



The world says...



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Cover photo: "Free Gaza" written in candles in Bern

Credit: Codepink

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palestine NEWS

A Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) publication. PSC does not necessarily agree with all opinions expressed in the magazine.

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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

Ten years of intifada and solidarity

By Betty Hunter

The triumphant, if delayed, entry of the Viva Palestina/Palestine Solidarity Campaign Gaza Convoy through Rafah has succeeded for the third time since the Israelis' "Operation Cast Lead" in breaking the illegal and inhumane siege of Gaza. This act of solidarity, together with the International Gaza Freedom March, demonstrates how much can be achieved by ordinary people everywhere. It is the huge efforts made by people around the world in the Gaza and boycott campaigns which show the people of Palestine that they are not forgotten.

The refusal of world leaders, including President Obama, to hold the Israeli government to account for its actions, despite the continual settlement building and the Goldstone report cataloguing the war crimes committed in December 2008 and January 2009, contrasts shamefully with the response across the world as people of conscience, seeing the reality of Israel's oppression and aggression, reacted in their millions with demonstrations, student occupations, educational meetings and boycott campaigns.

Last autumn the PSC decided to strengthen its previous support of the Viva Palestina convoys to make participation and building of the convoy a major part of our work for Palestine this winter. Our aim was to give practical help to the people of Gaza, to demonstrate our political support for them and to use the experience to help build a stronger solidarity movement.

Building on the immense work done at the time of the attacks on Gaza, branches and individuals have raised awareness and support while raising money for medical, educational and food aid as well as consciousness (see p26). We hope that the convoy and the reports which the participants bring back will be an inspiration to many more people around Britain to become actively involved in solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people.

Richard Falk, Special Rapporteur to the UN, repeated in December the conclusion which his predecessor John Dugard came to: namely that as world leaders have reneged on their duty to uphold and implement international law it is up to civil society to create movements which will bring change. Falk cited the international breaking of the Gaza siege and the BDS campaign as "the only meaningful significant challenges to Israel's violations of its obligations as the Occupying Power of the Gaza Strip under the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Charter."

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign has always taken seriously its responsibility to build the broadest mainstream movement



in support of justice for the Palestinian people. This means being clear about our objective to change government policy by building a mass movement based upon our political platform of self determination, sovereignty, right of return of the refugees and Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital.

When the second intifada started in September 2000 the PSC was a small grouping of 350 members, some in London and others in the admirable branches which had held steadfast during the difficult years, in Brighton, Durham, Sheffield and Cardiff.

Since then a new era of international solidarity with the Palestinian cause has

begun. PSC members and the elected leadership have worked together to build the current broad, mainstream organisation of almost 4,500 members, over 40 branches and prestigious patrons from all walks of life who use their influence and their experience in promoting our cause. The support of 18 national trade unions and our work with them has resulted in a political shift at the TUC and in the trade union movement similar to the support given to the anti-apartheid movement. The reality of a mass boycott campaign moving from settlement goods to all Israeli goods and taking up divestment and sanctions can be achieved in 2010.

PSC has won this significant support because we are a membership organisation open to all (except racists) with accountability. However we value the work of other campaigning groups or whose supporters are a particular milieu and have worked with many on events and campaigns where this can be done on a principled basis. Over the last nine years we have worked with and promoted the work of faith and community groups such as BMI, JFJFP, Amos Trust, those with very specific political aims such as ICAHD UK, BRICUP, those with party political affiliations and many others. We hope to continue with this unity in the coming year as the situation in Palestine demands absolute commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people.

In Britain it is now possible to challenge the myth of Israeli victimhood previously so entrenched in the public consciousness and PSC has helped create a new awareness of the history of Palestinian oppression and dispossession. The coming year will be one of increased pressure on the Palestinians to accept new borders, land loss and loss of refugee and sovereignty rights. The future of Jerusalem is in jeopardy. PSC has a responsibility to the Palestinian people to build an effective mass solidarity movement and we know that our members and branches will continue to work for that end.

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Amongst the ruins

From Victoria Brittain, Gaza City

The Erez crossing from Israel into Gaza is almost deserted these days, apart from the many soldiers who guard it. In the empty parking lot there's a tent plastered with pictures of Gilad Shalit, manned by keen advocates of a prisoner swap and a few passing diplomats or aid officials.

From the outside, modern terminal on the Israeli side, a long, empty tunnel leads to a turnstile in front of a backdrop of tank tracks, great heaps of sandy earth and the first signs of the destruction left from Operation Cast Lead.

You pass through the Hamas government checkpoint, housed in a small hut where there are few formalities, then start the drive into Gaza City. Then you begin to see how the best agricultural land, in the north of the 26 mile long Strip, has been bulldozed into new contours and the industrial areas flattened — factory after factory, from ice-cream to cement.

In town it seems for a moment almost as it always was — donkey carts, horses, bands of neatly uniformed school children on every street.

But then the thousands of pictures of the destruction, which became so familiar a year ago, leap into life. The catastrophic backdrop against which Gazans live today is visible on every central street. The Legislative Council, the police headquarters, all Ministries (except Finance), the American school and 17 others, Arafat's seaside complex, apartment buildings and home after home, lie in total ruins.

In some places, tons of broken concrete have somehow been hauled away. But there is no machinery to dismantle the blasted multi-storey buildings that tilt dangerously over the streets and no way to remove the live ordnance or the bodies that might lie buried in the wreckage.

We were told that up to 30 children have been wounded or killed by unexploded bombs and doctors say they fear that white phosphorus under the sand can flare up again.

In these ruins lie the hopes and dreams of normal life that Gaza's people so stoically held onto through the disillusion of the post-Oslo years, the factional violence which split the society and the collective punishment of the blockade imposed by Israel, with the shameful acceptance of the US and Europe, after the 2006 election unexpectedly won by Hamas.

Gaza's one and a half million inhabitants, half of whom are children, have been dramatically weakened by the economic blockade which allows enough basic food in through the UN to keep people alive but deprives them of everything else — most importantly, the building materials and equipment to rebuild the homes, schools



and infrastructure shattered in Cast Lead.

As UNRWA director John Ging puts it, "We have run out of words to describe how bad it is here. You don't need a PHD to see how rapidly things are moving in the wrong direction. Besides the humanitarian plight of a society with no economy, 80% aid dependency, undrinkable water, a very poor health environment and so on, the number one priority is that we face the destruction of civil society.

“How can we protect the minds of children from the bewildering injustice they experience?”

“How can we protect the minds of these 750,000 children from the bewildering injustice they experience every day? Only lifting the siege could change the dynamic.”

It is in the schools and kindergartens run by UNRWA that the battle to retain the children's humanity and hope for a different future is waged daily. Three days after Cast Lead the traumatised society sent all its children back to school. They were, and still are, schools with no windows and many with structural damage. But the small children's plays, dance troupes, gymnastics, paintings, and the older children's concentration on exams, are the heroic success stories of UNRWA teachers, legions of volunteers and the families who live for their children.

“These are amazing people,” said Husam El-Nounou, of the Gaza Community Mental Health Project. “Our studies show 99% of people thought they would die in Cast Lead, the same proportion felt unsafe everywhere.

“Seventy four per cent of people had to leave their homes, sometimes more than once. As I closed my door, taking my documents and jewellery, of course I thought of 1948 — would I ever come back? Those days I spent hugging the children all the time, day and night, to try to contain the fear.

“Later some of our staff collapsed under the weight of the terrible stories of the people they were working with. But... the children went back to school. Resilience comes from religion, family, social collective and the emotional, social and financial support from outside. However, the occupation, the siege, the war, were a continuum of events... they have left the whole society utterly traumatised and in a very bad situation.”

One manifestation of that bad situation is the new corrupt false economy of the tunnels. Rafah, on the Egyptian border, has created an economy by which Israel's blockade is partially normalised — in a unique and appalling kind of normality — by the safety valve of the tunnels. At least 127 people have died in the tunnels when they collapsed either under their own weight, or from Israeli bombing, according to one aid agency.

On the streets of Rafah everything is for sale — refrigerators, huge motorbikes, cows, sheep for the Eid festival, petrol, glass for broken windows, every kind of food, clothes, shoes, pharmaceuticals.

And this is not chaos, there is a

Breaking the siege!

The heroic volunteers on the PSC-Viva Palestina convoy finally reached Gaza to be met with a rapturous reception one month after they left London. They survived an arduous, exhausting, sometimes dangerous and frightening ordeal thanks to the actions of the Egyptian authorities which starkly revealed the extent of that country's collusion with Israel's illegal siege of Gaza.

The Egyptians refused to let the convoy make the four hour boat trip from Aqaba to their port of Nuweiba and forced it to travel hundreds of extra kilometers back through Jordan and Syria to Latakia then sail through the Mediterranean to the port of El-Arish.



convoy members staged a protest against the Egyptian government's decision to bar 59 convoy vehicles from setting out for Gaza.

More than ten people were injured, four of them seriously, and dozens were arrested. A Reuters correspondent witnessed the clashes being started by security forces throwing stones at convoy members.

The convoy — the third since Israel's onslaught on Gaza — was made up of nearly 500 people in 220 vehicles, including ambulances, loaded with humanitarian aid such as food, medicines and school equipment worth more than US\$1 million. It left London on December 9 and gathered

made it through the Rafah crossing on January 6, they were met by ecstatic crowds cheering and waving flowers.

Meanwhile 1,360 activists from 43 countries converged on Cairo for the Gaza Freedom March, due to proceed through the Rafah crossing on December 31. But no doubt under pressure from the US, which provided \$1.5 billion in military aid to Egypt last year, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs banned the march.

Egypt is a police state where political gatherings of more than six people are technically illegal. Nevertheless, activists managed to stage numerous protests around the city. Holocaust survivor Hedy Epstein, 85, announced she was beginning a hunger strike until they were allowed into Gaza.

Eventually permission was given for around 100 marchers to enter Gaza with all the humanitarian aid. After a heated debate around 85 chose to go, many of them Palestinians with foreign passports who had never seen members of their family living in Gaza. Around 500 others took part in a mass demo in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

■ See the Al-Jazeera report on the convoy at <http://tinyurl.com/yzwmuro>



The extra miles



Loading the lorries at Latakia

On arrival at the port, 157 convoy members had their passports seized and not returned for several hours. Later that night, Tuesday, January 5, riot police attacked them with water cannon and tear gas after



Swansea members on hunger strike

enthusiastic support along the way, especially in Turkey, before encountering Egyptian intransigence.

While held up in Aqaba dozens of people went on hunger strike to highlight the situation, including PSC members from Swansea. All the difficulties and delays cost convoy members dearly in time and money, but they were determined not to give up their mission to relieve the suffering of Gazans. And when they finally



Driving through mountains. Photo: joti2gaza



Gaza Freedom March in Cairo

logic and unique rules. Much of the merchandise is brought in to order. New cars — Subarus and Mercedes — are on the streets, some brought in cut into four and reassembled.

On both sides of the border some people are getting very rich, and others even poorer than before. Thousands of ordinary Gazans put their savings into the tunnel companies,

desperate with no work and lured by the promise of a good return. But they lost it all in a massive scam in which millions of dollars disappeared. A few of the suspects are now in jail.

"The tunnels are a disaster — they have let Israel off the hook, they have corrupted our sad society," said one Gazan. Young men like this one, stoically tending

what was his father's small garden of pomegranates, clementines, thyme, basil, roses, will not join the exit route which many other young, educated men dream of, sitting in the new coffee shops with their nice new furniture and pictures which have come in through the tunnels and where the illusion of being somewhere else is all that sustains.

Farmers vs bullets

From Eva Bartlett in Gaza

A 16 year old boy was murdered by Israeli soldiers in November while chasing stray dogs with a group of friends in Gaza, a kilometre in from the border with Israel. The boy, Mustafa Mohammed Wadi, was on his way home to Al Bureij refugee camp after taking his family's horse and cart to market in Gaza City.

A 17 year-old was also injured and four other 17 and 18 year-old boys arrested after the soldiers opened machinegun and artillery fire at them, according to Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights which strongly condemned "the continued acts of killing by the IOF in the Gaza Strip, which more than often target children."

Since Israel imposed a border "buffer zone" on fertile agricultural land roughly ten years ago, Israeli bulldozers have continued to raze decades-old olive and fruit trees, tear up crops, farmland, irrigation piping and demolish homes, greenhouses, water wells, cisterns and animal sheds.

Farmers in the "no-go" zone re-built whenever possible, defying the Israeli control and annexation of their land. But in Operation

Cast Lead Israeli warplanes destroyed over 300,000 additional trees, according a UN survey.

They also deliberately targeted water sources and agricultural infrastructure, destroying farmers' means to exist. Between 60,000 and 75,000 dunums (one dunum is 1000 square metres) of Gaza's 175,000 dunums of farmable land were destroyed plus 250 wells and 327 water pumps.

Following the onslaught, Israel expanded the "buffer zone" officially to a 300 metre band of land. But in reality, farmers and civilians are regularly shot at, injured and sometimes killed on land as much as 1.8 km from the border.

As a result of the ongoing siege, plus Cast Lead, almost 95% of the water available to Gazans is contaminated and hence "unfit for human consumption" according to WHO standards, as Amnesty International recently reported.*

Farmers, working either with toxic water sources or delivering water by plastic jugs, wait for the rains in order to salvage some of their crops. Many others have given up working their land.

* *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, October 2009 <http://tinyurl.com/yd46vyq>

Hassan Bassiouni, East Beit Hanoun:

"My brothers and I once had 1500 citrus trees, some destroyed by Israeli shelling and the rest destroyed during the last war on Gaza. It takes \$200 to raise just one tree to bear fruit.

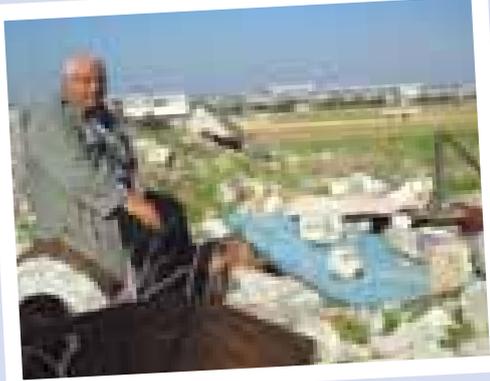
"130 people lived off this land from my family alone, and another 60 workers earned a living from it. If I want to make a new well it will cost \$50,000. But the materials aren't available in Gaza."

Sena and Amar Mhayssy, Shejayee, Eastern Gaza

"Our nine dunums of land in the 'buffer zone' have been bulldozed four times. Every morning the Israelis shoot at us. We have

ten dunums of land over 500m from the border fence. Of that, we had two dunums of olive trees, over 60 years old. They were all bulldozed by the Israeli army.

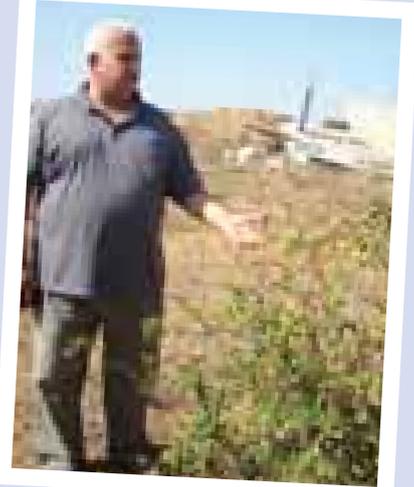
"Now we're growing okra and have re-planted 40 olive trees. We need to water them every three days but our water source was destroyed so we must bring water in containers."



