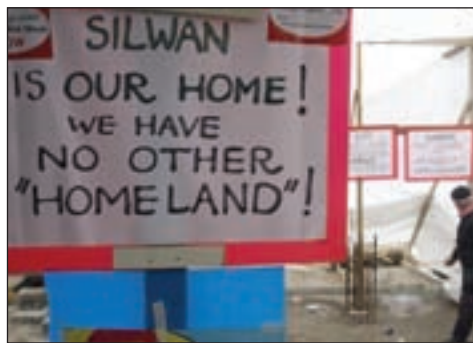


Israeli police and settlers.

Photo: Jillian Kestler-D’Amours

Among the events in the pipeline to promote the campaign are a major event on 30 March – Palestinian Land Day. Watch this space! In addition Amos Trust is creating a Lent Pack for churches focusing on Jerusalem – **make sure yours is one of them!**

For more info see www.palestinecampaign.org/jerusalem. Please sign the petition and encourage your family, friends and colleagues to sign too!



Freedom riders arrested

Inspired by the Freedom Rides of the American South, six Palestinians boarded a settler bus on November 15 near the illegal West Bank colony of Psagot. In a scene reminiscent of the struggle for civil rights by black Americans, the Freedom Riders were dragged from the bus and arrested by Israeli Occupation Forces.

While almost no limitations are imposed on the freedom of movement of Jewish Israelis in occupied Palestinian territory, Palestinians are forbidden to enter Jerusalem or Israel without a rarely-granted permit and are banned by military decree from entering Israeli settlements. This means that, while they are not officially prohibited from using Israeli transport in the West Bank, it is effectively segregated.

The Freedom Riders boarded the Jerusalem-bound Bus 148, operated by Egged, and travelled as far as the Hizmeh checkpoint on the outskirts of the city before they were ordered off. When they refused to budge, they were arrested.

One of the activists, Badia Dwaik, from Hebron, said: “The companies operating Israeli buses, like Egged and Veolia, are directly complicit in Israel’s violations of our rights. They transport settlers in and out of our occupied land, on roads that we often can’t use into places that we can’t reach, including Jerusalem.

“They need to be divested from and boycotted. Not just here, but around the world. It is a moral duty to end complicity in this Israeli system of apartheid.”

Before his arrest Basel al-Araj said: “The settlers are to Israel what the KKK was to the Jim Crow South – an unruly, fanatic mob that has enormous influence in shaping Israeli policies and that enforces these policies with extreme violence and utter impunity all over the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in and around Jerusalem.”



PHOTO: ACTIVE STILL

The Freedom Riders gained support from prominent international figures, including best-selling African-American author, Alice Walker, who wrote: “Board the buses to everywhere. Sit freely. Like many of my country’s people, I have witnessed this scenario before and know where it can lead – to a straightening of the back and a full breath taken by the soul.”

Renowned U.S. Civil Rights activist and former Black Panthers’ leader, Professor Emerita Angela Davis, wrote that the defiance of the US Freedom Riders helped to dismantle the legal structures of racism.

“All those who celebrate the achievements of the Civil Rights era should be prepared to stand in solidarity with our Palestinian sisters and brothers today,” she said.



PHOTO: ACTIVE STILL

Action gets results – Veolia battered

Great satisfaction was felt by members of PSC branches across West London when it was announced that Veolia had been excluded from bidding for a £485 million waste management contract.

The West London Waste Authority announced the shortlist in December for the contract covering 1.4 million inhabitants of the London boroughs of

Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond-upon-Thames. The reasons for excluding the French multi-national which profits from the Israeli occupation were kept confidential, but the impact of PSC and other activists should not be under-estimated.

Over the last six months campaigners assiduously lobbied councillors and council officials and submitted a letter to the WLWA – signed by nearly 600 local residents – documenting Veolia's direct complicity in grave breaches of international and humanitarian law in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Veolia's failure to win the WLWA contract is a heavy blow for the company since it owns a domestic waste depot in the area and so should have been ideally placed to meet some of the necessary criteria for the tender. Worse still for the company, this latest failure comes only six months after it failed to win Ealing Council's £300m "Clean and Green" contract even though it already did much of the work under the old contract.

