



2011: an independent state?

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Cover image: A Palestinian girl at a demonstration in Gaza.
Photo: Khalil Ibrahim.
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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

The alternative to failed talks

Mustafa Barghouti says that the time has come to declare an independent state

The American package of incentives and rewards did not satisfy the greed of Netanyahu and his settler government; they are asking for more. Settler activity is on the increase daily while the US administration mourns the so-called peace process, confirming its own failure to play the role it mapped out for itself as 'honest broker.'

The Arab League has promised repeatedly that it will look at other options to talks, while the Executive Committee of the PLO has promised that it has seven alternatives up its sleeve.

So what are we waiting for? Why has the ball been left in the court of Netanyahu and his endless negotiations with a weakened, pressurised US administration? This can only lead to yet more pointless, indirect talks, which will act as a cover for settlement expansion.

Hasn't the time come to choose an alternative? Faced with the impossibility of extracting a UN Security Council resolution, isn't the only practical alternative the absolute rejection of any talks — direct or indirect — and the immediate declaration of a Palestinian state with borders including all the Occupied Territories and with Jerusalem as its capital?

All countries should be called upon to recognise the state and to take practical measures to make it a reality. We are grateful to Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay for recognising the state and its borders, even before the PLO's declaration. We hope that the Arab countries will follow Brazil's example forthwith.

There is nothing in the present situation to worry Israel; on the contrary, it is overjoyed: the Americans are waiting for Israel; the Palestinians are waiting for the US Administration; the Arabs are waiting for the Palestinians; and Europe and the rest of the world are waiting for both the Arabs and the Palestinians.

And everyone is busy talking about building state institutions, while everyone knows that Israel is piling on the pressure, politically and geographically, so there can be what Netanyahu calls an 'economic and structural peace' in no more than 30-40% of the West Bank, excluding Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and Gaza. It will have no sovereignty, no water resources and no air space.

The only process actually in operation on the ground is one of wiping the question of Palestine off the map, of erasing the very



concept of an independent, sovereign state, and replacing it with limited autonomy over a Bantustan controlled by an Apartheid regime.

In other words, the only state to be built, according to Israel, will be one with 'temporary borders' — a misnomer because the intention is to make it a permanent solution.

The cause of the Palestinian people has never seen, throughout its entire history, conspiracy and collusion on such a scale. Nor have we seen such fragmentation, which is one cause of the situation we are currently experiencing. Attempts to heal the divisions within the Palestinian leadership meet with unrelenting external pressures, aimed at keeping the leaders divided and weak.

This is nothing new. But it is only part of the picture. There is another picture, a grassroots picture, of a seasoned people who can no longer be fooled. A picture of unprecedented unity among the Palestinian people, wherever they may be: within the '48 borders, in the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza or in the diaspora. They have been united by the same force that has sought to divide them and subjugate them to a racist, Apartheid regime, under the banner of the Jewish state.

It is a story of the amazing rise of young Palestinian men and women all over the world, acquiring an education and mature understanding and re-embracing the national struggle, in the face of countless obstacles, homelessness and poverty. A story, too, of a burgeoning global solidarity movement, believing with Nelson Mandela that 'the Palestinian issue is the primary issue for human justice in the world.'

The effects of this movement, rising from grassroots to governments, can be seen in the stand taken by Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. It is this grassroots movement that is making Israeli generals and leaders afraid of travelling to countries like Britain, lest they get taken to court for war crimes — a fear that will pursue them wherever they go.

It is a story of ordinary volunteers who were able to break the siege on Gaza, where governments failed to do so.

This is the same story and the same struggle that freed South Africa from Apartheid and liberated India from colonial rule and African Americans from racial discrimination. It's called 'the will of the people,' what Gramsci termed 'the optimism of the will, versus the pessimism of the intellect.'

The pessimists are those who back only the so-called talks, despite the absence of any optimism. But the optimists are those who back the will of the people — a people unbroken by a century of oppression, betrayal and deceit. They do have an alternative plan, firmly based on popular resistance and national unity — and on the growing campaign to impose sanctions on Israel.

Mustafa Barghouti is General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative and founder of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees

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A state of their own

The idea of unilaterally declaring an independent Palestinian state is now being discussed very seriously by the whole political spectrum.

In an article in *The National* in November, Nazareth-based journalist Jonathan Cook quoted a Palestinian official, who frequently speaks on behalf of President Mahmoud Abbas, as saying there was momentum building among senior Palestinian political figures to act on a long-standing threat to bypass the current peace process, which has stalled, and ask the UN Security Council to recognise Palestinian statehood.

The debate, which is occurring at the highest levels of the Palestinian Authority leadership, is no longer about *whether* to turn to the UN but *when* to do it, the official said.

It would not be the first time the Palestinians have made a declaration of independence. Yasser Arafat, the late Palestinian leader, did so in 1988 from exile in Tunisia. Then there was widespread international opposition to the declaration. Palestinian statehood was recognised by the Arab League and several other Muslim regimes, but failed to win support from the UN or any western state.

Things could be very different now. The governments of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Uruguay have already announced their recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and Paraguay plans to do so this year. Abbas laid the foundation stone for a new Palestinian embassy in Brazil's capital, Brasilia, in December.

The French and the Norwegians have upgraded the status of the Palestinian representative's office to diplomatic missions and there are reports the British intend to follow suit. This is a symbolic gesture but it infuriates Israel and supports Palestinian efforts towards building a state.

Here **Betty Hunter** analyses the significance of these developments.

As Dr. Mustafa Barghouti writes (p3) following the very public snubbing of President Obama over the extension of a non-existent settlement freeze, the Palestinians have begun the process of developing an alternative strategy to confront international stagnation.

The 17-year sham of meaningless negotiations can no longer be disguised — despite the protestations of the US government. Senator George Mitchell was despatched to the West Bank to reassure the PA but it was clear to all that he had nothing to offer or suggest.

But it is recognised that the declaration of a Palestinian state must be more than a routine empty gesture. Such a declaration has long been on the agenda of the unelected Palestinian Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad. He has been focusing on economic development and institution building in preparation for statehood to be announced later in 2011.

But while Fayyad may feel that he is making progress in the West Bank, the realities of occupation are becoming ever more devastating. A recent Save the Children UK report states that 79% of the Palestinian communities in Area C are unable to provide sufficient nutritious food for their inhabitants, as compared to 61% of communities in Gaza. It says the situation in Area C for all human necessities including health clinics, food, water and shelter has reached 'crisis point.'

In his last report to the United Nations, Richard Falk threw down the gauntlet.

'This intolerable, immoral and unlawful occupation must be brought to an end and there is no present prospect that traditional diplomacy will achieve this goal,' he said. In response to the failure of diplomacy, Professor Falk called for the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign to be supported in the way that it was against apartheid South Africa.

But it was the support of the ANC which gave the boycott movement authority and if Palestinian politicians seek to use a new international diplomatic strategy, then they must also work openly with the international solidarity movements across the world, backing our campaigns of BDS. The public support for a ban on the sale of settlement goods in the West Bank was an important step forward.

After the PLO declared an independent Palestinian state in the context of the first intifada in 1988, about 100 states recognised it and there followed all the secret negotiations leading to the Oslo Accords. The essential lesson is that Israel has for the last 20 years proclaimed its wish for a two state solution while refusing to acknowledge Palestinian statehood and refusing to negotiate on equal terms.

The fact that the United States House of Representatives discussed the matter of Palestinian statehood on December 15 in a very hastily convened debate gives some indication that this could be an effective campaigning strategy.

'The situation will only be changed if supporting states confront the Israeli government internationally'

House Resolution 1765 condemned 'unilateral measures to declare or recognise a Palestinian state' and predictably won unanimous support. Yet the haste and manner in which it was put through actually suggest a change in perceptions in the US,



The Occupied Palestinian Territories. Map: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Falk in London

Known for his fearlessness in speaking unpalatable truths to power, Professor Richard Falk got a warm welcome in the UK.

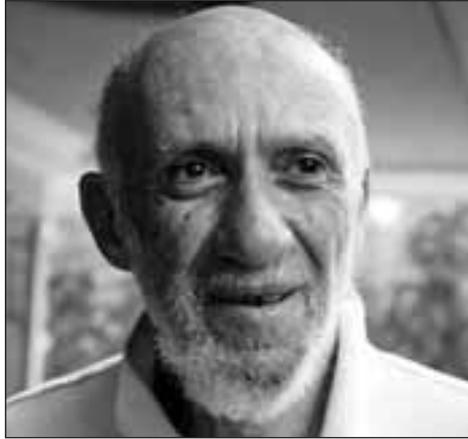
As UN Special Rapporteur for Palestinian Human Rights and Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University, no-one is better qualified than Richard Falk to talk about 'the Israeli assault on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.'

That was the theme of his lecture at a packed public meeting at the University of London in December, jointly organised by the Middle East Monitor and PSC and chaired by radical lawyer Michael Mansfield QC, who reminded the audience of the importance of legal challenges against Israel.

'The conflict has now become a test bed of universal moral values'

Professor Falk described Israel as the last remnant of the historically defunct colonial era, in which the 'hard power' of militarily superior imperial states ultimately proved ineffective against the 'soft power' of popular resistance. Extra violence is required to sustain this ahistorical attempt to translate hard-power dominance into a permanent political structure. Hence the increasingly brutal measures taken by Israel in the Occupied Territories. A major plank in the increasingly successful 'soft power' strategy, he said, is the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Repeatedly citing the ending of apartheid in South Africa as a reminder of what a mass solidarity movement can achieve, Professor Falk suggested that Palestine is an even more important moral issue. The ferocity of Israel's brutal assaults on Gaza and Lebanon and the killings on the *Mavi*



Marmara, together with its ongoing policies of dispossession and ethnic cleansing, mean it is no longer possible for Israel to play the victim on the world stage.

The conflict, he said, has now become a test bed of universal moral values, with the United Nations playing a crucial role as arbiter of the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle. On every aspect of the struggle, international law is on the side of the Palestinians. Hence, he said, Israel's insistence that it should be rigorously excluded from all negotiations.

In relation to the rights of occupied peoples, international law was designed only for temporary situations. Professor Falk suggested that exile and occupation of the kind experienced by the Palestinian people 'constitute a new type of crime against humanity.' He is, accordingly, pressing the UN for a new protocol specifically to cover the rights of those under prolonged occupation and condemned to refugee status for generations.

Both Michael Mansfield and Professor Falk stressed the importance of the use of language and the need to avoid what Falk called 'these sinister euphemisms,' a recent one being Hillary Clinton's suggestion that Israel's eventual borders should 'reflect subsequent developments'

(i.e. include the illegal settlements). We must be alert, he said, to the many attempts to normalise the status quo and to anaesthetise us to the horrors of what Falk himself is quite happy to call 'ethnic cleansing' and 'apartheid.'

At a press briefing he was equally clear about distinguishing 'terrorism' from 'resistance.' According to international law, he said, Palestinians are absolutely entitled to armed resistance to the aggression of a military occupying power. On the question of defining torture, he suggested that waging one-sided warfare on a helpless population, as in Gaza, indeed constitutes a form of torture.

An encouraging development he noted was the stirring of dissent within the 'Pentagon lobby.' When General David Petraeus suggested earlier this year that Israel was perhaps becoming a strategic burden rather than an asset to the US, costing American lives and giving rise to anti-American extremism around the world, he was heavily criticised — but his is clearly not a lone voice.

On the one state/two state issue, Professor Falk argued that, given the realities of land grabs and colonisation, the two-state solution has reached the point where it appears either incoherent or hypocritical: a truly viable Palestinian state would entail reversal of settlements — which Israel opposes utterly — but without that only a non-viable, apartheid state would result.

The lecture ended on a high note: Professor Falk quoted the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on the importance of trusting to our imagination and refusing to be imprisoned by the options of the past; and, as a call to confident action, the view of the Jewish writer, Abraham Joshua Heschel, that 'few are guilty [but] all are responsible.'

Brian Durrans

■ The Senate House meeting can be viewed in full on www.middleeastmonitor.org.uk.

(Cont. from previous page)

particularly in the light of growing grassroots support for Palestine.

If, as Peter Osborne suggested in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* (December 30), there is a potential split in the British coalition cabinet on the Palestine issue, then our lobbying of the government and the EU must be stepped up. Concrete actions are essential to demonstrate political will both to the Israelis and the US. Suspension of the EU/Israel trade agreement must be a central focus.

Improved diplomatic status and embassies may afford Palestine some dignity but the key players will continue to exclude themselves — the US in particular. The situation will only be changed if supporting states are prepared to take up the challenge to confront the Israeli government internationally. A Palestinian embassy should

be accompanied by a commitment to action from the country concerned.

Any new declaration must be presented as a refutation of Israel's denial of Palestinian statehood. It must be accompanied by a new determination to reject Israel's right to dictate terms. It must make clear that there will be no negotiations with Israel until UN resolutions and international law on borders, refugees, Jerusalem are implemented.

It must also declare support for international solidarity campaigns working for the self-determination of the Palestinian people. And it must be an active campaign which involves the people of Palestine wherever they are and to whatever party or campaign they belong.

Demonising criticism

By Sarah Colborne

The effectiveness of a solidarity campaign is often best seen by the scale of attacks upon it from the country responsible for the injustice. A typically paranoid report from the Reut Institute declared London to be the ‘hub of hubs’ of what it deems the ‘Delegitimisation Network,’ devoting five pages to its perception of the activities of the PSC.

The PSC is seen by this Israeli think-tank as a ‘main catalyst’ that threatens Israel’s ability to continue committing crimes with impunity — a clear indication that the work that is being carried out across the country by members and branches is making a real difference! And it reflects the fact that despite Israel’s carefully-crafted propaganda, the plight of Palestinians has won the hearts and minds of public opinion worldwide. Each atrocity from Israel has been met by a new wave of public shock and horror and a strengthening of the Palestine solidarity movement.

Reut’s report, released on its website in December 2010 and called *Building a Political Firewall against the Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy — London as a Case Study*, is a result of the findings of Reut’s ‘national security team’ who spent months in London interviewing ‘experts and activists from a range of fields.’ Rather than dwelling on the many and varied times when the report presents fiction as fact, this article will focus on the report’s underlying premise.

This report covers no new ground — it is simply a refinement of previous ‘studies’ that it has carried out. Although it acknowledges the driver for the growth in international solidarity is Israel’s violent and constant assault on Palestinians, Reut’s strategy is clear — to attempt to attack those who are defending peace, justice and international law, rather than to change Israeli policy. The implication of the report is that, for Israel to be able to continue its illegality and war crimes, it must silence international public opinion.

Some moments of clarity

There are some moments of clarity in Reut’s report. For example, it identifies the problem that uncritical support for Israel is required from those who want to join the ‘pro-Israel club.’ Then anyone who defends the rule of law is attacked as a delegitimiser, which narrows Israel’s base of support.

The report refers enviously to the ability of the solidarity movement to adopt a broader approach, based on international law and human rights, that involves all who support Palestinian



Mass support in London for Palestine

rights. But again, it fails to draw the conclusion from this — Israel’s violations of international law must cease. And the term ‘delegitimiser,’ according to Reut, can be used against anyone who links the words ‘Israel’ and ‘apartheid,’ or ‘demonises’ by ‘accusing Israel of the most heinous human-rights violations.’ In fact, the report claims that the Gaza Flotilla, and the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) Movement are both ‘recent delegitimisation campaigns.’

‘Reut’s strategy is to attack those who are defending peace, justice and international law’

Statements in the report such as ‘the ability to delegitimise Israel is rooted in efforts to brand it as an occupying and aggressive entity that ignores human rights and international law’ would be laughable if they weren’t so tragic. It’s not about PSC trying to ‘brand’ Israel — it is that Israel actually *is* an occupying and aggressive state that ignores human rights and international law!

