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TUC breakthrough:

unions back boycott

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Cover photo: Delegates at the TUC conference.

Credit: PCS/Jess Hurd.

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palestine NEWS

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- Campaigning against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people

- Supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights including the Right of Return in line with UN resolution 194

- Promoting Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice

- Opposing Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states

- Opposing anti-semitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state

A landmark decision

Hugh Lanning reports on the breakthrough at this year's TUC

Palestinian flags waving in celebration at the TUC! Even if some of them were upside down it was a sight some of us never expected to see. The cause was trade unions voting overwhelmingly for an effective consumer boycott.

Behind the scenes in smokeless rooms, the battle had raged all week. Real political and diplomatic pressure was being applied to union delegations to withdraw or change their positions. It was being argued by opponents that boycotts were ineffective, divisive and wouldn't bring about change — but an awful lot of effort was being put into preventing the TUC carrying a motion that mentioned any form of boycott, disinvestment or sanction.

Why? Although the TUC and trade unions are not as strong and influential as they once were, the fact that the British TUC passed a pro-boycott, pro-Palestine motion will be noticed around the world. Not least because for many years the TUC internationally was seen as being very close to, even collaborative with British foreign policy — especially over Israel. Talk was always of “balance,” fairness to both sides.

As always, there was some compromise and confusion. The TUC General Council Statement focuses very clearly on settlement goods, companies involved in the occupation, the wall and the sale of arms. For the first time it commits the TUC to working closely with the PSC to build an effective campaign.

This provides an early opportunity for the PSC to sit down with the TUC and plan a campaign that every union in the country can participate in — giving an opportunity to debate and discuss Palestine with over seven million trade union members.

Just as important, it gives us access to union communication, organisation and resources that can become a major stepping stone in building the mass solidarity campaign that is so desperately needed.

The TUC also condemned the statement put out by Histadrut — the Israeli equivalent of the TUC — at the time of the invasion of Gaza, a statement which in effect condoned the mass murder



“It was accepted that resolutions are not enough, that now is the time for this generation of trade unionists to stand up for Palestine in a way that they haven't in the past”

of civilians and destruction of the civilian infrastructure. These and other concerns will be raised with Histadrut and a report made on future relationships.

Many unions had already debated Palestine at their own conferences. The message to Congress from union after union was that now is the time for action. Following Gaza, delegates recognised, nothing has changed: the blockade of Gaza continues; the occupation remains in place; the settlements, the wall, the attacks on East Jerusalem and expulsion of its Palestinian inhabitants grow unchecked.

It was accepted that resolutions are not enough, that now is the time for this generation of trade unionists to stand up for Palestine in a way that they haven't in the past.

The TUC also passed overwhelmingly a motion, bravely tabled and kept on the agenda by the Fire Brigades Union. This called for a broader, unequivocal consumer boycott of Israeli goods. There was no formal opposition or speeches against either motion. No-one argued publicly against the boycott.

This means that the PSC can now have a twin track approach: working with all unions through the TUC but also working directly with those unions that support the call for a mass boycott campaign.

The passing of these resolutions provides a window of opportunity for all the supporters of Palestine — inside and outside the trade union movement. But to make real change, resolutions must be followed by action.

It means we have to redouble our efforts to explain and get our message across. We will need to produce campaign materials and briefings to help trade unionists raise the issues within their branches — in many cases for the first time.

This will not happen automatically. TV coverage showed crowds cheering in the streets of Palestine when the news was heard. Our responsibility is to not let that faith be misplaced. At a time when there is renewed talk of an Obama-inspired peace

process, the need for pressure for a fair and just deal for Palestine is greater than ever.

The TUC decision is a landmark, but it is only a step — a means to an end — not a solution. Now it is down to us to translate the motion into action.

Hugh Lanning is Deputy General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union and Chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The trade union breakthrough can be seen as part of a general turning of the tide of public opinion. The BDS campaign is really beginning to bite worldwide (see page 20), and international law has been shown to reject absolutely Israeli claims that their actions

can be justified as ‘self-defence’ (see page 13). Whether through our workplace, our union, our church or our local community, we must use this momentum to carry the campaign forward, into what promises to be a critical year for Palestine.

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Bethlehem — a little town, a great tragedy

**By Leila Sansour,
Director of Open Bethlehem**

Christmas in Bethlehem is a time for tradition, though some traditions are newer than others. Over the past decade the PR battle over the city has become a staple part of the Christmas experience.

Busloads of reporters arrive as early as the beginning of November and their stories follow what has become a seasonal format. The cameramen shoot pictures of the Wall, painting the grim reality of Bethlehem, while the reporters recite figures showing the decline of the Christian population and the collapse of the tourist economy.

In the five years that I have been the Director of the campaigning organisation, Open Bethlehem, I have been interviewed by everyone from national television stations to phone-in radio to student magazines. One of the most demanding and unpleasant parts of my job is dealing with those journalists who arrive with an all too familiar agenda — to highlight Christian-Muslim discord.

Bethlehem's story is twisted to make communal strife the key factor in its tragedy while the brutal realities of life under occupation are downplayed. I have learned to recognise journalists with a guilty conscience, who know that they have not come to investigate — all they need is a quote from a random Christian willing to spout about a dispute with a Muslim neighbour. In a city that has been turned into a prison and that is dominated by so much tension, these quotes are not difficult to obtain.

What is worrying about this phenomenon is the energy that hostile news media put into turning Bethlehem's story upside down. They have grasped the importance of our city in the seasonal PR battle better than our friends. And they have mobilised effectively to ensure that the truth remains hidden.

The reality on the ground reveals a completely different story. The series of Israeli invasions of Bethlehem that began in November 2001 and continued throughout 2002 brought about the complete economic collapse of a city where 62% of the population is dependent on tourism.

The Wall which isolates Bethlehem from the outside world and from its sister city, Jerusalem, has hastened the decline. A UN report, called 'The Changing Face of Bethlehem,' published in 2004, predicts a grim future for the city, mentioning the



Leila Sansour by the Wall

dwindling Christian community which now constitutes only 30% of the population.

In the last six years alone, 10% of Bethlehem's Christians have left the city. Our own Open Bethlehem survey of 2006 showed that Christians have been the most affected by the construction of the Wall since land ownership was concentrated in their hands as the oldest residents. The huge land confiscation has impoverished the community.

Christians were also in a better position to benefit from religious tourism, an industry which relies on an infrastructure shared with Jerusalem. The separation of these cities has devastated Bethlehem-based companies which have offices in Jerusalem or long standing contracts with bus companies and tour operators.

It is the cumulative weight of the occupation that hits one so forcibly in Bethlehem. The social and political damage that it is doing to the region and to the Middle East as a whole stares one in the face in my home town. This is why Bethlehem is so important in the jigsaw of telling the story of Palestine and,

more importantly, in winning friends.

A tour of my city proves that the occupation is an Israeli government-driven project aimed at seizing and annexing Palestinian land. Bethlehem's proximity to Jerusalem and the strategic value of its water resources means that it has always been coveted by Israel and Bethlehem's compact geography reveals at a glance the enormous extent and the voracious appetite of the settlement project.

Today Bethlehem is surrounded by over 20 well-developed settlements. In a city ringed by hills, the settlements are for ever in one's line of sight. They are designed to fence in the city, physically separating it from its agricultural villages, neighbouring towns and Jerusalem.

When plans are approved for new units, Bethlehem wakes to the sound of drills and bulldozers echoing off the hills. I am particularly aware of this because I have combined work at Open Bethlehem with making a film about the city and the sound on my tapes is sometimes deafening.

“Har Homa is a settlement without settlers, built not to satisfy demand but to seize local land”



Bethlehem surrounded by the Wall and settlements



Media frenzy in Manger Square at Christmas

Yet once the outer walls of the housing units are thrown up, construction abruptly halts. Har Homa, the closest settlement to Bethlehem, whose expansion seals the last remaining corridor to Jerusalem, has been staring over us with its unglazed windows for the past ten years. It is a settlement without settlers, built not to satisfy demand but to seize local land. Where it stood, there was once a tranquil pine forest.

Of course, all other faces of the occupation are present here, too. The collapse of the economy means that many Bethlehemites can only make a living as cheap labourers in Israel. The Israeli military authorities have placed a ceiling on work permits, allowing only 2000 people from a population of 175,000 to travel to Jerusalem each day.

We can leave only from one exit — the awful Gilo checkpoint where the queue of 2000 men stretches several hundred metres by opening time at 5.00 am. People with medical permits also have to wait in line. Recently, the behaviour of Israeli soldiers has been getting uglier and their mood

angrier, which I believe can be attributed to their sense that the world is growing condemnatory of their government's actions.

Permits are easier to obtain for those working on the settlements encircling Bethlehem. Israeli construction companies obtain permits directly from the military for the 3000 locals desperate enough to work for below the Israeli minimum wage, building settlements on land confiscated from their own community.

Bethlehem suffers like all Palestinian towns but its tragedy is uniquely visible. A visit here makes it very clear that East Jerusalem

is key in any peace deal for a healthy future Palestinian state. And the impact of the city's experience is all the more powerful because Bethlehem's heritage is a global heritage.

The damage wrought upon the city — on its holy places, its physical geography and its sites of special archaeological interest — is felt by many around the world as a personal affront.

Whether one believes that Christ is the Son of God or a beloved prophet, or simply the reason that we exchange gifts at Christmas, the ties that bind the world to Bethlehem are obvious and immediate.

This is the most famous little town on earth. As director of Open Bethlehem I have learned that the name of my city unlocks doors and opens ears: we do not need to beg for a hearing, the world actually wants to know about Bethlehem.

Too often, however, our friends around the world either underestimate its power or are simply too timid to focus on a story that resonates so strongly with our childhood hopes for Christmas. Israel's supporters are not so delicate. Each Christmas, as the spotlight turns to Bethlehem, they seek to change the story.

As we again approach Christmas, let us remember that day when a star shone over my city to mark a new message of peace and goodwill to all men. This message still reverberates today.

No one leaves Bethlehem without seeing the urgent necessity of ending the occupation and gaining justice for the Palestinian people. Our task is to do everything we can to hasten that day.

So this Christmas I ask you to think about how we can make the star of Bethlehem shine brighter. Every local paper, every newsletter or union magazine, every radio station or television channel, is more than happy to discuss Bethlehem at Christmas.

It can be particularly effective privately to sponsor journeys to Bethlehem for local opinion-formers, such as vicars, councillors, union leaders, journalists or local dignitaries, who will be invited to talk to the media on their return.

Money and time are precious: find a Bethlehem project, back it and make sure everyone knows what you have done. Christmas is the one time that the world comes to ask Palestinians for their story. We cannot afford to waste it.

■ Open Bethlehem:
www.openbethlehem.org



“Locals desperate for work are building settlements on land confiscated from their own community”

A peace lamp in every church

By Chris Cox

The small Christian village of Taybeh lies at the heart of an ambitious plan to place a Peace Lamp in every church in the world. The aim is to unite all churchgoers in solidarity with Christians living in the Holy Land and to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by their communities.

Home to 3,400 people in the 1960s, Taybeh, north of Ramallah, has shrunk to around 1,300 inhabitants as people have fled the economic and physical struggle of living under Israeli occupation. Around 50% of those who remain are unemployed.

The Latin church in Taybeh launched

the Peace Lamp initiative in 2004 to encourage international prayers for peace. The pastor, Father Raed Abusahlia, told a World Council of Churches team in March: “Maintaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land is the responsibility of all the Christians in the world.”

The Gaza Strip has around 3,000 Christians among a population of 1.5 million while in the West Bank there are between 40,000 and 90,000 Christians in a population of over three million.

For years the Church has been alarmed by the declining Christian population in the



Holy Land. Across the Middle East, Christians once constituted 20% of the population, but now only account for 2%. When the Pope visited the region in May he spoke to 50,000 Syrian, Jordanian, Lebanese and Iraqi Christians in Jordan and enthusiastic crowds in the West Bank which included a tiny group of Catholics from Gaza. He urged them to “persevere” and “be faithful to your roots.”

Church Council backs boycott

The World Council of Churches (WCC), which represents 560 million Christians in over 110 countries, issued an unprecedented and highly significant

cont. on next page

Just peace for Palestine

Calling on faith communities to speak out

By Ben White and Canon Garth Hewitt

Over 180 Christian leaders signed a declaration in May, 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, called "Just

Peace 60." It called for a "courageous settlement [in Palestine/Israel] whose details will honour both peoples' shared love for the land and protect the individual and collective rights of Jews and Palestinians."

The significant aspect of the petition was the names that signed it. Among familiar ones such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu there were many others who had not previously spoken up on this issue. Amos Trust has tried to follow up this initiative and the latest response is "Just Peace for Palestine."

We think there is much still to be done to bring in the Christian churches and members of faith communities and have launched a new, popularising umbrella campaign that increases people's



PHOTO: NICK DUFF DAVIES

Churches saying that the church must stand against apartheid and for justice. The document said it was a Kairos moment — Kairos is a Greek word meaning a "significant moment in time."

Our website will also be a key aspect of campaigning, pointing visitors towards the numerous organisations working in such fields as alternative tourism/pilgrimages in Palestine, selling Palestinian products, political lobbying and civil society activism. Denying Palestinians their basic rights offers no hope of a lasting peace so there will be a strapline saying: "A just peace for Palestine means peace and security for Israelis."

Offering a way in

The aim of the campaign is to offer a "way in" for new campaigners from churches, mosques, synagogues and others who wish to support a just peace but are not sure how or where to start. It is responding to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's call: "The Israel/Palestine crisis is the most urgent problem for the world to solve. If it remains unresolved you can give up on all other problems... this, this, this is the problem and it is in our hands."

- For more information go to www.justpeaceforpalestine.org or email info@justpeaceforpalestine.org
- Stickers, certificates and materials will be available in late October.

awareness and introduces them to campaigning groups.

Modelled on the Fair Trade campaign where people displayed a notice saying "We are a Fair Trade... church, school, mosque, etc.," they will now be able to put up a poster saying, "We are a Just Peace for Palestine Church..." It could also be used by students' unions, NGOs, trade unions and others.

No more silence

Just Peace for Palestine calls for "no more silence." It recognises that we are at a significant crossroads, just like in South Africa when the Kairos Document was produced by the South Africa Council of

cont. from previous page

statement in September calling on Israel to freeze and dismantle its settlements in Palestine and backing the international boycott and divestment campaign.

It said the settlements were "illegal, unjust, incompatible with peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel." And it directed that WCC member churches "must not be complicit in illegal activities on occupied territory" and therefore should "practice morally responsible investment in order to influence businesses linked to the Israeli occupation and its illegal settlements."

The WCC also invited member churches to lend "moral and practical support to non-violent acts of resistance to the confiscation of land, the destruction of Palestinian properties and the eviction of people from their homes and lands."

- Peace Lamps sell for 20 Euros each and can be ordered in bulk. See www.taybeh.info

Convoy to Gaza — get involved!

The PSC is organising a contingent on the next blockade-busting, international Viva Palestina convoy to Gaza, leaving on 5 December. The convoy will be taking essential medical supplies and raising awareness of the continuing illegal siege of Gaza.

It is going to be a joint mission with Americans who will fly in to help form the core of the convoy which will head off from London and travel through Europe to the Balkans, northern Greece, Turkey, Syria, Jordan and into Egypt.