Other branches are actively pursuing campaigns against Veolia. The **Portsmouth and South Downs** branch launched a campaign to stop the company from winning the West Sussex County Council contract for waste treatment that would have been worth £640m. Members lobbied councillors and informed Veolia of what was happening. In the end the company decided not to apply for the contract.

In **North London** the No2VAG (No to Veolia Action Group) protested outside Camden Town Hall where the North London Waste Authority Board was meeting to discuss a £4.7 billion waste contract. Around 50 people with banners and displays lined the front of the building.



Three wise monkeys later sat in on the meeting as a protest against the Board's refusal to engage with reasoned argument, to agree that complicity in war crimes amounts to grave misconduct or to allow a deputation to make the case for excluding Veolia from the contract.

Sarah Colborne, Director of PSC, commented: "Complicity in infringing human rights and international law has become an expensive business for Veolia. Other companies please note: there is a strong, determined and popular international campaign for justice for Palestinians; if you aid Israel's oppression of Palestinians your business will suffer just like Veolia's."

Successful lobby

The annual lobby of Parliament was judged a brilliant success as droves of PSC members travelled to the House of Commons in November to collar over 100 MPs and voice their concerns. Others lobbied their MPs in their constituency offices.

A report of one such lobby has been provided by Angus Geddes of **Portsmouth and South Downs** branch who gathered ten Havant constituents to meet their MP, David Willetts, in his constituency office.

Angus reports: "We sent him a brief outlining our concerns under the heading 'Negotiations, UN recognition and sanctions; the Arab Spring; war crimes; excluding Veolia from public contracts; Jewish National Fund; Iran.'

"On the unequal balance of power we reminded him of the enormous leverage available to the EU and UK through trade sanctions when 30–40% of Israeli trade is with Europe, but he seemed reluctant to take this up. On war crimes he took the view that we should not deter leaders from world hotspots visiting Britain and so seemed to see nothing wrong in giving Tzipi Livni diplomatic immunity. He did not comment on the Jewish National Fund and Iran.

"David told us that he had visited Israel about a month earlier with a University delegation. He had discussions about possible cooperation between Palestinian and British Universities.

"He followed up our lobby with a letter to Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. He asked for the government's view on the suitability of Veolia for public contracts and conveyed our concern that more should be done to ensure that the label 'produce of Israel' is accurately used."

Tours and talks

Remi Kenazi, the dynamic American-Palestinian poet whose work is becoming well-known as an incisive and inspiring call to action on behalf of Palestinians, was warmly welcomed wherever he appeared on his autumn tour with PSC members reporting that he was on brilliant form and the audience was mesmerised.



In a joint meeting between **Newcastle** and **Durham** branches, Remi was preceded by a student from Gaza and the playwright, Peter Mortimer, who provided, with great eloquence and insight, their personal analysis of the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and Lebanon.

Oxford branch organised a wide-ranging visit to the UK by **Mohammed Aruri**, key member of the Federation of Independent Unions in Palestine. One focus was to strengthen the Friendship Association between Faringdon in Oxfordshire and the village of Arura in the West Bank.

Mohammed was welcomed by the Mayor at a reception, spoke at the local Community College and visited an organic farm. As his visit coincided with the national day of protest on 30 November, he spoke at a huge rally in Oxford and at a meeting with Oxford TUC.

At the **National Twinning Conference** in **Liverpool**, attended by 60 delegates from all over the UK, Mohammed stressed the importance of creating and strengthening links between trade unions in the UK and Palestine. In London he participated in the annual lobby of parliament.

Mohammed said he was immensely heartened by the warmth of his reception and the positive response he got from so many different organisations. Plans are now in train to take delegations of young people and trade unionists from Oxfordshire to Palestine in 2012.

Susan Lorenzo of **Machsom Watch** gave an excellent talk to **West Surrey** branch in July followed by many interesting questions. One person asked if she was ever scared when carrying out observations at checkpoints. Her reply was that the settlers scare her, not the army.

Susan believes that she is starting to see a change in attitude from her grandchildren's generation, in that they are becoming more politically aware of the issues surrounding the occupation.