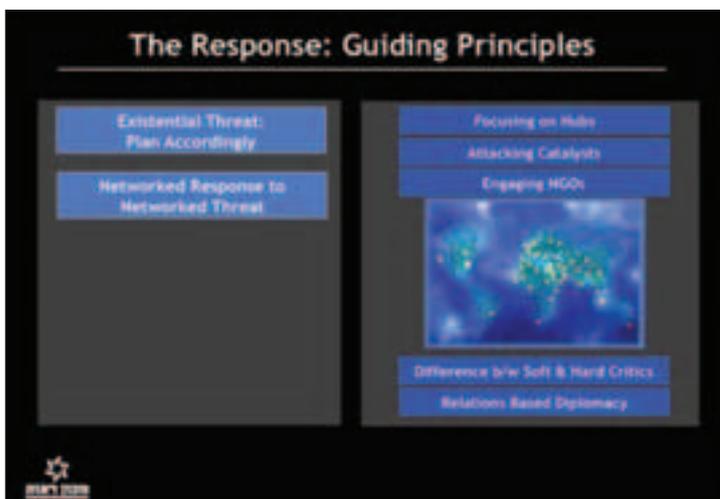
Violence has failed

So where does Reut come from? Established in January 2004, Reut (meaning Vision) claims to be a non-partisan policy team that supplies its services pro-bono solely to the Israeli government. In February 2010, it issued a report analysing the growth in international solidarity following Operation Cast Lead — Israel’s murderous assault against Gaza. In that report, it laid out its premise — that the international solidarity movement, particularly in ‘hubs’ such as London, needed to be challenged, including via acts of ‘sabotage.’

It acknowledged that violence had failed to achieve Israel’s ends and had produced worldwide revulsion. Its report said: ‘Our superior military power was offset by an offensive on Israel’s legitimacy that led to a significant setback in our international standing and will constrain future Israeli military planning and operations...’

It went on to issue a warning couched in similar terms — conflating outrage at the murders of unarmed civilians with an attack on Israel’s legitimacy — after the execution of nine peace activists by Israeli commandos on the Gaza flotilla.

In the introduction to this latest report, Reut says its analysis of the years 2006–2009 ‘led us to conclude that Israel is subject to a systemic and systematic assault on its political and economic model, which aims to precipitate its implosion. This campaign is inspired by the collapse of countries such as the Soviet Union and apartheid South Africa.’ It appears strangely puzzled over the success in making pro-Palestinian activity ‘trendy — The



A Reut Institute presentation

delegitimisation movement is linked with liberal, progressive causes.'

London is central

The assault is 'executed by two forces acting in parallel and with cooperation.' It calls these 'the Resistance Network, led by Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah, that rejects Israel's right to exist based on Arab and Islamist nationalist-religious ideology.' The other it dubs 'the Delegitimisation Network' which, it alleges, 'denies Israel's right of existence based on political, philosophical, or historical arguments.'

Its concern is that the 'assault has grown in sophistication and effectiveness to a point at which it should be treated as a strategic concern of potentially existential implications. However, it has been met by an under-resourced and uncoordinated local and situational response, and by an oblivious State of Israel.'

Reut perceives this 'Network' to be primarily concentrated in a few major cities such as London, Brussels, and the San Francisco Bay Area. London, it says 'stands out as a hub of delegitimisation' because of its significant global importance in the arenas of media, diplomacy, academia and non-governmental organisations.

Within the 'hubs' are a few dozen 'catalysts' — individuals and NGOs that 'drive the delegitimisation campaign.' The report says: 'London's influence on the global assault against Israel's legitimacy makes it central to this struggle. In order to win, success must be achieved there.'

Out, name and shame

Reut's advice as to how to counter the threat is 'delegitimising delegitimisation.' The report says: 'We believe that Israel's delegitimisers are relatively few, concentrated, and vulnerable — therefore, their plans can be disrupted.'

Tactics should include 'describing the delegitimisation challenge and its perpetrators,' (which clearly Reut itself is having trouble in doing), and it advises action to 'out, name, and shame the delegitimisers.'

This means, the report says, 'systematically exposing information about them, their activities, and the organisations that they operate out of. The goal is to eventually frame them, depending on context, as anti-peace, anti-Semitic, or dishonest purveyors of double standards.'

Reut has also referred to the danger of 'lawfare' — otherwise known in the real world as 'bringing Israeli war criminals to justice.' In addition, in November the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs released its paper on 'the campaign to defame Israel,' which went as far as to state that 'just as German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz states that "war is... a continuation of political activity by other means," so too, lawfare is a continuation of terrorist activity by other means.'

'Reut's focus on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign should be seen as a badge of honour'

These frenzied attacks by Israel and its associated think-tanks on those standing up for peace and justice reflect an increasingly panicked understanding that Israel's reliance on its overwhelming military superiority is unable to hold back the pro-Palestinian, pro-human rights international tide. Reut's focus on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign should be seen as a badge of honour — and an invitation to all those concerned with peace and justice to become actively involved in the main 'catalyst' — the PSC!



The report's chapter on 'The PSC and Trade Unions – A Case Study,' is itself an instructive case study in the methods Israel is increasingly using to demonise those who criticise its policies.

It says that 'in theory' the PSC 'is an apolitical Palestinian advocacy organisation that seeks to promote human rights, international justice, and peace.' But that it 'subtly shifts from criticism of Israeli policies to repudiating the State of Israel or Zionism, and promotes positions (that) represent delegitimisation of Israel.'

It gives a distorted analysis of the PSC's 'positions and activities' which it claims include 'rejection of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and, therefore, of the Zionist movement; support for terrorism and suicide bombers; promotion of a narrative of an Israel "born in sin," with the naturally derived corollary seeking its just dismantlement, and of the "right of

return" of Palestinian refugees; consistent demonisation; deployment of double-standards; and undermining of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.'

It adds: 'While not all of these positions can be considered explicit delegitimisation, the combination of all of them leaves little room for doubt regarding the PSC's true intentions. Thus, while some of its members may not seek to delegitimise Israel, the PSC's agenda clearly encompasses elements and symbols that advance Israel's fundamental delegitimisation, challenging its right to exist as the embodiment of Jewish self-determination.'

In reality, the PSC campaigns transparently for the aims published on its website, none of which are concerned with Israel's right to exist. These aims are:

- against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people
 - in support of the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights
 - to promote Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice
 - to oppose Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states
 - to oppose racism, including anti-Jewish prejudice and the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state
- for the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people
 - for the right of return of the Palestinian people
 - for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli state from the occupied territories

The Reut report says that the PSC's relationship with the trade unions is 'a particularly potent example' of how an advocacy organisation can 'make a substantial impact.' It adds that 'a trade union embrace of PSC-led campaigns can substantially impact the British mainstream.'

Delegitimisation — whose fault is it?

A group of young Jews created pandemonium as Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu was addressing the largest gathering of Jewish leaders in the US, the Jewish Federation General Assembly, on the subject of what is becoming Israel's favourite bête noire — the so-called 'delegitimisation' campaign.

Five people from the Young Leadership Institute of Jewish Voice for Peace stood up one after the other at the meeting in New Orleans in November which was attended by 3000 leaders from across the country. They unfurled banners and shouted the slogans: 'the loyalty oath delegitimises Israel,' 'the occupation delegitimises Israel,' 'settlements betray Jewish values,' 'the siege of Gaza delegitimises Israel' and 'silencing dissent delegitimises Israel.'

The protesters, Jewish-Americans Emily Ratner, Matthew Taylor and Rae Abileah and Israelis Eitan Isaacson and Matan Cohen, were set upon with increasing violence by members of the crowd and dragged away.

Abileah, who was the last to stand up, wrote afterwards: 'A man in the row in front of me pulled the El Al seat cover off his chair and tried to gag me with it. Another man came up from the side and grabbed me by the throat.' The event was widely reported and sparked lively discussion in the US on the growing split in Jewish

attitudes towards Israel.

The group is part of a new movement called Young, Jewish and Proud who have written an extraordinary statement called the Young Jewish Declaration, a compelling vision of collective identity, purpose and the values they cherish. It is a call to action for other young people who care about Israel and Palestine and also a strong challenge to community elders.

■ The full Declaration and a video of the action can be seen on the website: www.YoungJewishProud.org



Young, Jewish and Proud protesters with banners

UK seen as key battleground

Salim Alam reports on a conference held in London in December, 'Britain and the delegitimisation of Israel.'

After passing through heavy security requiring IDs, questions about their organisational or political affiliations and how far they had travelled, about 200 people gathered in a synagogue in Bayswater, London, to attend a keynote pro-Israel meeting on how to counter the 'delegitimisation' of Israel.

Organised by the Henry Jackson Society, Just Journalism and the *Jewish Chronicle*, the meeting was opened by Israel's Ambassador to the UK, Ron Prosor. He declared that Israel's British adversaries were 'crossing the red line every day,' by which he meant criticism of Israel and its policies as well as calls for boycott and the application of the legal system against Israel and its citizens.

Prosor said he saw the UK as the key battleground for three reasons. Firstly, London is the hub of the English-speaking media and what it reports gets picked up and analysed across the world. Secondly, UK universities are internationally influential and thousands of students study in the UK and return to their own countries to become future political and government leaders. Thirdly, the UK is the home of the largest and most influential NGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid.

He said that UK-Israel inter-governmental relations are much more positive than UK public opinion towards Israel and official pronouncements might suggest. He went on though to warn that whilst the 'view from the penthouse was amazingly good' there was 'increasing structural damage and deterioration to the building' as a result of what he called the actions of the 'delegitimisation network.'

Nick Cohen, the *Observer* newspaper columnist, spoke in what seemed to be the slot reserved for a token liberal. He suggested Israel's image might improve if there were some acknowledgement of the problems caused by settlement expansion and also asked the conference if it might not be better to put more stress on the acceptance of an independent Palestinian state.

He promised the meeting a radical agenda for countering delegitimisation. His big idea? Israel's supporters need to turn 'liberal arguments against liberal opinions,' explaining this meant

attacking the human rights record of despotic Arab regimes and the opinions of Islamists.

Baroness Deech, a lawyer and former BBC Governor, said her solution to delegitimisation was twofold. Firstly, use the full weight of the law and the 'code of conduct on freedom of speech' to ban 'delegitimisers' from speaking at UK universities. Secondly, she called for a change in the leadership of UK Jewry to address its failings and weaknesses.

She provided a helpful list of who the new leaders should be, including rabid right-wing *Daily Mail* commentator, Melanie Phillips, and the UK Zionist Federation Vice Chair and serial disrupter of pro-Palestinian meetings, Jonathan Hoffman. As she reached her full stride, Deech called for attacks on the UK left and for a campaign to highlight the 'influence' of 'Arab oil money' in university funding.

Times newspaper commentator, Daniel Finkelstein, proposed his strategy for countering delegitimisation: always frame the debate in terms of the need for the existence of Israel and the right of Israel to defend itself. He added that the pro-Israel lobby should seek to support tolerant liberal values as the best protection against the delegitimisation challenge.

Rafael Bardaji, director of the Friends of Israel Initiative and former adviser to the Spanish government, was the last speaker. He saw Israel as the front line against the 'enemies of the West' and believed any criticism of Israel undermines Western democracies, that Israel is a European country physically located in the Middle East and that it is the 'cradle of Judeo-Christian values.' His suggestions were to stress that Israel is 'a land of opportunity' and to campaign for maps of Europe to include Israel.

Contributions from the audience mostly attacked the Israeli left, Israeli liberal academics and journalists, Israeli NGOs and even 'left Zionists.' A few contributors tried meekly to take up the difficulties caused by Israel's actions but Ambassador Prosor made it clear that any criticism of Israel and especially those from 'left Zionists' is intolerable.

The biggest and most enthusiastic applause of the night was reserved for the lady in the audience who loudly proclaimed that 'Israel does not occupy Palestine. There is already a Palestinian state and it is called Jordan.' No-one challenged this, I believe because the overwhelming majority of the meeting agreed with her.

If this is correct, then the pro-Israel lobby in the UK needs to look no further than inside its own ranks in order to identify those who are driving the 'delegitimisation' of Israel.

Complaints to the BBC

Diane Langford traces the tortuous appeals process

Nineteen appeals have been launched against the shameful findings of the BBC Trust's Editorial Standards Committee in the case of *Death in the Med*, aired by Panorama on BBC1 on August 16, 2010. It appears the more thoroughly a programme has pandered to Israel, the more cynical and dishonourable become the Trust's responses.

At an earlier stage of the complaints process, Ross Montgomery, on behalf of the Panorama team, wrote that 'the programme set out to try and explain what happened on the *Mavi Marmara*, not to pass judgment on the morality of the actions of either the IDF or the IHH activists.' Yet the BBC makes moral judgments all the time, including the judgment (immoral in the opinion of many) to refuse to broadcast the DEC appeal for Gaza after the Israelis' merciless 2009 attack. Viewers who were not satisfied with the standard reply from Montgomery elevated their complaint to the third stage of the process which involves the BBC Trust and its Editorial Standards Committee.

Seasoned complainants did not expect much from the ESC but when its findings came, in a letter from Colin Tregear, his blanket justification of the programme — upholding the use of doctored IDF tapes — was shocking. Of the massacre, he wrote,

'the manner of the killings was immaterial to the issue of how a situation of violent conflict arose...'

Global outrage at Israel's brutal murder of nine civilians after commandeering the *Mavi Marmara* pirate-fashion was at its height when the programme was broadcast. Karl T. Hudson-Phillips, a former judge on the International Criminal Court, told reporters in Geneva on September 28 that Israel appeared to be trying to maintain a monopoly over information on what happened on the *Mavi Marmara*. *Death in the Med* looked like the BBC's contribution towards this Israeli strategy.

Neither the Panorama team nor the Trust were able to explain the startlingly different conclusions reached by a UN Human Rights Council report produced by a panel of diplomats and jurists (including Mr Hudson-Phillips) who had examined the same events and declared: 'On the basis of forensic and firearm evidence, at least six of the killings can be characterised as extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions.'

Panorama could not back up its claims to have uncovered 'important new evidence.' The programme ignored forensic evidence available from autopsy reports. How was it possible for an experienced journalist like the presenter, Jane Corbin, to fail to identify the execution-style killings of civilians?



The *Mavi Marmara*, now a museum in Istanbul. Photo: Tomasz Grzyb, www.demotix.com

The overwhelming conclusion that viewers unfamiliar with Israel's MO would take away from the programme was that the murdered human rights defenders had engineered their own deaths by luring peace-loving commandos onto their ships miles out in international waters.

Now the Trust has written to appellants to inform them that it has decided to consolidate all appeals into one document. Viewers who had prepared detailed arguments against the programme's bias and dishonesty will see their work ground to a bland pap by the Trust for presentation to the Appeals Committee. After all, the Trust's job is to defend the indefensible. Commenting on a previous Trust decision in which it had shafted the BBC's Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen, Robert Fisk confided that every time he typed the word 'Trust' onto his laptop he felt nauseous. Pass the sickbag, Robert.

Responding to bias

The PSC's media officer, **Amena Saleem**, reports on a new project aimed at monitoring and responding to media bias in the coverage of the Palestinian issue which has been launched with the support of the PSC.

The project, Fair News, will begin by examining BBC output, looking in particular at BBC Radio 4's daily *Today* and *PM* programmes. Instances of unbalanced or biased reporting, or stories where key facts or essential historical context are omitted, will be picked up on by a team of PSC volunteers, as will instances where Israeli spokespeople go unchallenged by journalists and where Palestinian spokespeople are lacking.

I will be co-ordinating the team who will contact the programme makers concerned and follow complaints through the BBC's complaints procedure to the appeals stage if necessary.

The project also aims to be proactive, compiling and providing lists of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian spokespeople to media outlets, providing information on Palestine to journalists and keeping them informed of potential stories in the Occupied Territories.

While the cause of justice for Palestine is growing rapidly in the UK, I believe it is vital that programme makers, not just politicians, realise that they will be held to account if they do not portray the situation fairly and accurately.

