



Flying the flag

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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

Gaza rising from the dust

By Hugh Lanning

Five years after Israel imposed its suffocating blockade, there is an untold story of Gaza – it is one of positive resistance. Everywhere you look, you see it. The hotel rebuilt using rubble from destroyed buildings. The hospital back, fully operational apart from lacking the lifesaving drugs Israel has put on its banned list. The reconstruction taking place of the University's science wing – targeted as a threat.

It was this story of positive resistance that overwhelmed Sarah Colborne, Steve Bell from CWU and myself who joined the Miles for Smiles convoy to Gaza in June. We arrived via the Rafah crossing, through an arch where a sign saying "Welcome to Palestine" and a Palestinian flag greeted us – an experience you don't get in the West Bank where you always have to pass through Israel or Israeli checkpoints and no such signs are allowed.

Rafah, cut in half by the border, is "digging for victory." Like in WW2 Britain, all available land – often reclaimed bomb sites – is being press-ganged into use for market gardening, self sufficiency being the objective. In addition there are an estimated 1000 tunnels bringing in vital ingredients for reconstruction and life.

Gaza is imprisoned, bombed and battered – but feels freer than the West Bank. It is also beautiful – a coastal Mediterranean strip, refugee camps on the right, the sun setting over the sea on the left. The beach comes alive in the evening when the electricity runs out with people eating, working, studying, meeting and playing but always under the watchful gaze of Israeli gunships on the horizon, their lights just visible, hemming in the fishing boats to the polluted inner waters.

We passed the *Mavi Marmara* memorial and Sarah, who was on board when Israeli forces killed nine peace activists on the flotilla, stared out to the sea where it happened.

But during our visit the message we received politically from all quarters and factions was positive: that Israel, the US and EU... the world have tried to block Gaza militarily, physically and politically yet there is a genuine view that the people of Gaza are succeeding in frustrating these tactics.

The Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh, a man with a clear strategic view, said: "They tried to blockade us militarily, politically and physically. On each front we survived; more than that we are now turning the tide. The siege is breaking – broken." And it was striking



Sarah planting a tree at Mavi Marmara memorial

that people always talked of Palestine, not just Gaza – of the West Bank, East Jerusalem.

So, what do they want? First, it was to break the siege. They did not want to be captives, fed with "humanitarian" aid. They wanted to rebuild – their economy, the destroyed water systems, power plants, and to get the medicines they are not allowed to buy. It was these measures that were identified as causing suffering – a whole population being deliberately punished.

Secondly, reconciliation was felt essential if a state was to be achieved. Support and help with the media was needed to assist the process. Thirdly, it was to support the Palestinians' choice of resistance – positive and non-violent.

This was the political response we were given at one meeting. But we felt our importance was just being there. The hospitality we were shown was amazing, a real warmth of greeting. Partly this was because people had come from a wide range of countries, including New Zealand, Malaysia, Libya, South Africa and France as well as the UK.

But it felt like there was a special place for the PSC. We were not Arab or Muslim, yet we were not just talking about solidarity, but giving it. I was constantly surprised at meeting people who knew what the PSC was and what we were doing. It was clear that huge importance was placed on Western solidarity, on the BDS campaign, and that people followed these issues via the press, TV and social media. It was humbling to realise that just by being there you were giving a, perhaps unrealistic, hope.

There is a shroud of silence surrounding Gaza. Many people talk about the siege – but not of the people. If there is to be reconciliation, a democratically elected national Government, the political siege has to end. One is not possible without the other. There will not be a solution on Palestine without Gaza – numbers and the physical reality make that obvious. Ignoring Gaza politically will not make it go away.

There is also hypocrisy – everyone, including Israel, talks to Gaza indirectly – on prisoners, aid, security. It is time to resume a political dialogue.

Visiting Gaza was an inspiration, to see how the people are resisting in their daily lives to frustrate the siege. We need to respond positively and politically.

At the TUC there will be a debate on a CWU motion to send a delegation to Gaza (see page 6). In March the PSC will be organising a major political conference in London. And PSC's AGM on 26 January 2013 (see page 18 for details) will be an important opportunity to discuss how to take our solidarity forward.

Our challenge is to break the silence. That is something we can do.

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Cruelty to the innocent – a portrait of Gaza's children

June 2012 marked the fifth anniversary of Israel's implacable blockade of the Gaza Strip in the wake of Hamas coming to power. The siege has had a "real and negative impact on the lives and health of Gaza's children," according to a report compiled by Save the Children and Medical Aid for Palestinians.

With 1.7 million people – including more than 800,000 children – crammed into just 365 square kilometres – an area roughly equivalent to the size of the Isle of Wight, the blockade has been "the single greatest contributor to endemic and long-lasting household poverty," according to the report, with the result that families are unable to buy nutritious food.

In addition Gaza's only fresh water source is now too dangerous to drink and is contaminated with fertiliser and human waste. Desperate families are being forced to buy from private sources, not knowing that in most cases this water too is contaminated, often at ten times the safe level.

At every level where children seek support, that support has been shrinking. Families bear the strains of poverty, the community is torn by political disputes, vital services such as health have not recovered from what the report terms as "the conflict" and the environment is heavily polluted.

Children suffer from:

- Stunting, or long term exposure to chronic malnutrition, affects 10% of children under five

- Anaemia, usually caused by iron deficiency, is found in 58% of schoolchildren, 68% of 9–12 month old babies and 36% of pregnant women

- Sanitation-related diseases such as typhoid and diarrhoea have increased in clinics serving refugees

Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Israel is a signatory, says that "States Parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life" and "shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child."

The Convention also ensures, in Article 24, the child's right to the "highest attainable standard of health." Yet, says the report, "there is evidence to suggest that conditions in Gaza are causing the avoidable deaths of children."

It cites:

- A study in the health journal, *The Lancet*, in 2009 showing the rate at which

children die in the first year of life has not improved in Gaza in decades, unlike nearly every other country in the world

- 605 children have been killed and 2,179 injured since 2007 as a direct result of "the conflict" while 60 children were killed and 82 injured in Palestinian factional and other fighting

- In 2012 alone three children died in pools of open sewage

- Delays and denials of permits for children seeking medical care in

Israel are putting lives at risk. 174 referred abroad for treatment in 2011 missed an appointment. Three children died while waiting for permission to travel.

Child health in Gaza is deteriorating despite the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid is poured into the OPTs every year.

The report says: "Israel, as the Occupying Power, has the right to address legitimate security concerns but it must also allow for the free flow of goods, people and services. According to the international laws of war, Israel is responsible for the welfare of Gaza's civilian population. At this key moment, five years on, we call on Israel to fulfil its responsibilities and end the blockade of Gaza immediately and in its entirety."



Playing soccer on Gaza beach

The report makes five key recommendations:

- Israel must lift the blockade
- Robust funding and development strategies must be implemented for Gaza

- The international community should implement long-term strategies specific to improving the nutritional status of the children

- All planned water and sanitation projects should be implemented immediately and a clear timetable provided by the Israeli authorities for their completion

- The Palestinian Authority must facilitate the impartial and rapid material provision and funding of medical supplies and services.

Fact box

- 1.59 million Palestinians are confined within 365 square kilometres. This includes around 819,000 children

- There are no current infant mortality statistics from Gaza due to years of estrangement between West Bank and Gaza authorities. But in 1999 officials set out to decrease the rate in the first year of life from 21.1 in 1,000 to 15

- The blockade has prevented many items from entering Gaza including

X-ray machines, scanners, laboratory equipment, batteries and spare parts

- Power cuts last eight hours every day. In early 2012 a fuel crisis increased this to 12-18 hours a day

- Though an easing of the blockade was announced in 2010, this has only resulted in an increase in consumer goods, not reconstruction materials and only a slight increase in exports, which are not nearly enough to revive the economy

We don't like sundown

By Aimee Shalan

In June, on the fifth anniversary of the tightening of the blockade in 2007, I went to Gaza with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) to visit projects and launch *Gaza's Children: Falling Behind*, a joint report with Save the Children on the effect of the blockade on child health (see opposite page).

Arriving through the huge, though largely unused, high-tech Eretz crossing – dubbed “the terminal to nowhere” – the difference between life in Israel and life in Gaza couldn't have been more apparent. Starting down the caged one kilometre walkway, my colleague and I jumped as we heard a loud crack of gunfire.

It sounded extremely close but we couldn't see what was happening until we rounded the corner and saw, on the other side of the fence, men and boys breaking up rubble in the sandy wasteland that used to be an industrial zone, collecting what they could in donkey carts. The lack of access to construction materials under the blockade has made rubble extremely valuable and these men and boys risking their lives by coming close to the crossing were so habituated to being fired on that they appeared oblivious to it.



Boys collecting gravel

medicine from private sources, which is very expensive and few can afford, or simply to wait in the hope that the political situation would somehow improve.

“We don't need to list the items,” Dr Al-Najjar said, “We need to think of how patients are feeling when they don't have medicine available. How does it feel when their child has a neurological problem and they don't have access to medicine to control the convulsions?”

“Men and boys... so habituated to being fired on that they appeared oblivious to it”

Our first stop in Gaza was at a neo-natal intensive care unit supported by MAP at Al Awda Hospital in Jabaliya. In one of the incubators was a baby who had been born that day and I wondered what kind of life was in store for this tiny new person. Over half of Gaza's population is children and there is now a generation growing up which has never been outside Gaza and knows nothing of life beyond the blockade. Poor housing, overcrowded schools and a heavily polluted environment are exacting a high price on children's health and the long-term effect of living in isolation, with little hope and the ongoing threat of physical and mental trauma from conflict, is potentially devastating.