Ali Ahmed Hamad, East Beit Hanoun:

"The Israelis bulldozed my trees, water pump, well and irrigation piping in the last war. We are about 500 metres from the border fence and no vehicles can come to remove the rubble – everyone is afraid of the Israeli soldiers.

"I haven't watered my trees since the war. I used to water them once a week, three to four hours per session. So, because they are dehydrated, the lemons and oranges are miniature."



Ali Zaneen, East Beit Hanoun:

"I've got 50 dunums of land, about 1.5 km from the border. The Israelis completely destroyed my well, the well-house, motor, pump, piping and the land around the well.

"Now, I take water from my neighbour and pay him for the motor's diesel. Before 2000, I'd get 400 tonnes of citrus fruits per year. Now I can't even earn the money I pay for diesel to pump the water."



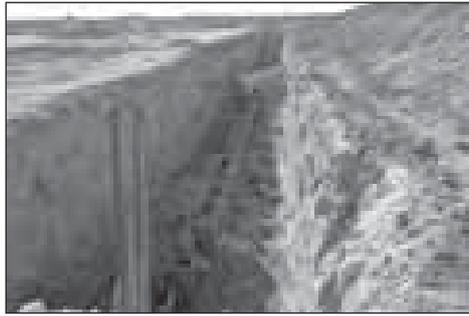
Underground Wall

Egypt has begun constructing a huge metal underground wall along its border with the Gaza Strip with the help of American army engineers who are believed to have designed it, according to a BBC report.

The wall will be 10–11km (6–7 miles) long, will extend 18 metres below the surface and will take 18 months to complete. Made of super-strength steel manufactured in the US, it will be assembled in sections like a jigsaw. Reports say that it is bomb proof and cannot be cut or melted — in other words, it is impenetrable.

The wall is intended to block off the thousands of tunnels which have been Gaza's lifeline since Israel imposed its blockade — supported by the international community — to collectively punish its citizens for electing Hamas in 2006.

Ann Wright, a retired US Army Reserve Colonel and a former US diplomat who resigned in March, 2003, in opposition to the war on Iraq, says that the United States provided the government of Egypt with \$32 million in March, 2009, for



electronic surveillance and other security devices to prevent the movement of food, merchandise and weapons into Gaza.

And she predicts that international efforts to “imprison and starve the people of Gaza into submission so they will throw out the Hamas government” will inevitably be defeated by enterprising Gazans.

“America’s super technology will again be laughed at by the world as young men dedicated to the survival of their people will again outwit technology by digging deeper and most likely penetrating the ‘impenetrable’ in some novel, simple, low-tech way,” she says.

UK wants to change law after Livni arrest warrant

The instant, and shameful, reaction of the UK government to the issue of a warrant for the arrest of Israel's former foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, for war crimes was to promise to try to change the British legal system.

Gordon Brown got on the phone to her to tell her he was “completely opposed” to the warrant and to pledge to work to change the law. Foreign secretary David Miliband issued a statement saying the government was “looking urgently” at ways to change the UK legal system. He was also reported to have rung his Israeli counterpart, the extreme right-winger Avigdor Lieberman, to apologise for the episode.

Livni was a member of Israel's war cabinet during last year's devastating attack and her office declared she remains “proud of all her decisions.” Westminster magistrates' court issued the warrant at the request of lawyers acting for some of the victims after they learned she was due to address the conference of the Jewish National Fund UK in North London in December. However, she had already cancelled her attendance so the warrant was dropped.

Israel reacted with fury and summoned the British ambassador, Tom Phillips, to the foreign ministry in Jerusalem to tell him the row meant that Britain's ability to play

a role in the Middle East peace process had been damaged. Israeli media reported that senior government officials would not visit the UK until Britain addressed the issue.

In a letter to *The Guardian*, Betty Hunter said PSC members were “shocked at reports that the Foreign Office is seeking to avoid its responsibility to uphold international law and bring war criminals to justice. The statement that Israeli leaders must be able to come to Britain... implies meddling with due judicial process.

“The government should rectify this immediately, reaffirm the principles of international law and justice, and take action itself to ensure those responsible for war crimes are brought to justice. And if the government does not act, we are ready and willing to take action.”



Amnesty: The world is failing Gaza

The international community has been accused of betraying the people of Gaza in a report by Amnesty International published one year after Operation Cast Lead which said there has been no effective action to end the Israeli blockade.

Amnesty said that all states, including the UK, have an obligation under international law to stop Israel's policy of collective punishment of Gaza's civilians. The report says that only 41 truckloads of construction materials have been allowed in during the year whereas before the blockade was imposed in 2007, 7,400 truckloads a month were going in.

Amnesty says the international community has not moved beyond “expressions of disapproval and hand-wringing” about Gaza's suffering. In particular, it says the EU should take an international lead to end the blockade.

Over 15,000 homes sustained major damage during Operation Cast Lead, displacing 100,000 Palestinians of whom 20,000 were still homeless in July. Almost 6,500 homes still need either complete rebuilding or major repair, according to the UN's latest estimates.

Read the Amnesty report, ‘Failing Gaza: No rebuilding, no recovery, no more excuses’ here:

www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_20012.pdf

Obama urged to help

Two American senators circulated a letter to Congress in December calling on President Obama to push for measures making it easier for Palestinians, aid workers and journalists to enter and leave Gaza and to address the severe shortages of basic necessities including water, food, fuel and medicine.

House representatives were asked to sign the letter, written by representatives Jim McDermott and Keith Ellison. When *Palestine News* went to press it had not been reported how many had signed the letter.

Another letter was circulated to the American Congress calling on Hillary Clinton to put pressure on the Israeli government to allow students from Gaza to travel to study at West Bank universities, which has been banned since 2000.

The ban ignores an Israeli High Court ruling which said that allowing Gazans to study in the West Bank would likely have “positive humane implications.” For many students, especially young women, studying in the West Bank is their only chance of pursuing their education at all (see the case of Berlanty Azzam, p20).

Netanyahu's freeze — a new bluff

By **Mustafa Barghouti**,
leader of the **Palestinian
National Initiative (PNI)**

Netanyahu's latest attempt at mass deception must be viewed with the contempt it deserves. Since 1967 the Israeli government has used the peace process not for peace but to disguise its progressive colonisation of Palestinian land. Sixteen years after the Oslo Agreements were wrongly signed, legitimising the settlements that force Palestinians to inhabit ghettos in their own land, we have 500,000 settlers instead of 200,000. That is Netanyahu's idea of progress.

The offer of a partial, ten-month freeze aims to restore some credibility to a visibly weakened Obama but for Palestinians there will be no respite. Over these ten months a further 3,000 pre-approved units will be constructed. Public buildings like schools and synagogues are excluded from the "freeze."

In East Jerusalem thousands more Palestinian residents will be forced onto the street as Israeli construction accelerates. Barak and Netanyahu have also made the proviso that settlement heads can authorise more units if they deem it necessary. These ten months will see the fastest rate of illegal constructions yet. After this period Benny Begin, the ultra-right cabinet minister, assures us settlement growth will return to normal, free of restraint.

“We must stop asking for the right to self determination and begin to exercise it”

To restart talks under these circumstances would only serve to legitimise Israel's expansionist policies, repeating the mistake of Oslo. Yet there is the concern that the Palestinian Authority, which has shown little ability to withstand Israeli/US pressure, may be forced back to the table as the gesture Israel now claims it is owed.

We must finally recognise that Israel will never respect its obligations and look for alternatives to a futile peace process. We must stop asking for the right to self determination and begin to exercise it.

The proposal that we should declare an independent Palestinian state without Israeli consent and ask the UN Security Council to recognise it is a noble idea, but will mean nothing without a wide-ranging strategy to underpin it. Such a strategy must make use of our most precious resource against the wealth and military might of Israel — the unique resilience of our population. A people unbowed after 62 years of dispossession and 42 years of brutal oppression must be empowered to take what is theirs by right.

The Palestinian National Initiative advocates a co-ordinated campaign of non-violent resistance throughout the territories. The defiant spirit of “Stop the Wall” campaigns in Bil'in and Ni'llin, where villagers with posters and flags stand tall against the tear gas



and bullets of the IDF, must be harnessed wherever land is taken, property is destroyed and innocent people are arrested or murdered. These campaigns need thousands, not hundreds, to test the resolve of the occupying forces. People of all religions and political sympathies must unite behind a basic and essential demand: the theft of Palestinian land must stop.

Resistance must encompass many and varied forms. Let us defy the regulations that strangle us by building in C Areas, driving on settler roads and rejecting the Israeli taxes imposed on us.

Why should Palestinians in East Jerusalem, already suffering severely, accept to pay higher property tax than anywhere in Israel? Why should we tolerate 800km of Israeli-only roads, with 50–75m “buffer zones” either side of them, that make our farmland off limits? The UN has already validated our right to such resistance, we need only to exercise it. These methods can succeed only with an entire population behind them, as they succeeded in India before.

To best support the popular struggle, we must use our institutions to address our most fundamental needs. A budget that devotes 33% of funding to security, with a pitiful 1% for agriculture and 0.1% for culture, offers little hope of progress. We must plan for a future of self-reliance, building from an education system that presently suffers from nepotism and inability to provide the necessary subsidies. The implementation of a national higher education loan fund, for example, would eradicate many of these difficulties at a stroke and reduce our reliance on foreign aid.

“Internal unity will give strength to the international campaigns”

The establishment of a unified leadership is essential to our long term goals. The divided government plays into Israel's hands, enabling them to deny the existence of a partner for peace and undermining our credibility in the eyes of the world. A sincere reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and the rest of Palestinian parties, combined with the restoration of a transparent, democratic system, will strengthen our sovereignty and national identity.

Internal unity will also give strength to the international campaigns on our behalf. Already the BDS campaign has developed into a staunch ally. We are grateful for the measures taken by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and British trade unions. Now the immediate focus should turn to preventing military trade with Israel, pressuring those who enable Israel's war machine. It will take time to harness support for a wider veto but we must quickly identify and expose those companies that profit from our blood.

But we cannot expect to gain the support we need if the PLO does not make the same commitment. All Palestinians must show their faith in the campaign by officially adopting and promoting the policies of boycott, divestment and sanction.

Without a pro-active strategy Israel will continue to dictate our future. We do not have 18 more years to waste in a false peace process that serves only to weaken us. Nor can we allow the so-called peace process to be a substitute for peace. By that time any hope of a state will have vanished. Netanyahu's fraudulent proposal is a clear message that Israel will not recognise Palestinian sovereignty of its own volition. Affirmative action is the alternative. We must take what will not be given.

Get behind your PC and write!

By Anne Key

I often find myself writing emails of complaint to the BBC and other media outlets about their coverage of the "Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

On 27th December 2009, I sent another one to the BBC, this time about the organisation's persistently subservient attitude when interviewing Mark Regev, the spokesman for the Israeli government.

I complained about how Regev was once again given free reign to "explain" Israel's motives for Operation Cast Lead. Statements such as the Israeli army's attack was on "key Hamas targets" went unchallenged by the interviewer and Regev was not asked to comment on the devastating figures, collated by trusted sources, which reveal the number of civilian deaths and the extent of the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure.

"Why bother to protest?" you may ask. It's because I'm fed up with hearing downright lies being recited parrot-fashion through a medium that is supposed to adhere to the strictest standards of journalism. An organisation that is supposed to educate the public on "the important issues of the day." An organisation that is supposed to be wholly independent from outside intervention.

How come we never hear a BBC interviewer have the courage to hold Israel accountable for its illegal actions? How come that those who do dare to speak out are demoted for showing "bias" in favour of the Palestinians? What is the BBC so afraid of?

I have yet to receive a response to my complaint. In an effort to keep the ball rolling, I contacted Pulse, a collaborative political weblog featuring work by a variety of writers, activists and academics based in five continents, which published my email. (<http://tinyurl.com/ya5dv7n>)

I believe it is crucial that we continually monitor the mass media and that we challenge the press whenever we find factually inaccurate information. We must beat the Zionists and their countless supporters at their own game.

Please, if you have five minutes to spare, get behind your PC and write. Better still, why not form a group made up of readers and writers? Copy in editor@pulsemedia.org when you write. Letter-writing may seem like a trivial thing to do, but if we collectively take a stand, we might just make a difference. We owe it to the people of Palestine.

Anne Key is a member of the Durham branch of PSC

Criminalising protest

In its intensifying campaign of repression of Palestinian grassroots mobilisation against the Wall and settlements, Israel arrested and detained **Jamal Juma'**, co-ordinator of Stop the Wall, in December.

Juma' is the highest profile arrest in a wave of detentions clearly aimed at criminalising human rights defenders struggling peacefully for freedom from oppression. With this strategy, Israel aims to weaken Palestinian civil society and its influence on political decision making at the national and international level.

Juma', 47, is a founding member of a number of Palestinian ngos and civil society networks and he dedicates his life to empowering local communities to defend their human rights. He is widely respected for his work and his articles and interviews have been published round the world, making him a highly visible figure.

Israeli security first summoned Juma' for interrogation at midnight of December 15. Hours later, they brought him back to his home in handcuffs while soldiers searched his house. Since then he has been detained and barred from speaking to a lawyer or his family. No explanation has been given for his arrest.

His arrest follows the detention of scores of local activists from villages affected by the Wall and of internationally known human rights defenders such as **Mohammad Othman** and **Abdallah Abu Rahmah**.

Othman, from Jayyous, was arrested when returning from promoting the BDS campaign on a speaking tour in Norway. Despite being held mostly in solitary confinement and subjected to lengthy interrogation sessions, the Israeli authorities could find nothing to charge him with so passed an administrative detention order against him. Abdallah Abu Rahmah, a leading figure in the nonviolent struggle against



Jamal Juma'

the Wall in Bil'in, was taken from his home in the middle of the night a week before Jamal was jailed.

A mass campaign to demand the release of these civil resistance leaders is being organised through petitions, demonstrations, letter writing and phone calling.

Recommended actions include urging the UK representatives in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to advocate for the immediate release of the activists, protesting to the Israeli Embassy in London and contacting the media nationally and locally.

The PSC is backing a letter from the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign to Baroness Ashton, the new High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, asking her to raise the issue of the arrests with the Israeli authorities and to ensure that this infringement of human rights carries consequences in terms of EU-Israel (non-)cooperation.

You can find pro-forma letters and follow the progress of the campaign at www.stophthewall.org

Blogs: <http://freejamaljuma.wordpress.com/>
<http://freemohammadothman.wordpress.com/>

Facebook: Free the Anti-Wall Prisoners

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/wallprisoners>

Unequal Before the Law

Israel's Deputy State Prosecutor, Shai Nitzan, rejected an appeal against the decision not to investigate Border Police officers who filmed themselves on their mobile phones beating Palestinians in East Jerusalem in 2007 and 2008.

A letter written on Nitzan's behalf stated that the reason for the decision was that "the beating in the case was extremely slight and did not cause any actual damage."

Michael Sfard, legal adviser to the Yesh Din human rights group which filed the appeal, replied: "Your position demonstrates unprecedented tolerance of abuse of people in custody by a person of authority, through the use of violence and humiliation."

Who profits from the occupation?