The BBC, in particular, as a taxpayer-funded broadcaster, has a responsibility to produce programmes that are completely impartial and fact-orientated. Sadly, when it comes to Palestine, it fails in this duty on



a regular basis, ignoring its own editorial guidelines as it does so. Fair News will be monitoring any transgressions and asking for explanations.

The Fair News project hopes to grow in size, so that more media outlets and more programmes can be monitored. It is being run in conjunction with Middle East Monitor and CAABU and also has prominent journalists on its panel.

Gaza: siege unchanged

In June last year, following the murders on the *Mavi Marmara*, international pressure finally reached such a pitch that Israel gave a little bit of ground and announced a set of measures to 'ease' its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

So, as Gazans commemorate the second anniversary of the devastating Operation Cast Lead assault that killed 1443 people, what has changed? Almost nothing, according to an authoritative report, **Dashed Hopes: Continuation of the Gaza blockade**, published in November by 25 NGOs from a variety of countries, including Cafod, Christian Aid, MAP, Merlin, Save the Children, Oxfam, Amnesty and the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

It says that many in the international community, including Quartet Representative Tony Blair, expressed hopes that the 'easing' would lead to a major change but five months on 'there are few signs of real improvement on the ground as the "ease" has left the foundations of the illegal blockade policy intact.'

For instance, while Israel pledged to increase the inflow of construction materials for international projects, it has so far only approved *seven per cent* of UNRWA's building projects such as schools and health centres and only a small fraction of the necessary materials for these has been allowed to enter.

There has been a significant increase in the amount of food stuffs entering Gaza but many humanitarian items, including vital water equipment, are not on the Israeli 'restricted' list, yet continue to receive no permits.

Two thirds of Gaza's factories report they have received very little or none of the raw materials they need to recommence operations. As a result, 39% of the population are unemployed and 80% are still dependent upon international aid.

The report sets out lists of the promises made on June 20, 2010, and the actual results (see inset).

In addition the report says that all other restrictions have remained fundamentally the same. That means the **ban on exports** continues, apart from a small amount of strawberries and flowers; **fuel restrictions** continue so that the power plant works at 68% of capacity and cooking gas imports are at around 53% of needs; the Israeli-declared **'buffer zone'** remains, meaning that access to around 35% of Gaza's farmland and 85% of fishing areas is restricted.

The report says: 'An estimated 178,000 people are directly affected. Boundaries of the restricted areas are highly arbitrary and enforced by live fire: six civilians have been killed (two of them children) and 57 injured (ten of them children) by Israeli fire in the buffer zone since the "easing" of the blockade.'

Imports

Promises

Publish a list of items not permitted into Gaza ('negative list').

All items absent from this list will be permitted to enter Gaza.

Results

Imports increased from 20% to 35% of pre-blockade levels; primarily consumer goods including food.

The published 'negative list' extends far beyond the international definition of dual-use items.

Many items absent from the list still require special approval and many of them have not received it.

Imports of many raw materials still restricted.

Negative impact of cheap imports on local production.

Construction materials

Promises

Allow the entry of restricted construction materials for international projects approved by the Palestinian Authority. Expand and accelerate their inflow.

Results

Inflow of construction materials at only 11% of pre-blockade levels.

Delays and extra costs due to complex approval and monitoring procedures.

Only 25 UNRWA projects approved in principle; only a small fraction of materials for these received.

Reconstruction of homes hampered due to exclusion of private sector.

Crossings operation

Promises

Expand operations and capacity of crossings to Gaza — allowing 250 trucks per day at Kerem Shalom crossing and 360 truckloads per week through a conveyor at Karni crossing.

Open additional crossings 'when security concerns are fully addressed.'

Results

Crossings operation still far from sufficient.

Kerem Shalom crossing: 183 trucks entering per day on average. Karni conveyor belt processes only 137 truckloads per week, down from 158 prior to 'easing.'

Erez crossing open for restricted movement of people only. Sufa and Nahal Oz closed.

Movement of people

Promises

Streamline permits for humanitarian and medical reasons and for aid workers. Consider additional ways to facilitate movement.

Results

Increase in permits for businesspeople. Overall ban on exit and entry still in place. Number of exits below 1% of 2000 levels.

Fewer permits for UN local humanitarian staff than before 'easing.'

Permit policy for aid workers and medical patients still arbitrary, unpredictable and time consuming.



Picking carnations for export

Dying for justice

The last peace campaigner to be killed by Israeli forces in 2010, and the first funeral of 2011, was that of Jawaher Abu Rahmah who died from inhaling tear gas fired at a New Year's Eve demonstration in Bil'in.

Jawaher, 36, was the sister of Bassem Abu Rahmah who was killed by an Israeli soldier firing a tear gas canister directly at his chest in April, 2009. Another brother, Ashraf, was filmed as he was shot and injured with a rubber-coated steel bullet while he was handcuffed and blindfolded in July 2008.

At her daughter's funeral on January 1, grieving mother, Subhiyeh, told the Israeli news agency, Ynet, that she did not seek revenge.

'I brought my children into the world with love and I educated them to believe in peace and not to act violently,' she said. 'Out of six children, I have four left. I ask the people of Israel to take a firm stand against the occupation. They must support our just struggle against the fence and for the liberation of the lands we were robbed of,



because only together we'll be able to put an end to the tragedy of our two peoples.'

She called on the Palestinian public to remain united and added: 'Like all human beings, we want to live and not to die. We want to live alongside Israel, but in dignity.'

The demonstration in Bil'in, which has had half of its agricultural land stolen by the Wall, attracted 1,000 people. As soon as the peaceful march reached the fields, Israeli soldiers fired wave after wave of US-made tear gas directly at protesters leaving nearly everyone gasping for air. Jawaher lost

consciousness and was taken to hospital but never recovered.

The Israeli army then proceeded to brief journalists anonymously with a series of lies, including that Jawaher suffered from a health condition such as leukaemia, that she was not injured by tear gas and was possibly not even at the demonstration.

These have been refuted by a shoal of eyewitness testimonies including from Subhiyeh who was standing beside Jawaher when she was overcome by the gas, started vomiting and collapsed. Mohammed Aida, director of the Ramallah health centre where she was treated, confirmed: 'Jawaher Abu Rahmah died from lung failure that was caused by tear gas inhalation, leading to a heart attack.'

Israel uses a type of tear-gas called CS — effectively a chemical weapon which has been blamed for a number of deaths and serious injuries, according to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*. Since 2005, 21 unarmed demonstrators, 10 of them children, have been killed in demonstrations in the occupied West Bank.

Collective punishment proved

Israel has been forced to reveal what observers on the ground have known for a long time: that the blockade of Gaza is state policy intended to inflict collective punishment, not to bolster Israeli security.

The human rights group, Gisha, won an 18 month legal battle that obliged the government to release documents that outlined what the state policy was for permitting the transfer of goods into the Gaza Strip prior to the May 31 attack on the *Mavi Marmara*.

The documents reveal that the dietary needs for the population of Gaza are chillingly calculated and that the state approved a 'policy of deliberate reduction' of basic goods, including food and fuel for the power plant.

Saed Bannoura of the International Middle East Media Centre commented that 'the amounts of food let in by the Israeli government (were) measured to remain just enough to keep the population alive at a near-starvation level. This documents the statement made by a number of Israeli officials that they are "putting the people of Gaza on a diet."'

The state set a 'lower warning line' to give advance warning of expected shortages in a particular item, but at the same time approved *ignoring* that warning if the item in question was subject to the policy of 'deliberate reduction.'

In addition, the state set an 'upper red



Fuel shortages cause power cuts.
Photo: www.demotix.com

line' above which even basic humanitarian items could be blocked. The state claimed in a cover letter to Gisha that, in practice, it had not authorised reduction of 'basic goods' below the 'lower warning line' but it did not define what these 'basic goods' were.

'Luxuries' denied

In violation of international law which allows Israel to restrict the passage of goods only for concrete security reasons, decisions were also based on 'the good's public perception' and 'whether it is viewed as a luxury.' Thus items such as chocolate and paper were not on the permitted list.

Goods 'of a rehabilitative character'

also required special permission. Thus, international organisations did not receive permits for building materials for schools and homes.

There was also a policy of secrecy — the list of permitted goods '**will not be released to those not specified!**' (emphasis in original). This meant that merchants in Gaza could not know what they were permitted to import.

Chilling calculations

The documents contain a series of formulas created by the Defence Ministry, presumed to allow the Coordinator for Government Action in the Territories (COGAT) to measure

what is called the '**length of breath.**' The formula states that if you divide the product inventory in the Strip by the daily consumption needs of residents, you will get the number of days it will take for the residents to run out of that basic product — in other words, until their 'length of breath' runs out.

Israel first denied the existence of the documents, then claimed that revealing them would harm 'state security.' Gisha — the Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement — submitted a petition under the Freedom of Information Act in the Tel Aviv District Court demanding transparency regarding the Gaza closure policy.

Israel still refuses to release any documents governing the policy as amended after the flotilla attack.

Out of the rubble — greener homes

Nasser Golzari reports on a workshop in Gaza City led by the University of Westminster's Palestinian Regeneration Team and UN-Habitat to help rebuild shattered homes.

The need for housing in the Gaza Strip is both urgent and immense. Population growth means that more homes are needed in addition to rebuilding those shattered in the Israeli onslaught of December 2008.

Very few reconstruction projects have taken place because the Israelis refuse to allow building materials through Gaza's closed borders. So most people resort to using rubble salvaged from damaged buildings and claiming whatever financial compensation they can get from the UN to make a new start.

Our visit to Gaza in September revealed a remarkable number of local initiatives emerging out of this situation of despair. Residents are using brick, concrete and mud construction in ingenious ways. These initiatives are outstanding in their creativity but people also require technical assistance to fill in the gaps.

Sustainable agenda

There is an urgent need to relate new building projects to Gaza City's existing urban context and above all to a more sustainable agenda for the future. So the requirement for immediate shelter runs in parallel with the need for better houses.

It was with this in mind that the workshop was held by Professor Murray Fraser, Yara Sharif and myself from PART, along with UN-Habitat and 30 local partners. We studied the worst affected neighbourhoods in Gaza City before exchanging ideas about how to make the typical concrete houses for extended families more energy-efficient. The key issues raised in discussion were:

1. The need for self-help/self-build initiatives by local communities.
2. How to deal with waste, water supplies and sewage systems.
3. How to use low-cost 'invisible technologies,' linked to everyday social habits, to create more sustainable neighbourhoods.

Pilot projects

Various workshop groups looked into shorter-term impacts and longer-term strategies and these findings were then drawn together to identify pilot projects in which the points discussed could be



Nasser Golzari addressing the workshop

incorporated. The proposals also addressed these vital factors:

- Availability/shortage of building materials.
- Need for house extensions in the most densely populated areas.
- Self-help initiatives to accommodate the homeless and displaced.
- How to make better use of roofs, gardens, kitchens and toilets in existing buildings.
- Recycling, use of 'grey water,' sewage and agricultural production.
- Climate analysis and sustainability measures to avoid excessive cooling and heating.
- Urgency for training, employment, community awareness and self-build initiatives.

The overall concept developed during the workshop was called 'green stitching' in the sense that the aim is to allow for flexible uses and adaptable spaces that are more responsive to the climate, economic situation and everyday social practices. The term also refers to designs that act both in horizontal and vertical directions in order to connect gardens on the ground with others at roof level.

Green Gaza coalition

What also emerged was a desire to share experiences and ideas as part of a 'Green Gaza Coalition.' This group intends to broaden debate and create conditions for new design proposals while also sustaining the initiatives of local residents. More critically, the coalition is needed in case the blockade of the Gaza Strip is lifted or relaxed, since then there would be an immediate requirement for a clear urban strategy based on a sustainable agenda.

The main strategies emerging from the workshop and associated consultations were as follows:

1. Model Neighbourhood for Salam

The different pilot schemes were conceived as an overall 'model neighbourhood' in the Salam district. This would have its own clear environmental framework and the ability to incorporate other projects being planned in the Green Gaza Coalition.

2. Self-Help Guidebook

The aim is to offer technical support for families interested in doing their own housing repairs or new extensions.

3. Three Pilot Projects

- A 20-dwelling 'Living Unit Cluster' in Al-Zeitoun in Salam using green building technologies and vertical gardens.
- Adapting existing school buildings by inserting a 'Learning Room' which embodies low-energy principles while also providing an interface with the local community to test out self-build techniques.
- 'Neighbourhood Upgrading' — inserting new gardens, urban spaces, play areas and shading devices between buildings.

We are appealing for support to keep this project going so we can help empower Gazans to stand on their own feet again.

We need to act now. Gaza needs 60,000 residential units every year but only 30 have been built since Operation Cast Lead. You can support a family to have a room, a roof, a garden, a window or even a clean glass of water.

■ To find out how you can help, contact us via www.palestineregenerationproject.com

Israel attacked for arrests of hundreds of children

By Jonathan Cook

Israeli police have been criticised over their treatment of hundreds of Palestinian children, some as young as seven, arrested and interrogated on suspicion of stone-throwing in East Jerusalem.

In the past year, criminal investigations have been opened against more than 1,200 Palestinian minors in Jerusalem, according to police statistics gathered by the Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI). Most of the arrests have occurred in the Silwan district where 350 extremist Jewish settlers have set up heavily guarded illegal enclaves among 50,000 Palestinian residents.

In a sign of growing anger at the arrests, a large crowd in Silwan was reported to have prevented police from arresting Adam Rishek, a seven-year-old boy accused of stone-throwing. His parents later filed a complaint claiming he had been beaten by the officers.

In the purge on stone-throwing, the police were riding roughshod over children's legal rights and leaving many minors with profound emotional traumas, concluded ACRI in a recent report, *Unsafe Space*.

In November, 60 Israeli childcare and legal experts wrote to Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu condemning the police behaviour. 'Particularly troubling,' they wrote, 'are testimonies of children under the age of 12, the minimal age set by the law for criminal liability... who were not spared rough and abusive interrogation.'

Unlike in the West Bank, children in East Jerusalem — annexed by Israel in 1967 — are supposed to be dealt with according to Israeli criminal law. Minors, defined as anyone under 18, should be questioned by specially trained officers and only during daylight hours. The children must be able to consult with a lawyer and a parent should be present.

Ronit Sela, a spokeswoman for ACRI, said: 'We have heard many testimonies from children who describe terrifying experiences of



A child being arrested at a protest at al-Aqsa mosque. Photo: activestills.org

violence during both their arrest and their later interrogation.'

Muslim, 10, lives in the Bustan neighbourhood in a house that Israeli authorities have ordered demolished. In an interview with *The National* he said he had been arrested four times this year. On the last occasion he was grabbed from the street by three plain-clothes policemen who jumped out of a van.

'One of the men grabbed me from behind and started choking me. The second grabbed my shirt and tore it from my back, and the third twisted my hands behind my back and tied them with plastic cords. "Who threw stones?" one of them asked me. "I don't know," I said. He started hitting me on the head and I shouted in pain.'

Muslim was taken into custody and released six hours later. A local doctor reported that the boy had bleeding wounds to his knees and swelling on several parts of his body.

B'Tselem reported the case of AS, a 12-year-old child taken for interrogation following an arrest at 3am. 'I sat on my knees facing the wall. Every time I moved, a man in civilian clothes hit me with his hand on my neck... The man asked me to

prostrate myself on the floor and ask his forgiveness but I refused and told him that I do not bow to anyone but Allah. All the while, I felt intense pain in my feet and legs. I felt intense fear and I started shaking.'

The 60 experts who wrote to Mr Netanyahu warned the children's abuse led to 'post-traumatic stress disorders, such as nightmares, insomnia, bed-wetting, and constant fear of policemen and soldiers.'

Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. His website is www.jkcook.net

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

Witch hunt spreads

The Knesset plenum (meeting of members) has voted overwhelmingly to establish a panel of inquiry to investigate Israeli groups they accuse of 'delegitimising' — the new buzz word — the IDF.