During our visit we also met with the Director of the Central Drug Store, Dr Zekri Abu Qamar, and the Director of the Drug Store for Primary Healthcare, Dr Mohammed Al-Najjar, who gave a very affecting account of the real human impact of the rapidly escalating problem of medication shortages in Gaza. They told us that the shortages were the worst they had experienced in fifteen years.

According to the Ministry of Health 253 out of 480 (58%) essential drugs have now reached zero stock. This marks a sharp rise since their inventory in March earlier this year when 186 (39%) essential drugs were at or below one month's worth of supplies. These shortages include medications for kidney transplant patients, haemophilia, and therapeutic milk for children with metabolic disorders. Fifty percent of psychiatric medication, Dr Al-Najjar told us, was also unavailable in five of the psychiatric centres in Gaza and this was having an extremely damaging effect on patients, their families and the community at large.

Children in Gaza are especially vulnerable as a result of the scarcity of medications. The Ministry of Health we were told had no antibiotics available for children at all and parents were being left with an impossible choice: to somehow find the money to buy

“No antibiotics available for children at all”

The slow suffocation and mounting frustration of life under a blockade that is making Gaza's already over-burdened health system increasingly ill-equipped to cope with the demands of Gaza's population, was apparent at every turn. At an event in Gaza City announcing a joint statement calling on Israel to lift its blockade, signed by fifty international NGOs and United Nations agencies, local journalists demanded to know what action would be taken finally to bring the blockade to an end and voiced their fear that they would be invited to attend another event to mark the sixth anniversary next year.

The most poignant memory I have from my visit, though, was a moment when I commented on a spectacular sunset over the sea to a friend from Beit Hanoun, who has been trying for the last three years to leave Gaza to study for a PhD without any success. “You like that do you?” he responded. “We don't like sundown here.” In Gaza, even the simple pleasure of a stunning sunset has been undermined by the blockade. Now it is associated with power cuts and the threat of night attacks by Israel.

Shakespeare wrote “The miserable have no other medicine/But only hope,” and Palestinians who have for so long lived through the misery of occupation and displacement are famous for their resilience and steadfastness. But as the blockade on Gaza rolls into its sixth year, hope is also in short supply.

Aimee Shalan is Director of Advocacy and Communications at Medical Aid for Palestinians

■ See the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/cmuv65m>

Solidarity is key

By Steve Bell

At this year's TUC, the Communication Workers Union has placed a motion on the agenda calling for the TUC to oppose the siege of Gaza. This is consistent with the adoption of pro-Palestinian policies by the TUC in recent years. The motion also directs the TUC to organise a delegation to Gaza, in conjunction with the PSC.

After five years of the siege, it is evident that the Israeli government is engaged in the collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza. UN Under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos, has established that more than 80% of families in Gaza are now dependent upon humanitarian aid.

Around 70% of Gaza's population is made up of refugees. Having been forcibly displaced from their ancestral homes, their place of exile



Gazan paralympic shot putter Khamis Zaqout (see p15)

has been turned into a prison camp.

Despite these terrible problems, it is clear that the Palestinians in Gaza have refused to buckle to the siege. The Israeli government hoped to isolate Gaza politically. This has failed. The rising in Egypt in 2011 means

that there is real pressure for the full reopening of the Rafah Crossing. This could service up to 80% of Gaza's economic needs.

In these circumstances, it is important that trade unionists add to their solidarity agenda specific activity around Gaza. The Israeli government has tried to pretend that Gaza has no legitimacy and insisted that Western governments should have no dealings with the Hamas government. This is unacceptable and represents just another attempt to split and atomise the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian parties are themselves treading the difficult path to national reconciliation. Our contribution

to Palestinian unity and freedom must include action against the isolation and siege of Gaza. We should press for the TUC Congress to carry the CWU motion and implement its proposal for a TUC delegation.

New patron – Nur Masalha

The PSC is proud to welcome **Professor Nur Masalha** as a new Patron. Members may know him best as the author of numerous books on Palestinian history, such as *A Land Without a People*, *The Politics of Expansion*, *The Bible and Zionism* and *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Reclaiming Memory*. (Many will recall his devastating critique of Benny Morris' claim that there was no planned "transfer" of Palestinians in 1948.) He speaks and writes widely about the current situation and is the presenter-commentator in the powerful, award-winning film *La Terre Parle Arabe (The Land Speaks Arabic)* which tells the story of the build-up to the Nakba using contemporary documentary material.

Born in the Galilee, he studied in Jerusalem and later at SOAS in London and, after teaching for some years in Washington and in Birzeit, Palestine, he is now Professor of Religion and Politics and Director of the Centre for Religion and History and the Holy Land Research Project at St. Mary's University College, University of Surrey. He is also co-founder and editor of the prestigious *Journal of Holy Land Studies*.

Nur's tireless ongoing research, which he is able to communicate to a wide public with great clarity, has made him an invaluable spokesman for the Palestinian cause worldwide.



Communication Workers Union

Lift the siege of Gaza

End settlement building

Support Palestinian statehood

Billy Hayes
General Secretary

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President

Cosmic chaos – a student's life in Gaza

Basma Awad, 22, is studying to be a laboratory technician and working as an intern in an UNWRA clinic in Gaza. Born to a Palestinian family in the United Arab Emirates, she moved to Gaza three years ago and writes a funny and poignant blog describing her daily struggle to forge a good and full life under siege. Here she describes a day spent revising for an exam.

Just another exam, just another day full of countless hours of studying and revising. Or at least that's what I thought it's going to be. I woke up early to study for my Parasitology final exam. Sitting quietly in my room and everything was perfect; the electricity was on, what more can a student ask for?

It was hours later when the beloved electricity decided to depart leaving me angry and frustrated. But anyhow that didn't stop me from studying; there was sun out there. I pulled a chair and opened the balcony and sat down and started studying under the beautiful Gazan sky.

"Then the bombs started flying around"

Perfect again? No. Then the bombs started flying around. East Khan Younis where I live was under attack. Almost every hour there was sounds of gun shots, explosions and the following ambulance sirens. The Earth was agitated like it's never been in a while. Regardless, I continued studying because, God knows, no amount of time is enough for Parasitology.

I kept that in mind and decided to block out the sounds of everything around in order to finish but imagine how hard it was when you're sitting in the middle of this unpleasant action. RPGs. Artillery shells. Ambulance sirens. You'd think I'd freak out and drop my books but, to tell the truth, the idea of not being able to study and revise properly scared me more.

So I kept on studying while being continually interrupted by the sounds of gun shots and explosions and again screaming ambulance sirens. It took me longer than it usually does to memorise the classes and diseases caused by each parasite because I kept forgetting them, thanks to the countless distractions around, and that's when I decided to use them in my favour. I



linked each class of parasites to a time we were being bombed and I eventually did get them right. Israel – eat your heart out!

Now the sun was also departing, declaring that I can no longer use her beautiful rays to study. And that's when I decided to go grab some coffee from a nearby café, hoping by the time I get home they would've turned on the generator and I can continue studying.

I came back to find my mother and sister still drowning in the darkness. I was mad. I still had an astronomical amount of studying to do and there was no light! Then the conversation drifted not to be about the absent electricity but about my short temper, which got even shorter when it was the centre of attention. As if they don't know that it's a good thing that I'm still sane after all.

I went to search for the "Kaz light." I haven't used it in ages and it was time

for it to shine (literally). I lit it and started studying. Ok, it's a summer day it was hot already and the little Kaz light wasn't helping the matter. Anyhow, continuing: intestinal nematodes, tissue and blood nematodes and life goes on. And my vision doesn't.

Hours later the generator magically started working! It was like an adrenaline shot straight to the heart, I jumped and turned on the lights and, guess what! Due to fluctuating current of the generator the light bulb decided to explode, as if it wasn't enough being bombed all morning.

You'd think I'd go mad and drop my books. But instead I started laughing hysterically. The day has been hilarious, no?

"You'd think I'd freak out and drop my books"

At that point I had no fight in me and my eyes started to give up. I made myself another mug of coffee and got up to the roof to watch the mesmerising night sky. Something has to be good about this day. Perfect again? Sad to report that it wasn't. As I gazed up I noticed the lonely creatures roaming above, aka DRONES. And other warplanes making a pattern in the sky that could distract you even from Vega.

The whole day felt like a cosmic chaos from the start. Most days in Gaza are like this: we're bombed but we choose to continue studying. The power is out but we choose to continue studying. The generator is not working, we choose to continue studying. The drones are so loud that you can't sometimes hear yourself think, we choose to continue studying. Regardless of the circumstances, we choose to continue studying because we know very well that as Palestinians our education is our ticket to freedom. And that's what was engraved in every cell of my brain from the moment I was born.

So cheers to all the Gazan students studying when the power is out and losing their eyesight just like I'm losing mine. We can make it!

■ Read Basma's blog at www.poetsspotlight.blogspot.com

Palestine Place, London WC1

By Hilary Wise

For the first two weeks of June, 24 Gray's Inn Road, normally five storeys of plush office suites, was home to a very different kind of activity. The empty building, temporarily re-named Palestine Place, was taken over by a group of young people wanting to call attention to the desperate situation facing the Palestinian people today.

Overnight it became a hub of workshops, discussion groups, lectures and photo exhibitions; banners were made, T-shirts printed, actions organised.