By Chris Cox

Passing through an Israeli checkpoint today is supposed to be a sanitised experience. Inside modern buildings, the security screening process is carried out in corridors containing small rooms whose walls are made of unidirectional glass — allowing unseen guards to issue instructions to Palestinians via a microphone. “Examinees” are told to unpack their belongings which are then inspected while the individual moves into another room to pass through a computerised scanner. When the system works smoothly, there is no direct human contact between the Palestinian and the security officer.

These are the new “demilitarised” checkpoints which are increasingly being manned by private Israeli security firms rather than IDF soldiers. The project of demilitarisation — which is another word for privatisation — began in 2006 and is being carried out at 48 checkpoints defined by the Israeli government as “the final checkpoints before entering Israel.” Several of these are on the Palestinian side of the Green Line along the route of the Wall, leading many to believe they are planned as permanent, privately-run border crossings.

The government’s stated aim of the project is “to reduce the friction existing at the crossing points today and to increase the level of service, without decreasing the level of security screening. The checkpoints will be defined as official border crossings



The “sanitized” Checkpoint 300 (Gilo) Bethlehem.
Photo: Barbara Walshe

and will look just like terminals do elsewhere in the world.”

Reports indicate that there is still plenty of “friction” at the checkpoints. Testimonies from Palestinians and Israeli human rights activists say that anyone deemed suspicious-looking can be put in a confinement room for several hours or more. In some cases up to 20 people have been crammed into a room two metres square with no air conditioning or windows. In June *Haaretz* reported that a privately managed West Bank checkpoint was not allowing Palestinians to pass through with large water bottles and some food items. In December the Israeli media reported that an Israeli man trying to enter Gaza was shot and killed by private security guards.

Private checkpoints worse

Private security is one of the fastest growing industries in Israel and private firms often now guard settlements and construction sites in the Occupied Territories. Many military responsibilities are also being outsourced to Israeli firms, following recommendations first made by the Israeli government in 1994.

“How we deal with these private security firms is a huge concern for civil society in Israel,” Dr Dalit Baum of the University of Haifa told *Palestine News*. “It is apparent that checkpoints manned by private firms are actually worse than military ones because there is nowhere you can complain to about the behaviour of the guards.”

Dr Baum runs the Who Profits from the Occupation? project along with members of Coalition of Women for Peace. It exposes Israeli and international companies profiting from the occupation and has found that the answer to its own question is — just about every Israeli does. Its website, www.whoprofits.org, already has data on over 400 firms.

Speaking at the London School of Economics in November, Baum said that the face of the occupation is changing. “There are more and more private interests

involved. This makes things very difficult because it means that the occupation is being supported and sustained by more areas of Israeli society.”

As well as security and surveillance sectors, Who Profits focuses on the “settlement industry” which covers companies producing goods in settlements and the more significant role played by companies providing services to the settlements and those involved in construction projects. It exposes just how intimately the Israeli economy is linked with the occupation.

This intensification of economic interests in the occupation has also shifted public Israeli attitudes. “In previous years people were arguing about the solution to the conflict but now there seems to be a sense that there’s no solution and that things can just continue as they are.”

People now talk about “managing” the conflict, rather than solving it. “This is horrifying because, on the ground, managing the conflict means the continuing intensification of the repression of Palestinians — it means that the Israeli public doesn’t feel like it has any incentive for change.”

The unmanned occupation

The drive towards privatising military services is part of radical changes that have been taking place across the Israeli economy since 2000. Before the dot-com crash, Israel was a global leader in high-tech exports, selling computer chips and IT to the United States and Britain. Following the crash, which had a calamitous effect on Israel’s economy, the Israeli government turned its attentions to homeland security which was a booming global market in the wake of 9/11.

After major injections of government cash, Israel was dominating international security markets by 2004. According to the Israel Export Institute (IEI), Israel currently has 600 security and homeland security companies with over 300 exporting to international markets. These exports exceeded \$3bn in 2005, making the sector central to the Israeli economy. “For a small country,” notes the IEI’s latest report, “Israel has conceived, developed, and manufactured military projects greatly disproportionate to its size.” The report adds that these efforts have placed Israel

“at the forefront of the global security and homeland security industries.”

One such disproportionate military project is the Hermes drone. In 2003, Elbit Systems received a \$47m contract from the Israeli Ministry of Defence to supply Hermes 450s to the IDF. Writing in *The Nation* last year, Marc Garlasco and Darryl Li catalogued the destruction wreaked by the Hermes 450 during Operation Cast Lead. They reported how the unmanned drone hovers at 18,000 feet and was used to kill hundreds of Palestinians. The *Guardian* reported in March that Israel is now developing a version of the drone for the British military.

“For a small country, Israel has conceived, developed, and manufactured military projects greatly disproportionate to its size.”

Other examples include the unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) which patrol the borders of Gaza and the West Bank. Elbit Systems manufactures the Guardium vehicle, which is equipped with machine guns and operated by soldiers in a remote command centre.

Israel is now seen as “the go-to country for antiterrorism strategies,” according to *Forbes* magazine, and trades on its reputation as being an expert in the field of high-surveillance and remote combat. At a massive annual homeland security conference in Israel in 2006, Steven Grossman, head of aviation at Oakland international airport in California, told reporters he was there because “the Israelis are legendary for their security”.

Losing the peace incentive

The spectacular performance of Israel’s homeland security companies is common knowledge on stock markets but its implications for Palestine are rarely discussed. In her book, *The Shock Doctrine*, the American journalist Naomi Klein noted: “It is not a coincidence that the Israeli state’s decision to put ‘counterterrorism’ at the centre of its export economy has coincided precisely with its abandonment of peace negotiations, as well as a clear strategy to frame its conflict with the Palestinians not as a battle against a nationalist movement with specific goals for land and rights but rather as part of the global War on Terror — one against illogical, fanatical, forces bent only on destruction.”

Israel’s economy grew dramatically throughout 2006 following the election



An Israeli army divisional HQ

of Hamas in the Gaza Strip which it then declared “a hostile entity.” Meanwhile the Palestinian economy contracted by between 10 and 15 per cent. Baum told Palestine News that the Israeli business community has now lost interest in reaching a settlement with the Palestinians. During the time of the Oslo Accords, Israeli companies believed that continuing conflict was holding them back from international markets. But with such huge profits now being generated from homeland security — and going

unchecked by continuing violence — there is now an understanding that this agreement is no longer necessary.

Attacking private interests

But Baum said that while these developments are deeply troubling, they also provide an entry point for activists. The Who Profits project is currently providing information to 26 campaigns against firms profiting from the occupation. Exposing these interests can have huge impact. Following a campaign aided by information from Who Profits, the Belgian-French financial group Dexia announced in June it will no longer finance Israeli settlements in Palestine through its Israeli branch, Dexia Israel.

“As activists we can open up a gap between these economic interests and other interests — be they military, religious or nationalistic,” said Baum. “It’s essential that we do this, because we don’t have many tools in our possession right now. Targeting these companies is our entry point.”

She added: “We’re trying to show the Israeli people that these companies are not acting in their interests.”



The IDF Ground Forces Command plans to double the number of unmanned D9 armoured bulldozers, known as the “Black Thunder,” in its arsenal.

The Black Thunder looks like the regular D9 bulldozer, which the Israelis use to knock down Palestinians’ homes, but is equipped with a number of cameras that transmit images to the operator who controls the vehicle with a wireless remote control.

It was widely used to destroy utterly homes, farms, wells and

infrastructure which had already been damaged by bombs — some dropped from unmanned “drone” aircraft — during Operation Cast Lead.

It “performed remarkably,” one officer in Ground Forces Command told the *Jerusalem Post* in March. He claimed the D9 was used for “clearing roads of mines and explosive devices” even though there have never been any reports that the Gaza Strip — the most densely populated area on earth — has ever been lain with mines or IEDs.

Sheikh Jarrah — ethnic cleansing in action

The tense situation in the East Jerusalem district of Sheikh Jarrah seriously escalated in December when Jerusalem Magistrates Court deemed a one-room extension built ten years ago onto the family home of Rivka Al-Kurd illegal and gave permission to extremist Israeli settlers to take possession of it.

The house is opposite that of the Al-Ghawi family who were evicted in August, along with the Hanoun family, from houses built for them by UNRWA in 1956 (see Palestine News, Autumn 09). Altogether the evictions threaten to make 300 Palestinians homeless so that Jewish settlements can be established around the Old City to secure it for any future peace agreement.



The Al-Kurd family and settlers

A recent report by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)* said that

in five neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, 377 new housing units for settlers are under construction, while plans for a further 444 units are awaiting approval.

They are: Sheikh Jarrah: 31 units approved, 290 waiting approval; Mount of Olives: 280 under construction, 104 waiting; Silwan: 20 waiting; South East Jerusalem: 66 under construction; Old City: 30 waiting.

* Third Quarterly Report: *Violations of the Right to Adequate Housing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. Download it at <http://tinyurl.com/ybqx3ts>

Armageddon, straight ahead

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, director of Rabbis for Human Rights, writes passionately about the day settlers moved into the Al-Kurds' house

It is 1:30 am and I just came back from Sheikh Jarrah. I know that my words will not succeed in conveying the horror of what I saw or the dread in my heart.

All day the tension was palpable, sometimes breaking into physical violence. Palestinians, backed by Israelis and internationals, huddled around fires as Arab music reminded settlers inside their new acquisition just where they were.

Nasser Ghawi, on his fourth month in a pitiful lean to across the street from his home, asked me if there was any hope left. I could only mouth some meaningless platitudes about looking for new legal options.

All of a sudden a group of settlers and their supporters comes to the Ghawi home to congratulate those within amidst cat calls and insults hurled by Palestinians seeking an outlet for their seething anger and pain. Everybody jumps to their feet and the gate is slammed shut. I am amazed that no fights break out.

The taunts get louder and more vicious. Some spit at the settlers. In similar

situations I have urged Palestinians to calm down, but here I felt that I had no right and that it would do no good.

The most terrifying indication that we were at the brink of conflagration was that the police did not wade violently into the Palestinians or arrest people for having the wrong look on their faces, as so often happens in Sheikh Jarrah. I even saw one of the officers snarl at one of the settlers and tell him that he dare not touch anybody. This was an indication that the police also knew that they were sitting on top of a volcano about to blow.

Every few minutes a new group of settlers comes to look, to smile. At one point a settler inside comes demanding that the Palestinians turn off the blaring music. I remind him of the Jewish teaching, "You don't rebuke somebody in the midst of their sorrow."

He goes back in as Palestinians shout and rattle the windows. One woman addresses at length the Druze officer guarding the door to the captured room. I can only imagine what she is saying. What is said in Hebrew again and again is, "This is your system of law?" I can only answer what I learned years ago, "Not everything that is 'legal' is just."

The worst of it is that I don't know what to suggest. Israel's democracy has failed up until now. International pressure has failed, the activist community has failed.

What is the big deal here? Why so worried about one more incident of helpless Palestinian fury directed at an Israeli injustice? Why should the political echelons and the courts shake themselves out of their torpor? Can't the international community

feel satisfied with itself over its "strong protest?"

Because this is Jerusalem. I see a Palestinian anger burning so strong that neither the threat of arrest nor the use of overwhelming force is a deterrent. That means a third intifada. That means that the world community forcing Israel into a settlement freeze (perhaps) may be too little too late.

I see Jerusalem in flames — I see Armageddon straight ahead. I know that tens will answer our call to demonstrate but we need thousands. The diplomats will write urgent reports, but we need effective pressure. The human rights community will say that this is terrible, but we need them to come out of their homes.

The politicians will say that it is a matter for the courts and that they can't interfere, while the courts will say that the law takes precedence over their personal conscience. The police will prepare emergency plans. If nothing changes, Jerusalem will burn.



Triumphant settlers on the Al-Ghawis' roof

An unfair fight

Hatem Abu Ahmad, a lawyer representing some of the Sheikh Jarrah families, describes the frustrating struggle in the courts

It is incredibly hard to fight through the Israeli legal system. We are up against a number of very well-organised and well-supported settler organisations who have links with the Israeli Land Administration.

And we are fighting in a court system where 70% of the judges in Jerusalem are settlers who believe that East Jerusalem should be part of the undivided capital of Israel.

The Jewish organisations, the Sephardic Community Committee and the Knesset Yisrael Committee, started trying to take the Sheikh Jarrah houses soon after the Six Day War, saying they bought the land in the 19th century because there is a grave of a famous rabbi in the area.

In 1972, without even producing a map, they registered themselves as the owners with the Israeli Land Administration. Then they sat quiet and did nothing for ten years, which I believe was a deliberate plan as it meant that time ran out for Palestinians to challenge the registration.

In fact, the Palestinians — who had been forced out of the homes they owned in West Jerusalem in 1948 — should have been registered as the landowners three years after the houses were built under an agreement between UNRWA and the Jordanian government. We don't know why the Jordanians did not do this and when we asked them for assistance, they refused because of their alliance with Israel.

In 1982 the Jewish organisations began a legal action for eviction. The Palestinians were at the time represented by a Jewish lawyer, Itzhak Toussia-Cohen, who did not contest the ownership — we cannot understand why. Instead, there was a court agreement that gave the Palestinians protected tenancy.

They never got a rent demand, which I believe was another deliberate plan. The Jewish organisations knew that Palestinians would not like to pay them money as that would be recognising them.

So in 1989 the settler organisations filed claims in another court over the non-payment of rent and demanded evictions. By then the families had Palestinian lawyers who tried to contest the ownership but all claims were rejected by the court. Since



Cartoon: Carlos Latuff

then we have been trying to use other laws to prevent the evictions.

I was asked by one of the sons of the Al Kurds, who became the first family to be evicted last year (no relation to the latest family), to get involved. I didn't hesitate. As a Palestinian I am acutely aware of the need to protect these families as my own family's land was expropriated in 1956. My grandfather could do nothing to prevent it and we lost hundred of dunums.

“We found proof that the documents the Jewish organisations used to register the land were forgeries”

It is a bad feeling when you see others facing the same destiny — losing their land without being helped by people like me who went to law school and have the knowledge to assist their people. I come from a very poor family; my parents never went to school and ten of us lived in one room, but I have never seen anyone as poor as these families who did not have enough money for food, never mind lawyers.

They are simple people who did not know how to fight. When I see a ten day old baby thrown out on the street, I cannot accept it. I

squeeze my mind all the time to try to think of ways to help them.

In March we went back to court with a very powerful document. The Turkish government were so angry about Israel's attack on Gaza that they opened up their Ottoman empire records for the first time and we found proof that the documents the Jewish organisations used to register the land were forgeries. The Israeli court rejected our claim, saying it was too late, and went ahead with the evictions

based on the forgeries.

I won one victory in 2007 when I got an eviction order against settlers who had taken over one of the Al Kurd son's house, but the police refused to carry it out. We went to the High Court but because the procedures had been started in the father's name, who had since died, we were not allowed to continue

This is an unfair fight. The battle over Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah is not a legal issue, it is political. Now the Sephardic Community Committee has “sold” the land to a private company, Nahalat Shimon International, which is registered off-shore — we cannot even find out where. This means that even if we succeed with our claims, the families may never get the land. It is all incredibly calculating.

We will launch a new strategy soon, and we are appealing to the world to help us with money for court fees and with support. I think it will be harder for the Israeli legal system to deal with this case the way they have done so far if they know the world is watching closely.