Major events, such as cultural and sporting rallies, are planned for strategic points along the way to build momentum, pick up more support and donations and raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Arrival in Gaza is planned to coincide with the first anniversary of Israel's Operation Cast Lead which began on

27 December last year. There the Viva Palestina convoy will join up with the crowds and high-profile personalities on the Gaza Freedom March planned for 31 December (for more details see page 24).

It will be a rally of thousands from round the world to prove that the 1,387 victims of Israel's assault on Gaza are not forgotten and to demand justice. Be there!

- For more details, visit the PSC website or email ruqayyah.collector@palestinecampaign.org



The bravery of Bil'in

By Jody McIntyre

The village of Bil'in, where the Wall has stolen 60% of its land, has become an international symbol of the courageous non-violent resistance movement in Palestine. Every Friday since 2005 the people, supported by Israeli and international sympathisers, have held a peaceful demonstration against this blatant injustice.

The people of Bil'in, near Ramallah, pay a heavy price for their spirit and resolve as, every Friday, the IDF attacks the marchers with brutal force, firing tear gas bombs, sound grenades, rubber-coated steel bullets and, occasionally, live ammunition at unarmed men, women and children. In April of this year, villager Bassem Abu Rahme was murdered in cold blood as he called on soldiers to hold their fire.

In addition, in recent months the IDF has carried out constant night raids in which they kidnap young boys, most of them close friends of mine. By dragging them from their beds in the dead of night then subjecting them to interrogation and intimidation, the IDF has managed to obtain supposed "confessions," alleging that members of the local Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall have been instructing the boys to throw stones during the demonstrations. These false confessions are then used as a pretext to arrest members of the Popular Committee in a clear attempt to crush the movement.

A typical night raid



An IDF soldier confronts activist Ashraf Abu Rahme

Abdullah Abu Rahme is the Co-ordinator of the Committee. At around 1:30am one night in September I was sitting with Mohammed Khatib, the father of the family I've been living with for the past few months and secretary of the Committee, on the roof of his house, when we heard whistling coming from the village. Two minutes later, Mohammed received a call — the army were in Abdullah's home.

Abandoning my wheelchair for the sake of speed, I jumped in the car with Mohammed and a couple of other international volunteers and we drove straight to Abdullah's. As we arrived, soldiers were entering the house. They had locked the front gate, preventing international volunteers, journalists and neighbours from entering, but I knew that wouldn't stop Mohammed from protecting his friend's family — there were children and women inside the house and someone had to get to them before the army did.

As two volunteers began climbing over the gate, distracting the soldiers from the front door, Mohammed jumped over a wall and ran into the house. Following his lead and with a leg-up from a friend, I also climbed over the wall but due to my disability I am not such a

Jody McIntyre is a young British journalist with cerebral palsy who travels in a wheelchair. He says: "Some of my friends and family suggested that Bil'in was not the best destination for someone with my 'condition' but I was determined to prove that I could get anywhere in the world — even a village under military occupation, even on wheels." Read Jody's blog, "Life on Wheels," at www.ctrlaltshift.co.uk or contact him at jody.mcintyre@gmail.com

fast walker and by the time I got to the front door the soldiers were back in position, blocking my entrance.

Brutal assaults by soldiers

As I argued with them I heard screaming from inside. They were beating Mohammed, my adoptive father. "Let me in!" I demanded, "my father is there!"

A soldier pushed me to the ground. "Can't you see he is disabled!" shouted a Palestinian friend who was standing next to me. "I don't care," replied the soldier.

When I finally got into the house over an hour later, I found Mohammed sprawled on a sofa. He had two black eyes, was holding his abdomen, and moaning in agony. Just two days earlier, he had been helping me fix my wheelchair and joking about how much I should pay him for the work. Due to the merciless brutality of the Israeli military, it looked like Mohammed would now be needing the chair more than I did.



Mohammed Khatib shows his bruises

Israel "at war with civilians"

Another increasingly well-known symbol of resistance, the village of Ni'lin, holds similar peaceful marches to those in Bil'in and suffers similar violent suppression. In March the IDF shot US peace activist, Tristan Anderson, in the head with a high-velocity tear gas canister.

As Anderson still lies critically injured in hospital, the Israeli government has declared it bears no responsibility for his fate since it perceives the incident as an "act of war." This is despite the fact the

shooting occurred during a civilian demonstration and there were no armed hostilities during the event or surrounding it.

Anderson's furious parents have submitted a notice of intent to file a lawsuit against the Israeli government and have lodged a formal complaint with the Israeli Department of Defence.

Their lawyer, Michael Sfard, said: "If a process by which an unarmed civilian demonstration is classified by Israel as an 'act of war,' then clearly Israel admits that it is at war with civilians. International law identifies the incident as a clear case of human rights abuse. We will pursue this matter and take the government of Israel to court."



A high-velocity tear gas canister fired at protestors

Foreign settlers, foreign

The truth about “natural growth” in settlements

By Megan Clay-Jones

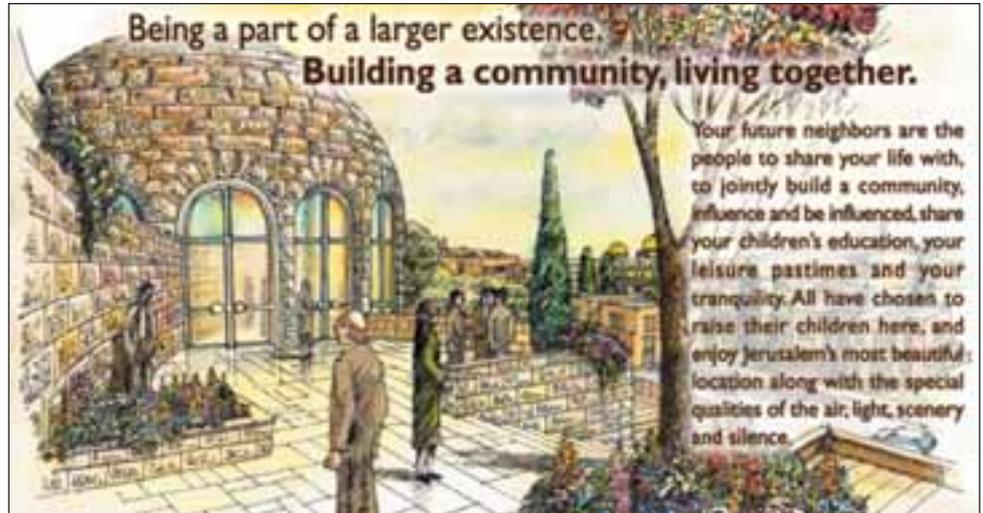
The view from Nof Zion is a magnificent panorama of Jerusalem, sweeping over the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives and the winding alleys of the Old City. Its website promises the swish new gated community will enjoy an atmosphere of “air, light and silence” with neighbours who will “jointly build a community to influence and be influenced, share your children’s education, your leisure activities and your tranquility.”

Among the first residents who were due to move in this summer were a group of American Jews from Miami, according to a report in the Jerusalem Post. They will enjoy amenities such as a shopping centre, hotel, school, parks, a country club, a synagogue and 24-hour security. Nof Zion (Zion View) will also play host to a new “Kabbalah World Centre.” Kabbalah — whose most famous devotee is Madonna — is concerned with the mystical aspect of Judaism.

Marketed to Americans

The first phase of the planned 395 housing units has been extensively marketed to wealthy Americans with slogans such as “Have a Foothold in Israel.” The sales pitch achieved great success — one US realtor reported delightedly that he was getting around eight enquiries a day. The apartments, which sell for between \$400,000 to \$580,000, have been bought in about equal numbers by Israelis and Diaspora Jews, according to Yehuda Levi, head of the real estate company handling the project, Dugal Investments and Holdings Ltd.

Nowhere does the promotional material for Nof Zion mention that it is, in fact, a settlement, being built in Arab East Jerusalem amid the 10,000 Palestinian residents of the village of Jabel Mukhaber, cutting it off from the surrounding predominantly Arab



The new Jerusalem settlement of Nof Zion

communities. The developers claim the complex is being built on about 30 acres of Jewish-owned land but the truth is around half that land was confiscated from its Palestinian owners by the Jerusalem municipality for “public services.”

The Palestinians brought an action in Israel’s High Court in 2005 and lost. Mohannad Jobarah, lawyer for the Jabel Mukhaber villagers, commented on the reason for the confiscation at the time: “If they don’t have the public services, they don’t have Nof Zion.”

Americans moving into settlements is not a new phenomenon — numbers are impossible to verify but Middle East historian Juan Cole has estimated that one third of West Bank settlers are Americans. This is the reality behind Binyamin Netanyahu’s insistence to Barack Obama that settlement expansion must be allowed because it is only due to “natural growth.”

Even more significant than the new foreign arrivals is the vast amount of foreign money, particularly from the US and much of it on tax-deductible charity status, which finances the settlements’ existence and expansion.

US donors give \$25.4 million

US donors have given a massive \$25.4 million in just the last five years to build Jewish homes in Arab parts of Jerusalem, Bloomberg reported in July after trawling through Internal Revenue Service records. Chief among these donors were Renco Group Inc founder, Ira Rennert, and bingo billionaire, Irving Moskowitz.

Moskowitz, whose Irving Moskowitz Foundation operates the Hawaiian Gardens charity bingo hall in one of California’s poorest towns, bought the former Shepherd

Hotel in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in 1985 (see p18). Under what his Foundation deems “charitable support,” he helps finance the project to build 20 Jewish homes on the site which the US has formally requested Israel to halt.

In an article in the *Guardian* in July, Haim Dov Beliak,



Irving Moskowitz

a rabbi serving Hawaiian Gardens and one of the Jewish leaders in California who have campaigned to block the flow of funds to the settlers, said: “Moskowitz is taking millions from the poorest town in California and sending it to the settlements. The money Moskowitz puts into the settlements has changed the game. Moskowitz has helped build a hardcore of settler movement that may number 50–70,000.

“He’s not paying for all of it but he puts the money up front for the vanguards that get things off the ground. That ties Israel’s hands. That ties the hands of the Obama administration. If the administration wants to be serious about stopping the settlers it has to begin in Hawaiian Gardens.”

Breaking up Arab continuity

In an article published in *Bmarev*, journalist Iroshalmi Shalom says that Moskowitz finances organisations such as Ateret Cohanim and Elad which lead settlement building in Jerusalem and that Elijah Begiv, member of the Likud Party, is at the head of this movement.

Moskowitz is a committed Zionist whose friends include Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, the

American Teens Moving to West Bank Settlements

An eye-opening article about fanatical young American males moving to settlements and outposts in the West Bank determined to get armed and fight any IDF attempts to dislodge them was published on *Conde Nast’s* website.

● Written by Matt McAllester, read it at <http://tinyurl.com/y9y9zga>

money

leading public figure behind settlement expansion in Jerusalem. Beliak told the *Guardian*: "What Moskowitz pioneered was trying to break up the continuity of the Arab population centres in Jerusalem. The consequences are radically different from just mom and pop buying a little piece of land. These are political statements and facts on the ground, and every [US] administration has allowed him to do this."

Another Diaspora Jew, Australian billionaire Yitzhak Gutnik, is one of the leading figures responsible for financing the settlements in Hebron, particularly in the old part of the city. Journalist Saleh Al-Naami explains how Gutnik "finances political and social activities organised by the Hebron settlers as well as the legal defence of many settlers who have been taken to court for attacking Palestinian civilians. Gutnik has been linked to the religious extremist party, Kach, which calls for the expulsion of Palestinians from Israel and Palestine and was a key contributor to Netanyahu's campaign."



Yitzhak Gutnik

Christians finance settlements

It is not just Diaspora Jews who are financing the settlements: millions in donations and funds from tourism also

come from fundamentalist American Christians. Journalist Sheera Frenkel quotes David Wilder, a spokesman for the Jewish settlers in Hebron: "There are many people who are not Jewish, who very much love the state of Israel, they love the land of Israel, they understand the necessity for the Jews to be here, and they express that love in different ways. One of those is financially."

Much of the money flooding into the settlements is hidden behind a smokescreen of charitable status. US organisations state that their donations are going to charities in Israel when the recipients are actually in the West Bank.

David Ignatius, writing in the *Washington Post* in April found that "a search of IRS (Inland Revenue Service) records identified 28 US charitable groups that made a total of \$33.4 million in tax-exempt contributions to settlements and related organisations between 2004 and 2007."

Charitable status

Many of the settlements have their own dedicated band of "Friends" in the US who energetically raise large amounts of funds. Emily Dische-Becker reported in *Menassat* that "one of the Israeli organisations that has led the way in developing... East Jerusalem is called Ir David, or City of David. According to Form 990s filed with the IRS, 'Friends of Ir David' raised \$8.7 million in 2004, \$1.2 million in 2005 and \$2.7 million in 2006."

American charities openly promote their activities in support of the settlements. Among these are the Christian Friends of



Israel, American Friends of the College of Judea and Samaria and the One Israel Fund, Inc. Grant Smith, director of IRmep (Institute for Research, Middle East policy) told *Menassat* that this charity funding "is the elephant in the room in all discussions — the raw power of groups funding [the Occupation] versus formal US policies."

The Israeli peace group Gush Shalom is now preparing to send details to the US tax authorities questioning the charitable status of several organisations. Spokesman Adam Keller said these operations' tax-exempt status meant that "settlement expansion is effectively being subsidised out of the pockets of the US taxpayer and government."

Long standing British anti-Zionist campaigner, Prof Moshe Machover, told *Palestine News*: "I regard the whole issue of 'natural growth' of something immoral and illegal is itself immoral and illegal — just as metastasis of cancer, while 'natural' is still malignant."

Help the settlers leave

A little known campaign is begging for funds to help settlers leave the West Bank and return to Israel. According to Bayit Ehad (One Home) around 150,000 settlers would pack their bags if only they could get compensation for their homes.

In the unlikely event that the Israeli government will facilitate the return, the campaign argues that the US and the EU should set up a compensation fund.

Benny Raz, a founding member of Bayit Ehad who lives in the Karnei Shomron settlement, has dedicated the past three years to keeping the movement alive with media exposure, workshops and public relations. But now all funds have dried up and he is in despair.

Growing influence of the religious right

The respected International Crisis Group has published a report saying that a transformation has occurred in the settlement issue as national-religious and ultra-orthodox Israelis have gained increasing influence and leverage.

It says the religious right accounts for the lion's share of the 37% increase in the settler population in the past six years. Although not a united bloc, their politicians hold over a fifth of Knesset seats, some 40% of the ruling coalition.

In Israel itself, their numbers are growing steadily and they carry weight far in excess of their numbers. They occupy key positions in the military, government, legal and education sectors, as well as the bureaucracy, and

are seeking to strengthen their ability to resist future territorial withdrawals by building up their influence.

The report suggests an early evacuation compensation package for settlers who agree to leave voluntarily should be implemented. The conditions under which settlers might live under Palestinian rule and the extent to which Palestinians might accept them could be examined. A clear offer by the Palestinian leadership to guarantee Jewish access to Jewish holy sites under its control would also be valuable.

Meanwhile, it says the Israeli government should apply its laws more consistently, whether on settlement and outpost construction or acts of violence and incitement against Palestinians.

■ Read the full report at www.crisisgroup.org

Learning amongst the rubble — education in Gaza

By Bianca Zammit

As children went back to school in Gaza after the summer break they had to struggle to learn in tents or in battered, windowless classrooms, without desks, textbooks, pens or paper.

Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" destroyed 18 schools and partially damaged 280 more and the continuing blockade bars the building materials necessary to repair them. So many schools are operating a double shift where some students have morning classes while others attend in the afternoon.

Despite the awful conditions, Palestinians have an unshakeable will to improve. It is a spirit I witnessed in action when I volunteered in the summer camps held throughout the Gaza Strip.

Around 60,000 children attended camps run by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) in tents pitched next to the sea shore or in UNRWA schools. Several thousand more went to camps run by various local NGOs in some of which I ran team-building activities and group work in psycho-social development.

Activities in the camps mostly focused on music and dance, which are very dear to Palestinian culture, to stimulate joy, energy, amusement and spontaneity in the children so as to counter the devastation and depression brought about by the attacks.

There was always an atmosphere of celebration as the traditional Palestinian dance of Dabka was blended with international influences such as breakdance, gymnastics and hip-hop, creating a vivacious atmosphere. There were also lessons in art, sports and water sports.

Many of the children came from poor families who rarely went to the sea and most did not know how to swim. They learned to swim at the camp and went on excursions to the only entertainment park in Gaza and to the zoo. There was also a wonderful kite event which saw hundreds of children flying their home-made kites on the beach.

Wherever I went in the camps, it was clear that the trauma caused by the Israeli onslaught in January will be felt by the children of Gaza for years to come. Every child that I approached insisted that I listened to his or her account of what happened during the attacks.

Nine-year-old Marryam described how she fled her home with her family and sought refuge at a UNRWA school. On returning she



Marryam with her doll, branded "Nobody"

found her house partly demolished and the walls covered with black phosphorus powder.

In her room the word "nobody" had been scrawled in Hebrew on her toys, a clear message from Israeli soldiers to dehumanise Palestinians. On the walls several other drawings depicted the faces of clowns or desecrated Islam and Palestinian culture. And because the Israelis blockade paint from entering Gaza, the family still has to wake up each morning to face this daubed aggression.

Marryam's mother, who is herself an English



Dabka dancing in summer camp

teacher at a local government school, told me: "It is very difficult to study and to concentrate whilst around you your house has been destroyed and at school your friends have been killed. As parents we have to be very strong to encourage our children to continue on their path of childhood of which learning, through formal education and play, forms the basis of their future and our society's future."

Nihad is ten years old. He was in his house in Beit Hannoun when the first drone bombs fell on the bedroom. Running in fear, he tripped and fell in a pot of boiling water which caused him third degree burns to his abdomen and legs. Nihad cannot be operated on in Gaza and needs specialised treatment abroad which his family cannot afford. After the bombs stopped falling, soldiers entered his house and took his older brother prisoner.

His mother, Um Suhayll alMasri, said: "Last year my son asked me, 'Why can't I wear the same uniform as my class mates? Am I not worth as much as they are?' This year we do not even have enough money to buy our children notebooks and other basic stationery."

"It is very difficult to study and to concentrate whilst around you your house has been destroyed and at school your friends have been killed"

Whether the summer camps have been successful in achieving their purpose can only be assessed as the new scholastic year unfolds. According to the UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs), the last scholastic year saw a sharp decrease in the progress of students at all levels.

A farmer who lives close to the border remarked to me that Palestinian children can never be compared to children from other countries because, whilst other children are concerned with food, toys and family, Palestinian children are still under the shock of the latest attacks and past conflict.

"Listen to ten-year-old Palestinians and they will be talking politics. Ask a nine-year-old names and events relating to Palestine and they will give you the right answers," he said. Sixty-one years after the foundation of Israel, Palestinians are still without their country and without their state; the attacks have now left many of them without homes and without schools.

Judaising the Galilee

By Ilan Pappé

Officially, no Palestinians live in the “Jewish” city of Upper Nazareth. The city’s elegant website appears only in Hebrew and in Russian. In fact, according to the Arab Association for Human Rights, 20 per cent of the city’s population are Palestinians, most of whom moved from the crowded Arab city of old Nazareth at the bottom of the hill and from the villages surrounding it. Some of them had to pay as much as £500,000 for a house, three times the market value.

There are no Palestinian schools or kindergartens so the roads between Nazareth and Upper Nazareth are overcrowded in rush-hour. But the non-existent 20 per cent are represented on the council and, Israel being Israel, the two Palestinian councillors are in a weird coalition with the ultra-right-wing party of Avigdor Lieberman.

The mayor needed their support in order to defeat the Labour Party. They demanded, and received, a promise that an Arab school would be built in Upper Nazareth. The mayor is nonetheless committed to the “Judaisation” — i.e. the de-Arabisation — of his city, and Lieberman declared in August that stopping the immigration of Arabs into Nazareth, as he puts it, is a national priority.

When David Ben-Gurion toured the region in 1953 he was outraged by the presence of so many Arabs. He therefore appointed the director general of the Ministry of Defence, Shimon Peres, to “Judaise” the Galilee using emergency regulations that allowed the army to confiscate land from the Palestinians.

“Each expansion has been on land expropriated from Palestinians”

Upper Nazareth opened in 1957 and since then has quadrupled in size, each expansion being on land expropriated from Arabs. Its present 50,000 inhabitants live in a dynamic urban space that keeps expanding and developing. The 70,000 Palestinians of old Nazareth live in a city half the size that is not allowed to expand by a single square metre; indeed, one of its western hilltops was recently requisitioned for Upper Nazareth.

In Yitzhak Rabin’s 1976 plan of Judaisation, “Yehud Ha-Galil,” the main tactic was to disrupt the natural geographical continuity between Palestinian villages by driving Jewish wedges between them. The Jews came, but the Palestinians



Looking east over old Nazareth, with the new white buildings of Upper Nazareth perched on the hill above. Photo: Jonathan Cook

did not leave, so a second wave of Judaisation began in 2001, under Peres and Ariel Sharon.

Sharon ordered the building of a new heavy industrial site, Ziporit, on land expropriated from the Palestinians and close to several villages. The site includes a glass factory and an aluminium works; according to international law, neither can be built near where people live. The closest of the villages is Mashad: since the opening of the site the number of deaths from cancer there has risen by 40 per cent.

The present attempt is motivated by the failure of the previous policies to make the Galilee in general, and Nazareth in particular, Jewish: well-off Palestinians have begun buying houses in the citadel that was built to evict them. Binyamin Netanyahu regards this as a grave threat to Israel’s national security.

Local politicians are even blunter. “If we lose the Jewish majority in the Galilee this is the end of the Jewish state,” Motti Dotan, a member of the Labour Party, said recently. “I would like to imagine a Galilee without Arabs: no thefts, no crimes... we will have normal life.” The racist mood in Israel absolves the government from any inhibitions that may have restricted its actions in the past.

Now ecologists, industrialists and academics have been drafted in. The Jewish National Fund is behind the initiative, along with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, and the prestigious union of Israeli wine producers has adopted a plan prepared by leading academics from the Israel Institute of Technology.

Published in 2003, the plan calls for the Jewish “takeover” of the Galilee. “It is either them or us,” it begins. “The land problems in the Galilee proved that any territory not taken by Zionist elements is going to be coveted by non-Zionists.”

The gist of what they propose is to

seize strategically important land by force and hold onto it until Jews settle on it. The director general of AMPA, an electrical manufacturer, recently said that his company is actively supporting the “Judaisation of the Galilee” by building new communities in the area for AMPA’s veterans: “We are not ashamed to say that our plans have a Zionist element,” he said.

“The racist mood in Israel absolves the government from any inhibitions”

The Palestinian village of Ayn Mahil, adjacent to Upper Nazareth, is now accessible only by one road which goes through a Jewish religious neighbourhood. On the Day of Atonement, the people of Ayn Mahil cannot leave or enter their village.

They will soon be encircled by a new town called Shacharit (which means “dawn” in Hebrew but is also the name of the first Jewish prayer of the day). Ten thousand ultra-Orthodox Jews will be settled there and the hope is that they will rectify the “unfavourable” demographic balance, as well as cut Ayn Mahil off from the greater Nazareth area. The village’s ancient olive groves have been uprooted in preparation for the building work. A new road network will ensure that other villages are separated from each other and from Nazareth.

Ilán Pappé is Chair of the Department of History at the University of Exeter and the author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. This article was first published in *London Review of Books* in August 2009.

The art of dispossession

How Israel manipulates the law to steal Palestinian land

By Sharen Green

Perhaps the most astonishing fact about the current house eviction campaign in East Jerusalem is that the Israeli authorities are so keen to use the fig-leaf of legality to justify the unjustifiable.

Families have been forced out of homes allocated to them by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) when the State of Israel was founded. And Israeli courts repeatedly find in favour of settler groups who claim the homes belonged to Jews before 1948 — a privilege which goes only one way as Palestinians are spectacularly unsuccessful when trying to regain property they can prove they own.

This eagerness to use or — it could be argued — abuse the law to expropriate Palestinian land struck me over and over again while I worked in the West Bank this summer.

Oslo Accords used to justify land theft

Israel applies whichever laws best suit its purpose — the laws of the vanished Ottoman and British Empires, or Jordanian law. I even discovered that the Oslo Accords are called in to justify land expropriation.

Abu Azzam, from Jayyous near the West Bank city of Qalqilya, was honeymooning in Jordan when the Six Day War broke out in 1967. He remembered the Absentee Property Law which was used with such devastating effect in 1948 when, if you were “absent” when Israel was established, you weren’t allowed back and your property was forfeit. The controversy still rages, with Jews from all over the world allowed to migrate to Israel but Palestinians who still retain the keys of their houses denied the Right of Return accorded to every other refugee on earth.

Abu Azzam and his bride, Siham, walked home to Jayyous to ensure that didn’t happen to them. His lawyer, Wi’am Shabita, an Israeli advocate who specialises in political and land cases in the Israeli Supreme Court, told me that the Israeli government used the experience of the partition of India to formulate the Absentee Property law, enacted in 1953 and applied retrospectively from the inception of the Jewish State. “All those who could prove they were on their land that day kept it,” he said.

All the six plots of land that Abu Azzam



Abu Azzam and his wife, Siham

owns now lie on the other side of the Separation Barrier which has sliced off 70% of Jayyous’s agricultural land and all six of its water sources. But one plot was in jeopardy long before the fence went up because Israel threatened to confiscate it, using an old British Mandate law which classified any land which was 50% or more rock as not suitable for agriculture.

“Israel applies whichever laws best suit its purpose”

“I sold 43 goats and sheep and my wife sold her gold and jewellery,” said Abu Azzam.

“I bought a big bulldozer and cleared the rocks. I was very proud that I saved my land.”

Now even more of his land is in danger of “confiscation.” This time Israel is using an old Ottoman empire law of 1860, amended in 1900, which says that if the land isn’t cultivated for three years it reverts to the state — in this case Israel though, according to international law, the State of Israel has no business here. The British Mandate, which operated from 1922 till 1948, retained this Ottoman law.

Confiscation by Ottoman law

Shabita told me of a case of a woman from the nearby village of Deir Istya who went to the United States and nearly lost her land under the Absentee Property Law. “The Israelis call themselves ‘guardians of the property,’” he said. When she proved she had been back within the time limit, the

Israeli authorities tried to confiscate it under the Ottoman non-cultivation rule.

Aerial photos of her land are now taken twice a year proving it is cultivated but her case is not yet resolved. “Until now they couldn’t offer aerial photos,” said Wi’am.

I visited Izbat at Tabib, a tiny village of 300 souls. The mayor showed us the brand-new community centre which contains the school and will house a clinic — if it’s not bulldozed.

Together with half the houses, the bus stop and the concrete arch welcoming you to the village, the centre has been issued with a demolition order. The reasoning is that the land was once designated agricultural land by the Jordanians who administered the West Bank following the ending of the Mandate and before the 1967 invasion.

Rules don’t apply to settlers

Strangely enough, this rule doesn’t seem to apply to the Israeli settlement above Tabib — it’s spreading rapidly downhill.

Another community Shabita represents suffered because of the Oslo agreements after coming into conflict with 500 Israeli settlers.

“It would have been much easier to move 500 settlers than 10,000 villagers,” he said.

“But the judge said he couldn’t do anything about the settlers because what happens to settlements must wait until Final Status negotiations under Oslo.”

During a few days’ leave in Israel, I saw how manipulation of the law had been used to rid Jaffa of thousands of Palestinians. I took an “alternative” tour of the town, whose Palestinian population has dropped from 147,000 in 1947 to 30,000 now, and the guide, Jewish Israeli Judit Ilani,



Refurbished houses in Jaffa

described the techniques the municipality used to get hold of many beautiful old houses.

To repair your house you needed a permit and permits are never issued to Palestinians. When the houses fall into disrepair, the authorities say they are not fit for human habitation and the families are forced out.

“When the Arabs left the houses, Jews immediately started repairing them,” Judit said.

“Suddenly the developers got permits to do that.”

In many cases, Palestinian owners have been forced to sign contracts in Hebrew which they couldn't read, she said. The contracts signed over ownership to the state and the erstwhile owners became tenants. Worse, their protected tenancies only lasted two generations so the grandchildren born to those who signed had no title.

“A very clear policy of ethnic cleansing”

“The babies from the day of their birth were intruders — it was a very clear policy of ethnic cleansing,” Judit said.

Palestinians who poured into Jaffa from the surrounding villages in the wake of the founding of the Jewish state in 1948 were told Jaffa was not their town and they should go back to their homes. But their homes had been flattened in an operation which destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages.

The aggressive town planning policies being implemented in the West Bank which result in Palestinian dispossession and land gains for Jews is just more of the same. But it intrigues me that the Israeli authorities resort to such convoluted methods. Why don't they just steal the land and be done with it?

Sharen Green served as an ecumenical companioner under a World Council of Churches programme run by Quaker Peace and Social Witness in Britain and Ireland.

■ Read the latest UNOCHA report on evictions in East Jerusalem at <http://tinyurl.com/ybo7cnz>

The Goldstone report — and after

By Gill Swain

Israel committed deliberate war crimes and possible crimes against humanity in its mass assault on Gaza for which individuals responsible should face criminal charges, according to an exhaustive UN inquiry led by former South African judge, Richard Goldstone.

Goldstone, who is Jewish and has been described by his daughter, Nicole, as “a Zionist who loves Israel,” said in his 575-page report that Operation Cast Lead, which killed nearly 1400 Palestinians, hundreds of them children, was “a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population.”

The UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict concluded that Hamas also committed

war crimes but singled out Israel for the most serious condemnation and rejected its argument that the three week bombardment was a response to Palestinian rocket fire and therefore an act of self-defence.

Goldstone's report was hailed by Palestinians and supporters of the

rule of law worldwide as a watershed; it called for suspects to be held accountable before international courts if Israel failed to prosecute them — which it never does. Israel, which refused to co-operate with the inquiry, rejected the evidence.

The UN Human Rights Council was about to issue its response to the report when, to the fury of large sections of the Palestinian public, the Palestinian Authority suddenly withdrew its support for a resolution endorsing the inquiry which meant the response would be delayed until March.

This reversal came after intense pressure from the Americans who told the PA that going ahead with the vote would harm efforts to restart peace talks with the Israelis, according to diplomats quoted by news agencies. Ali Abunimah, founder of the Electronic Intifada, was among many who condemned the move calling it a “stunning blow to the Palestinian people.”

In an apparent U-turn a few days later, PA officials admitted they had made a mistake. They backed a request by Libya for the UN Security Council to discuss whether to hold an emergency session on the Goldstone report. In a closed meeting the request was rejected.