Two of the organisers, Hilary Kidd and John Snowden, explained to *PN* how it came about. "The idea came out of an informal discussion among activists, followed by an organising meeting just three weeks before we occupied the building. Then it came together really quickly; people with experience of squatting in London found the location and we moved in," said John.

"The police did come, the first night, but when they found that the people here knew the law in respect to squatting and were properly organised, they went away again."

Hilary added: "When we explained to the owners that the squat was for a limited period of time, was to be used for a series of political workshops and that we would treat the place very responsibly, they were OK."

As well as being about Palestine, the venture has been about the right to reclaim buildings – a right currently under threat in the UK. "From the start coalition-building has been at the heart of the project," said John. "We have had a general open meeting every night where it was decided that broadly related issues, such as racism,



Jeremy Hardy at Palestine Place.



ethnic cleansing and refugees, should be explored.

"It's been a fantastic range of events, with writers like Ilan Pappé and Ben White, activists like Frank Barat, the comedian Jeremy Hardy and Prof Charles Tripp from SOAS talking about Palestinian art as a form of resistance. We've had sometimes four or five workshops a day, with about 150 people in and out of the building daily."

The workshops were on topics like BDS and Israeli apartheid, looking at the history

"We've had four or five workshops a day, with about 150 people in and out of the building"

of the region and discussing how Palestinian self-determination can be brought about. One highlight was a Skype link with the surviving hunger striker, Khader Adnan, in Jenin in the West Bank.

The talk that made the greatest impression on Hilary was by Israeli activist, Sebastian Rodriguez, who served in the IDF but who is now a boycott activist: "It was so moving to see what a distance he'd travelled," she said.

Outside the Israeli embassy candlelit vigils were held every evening for footballer, Mahmoud Sarsak, and other hunger strikers, plus a demonstration outside the AGM of the security firm G4S.

How about media coverage?

Hilary said: "We had a journalist from *Ha'aretz* [the Israeli leftist daily paper], who did quite a fair piece about us. Aljazeera has also been and there were pieces in the *Independent* and the *Guardian*, focusing on our G4S demo, and lots in the independent media like Demotix, Open Democracy, Mondoweiss, New Internationalist and Electronic Intifada, and massive tweeting has been going on about our events."

How do the finances work? "We're open to donations," she said, "but part of the rationale behind the squat was a commitment to recycling, like making use of the food just thrown away by supermarkets; every day a few people went out 'skipping' and came back with binbags of wholesome and delicious food that was just being dumped. And some Palestinians did lovely home cooking and brought in big casseroles of hot food. So we've been pretty well self-sufficient."

At the end of the fortnight the activists packed up their laptops and sleeping bags, thoroughly hoovered the offices and quietly departed. John said: "Although Palestine Place is no longer a physical space, the network we have formed is still going. There are lots of interesting plans for the future so check out the website and get involved!"

■ <http://palestineplace.org>

Stories in stitches

When **Jan Chalmers** was living in South Africa in 2001 she helped teach Xhosa women embroidery in a self-help project in a community devastated by poverty and HIV/AIDS. Here she describes how that experience inspired her to start a wonderful venture to be called the Palestine History Tapestry.

Embroidery was not a Xhosa traditional skill but the women were keen to learn and soon developed their own individual embroidery style, using the stitches and techniques we taught. In addition to making saleable items we looked towards creating embroidery art.

The first art piece undertaken was the Keiskamma History Tapestry, which measured 126m by 50cm. It was inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry, sewn by skilled medieval embroiderers and documenting events surrounding the battle of Hastings in 1066. The Keiskamma History Tapestry tells of the life and times of the San, Koi and Xhosa people over three centuries.



Caroline Nynogo and her beading team from Ntilini village.

Through exhibitions the tapestry soon became well known and was eventually purchased by the National Bank of South Africa. Today it hangs on permanent loan in the Parliament buildings in Cape Town and is considered by many to be a national treasure.

In addition to helping Xhosa women earn money, the creation of the tapestry helped restore pride and confidence in a fractured community. It helped people become aware of their history and ancestry and recorded times that should never be forgotten, such as the freedom and recognition of South Africa's most famous Xhosa son, Nelson Mandela.

In 1969–70 I had lived in Gaza and worked as a nurse in a United Nations clinic in Jabalia refugee camp. As a result of being in a Palestinian community, I developed a fondness for the Palestinian people and a keen interest in Palestinian embroidery and I began to collect items that I use and enjoy today. My work in South Africa led me to consider that the creation of a Palestinian History Tapestry might help to ensure that the long history of the indigenous people of Palestine would not be forgotten.

Palestinian women have been embroiderers since at least the mid-19th century, and unlike the Xhosa, need no instruction. In fact, Palestinian embroiderers are amongst the most accomplished embroiderers anywhere and this needs to be more widely known.

Discussions with family, friends, embroiderers, historians and, most importantly, Palestinians, about the possibility of making



Halima Baradeyah and Majida Abu Farah from Surif village studying the Keiskamma tapestry.

a Palestinian History Tapestry were met with enthusiasm and eagerness. Two Oxford friends, one married to a Palestinian and the other married, as I am, to a doctor who works with medical staff in Gaza, understood the significance of the proposal and together we have embarked on a project with the embroiderers of Palestine.

We plan to support Palestinian embroiderers in producing a Palestinian History Tapestry in traditional Palestinian stitches. Our intention is to raise awareness of the long history of Palestine, who the Palestinian people are, where they belong, and their entitlement and right to a safe place to live so that they can raise their children and enjoy a happy and healthy life.

In the short term the plan is to make two history tapestries and for the finished works to hang in Palestine and in the UK. In the long term it may be possible to create more tapestries to hang in other places in the world.

The tapestries will be made up of panels, measuring about 50cm by 100cm, depicting historical events. We have already reached agreements with Al Badia in Beirut and Sunbula in Jerusalem to oversee the commissioning of the embroidery in Lebanon, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza and in due course we will make contacts in Jordan and Syria. Our wish is that Palestinians should be the principle decision makers about which stories should be illustrated in stitches.

The venture will be costly and the finished works priceless, national heritage pieces. Donations are crucial if we are to succeed with this enterprise. We invite you to donate privately and to raise money any way you can – hold fund raising events, donate items for auction or commission an embroidered panel.

This project will take time and we need your constant enthusiasm and help.

■ Please get in touch and donate. Information telling you about the Project can be found on our website at www.pht2012.wordpress.com. For more information, email pht@btinternet.com.

■ Please donate either by PayPal through our website, or send cheques payable to 'PHT Project' to J English, 28 Tree Lane, Oxford, OX4 4EY.

Unions back the struggle

By John McGhee

In April the PSC held a trade union conference in Unison's head office with the objective of building union support for a free and independent Palestine. Over 100 delegates, representing 15 national trade unions, attended.

Most, if not all, delegates are currently involved in fighting for jobs, pensions and conditions of service which made their commitment to international solidarity even more powerful.

The PSC has developed an "action plan" to work with trade union affiliates in order to raise awareness, build support and to work together in campaigns and lobbying.

The work we are doing has led to most national unions agreeing policy in support of Palestine and the work of the PSC. It has led to improved policy within the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and closer working with Palestinian workers and their representatives.

The conference, which the PSC hopes to make an annual event, was addressed by a number of Palestinian representatives; Laila Shaar and Hussain Foqahaa from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and Wehbe Badarne from the Arab Workers Union (AWU) gave details of the challenges faced by Palestinian workers both in the occupied territories and inside Israel.

The need for international solidarity and lobbying to ensure that international laws are implemented was a theme of presentations by the Palestinian ambassador, Manuel Hassassian, and Dr Karma Nabulsi.

Following the conference it was evident from a number of national union conferences that the issue of the struggle for Palestine has remained firmly on the agenda with most unions holding fringe meetings in conjunction with the PSC at their own conferences. There were also a number of unions passing new policies to support the work of PSC and Palestinian workers.

A number of unions including the NUT, Unite and UCU are

now working together on issues like "Palestinian Child Prisoners in Israeli Detention." For instance, at their policy conference Unite approved a motion to campaign on the issue, calling Israel's treatment of Palestinian child detainees "an affront to democracy and basic human rights" and asserting that "efforts must therefore be redoubled by those in the union movement to oppose it." The motion included seven instructions to the Executive regarding promoting the campaign.

The communication workers union (CWU) has submitted a motion to this

year's TUC, to be held in Brighton from 9–12 September, addressing the issue of Palestine and the blockade on Gaza. This again ensures that the Palestinian struggle remains high on the agenda for all unions.

The PSC's Trades Union Advisory Committee, supported by CWU, FBU, NUT, PCS, RMT, Unison, Unite the Union and Thompsons Solicitors, has organised a fringe meeting at Congress which will be addressed by a number of trade union leaders

including Christine Blower, General Secretary of the NUT, and Chris Tansley, President of Unison. The meeting will also be addressed by Professor Ilan Pappé, director of Exeter University's European Centre for Palestine Studies, and

Mezna Qato who is studying for a doctorate at Oxford University on the history of educational regimes for Palestinians.

As we go forward with the trade union action plan we hope to encourage more union branches and individual members to affiliate and get involved with PSC campaigns. Through the PSC branches and affiliated unions we are attempting to build closer working relationships to ensure success in our campaigning.