Hatem Abu Ahmad, born in Nazareth, is a former boxing champion in Israel. He works as a commercial lawyer for an Israeli law firm and acts for the Sheikh Jarrah families pro bono. Donations, earmarked to be used for the families' court fees, can be sent via the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Christian soft Zionism

By Bernard Kilroy

Leaving aside avowed Christian Zionists, is there a “soft Zionism” among ordinary Christians? Catholic activists and members of Friends of Sabeel UK like myself, are convinced that Christians could be far more influential.

Pilgrims stream to the “Holy Land” yet so many seem to think it a blessing to close their consciousness to the “painful details” of the political “conflict” — the religious experience takes priority. All this contributes to the widespread idea that each of the two “sides” has an equally valid narrative.

In his autobiography, *Blood Brothers*, the indomitable Archbishop Chacour of Haifa recorded his shock in 1967 to see how many Christians in Jerusalem had turned out to cheer the Israeli victory parade. Elsewhere in the book he says: “Rather than face the Zionists, the bishops and archbishops seemed more interested in preserving their shrines — the ‘holy stones’ — and did not speak out.” Still true?

The Catholic Church is not entirely at one. At a special mass in Westminster Cathedral in September, Archbishop Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, spoke about the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians “completely at the mercy of the Israeli military.” His words that Pope Benedict’s visit to Israel earlier in 2009 “had not yet borne fruit” could be coded criticism either that the Pope should never have courted the Israeli government for a visit (after Gaza) or that he could have been far more outspoken when there.

The Vatican is conscious of suggestions that before and during WWII the then Pope Pius XII could have done more to prevent the extermination of Jews. So it is not surprising that (German) Pope Benedict welcomed the opportunity to pray at the Jerusalem Holocaust memorial.

However, imagine the international impact had the Pope also regretted the Naqba, especially because Yad Vashem is so close to the site of the Deir Yassin 1948 massacre of Palestinians. That would surely have been more in tune with the Assisi peace message and the Gospels. Or would it have endangered the status of the Church in the “Holy Land” and its property whose tax exemption Israel is re-considering?

Possible Vatican compromises of the 1930s can be compounded by its appeasement now. One historical injustice cannot be atoned for by silence about a present one. Ironically, Archbishop Sambi, Vatican papal nuncio to Israel until 2005, has said that the Church’s position was easier before the Vatican recognised Israel in 1993 than after.¹

Yes, Pope Benedict offered sympathy to Palestinians, showed respect to Muslims



The Tablet's view — two equally stubborn sides

and said Mass in the shadow of the Wall. But Vatican commitment to human rights was needed — to challenge all Christians. AND a corresponding commitment by bishops to ensure that “Holy Land” pilgrims from their dioceses are made aware of the “living stones” of Palestine, where the Via Dolorosa is around you if only you can open your pious eyelids. That’s merely equivalent to concerned tourism, which the Vatican’s Office for Migrants encourages.

“No one would believe from *The Tablet's* pages that the issue is a disproportionate struggle”

A case in point is the British Roman Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, which can be a prophetic voice in political matters. Around the 50th anniversary of 1948, it carried articles by campaigners for Palestinian justice like Marc Ellis (US Jew) and Ghada Karmi (UK Palestinian) and regular reports by Trevor Mostyn.

Under a new editor and chair there has been a shift; the 60th anniversary in 2008 was marked only by an article regretting a resurgence of anti-semitism — shocking, yes, but hardly appropriate for the date.

In a steady trickle of articles and editorials in *The Tablet* in the year since, Gaza included, the impression has been given by soft Zionists of a “conflict” between

“the two sides” of Israelis and Palestinians who each need to learn to compromise for the sake of a peaceful solution.

One cover cartoon featured two goats with horns locked in stubborn stalemate. No one would believe from *The Tablet's* pages that the issue is a disproportionate struggle between the nearly powerless oppressed and an almost infinitely powerful coloniser. Or that there are Jews of conscience inside and outside Israel campaigning for Palestinians. True, recently it has increased its coverage but only by focusing on the shrinking remnant of Palestinian Christians, as if that were the issue.

Alas, such bias reflects what many Catholics think — probably reinforced by more conscious shame now about Christian (particularly Catholic) treatment of Jews across the centuries, which needs reconciliation. Already we have underlying bonds from shared Scripture, morality and modes of worship. Also, Zionism’s attachment to the land of Israel has affinities with historicist attachments within Christianity, say for “the psalms of David” or the Exodus of Moses. Yet if Jesus were asked, wouldn’t He reply: “Ditch your false piety, listen to the prophetic needs of now?”

1 www.zenit.org/article-21042?l=english

Palestinian Christians call for boycott

Christian Palestinian leaders released a historical **Kairos Palestine Document** in December, unambiguously urging faith-based organisations to adopt BDS and calling on all churches “to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.”

Kairos is an ancient Greek term meaning the right or opportune moment. The Kairos Palestine Document is inspired by liberation theology, especially in South Africa where a similar document was issued at a crucial time in the struggle against apartheid.

Signed by 16 religious leaders and backed by a score of organisations, the Document is intended to explore a “morally sound” way out of the “dead end” reached in the Palestinian tragedy, “in which human beings are destroyed.”

See the full text of the Kairos Palestine Document at <http://tinyurl.com/ycrnqgp>

Workers' rights in the Jordan Valley

By Chris Cox

In the Jordan Valley, Palestinians from the city of Jericho and its surrounding villages are faced with a brutal choice. They do not want to support the Israeli occupation but working on settlement farms is often the only employment available. This leaves them exposed to exploitation and abuse by Israeli employers and their subcontractors who openly flout employment laws.

There are around 30 mostly agricultural settlements in the Jericho area and the Jordan Valley which include 1,400 acres of date palm groves. The dates make a significant contribution to the Jordan Valley's 500m NIS of agricultural exports each year. In 2006 the Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'Tselem) reported that Israel had "de facto annexed the Jordan Valley."

The Israeli date groves employ around 7,000 Palestinian workers. This number grows between July and October and reaches at least 20,000 workers during date and grape picking seasons — some estimates put this figure at 30,000. Among these workers are women and sometimes minors.

Less than minimum wage

The workers labour in hard conditions for low wages. Eight-hour days are rewarded with 55 NIS (\$15) at the most, which violates the 2007 Israeli minimum wage law. Israel is required by international humanitarian law to ensure the rights and safety of Palestinian workers, just as the state protects Israeli workers. But the reality is that Palestinians work under dangerous conditions with no provisions made for their safety.

A film, *Bitter Dates*, produced by the Israeli NGO Kav La'Oved which fights for the rights of disadvantaged workers employed in Israel and the OPTs, reveals the human cost of this apartheid system of applying employment law. The film, made with help from UNISON, shows cranes lifting workers to the tops of date trees which reach up to 65 feet. The men balance precariously on crane birds' nests while they shake dates into crates.

According to one worker, the crane operators have no licenses. During busy periods workers are left up in the trees for hours, climbing from tree to tree themselves. Despite the clearly dangerous heights, workers are not given safety harnesses or helmets. Some grow tired or dizzy and fall.

Workers have no insurance, so falling means not just physical injury but serious financial difficulties. Israeli law states that employees are entitled to medical treatment for work-related



PHOTO: AMIR TERKEL

injuries, but the film shows that this is not being observed.

No compensation for injury

Bashir Darawsha, a former grove worker, describes an incident where five workers picking dates in a tree fell eight metres to the ground after a crane broke. "Blood flowed everywhere," he says. "My left leg was broken." Following basic treatment at a nearby hospital, Darawsha was dumped by his employers and has been left struggling to provide for his family and his daughter at university. Darawsha says both the Israeli farms and their Arab contractors know these accidents are happening. "If they had cared [about the workers], they wouldn't have fallen," he says.

Another anonymous worker says he stopped working in the date trees after a co-worker fell and lost four teeth. He paid for his own treatment, which cost 4,000 dinars. Another fell on his face and was subsequently fired and left with a \$6,000 bill for dental treatment. "Who is supposed to compensate him?" he asks. "He went to work to provide for this family, not to pay for dental treatment." Since these

accidents, many Palestinian workers stopped working on the trees, though this doesn't mean they have found employment elsewhere.

One anonymous worker says that during the picking season, trees are sprayed with a thinning spray that creates dust. "It's dangerous," he says. "The dust enters your body. Your skin is damaged, there are rashes and allergies. Sometimes we have masks and sometimes we don't."

Settlement areas are no man's land

During the film Hani Ben-Israel, an advisor at Kav La'Oved, says that there is currently no enforcement whatsoever of Israeli labour and working safety laws. "The importance of state inspections of the employment of workers in these fields is enormous. But nothing is being done."

Ben-Israel adds: "The settlement areas are no man's land. The employers can have people working any way they want. They can leave them in the trees for hours. They can have them working with pesticides without protective clothing. The workers have no option to resist."

In August Kav La'Oved filed a complaint with the Israeli authorities, citing minimum wage and work safety violations in the Jordan valley settlements. Its appeals have gone unanswered.

- Watch the film *Bitter Dates* on YouTube: <http://tinyurl.com/yzlhvvy>
- Kav La'Oved is a nonprofit NGO committed to protecting the rights of disadvantaged workers employed in Israel and the Occupied Territories. www.kavlaoved.org.il

Homestay holidays — a great way to visit

By Polly Basak

When the winter sun was warm enough in the mornings, I used to sit under the lemon tree outside the house where I was staying in Beit Sahour and eat a delicious breakfast of fresh bread with houmous and olive oil. In the evenings my landlady, Abeer Rishmawi, would invite me to join her family next door for a meal of a Palestinian speciality like maqlubeh with a range of Middle Eastern salads.

Abeer and her husband, Fadi, lived with their three teenagers and ten-year-old daughter, Gina, and Fadi's eighty-year-old mother, Milia, and rented out their five spare rooms in the adjacent old stone house to international travellers.

I was fortunate enough to stay there for three months when I worked as a volunteer in the nearby Dheisheh Refugee Camp. It was an ideal location, just by Shepherds' Fields where the angels are said to have visited the shepherds to foretell the birth of Jesus. The town also includes Bir al-Syrah, the well said to have been dug by Jacob and later used by the Virgin Mary. And Bethlehem, with its many significant religious sites, is only a twenty minute walk from Beit Sahour.

Homestay holidays are an excellent way for tourists to see a country, especially if they are interested in getting to know the inhabitants, and for local people to earn some extra cash. Homeowners with spare rooms register with an organisation and advertise their accommodation on their website.

The potential for Palestinians to benefit is obvious, both in terms of earning money and making contacts with the outside world from their open air prison. But, while many Israeli homeowners are registered on several homestay websites, only a tiny number of Palestinians are included.

The lack of a Palestinian state is the first obstacle, reinforced by the internet. Virtually all travel websites list Israel in their country options while very few include Palestine. This means that people browsing the web for potential destinations will rarely consider staying in the West Bank, even if their itinerary takes them into the area.

I decided to test this bias by contacting some of the online companies that could potentially benefit Palestinian tourism. Most of them never responded, such as www.tours.com which lists only non-Palestinian companies running tours to Bethlehem.

The only one to reply was Homestay (www.homestayweb.com), a company offering family accommodation around the world. Since I contacted them, Homestay has now added "Occupied Palestinian Territory" to their country list.

A similar company, www.HostATourist.com, failed to reply. Their website says they have Palestinian members but a search under "Palestinian Territory" yielded nothing. Only when I searched under "Bethlehem" did I track down their sole Palestinian member.

The tourism industry has been in steep decline since the second intifada began in 2000 but it has been hit even harder in the wake of Israel's war on Gaza. The Rishmawi family have had only a handful of visitors this year because people are afraid to come.

Fred Schlomka, director of "Tours in English" which arranges tours in Israel and the West Bank, describes some of the other obstacles in the way of the industry. "Israeli tour guides are not permitted inside Area A and Palestinian guides, except for a select few, are not permitted to enter Israel. The Israeli tourism industry steers people away from the West Bank. A typical two-week tour



The Rishmawi family

with an Israeli company will have, at best, a few hours in Bethlehem. All hotel stays are inside the Israeli envelope.

"As a people under occupation, there is only so much that the Palestinian Authority and tourism industry organisations can do. There needs to be a well-funded PR campaign targeted at potential visitors, extolling the wonderful scenery, historical and religious sites and the warm and hospitable Palestinian people."

George Rishmawi, coordinator for the Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies which aims to create links between Palestinian and international people by organising tours, agreed. "Any tour that is arranged in Israel keeps any money made from that trip in Israel even if they visit the West Bank. In Israel there are always warnings stating you should not go to the West Bank. This scares people into thinking it will be dangerous if they are alone."

In addition, structural imbalances are gradually strangling Palestine's tourist economy. "There are only 41 tour guides in Palestine compared to over 5000 in Israel. The checkpoints and zoning makes travelling difficult or you need special permits to go to places. For example, the Herodian mountain, although in the West Bank, is in an Israeli-controlled area where Palestinians are prohibited to go.

"Now, with the expansion of settlements there are so many prohibited areas. Even hiking in a group can be hard because you get hassle from settlers."

I sent the Homestay and HostATourist links to the Rishmawi family in the hope that, if they join these sites, it might generate interest from potential tourists with a genuine desire to see the West Bank and to experience the warm hospitality offered by Palestinians in some of the world's most historic places.

Some online companies that specialise in travel and work in the West Bank are:

Alternative Tourism Group — www.atg.ps
www.sirajcenter.org
www.toursinenglish.com
www.palestinesummer.org
www.palestinehotels.com

The exodus myth debunked

By Raymond Deane

When poet Mahmoud Darwish published his poem, “A Soldier Dreaming of White Lilies” in 1967, he was accused of “collaboration with the Zionist enemy” for his sympathetic depiction of an Israeli soldier’s remorse. Forty years later that soldier has identified himself as the historian Shlomo Sand and has translated his remorse into a book that has become a bestseller in Israel and France, where the award of the Prix Aujourd’hui has made the author something of a TV star.

Translator Yael Lotan has chosen to follow the example of her French predecessors by telescoping the interrogative Hebrew title *When and How Was the Jewish People Invented?* into *The Invention of the Jewish People*, thus misleadingly and provocatively implying that such inventiveness was unique to the Jews. However, Sand makes it clear that worldwide in the 19th century “[t]he national project was... a fully conscious one... It was a simultaneous process of imagination, invention, and actual self-creation.”

“Zionist ideology drove the project of Jewish nationalism by turning Judaism ‘into something hermetic, like the German Volk’”

Sand traces how Zionist ideology drove the project of Jewish nationalism by turning Judaism “into something hermetic, like the German *Volk*.” He argues that history and biology were enlisted “to bind together the frangible secular Jewish identity.” Together, these engendered an “ethno-nationalist historiography” which was typified by the mid-19th century German Jewish historian, Heinrich Graetz, and his friend, Moses Hess, who “needed a good deal of racial theory to dream up the Jewish people.”

According to Sand, the destruction by the Romans of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD left the indigenous Jewish population of Judea and Samaria in place. “[T]he Romans never deported entire peoples. It did not pay to uproot



Shlomo Sand

the people of the land, the cultivators of produce, the taxpayers.” Furthermore, at that time there were already Jewish communities numbering up to four million in Persia, Egypt, Asia Minor and elsewhere. Palestine’s status as the unique “ancestral homeland” of the Jews collapses together with the myth of David and Solomon’s imposing kingdom.