The initiative proposes investigating the sources of funding for the mostly left-wing groups who oppose Israel's policies towards the OPTs and its own Arab

Israeli population. The plenum's approval in January means it will now be debated in the Knesset House Committee.

Yariv Oppenheimer, the director general of Peace Now, which will be one of the organisations targeted, condemned the move as 'another step on the path toward wiping out democracy in Israel.'

Another organisation, the New Israel Fund, said: 'The political persecution of human rights groups causes great damage to Israel across the world, and that is precisely what will lead to the delegitimation [of

Israel] and the representation of it as a McCarthyite state in which a witch hunt is taking place.'

The proposal was initiated by MK Fania Kirshenbaum of Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu faction. She said: 'These groups provided material to the Goldstone commission [which investigated the Gaza war] and are behind the indictments lodged against Israeli officers and officials around the world.'

The vote went 41 MKs in favour and 15 against.

A life of resistance

Jamal Hweel, now a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, spent eight years in an Israeli jail. He talked to **Hilary Wise** about his experiences and about the need of long-term prisoners for contact and support.

There is a cheerful serenity about Jamal Hweel, as he talks about a life full of tragedy but also pride and comradeship. He is from Jenin, home to 13,000 refugees and the target of some of Israel's bloodiest incursions. Jamal was caught up in the struggle against the occupation at a young age, jailed for the first time at 15 with his twin brother for throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

A year later the first Intifada broke out. Together with thousands of young Palestinians, the brothers found themselves arrested on many occasions — sometimes just beaten up or interrogated, on other occasions jailed for short periods. In 1991 Jamal opted to study in Jordan. His brother was the victim of an Israeli assassination squad that infiltrated the refugee camp and shot him dead at close range. The body was flown by helicopter to Israel where it remains in an unknown burial place.

To many Palestinians, particularly followers of Fatah like Jamal, the Oslo Accords of the early 90s seemed to hold out some hope of peaceful coexistence. He returned to Palestine in 1994 but was immediately arrested at the border, interrogated for 100 days then given six months 'administrative detention' (imprisonment without trial).

After finishing his MA in Jordan in 1996 he joined the Fatah Youth Movement. They were tense times as it was increasingly clear that Israel was not going to honour its commitments under Oslo. 'All those concessions we made — all for nothing,' he says. When Sharon's infamous 'walk' on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in September 2000 ignited the Second Intifada, Jenin was more than ever a target for the IDF.

As a member of the leadership of Fatah's resistance movement, Jamal was on the Israelis' most wanted list. The now legendary Battle of Jenin took place in April 2002. 'It took the Israel army and air force 11 days to take a camp less than 2km square,' Jamal says.

As soon as he was arrested, Jamal was taken to a nearby mosque and heavily beaten as part of what he calls 'on the spot interrogation.' Later he was taken to one of the many unidentified, unofficial jails in Israel for fuller interrogation. His captors told him that, for the outside world, he was already dead. His family assumed he had been killed and neither lawyers nor representatives of



Inspiration for resistance: destruction in Jenin 2002. Photo: www.demotix.com

the Red Cross were given access to the jail.

'They disorientated you before the interrogations,' he says. 'Blindfolded and on the end of a chain, they made you keep walking in circles. The bed in the cell was a narrow concrete slab and the light was on all the time so you couldn't tell night from day. Sometimes they doused you with water as you slept. On occasions I was exhibited to young Israeli students visiting the jail — "This one's from Jenin," they'd say, and sometimes they took pictures with me, blindfolded, as a kind of trophy.'

During the interrogation the infamous 'shabeh' position was used. 'You're perched on a chair, neither sitting nor standing, with your wrists cuffed behind your back and chained to your ankles. It's excruciating. You usually have a bag over your head — a urine-soaked bag.'¹

After 40 days he was taken to an ordinary jail, where he could meet with a lawyer, and after many months in and out of court was finally sentenced to seven and a half years and a fine of 30,000 shekels (over £5,000).

Jamal speaks with pride about the life prisoners are able to organise for themselves. 'There is a degree of autonomy, in that we have a constitution and even hold elections along the lines of the parties and political groups on the outside,' he says. Inmates are elected to committees relating to education, health, finance and security,

with a High Committee which oversees the whole structure and communicates with the prison authorities. 'We negotiate on issues like the right to medical treatment, reading material, visits and so on. If necessary, we resort to hunger strikes to highlight our demands.'

Jamal was allowed only three visits in eight years, from his father and from his fiancée. 'There are very poignant cases,' he says, 'like a long-term prisoner who had barely seen his two small sons. But he met them again, inside, when they too became prisoners as young men. You can imagine the reunion!' Despite the worries about their families and the inevitable depression threatening the prisoners sentenced to decades in jail, morale is high. 'We feel that right is on our side, and our communities value what we have done.'

The Security Committee has the role of containing violence among prisoners. It also deals with the difficult and painful issue of plants and informers. 'We call them "birds"' he says. 'Sometimes they confess they've been blackmailed into it and we try to help them resist this and regain their self-respect.'

Education is paramount in the jails. Jamal opted to learn Hebrew, which he now speaks fluently. Since he already had an MA in politics and international relations when he was arrested, he was able to teach these subjects, and the history of the Palestinian struggle, to fellow inmates. 'One young guy couldn't read when he came in but he ended up with a PhD.' Young prisoners take the 'tawjeeh' exams in jail, hopefully to prepare them for higher education on their release.

Now released, married to the fiancée who waited for him for nine years and with a young daughter, Jamal is still concerned for his comrades in jail. 'It's so important for them to know the outside world has not forgotten them.' He is asking people to write to prisoners, especially those in jail for decades. 'If people write to me by email, I will make sure the messages get to the families at least. They can then be transmitted to the prisoners, for example, over local radio, or through texting — we have all sorts of ways of communicating. It's a window onto the outside world for them.'

¹ See www.btselem.org for a variety of testimonies and reports on the use of torture in Israeli jails.

■ Jamal can be contacted on plchweel@hotmail.com

■ Jamal came to London in November as a guest of the Tower Hamlets and Jenin Friendship Association (www.thjfa.org.uk) and spoke at a House of Commons meeting following the lobby of parliament.

Badgering Brussels

Sharen Green, the organiser of an international lobbying mission to the European Union, reports on the gains and frustrations of the trip

After months of detailed planning, 19 people from across Europe spent four days in Brussels asking parliamentarians, diplomats and bureaucrats in the European Commission to bring pressure to bear on Israel.

Twelve of us were Ecumenical Accompaniers — known as EAs — from EAPPI¹ who have worked as human rights monitors in the West Bank (including *Palestine News* editor, Gill Swain) and three of us belong to Jews for Justice for Palestinians. We were supported by four “freelance” campaigners including Hilary Wise, PSC’s Director of Publications.

We divided into groups of three or four and made appointments with as many members of the Parliament (MEPs) as we could or, failing them, their assistants or political advisers, plus member states’ Permanent Representatives (like ambassadors) and other bureaucrats. We argued that because the Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal — a stance the EU endorses — goods from those settlements should not be imported or sold in Europe. It’s a principle of international law that no one should benefit from a crime — in this case a war crime, since the settlements breach the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We also asked for the agreement under which Israel receives tax breaks for goods coming from Israel proper — the European Union-Israel Association Agreement — to be suspended until Israel fulfils its human rights obligations as detailed under Article 2 of the agreement.

The third plank of the lobby involved a Written Declaration — a mechanism similar to Early Day Motions here but potentially more effective. Four MEPs had put forward this motion which asked for labelling to show whether West Bank goods come from an illegal Israeli settlement or from a Palestinian farm.

Although this was a very poor second to the total ban on settlement produce that we really wanted, we decided to campaign vigorously for it since it could become EU policy if half the MEPs signed it. In the event, not enough signed it to make this happen but it was a useful awareness-raising tactic.

‘Many of the assistants and advisers to the MEPs were shocked and moved by the stories’

We were excited, dismayed, encouraged and disheartened by all the different reactions we got. One official was rather grudging — playing the ‘we don’t do politics, we only implement policy’ card — but another guided us as to how we could pressure the EU by using questions from the Parliament to the Commission. The questions should be ongoing, at the rate of perhaps two per month, on and on, until ‘it gets under the noses of the Commissioners,’ he said.

Eyewitness accounts and presentations from the EAs proved an extremely powerful lobbying tool. Many of the young assistants and advisers to the MEPs were shocked and moved by the stories and even hardened bureaucrats thanked us for the concrete examples, especially when it came to evidence about the torture of children.

The Disappearing Palestine maps stopped some in their tracks — even those who recited the Zionist narrative to us — and having



Left to right: Hilary Wise, Gill Swain, Arlene McCarthy MEP who initiated the Written Declaration, Françoise Pinteaux-Jones, EA, and Ann Wright, EA

Jews lobbying beside us with their heartfelt witness strengthened our hand immeasurably.

We met over 70 MEPs, their assistants and advisers from 19 member states as well as diplomats from 11 countries and nine Commission staff. It was exhausting but exhilarating. Although it was such hard work, we all know it’s only the beginning and most of us can’t wait to go again.

¹ Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, a World Council of Churches project. www.quaker.org.uk/eappi

Ireland blocks moves to share EU citizens’ personal data with Israel

The Irish Minister for Justice, Dermot Ahern, blocked a proposed European Commission data-sharing plan with Israel in September. If adopted, the proposal would have allowed EU member states to approve the transfer to and storage by Israel of sensitive personal data on European citizens.

The European Commission proposal was for EU member states to sign a declaration that the EU approves Israeli data protection standards. As a result of Irish pressure, the move was debated in an EU committee that deals with the protection of personal data.

Mr Ahern pressed to have the plan halted in the light of disquiet about the use of eight fake Irish passports by the Israeli assassins of Hamas official, Mahmoud al-Mabhouh. As a result, the Commission decided not to go ahead before it had received clarification from Israel on its data protection systems.

The block was welcomed by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Chairperson Freda Hughes said: ‘The IPSC commends Minister Ahern’s successful intervention to freeze this process — the sole EU minister to take this stance... the very idea that EU citizens’ private data would be provided to Israel after the passport abuse in the Dubai murder is absurd. Israel’s actions have, time and again, proven that it is not a “normal” state and should not be treated as such.’

Russell Tribunal finds business guilty

By Andree Ryan

The second session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine met in London in November to examine corporate responsibilities under international law and assess the conduct of companies with regard to Israel's violations of human rights.

Held at the Law Society, the Tribunal was attended by around 200 people from all over the world. I heard French, Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and also English spoken in all sorts of accents: South African, Canadian, Irish, American. It was recorded live online but, as far as I could see, the press snubbed the event.

It was not an academic exercise but a citizen tribunal based on the original model set up by philosopher Bertrand Russell in 1967 to examine war crimes in Vietnam. The first Russell Tribunal on Palestine met in Barcelona in March where it considered EU complicity in Israel's occupation of Palestine and there are two further meetings to come.

The jury consisted of eminent personalities from the legal, academic, scientific, cultural and political fields including Jose Antonio Martin Pallin, a judge in the Spanish Supreme Court; Michael Mansfield QC, leading human rights barrister; John Dugard, South African law professor and former special rapporteur on human rights in Palestine; Ronald Kasrils, South African political activist; Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Prize laureate from Northern Ireland; Cynthia McKinney, former US congresswoman; Stéphane Hessel, holocaust survivor, Ambassador of France and Honorary President of the RTP, and Lord Anthony Gifford QC.

The main questions the jury considered were:

- 1. Which Israeli violations of international law are corporations complicit in?**
- 2. What are the legal consequences of the activities of corporations that aid and abet Israeli violations?**
- 3. What are the remedies available and what are the obligations of states in relation to corporate complicity?**

More than 25 witnesses from different countries gave evidence. They included farmer Fayez Al Tanneb from Tulkarem who spoke via video as he had been prevented from attending. He related how he had been evicted from his land to make way for the Wall and also described the 11 Israeli chemical plants that discharge toxic liquid waste on Tulkarem farms.

Another Palestinian, Wael Natheef, General Secretary of the Jericho branch of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, described the exploitation of Palestinian workers in the settlements. He cited Ma'ale Adumin where 8,000 Palestinians work and the pay is 10 NIS an hour (£2) but is often delayed for months and there are no health and safety regulations.

Legal experts from the UK, France and the US set out the tribunal's legal framework. Dr Dalit Baum and Merav Amir from the Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace talked of how they set up the research project, 'Who Profits from the Occupation,' to uncover the economic connections between Israeli and international corporations and the occupation.

Various experts gave evidence about specific companies such as Veolia, Agrexco, Ahava, Soda Stream, Dexia, Elbit, Caterpillar, G4S — a British/Danish private security firm — and a number of banks. Twelve corporations and the EU were invited to participate in the Tribunal but all declined. Letters were received from three

corporations and the EU, which were entered into evidence.

After two days of deliberations, the jury told a press conference that it had been presented with 'compelling evidence of corporate complicity in Israeli violations of international law.'

'Compelling evidence of corporate complicity in Israeli violations of international law'

Michael Mansfield announced that the jury called for the mobilisation of civil society to end the involvement of companies in Israeli violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. These related to 'the supply of arms; the construction and maintenance of the illegal separation Wall' and providing services to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Israel is in 'flagrant disregard' of international law and is on the wrong side of world opinion and morality, said Mr. Mansfield. Ronnie Kasrils told the press conference that one 'can not underestimate the importance' of civil society action on boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The Tribunal's public statement is available in full on the website www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com



Members of the jury listening to witness Dr William Bourdon



Rawabi — a new city

By Abe Hayeem

Since 1948, 1000 new towns and villages have been built for Jewish citizens of Israel west of the 'Green Line,' and 121 illegal settlements and 102 outposts built for Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories. Due to racist and discriminatory planning restrictions, not a single new town has been built for Palestinian citizens of Israel while their population has grown sevenfold. Building for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories is similarly fraught and tightly restricted.

Now a brand new, hi-tech Palestinian city, ten kilometres north of Ramallah, is to be built on rolling virgin West Bank hills. The brainchild of Palestinian entrepreneur Bashir Masri, in partnership with Qatari developers, Qatari Diar, and designed by the international firm AECOM, the site for Rawabi — meaning 'hills' in Arabic — is already being cleared by earth movers.

Hailed by both the Palestinian Authority and Israel as an example of the West Bank's improved economic development, the new city is being marketed as 'a green and affordable alternative for the Palestinian middle class.'

The developers say special attention is being paid to the project's environmental aspects. The town will feature elements like wastewater reclamation, alternative energy and extensive tree planting. Pedestrian paths and mixed-use streets will discourage the use of cars and the town will be served by public transportation. They claim Rawabi could become the prototype for a new, more sustainable Palestinian urbanism.

'A green and affordable alternative for the Palestinian middle class'

The new apartments are expected to sell for between \$38,000 to \$75,000 per unit and the first residents are set to move in around 2013. The city is also planned to have industrial and commercial zones.

The developers hope the extensive green space and infrastructure, including schools,

mosques, a church and office buildings, will also serve the inhabitants of nine surrounding villages. Rawabi is eventually set to grow from the first phase housing 25,000 residents, costing \$800 million initially, to 40,000.

Ironies and contradictions abound in Rawabi, which has already been called a 'Palestinian settlement.' Rather than using this as an opportunity to create a new Palestinian architecture that emulates traditional building in context with the



An artist's impression of the new city

environment and arising out of the local community's needs, the artists' projections show an uncanny resemblance to the Israeli hilltop settlements of Har Homa and Ma'ale Adumim and international commercial design that one also sees in Ramallah, the most prosperous Palestinian city and financial hub.

The model for Rawabi is based on real estate developments across the capitalist Arab countries of the Gulf states and involves some donor and political backing of the US, Tony Blair and the IMF-minded PA Prime Minister, Salaam Fayyad.