John McGhee is National Officer of the FBU

"The Palestinian struggle remains high on the agenda for all unions"



RMT

End the occupation

Support the boycott

Justice for Palestine

Bob Crow
General Secretary

Alex Gordon
President

"Fear is our worst enemy"

By Kiri Tunks

Wafa Owaied had a permanent job at a Nazareth museum when she was told she was no longer needed full-time because of the introduction of the welfare-to-work/Wisconsin programme in the area. Most of her job was assigned to those claiming benefits and she was asked to go freelance.

Suriya Ihjirat was told she had forfeited her right to income benefits and would have to pay back everything she had been entitled to for the previous two years because she had been photographed driving a car to the job office in contravention of Israeli National Insurance Law.

On the face of it, the law denying benefits to those who drive is a universal law applicable to all Israeli citizens. Except that not all people are equal in Israel and it is Palestinians who are its target.

Suriya lives in al-Mikman, 5km from the nearest bus stop. She must get two buses, the first of which comes hourly and takes between 30-60 minutes. As she cannot keep her appointments at the job office by taking this route she takes a taxi, the cost of which exceeds her monthly income.

These two case studies are taken from the 2011 Annual Report of the Arab Workers Union in Israel (AWU), a legally recognised independent trade union born out of the workers' advocacy group, Sawt-el-Amel. AWU represents Palestinian workers and unemployed people within Israel and also campaigns for workers in Gaza. It has aims and objectives that will be familiar to anyone in the trade union movement but there is a reminder of the political context for their struggles: "the integration and organisation of the workers struggle of Palestinian society in Israel against discrimination and racism operated by the Israeli state."

"Not all people are equal in Israel"

The report provides an essential reminder that trade union involvement in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign is not an act of charity but a necessary expression of solidarity, uniting workers around the world to defeat attacks on all our conditions and services.

The political struggle that the Palestinians are engaged in has huge lessons for all of us and we too can learn from a people who have never given up on their fight for justice. As Wehbe Badarne of AWU says, "Arab workers in Israel are part of the same workers' movement across the world. We want to be altogether in the struggle."

The AWU is organising Palestinian workers to challenge the unjust employment and welfare practices of the Israeli state and, in doing this, is mobilising sections of society that have previously been silenced and unprotected, as well as involving them in a global movement for freedom and equality.

The report outlines the progress they have made and describes the methods by which they seek to organise workers with a particular aim at mobilising women through the "Women's Platform." Just as in our society, women face a complex web of inequalities which sees them hardest hit by attacks on welfare, employment and public services. Global forces and the rise of neo-liberal working



Palestinian women in Nazareth protesting against the Israeli job centre. Photo: Fadwa Ali Awu

practices have had a serious impact on working conditions and workers' rights. Palestinian women, like their sisters elsewhere, recognise the benefit of uniting to fight these attacks.

As Dalal H says in the report: "Fear is our worst enemy and only together we can overcome this enemy. With the Women's Platform, I feel safe."

A clear example of how the rights of workers are inextricably linked with the battle for a free Palestine can be seen in the case of the textile industry which has been the main source of employment for Palestinian women since the 1920s. In the past decade 30,000 workers, most of them Palestinian, lost their jobs in the Israeli textile industry.

The decline of this industry was exacerbated by the "peace dividend" following the establishment of Qualifying Industrial Zones in Jordan and Egypt as part of the "normalisation" of relations with Israel. Those still employed in the declining industry in Israel face a tough battle: to defend their jobs and fight for decent pay and conditions.

Yet AWU and its predecessor, Sawt-el-Amel, have demonstrated what can be achieved through solid trade union organisation. In the UK many will be familiar with the A4E "Workfare" scandal – a privatised company making huge profits from contracts alleging to find work for the unemployed under threat of benefit cuts. In 2005 a similar "Wisconsin Programme" was imposed especially on Palestinians in Israel but Sawt-el-Amel was a key organiser in the battle that saw the programme terminated.

As well as collective and industrial action, AWU work to challenge through the Israeli courts unfair employment practices. For example, successfully helping Wafa Owaied sue her employer for unfair dismissal.

In the end, the struggles of the Palestinian working people in Israel cannot be divided from the struggle for a free Palestine. Suriya and Wafa continue to fight. We must stand alongside them.

A spiral of injustice

A hard-hitting report – albeit expressed in restrained and legalistic language – by a delegation of eminent UK lawyers found that Israel subjects Palestinian child detainees in military custody to a “spiral of injustice” and breaches of international law.

The independent report, *Children in Military Custody*, published in June, was based on a visit to Israel and the West Bank in September, 2011, funded and facilitated by the Foreign Office and the British consulate in Jerusalem. The nine-strong delegation was led by former high court judge, Sir Stephen Sedley, and included former Attorney General, Baroness Scotland.

Relying solely on documented facts which official Israeli spokesmen are unable to refute, the delegation concluded that Israel violates at least six articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Israel was also in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention in transferring child detainees from the West Bank to Israeli prisons, the delegation said.

The report says Israel has international obligations as the occupying power and that under international law no state is entitled to discriminate in the exercise of justice on the basis of race or nationality. It says, however, that “there are major differentials between the law governing the treatment of Palestinian children and the law governing treatment of Israeli children.”

It describes hearing “two irreconcilable accounts” of the treatment of Palestinian children. One was from Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, UN agencies, lawyers, former Israeli soldiers and former child detainees; the second from Israeli government officials, military judges and prosecutors.



The first included night-time arrests, the use of blindfolds and painful plastic wrist ties, physical and/or verbal abuse, the failure to be informed of the right to silence or to see a lawyer, solitary confinement, self-incrimination, children being made to sign statements in Hebrew which they could not understand and extremely restricted access to family. “In this process, every year hundreds of Palestinian children are traumatised, sometimes irreversibly, are denied part of their schooling and then live at ongoing risk of much harsher punishment if they are arrested again,” the report said.

The second account it heard was in complete contrast. It said that children are informed of their rights, subject to procedural safeguards and violence and threats are forbidden. The delegation was told: “In custody, children receive education to such a high standard that Palestinian children have been known to offend in order to access it.”

The delegation decided not to choose between the conflicting accounts but its key findings included the statement: “If the manner of arrest and detention is to any significant extent that which was described

to us by the UN, Israeli and Palestinian NGOs and Palestinian children, Israel will be in breach of the prohibition on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in article 37(a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

It also said that to hold children routinely and for substantial periods in solitary confinement “would, if it occurred, be capable of amounting to torture in breach not only of article 37(a) but also of other well-known international instruments.”

In conclusion the report says, in what *Ha'aretz* described as “terse, staggeringly polite understatement”: “It may be that much of the reluctance to treat Palestinian children in conformity with international norms stems from a belief, which was advanced to us by a military prosecutor, that every Palestinian child is a ‘potential terrorist.’ Such a stance seems to us to be the starting point of a spiral of injustice.”

In a letter dated 29 June, the Foreign Office responded to the lawyers’ report by saying the British Government “shares your concerns about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons and we have a continual dialogue with the Israeli authorities on this question.”

It said the government agreed that Israel has legal obligations as the occupying power and that Israel’s policy of detaining Palestinians within Israel is “contrary to Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and that domestic law cannot be used as a justification for violations of international law.”

■ The full report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/7ppwyng>

The report makes 40 specific recommendations, including:

- 1 Arrests of children should not be carried out at night save for in extreme and unusual circumstances.
- 2 Children should be informed, in their own language, of the reasons for their arrest and their right to silence.
- 3 Any confession in a language other than the child’s own should not be accepted as evidence.
- 4 Children should never be blindfolded or hooded.
- 5 Methods of restraint should not be used unless strictly necessary.
- 6 Children should not be transferred on the floor of vehicles.
- 7 The prohibition on violent, threatening or coercive conduct should be strictly observed.
- 8 Children should have a parent or guardian present prior to and during their interrogation.
- 9 Interrogations should be audio-visually recorded and the tapes should be made available to the child’s lawyer.
- 10 Solitary confinement should never be used “as a standard mode of detention or imprisonment.”
- 11 Children should be held in facilities in the OPT, not in Israel.

World Social Forum: Free Palestine

By Averil Parkinson

The World Social Forum is a regular international open event where all kinds of civil society organisations come together to share thinking in order to promote effective progressive alternative action to that offered by the prevailing world powers. This year the focus of the meeting will be on Palestine.

It will be an historic occasion as for the first time the entirety of the global Palestinian solidarity movement will gather in one place. This will make it an important opportunity to raise the profile of Palestine in the international arena and for it to be fully understood as an integral part of the worldwide struggle for justice and equality. Ideas debated at previous WSFs have achieved worldwide mainstream acknowledgement and it is intended that this event will do the same for Palestine.

The Palestinian Preparatory Committee has put out a call to all organisations, movements, networks and unions across the globe to join the WSF Free Palestine from 28 November to 1 December in Porto Alegre, Brazil. A wide network of European groups has subsequently put out its own call and responses have already come from over 150 organisations across Europe, including the PSC.

The aims of the WSF are to:

- 1) Show the strength of solidarity with the calls of the Palestinian people and the diversity of initiatives and actions aimed at promoting justice and peace in the region.
- 2) Create effective actions to ensure Palestinian self-determination, the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the fulfillment of human rights and international law, by:
 - a) Ending Israeli occupation and colonisation of Arab lands and dismantling the Wall
 - b) Ensuring the rights of the Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality
 - c) Implementing, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

Palestinian and Brazilian committees have initiated the organising process. The Palestinian Preparatory Committee unites all Palestinian political factions, the main civil society networks, unions and campaigns. It includes Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian citizens of Israel and refugees. The Brazilian counterpart is a coalition of 36 movements, unions and organisations along with Palestinian communities, representing the major progressive forces in Brazil.