Against the ethno-biological concept of a Jewish people — a “race” — whose linear descendants returned from exile to (re-) found today’s Israel, Sand posits a religious community proliferating throughout and beyond the Mediterranean region by means of proselytism and conversion. He offers a detailed rebuttal of the conventional wisdom which maintains that “Judaism was never a proselytising religion,” a view disseminated by historian Martin Goodman and others.

Most importantly, he concentrates attention on Khazaria, that “Strange Empire” that flourished in the Caspian region between the seventh and tenth centuries AD. By the eighth century the Khazars had adopted Hebrew as their sacred and written tongue, and “[a]t some stage between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth centuries, the[y]... adopted Jewish monotheism.”

Sand speculates that this conversion was calculated to save them from absorption into either the Roman or the

Islamic empires. The Khazars, he contends, engendered those Askhenazi Jews of central and eastern Europe who would later invent the myths of Zionism to justify their colonisation of Palestine, a land to which they had no “ethnic” connection.

So if the exile was a myth — fomented, Sand writes, by the Christian church as an image of divine punishment (The Wandering Jew) — what happened to the indigenous Jews? Sand’s answer: they converted to Islam and survive as today’s disinherited Palestinians. This seemingly radical thesis was once shared by, among others, David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, who in 1918 still believed that (in Sand’s words) “the ancient Judean peasants converted to Islam... for material reasons... Indeed, by clinging to their soil they remained loyal to their homeland.”

Ultimately, the case against the Jewish state cannot be based on an unseemly tussle for genetic primacy but on a discourse of fundamental political and human rights. Sand turns toward such a discussion in the final chapter, describing it as the *raison d’être* of *The Invention of the Jewish People*.

Today’s Israel is not a democracy but a “liberal ethnocracy” that assumes its “growing and strengthening” Arab minority “will always accept its exclusion from the political and cultural heart.” Ultimately we may see “an uprising in the Arab Galilee, followed by iron-fisted repression,” which would constitute “a turning-point for the existence of Israel” in the region. Hence, Sand states that the ideal solution would be the creation of a democratic binational state.

Sadly, Sand hastily dismisses this “ideal project.” In terms all too drearily reminiscent of Zionist apologetics, he states that to “ask the Jewish Israeli people, after such a long and bloody conflict, and in view of the tragedy experienced by many of its immigrant founders in the twentieth century, to become overnight a minority in its own state may not be the smartest thing to do.”

Instead, he falls back on a sequence of rhetorical questions: “[h]ow many Jews would be willing to forgo the privileges they enjoy in the Zionist state?... will anyone dare to repeal the Law of Return...? To what extent is Jewish Israeli society willing to discard the... image of the ‘chosen people,’ and to cease... excluding the ‘other’ from its midst?”

cont. on p18

Lessons in citizenship

John Yandell discovers an invaluable resource for schools

As a subject, Citizenship is a recent arrival in English schools, a product of the present government. Those who believe that the function of schooling is merely to deliver the basics of literacy and numeracy, or perhaps to separate academic sheep from goats, tend to regard the newcomer with some suspicion. For others, though, the very existence of Citizenship within the statutory school curriculum promises a more capacious concept of what education is for — a recognition that it is about the development of social beings and even, perhaps, an understanding that politics belongs in the classroom.

Exploring Palestine through Citizenship, the online pack of materials sponsored jointly by PSC and CAABU which is available to download for free from the PSC website, provides a wonderfully rich array of resources and cleverly designed lessons which can be used to realise the goals of Citizenship education.

The approach that is adopted throughout is one that promotes active and collaborative learning. Through role play and other engaging and challenging activities, students are encouraged not simply to find out more about Palestine but also to analyse different sources, to consider the perspectives that inform the materials with which they are presented and to engage in discussion and debate.

The sequences of the 20 lessons that are envisaged in the pack thus position the learners not so much as citizens-to-be — adults in waiting, as it were — but rather as citizens-already, human beings capable of taking an interest in complex questions and making reasoned, ethically-informed decisions about these problems.

The pack covers a wide range of issues, from the position of Palestinian refugees and the debate over the right to return to the relationship between the occupation and the economic position of the Palestinian people,

and hence to questions of trade and the ethical responsibilities of consumers in this country.

More impressive than the range, however, is the care that has been taken to render the complex issues accessible to school students, including those without any prior knowledge of the history of Palestine-Israel, without oversimplifying these issues.

Though the pack has been designed with the Citizenship curriculum in mind, the resources and lesson plans have much wider applicability. There is plenty here to interest teachers of Art, History, Geography, English and Media Studies too.

“It is hard to think of a better way of introducing students to the outrage that is the Wall”

The unit of work on maps is exemplary. It is, of course, a truism that the history of the Palestinian people, of the Nakba and of the last sixty years, can be told through a series of maps. What Naira Antoun and Monica Brady, the pack's authors, have done is to juxtapose pro-Palestinian and Zionist maps. They direct our attention to the effects not only of labelling and captioning but also of colour and shading as means whereby the interests of the cartographer are promoted.

The sequence of maps across time thus opens up both the history of the region and important questions about perspective and propaganda: whose truth does a map reveal? For school students to be able to see maps as constructed, as products of human agency — and hence of particular interests — seems to me to be a significant intellectual achievement in itself.

It is worth emphasising, too, the quantity and quality of the images in the pack — images that would lend themselves to



all sorts of other uses in the classroom, apart from those envisaged by the pack's creators.

Two units, in particular, grabbed my attention, in both cases because of the arresting nature of the visual content. The sequence of lessons on graffiti and the Wall presents work by Banksy, which might be familiar to many readers, but also much else besides — work by local artists and others. It is hard to imagine a classroom where these slides would not excite lively discussion about the status and purposes of graffiti, about representation and about audience. Equally, it is hard to think of a better way than this of introducing students to the outrage that is the Wall.

I am ashamed to admit that I was completely ignorant of an artist whose work forms the subject of another unit in the pack, the cartoonist Naji Al-Ali. His art is quite extraordinary — bitingly funny, unbearably sad, and suffused with a political anger that burns on behalf of the Palestinian people. His trademark character, Handala, the barefoot boy whose face we never see and through whom the world is mediated, makes these very grown-up cartoons instantly accessible to the youngest reader. I can't think of a better way of spending a lesson than in reading and talking about these images.

John Yandell is a Lecturer in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London

■ The pack can be downloaded from the home page of www.palestinecampaign.org

(cont. from previous page)

What is behind this sorry post-Zionist anti-climax to a book that seemed to presage a heady anti-Zionist conclusion? In an interview Sand admitted that he “waited until [he] was a full professor” before publishing the book, adding that there “is a price to be paid in Israeli academia for expressing views of this sort.” In providing the premises for radical conclusions without either drawing or excluding those conclusions, Sand has the best of both

worlds with few if any consequences.

Ultimately, Shlomo Sand is a little like Moses, unable to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. The journey so far, however, is instructive, and very stylishly



accomplished; one hopes that the “soldier dreaming of white lilies” may eventually be emboldened to complete it.

Raymond Deane is a composer and political activist (www.raymonddeane.com). This review was published by the *Electronic Intifada*, 22 October, 2009

“The Invention of the Jewish People” by Shlomo Sand, published by Verso

Firefighters learn and relax

By Kevin Brown

Eight firefighters from Nablus spent four weeks training in Scotland and North West England on a visit organised by the Fire Brigades Union and at the invitation of the Scottish government.

The visit, mostly funded by donation and sponsorship, followed several trips by FBU officials to the West Bank where they learned that Nablus firefighters were severely handicapped by lack of equipment and training.

At their request the firefighters' training covered road traffic accidents, compartment fires, urban search and rescue, fire investigations and a "Train the Trainers" course designed to equip them to pass on their knowledge.

The firefighters also fitted in some relaxation, enjoying trips to the Scottish Parliament, the STUC General Council, the STUC Women's Conference and the FBU national school. They were also hosted by Dundee City Council, the Lord Mayors of Manchester and Bolton, watched football matches at Celtic Park and Tannadice (Dundee) and visited Manchester United football ground.

They finished off with two days sightseeing in London including a visit to the Houses of Parliament where they met Jeremy Corbyn MP. However, the aspects of their trip which left them humbled, if not speechless, were the visits to the



various Palestine support groups; whether Friends of Palestine in Dundee, Liverpool and Manchester or when coming upon the Glasgow Palestine Human Rights Campaign stall. It was when speaking to people at these venues that the strength and depth of support was there for all to see.

So what they took back with them

to Nablus — along with new fire and rescue techniques, copious training manuals and armfuls of gifts — was a clear understanding that, amongst many ordinary people at least, the struggle for justice for the Palestinian people has widespread support here in the UK.

Shams Eddin Abu-Ghazaleh, head of the administrative unit of Nablus Fire Department, said: "It was a golden opportunity for us to benefit from the experience of British firefighters and trainers. We were so pleased to be there, to explore the beauty of British cities, learn about the culture and to feel all this hospitality and kindness of the British officials and people. We wish to thank everyone who worked hard to achieve this project."

Kevin Brown is North West Regional Secretary of the FBU



Trade union links

By Nick Crook

Soon after the historic TUC vote for boycotting Israeli settlement goods I took part in a small delegation organised by the TUC to meet the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions. The General Secretary of the PGFTU, Shaher Sae'd, expressed the Federation's support for the TUC decision which came at the same time as the Palestinian Authority has sought to enforce its own ban on settlement produce.

The main purpose of the visit was to monitor the progress in implementing a series of PGFTU capacity building projects that are being supported by the TUC and its affiliates, in particular my own union, UNISON, and PCS. We took part in a training session in Nablus for PGFTU

activists and discussed further support that British trade unions could provide.

The PGFTU also raised with us the issue of employment conditions in the Israeli settlements and industrial zones inside the West Bank (see p 15).

The British government is one of the major funders of the Palestinian Authority and we were able to facilitate the first meeting between the PGFTU and the East Jerusalem based staff of the Department for International Development. This was particularly important because the PA is the largest single employer in the West Bank with approximately 150,000 staff and international donors are putting the PA under pressure to cut both staff numbers and the public pension system.

Public employment is vital in the West Bank as the domestic economy has been destroyed by the Occupation —

unemployment is 30–40% and 60% of people live below the poverty line. The salaries and pensions paid out by the PA support a far larger number of people than just their direct employees. We were pleased therefore that the DfID officials have agreed to meet the PGFTU on a regular basis to discuss these and other issues.

Each time I go to Palestine I am surprised and inspired by the strength and vitality of the civil society, including the trade union movement. The British trade union movement, through the solidarity they show to their sister unions in Palestine, will continue to build a mass solidarity movement in the UK.

Nick Crook is International Officer at UNISON and a member of the PSC Trade Union Advisory Committee.

• campus watch

By Sharen Green

Student **Berlanty Azzam**, 22, was detained at a checkpoint, handcuffed, blindfolded and forcibly expelled to the Gaza Strip in October just two months before she completed her four-year business degree at **Bethlehem University** because her ID card listed a Gaza address.

At a High Court hearing in December the Israeli army said Berlanty had been living illegally in the West Bank since 2005 but they presented no evidence to support this claim. Despite this, the High Court refused to allow her to return to finish her degree.

Berlanty's was the sixth known forced return to Gaza of Palestinians stopped at the "Container" checkpoint between Bethlehem and Abu Dis within ten days, according to the Israeli human rights group, Gisha. Israel has also been preventing family reunifications in the West Bank for Palestinians with relatives living in Gaza, in effect forcing people to relocate to the Strip.

The steps are part of an Israeli policy of treating Gaza and the West Bank as two separate entities even though the 1993 Oslo agreement stipulates they should be treated as one territorial unit.

Berlanty had done everything she could to change her address while she was studying but all her applications had been summarily rejected. She had been told that Israel, which controls the Palestinian population registry, refuses to register changes in address from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank.

Following the High Court decision, she said: "I am very disappointed and I don't understand why Israel is preventing me from continuing my studies. They don't claim that my return poses a security risk and studying at a Palestinian university is my right and the right of every Palestinian student."

In the late 1990s, about 1,000 students from the Gaza Strip studied in the West Bank but since 2000 Israel has enforced a sweeping ban on them. In 2007 the High Court ruled this ban should not apply "in cases that would have positive humanitarian implications." However, to the best of Gisha's knowledge, Israel has not issued a single entry permit since the judgement.



Berlanty Azzam at the Eretz crossing to Gaza

McCarthy-style witch hunt

Right-wing groups in Israel want to create a climate of fear among left-wing scholars at Israeli universities by emulating the McCarthyite "witch-hunt" tactics of a US academic monitoring group, Israeli professors have warned.

The watchdog groups IsraCampus and Israel Academia Monitor have been alerting the universities' external donors, mostly US Jews, to what they describe as "subversive" professors as a way of pressuring university administrations to curb or even fire faculty staff who are critical of Israeli policies, it is claimed.

Politics professor David Newman at **Ben Gurion University** in southern Israel said: "I have no hesitation in calling this a McCarthyite campaign. What they are doing is very dangerous."

IsraCampus recently placed an advertisement in an official diary issued to students at **Haifa University** urging them to visit its website to see a "rogues' gallery" of 100 Israeli scholars the group deems an "academic fifth column."

"The goal is to transform our students into spies in the classroom to gather information and intimidate us," a senior

Israeli lecturer said. "It's a model of 'policing' faculty staff that has been very successful in stifling academic freedom in the US."

Both Israel Academia Monitor, established in 2004, and the later IsraCampus, model themselves on Campus Watch, a US organisation founded by Daniel Pipes, an academic closely identified with the US neo-conservative movement. Campus Watch has been widely accused of intimidating US scholars who have expressed views critical of US and Israeli policies in the Middle East.

The advertisement in the Haifa students' diary warned that a number of their professors "openly support terrorist attacks against Jews, initiate an international boycott of Israel, exploit their status in the classroom for anti-Israeli incitement and anti-Zionist brainwashing, collaborate with known anti-Semites... who publicly call for Israel's destruction."

Publication of the advert was supported by the head of Haifa's student union, Felix Koritney. "Students... need to know who their lecturers are, and if there are lecturers who oppose the state of Israel, it is important to publish their names," he said.

Academics refused entry

British brothers **Jameel and Luay Zayed**, who were refused entry into Israel in September when on their way to visit their Palestinian Israeli grandparents (see *Palestine News*, Autumn 2009), have learned that their ban has been extended to 2015.

Jameel, a chemistry PhD student at **Cambridge University**, said: "This totally throws away the research collaboration between ourselves at the University of Cambridge with the head of the chemistry department at **Tel Aviv University**."

The news came via an email from Meital Volkovich at the Israeli Consulate in London. Jameel said he and his brother and his PhD supervisor were in "total shock" at the result.

An American academic, was also refused entry to the West Bank to return to her post at a Palestinian university in September. **Rima Merriman**, assistant professor at the **Arab American University of Jenin (AAUJ)**, was interrogated by the Israeli authorities about her Palestinian heritage on her return from Jordan and was told she had "broken the law."

She says: "Internationals employed by Palestinian universities are deliberately issued the kind of visa that puts us in a de facto illegal status. It's even stamped with 'not permitted to work.' Alternatively, we are denied entry at the border on the basis that we do not have a work permit yet, in a Kafkaesque twist, there is no mechanism by which we can get a work permit."