If, as seems likely, the US was instrumental in that decision, all hopes



that Obama would stand up to the Zionist lobby will be dashed, at the first test of his resolve.

Richard Goldstone could hardly have a more distinguished record in the field of investigating state-sponsored crime. He was chair of a commission in South Africa which played a critical role in uncovering the wrongdoing of the security forces in

the apartheid era.

He served as a judge in the Constitutional Court during South Africa's transition to democracy and was the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Goldstone's team of four examined 36 incidents during

“Failing to pursue justice will have a deeply corrosive effect on international justice, and reveal an unacceptable hypocrisy”

the Gaza assault including the deaths of 22 members of the Samouni family who were killed after following soldiers' instructions to shelter in a house in Zeitoun. The inquiry said the killings were a “grave breach” of the 4th Geneva Convention.

It found seven incidents in which civilians were shot while waving white flags and said that a “direct and intentional attack” on the al-Quds hospital may amount to a war crime. It also found Israeli soldiers guilty of using Palestinian civilians as human shields.

After the publication of the report, Goldstone wrote: “Pursuing justice in this case is essential because no state or armed group should be above the law. Western governments in particular face a challenge because they have pushed for accountability in places like Darfur, but now must do the same with Israel, an ally and a democratic state.

“Failing to pursue justice for serious violations during the fighting will have a deeply corrosive effect on international justice, and reveal an unacceptable hypocrisy. As a service to the hundreds of civilians who needlessly died and for the equal application of international justice, the perpetrators of serious violations must be held to account.”

Life in a refugee camp

Polly Basak reports from Dheisheh camp on the problems, and resilience, of living as long-term refugees

I first saw Dheisheh Refugee Camp on a visit to Palestine in the summer of 2008 and was shocked by the realities of refugee life. High-rise houses, overcrowding, a lack of communal space, inadequate water and electricity supplies, abject poverty and very little health provision are normal conditions for the refugees of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Located just outside Bethlehem on the busy Hebron Road, Dheisheh Refugee Camp has a population of 12,900, half of them children. It is the biggest camp in the vicinity and the fifth largest in the West Bank. A further 500,000 refugees live in camps in the Gaza Strip.

Dheisheh, which was set up in 1948 when over 750,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and land, is one of 19 registered refugee camps in the West Bank. Most of its residents are originally from 45 villages in western Jerusalem and western Hebron. These villages, which they can no longer access, are now destroyed, deserted or inhabited by Israeli citizens.

In 1949, UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, gave every family in the camp a tent to live in. At the time most people thought this was a temporary measure and they would eventually return to their homes. After seven years with no sign of this happening, UNRWA built very basic living units for each family.



Dheisheh, an overview

Alleyways the only playgrounds

Finding the inadequate units intolerable, families started building extensions onto these dwellings and the result is what Dheisheh is today. Space is extremely limited; there are no open areas and children play in the narrow alleyways. Members of an extended family usually live together in one building and most houses can now only be extended upwards because there is no room widthways. The walkways through the camp sometimes lead through people's properties.

I decided to return to the camp as a volunteer health worker and researcher at the invitation of Wisam Hasanat, director of Ibdad Health Committee. Established in 2003, the Committee was set



A children's event held on a roof because there are no open spaces

up because the UNRWA Health Clinic had just one full-time doctor for the whole camp. It is run by refugees who are doctors, nurses, social workers or other health workers. Focusing on areas such as diabetes, disadvantaged children, women's health, eye disease and general wellbeing, the Committee raises its own funds in Palestine and abroad.

I was primarily involved in the Diabetes Project in Dheisheh. With a rising level of diabetes in the camp the Health Committee provides advice on managing the disease and arranges home visits to patients who are unable to come to the centre. Working with health worker Suhaila Sulieman, I quickly learned how life in the camp has been adversely affected by the Wall which cuts through the heart of the Bethlehem area.

No money for medicine

"The situation is very bad for many people in Dheisheh," Suhaila told me. "They have barely enough money to live on. Most of the men can no longer go to work in Jerusalem and it is impossible for them to find other work. Some of the diabetic patients can't even afford medicine and



Polly (right) with Suhaila

we don't have the resources to help them. We have recently been given some funding so we bought some new glucose meters which is a great help. But now we need more money to buy more glucose meter strips as they are running out."

On home visits I saw stark evidence of the hardship of life in the camp. Once we came upon the distressing scene of a 76-year-old widow slumped on her kitchen floor. Her disabled daughter was unable to help her and the widow had not eaten so her blood sugar levels had fallen and she had collapsed. After we picked her up and gave her some food, her condition improved but I knew that her situation of having very little support was common.

As well as working in the Committee, I carried out interviews

in order to find out more about health in the camp. During one long discussion a resident called Manal told me how she was severely wounded in 1989 during the first Intifada. When Israeli tanks invaded the camp she had been throwing stones in resistance like so many of the Dheisheh residents and was shot in the chest.

"When they shot me I wanted to die," she said. "I lost so much blood and my breathing altered. My kidney was also damaged. Fragments of the bullet still remain in my body." Manal continues to have breathing problems and is in constant pain as well as in fear for the life of her children. "The Israeli army has entered my home many times," she went on. "The last time they came they took my husband and he is in jail. I don't even know why. Now, I have barely enough money to feed my children."



Dheisheh, 1948

Never give up hope

One evening I was invited to the house of Kafaya, another Ibdaa health worker. Whilst she served the delicious Palestinian rice dish of maqlubah, she told of her despair at the situation in the camp. "Many people here have nothing. UNRWA gives some families rice but it is of such bad quality that you cannot eat it," she said.

After seeing Israel's terrifying invasion of Gaza, Kafaya now fears West Bank towns like Bethlehem may soon suffer similar devastation. In the face of all these anxieties, people like Kafaya have no escape as their movements are highly restricted with most men black-listed from ever leaving the West Bank. "We are deemed

a security threat even though most of us have done nothing," she said in frustration.

But Kafaya remained defiant: "We, as Palestinians, will never give up hope. We need the international community to come to Palestine and see what the situation is like for themselves. Then they will know the truth."

Back in the Committee's clinic, Wisam stressed the importance of encouraging people to visit Palestine. He said there are opportunities at Dheisheh to help with sport, art, historical and political work and looking after children, and free accommodation is available. "We are always looking for new volunteers and we have something for everyone," he enthused.

My time in Dheisheh exceeded my greatest expectations. As well as giving me a thorough insight into Palestinian refugee life in terms of health, the economic and political situation, the history of the region and day-to-day conditions, I also built lasting friendships with many of the health workers and residents. The hospitality, friendliness and openness of people living in such trying conditions was truly inspiring. Volunteering in Dheisheh is not simply a work placement; it is an enriching experience that lives in the memory forever.

Polly Basak is a project manager on a public health law project at the University of Hertfordshire. For more information about volunteering, contact her at pollybasak@hotmail.com or Wisam Hasanat, Director of the Health Committee, Dheisheh Refugee Camp at wissamhasanat@gmail.com

Week of supermarket boycott actions — November 7–15

Organise now!

Phone-in day Wednesday, November 11

It is time to step up the supermarket boycott campaign.

From November 7 to 15, **PSC** and other organisations are targeting **Waitrose** and **Morrisons** supermarkets in particular as both refuse to discuss the question of settlement goods. We aim to inundate them with calls to their HQs on **Wednesday November 11**. Note these numbers:

Morrisons Customer Services — 0845 611 6111

Waitrose Customer Services — 0800 188 884

You can also write to your local store and the chain's HQ, organise a demo, hand out leaflets and tell the local press.

If you have no Waitrose or Morrisons in your area, please raise the issue in your local stores.

Useful resources including model letters, videos of demos, pictures and links to background information are available via www.bigcampaign.org.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT PSC OFFICE IN GOOD TIME TO REQUEST LEAFLETS & STICKERS!

Waitrose:

Email: customer_service@waitrose.co.uk

Waitrose Customer Service Dept, Waitrose Ltd, Doncaster Rd, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8YA

Morrisons:

Head Office — 0845 611 5000

Registered office — Hillmore House, Gain Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD3 7DL

Eye on the web

- A short film, "Walled Horizons," produced by the UN in Jerusalem on the humanitarian impact of the Wall is calmly narrated by Roger Waters, founding member of the former Pink Floyd rock band. It also features Palestinians affected by the Wall and three Israeli senior security officials, two of whom were directly responsible for planning its route. See it on YouTube, Part 1: <http://tinyurl.com/ye46jih> Part 2: <http://tinyurl.com/yechvpc>



- MEND is an organisation based in Jerusalem which focuses on equipping Palestinian young people to respond to violence and injustice with active nonviolence. www.mendonline.org

- Longtime Quaker peace activist, Landrum Bolling, interviews Jimmy Carter, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, to learn how the Obama administration can achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace in a new 20-minute DVD ideal for group viewing and discussion.

"New Hope for Peace" is available free from the Foundation for Middle East Peace by email request to info@fmep.org. You can preview the DVD on YouTube <http://tinyurl.com/ybwtxz1>

- A powerful BBC film exposes the abuse and violent ill-treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers during night raids. It features an interview with a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who was badly beaten and with a former Israeli soldier who confesses that such treatment is routine. <http://tinyurl.com/npvwuw>

- There is an excellent video of the crew and passengers of the Free Gaza boat, Spirit of Humanity, being interviewed and the boat being boarded at www.ricenpeas.com. Very dramatic.

View from the West Bank

The first Fatah conference to be held for 20 years took place in Bethlehem in August. Laila Hakim reports

A surprise announcement appeared on the website of the Palestinian National Authority on August 26, over the signature of Salam Fayyad.

Fayyad, appointed Prime Minister by President Mahmoud Abbas when the fragile unity government established after the 2006 elections collapsed under concerted Israel/US pressure, announced that a Palestinian state will be established in the West Bank and Gaza before the end of 2011, regardless of Israel's views or actions in the meantime.

He talked of "ending the occupation, despite the occupation" and of building "facts on the ground, consistent with having our state emerge as a fact that cannot be denied."

His detailed plan, the "Program of the Thirteenth Government of the Palestinian National Authority" (see <http://tinyurl.com/l2qe5r>) contains some initiatives which under present conditions sound extremely ambitious: an international airport in the Jordan Valley, strengthened "security forces," rail links to neighbouring states, tax incentives to attract foreign investment and reduced economic dependence on Israel and on foreign aid.

It is not clear how this utopian state of affairs is to be achieved, but some analysts suggest Fayyad is positioning himself to head up a pseudo-state on some of the West Bank, linked in some way to Gaza, which would be under effective Israeli control.

Many fear this would be more akin to the "independent homelands" proposed for the black majority in apartheid South Africa than to a genuine sovereign state. Then any refugees would return there, rather than to their lands and homes in Israel, and its capital would be either Ramallah or the new city of Rawabi, to be built just north of Ramallah.

The announcement came shortly after the Sixth General Conference of Fatah (the party founded by Yasser Arafat and now chaired by Abbas). The decision to convene it in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank was criticised by some Fatah members since it meant that Israel was able to bar many activists from Gaza and from the Palestinian diaspora from attending.

In addition, several hundred Fatah members were not allowed to travel from Gaza by the Hamas leadership, who



PHOTO: MAAN IMAGES

Fatah leaders pray at the tomb of Yasser Arafat, after the elections

demanding the release of the many Hamas members and sympathisers imprisoned in the West Bank.

Hence the majority of the 2000-plus attendees — and therefore of those elected to the 22-strong Central Committee — were from the West Bank, many of them veterans of the party, in their 60s and 70s. One newcomer is 50 year-old Marwan Barghouti, with a strong popular base, but who is now serving five consecutive life terms in an Israeli prison. He is reported to be seen in some Israeli circles as a future leader with whom Israel could do business.

Another new member is the controversial Mohammed Dahlan, head of Fatah security forces in Gaza until the 2006 elections when Hamas had a landslide victory. He was responsible for planning an armed take-over of Gaza in 2007, backed by the US, but preempted by Hamas forces.

Dahlan's power-base is now in the West Bank and he is known to be looked upon favourably by both Israel and the US as a strong man sufficiently "pragmatic" to

give up on and indeed suppress the armed struggle. While he spoke vehemently against Hamas in the conference, Barghouti has been a strong advocate of reconciliation and the formation of a unity government.

The Revolutionary Council, a broader legislative body of 128 members which monitors the performance of the Central Committee, was elected at the same time. New members include Afif Safieh, former Palestinian Ambassador in the UK, the US and Moscow, Uri Davis, Israeli law professor and an outspoken anti-Zionist and Marwan Barghouti's wife, Fadwa, a lawyer and tireless campaigner for her husband's release.

Although in his final report Abbas did use the word "resistance," it was not clear what form that might take. He has in the past criticised Hamas for their policy of armed resistance — but he seemed in tune with his rivals in demanding the release of all Palestinian prisoners and a halt to the building of settlements as prerequisites to any peace agreement.

Our man in Ramallah

Little is said in the Western media about the role of US General Keith Dayton, appointed by Condoleezza Rice in 2005 as "US Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority," to "help reform, train, and equip Palestinian Authority security forces." Since 2007 the forces have purportedly aimed at "countering militant and/or terror organisations" in the West Bank. As of June 2009, 400 Presidential Guardsmen and 1,700 National Security Forces troops had been trained at the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) near Amman, at a cost so far of about \$300 million (see

Congressional Research Service report, June 2009).

Dayton has, in effect, overseen the creation of a paramilitary force in the West Bank which has carried out arrests, raids on charitable institutions and NGOs, assassinations and, it is said, torture of political opponents of the Palestinian Authority. Although nominally under the control of the PA, these squads are generally thought to work closely with the Israeli military and security forces.



Israel's new separation policy

By Jonathan Cook

In an echo of restrictions already firmly in place in Gaza, Israel has begun barring movement between Israel and the West Bank for those holding a foreign passport, including humanitarian aid workers and thousands of Palestinian residents.

The new policy is designed to force foreign citizens to choose between visiting Israel — including East Jerusalem, which Israel has annexed illegally — and the West Bank. It breaches Israel's commitments under the Oslo accords to Western governments that their citizens would be given continued access to the occupied territories. Israel has not suggested there are any security justifications for the move. U.S. diplomats, who are aware of the policy, have raised no objections.

The rule change will further separate East Jerusalem, the planned capital of a Palestinian state, from the West Bank. It is also expected to increase the pressures on families where one member holds a foreign passport to leave the region.

The regulation was introduced quietly three months ago at the Allenby Bridge terminal on the border with Jordan, the only international crossing point for Palestinians in the West Bank. Israeli officials now issue foreign visitors with a visa for the "Palestinian Authority only." A similar policy is in place at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv.

Sam Bahour, a Palestinian-American living in Ramallah who heads a Right to Enter campaign highlighting Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement, said: "This is a deepening and refinement of the policy of separation that began with Israel establishing checkpoints and building the wall.

"Foreign governments like the U.S. ought to be up in arms because this rule violates their own citizens' rights under diplomatic agreements. So far they have remained silent."

"When Israel prevents access to an area, it raises the question of what is happening there"

Bahour, 44, said the immediate victims of the new policy would be thousands of Palestinians from abroad who, like himself, were returned to the West Bank during the more optimistic Oslo period.

Well-educated and often with established careers, they have been vital both to the regeneration of the local Palestinian economy by investing in and setting up businesses and to the nurturing of civil society by running welfare organisations and teaching at universities.