However this is only the start. In effect we are all organising the WSF Free Palestine. It will be up to groups of all kinds to put forward ideas for seminars, workshops and cultural events and to publicise, seek endorsements, fundraise and especially to ensure there will be a wide range of participants in Porto Alegre.

As an example the Scottish TUC has voted to instruct its General Council to endorse the event and to "mobilise the Scottish trade union movement towards WSF Free Palestine." Similar motions are needed to be put to other trade union conferences.

There has been an early and prominent endorsement from musician Roger Waters, formerly of Pink Floyd, who said he was "honoured" to have been asked to announce the event and added: "The object will be to create an international gathering that will encourage the basic human instinct in all men and women of good faith to unite in support of the Palestinian people in their struggle for self determination."



In the UK a mobilisation network has been set up to initiate and co-ordinate these important preparatory stages. The context of the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, the recent Palestine Place in London, all testify to the potential impact of this type of forum in spreading ideas, making important connections between campaigns, bringing fresh networks into the field and effecting change.

■ For more info, see www.uk-wsf-fp.info and www.wsfpalestine.net

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION



supports the
Palestinian people in
their struggle for self
determination and
recognition of their
State



Football campaign kicks off

With the UEFA Under-21 Championships due to be staged in Israel next year, **Betty Hunter** reports on the protest campaign.

When Eric Cantona signed a letter of support for the hunger striking prisoner, Palestinian footballer, Mahmoud Sarsak, he helped open the door to an international campaign of protest at Israel's policy of administrative detention. Following Cantona's lead, internationally recognised players in the French league also expressed their support.

Frédéric Kanouté, formerly of West Ham and Tottenham Hotspur and now playing in China, published on his website a press release supporting Mahmoud Sarsak signed by 33 French sportspeople including Nicolas Anelka, Abou Diaby and Pape Diop.

Mahmoud Sarsak's courageous actions focused attention on the reality of occupation and key footballing institutions were forced to speak out. The president of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, called on Israel to end its apparent human rights violations in relation to the detention without charge or trial of a number of Palestinian national football team players.

Gordon Taylor, leader of the British Professional Footballers Association, stated: "As the founding member of FIFPro (the professional footballers' international body) and executive member of the Board, we fully support FIFPro's call for the release from prison of Palestinian footballer Mahmoud Sarsak."

Last year FIFPro paid two visits to Palestine to visit imprisoned footballers. Philippe Piat, FIFPro's vice-president and president of FIFPro Division Europe, in calling for support for Mahmoud Sarsak also said: "The freedom of movement is a fundamental right of every citizen... It is also written down in the FIFA Regulations that players must be allowed to play for the national team of their country. But actually for some footballers it is impossible to defend the colours of their country. They cannot cross the border. They cannot visit their family. They are locked up. This is an injustice."

Jibril Rajoub, the president of the Palestine Football Association, wrote to UEFA president, Michel Platini, to make clear that the Israeli occupation is the fundamental problem facing Palestinian football. He wrote: "For athletes in Palestine there is no real freedom of movement and the risks of being detained or even killed are always looming before their eyes.

"What is happening in reality is the Israeli government continuation of a direct violation of FIFA regulations and the International Olympic charter... We ask Your Excellency to not give Israel the honour to host the next UEFA Under-21 Championship 2013."

In response, Platini admonished Rajoub for publicising his letter. And he wrote to Israeli Football Association President Avi Luzon saying that he was looking forward to Israel hosting "a beautiful celebration of football that, once again, will bring people together."



Mahmoud Sarsak returns to Gaza

An earlier open letter to Platini on the situation of Sarsak, signed by PSC patrons, Ken Loach and Ahdaf Soueif, and other British and international public figures including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Alice Walker, received no response. Clearly once again it is the people who must act.

A good start was made in June when the Israeli women's football team visited Britain. About 140 protesters in Scotland staged an energetic demonstration in the stands to add to the 8-0 humiliation of the Israeli team in a European championship qualifying match.

In Wrexham, North Wales, three days later around 50 activists leafleted fans at the main entrance and several were thrown out of the ground for showing Palestinian colours. The head of security said he had orders from UEFA to remove any signs of support for the Palestinian people from the stadium. Both events were covered prominently in the Israeli media, illustrating how effective small actions can be.

In the South African Anti Apartheid campaign, the sporting boycott was central in promoting international awareness and support. Until recently sport was not seen as a feasible priority in our efforts to develop an all encompassing international boycott campaign of Israel which has traditionally presented itself as foremost in cultural and scientific areas. But the way in which the BBC has been lobbied over its presentation of Israel at the Olympics shows that every platform is useful and sport is becoming more prominent for them.

The outcry over Mahmoud Sarsak is an opportunity to extend the BDS campaign to include an effective sporting boycott. The Red Card Israeli Apartheid Campaign is aiming to do precisely that in football. In 2011 this campaign was started with the support of PSC, Friends of Al Aqsa and JBIG and our purpose is to convince the authorities to change the venue of the UEFA 2013 Under-21 Championships. We will be working from the start of the football season to inform all football fans what the situation is for Palestinians.

It is unacceptable for sporting bodies supposedly committed to eradicating racism from football to reward Israel, a state enacting racist policies against the millions of Palestinians whose lives it controls.

- Support the Red Card Israeli Apartheid Campaign at: <http://redcardapartheid.weebly.com/contact.html>
- Call on UEFA President Michel Platini to remove the 2013 finals from Israel by signing the RCIA petition at <http://tinyurl.com/bsetwp6>, emailing UEFA at info@UEFA.com or writing to UEFA, Route de Genève 46, Case Postale, CH-1260 Nyon 2, Switzerland.



Records broken by Palestine

By Gill Swain

The Olympic spirit was displayed at its finest by the athletes representing Palestine at London 2012. Despite having no tracks, no large pools and few gyms in their home country they ran, swam and fought their hearts out to turn in lifetime best performances.

One member of the five-strong team, 28-year-old judo competitor Maher Abu Rmeileh, was the first Palestinian ever to qualify for an Olympic Games on merit. The International Olympics Committee included him based on his success at the world judo championships in Tokyo in 2010. The others – two runners and two swimmers – got their chance under rules exempting developing nations from having to reach the qualifying standard.

Unsurprisingly, given the discrimination they suffer, there were no Palestinian Israelis in the 38-strong Israeli team, despite the fact Palestinians make up 20% of the population of Israel. As an article in the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, pointed out, since its foundation Israel has been represented by 338 athletes in 19 different Olympics but only two of them have been Palestinian – weightlifter Edward Maron in Rome in 1960 and soccer star Rifat Turk in Montreal in 1976.

In the Palestine team, swimmers Ahmed Gebrel, 21, (400m freestyle) and Sabine Hazboun, 18, (50m freestyle) have been given scholarships to study and train in Barcelona by the Olympic Solidarity Commission, the body which uses money from TV rights to the Games to develop sport in poorer nations.

**“It is not just for me.
It is for Palestine”**

Both achieved personal bests in the Aquatics Centre with Ahmed shaving a massive 10 seconds off his previous record and coming third in his heat. Swimming coach, Amani Ghneim, told *Palestine News*: “He has only been training properly for four months. If he’d had years of training, he could have broken his record by minutes.”

As *PN* went to press two Palestinian athletes, both from Gaza, were arriving in London to take part in the Paralympics. Partially blind Mohammed Fanouna, 32, was competing in the long jump and the 200 metres sprint and Khamis Zaqout, 47, who is paralysed from the waist down, was in the shot put.

Mohammed said: “We only have one training area in which we have no running track. I’m also a long-jumper and we created a sandpit which is surrounded by car tyres and concrete. It’s not of a suitable standard. I do not get to train or become accustomed to jumping in spikes, yet have to compete in them when in London.”

Their problems did not dent the athletes’ pride in representing Palestine and we wish them every success!



Women's 800 metres heat

There are no competition-sized 50 metre pools in Palestine, though one is being built in Jericho, and most of their 25-metre pools are outdoor, limiting their use to warm weather. Amani was unable to travel to Spain to coach the swimmers and had to do their pre-Games preparation online.

“Everything is hard,” she said, laconically. “There is a lot of talent back home but because there are no facilities, we can’t develop it.”

Woroud Sawalha, 20, a runner in the 800 metres, discovered her sport as a child and has been training seriously since she was 13 but has to do it running round the streets of Nablus. “Islam does not prohibit sport for women. It encourages it,” she said.

Woroud was still to compete when we spoke and she said she hoped to match her team-mates and achieve a personal best. “It is not just for me. It is for Palestine,” she said. Happily, she managed it, finishing in 2.29.16.

Runner Bahaa Al-Farra, 21, (400m) was from Gaza. His coach, Majed Abu Marahil, said he faced the same problems as his counterparts from the West Bank. “There is also constant bombing and no security at all which affects the athletes a lot.”

He said the team’s biggest motivation was to represent Palestine abroad. “It is the most important thing because it is saying to the world that Palestine exists.”

The Palestine team had a detailed media plan and gave many interviews during their stay. “With no facilities, how can we win medals? But we came here not only for the sport,” said the team’s media representative, Muntaser Dkaidek.

**“Our flag should be raised
amongst those of
all the other countries”**

“Behind the sport is a political message that Palestine is a country. We want to live in freedom and our flag should be raised amongst those of all the other countries in the world.”