A colleague at the AAUJ, an English-language instructor from Ireland was also refused entry on August 23 when she tried to return to the West Bank.

Support for Palestinians

After a vote by the students, **Sussex Students' Union** became the first in the UK to implement a full boycott of Israeli goods as part of the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign.

The **London School of Economics** elected **Palestinian Othman Sakallah** as Honorary President of its students' union — in spite of the fact that he has not been allowed to leave Gaza to take up his place to study for his Master's degree. LSE activists said his election would uphold the values of a right to education for all and the protection of human intellect and dignity.

A new **Palestine Studies Centre** has been set up at the **University of Exeter**. It will be part of the university's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS) and directed by historian Professor Ian Pappe.

BDS: a key strategy

A watershed in the growth of the global BDS movement was achieved in 2009, according to the newsletter of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) issued on the first day of the new year.

The onslaught on Gaza galvanised groups around the world and the Goldstone report, and the media attention given to it, “moved the terms of international solidarity with Palestine into a new plane, where calling for BDS is no longer considered ‘unrealistic’ or ‘counterproductive.’ BDS is emerging more strongly than ever as a key morally sound and politically realistic strategy...”

In Palestine, the BDS National Committee (BNC), established in April 2008 and representing major sectors of Palestinian society in the OPT, inside Israel and in exile, has become the principal anchor of the global BDS movement while the PACBI website is now a valuable source of information, averaging 750,000 unique visits per year. (See the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/yf4fqxt>)

Credit cut to settlements

A momentous breakthrough came in December when the parent bank of **Dexia Bank**, owned by French and Belgian interests, cut off credit to councils in Israeli settlements. The move reportedly left council leaders in shock.

The Dexia Group in 2001 bought the Israeli Municipality Treasure Bank and established Dexia Israel. Last summer Dexia signed an agreement with the Finance Ministry to set up a \$70 million line of credit for improving the financial structure of the councils.

But the company was already coming under intense pressure from the boycott campaign, “Israel colonises, Dexia finances.” Its shareholders raised the issue of the settlements at the company annual meeting in Brussels last March. However, Dexia has rejected demands to stop lending money to Jerusalem.

Divestment from Africa-Israel

Another significant move came when the second-largest Dutch pension fund, **PFZW**, joined an already impressive group of investors that have divested from Africa-Israel which is involved in the construction of settlements.

The BDS campaign against the company began to bite at the same time as the global financial crisis and forced its owner, diamond mogul **Lev Leviev**, to sell 20 percent of his shares in the company. In November, the Israeli business magazine, *Globes Online*, reported that the Israeli Bank Hapoalim, Leviev’s largest creditor, made a provision of \$78.8 million for doubtful debt (debts a creditor does not expect to be paid off) related to Africa-Israel. In addition, **Memorand Management Ltd**, the private company owned by Leviev, owes Bank Hapoalim \$525.5 million.

Africa-Israel’s problems began when the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) refused to accept Leviev’s donations in

The call for BDS has finally reached Israeli public opinion and the “**Boycott from Within**” movement is gaining momentum. Journalist Michel Warschawski, founder of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Israel, wrote that the “fact that there is an (even small) Israeli voice to support the international BDS campaign makes a lot of difference, and... helps to disarm the infamous accusation of Anti-Semitism raised by the Israeli propaganda machine against everyone who dares to criticise the colonial policies of the Jewish State.”

Rebutting criticisms of BDS by Uri Avnery (founder of Gush Shalom), Warschawski wrote that BDS was “in fact expressing the true and long-term interests of the Israeli people.” He said



Protestors at Leviev's New York jewellery store

June 2008. In 2009 the British government decided not to move its embassy to the company’s Kirya Tower in Tel Aviv and **BlackRock**, one of the world’s largest investment management firms, divested from the company in response to pressure from Scandinavian investors.

BlackRock was joined by the **US Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association College Retirement Equities Fund, Swedish Investeringsforeningen Sydinvest, Swedish AP1** pension fund and now **Dutch PFZW** (formerly known as PGGM).

Shir Hever, a political economy researcher at the Alternative Information Center (AIC), argued that the boycott movement played a key role in damaging Africa-Israel. In an article published by AIC in September, Hever wrote that the boycott “destroyed Africa-Israel’s image along with its fortunes because investors were wary of lending money to a company beset by protest and facing possible litigation for crimes committed in the [Occupied Palestinian Territory].”

Co-ordinated European action

The first fully coordinated BDS campaign in Europe targeted **Carmel-Agrexco**, the main Israeli exporter of agricultural produce, in November. Actions inside or in front of the “Maisons du Languedoc-Roussillon” in Milan, Brussels and London protested against the decision of the Languedoc-Roussillon regional council to allow Carmel-Agrexco to set up its major import terminal at Sete, near Montpellier in southern France.

Omar Barghouti, founding member of PACBI, commented: “By coordinating this campaign across several European countries, BDS activists in France, Italy, the UK and Belgium (more countries are joining soon!) have reached a higher level of effectiveness and public awareness in Europe than seen before.”

that boycott and sanctions would eventually pressure the Israeli people “to understand that occupation and colonisation have a price, that violating the international rules may... make the State of Israel a pariah country...”

Once the BDS campaign was initiated by a coalition of Palestinian political and social movements, he said no Israeli supporter “can, decently, turn his back on that campaign after having claimed for years that ‘armed struggle is not the way’... On the contrary, we have all together to join ‘Boycott from Within’ in order to provide an Israeli backup to that Palestinian initiative. It is the minimum we can do, it is the minimum we should do.”

Read the whole article at <http://tinyurl.com/ylycv3vn>

Palestinians urge boycott

A misleading article by Leon Symons in the *Jewish Chronicle* in November stated that Palestine's equivalent of the TUC, the PGFTU, "told a delegation of British trade unionists that they are not interested in general boycotts of Israel."

This was never the position, according to Shafer Saed, general secretary of the PGFTU, who issued the statement: "The PGFTU adopts and supports the national Palestinian policy to boycott all products from the Israeli colonies/settlements, although this boycott may harm also the Palestinian workers."

"Furthermore we would like to underline that it is the free will of all organisations to take decisions of boycotting Israel or not."

Meanwhile the Palestinian Authority for the first time called on Arab countries to cancel their business ties with Veolia and Alstom, the two French companies involved in the construction of the Jerusalem light railway. Saudi Arabia has contracts worth billions of dollars with Alstom to build a railway to Mecca, as well as deals to construct power plants.

The chairman of President Mahmoud Abbas' office, Dr. Rafiq Husseini, made the call at a press conference organised by the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) in November. Also at the press conference were Jerusalem Mufti, Mohammad Hussein, and Orthodox Archbishop, Attallah Hanna, both of whom supported the requested boycott.

Husseini lambasted those Arab countries continuing to work with the two companies, accusing them of "not fulfilling their duties." Using softer wording, the BNC issued a statement saying it "strongly urges Arab governments to practically translate their consistent verbal support for Palestinian rights in Jerusalem into action, at least by refusing to deal on a business-as-usual basis with companies implicated in violation of international law and Palestinian rights."

Eye on the web

- Every year the United Nations General Assembly votes on a two-state solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Like every other year, the vote this year was 164 nations in favour, 7 against (Australia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, United States) and 4 abstentions. Here is the text of the resolution: <http://tinyurl.com/yzpjq8p>

- Palestine Monitor has assembled eye witness accounts, photographs and analysis to present a detailed account of the causes and consequences of Israel's brutal assault on Gaza in "Palestine's Guernica." <http://tinyurl.com/yIpmzw3>

Some highlights on YouTube –

- Watch brave activists breaching the wall in Ni'lin to celebrate 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. <http://tinyurl.com/y88scwy>

- Twenty-two activists tried to put Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert under citizens' arrest while he was giving a speech to the World Affairs Council in San Francisco on 22 October. <http://tinyurl.com/ygu53ej>

- A short film details the ideas behind the Free Gaza Movement and the kinds of action and witnessing International Solidarity Movement and Free Gaza activists have undertaken in Gaza in the past year, including accompanying farmers and fishermen who come under unprovoked Israeli attack. <http://tinyurl.com/yxrg7r>



Teaching the liberation struggle

By Karma Nabulsi

A three year research programme into teaching the political history of the Palestinian liberation struggle has just been launched. It will pioneer extensive collaboration between Oxford University and universities in the Arab world, including the OPTs.

The project, "Teaching Contemporary Palestinian Political History: Setting a Collaborative Research Agenda and Building Capacity," was initiated under the UK Middle East Partnership Scheme and is sponsored by the British Academy. It will involve scholars from An-Najah (Nablus), the three universities in Gaza and the Lebanese University (Beirut).

It builds both teaching and research capacities in the political history of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Among the questions to be investigated are: the sources required for teaching this subject, the research methods to be used in gathering these sources, and the conceptual paradigms and analytical frameworks most suitable for introducing these sources to university-level students.

The focus is on the pivotal three decade period that began with the establishment of the PLO in 1964 and ended with the signing of the Oslo Peace agreements in 1993. Four principal challenges confront scholars working on this period – the sources are fragmented and dispersed, the field is dominated by the study of political elites while other important themes are neglected, much of the available literature fails to account for the historical simultaneity of political activity in Gaza, the West



Bank, Lebanon, Jordan, and in refugee communities, and finally there is a failure to consider Palestinian political history within the context of its wider revolutionary and anti-colonial history.

To address these challenges, the programme begins with a survey of archival and documentary material, culminating in a comprehensive bibliography in both English and Arabic. In the second year the focus will be on oral history approaches and techniques. The programme will explore best practices from the oral histories of other liberation movements, working with institutions in South Africa and elsewhere, and establish a collaborative oral history database.

In the final year, the workshops will examine useful methodologies and approaches for both gathering and teaching political history of this kind and provide a website of sources and tools for both teachers and students.

The programme draws upon the experience of scholars exploring similar questions in other parts of the world. These include the pioneering South Africa Democracy and Education Trust (SADET), as well as scholars who contributed to the British Academy-sponsored programme, "Republicans without Republics in 19th century Europe," a four year network, directed by Karma Nabulsi, which explored underground republican movements, their practices, philosophy and ideology.

The programme between the universities began this November 2009 and will finish in the autumn of 2012. Six workshops and three video conferences will be held in Oxford, Nablus, Gaza and Beirut over three years. Visit the programme's website at www.rwrp.org.uk

Karma Nabulsi, Politics Fellow and Lecturer in International Relations at Oxford University, is Director of the British end of the project and a patron of PSC

In Brief

GET LOWKEY IN THE CHARTS

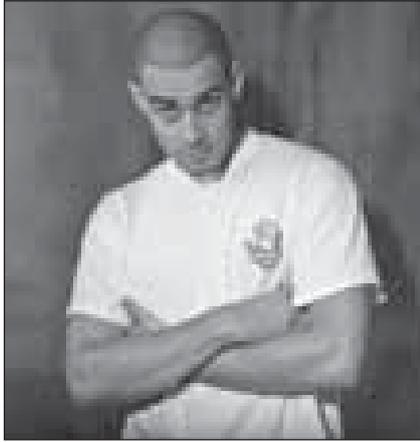
An internet campaign has been launched to propel Lowkey's powerful rap, "Long Live Palestine, Long Live Gaza," just released as a single, into the charts. Ten thousand downloads will do it.

The idea came from the success of the campaign to stop X-factor winner Joe McElderry from gaining the Christmas number one slot, mainly in order to annoy the otherwise all-powerful Simon Cowell. Half a million people downloaded "Killing in the Name" by Rage Against the Machine to make it number one instead.

Poet and rap artist Lowkey, who recently became a patron of PSC, sparked tremendous applause when he performed "Long Live Palestine" at the Gaza protest rally in London in January last year and has continued to inspire audiences with its mix of clever, forceful words and pulsating rhythm ever since.

He says: "I am attempting to speak up for the unheard, those who need a voice the most. People who don't have access to basic necessities we take for granted like clean water, let alone access to a microphone and recording studio."

You can listen to the single on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/bdu2d5>



DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD IN ISRAEL

Bernard Kilroy writes: Ever since I discovered that the Jewish National Fund's dinner at Windsor Castle in April 2008 contributed to the Israel Youth Award (affiliated to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award), I have been trying without success to find out the extent of participation by Palestinian Israelis who form some 20% of Israel's population.

The IYA is funded by the UK Pears Foundation and claims to reach out to Israel's Arabs. And the DofE's Trustee, HRH The Earl of Wessex, while presenting the IYA's awards in 2007 praised its work. However, unlike the parent DofE Award, which publishes its impressive statistics of minority ethnic or other vulnerable youngsters taking part, the IYA has not been able to supply me with substantiated statistics.

The IYA's website — all in Hebrew or English — is silent about measures of its Arab reach. Enquiries to Palestinian groups working with young people or human rights in Israel have failed to supply me with any information ("don't know about it...", "too busy to investigate...", "foregone conclusion..."). Is the huge potential of this initiative, which could be comparable to the Barenboim Orchestra, being under-used or diverted? DofE International Award Association please answer!

Comments to: bernard.kilroy@gmx.net

NO POWER FOR PALESTINIANS

The IDF and police removed two electricity pylons in November which had been erected by the villagers of At-Tuwani in the South Hebron hills who are trying to get connected to the electrical grid in the nearest city, Yatta.

This was not long after Tony Blair, the Quartet's special Middle East envoy, visited At-Tuwani and assured residents that the Israeli authorities had given oral permission for the electrical construction work. But his words have proved empty.

The IDF and the District Co-ordinating Office have been disrupting the work, arresting construction workers and confiscating materials since May without presenting any written orders saying the work cannot go ahead.

At-Tuwani's problem is that it is in Area C, which covers nearly 60% of the West Bank. A new UNOCHA Special Focus report, "Restricting Space: The Planning Regime Applied by Israel in Area C of the West Bank,"* examines how Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in some 70% of Area C while in the remaining 30% a range of restrictions virtually eliminate the possibility of obtaining a building permit.

The 1995 Interim Agreement called for the gradual transfer of power and responsibility in the sphere of planning and zoning in Area C to move from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) to the Palestinian Authority (PA) but this transfer was never implemented. As a result, though the arrangements set up in the Interim Agreement were intended to last no longer than 1999, ten years later, any kind of construction in Area C, including animal sheds and infrastructure funded by charities, still requires the approval of the ICA, which is under the authority of the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

The report says: "The consequences of the current regime are wide-ranging and extend to the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank."



Meanwhile, in October, the IDF bulldozed 1.5 acres of Palestinian agricultural land near Beit Ommar in order to build two large electricity towers for settlements. The towers are part of a string which have been constructed on a path between Gush Etzion, near Bethlehem, and Kyriat Arba in Hebron, the two largest settlements in the Southern West Bank.

This has renewed local residents' fears that the Israelis intend to connect them by carrying out a long-reported plan to build a "settler only" road straight through the Arroub Agricultural University and Beit Ommar.

*Read the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/ycj5anc>

TUNNELS CLAIM MORE LIVES IN GAZA

Two Palestinians died in tunnels in November, bringing the death toll to 120, including four children, according to Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights. Of these, 59 were killed in the first ten months of 2009 while a further 250 people have been injured in tunnel incidents during last few years. In addition, seven Palestinians have been killed inside tunnels as a result of Israeli aerial attacks.