Although many have married local spouses, Israel has usually denied them residency permits, forcing them to renew tourist visas every three months. Bahour recently lost his limited privileges when he was forced to take a Palestinian ID, which supersedes his American passport in the eyes of the Israeli authorities, to avoid the danger of being deported.

Overnight his business consultancy lost a quarter of its clients — all from nearby East Jerusalem — because he is now barred from leaving the West Bank. "The ID was bittersweet for me. It means I can't be separated from my family here, but it also means I am now subject to the closures and arrests faced by ordinary Palestinians," he said.

Sari Bashi, a lawyer with Gisha, an Israeli organisation that challenges restrictions on Palestinian movement, said staff of major international organisations such as the United Nations refugee agency, UNRWA, and its humanitarian division, OCHA, had been denied entry at Ben Gurion airport after declaring that they were working in the West Bank.

"When Israel prevents access to an area, it raises the question of what is happening there," she said. "What are we being prevented from seeing?"

■ A version of this article originally appeared in *The National*, published in Abu Dhabi.

Brothers Jameel and Luay Zayed, both British citizens, were denied access to Israel at Ben Gurion airport in September when on their way to visit their Palestinian grandparents who are Israeli citizens living in Jerusalem.

Jameel, a PhD student at Cambridge University, says: "We were detained for nine hours and interrogated repeatedly with no access to food. Humiliated by the numerous strip searches, we were finally told that our access to Israel had been denied. We were then taken to a detention centre and locked in a cell for another nine hours awaiting deportation."

Jameel, a research chemist involved in a collaborative project with Israel funded by the British Council, has complained to MPs in his home town of Cardiff and in Cambridge and has the backing of the Royal Society, the National Academy of Sciences and the University and College Union (UCU).

Sally Hunt, general secretary of the UCU, wrote to the Israeli ambassador to the UK, Ron Prosser, that she was "shocked" by the case. "The Israeli government repeatedly makes claims regarding academic freedom in Israel and the good relations between Israeli universities and the wider academic community, but this incident appears to reflect the reality of those relationships, when a junior official can make an arbitrary decision to subject the citizen of another country to a prolonged, unjustified and humiliating ordeal and deny them legitimate access to their academic work and their families."



Jameel (left) and Luay Zayed with their grandfather

Jameel says: "We wish to take our story up the highest level since this is totally unacceptable. Will we be able to enter through Jordan in the future with such a mark on our name on Israeli records? Will we be able to see our family again?"

■ If you have similar experiences to share, you can contact Jameel at jj296@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Families turfed out to

Rada Daniell reports on the impact of evictions on the people of Sheikh Jarrah

The Israeli master plan for Jerusalem — which Israeli leaders consider to be a *fait accompli* — is to construct a crescent-shaped belt of settlements around the Old City to form a physical link between settlements in the West Bank and Jewish West Jerusalem, a project known as E1.

Until recently the E1 venture has been implemented opportunistically by the purchase of Palestinian houses, often for astronomical sums of money, by fanatical and shadowy settler organisations or by the expropriation of empty Palestinian houses.

President Barack Obama's declared determination to address the Palestinian question has provoked a visible haste on the part of the Israeli government literally to cement by bricks and mortar the desired strategic points in Palestinian East Jerusalem and to expel as many as possible of its quarter of a million Palestinian inhabitants.

Israel's most liberal daily paper, *Ha'aretz*, wrote recently that Binyamin Netanyahu's plans included building 3,500 housing units, commercial areas and tourist sites in E1. A few weeks ago the government announced the construction of 486 units in the settlement Pisgat Ze'ev to connect it to West Jerusalem and 455 units in the West Bank.

“Israel does not hide its intention to create a judaised Jerusalem”

Israel does not hide its intention to create a judaised Jerusalem. The process will isolate the remaining Palestinians in ghetto neighbourhoods and sever their territorial connections with the West Bank and their main places of worship, Harem Al-Sharif (Temple Mount) and Al-Aqsa mosque.

Netanyahu's message to Obama was that Israel's sovereignty over East Jerusalem was not to be questioned and that Israelis would acquire and build property wherever they liked in the city they regard as the capital of their state, though no other nation recognises it as such.

The East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah has the bad luck to be part of the E1 area. Here, and in neighbouring



Sleeping under the olive tree

areas such as Silwan, Ras Al-Amud and the Mount of Olives, Palestinians have lived for centuries while others came as refugees in 1948.

So Sheikh Jarrah has become the focus of intense settler activity, supported by the police and backed financially by figures such as American bingo billionaire, Irving Moskowitz (see pages 8–9).

First to be evicted was the Al Kurd family, in November 2008, in a police raid in the middle of the night. Mr Al Kurd later died of a heart attack and his wife, Um Kamel, pitched a tent on a nearby parking lot which has been destroyed and re-erected six times.

Then on 2 August, 53 members of the Hanoun and Al-Ghawi families, aged from three to 87 and including 20 children, were evicted at gunpoint from four homes before settlers were ushered in to take up residence in their properties.

The evictions have attracted universal and unusually strong condemnation from all key international agencies including the US, the UN and the Quartet. Many consulates are located in Sheikh Jarrah and the American Colony Hotel, where “peace envoy,” Tony Blair, resides on the top floor, is just around the corner from the Hanouns. The UK Consulate expressed its deep concern about extremist Jewish settlers setting the agenda in this ancient Arab neighbourhood.

But despite all the strong words, after more than two months the Hanoun and Ghawi families are still homeless and are sleeping in the street opposite their homes, the settlers having failed to get a court order to move them on. They refuse to accept the legality of the evictions and plan to continue to camp outside while struggling to carry out ordinary daily tasks such as going to work and sending their children to school.

These families have lived in Sheikh Jarrah since 1956 when, as refugees from West Jerusalem, they received funding from UNWRA to build their homes on land provided by the Jordanian government. But in a protracted court case the settlers claimed — with documents that were proven to be false — that Jews had owned the land before that.

The first judge resigned rather than make a decision, the second ruled for the settlers. Afterwards Maher Hanoun, said “OK, if that is the law, let them take this



The Al-Ghawi family home

make way for settlers



Maher Hanoun and family

house, but give me back my house in West Jerusalem.” Unfortunately, the laws that settlers have access to do not apply to this mild-mannered Palestinian.

This spring I was a volunteer in Palestine and I frequently stayed with one of the Hanoun families. At the time, they expected the eviction to come at any moment. One of the sons stayed on guard in front of the house until 2 am when he had to go to work, then his father would take over.

That went on night after night, week after week. I remember coming in one late afternoon to find everybody asleep because they were under constant stress and totally exhausted.

At night we would sit with our warm and friendly hosts, Saleem Hanoun and his wife, Najla, and talk about everything. We tried to joke and laugh to forget that that might be the eviction night. While Saleem and Najla worried about how each member of their family would cope, I felt rage that this could be happening to them for one and only reason — they were Palestinians living in a house that Israelis wanted.

I remember the first time we thought the Israelis had come to do their cruel deed. It was about 3 am and Saleem, who was on guard duty, woke us all up and gently said: “They have arrived.”

A heavy silence descended and we all looked at each other, fearing what would



Settler family in the al-Ghawis' house

happen next. We started dressing feverishly and picking up things we could not part with. I had a feeling like a vacuum in my head and my stomach. Najla put her scarf on and we all lined up with our little bundles and waited.

It turned out to be a false alarm — one of many. Police and groups of settlers would frequently decide to have some late night fun and drive by the houses with their horns blaring and blue lights flashing.

Then the time came when it was not a false alarm. I was back in the UK and watched the evictions on TV with tears in my eyes and my heart pounding as I saw Israeli border police, known for their brutality, ushering into the Hanouns' houses families of Orthodox Jewish settlers, some of whom could not hide the joy of victory.

“Israeli courts, which took our houses away, are not free and fair”

The evicted families' possessions were loaded on a truck and dumped in the middle of the road and later in the evening the police beat up members of the families, neighbours and other supporters causing injury to 13 protestors and arresting 35.

As the nights turned cold at the beginning of October, Sheikh Nasser Al-Ghawi told me on the phone that nine men and boys from his family were sleeping in a small tent while six women, young girls and the smaller children spent nights in one hotel room and days in the tent.

It has been raining, the tent leaks and two of his children have fallen sick. “All this time we have been living without cooking or washing facilities. We survive on takeaways and go to neighbours to wash. It is difficult to live in the street. We send the children to school but it is difficult for them to learn without the security of home family life,” he said.

Sheikh Nasser said the family was getting no help, except from neighbours. Now he has to find winter accommodation for his family and money to pay rent, but mostly he wants to “let everybody know that Israeli courts, which took our houses away, are not free and fair.

“I hope for peace in Jerusalem. I want Israel to let us live in this small part of Jerusalem. We can live in our own state in peace next to the Israelis living in their own state,” he said.

Maher Hanoun, who has become a family spokesman during the decades long struggle that he and his two brothers have fought for their homes, said that 18 members of their families were living under an olive tree 30 metres from their houses.

Maher says they refuse to become refugees for the second time and will continue to demand to return to their homes and campaign to prevent the same happening to other East Jerusalem Palestinians.

“Being homeless has affected the health of all of us. We get very little help from anybody,” he told me. Sleeping in the street was particularly stressful for the children. “We are exposed to all kinds of people passing by and the children are scared. What is even more difficult is to watch the settlers coming in and out of our houses. The children just want to go back to their rooms.”

Maher's plans now are to find accommodation and introduce some normality into his children's lives. “We will continue to protest under the olive tree because we can not forget. We will continue our peaceful fight for our own rights and for the rights of all Palestinians.”

This year alone, up to July, the UN documented forcible displacement of 194 people, including 95 children, in East Jerusalem. Another 107, including 46 children, have been affected by house demolitions. Conservative UN estimates show that 1,500 demolition orders are pending. Just in Sheikh Jarrah, 25 of the Hanouns' and Al-Ghawis' neighbours, a total of 475 people, have also had eviction orders served on them.

Legal channels are now closed to the families but they are still fighting, although they are very tired and anxious. They say that everything must be done to stop Sheikh Jarrah becoming a second Hebron, where Israeli settlers tyrannise Palestinian families after taking over neighbourhoods in the historic centre.

■ For more information and to sign a petition in support of Sheikh Jarrah families, see www.standupforjerusalem.org

Rada Daniell, member of Waltham Forest PSC, is originally from Montenegro and has worked with the Refugee Council, the NHS and the British Red Cross. She was in Palestine with the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS)

BDS goes global!

By Chris Cox

There have been several highly significant moves in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign over the last few months, both in the UK and around the world, which has shown Israel that it is getting to be regarded as a pariah state on a par with South Africa in the apartheid era.

Lots of eye-catching protests too, such as American women wearing pink bikinis and smearing themselves with mud and French protestors noisily loading supermarket trolleys with Israeli and settlements goods, have raised the campaign profile and attracted thousands of new supporters.

In the UK the emphatic vote by the TUC in support of BDS was the most important leap forward (see page 3). In addition the British government slapped export bans on five UK-made weapons parts. The licences apparently covered spare parts for guns on the Israeli navy's Sa'ar 4.5 ships which fired missiles and artillery shells into the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead.

It's not an embargo — but it is significant because the UK government explicitly linked its decision with Israel's brutal aggression against Palestine. Reports say the bans were prompted by pressure from MPs and human rights groups.

Israel rattled

Though it got minimal coverage here, the move which caused the biggest stir in Israel was the announcement by the Norwegian government that it was withdrawing its investments in the Israeli hi-tech company Elbit due to its involvement in the construction and maintenance of the Wall.

Announcing the decision at a press conference — the first official act of this kind by a Western government — the Norwegian Finance Minister, Kristin Halvorsen, said it was based on the recommendation of her ministry's council. "We do not wish to fund companies that so directly contribute to violations of international humanitarian law," she said.

Ilan Pappé, author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, reported in the Electronic Intifada that the decision created "a unique day in the history of media coverage and discussion in Israel" as all radio and TV stations discussed the occupation and "more importantly, the possible price tag attached to it."

He said the significance was "who took the decision: the Norwegian ministry of finance through its ethical council. No less important was the manner in which it was taken: the minister herself announced the move in a press conference. This is what transformed for a short while the media scene in the Zionist state."

Commentators invited on to media programmes "explained, on prime time, that it is actually the Norwegian sensitivity to human rights that begot this last action and quite likely similar actions will be taken in the future... the average listener and viewer in Israel has not been exposed to such a clear deduction in the mainstream media by mainstream journalists and personalities for a very long time."

Pappé added: "It is reminiscent of the first day when governments heeded the pressures of their societies in the West to act against apartheid South Africa."

In another action unprecedented in the West, the Spanish government banned the University Center of Ariel in Samaria (AUCS), which is situated in the illegal settlement of Ariel in the West Bank, from an international sustainable architecture competition in Madrid. The University was shortlisted for the Solar Decathlon 2010 but was barred after angry protests from the Spanish public.

Wheels in motion

In America the United States Campaign to End Israeli Occupation voted in September for an academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Organiser Nada Elia said the campaign's wheels are in motion and there's no stopping them. "We are on board the freedom train and we have endorsed the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions in all its forms."

The US pension fund giant TIAA-CREF confirmed its divestment from Africa Israel Investments, owned by Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev, earlier this year. Though this is significant, the pro-Palestinian group, Adalah-NY, pointed out that the fund continues to invest clients' money in companies supporting Israeli settlement activity including Israel Discount Bank, Cellcom Israel, Bezeq Israeli Telecommunications Corp, Bank Leumi, and Motorola.

Australian activists dealt another blow to the French company Veolia, which announced its intention to pull out of the Jerusalem Light Rail project following BDS actions but has not actually done it yet. After intense activity by Derail Veolia campaigners, the BassWater consortium (which includes Veolia) found in July

that its bid to build a \$3.5bn desalination plant in Victoria had failed. The BIG campaign has also stepped up efforts against Veolia — find out more at: www.bigcampaign.org/veolia

The makers of the film, *Looking For Eric*, pulled it from the Melbourne International Film Festival after they discovered the event was part-sponsored by Israel. Backing the international boycott movement, director Ken Loach said: "Israeli filmmakers are not the target. State involvement is. In the grand scale of things, it is a tiny contribution to a growing movement, but the example of South Africa should give us heart."

The United Nations learned of the growing boycott movement in July when general assembly president, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, sent a message to the UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine. He said while governments and the UN stand mute, a global movement was taking shape to bring pressure on Israel by rejecting settlement goods.

Bikini outbreak

One of the more colourful protests took place outside cosmetic stores in Washington DC when dozens of women in bikinis, many of them streaked in mud, demonstrated against Ahava beauty products which are produced on settlements using stolen Palestinian natural resources.

The protest was part of the American CodePink movement's

"Israel is getting to be regarded as a pariah state on a par with South Africa in the apartheid era"



“Stolen Beauty” campaign which also targeted Ahava’s celebrity spokeswoman, “Sex and the City” actress Kristin Davis, with spectacular results.

Davis was hired in 2007 and did a promotional video and photo shoot in the Dead Sea to promote the

products. At the time she was also an Oxfam Goodwill Ambassador but after CodePink’s campaign drew attention to the incompatibility of her two roles, Oxfam dropped her in August.

Her appearances on behalf of Ahava were then picketed by activists. In one incident at a Fifth Avenue store in **New York**, they handed her a letter requesting she “stop letting Ahava use her beautiful face and good name to cover up their crimes.” They found her to be “less than receptive” and they were escorted from the store. But a few weeks later, at the beginning of September, Ahava decided the unwelcome publicity was getting too much and dropped her too!