Life on the brink

By Kate Laycock

The village of Susiya in the South Hebron hills has become symbolic of the thousands of Palestinians facing expulsion from Israeli-controlled areas of the Occupied West Bank – Area C. Now, the village is facing demolition once again.

The Palestinian village of Susiya has been destroyed four times in the past 25 years. Soon, that number will be five. On 14 June, the Israeli Civil Administration issued demolition orders on some 50 buildings, including tent dwellings, animal pens, water cisterns and a row of German-funded solar panels.



Palestinian Susiya

According to the UN, there are an estimated 150,000 Palestinians living in Area C which is under full Israeli civil and military control. Seventy percent of the land is off-limits to Palestinian construction; 29 percent is heavily restricted. Meanwhile, over 3,000 demolition orders are outstanding, including several targeting schools. All, according to lawyer Quamar Mishirqi-Asad, proof of a deliberate policy to drive Palestinians away from Area C.

“Susiya is actually the village which represents villages in Area C,” Mishirqi-Asad said. Herself a Christian Palestinian, Mishirqi-Asad is representing Susiya on behalf of the Jewish NGO, Rabbis for Human Rights. The Civil Administration’s demolition policy is, the lawyer believes, “another way of making people get away from Area C and into Area A and Area B.”



Susiya’s children

Israeli political desire to create an area “clean of Palestinians” is, according to Mishirqi-Asad, the reason that the majority of Palestinian villages in Area C are left without access to electricity, tap water and other basic services. In the case of Susiya, Mishirqi-Asad argues, Israeli demolition policy has taken on an urgency which can only be explained by cartography.

Trapped by lines on a map

“Look,” says Mishirqi-Asad, pointing to a tattered map hanging on the wall of her office, “there’s Susiya.” On either side of the village, two lines cross the map. One line marks the current projectory of the Separation Barrier, the other marks an alternative route which as yet has no physical basis in reality. “We were scratching our heads to understand why the government was being so stubborn about a few little windswept hills,” Mishirqi-Asad’s colleague, Rabbi Arik Ascherman, quips dryly. “But if you look at a map, it becomes a lot clearer.”

With Susiya and its neighbouring Palestinian villages gone, he explains, “you have a Palestinian-free finger of land going up all the way to Kiryat Arba, one of the major settlements” (on the outskirts of the city of Hebron).

In 1983, a settlement was built next to the Palestinian village of Susiya which was, at that time, a collection of cave dwellings. Within three years, the cave dwellings had been identified as a Jewish archeological site and the residents expelled. Since then, the Palestinian villagers have been living in make-shift tent dwellings on their traditional pasture lands, just a few hundred metres away from their settler neighbours.

In February 2012, the Jewish settlement, which is also called Susiya, teamed up with a Zionist organisation called Regavim to petition the Israeli High Court to order the immediate demolition of Palestinian Susiya. The petition’s success sets new precedents for future cases against Palestinian villages in Area C. Of particular importance is the fact that the petition referred to the Palestinian villagers as “trespassers” living in “illegal outposts” – terminology which has hitherto been applied exclusively to Jewish settlements built without government permission.

Australian-born Ari Briggs, the international spokesperson for Regavim, is also keen to talk about maps. On a laptop, he pulls up detailed satellite imagery of the two Susiyas. The next image is of the same area, but taken in 1999. In this picture, there are no Palestinian dwellings to be seen – proof, Briggs says, that “these people are squatters who are sitting on this land in order to grab it for themselves.”



Susiya resident holding a demolition order

“We actually believe that it’s an organised plan by the Palestinian Authority to take over as much of Area C as possible because they’re trying to influence final negotiations,” Briggs said. A satellite image is, however, a moment freeze-framed in time. Put that moment into its wider context, and a very different story emerges. In 1998, 113 structures were demolished in Susiya. The blank area on the screen isn’t so much proof of what never was, as an image of what is soon to be again.

We will never leave

Meanwhile, in Palestinian Susiya, 26-year-old Ibrahim Nawajah is clutching a video camera. The memory card is full of interviews with his neighbours. Soon the footage will be online, and his community will have a voice. In each interview, Ibrahim asked the same questions: “What does home mean to you?” and “what will you do after the demolition?”

Ibrahim’s own answer is the same as everyone else’s: “I cannot leave Susiya, because Susiya has a special place in my heart,” he says simply. Nevertheless, he is troubled. “I have seen a demolition before,” he says quietly. That time, only ten families were affected. After the demolition, the families went to live in a nearby town in Area A. They never came back. “I am afraid for Susiya,” Ibrahim admits.

■ Watch Ibrahim’s film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJ-nO-YjFzY

■ A longer version of this article was first printed in *Deutsche Welle*

Susiya settlers come from South Africa

While the residents of Palestinian Susiya wait for their poor tents and animal shelters to be bulldozed, a farmer in the Jewish colony of Susiya on the nearby hill can often be heard addressing his sheep in his native language – Afrikaans.

For it is one of the most shocking ironies in the whole cruel outrage of the story of the two Susiyas that many of the settlers are Afrikaaners who migrated to the West Bank after Apartheid came to an end in their native South Africa.

Three of the families spoke to South African TV programme, *Carte Blanche*, last year about how they had converted to Judaism and decided to make a new home in the Orthodox and Zionist colony on Palestinian land.

Jacobus Johannes Talyard, who gives himself the Jewish

name of Jacob Taljah, arrived in Susiya in 1992, two years after the last of South Africa's Apartheid laws was abolished, and helped 74 members of his family to follow him. He leased land from the



Jacob Taljah

Israeli government and imported sheep from his homeland.

"I love building up the country," he tells the programme in a strong South African accent. "I know it's for my people. It's for the people of Israel and we are the people."

Ronel Brink was a devout member of the Dutch Reformed Church in East Rand until she realised that Christmas was "a pagan feast" and decided to convert to Judaism and move to Susiya with her husband, Johan.

"How can you be a Jew and not live in Israel?" asks Ronel without any apparent realisation that she is not living in Israel. "That's my whole heart. This is the place to be a Jew. The time of exile is over."

Yael Shareth, who was born Kristel Petersen, says: "This area has so much history and it makes it very real to you."

In irony laid upon irony, the Afrikaaners are living a comfortable life in Susiya though they are not even entitled to Israeli citizenship since only people with Jewish ancestry are given residency under the Right of Return. So they have to travel outside of Israel every three months to renew their visas.



Nasser Nawajah



Yet they live in stone houses with all services laid on and are protected by the Israeli army while Nasser Nawajah, who can trace back his family's residency in the area 800 years, has none of these things in Palestinian Susiya.

Speaking of Jacob Taljah, Nasser tells the programme: "He did not learn from what was in South Africa. He came here, he feels superior to the Palestinians and he creates the same situation."

Settlers bulldozed Nasser's well and chopped down his olive trees. "They make our lives impossible," he says. All it takes is for a settler to allege a Palestinian has "said something" and the army will come to arrest him. "There is no chance for justice."

■ Watch the *Carte Blanche* programme at <http://tinyurl.com/cwgc2s>

■ Part two includes a translation of Nasser's words <http://tinyurl.com/c2jdmk9>

Susiya for ever

Susiya is not being forgotten. Protesters round the world are signing petitions, lobbying their parliamentary representatives and joining support groups. And a major demonstration at the village on 22 June drew the support of over 500 people.

Israeli academic David Shulman, author of *Dark Hope*, his account of four years supporting the Palestinians in the South Hebron hills as they came under increasing violent attack from settlers, wrote afterwards: "I've rarely seen so large, so disciplined and so clearly focused a peace demonstration."

People came from Jerusalem (including a large Palestinian contingent from East Jerusalem), Tel Aviv, Beer Sheva and the West Bank and marched towards Susiya al-Qadima, the original site of the village. "The Susiya people were going home. It was a moving sight and a certain solemnity, even serenity, accompanied us as we walked through the thorns and rocks. There was not the least hint of violence; no stone was thrown."

The army, however, reacted with its usual brutality, firing stun grenades and tear gas.

"Much more ominous was the Israeli army's Domsday Weapon, the Bo'esh or Skunk, which sprays a liquid of overpowering stench that sinks into your pores and clothes and stays there for days; it causes severe vomiting and very effectively stops a crowd of marchers."

In the demo women played a leading part, "fearlessly engaging the soldiers, taunting them, dancing and singing before them, insouciant. Alongside these women was a troupe of five brightly costumed clowns, no less daring and inventive."

Shulman said he wondered "if any of the soldiers standing there in the Palestinian fields felt as ridiculous as they looked to us. And why were they there? Maybe to make sure we didn't march on the Israeli settlement of Susiya, just over the hill? Was this what really terrified them? But we had



Protesters in clown suits confronting Israeli soldiers, Susya, June 22, 2012. Photo: Guy Butavia

no intention of trying this. Still, I said to my friend Danny, maybe one day this will happen, and everything will change."

■ For more information see: <http://susiyaforever.wordpress.com>
<http://villagesgroup.wordpress.com>
www.taayush.org
www.tomorrowland.com

PSC Annual General Meeting 2013

Saturday 26 January, 10am–5pm
Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Square,
London, WC1 4RL (Holborn tube)

The PSC Annual General Meeting is a vital event, discussing our work over the last year, and planning the future of our campaign — including motions and elections to the Executive Committee. Please join us there!

All members of national PSC are strongly encouraged to attend the AGM. If you are not sure whether your membership is up to date, please contact psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org or 020 7700 6192.