The latest victims were Mohammed Baraka, 23, from Khan Younis who died due to an electric shock. On the same day Ahmed

Salah Abdeen, 35, also from Khan Younis died from suffocation after a tunnel collapsed under Rafah town.

Al Mezan says the tunnel industry is driven by the unlawful collective punishment of the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip but it calls on the Gaza government to "monitor and regulate this industry, including by taking measures to protect the life, safety and wellbeing of those who work in it."

It says the government is also responsible for monitoring the quality and price of the goods that come through the tunnels. "Al Mezan finds it incomprehensible that the authorities have not made any significant efforts to regulate this industry despite the very high death rates it causes and the very high prices of the goods that enter Gaza even when goods are available in the market.

"Therefore, Al Mezan Centre calls on the Gaza government to take immediate steps to act upon the obligations it owes to Palestinian citizens in Gaza. The tunnels' catastrophe must end. If shutting it off entirely does not seem objectively attainable now, the authorities, at minimum, are responsible for taking all the necessary measures to protect its workers and the entire population from the consequences of the lack of its regulation."



HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Rima Canawati, who dedicates her professional life to the needs of disabled people, won the 2009 Award for the Defence of the Human Rights of Disabled People presented by the York-based development charity, International Service.

Rima, who lost her own sight completely at 18, is the Director of Programme Development at the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation. She supervises five day care centres located in villages and refugee camps within Bethlehem which provide disabled children with rehabilitation and special education.



She has also campaigned to establish degree courses in special education and to get the Ministry of Education to set up a national policy for special needs provision and she works with international organisations in the field of disability.

Rima was nominated for the award by Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability (ABCD) which sponsors her salary. Georgina Mortimer of ABCD said: "We were absolutely delighted that she won. Rima's achievements have been gained against all the odds — apart from her blindness, the ground conditions within the separation wall are very harsh and minority groups such as the disabled come at the bottom of the pile."

TEENAGE BOOK WINS AWARD

A book set in Palestine has won a major Australian prize for young adult fiction, the 2009 Gold Inky Award. *Where the Streets*

Have a Name, about two teenagers from Bethlehem who try to bypass the checkpoints and travel to Jerusalem, was chosen by Aussie teenagers voting online, meaning the award reflects what young people enjoy reading rather than what adults think they should read.

The author, Randa Abdel-Fattah is a Muslim Australian of Palestinian and Egyptian heritage who lives in Sydney with her husband, Ibrahim, and their two children. She is a lawyer and is a member of the Coalition for Peace and Justice in Palestine. www.randaabdefattah.com

PICTURE SHOWS — NEW AND LOST

This summer, Palestine's first multiplex, Cinema City, opened in the city of Nablus amid great excitement, bringing Hollywood and Egyptian films to a culturally thirsty people.

Meanwhile, in the UK, film maker Sarah Wood released her short documentary about the Palestinian Film Archive, a collection of political films documenting the resistance movement, which was established in 1976 and completely lost in the siege of Beirut in 1982.

Wood, who was the programmer for the Cinema Palestine festival in Cambridge in the summer, wrote in *The Guardian*: "Imagine what it would be like if every image of 1960s London, or of pre-war France, or Soviet Russia, vanished overnight. Imagine there was no footage of your home town. In an age dominated by the moving image, how would that vanishing act make you feel?"

For more info on her documentary, *For Cultural Purposes Only*, see <http://tinyurl.com/y8jowhd>

RAY HANANIA FOR PRESIDENT

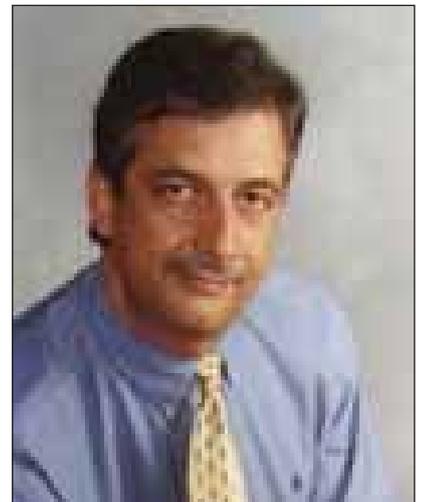
Renowned Palestinian-American journalist and stand-up comedian, Ray Hanania, announced he would stand for president of Palestine after Mahmoud Abbas said he was chucking in the towel.

Hanania, who is married to a Jewish woman and lives in Illinois, is realistic about his chances ("No, I don't expect to win"). But he hopes that his ideas for bringing about peace based on a two-state solution will be taken seriously.

He supports some settlements remaining so long as there is a "dunum for dunum" land exchange with Israeli land, says Jerusalem should be a shared city with a joint police force and the 1948 refugees should be compensated for the loss of their homes through a fund maintained by the US, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the United Nations.

As he opposes all violence he thinks Hamas should be excluded from the political process until they lay down their guns and Israeli settlers must also be forbidden from carrying arms. He says a subway system should be built linking the West Bank to the Gaza Strip and Palestinians should be allowed to develop a sea port and an airport.

Read more on his campaign website, www.YallaPeace.com



CENSORSHIP — GERMAN STYLE

Historian Prof Ilan Pappé, the son of a German Jew, was banned by the Munich Municipality from speaking at a government institution in November. In an open letter to the city's mayor, he said it reminded him of the censorship his father suffered under the Nazis in the 1930s.

Pappé, one of the Israeli "new historians," had been due to speak at the Pedagogical Institute of Munich but a letter received

from the "Israeli-German association of Munich" claiming his lecture would turn into "an anti-Israeli propaganda show," led the Munich Municipality not to allow him to use the room, claiming it feared violent clashes breaking out.

Eventually the lecture took place in another venue. Pappe wrote to the mayor saying his father had been "silenced in a similar manner, and I am saddened to discover the same censorship in 2009."

He later told YNet: "It's very strange that a lecture should be prevented due to fear of criticism against Israel. This is the reason, it's obvious to everyone, but why cancel? Words don't kill, but rather open the mind.

"If they wanted, why didn't they bring someone from the embassy to contradict my remarks? This hasn't happened to me even in Israel, so it's peculiar."

CENSORSHIP — BRITISH STYLE

Two hospitals in the North West cancelled lectures due to be given by a speaker from the Israeli charity, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, in October after a campaign by The Zionist Central Council of Greater Manchester.

One talk, entitled "The right to health in a conflict zone" by Miri Weingarten, advocacy director of PHRI, was cancelled four hours before it was due to start at Manchester Royal Infirmary.

The Zionist Central Council had posted on its website an "urgent call to stop the anti-Israel meeting at Manchester Royal Infirmary and Fairfield Hospital." A spokesperson for the Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said it had cancelled the Royal Infirmary meeting "for safety and security reasons."

However, the chief executive of the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, which includes Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, decided to let the event go ahead.

Another lecture by Weingarten at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool entitled "Children's health rights: the case of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory," was also cancelled though The Zionist Central Council said it was not involved in the protest against this event.

Weingarten said: "I was quite shocked by the behaviour of the ZCC... but I was even more disappointed by the hospitals: the fact that they allow external pressure of this kind to affect what happens in hospitals."

Alder Hey denied it was influenced by any outside pressure but had cancelled because the talk was being trailed as a political issue and the hospital was "apolitical."

The Jewish Chronicle weighed in on the side of free speech, criticising The Zionist Central Council for attempting to stifle debate rather than attending the lectures and challenging the speaker. Its editorial concluded: "The sound of shot feet resonates throughout north-west England." (*Jewish Chronicle*, 30 Oct)

IDF RABBI: "TROOPS SHOWING MERCY WILL BE DAMNED"

The Israeli Defence Force's chief rabbi, Brig Gen Avichai Rontzki, told students in a pre-army yeshiva programme that soldiers who "show mercy" toward the enemy in wartime will be "damned," according to a report in *Haaretz* in November.

Speaking at the Hesder yeshiva in the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomron, Rontzki quoted a passage from the Book of Jeremiah stating: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord with a slack hand, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood."

The rabbi added: "In times of war, whoever doesn't fight with all his heart and soul is damned — if he keeps his sword from bloodshed, if he shows mercy toward his enemy when no mercy should be shown."

THE PEACE CYCLE DONATES £5,200

The Peace Cycle proudly announced that the 2009 ride from Amman to Jerusalem raised a total of £5,200 which has been donated to the Oyooni Mobile Eye Clinic.

Oyooni is an initiative that aims to deliver specialised eye care to diabetes and glaucoma patients in Palestine, the West Bank and Gaza. It was founded by Dr Ali Dabbagh, an eye surgeon who cycled on the first ever Peace Cycle from London to Jerusalem in 2004. During the 2009 ride, cyclists were joined by Dr Dabbagh who showed them one of Oyooni's projects at the Surooq School for Blind Children in Beit Jala, just outside Bethlehem.

Laura Abraham of The Peace Cycle says: "Huge thanks to the amazing group of cyclists who all worked so hard to raise funds and complete the ride from Amman to Jerusalem, and everyone who helped organise, promote and support the 2009 ride especially all at the Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies in Beit Sahour.

"There will soon be news of the Peace Cycle 2010... stay tuned!"

For more information on the work of Oyooni, go to www.ooyoni.org. For info on the Peace Cycle go to www.thepeacecycle.com

GAZAN AGONY EXPRESSED IN PAINT

Ziad Deeb is the last survivor of his family after an Israeli artillery shell, which landed in the front yard of his home in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, wiped out ten of his relatives including his father, grandmother, brothers, nieces and nephews.

Ziad, 22, lost both legs in the attack on January 6, 2009, and now uses a wheelchair. But instead of giving way to bitterness he channels his grief into extraordinary paintings, according to a moving report on Electronic Intifada by Gaza-based photojournalist Eman Mohammed.



Ziad Deeb next to an image that he made of his family members. Photo: Eman Mohammed

A graduate of Gaza's College of Fine Arts, Ziad started drawing — on wood, on the walls of the city streets, destroyed government buildings and public squares. He said that in the attack he had seen "my family members drowning in their own blood. I didn't hear the explosion, it was only a loud whistling sound, and dark smoke blocked my vision. But I could smell the strong odour of blood and when I tried to move myself I saw my legs ripped apart. Then the smoke became less and I saw everyone around me was dead and I thought I was too."

Ziad added that "as weird as it might sound, this ugly memory urges me to go further with my arts. If I can't be heard, my paintings can be seen. I draw for peace, now that's how much I believe in the power of colours, paintbrushes and art itself..."

"I have dreams to pursue, if not for myself, then for the memory of my family. They are in a better place... Losing them caused me wounds that can never heal but I won't allow the sadness to defeat me. In the end that's what it takes to make great art, to never be defeated."

Mobilising support nationwide

Two major actions — the Viva Palestina convoy and the supermarket week — kept members busy plus many branches held vigils to mark the anniversary of Israel's murderous onslaught on Gaza on December 27.

Members from several branches joined the convoy and many other branches worked hard to raise money to buy and equip the ambulances and other vital supplies.

York branch bought an excellent second hand NHS ambulance which was "launched" by Professor, the Baroness Haleh Afshar, beside York Minster. The next day it provided the focus for a street collection which was extensively covered by the local paper, Radio York and Minster FM.

Mike Gwilliam reports: "Children from the mosque gave their savings to buy football posts, an elderly lady gave all her Christmas present money and others gave their winter fuel allowance. The ambulance was paid for and we were able to buy a good collection of medical supplies, educational materials, tents, sleeping bags, etc — all of which we knew would be of use in Gaza."

The plaque on the ambulance commemorating the 15 medics killed during the siege of Gaza was unveiled by the Lord Mayor, Cllr John Galvin, with York MP, Hugh Bayley, in attendance.



From left to right: Lord Mayor, John Galvin; York ambulance crew Nicholas Hall, Steve Stroud, Heather Stroud; the Lady Mayoress, Mike Gwilliam

Southampton held a very well-attended Day for Gaza involving films, speakers, debates and Palestinian food. An impressive £750 was raised for the convoy at the event, plus a further £663 from a sponsored walk with hundreds more anticipated to come in.

Brent branch sent £500 to the convoy while South Downs raised over £300 from a sponsored walk and a concert with folk singer/songwriter Leon Rosselson.

To mark the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead, the Free Gaza movement is urging activists to show an award winning film *To Shoot an Elephant* by Alberto Arce and Mohammad Rujailah. See www.toshootanelephant.com

In the week of supermarket actions, between 7 and 15 November, members in London, Sheffield, Manchester, Norwich, Bristol, Wolverhampton, Wales and Cheltenham got the message across to shoppers that to buy Israeli produce is to support Israel's

violations of international law.

At Morrisons in Chorlton, Manchester, 25 protestors entered the store, collected Israeli and settlement goods on sale, leafleted shoppers and staged a protest at customer service. Footage from Manchester and Sheffield can be viewed on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/yzkd8uw>

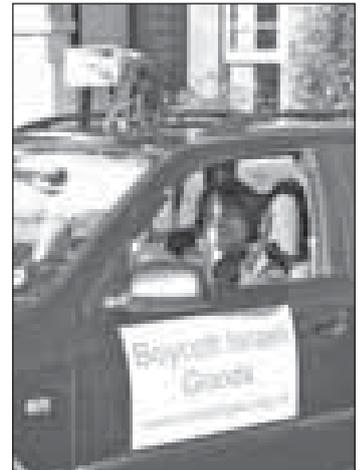
A picket of the national office of Morrisons in Bradford led to a meeting with the management. And during the call-in day on 11 November, hundreds of supporters bombarded Morrisons and Waitrose HQs on the phone.

Keith Rowley, chair of Norwich PSC, reported a typical response from the public: "Only the odd irate Zionist hurled abuse during our demo outside M&S and Tesco. Such irrational reactions are vastly outnumbered by sympathetic responses.

"The majority of shoppers remain apathetic but we are bombarding them with BIG leaflets combined with PSC basic facts pamphlets so some are converted. We give out nearly a thousand of these information packs each month."

Norwich produced a new version of their branch pamphlet *Palestine: Facts You Should Know* and sent it to all their city, county and national politicians to mark December 27. Keith adds: "Our new PA system mounted on a car touring the city centre means that even those who try to avoid us can not escape the message."

In Brighton campaigners filled trolleys in the Waitrose in Western Road with mangoes, grapefruit, herbs, humous and dates, all produced on settlements, in a graphic illustration of their message. They chanted slogans, distributed leaflets, talked to shoppers and unfurled banners reading "Boycott Israeli Goods! — Justice to the Palestinians!"



Sara Knox with Norwich's PA system



Picketing Waitrose, Brighton

Outside supermarkets in Southampton, members gave away Palestinian dates and fresh herbs grown locally as a fun way of making the point that there were alternatives to Israeli produce.

New groups

University of East Anglia (UEA) Contact Kali Erstein at uea.psc@googlemail.com

Targetbrimar is a new **Manchester** based group set up to protest against Brimar, a company supplying equipment for Israel's Apache helicopters.

See www.targetbrimar.org.uk

One action was held in a Muslim area during Ramadan and was well received.

Halifax members lobbied their local Asian suppliers not to take Israeli dates. Next year they plan to liaise with **Bradford** to lobby the wholesale suppliers in the city against the Israeli practice of offering inducements — such as trips to Israel — and to push Palestinian dates for breaking the Ramadan fast.