Machsom Watch has produced a powerful documentary, *Kalandia*, which describes in moving detail how the checkpoint at Kalandia has evolved since 2002. West Surrey can provide it for £8 including postage, £5 of which goes to Machsom Watch. Or you can make a larger donation. See www.westsurreypsc.org.uk/shop.

West Surrey also hosted a lucid and powerful presentation by **Gemma Houdley** of **Addameer** on the conditions of Palestinian prisoners. She spoke about arbitrary arrests, discriminatory laws, lack of access for lawyers and families and the difficulties for the staff of NGOs in obtaining entry to the Occupied Territories.

Meetings, events

Along with actions such as marking the Boycott Day of Action with supermarket pickets, members, as ever, also found ways to have some fun. In **Cambridge** the Hanin Palestine Café featured a fascinating talk and beautiful demonstration of Arabic belly dancing in November. Funds were raised for a grass roots Gaza charity and the Amos Trust's Al Ahli Hospital breast cancer appeal.

In the first of what will become an annual event, the **Bristol** Palestine Film Festival got off to a great start with an opening speech by renowned film director and PSC patron, Ken Loach. He spoke of how films of Palestinian life were important because Palestinians did not want to be seen only as victims but as people with families, hopes, aspirations and a life to live like anyone else.



There were screenings of *Hassan Everywhere* and *No Laughing Matter* after which the directors, Andrew Kavanagh and Vanessa Rousselot, took part in a panel discussion. The topics covered

included the inspiration for the films, film making in Palestine and the cultural boycott.

Fundraising drive

Branches across the country have been responding in imaginative ways to the PSC's appeal to raise vitally needed funds (see *PN* Autumn 2011). In **West Surrey**, Debby and Paul hosted a delightful Falafel Evening in which splendid dishes were brought by the many who attended and £172 was donated.

Portsmouth held a fund-raising barbecue in the summer and a pre-Christmas dinner which together raised £314. They also raised money for Medical Aid for Palestinians and other groups.

Ambassador visits Wales



The Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, Professor Manuel Hassassian, was invited to the Senedd in December to meet Welsh Assembly Members. Nine members of Plaid Cymru and two Conservatives attended the meeting, hosted by Rhodri Glyn Thomas.

The Ambassador talked about the urgency of the situation facing the Palestinian people. He referred to the impending eviction of 30,000 West Bank Bedouin from their homes and stressed that the expansionism of the illegal settlements threatened the possibility of a two state solution.

In the evening 70 people crammed into a PSC meeting in **Abergavenny**. After a welcome from Maggie Harris, the Deputy Mayor, Professor Hassassian described the situation faced by the Palestinians under occupation. After a lively question and answer session, Catherine Charrett, a Ph.D. student from Aberystwyth, showed images taken during her recent visit to the West Bank. The Dean of Brecon Cathedral also spoke briefly of his visit to the Holy Land.

Welcome to Palestine

The Welcome to Palestine Initiative is asking people to join them to fly to Tel Aviv on April 15th, 2012, to insist on the rights of Palestinians to receive visitors from abroad.

Manchester is asking PSC branches to endorse and publicise the event. Some people in Manchester have already booked their flights and the plan is that everyone from the North of England travel together from the same airport.

If you are interested email contact@welcometopalestine.info and you will be directed to the Northern coordinator.



From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Foundation, 1947–1950

By Ariella Azoulay

Published by Pluto Press

By Abe Hayeem

The events that led to the violent foundation of the Israeli state are wrapped in layers of mythology and propaganda which are still being promoted and advocated today.

Ariella Azoulay's fascinating book and recent exhibition at the Mosaic Rooms in West London, combining detailed research of the history and politics of the whole period that preceded the Partition of Palestine before 1947 and the succeeding years, lifts the lid off this mythology using photographs mainly from the Haganah archives, hidden for more than six decades.

Through its pioneering methodology of using a "civil imagination" and re-interpretation, it rejects the nationalist narrative that the photographs are meant to portray to the Israeli public and reconstructs the reality of the Nakba that was caused to the Palestinians.