Cost and accommodation

Cost: £8 waged, £6 unwaged (to cover cost of lunch). We will try to arrange accommodation with other members of PSC if requested by 11 January 2013.

Voting eligibility

- At the AGM, every member in good standing has one vote, but a minimum period of membership of 3 months, ie by 26 October 2012, is necessary before voting rights are acquired.
- PSC branches can send a delegate but this will only be valid where the branch affiliated has paid its subscription (£25 annually in January) Delegates from affiliated national organisations with over 100,000 members are entitled to 3 votes. Delegates from all other affiliated organisations will have one vote.
- The names of delegates from affiliated national organisations and PSC branches must be nominated by their affiliated organisation and registered with the PSC office by 11 January 2013.
- In order to facilitate the smooth running of the AGM, to try to avoid lengthy registration queues, and guarantee your lunch, we are asking all delegates to **pre-register** for the AGM as an individual by 18 January 2013.
- Voting for candidates will be by ballot at the AGM. Tellers will be appointed by the meeting.

Motions and amendments

Motions to the AGM, and nominations to the executive must be received in the PSC office by 30 November 2012. Please keep any motions to no more than 300 words. These will be sent to members by 15 December.

Amendments to motions must be received in the PSC office by 18 January 2012. Please keep any amendments to no more than 100 words.

Elections to the PSC Executive Committee

The following positions are elected at the AGM: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Trade Union Liaison Officer, Student Liaison Officer, Campaigns Officer, Publications Officer, 8 ordinary members of the Executive Committee. Election regulations and copies of the constitution are available from the office on request.

Nominations must have the name of proposer, seconder and candidate's agreement.

(All of the above must have been a national PSC member for 6 months before the AGM. Candidates can write 100 words in support of their nomination)

Nominations to the EC of Palestine Solidarity Campaign

I propose for the post of

Nominated by Seconded by

I agree to this nomination..... Date

Please complete and return to the PSC office by 30 November 2012 with your 100 word statement.

Deadlines

Please see relevant sections above for more detailed information about the following deadlines.

26 October 2012: To vote at AGM, your membership must be in good standing from this date.

30 November 2012: Deadline for motions and nominations

11 January 2013: Receipt of accommodation requests

11 January 2013: Registration from delegates of affiliated national organisations & PSC branches

18 January 2013: Deadline for amendments

18 January 2013: Pre-registration date for individuals



Annual General Meeting 2013 – PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE

PSC members who wish to attend the 2013 AGM should **register in advance by 18th January 2013**. This will help staff to plan for the day to work effectively.

You can register on-line at www.palestinecampaign.org/psc_agm or complete and return the form below for individual member registration. **Please fill in the form clearly, using block capitals.**

Name

Address

.....

.....

..... Postcode

Email.....

Telephone number.....

Mobile.....

Registration fee is waged £8 / unwaged £6

Subscription renewal can be included for waged £24 / unwaged £12 (current status can be checked via the office – contact details below)

I enclose a cheque/P.O. payable to 'PSC' for registration fee (including lunch) of £..... plus £..... donation to PSC's campaign costs

Alternatively payment can be made by credit / debit card by phoning 020 7700 6192

Deadline for receipt of forms: 18th January 2013

Signed Date.....

Please return to: PSC, Box BM PSA, London, WC1N 3XX

If you have any questions about registration for the AGM please contact the PSC Office: psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org or **020 7700 6192**



Education – the soul of a society

By Diana Safieh

The struggles of the 1.5 million Palestinians in Israel are perhaps less familiar and more misunderstood than of those on the other side of the Green Line.

As citizens of Israel, they are in theory entitled to the services and rights offered by the State but the reality is they face a complex and confusing system designed to disenfranchise and impoverish them.

The Galilee Foundation was established to bring attention to this issue and to empower the Palestinian minority primarily through its Scholarship Programme. We focus on long-term solutions to help communities alleviate poverty, develop sustainable livelihoods and participate more competitively in the labour force.

Palestinian citizens of Israel have been allocated less than 6.25% of the 2012 State Budget, even though they comprise 20% of the total population and 25% of all children in Israel. In fact, just \$192 is spent per Palestinian child per year, compared to \$1,100 on Jewish Israeli children.

Furthermore, according to Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, the current Israeli government has introduced over 30 new laws directly or indirectly targeting its Palestinian citizens. This miasmatic swamp of discriminatory laws and inhibiting budgetary apportionment means that Israel is able to control the delivery, quality and division of the basic human right of education.

There are few elementary schools in the unrecognised Palestinian Bedouin villages in the south and not a single high school. Where Palestinian schools can be found, minimal state support means that they operate with larger class sizes and inferior facilities. At primary school level, there are 20% more students in Palestinian classrooms than in Jewish classrooms. The curriculum is also discriminatory, with textbooks and teachers frequently ignoring or misrepresenting Palestinian history and culture.

Palestinians are three times less likely to go to university than Jewish citizens, and while the rate of those rejected from universities is 43.6% among Palestinians, it is only 20.5% amongst Jews. Consequently, Palestinian students make up just 11.2% of first degree students, only 6.1% of second degree students and only 3.5% of third degree students.

In addition, Palestinian citizens of Israel are not generally obliged to do national service, although this is yet again under review.

Shatha Elias, from Kufur Yasif, near Acre
4th year Medical student at Teknion in Haifa

“You are supporting me both financially and personally and I have gained a lot of knowledge and skills to be a better person and a better contributor to my society here.”

Caesar Hakim, from Haifa
PhD candidate in Psychology at Haifa University

“Volunteering in my community as a recipient of the scholarship made me feel proud of being part of a community trying to enhance its opportunities in academy and life in general.”



However, many citizenship rights such as grants, scholarships, university dorms, loans and other government-offered benefits that facilitate the acquisition of education, are linked to military service. In order to be eligible for these, a Palestinian must take the decision to join the very army used to enforce the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This thread of discrimination running through the education system leaves the Palestinian population without a cohesive structure for the conveyance of language, history and culture. In short, the transference of national identity is interrupted and dislocated. Already the effects of this are visible, as many Palestinian youths are more familiar with Israeli history and traditions than their own, and more comfortable using the Hebrew language than that of their ancestors.

If what G. K. Chesterton said about education being the soul of society as it passes from one generation to another is true, then it seems Israel has managed to erect a roadblock even here. In the absence of a collective Palestinian identity, the hope is that Palestinians will adopt the Israeli national identity with less resistance, becoming a more malleable component within the Jewish State of Israel.

Galilee Foundation Scholarship recipients attend workshops on culture, language, identity, and the importance of creating a strong civil society. Students are required to undertake placements within media agencies, women and youth associations, legal groups, human rights organisations, the arts and medical centres in order to explore the various means to build support for their communities.

Our success is represented by our graduates, who so far have found positions in their municipal councils, assisting Palestinian Knesset Members, working at Palestinian-serving medical centres and hospitals, as well as starting their own businesses and working with women and youth on issues such as violence, drugs, gender and identity.

We are proud of our students, during their studies, and after their graduation. Building a strong foundation of leadership in all sectors is an essential ingredient to a thriving ethnic minority. Your support is vital to the continuation of our work.

The Galilee Foundation is a UK-based charity focusing on helping Palestinian communities in Israel alleviate poverty and develop sustainable livelihoods by facilitating access to education and empowerment opportunities.

Words are not enough

By Sara Apps

A hard hitting report by Oxfam called “Words are not enough” sets some of the numerous statements of condemnation by world leaders about Israeli settlements on Palestinian occupied land against the realities of their relentless expansion.

For instance, it cites the EU High Representative for foreign policy, Catherine Ashton, saying in December: “I wish to express my strong disapproval of the Israeli authorities’ announcement that they intend to publish tenders for the construction of some 1000 housing units in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem.

“I urge them not to proceed with this publication. The EU’s position is clear: settlement construction is illegal under international law and further complicates efforts to find a solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

The report contrasts this with just a few of the “facts on the ground” that the Israeli government has established this year:

On 21 March, the Israeli Knesset’s Finance Committee approved the allocation of around \$30 million to support settlements.

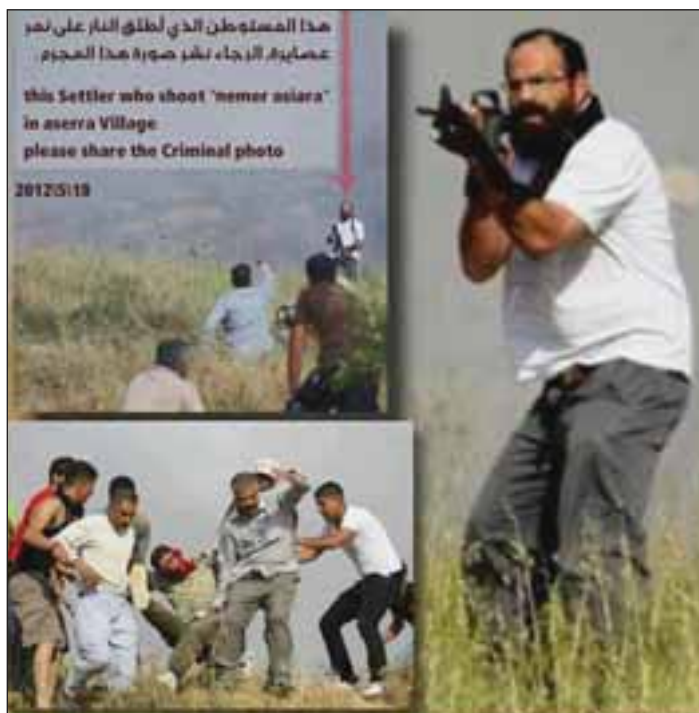
On 4 April, the Israeli government unveiled the tenders for 1,121 new settler homes.