The **Ahava shop in London** was picketed by 30 protesters on the international day of actions against the company in September. On the previous day, activists occupied the store for nearly six hours under the banner “Stolen Beauty from Stolen Land.” In **Amsterdam** a “Bathroom Brigade” wearing pink bathrobes walked around the city carrying placards and speaking to people about Ahava.

Creative protests

Dozens of other creative protests are taking place around the world. In **France** actions are taking place nationwide. On the www.europalestine.org website you can see actions such as a large,



Kristin Davis

noisy but good-natured demo actually inside one of the huge Carrefour supermarkets (see <http://tinyurl.com/ye89nh8>). Armed with Palestinian flags, over 30 protesters, including French MEPs, wearing “Palestine vivra” T-shirts loaded a trolley with goods ranging from fruit to cosmetic wipes produced in Israel and the settlements.



Meanwhile the **Scots** are marking Israeli bottled water as “contaminated with apartheid.” The **South Africans** have blockaded the unloading of an Israeli ship, while the **Swedes** showed their meticulous attention to detail with a hugely successful protest against Veolia. And the **Turks** — perhaps in homage to the Iraqis next door — showered an Israeli sports team with old shoes. In the words of one campaigner: “Viva the diversity!”

Free Mohammad Othman

Activists are being urged to protest against the arrest of Mohammad Othman who is “Palestine’s first BDS Prisoner of Conscience.” Mohammad, 33, who has been a non-violent campaigner for human rights for ten years in his village of Jayyous in the West Bank, was arrested in September on his

return from promoting the movement in Norway where he met senior officials including Finance Minister, Kristen Halvorsen (see p20).

While Mohammad is only one of the approximately 11,000 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons and detention centres, he has become the first Palestinian to be imprisoned by Israel in response to BDS advocacy activity.

Though very hard for Mohammad who, at the time of going to press, was being held without charge in solitary confinement in a small, windowless cell, his arrest is evidence of the spectacular rise in the effectiveness of the BDS campaign.

Recommended actions include:

- Urge the UK consular offices in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem/Ramallah to demand the immediate release of Mohammad Othman. (For your consular contacts, see: www.embassiesabroad.com/embassies-in/Israel#11725)
- Tell the Israeli Embassy in London you are campaigning for Mohammad’s release
- Bring the case to the attention of local and national media outlets. Encourage others to join this campaign through petitions, demonstrations and / or letter writing / phone calling.

For more information see <http://freemohammadothman.wordpress.com>. Join the Facebook group: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=36429272741&ref=ts or email: freemohammad@bdsmovement.net



Sainsbury’s

In September members of the PSC had their third meeting with Sainsbury’s HQ staff to discuss their stocking of settlement goods. Sainsbury’s staff reported on their decision to stock Palestinian fair-trade olive oil — now in 100 stores — and on a recent visit to the West Bank, where they met members of the olive oil co-operative and were informed about another planned project for exporting Palestinian produce directly — not through Israel.

Sainsbury’s said they are having difficulty linking extensive PSC evidence on violation of working conditions for Palestinian workers in settlements (including child labour and non-payment of minimum wages) to particular sites within settlements. However, they confirmed they regarded the supermarket as bound by Ethical Trading Initiative standards on labour conditions, so if such conditions were confirmed at sites they source from, this would lead to an investigation of these practices and the social conditions which underlie them.

The supermarket intends to stick with the grossly misleading West Bank label for settlement products unless the government advises them to do otherwise, saying that, as a non-political organisation, they could not make independent ethical decisions.

Sainsbury’s agreed to meet with the PSC again in February.

Supermarket protests are now kicking off around the UK. In London, a group including members from PSC, the International Solidarity Movement and Jews For BIG have been hitting Tesco stores, and others have been joining in nationwide, with protests at Morrisons and Waitrose also picking up momentum. For details of a week of Supermarket Action in November, see page 15.

In Brief

THE ELDERS VISIT THE WEST BANK

The Elders, the independent group of eminent global leaders, visited the West Bank in August. Brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, the idea of forming the Elders to investigate the world's trouble spots was first dreamed up by entrepreneur Richard Branson and musician Peter Gabriel.



The group included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil and Mary Robinson of Ireland, former prime minister Gro Brundtland of Norway, women's activist Ela Bhatt of India and former US president Jimmy Carter, founder of the Carter Center which promotes global peace and health issues.

Writing about the trip in the *Washington Post*, Carter said the group "found a growing sense of concern and despair" about settlements throughout the West Bank and that their expansion was "even more disturbing" in East Jerusalem.

"Three months ago I visited a family who had lived for four generations in their small, recently condemned home. They were labouring to destroy it themselves to avoid much higher costs if Israeli contractors carried out the demolition order." He said the Elders had taken a gift of food to the Hanoun family at their street camp opposite their former home (see p18).

On President Obama's call for a settlement freeze, he said Jerusalem newspapers daily wrote that, if it happened, it would be limited in scope and duration. "Increasingly desperate Palestinians see little prospect of their plight being alleviated; political, business and academic leaders are making contingency plans should President Obama's efforts fail."

He saw "considerable interest" in a call by Javier Solana, secretary general of the Council of the European Union, for the United Nations to endorse the two-state solution but he thought a "more likely alternative" to the present debacle was one state.

"A majority of the Palestinian leaders with whom we met are seriously considering acceptance of one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. By renouncing the dream of an independent Palestine, they would become fellow citizens with their Jewish neighbors and then demand equal rights within a democracy. In this nonviolent civil rights struggle, their examples would be Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela."

CHILD MURDERED, RESCUERS SHOT AT BY IDF

Israeli troops, hidden in a military observation tower inside Beit Eil settlement, north of Ramallah, opened fire on five Palestinian children walking near the entrance of al-Jalazoun refugee camp in August.

Three bullets hit 15-year-old Mohammed Riad Nayef 'Elayan in the chest. An ambulance from Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Ramallah and Red Crescent medical staff raced to the scene but at least 30 soldiers fired at them to stop them from reaching the grievously injured child.

As a crowd gathered to try and help, the IDF fired tear gas canisters at them. Mohammed lay bleeding on the ground for an hour before he was taken into the settlement then flown to Hadasa 'Ein Karem Hospital in West Jerusalem where he died.

The IDF claimed Mohammed's "crime" was throwing stones at a military jeep but one of the boys who was with him told the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) that they were walking normally in the street when they suddenly found themselves under Israeli fire. He said that when the soldiers saw the wounded child falling, they rushed to arrest his companions.

The PCHR strongly condemned the murder of a child by the IDF which it said was "part of a series of crimes" committed by Israeli forces. It called on the international community to act to protect Palestinian civilians in the OPT.



The funeral of Mohammed Riad.

SETTLERS PETROL BOMB THE IDF

Masked settlers from the extremist outpost of Havat Gilad and Yitzhar settlement in the northern West Bank threw a Molotov cocktail at an army jeep in September. The incident, which was confirmed to AFP by Israeli border guards, was the first of its kind and is evidence of growing settler militancy.

An Israeli TV report said that the soldiers did not shoot when they saw that the attackers sported phylacteries which are worn by pious Jews.

In contrast, a short while afterwards Israeli Border Police troops did shoot and kill a Palestinian child who they said was approaching Yitzhar carrying a lit Molotov cocktail. The boy, Suhayeb Saleh, from the nearby village of Assira al-Kubliyah, was 14 years old. Police said they also found a knife on his body.



A settler from Havat Gilad confronts a soldier; arrests are rare.

ISRAEL SEEKING NEW FRIENDS?

In response to the US finally showing some distaste for Israel's abuse of international law and human rights, and the increasing power on the world stage of other countries such as China and India, Israel is reportedly considering looking in new directions for allies.

The Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman's, office has drawn up a secret memo calling for a radical refocus of foreign policy toward the developing world, according to *The Jerusalem Post*.

The paper acquired a copy of the memo which showed the new policy involves moving away from a "lone dependence" on the United States as a strategic ally, to developing broader and closer ties with other world powers and with the developing world.

The document, which was developed in recent weeks at Lieberman's request, focuses on three major shifts in policy: expanding ties with parts of the world "neglected" by previous governments, lowering international expectations of a breakthrough in negotiations with the Palestinians and creating a "zero-tolerance" policy for anti-Semitic expressions worldwide.

The memo chastises the Foreign Ministry for "becoming the 'Ministry for Palestinian Affairs,' with Israeli foreign policy almost entirely consumed by this single issue."

The almost exclusive focus of diplomacy on the Arab-Israeli conflict "has hurt Israeli interests in the [broader] international arena and in our relations with the United States and Europe," the memo states.

WATER CONVOY RESCUES PARCHED PALESTINIANS

Three convoys of water tanks had to be sent for the first time to West Bank villages in August to relieve the dire water shortage caused by the Israelis' monopoly of the water resources in the occupied West Bank.

The convoys, organised by Israeli, Palestinian and international NGOs, went from Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ramallah to Qarawat Beni Zaid, a village in the Ramallah Governorate. This village, along with the neighbouring villages of Kufir 'Ayn, Deir Ghassani, Beitrima and Nabi Salah have not had running water since 15 March. The aim was not only to provide temporary relief but also to highlight the scandalous injustice of the theft of Palestinians' water.

During the hot summer months the average parched resident of the villages consumed 37 litres of water per day, one sixth of the average provided to Jewish settlers in the West Bank (235 litres a day). In Israel and the settlements, 2 billion cubic metres of fresh water are consumed annually, while for the 2.5 million Palestinians residents of the West Bank, the annual allotment is only 190 million cubic metres.

The convoys, each consisting of 50 to 80 people, convened in the village square where residents immediately rushed to queue by the water tanks, various containers in hand. Excited children laughed and danced in the water spurting from the trucks while their elders scolded them, trying to use the water as efficiently as possible.

Community leaders spoke of the need for greater attention to be paid to the question of water disparity in Palestine. They stressed their longing for peace and the impossibility of that peace without immediate access to water.



LIBEL THREAT OVER DOCTORS' PROTEST

Lawyers acting for Dr Yoram Blachar have threatened a libel action against Dr Derek Summerfield who convened a protest letter signed by 725 physicians from 43 countries against the Israeli's

appointment as president of the World Medical Association. Much of the evidence supporting the letter came from the Israeli human rights organisation, Physicians for Human Rights — Israel (see www.phr.org.il).

Summerfield interpreted the threat as "evidence that our campaign has had a considerable impact and is a threat to the IMA (Israeli Medical Association) status quo and to torture as state policy in Israel."

The protest letter accused Blachar, leader of the IMA since 1995, of turning a blind eye to the involvement of Israeli medical staff in the torture of Palestinian prisoners. His lawyers alleged that the signatories were "deceived" into signing it. Summerfield has appealed to them to contact the lawyer individually to refute the allegation.

GROTESQUE TOURISM IN ISRAEL

Do you fancy meeting an assassination squad which carries out clandestine, state-sponsored murders of resistance fighters? Or viewing an exhibition dedicated to the terror caused when soldiers haul children from their beds during middle of the night raids? Then maybe a tour billed as "The Ultimate Mission to Israel" is for you.

This sickening tourist trip is being advertised by the Israel Law Centre as a "once-in-a-lifetime experience." The website describes the eight-day trip, based at the Sheraton Plaza in Jerusalem, as a "dynamic and intensive" exploration of "Israel's struggle for security."

Never mentioning that the victims of the army's actions are primarily unarmed Palestinian civilians, the advert describes the so-called "mission highlights" as including a tour of the unit which "carries out targeted killings" and a "live exhibition of penetration raids" in Palestinian territory.

There are briefings by Mossad officials, commanders of the Shin Bet, officers in IDF intelligence and operations branches, "Israel's war heroes who saved the country" and what it calls "Israel's Arab agents who infiltrate the terrorist groups and provide real-time intelligence."

Other delights are the opportunity to "observe a trial of Hamas terrorists in an IDF military court," tours of military positions in Lebanon and Gaza border checkpoints and an "inside tour of the controversial Security Fence and secret intelligence bases."

Feel tempted? You can see the full ad at www.israelawcenter.org/Missions-general-information.html

A souvenir T-shirt?
— courtesy of the IDF



ISRAELI SCHOOL APARTHEID

An Arab couple whose one-year-old daughter was expelled from an Israeli day-care centre on her first day are suing a Jewish mother for damages, accusing her of racist incitement against their child, reported Jonathan Cook in *The Nation*.

Maysa and Shua'a Zuabi, from the village of Sulam in northern Israel, launched the court action in August after they were "shocked and humiliated" when the centre's owner told them that six Jewish parents had demanded their daughter's removal because she is an Arab. In the first legal action of its kind in Israel, the Zuabis are claiming \$80,000 from Neta Kadshai, whom they accuse of being the ringleader.

Israel's education system is almost entirely segregated between

Jews and Arabs and the girl, Dana, is reported to be the first Arab child ever to be accepted at the day-care centre. But six parents threatened to withdraw their own children if she was not removed.

Ms Kadshai, in particular, is said to have waged a campaign of "slurs and efforts aimed at having [Dana] removed... making it clear that [her] children would not be in the same centre as an Arab girl."

The centre's owner told Mrs Zuabi she could not afford to lose the six children. The Zuabis' lawyer, Dori Kaspi, is suing Ms Kadshai under the terms of the 1992 Basic Law on Human Freedom and Dignity, the nearest legislation Israel has to a bill of rights.

When Israeli Arabs try to put their children in Jewish schools it is usually because of poor conditions in Arab schools. A report published in March revealed that the government invested \$1,100 in each Jewish pupil's education compared to \$190 for each Arab pupil.

■ www.jkcook.net.

GAZA FREEDOM MARCH

The Gaza Freedom March is being organised by the US-based International Coalition to End the Illegal Siege of Gaza which was formed after Israel's 22-day assault. It is hoped that huge numbers of protesters from all over the world, led by well known artists and academics, will converge in Egypt and make a mass crossing into Gaza by the Rafah gate.

The Freedom March is inspired by decades of nonviolent Palestinian resistance, by international volunteers who have stood in solidarity with Palestinians and by Nelson Mandela who said: "I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb... I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

Marchers will gather in Cairo on 27 December, plan to enter Gaza on the 29th, visit areas devastated by the Israeli invasion, walk a mile long march for freedom on the 31st, meet community leaders and attend a peace event before returning to Cairo on 2 January.

The deadline for registration and payment is 30 November. See www.gazafreedommarch.org



RACHEL CORRIE'S PARENTS DENIED ENTRY TO GAZA

It has to be doubted that the Gaza Freedom March will manage to pass through the Rafah crossing as in recent months the Egyptian authorities have been barring access to nearly all foreigners, including medical staff and humanitarian aid workers.



Rachel Corrie with the bulldozer that ran her over

They even denied access to the parents of American activist Rachel Corrie who was killed in 2003 by an Israeli bulldozer when she tried to protect a Palestinian home from demolition. Craig and Cindy Corrie were trying to attend the Ramadan Soccer Tournament which is played annually in memory of their 23-year-old daughter.

Craig Corrie said they spent weeks co-ordinating with the US State Department, the US Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Embassy in Washington and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to try to secure entry.

As he stood, frustrated, at Rafah, he said: "I talked to my friend two miles away on the other side of this border, in a prison he cannot leave and I cannot enter. My heart goes out to him and his family and to all those in Gaza. I wish more than words can say that we could have been with them today at Unity Fields for the final game of the Rachel Corrie Ramadan Soccer Tournament."