Until today, Israelis have been encouraged to think of what happened to the Palestinians as a "catastrophe from their point of view." Azoulay's intention in revealing the truth of the events hidden by the photographs' original captions, is to lift their "colonial aphasia" – the difficulty in attaching the appropriate vocabulary to the appropriate events, concepts and things – and to create a proper understanding of these events that affected both peoples as a way to formulate a new reality that could bring about a move towards eventual reconciliation.

The UN resolution that created the partition of Palestine in 1947 was vehemently opposed by most of the country's Arab inhabitants who were never consulted and by "not an insignificant number of Jews." The Zionist leadership and its enforcers, the Haganah, were bent on erasure of the Palestinian presence and the physical evidence of their habitation, agriculture and customs.

The Haganah's war crimes included the destruction of hundreds of beautiful villages and towns, reducing them to rubble which the new Jewish immigrants from Europe helped to move, level and use as a base to rebuild new homes.

In a typical photograph, as Azoulay comments, "the official caption that reads 'Beit Sha'an abandoned' doesn't serve to display for us a town abandoned, rather than one whose inhabitants are

to be returned; a town that no longer belongs to those who built it or who until yesterday lived there. It refers to the achievement that created a 'valley that's entirely Jewish'."

The author's commentary, often in elegant, challenging and intriguing prose, that replaces the existing bland and often misleading euphemisms in the captions, exquisitely captures the nightmare of the expulsions, the mood and feelings of the dispossessed and the casual arrogance of the dispossessors. It makes one feel a witness to the events which unfold in these haunting, surrealistic tableaux.

The pictures depict the corralling of the refugees behind barbed wire enclosures, long queues directed out of emptying villages, the buses employed to move them to Jordan, Lebanon and Gaza across newly established lines that once were open land or borders. Then followed the registering of refugees in locations they were allowed to stay but still confined to ghettos; all these were "mechanisms of subordination" and then socialisation carried out with pre-planned ruthlessness.

Azoulay describes the events between 1947 and 1950, and subsequently, as "a civil malfunction – the way citizens relate to the man-made disaster in whose continuing reproduction and preservation they participate." This original book is an indispensable tool to unraveling the dystopia created by the Israeli state and illuminates the way to a new future of justice and hope.



Ariella Azoulay directs the Photo-Lexic project at Tel Aviv University. She is the author of a number of books on photography.

A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East

By James Barr

Published by Simon & Schuster

James Barr's important new book exposes a hitherto hidden aspect of what he calls the "venomous rivalry" between Britain and France in the Middle East during the British Mandate period in Palestine (1920–48). The author describes the jaw-dropping moment when he came across a recently declassified MI5 report from early 1945 showing that Zionist terrorists were receiving support from the French.

The Stern Gang and the Irgun were dedicated to kicking the British out of Palestine. Britain's secret intelligence service, MI6, knew that French officials in Syria and Lebanon had been clandestinely selling arms to the Hagana, a Jewish militia. So at the very time when the British were fighting to liberate France, their allies were secretly supporting Zionist attacks on the British.

The author's meticulous research, including study of extensive French and British diplomatic and other archives, uncovers the core of Anglo-French double-dealing that had existed since the Arab Revolt of 1916–18. The "line in the sand" refers to the carve-up of the Ottomans' Middle Eastern territories between Britain and France, initially by the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. The British were in control of Egypt and thought a mandate for Palestine would

keep the French at arms' length from the Suez Canal. They gave cynical public support to Zionist aspirations to make Palestine a Jewish state but succeeded only in antagonising both the Palestinians and the Zionists (through restrictions on immigration).

The shenanigans engaged in by a rich cast of diplomats,

intelligence operatives and military men are laid bare in vivid detail. In 1941, after the Vichy French regime in Syria and Lebanon had been ousted by a British invasion, the Arabs were angry when the British entrusted their government to the Free French. So to divert attention away from Palestine, the British secretly helped the Syrians and the Lebanese to gain their independence.

The French and the Zionists now both had a motive for revenge against the British. The Zionists were furious that the British were tightly restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine. A perfect storm was about to engulf the British. In addition to supporting Zionist terrorists, the French helped to increase Jewish immigration, thereby playing a major role in the creation of the state of Israel when the mandate limped to an end in 1948.