Brent branch organised the demonstration by PSC and others against the Jewish National Fund's invitation to Israel's former foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, to address their conference at the Hendon Hall Hotel, North London. (Livni cancelled for fear of being arrested for war crimes, see p7.)

The hotel manager apologised for having hosted the conference and told the JNF that they are banned from using the hotel again. She told activists she sincerely regretted any upset caused and offered a free night's accommodation as a prize in a raffle run by any charity supporting Palestinians.

As freedom lovers around the world celebrated the 20th anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall on November 9th, a large crowd of campaigners in **Bristol** gathered at the traditional peace vigil site to highlight the much bigger Wall around the West Bank which is still being constructed.



New Walls for Old demo, Bristol. Photo: Jess Linington

At a **West Midlands** public meeting entitled War Crimes in Gaza one speaker, public interest lawyer Phil Shiner, urged the audience to move from analysis to serious action. He appealed for mass attendance at a High Court appeal hearing concerning the Palestinian human rights organisation, Al Haq, scheduled for early 2010, as packed public galleries make a significant difference, especially in terms of media coverage.

Southampton attracted young people not really aware of the situation in Palestine to a showing of Rumzi Arap's film, *Slingshot Hip Hop: Resistance & Hip Hop in Palestine*. Jenny Flintoft reports: "The film showed Palestinians, especially young women, as being empowered by their music. It provoked a lively, intelligent discussion — people wanted to know more about hip hop in the Middle East, more about the situation, and more about future events."

Peaceforte is a group of students, peace campaigners, academics and professional young musicians who are staging concerts to raise funds for humanitarian causes. Their first event was held in **London** in November to help fund an ambulance in the Viva Palestina convoy and featured musicians from the Royal Academy of Music and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra.

For more info contact peaceforte@gmail.com

Cheltenham and **Gloucester** branch hosted exiled Palestinian journalist, Iqbal Tamimi, who talked about her experiences and her view of the current situation. A public meeting in Petersfield held by **South Downs** heard from Rachel Nassif, who worked as an Ecumenical Accompanier in the West Bank, and Suleiman Sharkh, a Southampton University lecturer from Gaza whose family was there during the bombardment. The audience were "visibly shocked" by what they heard and there was a "vigorous debate" afterwards.

South Downs recently linked up with Adam Flude from UK

Friends of Palestine & Israel to run a stall twice a month next to the popular farmers' market in Chichester High Street.

Speakers from **Halifax** branch gave a dozen talks during the year to sixth form colleges and aim to expand this activity in 2010. Members are also going to work with Halifax Council and other Northern groups to create a Palestinian



Gerry and Jenny Flintoft at the Chichester stall

Cultural Festival for July encompassing song, music, dance, food, embroidery, photography and art.

A dramatic presentation of life in Gaza written and presented by Mohamed Altawil, David Harrold and Sylvia Pepper, was described as "extremely moving" by Janet Walker of **Cambridge** branch.

Journey through Thorns tells the story of Mohamed, founder of the Palestine Trauma Centre, and his personal journey from the stone throwing of his youth to a realisation that education and non-violent action were a better way to resist.

"We would heartily recommend this presentation to other branches," says Janet. Contact David Harrold at Diddeus@aol.com or Sylvia Pepper at s.b.pepper@herts.ac.uk

Camden held its fourth annual Festival for Palestine in October. Talks were interspersed with hypnotic music by Iranian musician, Sam Fathi, and some fantastic Islamic feminist rap by Poetic Pilgrimage. The festival reached a poignant climax with a video of children flying kites on Gaza beach while the room was festooned with an exhibition of their colourful kite art.

In November PSC branches and Action for Palestinian Children hosted packed public meetings in **London**, **Liverpool**, **Oxford** and **Sheffield** for 14 year-old Mohammad Abu Eid and his mother Somaya. Mohammad

was jailed in Israel in February 2008, for allegedly throwing stones at the Wall. He described his injuries at the hands of the army and how he had to sign a confession in order to get a lighter sentence.

At the London meeting, Baroness Helena Kennedy spoke of the widespread ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children by the Israeli army and



Mohammad with Sir Geoffrey Bindman, who chaired the London meeting. Photo: Sarah Booker: www.bookerphotos.com

police force. She condemned Israel's violations of the basic right to a fair trial, the forced confessions and the abuse of the general principles of juvenile justice, including the right to family visits.

■ Mohammad tells his story on video: www.vimeo.com/6207845. He was supported by the Defence for Children International — Palestine branch. See www.dci-pal.org.

World's largest dress

The people of Hebron unveiled what they believe is the largest embroidered dress ever sewn in November, in a bid to promote their local handicrafts and gain an entry in the Guinness Book of Records.

Around 150 women helped make the dress, measuring 32.6 metres long and 18.1 metres wide, which took four months to complete, according to the Palestinian Children's Home, the local organisation behind the project.

The unveiling was part of the city's festival, "A Dream Through a Thread," and was accompanied by a large cultural event held at the Al-Hussein Stadium. Substantial crowds heard poet Samih Al-Qassim recite and watched performances of traditional dance and theatre.

"The dress is a symbol of the steadfastness of Palestinian women, and their struggle for the freedom of their country"

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad opened the celebration which he said was a tribute to Palestinian cultural production and values. He said the gown will serve as a link between Palestine's past, present and future, using cultural traditions in

new and innovative ways.

Mayor of Hebron Khalid Al-Isseili said the creation of the dress was a symbol of the steadfastness of Palestinian women and their struggle for the freedom of their country. The mayor also took the opportunity to ask President Mahmoud Abbas to reconsider his decision to retire from the position before the next elections.

West Bank women have increasingly turned to traditional handicrafts as a source of income in recent years as the occupation strangles the economy and causes high unemployment. The Palestinian economy lost ground for the ninth year in a row in 2008, and the unemployment rate now stands at 32%, according to a recent UN report.



Not the enemy — Israel's Jews from Arab lands

By Rachel Shabi
Yale University Press

The foundation of the Zionist Israeli state in 1948 caused an upheaval for Jewish communities in Arab countries where they had been established for centuries and generally integrated into the life and culture, such as Iraq, Morocco, Egypt and the Yemen. At this time the activities of Mossad agents in these countries, especially in Iraq and Egypt in plots and bombings, accelerated the often reluctant departure of these Jews.

Rachel Shabi has written about the experiences of these "Arab Jews" in their settling-in process as Israeli citizens. She comes from an Iraqi family who emigrated to Israel and who later settled in the UK where she grew up, only to return to live in Tel Aviv. From there she has keenly observed Mizrahi (a broad collective term for Eastern Jews) society and has filled an important gap in the voluble literature on the Israel/Palestine conflict. Her obvious talent for human observation, laced with warmth and humour, has produced a carefully researched, balanced and nuanced account of their most often inferior position in Israeli society.

In the Zionist dream of Israel as a homeland for Jews of Europe, as a solution to anti-Semitism, Jews of the "East" did not feature. Palestinian Jews of Sephardi origin, who felt they were part of the Semitic-Oriental community and who proposed an accommodation with the host Palestinian entity, were sidelined by the European "New Settlement" Zionists who were determined to build a state that was not "Levantine" and foreclosed any possibility for co-existence.

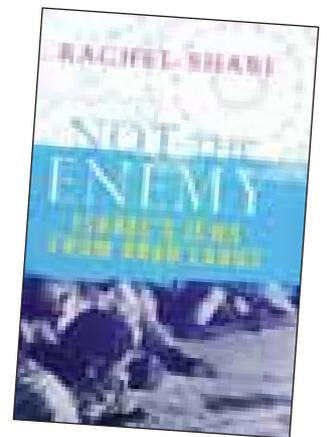
They also feared the "contaminative" result of the emigration of Arab Jews who were necessary to bolster the Jewish population. Ben-Gurion said: "We do not want Israelis to become Arabs" and considered these communities "without a trace of Jewish or human education."

Shabi traces the history of each of the communities through to their arrival in Israel where they spent many years in "ma-abarot" transition camps while European Jews were quickly found better housing. Mainly Moroccan immigrants were sent to out-lying development towns, like Kiryat Shmoneh in the north and Dimona, Ofakim and Shderot in the south, to increase Israel's security. Over the years the inhabitants became cannon fodder for rockets from Lebanon or Gaza in wars that the Israeli occupation provoked.

Money promised to these towns by Menachem Begin to promote employment and development quickly evaporated as massive finance was diverted to the illegal settlements — a situation unchanged today.

Despite attempts to create a melting pot of Israeli Jews, discrimination, stereotyping and segregation against Mizrachim was experienced in all fields, particularly in education. Abba Eban, a "respected" world statesman, claimed that "one half of the population comes from communities which, since the decline of Islamic culture, have had no educational history or development." Anyone with a hint of Arabic in pronunciation of modern Hebrew was viewed as "working class" and excluded or sidelined from the mainstream media and culture even though many Iraqis, for instance, were highly educated academics, writers and musicians.

Shabi's exploration of Mizrahi/Israeli identity, their struggle for equality, their relationship with the Palestinians, with whom they have more in common than the "western" Israelis and together with whom they from a large Middle Eastern majority, makes fascinating reading and is indispensable to the understanding and possible resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.



Abe Hayeem

Camp Shatila: A Writer's Chronicle, by Peter Mortimer**Five Leaves**

And now for something completely different. You may know Shatila through the lens of Dr Ang Swee Chai's *From Beirut to Jerusalem* or *Pity the Nation* by Robert Fisk — who, incidentally, has a walk-on part in this book.

But you will find this much more like a travel book — Mortimer decides to spend two months in the notorious Lebanese refugee camp and it takes a while before we know why.

Shatila, relatively quiet at the time, is recorded with a quirky freshness. The faces in the windows of this overcrowded high-rise slum are like those "in an advent calendar." One chap has a "yard brush moustache" and another, Castro, has a son called Rommel.

There are a few verbal tics which annoy but I really enjoyed his vignettes — the (English) poetry-spouting Coca Cola seller, the man drinking coffee as he rides his noisy Yamaha and the shopkeeper serving his customer the bitter brew — "this rarely happens in my local Spar."

Mortimer is great at conveying his own culture shock and homesickness at the squalor, chaos, noise and lack of privacy in the camp. But he becomes part of a loving neighbourhood and the wrench when he leaves brings tears to the eyes.

Speaking no Arabic, he's there to put on a play with child actors whose grasp of English is "of the slenderest." The project

seems doomed to failure as it takes five of his precious eight weeks even to get permission to start and the obstacles mount. He can certainly do suspense and if you saw it on the telly you'd think the ending far-fetched.

His political awareness seems to grow with the book and I learned many things about Lebanese society and the place of Palestinians within it. He takes away a message of hope from the children's attitude to the play's baddie — but I won't spoil it by giving it away.

"Shatila is not on any maps. They like to think Shatila doesn't exist," says one woman.

And an American lawyer says he has "the Palestinian disease." "Once I realised what was really happening here I couldn't go back [to ordinary life]," he says. I suspect many readers of Palestine News suffer from this disease and I'm rather hoping Peter Mortimer has been infected too.

Sharen Green



Artists go underground

Palestinian attempts to celebrate Jerusalem's year of being the Capital of Arab Culture, despite events being constantly disrupted and harassed by the Israeli authorities, continued with a two-day arts festival with a difference in November — it went underground.

Musicians, singers, actors and writers performed at six venues — private houses or businesses — kept secret from the police in what was called "The al-Quds (Jerusalem) Underground Project."

The BBC's Arabic Service correspondent in the city, Ahmad Budeiri, joined a group of 100 specially invited guests at Damascus Gate for one of the evening programmes. He reported that they were first divided up into several sub-groups before being led into the winding alleyways of the Old City. With some of these alleyways not having streetlights, sometimes the audiences was led around in near total darkness with only the screens of their mobile phones lighting the way.

Budeiri's party arrived at an old stone house with a small courtyard where three musicians entertained them with a mixture of traditional Palestinian songs and some 20th century classics from the popular Arab repertoire.

Drummer Ahmad Hdeib told him they had tried to perform at public venues in Jerusalem but the Israeli authorities always denied permission. But he added they would never stop trying to "send our voice to the world" from the Old City.

Vocalist Omar Abu Nejme admitted it was not an easy choice to become a Palestinian artist living in Jerusalem but this unique occasion was one of its compensations.

"I feel we have gone back in time, singing in such an old house, rather than a modern theatre or concert hall," he said.

The Israeli authorities have justified breaking up many of the events marking the Arab League and Unesco-backed City of Arab Culture year because they have been sponsored by the Palestinian Authority and anything involving the PA in Jerusalem is banned.

The Underground Project events were arranged without PA involvement and mainly advertised by word of mouth but they were nevertheless a response to Israel's suppression of Palestinian culture.

The project was the idea of Dutch composer, Merlijn Twaalfhoven, who worked for several months to arrange it. He

told Budeiri: "The idea is to look beneath the surface of Jerusalem since the surface is politics, history and religion but under that there are people and reality and we seek the truth about their lives and their daily routine."

After the first concert, Budeiri's group was taken to another house to watch a short play about discord in family life. It had been scheduled to be staged at East Jerusalem's only theatre, but one of the actors told him after the performance that Israel's Internal Security Minister, Yitzhak Aharonovitch, was working to close the theatre down for carrying out "illegal activities."

Further stops took them to a traditional bakery and to someone's house that had been turned into a lending library, a much-needed resource because Palestinians do not have a municipal library of their own in Jerusalem.



Oral history in a bakery with Majid Almani

"The Underground Project events were... a response to Israel's suppression of Palestinian culture"

Resistance Art Calendar 2010

Resistance Art begins its "World for Palestine" calendar series with Carlos Latuff, the brilliant Brazilian cartoonist who devotes his art to fighting oppression wherever it exists.

Scottish Friends of Palestine are offering this stunning calendar at a discounted price of £9 + £1.41 p & p. The calendar can be viewed at www.resistanceart.com

All proceeds go towards supporting artists in the Gaza Strip.

Send orders to: Scottish Friends of Palestine, 31 Tinto Road, Glasgow G43 2AL

Cheques for £10.41 per calendar should be made payable to Scottish Friends of Palestine.



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Travel Palestine, the official website for tourism in Palestine, gives you all the information you need to plan your visit.

- Accommodation lists – hotels and guest houses
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Annual General Meeting 2010



Justice for Palestine: making a mass solidarity movement a reality

Saturday 6 February 2010
10am–5pm,
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WCI
(nearest tube Holborn)

Guest speakers include:

Dr Mustafa Barghouti
HE Professor Manuel Hassassian
(introduced by Victoria Brittain)
Rodney Bickerstaffe
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Mark Serwotka, General Secretary, PCS

- Videos from Gaza convoy and PSC's trade union delegation
- Video showing of 'Bitter Dates'

Registration – Opening remarks Hugh Lanning –
Treasurer's report Sue Plater – **Secretary's report**
Betty Hunter – **PSC Annual plan – Motions –**
Constitutional amendments – Elections

Cost: £8 waged, £6 unwaged (to cover cost of lunch)

If you need accommodation, provided by other PSC members, please email psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org or phone 020 7700 6192 by 22 January 2010.



Thanks to Rodney Bickerstaffe for his kind agreement to act as Returning Officer for this AGM.

This is a vital PSC event. All members are encouraged to attend.

Opposing Apartheid: Palestine and the Experience of South Africa

Ilan Pappe and Ronnie Kasrils
10 March
House of Commons 7pm