Since average Palestinian incomes in the depressed and strangled economy of the West Bank are barely £1500 per annum, the mortgages for the housing units will only be affordable by a small wealthy and educated Palestinian elite.

The hand of Israeli control is still evident.

To create surrounding forests, the first 3,000 tree saplings of the 25,000 to be planted have been provided courtesy of the Jewish National Fund, the key agent of Israel's use of tree planting to cover destroyed Arab villages and as a tool of land expropriation. This process, seen currently at Al-Araqib in the Negev, has courted controversy within the PA and raised fury amongst JNF supporters in the US.

Further support is being provided by the Portland Trust, a British organisation whose governors include the financier, Sir Ronald Cohen, and former IDF brigadier general, Eival Gilady.

Most of the designated site for Rawabi falls in area A, under Palestinian Authority control. Despite supposed Israeli assent, the sting in the tale is that the access road into the city is in Area C in which Israel has control. In order to extract concessions, Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu pledged to 'grant' the PA full control over the area through which the Rawabi highway is to run if the PA agreed to direct peace talks. With the perpetually continuing stalemate in negotiations, no word about the Rawabi highway has been received and no relaxation of Israel's iron grip on the West Bank.

The idea of a new city has rattled the residents of the nearby illegal settlement of Ateret containing 70 families who view Rawabi as an intrusion and harm to their security since the new highway would bisect the

East-West road to Petah Tikvah in Israel that serves Ateret and other Jewish towns.

They complain it will spoil their views, that traffic from Rawabi will get in the way of their wives getting to work, that the sewage might fill the wadis between them and the residents might start shooting at them. Worse still, one settler moaned: 'Giving the PA control of that north-south road will grant them significant territorial contiguity from Ramallah to Bir Zeit to Rawabi to Nablus and, and what's worse, could create a de-facto Palestinian state.'

In October Israel's environment minister said he would attempt to block Rawabi's construction over concerns for the environment. But PA economy minister, Hassan Abu Libdeh, said Israel was 'trying...to weaken our national economy.'

(Cont. overleaf)

Shepherd Hotel demolished

The world reacted with fury when Israeli bulldozers demolished a large part of the historic Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem to make way for 20 new homes for Jewish settlers, though whether that fury will be translated into positive action has yet to be seen.



PHOTO: WWW.DEMOTIX.COM

British Foreign Office minister, Alistair Burt, condemned the demolition on January 9 as a 'provocative unilateral action.' And US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reacted with what was, for her, a strongly worded statement: 'This disturbing development undermines peace efforts to achieve the two-state solution,' she said. 'In particular, this move contradicts the logic of a reasonable and necessary agreement between the parties on the status of Jerusalem.'

Within three hours of the demolition, two containers were unloaded onto the site for use by the settlers and security guards had erected a barrier around it. The action was further proof that Israel pays no attention to what anyone else thinks, including its closest allies. In a statement of breathtaking hypocrisy, PM Binyamin Netanyahu said: 'Actions taken at the Shepherd Hotel were conducted by private individuals in accordance with Israeli law. The Israeli government was not involved.'

With apparently no sense of irony, he continued: 'Just as Arab residents of Jerusalem can buy or rent property in predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, Jews can buy or rent property in predominantly Arab neighbourhoods in Jerusalem.'

The Shepherd Hotel, located in the Sheikh Jarrah district which is being targeted relentlessly by fanatical settlers determined to take over Arab East Jerusalem, was built in the 1930s by the then mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni. In 1985, it was bought by American businessman, Irving Moskowitz, a veteran patron of settler projects.

The hotel lay empty while the 82-year-old, Florida-based Moskowitz battled to get authorisation to build homes for settlers in the part of Jerusalem that the Palestinians want as their future capital. International opinion was united in its opposition to him being granted such authorisation.

A document recently circulated among the 25 European Union consuls general in Jerusalem lamented that 'if current trends are not stopped as a matter of urgency, the prospect of East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state becomes increasingly unlikely and unworkable.' The Europeans determined that they must do more to halt this process.

Gill Swain

(cont. from p17)

Any obstruction to such a project is an obstruction to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.' He added: 'Building Rawabi could provide between 8,000 to 10,000 jobs during the construction period and up to 3,000 jobs in the city itself once complete.'

Some Palestinians are unhappy about the project. Reports that, of the 60 companies involved in the construction, 20 are Israeli has raised concerns amongst the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) in Palestine that

the boycott campaign is being undermined and the project is part of a 'normalisation' process with Israel that they oppose.

PA officials are already under attack for delaying the implementation of a boycott of Israeli settlements, announced at the beginning of last year, because 35,000 people work on building the settlements and there is not enough alternative work for them even when the construction of Rawabi is fully underway.

However, the Israeli building firms' contracts apparently state that they may not source any materials or labour from the settlements in the West Bank, East

Jerusalem or Golan Heights.

Unfortunately Israel's grip on the Palestinian economy over decades of occupation and siege and the necessity of obtaining military permits for conducting business, makes the use of Palestinian and alternative sourcing difficult. The BNC says that 'the ultimate result is perpetuating Israel's occupation and the economic subjugation of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian economy.'

Abe Hayeem is an architect and founder member of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine.

Eye on the web

● What do you know about Gaza?

A new online quiz, jam-packed with all sorts of fascinating facts, is a fun way to educate students about Gaza.

It has been produced by the Council for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) for Fakhoora, an international campaign which aims to secure the freedom to learn for Palestinian students in Gaza and the West Bank.

Check out the quiz at www.fakhoora.org/resources/quiz-on-gaza



● A Zionist response to Kairos

Four prominent British rabbis and academics have written a pamphlet in response to the Kairos Palestine document which was produced a year ago by Palestinian Christians and cried out to the international community to act to end the occupation.

The writers in the pamphlet, called *Zionism: a Jewish communal response from the UK*, barely address the contents of the Kairos document, choosing instead to focus on what they perceive it leaves out, i.e. proper recognition of the connection of Jews to the land of Israel.

<http://tinyurl.com/23kvdxd>

● Top ten companies to boycott

Youth Against Normalisation has put together a list of ten Israeli companies to target, with details of why you might want to boycott them. This is that they mostly produce goods in a way that directly harms Palestinians — exploiting labour, developing technology for military operations or supplying equipment for illegal settlements.

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

● Stop shooting children

A most unusual sight — a US Congressman pleading with his fellow legislators that the US should 'call on our allies, the State of Israel, to stop shooting children.' Watch Brian Baird's one minute speech on YouTube: <http://tinyurl.com/2wr8yg9>

● Ben White on apartheid

A video of a powerful talk by Ben White, writer and campaign coordinator for 'A Just Peace for Palestine,' on the apartheid nature of Israel can be seen at www.ajustpeace.net/psc

Where is fair play?

In an open letter from besieged Gaza to Michel Platini (president) and UEFA, 31 sports and youth clubs called on them to 'reverse apartheid Israel's participation in European competitive football.' This is an edited version of the letter.

We are writing as Palestinian footballers, coaches and athletes in the besieged Gaza Strip to commend your statement highlighting the impossible conditions imposed on our sports, echoing the general consequences for all aspects of our life caused by the Israeli occupation and hermetic siege.

You recently said that 'Israel must respect the letter of the law and international regulations otherwise there is no justification for them to remain in Europe... Israel must choose between allowing Palestinian sport to continue and prosper or be forced to face the consequences for their behaviour.'

We would be very interested, Mr Platini, in knowing if there are any laws and international regulations to which Israeli policies against Palestinians adhere!

...Like all residents of Gaza, footballers are continually deprived entry or exit from what many mainstream human rights organisations call the world's largest open-air prison. You must know that we are still grieving the loss of over 430 of our children, who were among the 1443 people killed during Israel's three week bombing of Gaza in winter 2009. Two of our national football team heroes, Ayman Alkurd and Wajeh Moshate, were among those 1443. 5300 more people were injured. Many had their legs amputated. They will never have the chance to play football.

Despite the grief and the injustice... football will always continue, one way or another, within the Gaza Strip. The majority of us in Gaza are United Nations-registered refugees, ethnically cleansed by the Israeli army in 1948.

You must be aware of the recent events, just this August, when Israel refused to allow six members of the Palestinian national team to travel from Gaza to a match against Mauritania. Israeli spokesmen said the players were denied access for 'security reasons,' claiming they did not have the correct permit, reminiscent of the notorious and racist 'pass law' in apartheid South Africa.

This is a continuous systematic policy

for all of us which has sharply diminished our involvement in international sport... In 2007 the national team was prevented from travelling to play a World Cup qualifier in Singapore and thus eliminated, and in May 2008 was not able to attend the AFC Challenge Cup, denying them qualification for the 2011 Asia Cup.

In July, 2009, just one of the 30 best Gazan players, Mahmoud Sersik, was granted permission to enter the West Bank. As he crossed the Eretz checkpoint to enter Israel, he was immediately arrested and has been in an Israeli prison ever since. Four months ago the football league winners of Gaza and West Bank had to postpone their cup final because the Gazan team was refused permissions. It is now scheduled to be played in Algeria in January 2011 with no home-based fans present.

Until now the Olympic players from Gaza have been barred from entry to the West Bank and the youth teams have frequently been denied exit and re-entry.

If it is not the restrictions on movement, it is the direct destruction of our sporting

equipment and stadiums... During Israel's criminal attacks on Gaza in 2009 our national stadium was targeted and destroyed, as was the Palestinian Football Association building....

The one grass pitch in Gaza had previously been blown up by an Israeli missile, forcing the national team to play matches in a virtually empty stadium in Qatar.

Of course the effects are not limited to football. The lower profile of other sports means that participation internationally is a distant dream. For the last seven years the Israelis have refused to let the Gazan basketball team play in the West Bank.

'The sports boycott of Israel has identical goals to those against apartheid South Africa'

Numerous campaigns such as 'Unite against Racism' have helped to stamp out racism in European football, and football has always been a beacon of multi-ethnicity given the huge array of countries, races and religions represented, participating on a level playing field in the most global of sports.

Sadly, racism is at the heart of why our national team cannot play abroad. It is the core reason why our sporting equipment



The Palestinian national football team at its first ever game on home soil in a new stadium in the West Bank town of al-Ram on October 26, 2008

In Brief

SUPPRESSING DISSENT

The Israeli authorities' drive to silence the voices of protest continued with the banishment of activist Adnan Gheith from his native city of Jerusalem. In a move reminiscent of Soviet pogroms, he was notified of his expulsion without any charges or evidence being brought against him.

Gheith, a father of four who lives in the Silwan district and is a member of the al-Bustan Neighbourhood Committee which fights the demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for Israeli settlers, launched an appeal to the Supreme Court. But at the last minute he withdrew it, convinced he would lose because Israel's General Security Service was expected to submit classified documents that he would not be able to view and therefore would be unable to refute — effectively barring him from mounting a defence.

In addition he argued that taking part in the court hearing would constitute recognition of the court's authority and would set a legal precedent for more Palestinians like him to be expelled on the same grounds. Rumours have been circulating that the GSS has composed a list of a few hundred Palestinians in East Jerusalem to be targeted for similar expulsion orders.

Gheith was also forbidden to attend a conference with a senior foreign diplomat

or to appear in any press conference. His banishment and the quashing of his freedom of speech are part of a larger pattern to 'judaise' Silwan at the expense of its Palestinian residents. His lawyers reached a deal with the court granting him two more weeks to find alternative housing for the four months of his expulsion.



ADEEB ABU RAHMAH RELEASED

After serving 18 months in jail for organising unarmed demonstrations in Bil'in, Adeeb Abu Rahmah was released from Ofer military prison in December. He embraced his daughters with tears in his eyes and kissed and hugged supporters who had gathered to greet him.



The taxi driver and father of nine, who has been active in the unarmed resistance in Bil'in from its outset, was arrested on July 10, 2009, while taking part in one of the weekly Friday protests. The Israeli army accused him of participation in 'violent demonstrations,' presence in a 'closed military zone' and disturbing public order.

There were joyful scenes when Adeeb arrived home, but he still has a suspended sentence hanging over him and is under orders not to resume his human rights activities for four years.

VANUNU HONOURED

Mordechai Vanunu, who served 18 years in prison for revealing Israel's nuclear weapons programme, has been awarded the prestigious German International League of Human Rights' Carl von Ossietzky peace medal.

The medal is named after a German journalist and pacifist who campaigned against the aggressive policies of the Weimar Republic. He was arrested as a traitor in the early 1930s and executed. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1935.

In their press release the League said: 'Vanunu's courageous conduct unquestionably recalls Carl von Ossietzky's undaunted resistance against armament and war during the Weimar Republic.'

Despite completing his sentence six years ago, Vanunu still lives under tight restrictions. Many well-known names backed the League's appeal



(cont. from p19)

does not arrive. It is the reason why our stadiums do not get built and why our football season ends prematurely through resource shortages or violent attacks.

We, the Palestinian people, are the undesired 'ethnic group' for the Israeli authorities who control our lives, shown by the unequal treatment and dehumanisation which pervades our every living day under their military occupation and siege and in forced exile as refugees.

Mr. Platini, decades ago, many sportswomen and men around the world were aware of their connection to the wider world and the influence they could have on it. Muhammed Ali, Arthur Ashe and Jackie

Robinson were all world champions who spoke out against apartheid South Africa when it was not fashionable to do so.

Ruud Gullit of AC Milan and Holland spoke out and acted by dedicating his Ballon d'Or award in 1987 to Nelson Mandela when he was still in prison, when he and the African National Congress were branded terrorists by the American and many European governments.

The sports boycott of Israel has identical goals to those against apartheid South Africa — for international sports authorities and civil society including sports lovers around the world to hold to account another apartheid regime for carrying out such a racist enclosure of an entire population simply by virtue of their ethnic and religious affiliation.

The right to enjoy ourselves, the right to sport, is a right denied by the Israeli occupation forces. We demand boycotts and sporting exclusion of Israel until it complies with international law and until justice and accountability are reached...

Ruud Gullit stood on the right side of history when it was easy not to do so. He was a friend to Nelson Mandela and now Nelson Mandela is a friend of Palestine. We urge you and UEFA to reverse Israel's participation in European competition until they end their racist policies and abide by international law, as stated in the boycott divestment and sanctions call by over 170 Palestinian organisations in 2005.

to the Israeli government to allow him to travel from his home in Tel Aviv to the award ceremony in Berlin in December, to no avail. He suggested they postpone the ceremony until he is allowed to travel freely. The League agreed to this and continue to lobby for his release.

SETTLERS BURN SHEEP

Another in our regular series of particularly vile acts by settlers — a farmer in the northern West Bank watched helplessly as a group of settlers herded his sheep together and burned them alive.

Twelve sheep perished in the fire, five were severely burned and two more slightly injured. The farmer, father of nine Samir Muhammad Bani Fadl, 40, told *Ma'an News*: 'I've lost at least \$12,000,' and called the act 'abominable.'

According to his testimony, a group of armed settlers approached him and asked him to speak with them. Feeling threatened, in an area where settler attacks have mushroomed, he fled to a nearby hill from where he watched the settlers drive the sheep into thick brush and set fire to the bushes.

The mayor of the nearby village of Aqraba, Jawdat Bani Jabir, blamed the residents of the settlements encircling the area: Ma'ale Efrayim, Itamar and Hetzit.

HERO FIREMEN BARRED

Palestinian firemen who risked their lives fighting to put out the worst forest fires in Israel's history were later banned from entering the country to attend a ceremony in their honour.

Eleven Palestinians volunteered to help put out the Carmel forest fire which killed 43 people in December. When four of them were refused permits to cross from the West Bank for the ceremony, it was cancelled in protest.

The Israeli government office that oversees border crossings issued a statement expressing 'regret' over the incident, blamed a 'technical error' and asked that 'a fuss' not be made. The Palestinian Authority asked in a statement why 'the same Palestinian firemen who were permitted to enter Israel last week to put the fire out are not permitted to enter today to be honoured?'