James Barr deftly illuminates the bleak amorality of the "game of nations." He has the happy knack of presenting important, groundbreaking new historical research in a page-turning and stimulating way. This book should be read by everyone interested in the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict.



Philip Walker

If you did not destroy my home...

Palestinians respond to Israeli occupation

Interviews and observations by Greg Wilkinson

Published by the Arab Educational Institute, Bethlehem

When Greg Wilkinson was serving with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) in 2002 he met a young woman called Hibba, a mother of three, whose husband was on the run and whose home in the old city of Nablus had been blown up, with all her possessions inside, by Israeli soldiers.

He asked her what she would say to an Israeli visitor and she replied: "If you did not destroy my home, I could give you tea."

Greg was struck by how moderate and free of hate her response was and decided to use her words for the title of his book of interviews and pictures (in black and white) of people whose lives are at the interface with the Israeli military occupation



Hibba and her children



Sheerin under arrest, eyes shut by pepper spray, after protest against extension of Wall round village of al-Walajah

of their homeland and who live the reality of "sumud" – to exist is to resist.

A former reporter with Reuters, Greg quit in 1967. He came to think "objective" reporting might be less useful than enabling people to speak for themselves and later became a community educator.

Published by the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem, a Catholic organisation, the book weaves the moving interviews Greg collected, mostly in 2010 but also in 2002, with his narrative journey through life in the West Bank. He connects the stories he heard with stories from other contexts of inequality, exploitation and oppression, not least from his home ground in Wales, and in the process Palestine becomes a mirror to the world.

The book is available for £8, including postage and packing, by post from Greg at 19 Trafalgar Place, Swansea SA2 0BU or phone 01792 455335.

Corporate Complicity in Israel's Occupation

Edited by Asa Winstanley and Frank Barat, with a Foreword by Alice Walker

Published by Pluto Press

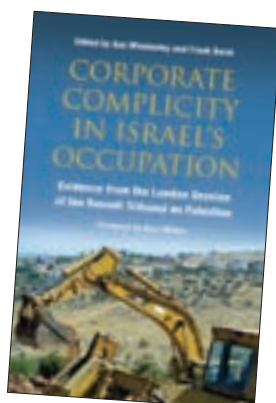
David Cronin

This book is a transcript of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine's session in London in November 2010. It is required reading to understand how some commercial enterprises are accomplices to murder. And I mean that literally.

Caterpillar is probably the first name that springs to mind. We remember the courage of American peace activist Rachel Corrie who was crushed to death by an Israeli soldier driving a Caterpillar bulldozer in 2003. Palestinians killed with the aid of Caterpillar have included Samir al-Sh'obi, his pregnant wife Nabia, their three children, Anas, Azzam and Abdallah, and Samir's father Umar. Their home in the old city of Nablus was attacked in the middle of the night in 2002.

In precise and analytical fashion, one "witness" after another identifies the occupation's profiteers. The evidence draws extensively from the work of Who Profits from the Occupation? — a project set up by the Tel Aviv-based Coalition of Women for Peace

One of the most important messages of this book is that campaigners should not merely take action against products emanating from Israeli settlements. Dalit Baum, a Who Profits? coordinator, explains why a narrow emphasis on such products betrays a fickle grasp of the relationship between settlements and the Israeli economy.



Other witnesses illustrate the strong bonds between political and corporate elites. And the section in the book relating to the arms industry is especially strong. John Hilary from the campaign group War on Want cites data indicating that the EU's governments approved licenses for exporting more than €1 billion (\$1.3 billion) worth of weaponry to Israel between 2003 and 2008.

The same governments have helped the Israeli arms industry to flourish by enthusiastically buying its wares.

The litany of crimes in this book can make for grim reading. Yet an antidote is provided by highlighting instances where activists have directly confronted some of the corporations in the dock.

Salma Karmi-Ayyoub from the Palestinian human rights group Al Haq, meanwhile, shows that it is possible to make an impact by taking lawsuits. She is involved in litigation against Riwal, a Dutch company that has supplied cranes to Israel's wall in the West Bank.