PETITION TO SAVE LIFTA

Lifta, a most picturesque Palestinian village, lies on the slopes of West Jerusalem. It has been abandoned since the invading Israeli Hagana underground forces, backed by the Stern Gang, drove out the last of its Palestinian inhabitants in 1948.

Dozens of the village's pretty, white stone houses were destroyed but many of them were also left standing, along with the mosque and stone pathways leading to a tranquil pool which has become a favourite destination for picnicking Jerusalemites. Now the Jerusalem Municipality has produced plans to turn Lifta into a luxurious and exclusive development – reinventing its history in the process.

A petition has been launched to save Lifta and to draw attention to the site which has great historical significance in the story of the dispossession of the Palestinians.

■ For more information about Lifta, see www.seamless-israel.org/Lifta-main.html

■ To sign the petition, go to www.1948.org.uk



ON SEEING OLIVE OIL FROM PALESTINE IN SAINSBURY'S

A poem by Charlotte Eatwell.

From stony hillsides
hard lives, barriers, barbed wire
this magic liquid.

Let us dip our bread
This taste from embattled trees
enriches our hearts.

Activism with impact

A textbook example of how to conduct an effective boycott protest action was carried out by the **Sheffield** branch when they descended en masse on Waitrose and loaded Israeli goods onto trolleys.

Around 30 members wearing green T-shirts marched into the supermarket, took Israeli dates and herbs from the shelves and patiently explained to the managers why they should not be selling them. "We were very clear, neither the shop nor the managers nor shoppers were our enemy. We simply wanted to point out the systematic oppression of the Palestinians and that it should not be a matter of 'business as usual' with Israel," they say.

Part of the group stayed outside to explain the issue to shoppers. A three minute video of the action can be seen at www.youtube.com/user/SheffieldPSC



Members promoting the BIG campaign also had an impact in **Bristol** where they tested shoppers at the Co-op on their response to a total boycott of Israeli goods. More than a hundred people signed postcards to be sent to the Co-op headquarters.

Cliff Hanley, chair of Bristol PSC, says: "This tremendous response shows just how concerned people are about Palestine." Branch members are also signing up for membership of the Co-op so they can submit a resolution for a total boycott.

Another branch targeting Waitrose is **Southampton** where the PSC runs a stall outside the Portswood branch and hands out leaflets asking shoppers not to buy Israeli goods. On two Saturdays in August they gave away free locally grown herbs to illustrate the absurdity of Waitrose stocking Israeli herbs that could easily be sourced in Western Europe. They also collected signatures on a petition which will be sent to Waitrose head office in Bracknell.



Members also visited independent shops in the Portswood area which are quite often run by Muslim Asians. They received an undertaking from the largest Asian shop in the area that they would try to avoid selling Israeli goods. The proprietor offered a substantial donation to the next aid convoy to Gaza leaving from the Isle of Wight Friends of Palestine.

In **York** they have focused on Morrisons where they held a protest in September over the supermarket selling settlement goods. "At least 15 people turned up, at short notice, including four people who had not come to any of our protests before."

Protest against war criminal



Brighton PSC organised a protest about the Labour Party entertaining Israeli War Minister, Ehud Barak, at its annual conference in September. The demo was joined by nine Labour MPs and other delegates.

Barak was due to attend a fringe meeting and see Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, who said he was pleased to meet the Israeli war minister.

PSC General Secretary, Betty Hunter, said that it was a disgrace for Britain to hold meetings with Barak. "As a High Contracting Party to the Geneva Convention, the British government should be arresting Barak for war crimes, not treating him to dinner," she said.

In an imaginative move, **Durham** branch organised a mass signing of a letter to President Barack Obama demanding firm American action to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. Over 100 people signed the letter in the city's Millenium Square. County Durham PSC spokesperson, Prof Bill Williamson, said: "Most people agreed that the American leadership had to exert influence on the Israeli government to change its course."

Fundraising walk



The annual fundraising walk in July was organised by **Exeter** branch who say they had "a great weekend" on Dartmoor which raised over £3000. "It was a real EPSC team effort and thanks to all who helped."

The branch is running a campaign highlighting their concern about a local arts centre, the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, hosting an Israeli government funded eco-artist, Shai Zakai, in October and November. "We have been in dialogue with the centre's Director and the pressure is ongoing," they say.

Talks, meetings, links

Branches held a wide variety of fascinating and stimulating events and meetings. The Hanin Cafe and Crafts and members of **Cambridge** PSC, Gaza Solidarity and Cambridge Stop the War joined forces to host a Palestine Cafe at the Centre at St Paul's Church in Cambridge in July. Some UniPal teachers contributed a very tasty maqluba to a wonderful buffet.

There were three showings of the film *Children of the Nakba* and a craft stall with Zaytoun products and the event was extremely well-attended. For details of future Hanin Cafe events, contact Janet Walker: janet.walker3@googlemail.com

Members of **York** branch say they find it particularly valuable to give talks to local church and community groups. They say that "people are always astonished at the level of brutality and suffering caused by the Occupation."

A member of EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) came to speak at one meeting. Another time they showed the DVD from the Amos Trust, *Bethlehem: Hidden from View*, which stimulated a member of the audience to ask which goods she should avoid to boycott Israel.

Two members took part in the inaugural York 10K run, a huge event for the city with over 4000 runners, to raise money for Palestinian causes.

Another two members visited Brussels in September to speak at a meeting of the EU Petitions Committee which was considering their petition on the withdrawal by the EU of funding for ICAHD.

Members from **Hereford** are also visiting Palestine, one working for the EAPPI and one with Zaytoun, and will be reporting back in public meetings on their return.

In **Bristol** a prestigious event was held in September to launch the Bristol Gaza Link twinning organisation which has the full backing of Bristol City Council. The event, at the Council House on College Green, began with a moving message of support and gratitude from the Mayor of Gaza followed by messages of support from all the political parties in Bristol.

The Bristol Gaza Link aims to build humanitarian, cultural, educational and social links between organisations in Bristol and Gaza City. The organisers said they were "overwhelmed" with the public support shown for the initiative and contributions have flooded in. For more information, see <http://bglink.ning.com>

ICAHD director, Jeff Halper, spoke at a meeting co-ordinated by **Rochdale, Halifax and Manchester** branches. **Halifax** also held a fund-raiser for Medical Aid for Palestine.

Norwich branch BIG organiser, Sara Knox, stood on her feet for six hours telling students about Palestine at the University of East Anglia's Freshers' Fair. The branch has also had a series of vigils, leaflettings and talks by speakers who recounted their direct experience of life in the occupied territories or within the Palestinian diaspora and provided thoughtful insights into the situation.

At a meeting organised by **Lambeth and Wandsworth** and attended by Kiri Tunks of the NUT, several people spoke of the immense significance of the TUC resolution for building the campaign. A number of people attended from Unison who said they were keen to work with the PSC.



Sue Cooke running in the York 10K

New branch in SE Hants

Based on the Hampshire/Sussex border the new branch of SE Hants has already been active, holding a stall at the Portsmouth Green Fair and showing La Terre Parle Arabe in the United Church in Winchester. More interesting events are planned for the autumn.

For further info contact Jenny Flintoft on 023 9241 3358, or email flintoftjenifer@yahoo.co.uk.

Urgent: Comet-ME needs your vote!

Comet-ME, a group which helps Palestinians from poor communities build energy systems using solar and wind power, is one of 12 finalists in the BBC World Challenge 2009 and needs your vote now.

Palestinian, Israeli and international volunteers work together at Comet-ME with communities which, for political reasons, have no access to the electricity grid. The group provides materials and knowledge for building the energy systems which the community owns and controls.

The winning project receives an award of \$20,000! Deadline for voting is 13 November 2009, at www.theworldchallenge.co.uk/index.php

■ For more info about Comet-ME, see www.comet-me.org



Comet-ME project in Susiya, South Hebron hills

To Gaza by bike

Four intrepid Irish students cycled 6000 km from Ireland to Gaza to raise money for neo-natal care and medical resources for burn victims in Gaza. Cycling over 150 km a day and resting only one day a week, they completed the journey in just over six weeks.

The idea came from Eoghan Quinn, 21, who is diabetic. Being completely dependent on access to medicine himself, he said he "wanted to use my fortunate circumstance to help those cut off from the outside world in Gaza."

The other cyclists were John Maher, 30, Ronan Sheehan, 21, and Gearóid Ó Cuinn, 29. Three other friends manned the support vehicle. The cyclists survived hypothermia in France, several falls and being chased by wild hounds in central Turkey. "It's been tough but epic," said Gearóid.

The cyclists received support from around the world, but not from Egypt which refused to let them bring their van into the country then barred them from entering Gaza at the Rafah crossing. Gearoid said: "To fall at the last hurdle is disappointing, but it's also about creating awareness around this unjust situation."

■ Donate online at www.pathwaystopalestine.com



From Coexistence to Conquest:

International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891–1949

By Victor Kattan
Pluto Books, 2009

“International law essentially supports all of the basic Palestinian grievances.” This, according to the foreword, is the central message of Victor Kattan’s book.

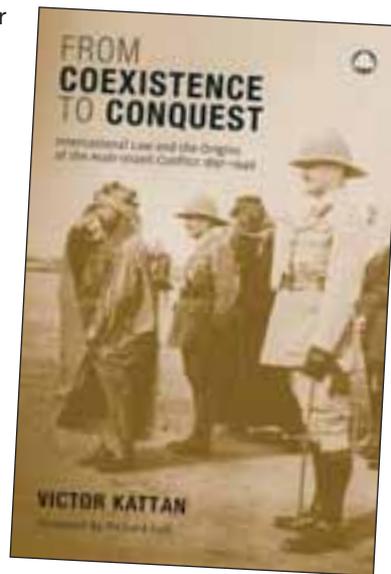
Kattan examines the events leading up to the creation of Israel in the light of international law as it applied then and developed over the period. A lawyer by training, Kattan argues with care and attention to detail, often citing legal precedents arising from disputes in other parts of the world and new primary material in the form of contemporary British government documents, such as Foreign Office assessments and legal advice. He makes no attempt to hide where his sympathies lie but generally presents his arguments in a scholarly and rational way.

The book’s focus on the first half of the 20th century is justified and welcome since it is in this frequently overlooked period that the roots of the conflict are to be found. The early chapters examine the contradictory pledges concerning the fate of Palestine

made during and after WWI.

Kattan makes a strong case that the Hussein-McMahon correspondence of 1916 was a binding treaty and that Palestine was to be included in the area promised to the Arabs; a contemporary map drawn up by the Foreign Office leaves little doubt of this.

He also argues that the Mandate for Palestine, by incorporating the Balfour Declaration of 1917, was seriously at odds with the League of Nations Covenant which provided for the eventual independence and self-determination of indigenous peoples in the mandated territories. In fact, he says, the Palestinians had a right to self-determination even before the notion was incorporated into international law after WWII.



Later chapters cover the 1947 UN Partition Plan and its consequences, concluding that it was “impracticable, most probably illegal, contrary to the League of Nations Covenant, the Mandate and the UN Charter, manifestly unjust to the Arabs, and ultimately unenforceable.”

Though the Jews of Palestine ostensibly accepted Resolution 181 and based their claim to statehood upon it, the process by which Israel came into existence in 1948 did not abide by its terms and was therefore, Kattan suggests, of questionable legality.

The text is a little repetitive at times and some of the lines of reasoning somewhat tangential. But overall, Kattan’s book is a well-researched and informative contribution which deserves to be read widely as the issues it raises remain at the core of the conflict today and must be addressed if a just settlement is to be found.

Samer Abdallah and Graham Hobbs

Strangers in the House

By Raja Shehadeh
Profile Books, 2009

The power of Raja Shehadeh’s writing is that he makes you understand what it is like to be a highly intelligent, sensitive and spiritual person imprisoned by the crushing brutality of the Israeli occupation.

A lawyer and founder of the Palestinian human rights group, Al Haq, Shehadeh gave up campaigning to concentrate on writing and won the George Orwell prize last year with his poignant memoir of a lost landscape, *Palestinian Walks*.

On a visit to London he told *Palestine News* that his writing has a powerful impact because it makes people empathise with the Palestinians’ situation. “I get a lot of gratification from people saying, ‘Oh, now I understand what your life is like.’ I am still serving the human rights cause through my writing.”

Strangers in the House is a personal memoir which portrays Shehadeh’s conflict with his brilliant, energetic but remote father, Aziz, against the backdrop of the family’s exile from the comfortable life they led in Jaffa before they lost their home in the Nakba and the increasing impact of the Israeli occupation.

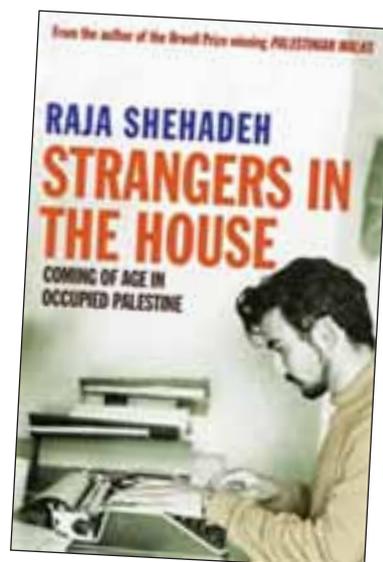
Growing up in the cramped holiday

home in Ramallah where the family took refuge from the fighting in 1948, never to be allowed to return, Shehadeh’s childhood is dominated by his stately, aristocratic grandmother who constantly yearns for the past, and his father.

Aziz, a politician and lawyer, argues passionately that the Palestinians should accept the existence of Israel and negotiate for a state of their own – a position for which he is branded a traitor, making life uncomfortable for his family.

After years studying English literature Shehadeh eventually follows his father into law and becomes a leading fighter for Palestinian rights. This causes further conflict with his father who feels he is stirring up trouble.

Shehadeh is abroad on a speaking tour, not having mended the relationship,



when his father is murdered. The public thinks he was assassinated as a traitor by a Palestinian extremist but Shehadeh believes the motive was unrelated to politics.

He goads the Israeli authorities into investigating the murder and believes at least some of them are acting in good faith. When he eventually learns the awful truth, it plunges him into a state of despair from which he is only saved by writing.

Shehadeh comes to the UK every year to walk in the Scottish Highlands and dreads going back, though he loves his country. Days before his return he told *Palestine News* he was having bad dreams.

“The minute I arrive, I have a sinking feeling that I am coming to my country but it is not my country. I want to be happy that I am going home, but I can’t be happy,” he said.

While it is a personal story, this book proves that the personal is political as it portrays the profound impact the inhumanity of the oppressors has on the humanity of the victims.

Gill Swain

Rana Bishara: the audacity of life

By Catherine Wilson

For one of Palestine's leading artists, the multi-faceted Rana Bishara, creativity is vital to resistance to the occupation. She claims that art "challenges the most vicious weapon and inhuman acts. Art is a sensible language of civilisation, beauty and the power of expression."

Born in Tarshiha, Galilee, where her ancestors have owned land for generations, her childhood was shaped by the natural beauty of the countryside, the artistic heritage of jewellery making in her family which is inextricable from her sense of identity and belonging, and the violation of that identity through Israel's attempts to cleanse the region of Palestinian history and culture.

Bishara has exhibited her work, encompassing drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, film, performance and installation, in Palestine and internationally since the mid-1990s and is now Chair of the Art Department at Al Quds University. She spoke to me of her resolute commitment to addressing issues of truth and injustice and of her recent collaborations with UN organisations working in the Occupied Territories.