TRISTAN ANDERSON HOME

After more than a year in a Tel Aviv hospital recovering from being shot in the head at close range with a high velocity tear gas canister, photo journalist Tristan Anderson recovered enough to return home to California.

Tristan, 39, was critically injured by the IDF on March 13, 2009, while taking photos following a demonstration against the apartheid wall in the West Bank village of Ni'lin. The shooting caused traumatic brain injury and blindness in his right eye. He has not yet regained the use of the left side of his body and remains in a wheelchair but he has regained his ability to speak.

His partner, Gabrielle Silverman, said: 'After a very long period of hospitalisation, Tristan is finally ready to re-enter the world. His injury has profoundly affected our community and changed our lives. We both support a free Palestine and a just peace and stability in the Middle East and see it as a defining struggle of our generation.'

In March, 2010, Israel released its official report of the incident, calling it 'an act of war' with no concomitant liability and bringing no charges. An appeal to reopen the investigation has been filed, since the report was inconsistent with the injuries



Tristan sustained and with eyewitness testimony. His parents have also brought a civil case against the Israeli military.

RACIST RABBIS: DON'T SELL TO NON-JEWS

Fifty Israeli rabbis signed an open letter warning Jews not to let or sell property to non-Jews, saying those who do should be 'ostracised.'

The letter, which was signed in December mostly by rabbis employed by the state, said that it was 'forbidden in the Torah to sell a house or a field in the land of Israel to a foreigner,' and warned 'he who sells or rents them a flat in an area where Jews live causes great harm to his neighbours.'

In what was obviously a reference to Israel's Arab minority, it went on to say that selling or renting to non-Jews 'causes his neighbours a big loss and his sin is great... Anyone who sells (property to a non-Jew) must be cut off!'

The letter came just months after Shmuel Eliyahu, the chief rabbi of the town of Safed, where there is a college that attracts Arab-Israeli students who need accommodation, issued the same call. Signatories included the chief rabbis of Ramat Hasharon, Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, Rishon Letzion, Carmiel, Gadera, Afula, Nahariya, Herzliya, Nahariya and Pardes Hannah.



Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu with fanatical settlers in Hebron

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel slammed the letter as 'racist' and called on Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu to take disciplinary action against state-employed rabbis who signed the document.

But the rabbis were unrepentant. 'Racism originated in the Torah,' said Rabbi Yosef Scheinen, who heads the Ashdod Yeshiva. 'The land of Israel is designated for the people of Israel. This is what the Holy One Blessed Be He intended and that is what the [sage] Rashi interpreted.'

ANTI-DEMOCRATIC TREND IN ISRAEL

A comprehensive survey compiled by the Israel Democracy Institute revealed anti-democratic views taking hold of Israeli society.

The survey, reported in the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, in December showed that a majority of the public supports predicating voting rights on a declaration of loyalty to the state; only 17% believe the state's self-definition as a democracy should take precedence over its self-definition as Jewish; an absolute majority believes that only Jews should be involved in decisions crucial to the state; a majority supports allocating more resources to its Jewish than its Arab citizens; a third of Jewish citizens support putting Arab Israelis in detention camps in wartime; and about two-thirds think Arabs should not become ministers.

In an editorial, *Ha'aretz* called the findings 'extremely disturbing.' It said: 'At their root lies the twisted belief that democracy means the tyranny of the majority and that equal rights for all the state's citizens is not an integral part of the democratic system.'

It called for 'resolute action' and said: 'What is at stake is the very nature of Israel's society and political system. Cracks in either will endanger Israel's future no less than any external threat. The

kind of society reflected by this survey will not be able to preserve democracy — or even a veneer thereof.'

PHRI WINS AWARD

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHRI) won the 2010 Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, and were presented with it at a ceremony in the Swedish Parliament in December.

PHRI was founded in 1988 by Dr. Ruchama Marton and Israeli and Palestinian physicians, motivated by the conviction that 'every person has the right to health in its widest possible sense, as defined by the principles of human rights, social justice and medical ethics.'

It involves 1200 members and volunteers who treat 20,000 patients a year and run weekly mobile clinics in the OPTs and an Open Clinic for migrant workers and refugees. Dr Marton, now president of the organisation, campaigned against the torture of Palestinian prisoners and helped persuade the Supreme Court to rule it illegal in 1999. She says: 'PHRI's main concern is to struggle against wrongs that stem from human conduct, rather than the illnesses caused by viruses or microbes.'

The Right Livelihood Award was established in 1980 to honour those 'offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today.' It was awarded to PHRI 'for their indomitable spirit in working for the right to health for all people in Israel and Palestine.'



Dr Ruchama Marton, founder of PHRI



LEGAL AID FUND

An evening of comedy, speech and music was held in London in December to raise money for an unprecedented legal aid fund to defend Palestinian rights through unique legal challenges about war crimes, home demolitions, settlements, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

The Palestine Legal Aid Fund is an initiative of the Human Rights Legal Aid Fund and was inspired by the successes of a similar fund during the South African anti-apartheid movement.

Patrons are Michael Mansfield QC and human rights lawyer Sir Geoffrey Bindman, while the directors are barrister Mary Nazzal-Batayneh and Rashad Yaqoob, a solicitor, investment banker, co-founder of the Human Rights Legal Aid Fund and co-founder of UK charity the City Circle.

The Fund's methods will include providing legal advice and representation in cases at international human rights courts, investigations into human rights violations and conducting research.

For more information, see www.humanrightsfund.org

APARTHEID TRAIN

A new fast train line between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is to be partially built on Palestinian land but aimed for the exclusive use of Israelis, according to a report by the Who Profits? organisation.

Sometimes referred to as the A1 train, its route crosses the Green Line into the West Bank in two areas, using occupied Palestinian land which the report says makes it 'unlawful and unethical. According to international law, an occupier may not use the occupied resources solely for the benefit of its own citizens.'

It adds that the six kilometres (3.75 miles) of the railway route which fall outside the Green Line are creating 'devastating effects' on the three Palestinian communities in the area.

Several international corporations have been contracted to provide economic and engineering consultancy and tunnelling work. They include two governmental companies, the German Deutsche Bahn and the Russian Moscow Metrostroy, plus private European firms such as the Italian Pizzarotti. Construction began in October but the completion date is 2016-7.

One of the villages affected, Beit Surik, has called for international intervention. The Village Council said: 'We, the people of Beit Surik, do not want the train line to be built on our land. We see as fundamentally important that the people of the world support our right to decide on the use of our own land and help us change the route of this train line.'

To read the full report see <http://tinyurl.com/35pttg4>

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

The Jewish National Fund is once more extensively foresting just north of the village of Al-Araqib, funded by an evangelical Christian TV channel called GOD TV which is on a mission to 'prepare the land' for the 'second coming' of the Messiah.

The lands belonged to the Alamat tribe who were driven away in 1948 and now live as refugees in Jordan. By planting trees all over it, the JNF claims to be 'redeeming the land for the Jewish people' while GOD TV claims to have received 'instructions from God... to prepare the land for the return of my Son... Plant a million trees.' (See their video on www.god.tv/excavation.)

GOD TV says on its website that it 'has committed to sponsoring this significant project' (the JNF forest). Last October, the channel organised a tour of 'pilgrims' who planted 25 olive trees 'one tree for each of the 25 nations present on the tour' as a symbol of the 'rebirth' of the region.

They also get very excited over the discovery of traces of an alleged ancient Christian community. The buildings are from the 6th century Byzantine period, rather than Biblical times, but that doesn't stop them predicting the site will become a place of Christian pilgrimage. After all — this unholy alliance will try anything to stop the modern day Bedouin inhabitants from using their ancestral land for agriculture.

BLACKWATER COMING TO WEST BANK

An affiliate of Blackwater, an American private security firm that was involved in scandals in Iraq, has won a contract to provide security for US personnel in the West Bank.

The contract was won by International Developments Solutions, a joint venture that includes U.S. Training Center, a company until recently owned by Xe Services which changed its name from Blackwater following a cascade of legal problems over several years.

The consortium will provide protective 'services that are based from the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem,' State Department spokesman Mark Toner said. The initial contract, awarded on January 3, is for one year 'with the possibility of four, one-year renewable options' with a total value of roughly \$84.3 million.

Blackwater has been the subject of four grand jury investigations. It was accused of illegally shipping assault weapons and silencers to Iraq, hidden in sacks of dog food, when it was protecting US diplomatic missions.

Five former Blackwater guards pleaded not guilty to federal charges that include 14 counts of manslaughter and 20 counts of attempted manslaughter in connection with the shooting of civilians in September 2007 at a Baghdad traffic circle.

Commenting on the company's name change in February, 2009, Jeremy Scahill, author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, said: 'Blackwater's deadly record has clearly made the company an international symbol of the out of control violence of the Bush era in Iraq and the rise of modern-day mercenaries, so it is understandable why the company would try to change its name at this moment in history.'

Politicians, artists, academics, unions, unite in boycott

Despite the largely pro-Israel stance of European parliamentarians and institutions, there have been some recent official moves which reveal a hardening attitude towards Israel's illegal settlements.

Following its accession to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in May, Israel quickly used this entry into the European Union via the back door to attempt to gain *de facto* recognition of Jerusalem as its capital by hosting an OECD tourism conference in West Jerusalem in October.

Israeli Tourism Minister, Stas Misezhnikov, even boasted to the press that the conference would be 'a seal of approval on the fact that we have a state whose recognised capital is Jerusalem.' His glee was shortlived, however, when 11 countries, including the **UK, Norway, Canada, Ireland, Sweden, Iceland, Turkey and South Africa**, boycotted the High Level Roundtable rather than provide the long-sought recognition.

Greece and Denmark sent only low level delegations; the Czech republic was the only EU country to send political representation. And in a strongly worded letter to PM Binyamin Netanyahu, OECD General Secretary, Angel Gurría, called the Tourism Minister's comments 'factually incorrect and quite unacceptable.'

The Palestinian BDS National Committee described the Roundtable boycott as 'clear condemnation of Israel's continued ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem.' Coordinator, Hind Awwad, said: 'That countries like Canada and the UK, which are traditionally staunch defenders of Israeli apartheid, colonialism and occupation, have refused to attend the conference is a significant development.'

This fiasco followed the cancellation of a proposed visit to **Spain** and the **Netherlands** by a group of 30 Israeli mayors because they included leaders of illegal settlements. The Dutch conference was to be hosted by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). The official aim was to learn more about the Dutch system of government but such visits also serve as an Israeli ploy to provide *de facto* recognition of the settlements.

When they were informed that the mayors of settlements Beit Aryeh, Har Adar, Kiryat Arba, Oranit, Beit El, Efrat and Elkana were to be members of the delegation, VNG refused to host it. Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister, Maxime Verhagen, known to be pro-Israel, surprised parliament by supporting VNG, admitting that Israeli settlements are in violation of international law.

Also in Europe, the **European Platform for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (EPACBI)** was established in September after a successful meeting in Paris of 50 representatives of academic boycott campaigns from nine European countries. In addition, a fresh boycott call was announced in **Oslo**, endorsed by 100 leading Norwegian figures in academia, culture and sports including **Egil 'Drillo' Olsen**, the coach of the Norwegian national soccer team. Drillo is a particularly huge celebrity in Norway.

In **South Africa**, while the University of Johannesburg was considering ending its collaboration with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, some 200 academics from 14 other universities supported the move. A petition backing their stance said: 'As academics we acknowledge that all of our scholarly work takes place within larger social contexts —



Egil 'Drillo' Olsen

particularly in institutions committed to social transformation.

'South African institutions are under an obligation to revisit relationships forged during the apartheid era with other institutions that turned a blind eye to racial oppression in the name of "purely scholarly" or "scientific" work.' In a vote taken in September, the university decided to end the relationship by April unless certain conditions are met.

Another move that revealed growing awareness in South Africa was that **South African Artists Against Apartheid** decided to support boycott.

In a declaration announcing the move in November, they said: 'As South African Artists and Cultural Workers who have lived under, survived, and

in many cases resisted apartheid, we acknowledge the value of international solidarity in our own struggle. It is in this context that we respond to the call by Palestinians, and their Israeli allies, for such solidarity.

'As artists of conscience we say no to apartheid — anywhere. We... undertake not to avail any invitation to perform or exhibit in Israel. Nor will we accept funding from institutions linked to the government of Israel. This is our position until such time as Israel, in the least, complies with international law and universal principles of human rights.'

The ultra hip international Japanese retailer, **Muji**, cancelled plans in December to open a store in Israel following a concerted campaign of criticism and protest in **Japan**. This is the first major Japanese BDS victory.



Mock checkpoint outside a Muji store. Pic: Palestine Forum, Japan.

After Muji announced its plan in April to found a store in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, protestors carried out actions such as creating mock West Bank checkpoints outside Muji stores in Tokyo, constantly appealing for cancellation through websites or Twitter and sending message cards to the company.

In **America**, Jews, Christians and Muslims in 23 cities joined together to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10 by visiting individual offices of the US's leading pension fund, **TIAA-CREF**, to say: 'Do not use my money to profit from the Israeli Occupation. TIAA-CREF, divest from Caterpillar and other companies that profit from breaking the law, harming others and preventing peace.'

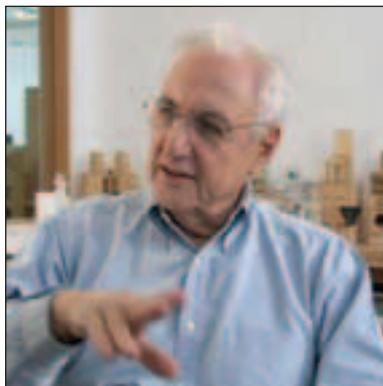
TIAA-CREF is one of the largest pension funds in the world and has invested over a quarter of a billion dollars in Caterpillar which manufactures the D-9 bulldozers used by the Israeli government to demolish Palestinian homes and orchards. TIAA-CREF simply does not offer participants an option for investments free from supporting the occupation — even their 'socially responsible' funds invest in Caterpillar.

Meanwhile in the **Netherlands**, the major Dutch pension fund **Pensioenfonds Zorg en Welzijn** (PFZW), which has investments totaling 97 billion euros, told the Electronic Intifada it had divested from almost all the Israeli companies in its portfolio.

In **Montreal**, Canada, more than 600 BDS supporters gathered in October at an inspiring BDS Conference. The academic workshop witnessed one of the liveliest discussions about the many campus divestment and other academic boycott campaigns planned across Canada for the new school year.



The renowned Jewish Canadian-American architect, **Frank Gehry**, designer of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, decided in November to back the boycott of the theatre built in the West Bank settlement of Ariel. Born Ephraim Owen Goldberg, Gehry joins more than 60 Israeli actors, playwrights and directors who have refused to take part in productions planned by Israel's national theatre, the Habima, and other leading companies in Ariel.



Frank Gehry

In **Australia** the New South Wales Greens party unanimously endorsed a proposal in December calling on 'all Australians and the Australian government to boycott Israeli goods, trading and military arrangements, and sporting, cultural and academic events.'

The NSW Greens, who have four members in the Legislative

Council of the NSW Parliament and one in the national House of Representatives, also called on Australians to condemn 'Israel's apartheid and occupation policies,' censure its 'failure to abide by international law' and support the BDS campaign.

In addition, five **Australian unions**, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, the Queensland branch of the Rail Tram and Bus Union and the Finance Sector Union, passed a resolution in late October supporting BDS. Soon afterwards around 100 activists from across Australia gathered in **Melbourne** for the country's first national BDS conference.

In **Ireland** the **Dublin Food Co-op** voted overwhelmingly to boycott Israeli goods. This was the third attempt in two years to get the required 75% in favour and the move was passed in November by 50 for to about six against.

Finally, **Unilever Israel Foods** is planning to move its Beigel & Beigel company plant from the Barkan industrial zone in the occupied West Bank to a location inside Israel, according to a report in the Hebrew-language daily, Maariv, in October.