A rousing speech by Stéphane Hessel, the Holocaust survivor and author of the pamphlet *Time for Outrage*, ends the session's proceedings: "In no case, must we allow ourselves to be intimidated by propaganda that is trying to make the struggle for the freedom of the Palestinian people appear to be anti-Semitic," he says. "That word should be banished once and for all from our vocabulary."

A longer version of this review was published by the Electronic Intifada on December 1. David Cronin's book, *Europe's Alliance with Israel: Aiding the Occupation*, is published by Pluto Press.

The Hour of Sunlight: One Palestinian's Journey from Prisoner to Peacemaker

By Sami Al Jundi and Jen Marlowe

Published by Nation Books

Sami Al Jundi and Jen Marlowe have produced an extremely important memoir of lost hopes and destroyed dreams in the years after Oslo when they worked together in Jerusalem on a US-funded programme which brought together extraordinarily idealistic and brave teenagers from Palestine and Israel and forged bonds of great intensity across the divide.

Sami's life experience, which brought him to try the impossible in those years, starts with the story of his parents, a blind couple from one of Palestine's lost villages of 1948, Zakkariya. They successfully brought up a large family in Arab East Jerusalem after the *nakba*.

The teenage life of Sami and his brothers is wonderfully evoked – street games of marbles, boys climbing on forbidden roofs, Hebrew and maths lessons, guiding the blind father to his work place. The gradual politicisation of children like them is traced in their bruising experiences of racism and humiliation by Israeli Jewish boys and then with the 1974 crisis over the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron that led to mass demonstrations and frightening confrontations with soldiers.

Sami became an avid reader and a volunteer road builder for isolated Palestinian camps. But as settlements grew and violence met him everywhere, Sami and his friends were fired into taking action, culminating in making an amateur bomb from matchsticks in his bedroom.

One of his friends died in its explosion in the house while Sami and the other were seriously wounded and ended in Israeli jails. His valuable account of ten years of studying of history, philosophy, literature, and learning how democratic political organisations worked, is a rare glimpse for an English speaker into the experience of Israeli prisons when they were the key political experience for Palestinian resistance. Sami's commitment to a personal role in

forging a different Palestinian future became the foundation of his adult life and grew out of his prison years' experience.

The book's recounting of the 1990s which he spent driving around the West Bank from refugee camp to refugee camp with the children he brought to meet Israeli school children, to desert retreats, trips to Egypt and Jordan and to US summer camps, is a vivid record of the slow strangling of Palestinian society in the post-Oslo years. It is a story recorded many times before but not told elsewhere with the intense, lived, detail of how Sami and his team resisted the logic of closures, new settlements, settler roads, permits etc.

Sami himself, euphoric in the post-Oslo street celebrations in Jerusalem, soon had bad experiences with the in-coming Palestinian authorities. And, to his great sadness, he was gradually shunned in his own community where he was accused of "normalisation" with Israel for his work in Seeds of Peace.

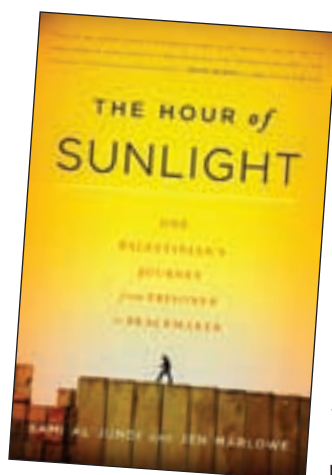
The final chapters of the book tell another sombre tale of how his dream project ended for him. From 2003, Seeds of Peace was gradually taken over by new US-based managers and the entire focus changed to suit the demands of the Israeli Ministry of Education.

The driven, idealistic young team was squeezed out and, by 2006, Sami himself was fired and locked out of his office by Israeli security guards hired by the new managers. He sank into a deep depression before writing this book.

This is a book all foreign aid workers in Israel and Palestine should read for these last shocking chapters, but for everyone interested in 60 years of Palestinian history, Sami's moving story is an unforgettable gift.

Victoria Britain

"For everyone interested in 60 years of Palestinian history, Sami's moving story is an unforgettable gift"



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