Homage to childhood

Last year she was invited by UNWRA to show her installation, "Homage to Childhood," at the French Cultural Centre in Jerusalem. In a dreamy, light filled room, evoking a womb-like space, the viewer could walk across a fur-lined floor through a field of clear balloons, each holding a photograph of a Palestinian child, as the lullaby, Yllah Ynam, was played.

Bishara explained the balloons "are made for children, but the children can't play with them. When you want to do a birthday, you put balloons with colour, but here the colours have been hijacked." A disturbing realisation was that each child depicted was enduring humiliation or abuse. Also in the room was a fur-covered mattress with halos of tulle ringed with barbed wire suspended from the ceiling, suggesting both the innocence of a child's dream and the menace of an impending threat.

Selecting photographs from UNRWA's archives for use in the



artwork "gave me a flashback of what I have seen and still see today...scenes of torture and ethnic cleansing, of house demolitions and children in refugee camps living under inhuman conditions," Bishara said.

Health facilities in emergencies

Another of her installations was featured in an exhibition, "Health Facilities in Emergencies," hosted by the World Health Organisation at the Al Mahatta Gallery

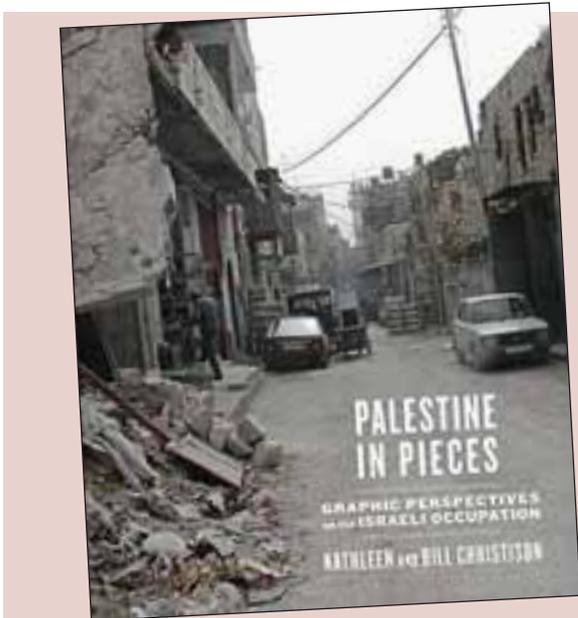


in Ramallah on World Health Day in April, which exposed the destruction to health facilities caused by Israel's vicious attack on Gaza.

Bishara's mixed media works creatively transformed the everyday materials used by health workers. Across wooden panels suspended from the ceiling, she pinned hundreds of latex medical gloves, superimposing in text the facts of the devastation such as that 15 hospitals, at least 43 primary health centres and 29 ambulances were damaged or destroyed, 16 health workers were killed and 25 injured. On the reverse sides were excerpts from the Geneva Convention declaring that medical personnel should be protected in all circumstances.

On the floor of the gallery the artist placed orange ambulance stretchers, each draped in a piece of white gauze printed with a documentary image showing health workers administering assistance or as casualties themselves. She used gauze, she told me, "because this material is made in Gaza, it is where the word comes from."

One may wonder, with the innumerable challenges to survival that living under occupation presents, why any Palestinian is willing to dedicate her life to making art. Yet, ever since Ismail Shammout painted resonant images of exile and displacement and the PLO advocated the importance of art and culture to resistance in the 1960s, Palestinian artists have been driven to mobilise freedom of the soul and the imagination. Rana Bishara is one of those challenging the psychological cage of occupation and working to plant the seed of decolonisation in the minds of others.



Palestine in Pieces: Gra

By Kathleen and Bill Christison
Pluto Press

This book, written by two former CIA analysts, is a good introduction to the daily realities of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and its long-term aims. It blends eye-witness accounts by the authors with personal stories of Palestinians and analysis by human rights and UN organisations, journalists and academics. This variety of voices is one of the book's strengths. Its 52 black-and-white images are a little disappointing but they serve their purpose well enough.

The title of the book refers to a territory shattered by over 230 settlements and all the paraphernalia of the occupation. It begins with the story of Numan, a village cut off from Jerusalem in the north by a lack of Israeli permits, from Bethlehem and other villages to the east and south by the Wall and hemmed in on the west by an advancing Israeli settlement. The only exit is

A Child in Palestine

The cartoons of Naji al-Ali,
Verso, 2009

Born in Palestine, raised in a Lebanese refugee camp, harassed and imprisoned by a variety of Arab regimes for his political activism, finally assassinated in London (by an Israeli-infiltrated Palestinian hit squad, if the most authoritative account, in *Ha'aretz* June 1999, is correct) — Naji al-Ali's life encapsulates a narrative of the Palestinian diaspora.

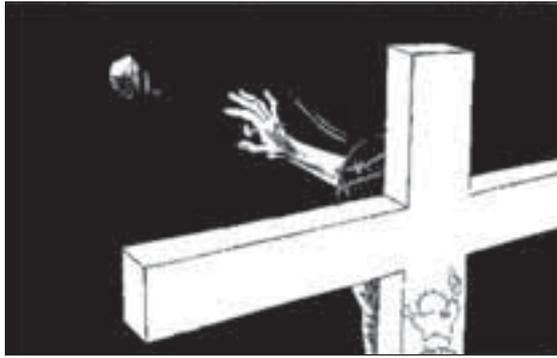
If the narrative is familiar, however, Naji's remarkable work is not. Edward Said repeatedly commented on the invisibility in the West of the truth of Palestinian culture, history and suffering. Naji al-Ali's graphic art is symptomatic of that invisibility.

In the Arab world his work was syndicated in newspapers of all political affiliations; Mahmoud Darwish referred to him as "Naji al-Ali — our daily bread." Edward Said noted that newspaper readers would turn to Naji's cartoons to see what was actually happening before moving on to news reports or editorial interpretation. Yet he was very little known, or even ignored, in the West.

It is to be hoped that the publication by Verso of *A Child in Palestine* will go some way to rectifying this invisibility but, at less than 120 pages, the book represents a tiny fraction of the huge archive of Naji's work being put together by his son, Khalid.

Ideally the book would have been longer and more substantially introduced and contextualised. As it is, it has a general introduction by Joe Sacco, best known for his comic book series, *Palestine*, and brief section introductions by Abdul Hadi Ayyad.

Despite its brevity, the book manages to give a sense of both the variety of Naji's



styles and of their development. Works from the early 70s, for example, look as if they belong to someone else, while those from the 80s are marked by the strong, simple graphics, often using a black background, which include his most powerful images.

Running through the cartoons is a cast of characters: the ordinary Palestinian man, moustached and bald-headed, who experiences, or more often suffers, so much; Arab politicians and businessmen, increasingly corrupt and dehumanised (turning into a strange combination of human being and slug); fedayeen in keffiyeh and battledress; Jesus (as a suffering Palestinian).

The character with whom Naji's work is centrally associated, however, is Handala (the spelling varies) — a 10-year-old child of the refugee camps, ragged, barefoot, and spiky headed, hands clasped behind his back. He is the silent and unmoving witness to everything from Israeli brutality, international hypocrisy, and Arab complicity with them, to the different forms of Palestinian resistance, including what Ousmane Sebene called "the heroism of everyday life."

The need for resistance can be so overwhelming that even the observer has to join in — as in the cartoon where

both Jesus on the cross and the unmoving Handala become stone-throwing protestors.

Interestingly, the novelist Michel Faber, in a review of *A Child in Palestine* in *Palestine Telegraph*, sees this as evidence of Naji becoming "unhinged" — but then Faber is distinctly uncomfortable with specific political commitment as opposed to images which he feels transcend the Palestine/Israeli conflict to become symbols of universal human suffering.

This is both a rerun of the old argument that "true" art rises above the nasty business of politics and a travesty of Naji's own position. While he was certainly concerned with "universal" issues such as human rights or the internationalisation of oppression, Naji was first and foremost a highly politicised defender of his own people who wanted graphic art to be revolutionary.

To "support" Palestinians by asking them to be less obviously political seems like another way of making their concerns invisible — something which Naji's remarkable cartoons work so hard to oppose.

Patrick Williams



Graphic Perspectives on the Israeli Occupation

"Coming from former CIA analysts, this condemnation of the occupation is both telling and encouraging"

past an intimidating Israeli guard tower.

Virtually every one of the roughly 20 houses has been either demolished by Israeli bulldozers or issued with a demolition order. Israeli municipal authorities have cut off electricity and water and a UN mobile medical clinic has been barred.

Villagers have been imprisoned and killed by the Israeli state for being in Jerusalem without a permit. Fatma's son went to Jerusalem to buy medicine for his sick five-year-old daughter and was arrested and detained without charge for 18 months; Mahmoud was found near death, being dragged by his donkey down a rocky

road (a treatment known as "the donkey procedure"). He had been stopped by Israeli Border Police while searching for work. He died a few days later. Numan's horror story represents the occupation in microcosm. The book tells similar stories of Israeli control and oppression from across the West Bank, describing settlements, the Wall, checkpoints, roadblocks, house demolitions, the siege of towns and villages and the unspeakable anguish of Gaza. The book concludes that "it is crystal clear that Zionism's design is absolute Jewish control over the entirety of a Palestine swept clean of Palestinians" and reminds us that "terms like 'annihilation,' 'ethnic cleansing,' 'genocide,' 'holocaust' are increasingly being used by serious scholars to describe the fate Israel and its US enabler envision for the Palestinians." Coming from former CIA analysts, this uncompromising condemnation of the Israeli occupation is both telling and encouraging.

Graham Hobbs and Samer Abdallah

Fragile bodies in the UK

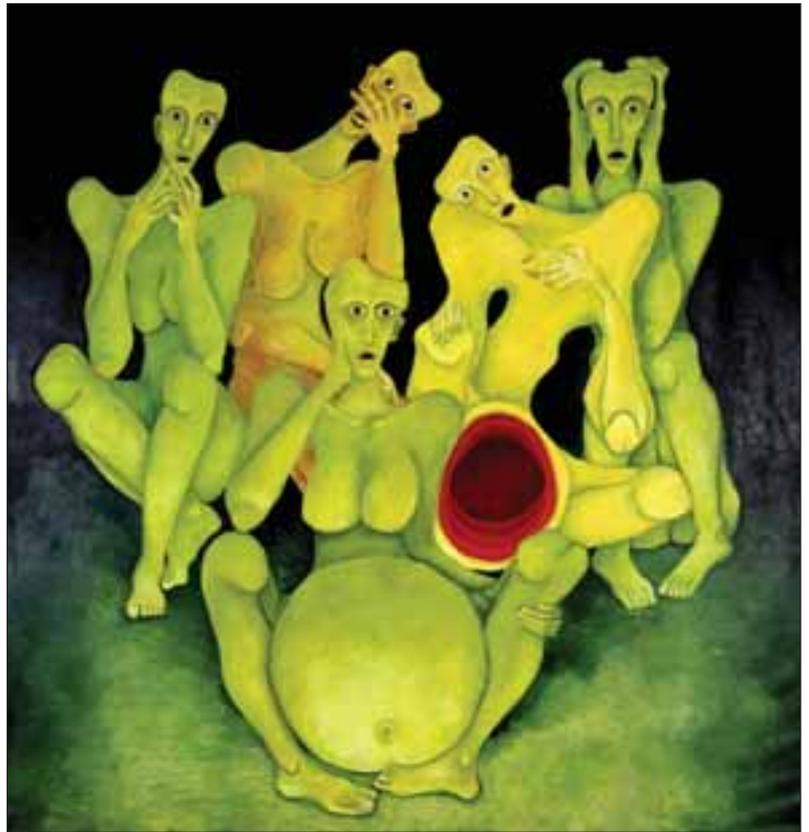
The Mosaic Rooms in London hosted another powerful exhibition this autumn, presenting the work of seven young artists. They were finalists in the AM Qattan Foundation's 2008 Young Artist of the Year award which was founded to promote artistic practice by young Palestinians.

The artists all grew up under conditions of military occupation, subjugation or exile, which are reflected in the recurring motifs of loss and isolation in their work: but the themes were expressed through an astonishing range of media, from paint to video, from etching to installation.

The overall winner, 23-year-old **Layan Shawabkeh**, was born in Jerusalem, studied at Birzeit and later the Malmö Art Academy in Sweden.

Another of the prize-winners, 27-year-old **Shada Safadi** was born in the occupied Golan Heights, and studied painting and engraving at the University of Damascus.

More of the works can be viewed on www.mosaicrooms.org.



Layan Shawabkeh's 'Ladies of Gaza', 2008

Ordinary lives

The work of Lebanese-born photographer **Rania Matar** is already well known to the London public.

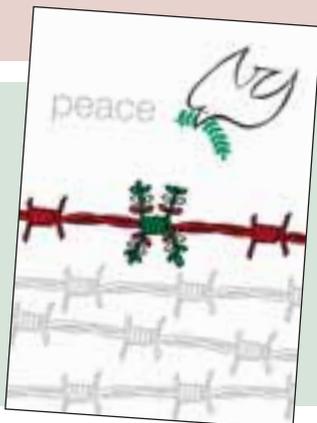
In a new exhibition she focuses on the lives of women and children in Lebanon, including those in the Palestinian refugee camps. Her work can be seen as a celebration of the human spirit, of the survival of grace, dignity and tenderness in the face of poverty and war.



■ 6–26 November, at the Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road; tel: 0207 370 9990.



Shada Safadi's 'In the Presence of the Crow I', 2008



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Palestinian child prisoners

Action for Palestinian Children is holding public meetings to highlight the systematic and institutionalized ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children by the Israeli authorities.

Mohammad Abu Eid was aged 14 when he was detained by the Israeli forces. He was beaten, interrogated in the absence of a lawyer or family member, deceived into signing a confession, prosecuted in a military court and sentenced to four months imprisonment.



Come and hear Mohammad, accompanied by his mother, Somaya, talk of his experiences. Also present will be lawyer Khaled Quzmar from Defence for Children International and Abdefattah Abusrour, President of Palestinian Theatre League. Supported by the PSC.

All meetings 7pm to 9pm:

Monday 2 November, Liverpool

Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT.
Guest: Dr. Derek Summerfield

Tuesday 3 November, London

Mander Hall, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

Guests: Baroness Helena Kennedy and Christine Blower

Wednesday 4 November, Sheffield

Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James Street, Sheffield S1 2EW.
Guest: Bruce Kent

Thursday 5 November, Oxford

Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BX.
Guests: Danny Friedman and Karma Nabulsi

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November — Lobby for Palestine!

24 November
7pm

Committee Room 14
House of Commons

Public meeting to mark the UN
day on Palestine

Please lobby your MP and the Prospective Parliamentary Candidates from the major parties in your constituency — let them know that they must take action NOW.

For more information including a guide to lobbying, frequently asked questions, feedback forms and briefing materials, check the PSC website.



PSC christmas concert

Voices for Bethlehem 09
Tuesday 1st December

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church
235 Shaftesbury Avenue
London WC2H 8EP

www.bloomsbury.org.uk/about/location.html

PSC would like to invite you to join us for the 2009 edition of our concert to raise awareness of the situation in occupied Bethlehem.

Performances will include a choir and a range of musical contributions as well as seasonal readings.

We are extremely proud that half of this year's proceeds of the event will be donated to the Holy Land Trust www.holylandtrust.org/

For more information: info@palestinecampaign.org



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