The announcement follows intense pressure on the parent company, Unilever International, to move its operations out of the West Bank or to divest from the factory. The **UK** and **Dutch**-owned multinational company has been trying to divest from Beigel & Beigel since 2008, but because of the international BDS campaign the company was unable to sell its shares.

Ride for boycott

Last summer Bruce Burgess and three fellow motorbike enthusiasts set off on their beloved vintage Royal Enfield bikes on the first Ride for Palestine.

Seen off from their starting point at Southport Pier, Lancs, by around 30 biking friends, they rode 200 miles to London carrying a petition calling on the government to cancel immediately the supply of arms from Britain to Israel.

More bikers joined the initial four in the Midlands and the group finally arrived at the iconic Ace Cafe on London's North Circular Road, the spiritual home of bikers and rock 'n' rollers since the 1950s, in time for a hearty evening meal. They delivered the petition to 10 Downing St the next morning.

This year there will be another Ride for Palestine in what looks like becoming an annual event drawing attention to different facets of British complicity in the Israeli Occupation. The focus this time is to promote the boycott of goods from the settlements and to encourage the sale of Palestinian produce.

There is an online pledge not to buy Israeli settlement goods that supporters can sign and which is being sent to the major supermarkets. By January 5, 4208 people had signed the pledge, including parliamentarians, church leaders and academics. The aim is for 10,000 signatories before the Ride for Palestine sets off.

The target date for the next ride is August 6, 2011. Bruce said: 'We'll be spending the weekend delivering genuine Palestinian products to various parts of the UK.'

■ For more information and to sign the pledge, visit the website <http://rideforpalestine.blogspot.com>



Chris Davies MEP tries out Bruce Burgess's bike, watched by Bruce and Cllr Haydn Preece, at the start of Ride for Palestine 2010.

Supermarkets bombarded with calls

Supermarkets around the country were bombarded with calls from members on the PSC's annual phone-in day during the national BDS Week of Action in November.

In **Cambridge** members spent the day ringing shops with a prepared script. Callers asked: '(Name of supermarket) claims to have an ethical policy yet it stocks produce from Israel which is in daily breach of international law and international human rights legislation.

'Does (supermarket) condone Israel's illegal actions?

'If not, how do Israel's flagrant violations of international law fit into the supermarket's ethical policy?'

Finally callers asked the supermarket to stop stocking Israeli produce until Israeli government policy complies with international law.

Members noted that the people they spoke to had little understanding of the occupation. When the manager was able to speak, most said they would pass the complaint to the central office. Where the manager was not available, staff said they would forward the complaint.

They followed up the phone-in with the first session of a new discussion group and made the theme of it the boycott campaign. Held in a cafe, the event covered the reasons for and against boycotting Israel, the different types of boycott — academic, cultural, consumer and sports — and whether BDS is effective.

Averil Parkinson reports: 'All participants thought that a full boycott should be implemented, although not all agreed on exactly what this constitutes.'

Cambridge have had a banner printed with the four maps showing Disappearing Palestine and now take it to every event. They had it made by 'Banners For All' for around £50 and say 'it is really effective — loads of people stop to look at it.'



During BDS week **Lambeth and Wandsworth** branch held four stalls and a public meeting. The first stall was in a large open space in the centre of Brixton and one of the members, Simon, attracted the attention of Saturday shoppers by striding about on stilts.

Secretary Jim Lusted reports: 'The response from the public was very good and a lot of people hung around for some time to talk.'

The public meeting was organised jointly with **Lambeth Unison** and chaired by LWPSC chair, Jackie Lewis, who opened it by reading out the Palestinian Civil Society call for BDS.

Speakers were Bella Ribeiro-Addy from the Black Students' Committee of the National Union of Students, Muthanna Al-Qadi, Middle East Affairs editor for the *Al-Quds* newspaper in Jerusalem, Amena Saleem who was on the Viva Palestina 5 convoy, and Sahida Uddin, a member of a recent Lambeth Unison delegation to West Bank whose purpose was officially to twin the Lambeth branch with

the Nablus branch of the PGFTU.

When **Portsmouth and South Downs** organised two boycotts at Waitrose, they got very different responses. At Southsea the management were polite and friendly while at Waterlooville the management was hostile and aggressive and called the police.

There were some excellent cultural events, despite the wintry weather. It was almost full house at a do to mark the UN's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People organised by the **Aberystwyth** branch in the town's Morlan Centre.



Guest speaker, former MP Cynog Dafis, made a thoughtful and informative speech while actress Sue Jones-Davies and Abdulwahab Jouani gave powerful readings of Mahmoud Darwish's iconic poem, 'Identity Card,' in English and Arabic. Cor Gobaith (Choir of Hope) sang peace and justice songs and renowned protest singer and former president of Plaid Cymru, Dafydd Iwan, delighted the audience with amusing anecdotes and several old favourite tunes. The event raised £220 for Medical Aid for Palestinians.

In **Hounslow**, West London, around 40 people attended the screening at the Watermans Arts Centre of *Inshallah*, a new documentary on Gaza. US film maker Maurice Jacobsen had asked for feedback for his final editing and people were very positive but felt that some historical context was needed if the film was aimed at 'beginners' on Palestine issues.

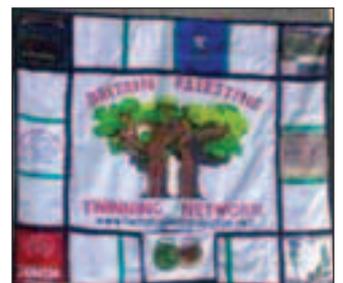
The screening was followed by a live Skype link-up with two Gazans who answered questions about the current situation and hopes for the future. Stephanie reports: 'This was a great way to help us relate to ordinary Palestinians and made the evening really special.'

The event helped re-launch Hounslow Borough's town twinning with Ramallah which was established in 1988 but has been dormant. In December, the local council gave official recognition to the Hounslow-Ramallah Twinning Association, making it the only council in England formally to approve such a link.

A the sixth national **Twinning with Palestine** Conference was hosted by **Bristol-Gaza-Link** in November, see www.twinningwithpalestine.net

Portsmouth and South Downs hosted a Stories For Peace event which involved a Palestinian sheikh and a Jewish Israeli story-teller singing songs and telling stories from their respective traditions.

They also set up a public meeting for Rotem Mor, an Israeli who



was jailed for refusing military service. 'He made a deep impression on the audience who donated generously towards his expenses,' reports Jenny Flintoft.

Around 60 people enjoyed a cooked vegetarian meal and homemade bagels at **Manchester** branch's 8th annual Breakfast for Palestine in November. Guests were able to do their Christmas shopping in the Manchester outlet of the Jerusalem souk and listen to the experiences of Norma Turner, recently returned from working with health workers in Gaza, and of Drs Asad and Aisha Khan who attended the 28th commemoration of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut. Over £1400 was raised.

The branch also had regular contact with Gallery Oldham and the *Oldham Chronicle* regarding the Photographer of the Year Wildlife Exhibition, sponsored by Veolia. An action at the Gallery was planned for January.

Brent branch decided to expand to include the neighbouring borough of Harrow so is now **Brent and Harrow** PSC. They held a public meeting called 'Israel — Beyond the Law?' which was addressed by Audrey Bomse, Legal Coordinator of the Free Gaza Movement, and Sarah Colborne and Alex Lort Phillips, who had been on the *Mavi Marmara* when it was attacked by Israeli commandos.

A lively picket of a Jerusalem String Quartet concert in Bath's Assembly rooms was organised by **Bristol PSC**, plus members from Frome and a few Bathonians. A couple of technologically minded members rigged up an outdoor slide show using a portable projector and a laptop and projected dramatic visual images of the Wall, closures, checkpoints and military violence directly opposite the concert hall entrance while activists gave out leaflets calling for Palestinian musicians to have the same rights to travel freely as those enjoyed by Israeli musicians.



Bristol member Rita Cangilosi at the JSQ protest

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Activists claim victory in Veolia campaign

Edinburgh Council decided to take Veolia off the shortlist of companies being considered to take over the city's environmental services contracts after a vigorous campaign by groups including the **Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign**.

SPSC argued that Veolia should be excluded from council contracts because of the company's involvement in the occupation. The law firm, Hickman and Rose, warned council leaders that employing Veolia could expose them to 'legal action for failing to take on board their obligation to recognise and comply with their duties and responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions and international law.'

Edinburgh is following in the footsteps of **Swansea** and **Dublin** in not considering Veolia for their contracts. The Labour group and the Greens also argued for a boycott of the company.

SPSC Chair, Mick Napier, said the decision was 'a victory for human rights.' He continued, 'Any company that helps maintain the illegal occupation should not be surprised when local authorities choose to avoid them.'

It's a bit late for Christmas presents but you may still like to buy a lovely calendar produced by **Sheffield** branch made up of photos of their activities and of children at the projects they support in Gaza — a bargain for £5. Contact Dick at d.a.pitt@shu.ac.uk



The picture for March: children in the ball pool at Nussairat refugee camp, Gaza, funded by Sheffield

cinema Palestino draws the crowds

Sheffield PSC organised a second successful *cinema Palestino* film festival in collaboration with the Showroom Cinema, to mark the UN's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

They report: 'Our aim was to present a season of the latest films exploring issues that affect us all — falling in love, making a home, caring for family and for freedom — but all under the shadow of military occupation and exile that distort all aspects of daily life for Palestinians.'

They showed a mix of high class documentaries, fictional stories and personal struggle and welcomed Norma Marcos who participated in a Q&A after the showing of her film, *Fragments of Lost Palestine*. The Showroom restaurant served Palestinian food during the weekend.

How to do it

Sheffield members say that by concentrating a number of films into a defined festival, they can generate publicity which reaches beyond the usual audience that attends their political meetings.

'Working in a small group, we look at what other similar festivals are showing, find as much information as possible on the web and get hold of copies on DVD. We each watch as many as we can before coming together to shortlist potential films.'

'Working with the Showroom staff we discuss the festival format and our shortlisted films. The advantage of working with people who know their industry is crucial. They really know how to negotiate with film distributors to get the screening

rights at a realistic price and, because they're passionate about film, often suggest films that we may have missed. It's also worth pointing out that many independent cinemas receive public funding, often to encourage them to create partnerships with local groups.'



Your cinema Palestino?

Sheffield says that the idea of *cinema Palestino* is spreading and they have been contacted by people around the country who are interested in their approach. Collaboration would bring a number of advantages: sharing information on films and their availability, negotiating better deals with distributors, sharing an internet presence, using Skype to create direct links with film directors and audiences, co-ordinating screenings to create tours for visiting directors, creating a bigger splash in local and national media. If you don't have an independent cinema, try contacting your local film society or film studies courses.

■ If you are interested in linking up next year and meeting up, physically or virtually, get in touch with:
 Dave Campbell: dcampbellsheff@gmail.com
 Jonny Feldman: shimshun2002@yahoo.co.uk
 Hilary Nelson: hilarynelsonandco@btinternet.com
 www.sheffieldpssc.org.uk

Stars turn out for refugee children

Screen stars Alison Steadman and Bill Nighy and acclaimed scriptwriter Richard Curtis joined renowned actor David Morrissey to support the launch of his new charity which grew out of his work with Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon.

The launch of CAST — the Creative Arts Schools Trust — at the British Film Institute in London in September began a fundraising drive that will allow Morrissey to return to Lebanon and also spread his work delivering courses in drama, music, movement, dance and film to children whose lives are severely restricted.

Morrissey first visited Lebanon in 2009 at the invitation of UNWRA (United Nations Works and Relief Agency) and Interpal who were keen to see the development of drama activities within UNWRA schools in the refugee camps. Some 422,000 Palestinians are registered refugees in Lebanon living in 12 official camps and other, smaller communities.

He gathered together eight artists from different disciplines who worked with 100 children and teachers for a week. The project was so successful that he decided to create CAST with a view to producing a more long-term and sustainable programme of workshops.

The British Embassy in Beirut gave the project full backing. Political officer, Peter Wilkinson, said: 'This was a rare opportunity for children who face serious hardships and challenges to broaden their horizons about learning, to develop their confidence and to express themselves in new ways.'

'The excitement and pride exuded by the children as they combined what they had learnt with their own imaginations was

a joy to watch. Such was the emotion at coming to the end of the week that many children, teachers and even some parents were brought to tears.'

In March this year, drawing on feedback from the teachers, a three day course was set up to train teachers to run creative learning sessions in their own schools. The next project is a youth scheme incorporating a film course which Morrissey is planning to teach in the Tyre area of South Lebanon in order to reach children in camps in immediate proximity to the Israeli border.

■ To find out more see www.creativeartstrust.org



David Morrissey at the launch of CAST

Eyes in Gaza

By Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse
Quartet Books

I wept my way through this book. Tears of sorrow and anger. The eyes are those of two Norwegian doctors who were the only internationals to witness at first hand the horrific carnage of the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, December 2008 to January 2009. Their story is deeply shocking and truly heroic.

Part of the power of their accounts is that you have a vivid sense of being present in the operating theatre in Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City as wave after wave of horribly injured Palestinians, many of them children, are brought in; of the overflowing wards and corridors, the terrible choices which they and their Palestinian colleagues were forced to make between those they had a chance of saving and those whose injuries would almost certainly prove fatal.

These choices became more frequent as the merciless bombardment intensified, supplies diminished and medical staff were forced to function on minimal sleep and decreasing amounts of food. Injuries and surgical procedures are described in vivid detail by words and explicit colour photographs.

There are stories of individuals and families. The al-Daya family's four-storey house was hit by a huge bomb at six o'clock one evening. The grandfather had gathered all his children and grandchildren there, thinking they would be safe. Thirty members of



the family were killed, most of them children. Many of the survivors came to Al-Shifa for treatment.

Once the Israeli land forces moved in, eye-witnesses testified to whole families rounded up by the IDF and shot. In the midst of this chaos and destruction, the Norwegians gave interviews to the world's media by satellite link, telling the truth and pleading with international leaders to stop the madness.

Throughout the book, Gilbert and Fosse express baffled outrage at the seeming indifference of the world, at weapons used (white phosphorus, flechettes) which are banned under international law, at the drones which can be operated from a room hundreds of miles away by someone pressing a button on command. And they record something even more sinister: 'We realised that the people who pulled the trigger no longer saw Palestinians as human beings. All Palestinians were terrorists in their eyes and the children were defined as " Hamas children," children that it was all right — like vermin — just to eradicate.' What is this doing to both the victims and the perpetrators?

The last chapter is called 'War Criminals' and by the time you get to that point, there is no doubt in your mind that serious crimes against humanity were committed during Operation Cast Lead. Apart from the deep physical wounds, Gaza needs an army of psychiatrists. It is a stain on the conscience of the world.

Warren Bardsley

Acting for peace

A unique group of performers from both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli divide took part in a ten day tour of the UK in the summer, sharing their personal stories and non-violent, creative methods for resolving conflict at a series of moving and absorbing public events. **Gill Swain reports.**

The 16 performers were members of the Tulkarem/Tel Aviv group of Combatants for Peace, a remarkable collection of Palestinians who have been part of the violent struggle against the occupation and Israelis who have fought in the IDF, all of whom have put down their arms and dedicated themselves to non-violent opposition to the occupation and for a viable peace in the area.

Founded in 2005, there are now five bi-national local activist groups operating in Israel/Palestine and their members routinely risk arrest and resentment from within their own communities simply for meeting together. They use theatre as a tool for dialogue and reconciliation, as a way to promote the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, alongside the state of Israel.

The UK tour of the Tulkarem/Tel Aviv group was organised by Encounters, an arts organisation which offers imaginative spaces and processes for people to explore their relationships with themselves, each other and the world around them. The creative director of Encounters, Ben Yeger, is also the UK representative of Combatants for Peace.

Warrington Peace Centre in Cheshire



hosted the first event where the group were joined by members of 'Survivors for Peace' — people who have been directly affected by violence. Jo Berry, whose father was killed by the IRA in the bombing of the 1984 Tory Party conference in Brighton, and Pat Magee, one of the bombers, told their own extraordinary story of reconciliation.

'Members routinely risk arrest and resentment simply for meeting together'

On the last day members of CfP and Ben Yeger led their 'Rainbow of Identities' theatre workshop for the public which explored the complexities of conflict. In the evening 60 members of the public attended the first 'No Victory in Violence' of the tour, an evening where CfP members gave moving personal accounts of their journeys from wielding arms to non-violent dialogue.

As well as engaging the public, the UK visit offered the group a safe space to deepen relationships and resolve conflict within their ranks. They took full advantage

of it in a short walking tour in the Peak District before heading for Coventry where their workshop was enjoyed by students from all over the world who were attending the Coventry University international summer school for peace and reconciliation.

The tour ended in London where four members of CfP told their stories at the Frontline Club, a club for foreign correspondents, chaired by the *Guardian's* former Middle East editor, Ian Black. The next day, Adrian Jackson, artistic director of Cardboard Citizens Theatre Company, led a public Theatre of the Oppressed workshop he had devised specifically for the CfP visit.

In the evening 250 people gathered at Amnesty International's human rights centre for another 'No Victory in Violence' presentation and to listen to the powerful testimonies of two of CfP's co-founders, Nour Aldin Shehada and Chen Alon.

Amnesty's campaign manager, Kristyan Benedict, who chaired the meeting, said: 'Amnesty International were delighted to work with Combatants for Peace and to support them in our shared aim of seeing Israelis and Palestinians living peacefully together with their human rights and dignity respected and protected. They are remarkable, tenacious and inspiring individuals and as a collective an example of what "the change you want to see in the world" looks like.'

Ben Yeger hailed the visit as a huge success, 'deeply transformative' for all who took part and 'touching people on emotional, intellectual and political levels.' He said the response from everyone to the creative methods CfP used was that the approach was 'potent and powerful, creating a gateway for understanding these issues in a new way.'

A tour of venues in the South West and London is planned for 2011. For more info see www.cfpeace.org



Chen Alon



Nour Shehada

Poetic injustice

Palestinian-American born poet, **Remi Kanazi**, who caused a stir at the Poetry International Festival at London's South Bank Centre, talks to Maha Rahwanji

The focus of the annual Poetry International Festival was Palestine and the Middle East. Responding to the theme of 'Imagining Peace,' celebrated poets from 29 countries gave readings, including established Arabic poets, Mourid Barghouti and Nabeel Yasin, and younger English language poets such as Suheir Hammad.

One of the undoubted stars of the show was the forthright political poet, Remi Kanazi. This New York City-based effervescent activist grew up in Massachusetts in a Greek Orthodox Christian family, feeling 'awkwardly brown in a small white town.'

He reminisced with me about his grandmother and mother who were always talking about Palestine and their memories of Yafa and Haifa and of losing their houses, land and former lives. It wasn't just about the financial loss but about the more than 60 years of yearning that never left their hearts.

As the youngest of three, Remi was inspired by his brother who acted as the catalyst for his activism. During 9/11 Remi was studying in Manhattan College and working in a restaurant. He noticed a shift in tone and says 'hate crime sky-rocketed.'

Remi now felt more 'awkwardly white.' The more he was assumed to be European, the more he was able to witness the racism and the vitriolic attitude of the 'ground zero culture towards Arabs, Latinos, Indians and blacks who look like Arabs and were therefore taken as Muslims to be hated.' He wondered how many non-white Christians the media could hate!

Starting out as a teacher of literature, he later turned to full-time writing and poetry recital tours. He describes himself as an 'angry' poet and takes as his themes the abuse of human rights, the need for justice, identity and the notion of home.

He is a recurring writer in residence and an advisory board member for the Palestine Writing Workshop and the editor of *Poets for Palestine*, an anthology of 48 poems, alongside some original visual pieces by Palestinian artists, published to unite a diverse range of poets, spoken word and hip-hop artists.

Remi's political commentary has been featured on Al Jazeera English, GRITtv and BBC radio. His poetry has taken him across the Middle East and Canada and he begins a tour of North America in February after



the release of his first collection of poetry and spoken word CD: *Poetic Injustice: Writings on Resistance and Palestine*, published by RoR Publishing. Laced with searing indictments of occupation, ethnic cleansing and war, Remi tackles some of the most important issues facing the world today.

'That's the greatest thing Palestinians have: truth and reality'

Remi first visited Palestine in 2007. He says it was a 'transformational experience' as no book or person could have prepared him for his journey 'home.' He feels that the most important thing he can do as an artist, along with his poetry, is to fight against apartheid.

He is a proponent of the **Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel** as the BDS movement came from Palestinian civil society. 'What's great about BDS is that you are not just talking about doing something; you are doing it, educating at the same time and building a movement,' he says.

Remi advocates boycott from within, working with the Israeli left. 'Incrementally it's moving forward and things will change. The sad reality is that things keep getting worse but on the other hand the

Palestinians have been using the media to expose Zionism on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Palestinians have been able to come back at the million dollar Israeli PR industry with just words, facts and reality. That's the greatest thing Palestinians have: truth and reality.

'It's important for Palestinians to be talking about BDS and what we can do. That includes me as a political poet. As everything Palestinian is considered inherently political, our lives are considered political. That kind of engagement has been really good in the UK, France and Norway. We are so far behind in America!'

The book and CD is available to order at www.PoeticInjustice.net. To book Remi email: Booking@PoeticInjustice.net

Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh
Pluto Press 2011

Blessedly free of rhetoric and strong in clearly sourced facts, this absorbing book presents a concise history of the entire Palestinian struggle from the point of view of Palestinians on the ground. It is a very timely reminder that 'samud,' or endurance, for which the Palestinian people is renowned, is but one facet of the will to resist that has characterised the opposition to colonisation from the Ottoman era until the present day.

Setting the Palestinian case in an historical context, Qumsiyeh draws parallels with the resistance movements in Algeria and South Africa, though 'we have witnessed far more diversity among groups and tactics than those countries.' He lists over 100 methods of both armed and civil resistance. Some of the most successful include the Stop the Wall Coalition and the Palestine Agricultural Relief Committees that fight to stop the land grabs in the Occupied Territories. He sees the global campaign for boycott,



(Cont. overleaf)

(Cont. from previous page)

divestment and sanctions, to which a whole chapter is devoted, as possibly the most effective recent weapon in the battle for hearts and minds abroad.

The author does not shirk from examining the internal schisms that have damaged the Palestinian cause; he sees the Oslo Accords of the nineties as heralding 'a strengthening of the bourgeois trends and a weakening of the revolutionary spirit,' widening the gap between the people and an elite leadership. He condemns the leadership of both Fatah and Hamas, while understanding the pressures to which both have been subject:

'The two "authorities" in the West Bank and Gaza behave like leaders of gangs in prison; strong on each other and weak in dealing with the prison guards.'

The book ends on a note, if not of optimism, then of a trust in the historical forces at work: '[The] project of transforming Palestine from a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society into a "Jewish state" is destined to fail not only because of this resistance but because of the internal contradictions and increasingly apparent racism.'

Hilary Wise

Nothing to lose but your life: an 18 hour journey with Murad

Suad Amiry

Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing

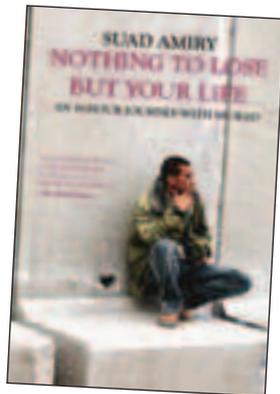
The hazards for Palestinians from the Occupied Territories finding work in Israel are revealed in this illuminating and moving book by Suad Amiry, author of the remarkable diary, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*. Her talent is displayed yet again in this original and gripping narrative.

Israel's total control of the West Bank has engineered the collapse of the Palestinian economy, creating a 31% rate of unemployment. Palestinians have practically no choice but to seek work inside Israel or in building the illegal settlements. Permits for work are scarce — in 2009 no more than 23,000 were given, forcing nearly half of the 40,000 Palestinians entering Israel to work illegally.

The desperate search for work can take whole days crossing into Israel. These men say they are not 'scared of jail or the oppression of the occupation.' In the 'cat and mouse' game escaping the soldiers guarding the borders along the Wall, workers can be shot and killed.

It is this scenario that led to the author's courageous decision to join a group of workers led by the intrepid Murad, a brother of one of her staff members at RIWAQ*, in their quest for work. The destination is Petach Tikvah, a major Israeli town north of Tel Aviv, where Murad and his friends have worked for 'sympathetic' Israelis, and where Murad has also found a Jewish girlfriend he longs to see again.

What takes only 18 hours feels like a mini-odyssey. Amiry,



disguised as one of the workers, travels by taxi, bus and on foot, bravely scampering over the Palestinian landscape in the shadow of the settlements — often going round in circles, negotiating checkpoints, detritus and barriers, dodging the Israeli soldiers in their armoured cars.

In often-hilarious vignettes, Amiry sympathetically describes the traditional domestic life of Murad's family, the raw humorous banter, the camaraderie, the foibles, hopes and despair of the growing crowd of workers and characters from villages along the route towards and across the enclosing barrier.

The tragedy is that the separation of the two peoples is so unnecessary, as the Palestinians show an amazing ability to co-exist with the Israelis when allowed to and feel a longing to move about freely amongst what was the land of their villages and towns. But as Abu Yusef, one of the older workers, who spent 28 years in such searches for work through the night says, 'It is not this darkness that worried me, it is the darkness of their hearts... They have no mercy and they know no God. I spent my whole life working for them and now look at me; like a thief, I steal my own livelihood in the dark...'

This important and heart-wrenching book evokes the absurdity and nightmare of denial and dispossession of a people from their own land and is a spur to those who wish to help bring an end this injustice.

■ www.riwaq.org

*Suad Amiry is the director of RIWAQ, the centre for architectural conservation in Ramallah

Abe Hayeem

The Husaynis, 1700–1948: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty

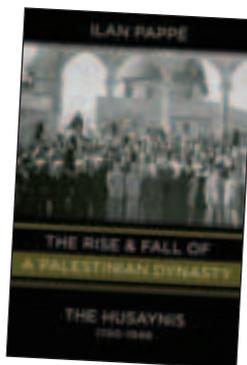
By Ilan Pappé

Saqi Books

This book is a biography of a notable Palestinian family, the Husaynis, chiefly known in the west through Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem under the British Mandate who was later vilified by the Zionists for his contacts with Nazi Germany. The book covers the fascinating period of Ottoman Palestine, particularly Jerusalem, and the massive changes wrought on the country by the advent of Zionism and the establishment of Israel. Reading it, I was struck by the need for more such books in order to document Palestine's social and political history prior to Israel's creation.

As Pappé points out, the excess of Zionists' writings and 'histories' of Palestine, ancient and modern, have aimed to create an alternative narrative of events which portray the country as barren, empty and backward prior to the entry of Zionism. For the casual reader, exposed mostly to this historical version, the reality of a complex, rich and thriving Arab society that was in fact destroyed by Zionism comes as a surprise.

Through an account of the lives of one prominent Palestinian family, the author paints an intricate picture of Palestine's history



under Ottoman rule and what succeeded it. He also provides a much-needed account of Jerusalem's history from 1700 onwards.

The Husaynis belong to a group of leading Arab families which flourished in Palestine before 1948. Other examples are the Alamis, Khalidis, Afifis, Dajanis and Nusseibehs. The Husaynis, who, like the Khalidis, trace their lineage from the Prophet, acquired prestige and later wealth through their connection with the Ottoman authorities.

They were appointed to supervise the awqaf (religious endowments) in Jerusalem, considerably developed by the Ottomans to provide educational, religious and social services to the population. They later benefited from Ottoman land reforms to become wealthy landowners. By the turn of the 20th century, the family had become fully integrated into the Ottoman political system and many of its members attained high office.

The book comes into its own when detailing the Husaynis' relations with the Zionists from the turn of the 20th century and the evolution in the family's fortunes up to 1948. This section is exceptionally well-researched and illuminating on a period crucial to understanding the bitter conflict still with us today. The book makes essential reading for this and everyone interested in Palestinian history.

Ghada Karmi

PLEASE HELP PALESTINIAN STUDENTS

Over two-thirds of **Birzeit University's** 8000 students need assistance with their tuition fees.

Any amount will help the **Friends of Birzeit University** to expand our support work.

£250 will help pay for one laptop

£500 will fund a student to have English tutorials

£1950 will fund an Annual Scholarship

£2187 will fund a Masters Degree

Our Hardship Fund helps with books, travel expenses, technology or accommodation.

Please contact: Jocelyn Hurndall, 1 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE.

www.fobzu.org • 020 7832 1340 • director@fobzu.org

HELP REBUILD A HOUSE

The **Amos Trust** will be taking a group of 25 people in April 2011 to rebuild a home demolished to make way for the Wall near Bethlehem.



The action will

- be a non-violent protest against the demolition of Palestinian homes
- show solidarity with local Palestinians
- enable you to experience first hand the reality of the occupation
- enable a Palestinian family to return to their home

Dates: April 9th to 21st, 2011

Cost: £2000 per person — £1000 to cover flights, accommodation and food and £1000 towards the rebuilding costs.

To register interest, please contact Nive via the Amos office: www.amostrust.org

Replanting Palestine

Settlers have destroyed nearly all the trees belonging to the farmers of **Saffa**, an agricultural community at the edge of the illegal Beit Ayn settlement.



The Israeli military has recently begun claiming that the land is 'state land,' indicating the state's intention to annex the whole valley.

The **Palestine Solidarity Project** organises the replanting of thousands of trees in Saffa to replace the ones destroyed and to deter further annexation.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

All of the trees in Saffa are paid for by donations from people like you. To donate go online to <http://palestinesolidarityproject.org/donate/>

For information on how to get involved contact Maria Lewis at maria.L@riseup.net

Youth exchange programme

An **International Summer Work Camp**, 'Global Palestine,' will take place at **An-Najah University** in Nablus in September.

Our goal is to host 40 volunteers interested in the Middle East question. While Palestine may seem daunting, it is also a highly rewarding environment to study first hand.

The programme will include attending lectures, working with Palestinian students and getting involved in youth development.

Dates: September 6th to 20th, 2011

For information see: <http://tinyurl.com/32hkrxq>

For an application form contact: youthexchange@najah.edu or zajel.camp@gmail.com



Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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

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Help the PSC fund its campaigning work SWITCH TO STANDING ORDER!

2011 is a critical year for the Palestinians. With solidarity growing internationally, now is the time to build the mass movement in Britain.

A mass movement depends on the strength of its membership and every member of PSC makes a crucial difference. PSC is funded solely by its members and supporters, so we rely on your generosity.

If you are not already paying your membership by Standing Order, **PLEASE** consider doing so. You can choose a payment frequency to suit you. As little as £1 a month unwaged / £2 a month waged is enough to cover your membership.

Paying by Standing Order helps us by cutting down on time consuming administration; it allows us to plan expenditure more accurately and it also saves you having to arrange a payment every year.

Simply fill in the standing order application on P 31 — the reverse of this advert — cut out the form and post to: PSC, Box BM PSA, London, WC1N 3XX

Thank you!



The PSC has joined A Just Peace for Palestine, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and War on Want to call on BT to cut its ties with **Bezeq International**, a subsidiary of Israeli telecommunications company, Bezeq.

Bezeq are deeply involved in supplying telecommunication services to illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories yet Bezeq International has become part of BT's 'Global Alliance.'

PSC has set up an easy to use e-tool that allows you to send a model letter to Ian Livingston, the CEO of BT, calling for BT to disconnect from the settlements and occupation.

Email the CEO of BT:
<http://psc.iparl.com/lobby/54>

For more information on the campaign visit:
<http://disconnectnow.org/>