On 22 April, the outposts of Sansana, Bruchin and Rehelim were legalised under Israeli law. These were the first completely new settlements to be approved since 1990.

“Spending on the settlements has increased by 38%”

There have been many more such statements and many more such facts on the ground since the temporary moratorium on settlement building came to an end in 2010. And in July the business newspaper, Calcalist, revealed that Israeli government spending on the settlements has increased by 38% under PM Binyamin Netanyahu.

Meanwhile the EU went against its own commitments under its European



19 May 2012: A video by B’Tselem of a clash between settlers from Yitzhar, accompanied by IDF soldiers, and Palestinian youths. Two of the settlers were armed with M4 rifles and one had a pistol. The settlers aimed their weapons at the Palestinians and fired. Nemer Fathi of Asiara, 24, was injured in the head.

Neighbourhood Policy and its Human Rights Package when it announced in July that it would strengthen its bilateral relations with Israel by endorsing a package of 60 new areas of cooperation.

EU leaders argued it was part of the current Action Plan therefore not an upgrading of relations as such. It included enhanced co-operation between Israel and nine EU agencies, such as Europol and the European Space Agency, and a promised removal of obstacles hindering trade between Israel and European markets. The economic developments are especially important for Israel whose trade market in Europe is estimated to be 60% of its total trade.

The move was unopposed by any European Government, including the British, despite the fact that over 60 EU-funded structures in the West Bank have been destroyed since 2011 and over 110 are currently under threat. It was strongly condemned by many human rights groups including Amnesty International and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Amnesty’s director of the European Institutions Office, Nicolas Beger, said: “Enhancing relations whilst the EU’s own demands and benchmarks are

not being met is a clear case of double standards and sends the wrong message.”

In an interesting development, Britain’s former ambassador to Israel then Saudi Arabia, Sir Tom Phillips, suggested that the EU should consider “dramatically” scaling down aid to the Palestinians “in order to put the full weight of the occupation on Israel, a burden I do not think they would be able to endure.”

Writing in *Prospect* magazine, he said it could be argued that “the international donor community has in effect propped up the Israeli occupation by pumping in aid money which has taken the edge off Palestinian frustration.” This has also, he said, “fostered a widespread dependency culture in Palestinian political life...which has contributed to their leadership problems.”

There have been signs that the British government is trying to back up their increasingly robust words of condemnation of settlement building with some action. Whilst continuing to repeat their mantra of “no sanctions, no boycotts,” there have been

discussions between Foreign Office officials and ministers and key organisations over what measures the UK needs to take to end financial support for settlements. On 4 July Foreign Office Minister, Alistair Burt, confirmed in Parliament that “the issue of settlement produce and financing is under active consideration in London and in Brussels.”

Now is the time for us to increase the pressure. The Government not only decides UK policies in relation to Israel and settlements but can influence policies at a European level and can unilaterally block further upgrades in relations with Israel. The PSC National Lobby of Parliament on Wednesday, 28 November, provides an opportunity to reach almost all British MPs if all PSC members and supporters contact their representatives. With your support we can ask more MPs to pressure the Government to take measures to end the UK’s and Europe’s financial support.

- For more information see www.palestinecampaign.org/lobby
- For the Oxfam report see <http://tinyurl.com/bl1s7z>
- For Sir Tom Phillips full article, see <http://tinyurl.com/czu4386>

In Brief

ARAFAT'S WIDOW ASKS FRANCE TO PROBE "MURDER"

Yasser Arafat's widow, Suha, has asked a French court to launch a murder investigation into the death of the Palestinian leader after an Al Jazeera investigation suggested he was poisoned by a radioactive element.

After a sudden collapse in his health, Arafat was flown to France in October 2004 from his battered headquarters in Ramallah where he had been effectively confined by Israel for more than two and a half years.



The Arafats in Paris after he fell ill

He died a month later. Arafat aides at the time quoted doctors as saying he had suffered a brain haemorrhage and lost the use of his vital organs one by one. Allegations of foul play quickly surfaced after the doctors said they could not establish a precise cause of the illness that led to his death. Many Palestinians suspect Israel was behind it.

Now a Swiss institute has found surprisingly high levels of polonium-210 on Arafat's clothing – the same substance used to kill former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006. The Palestinian Authority has agreed to exhume Arafat's body from a limestone mausoleum in Ramallah for an autopsy and Tunisia has called for a ministerial meeting of the Arab League to discuss his death.

The lawsuit filed by Suha Arafat and her daughter, Zahwa, accused a person, or persons, unknown of premeditated murder. A statement from their lawyer said: "Suha and Zahwa have complete faith in the French justice system. They do not, at this stage, advance any accusation against a specific party, be it a state, a group or an individual."

EIGHT VILLAGES TO BE RAZED

Israel's Defence Ministry has ordered eight Palestinian villages in the West Bank to be destroyed, claiming the land is needed for military training. The 1,500-plus residents are to be thrown out of their homes despite evidence that the villages have existed since 1830.

The residents of the villages – Majaz, Tabban, Sfaye, Fahit, Halawa, Al Marqaz, Jinba and Kharuba in the South Hebron Hills – are accused of "illegal dwelling in a fire zone." In a memo to the Supreme Court the government said that the people will be moved to the nearby city of Yatta, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reported.

The villages are in Area C as designated in 1993 by the Oslo Accords. Area C makes up 60% of the West Bank and is under full Israeli control. Peace negotiations should have led to it being handed back to the Palestinians by the end of the 90s.

The IDF says it will allow the displaced Palestinians to continue farming the abandoned land and tending cattle on weekends and

holidays when there is no military training. There will also be two month-long periods allotted to the residents for farming, the memo says.

The military training that Israeli Defence Ministry intends to carry out would include firing exercises which are strictly forbidden in areas where people live nearby. *Ha'aretz* says this is not because civilians may get hurt but because they may spy on the exercises or steal weapons to use for "terror purposes."

The villages together with four other locations in the Hebron Hills have been under threat of demolition since 1999, according to the Association for Human Rights in Israel. An evacuation was halted in 2000 by a court decision after 700 people were evicted. Many Palestinians living there fear they have fallen prey to an intimidation campaign as Israel seeks new lands on which to build settlements.

WATER, WATER....

Water – the lack of it, the wastage of it and the pollution of it – punctuated every day of the ten-day study tour completed by six volunteers and staff from the Fair Trade shop, Hadeel. We regularly visit our suppliers in the West Bank, Gaza, the Galilee and the Negev in order to update on their situation and note any particular needs which might be eligible for a grant from our parent charity, Palcrafts.

The first five nights we stayed in an Arab Women's Union Guest House in Beit Sahour. Like all residents in the greater Bethlehem area, they had had no piped water for two weeks. People survive with water tanks or some have a well. They catch up with the washing when Israel occasionally opens the taps – unless, of course, there isn't one of the frequent power cuts when water can't be pumped up into the roof storage tanks.

Imagine the near shock we felt when, moving into West Jerusalem, we found the hotel had put in baths where previously there were only showers. The water stolen from Palestinians is bathing tourists in Israel and watering their gardens.



Hadeel visitors meeting suppliers

In Gaza we visited two of our long-term partners: Sulafa, UNRWA's embroidery project, and Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children. The Israeli blockade poses serious problems for the export of handcrafts. Hadeel has consulted our MP, DFID and the Office of the Quartet Representative in Jerusalem in an attempt to get a box full of handcrafts out of Gaza – a box which is apparently a great security risk, containing handcrafts made by deaf people.

The third group we visited was Right to Live which cares for 900 Downs Syndrome children and a few adults. In addition to educational help, Right to Live has a vocational programme, producing crafts as part of their therapy and providing a small

income for the older children and adults. We hope that we might be able to source some crafts from them in the future, but factors like quality control, ability to write an invoice and export the goods in the current blockade mean that it is very problematic.

Hadeel tries to maintain long-term relationships with producers, giving not only desperately needed income, but perhaps more importantly, hope, knowing that someone cares and values their traditional handicrafts, part of their culture which is an essential element of their identity as Palestinians.

A total of 20 similar partner organisations were visited by our group – women’s cooperatives, organisations for those with a variety of special needs, Bedouin, Gypsies and Palestinians discriminated against even though they are citizens of the state of Israel. All are impeded in a greater or less degree – whether by the Occupation, the Wall, or simply unjust government policies.

Hadeel will be making a DVD of our visit, updating one made four years ago. If you would like to learn more about the study tour, please contact us and when ready we will send a loaned out copy for you to use and return.

Please consider helping our work by buying products from Hadeel, encouraging others to do the same, becoming one of our Local Reps or doing advocacy work. For more information see www.hadeel.org

Carol Morton

DEMOLISHED HOME REBUILT

Over 200 people gathered in the West Bank town of Anata in July to celebrate the rebuilding of Beit Arabiya (“Arabiya’s House”), home of Salim and Arabiya Shawamreh. Since 1998, this home has been demolished five times by the Israeli government but rebuilt each time by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) and used as a peace centre as a political act of resistance to Israel’s demolition policies.

The home was rebuilt during ICAHD’s tenth annual rebuilding camp which attracted more than 30 internationals who joined Israelis and Palestinians who refuse to be enemies, demonstrating that there are partners for peace. At the same time as it was demolished in the middle of the night in January, seven other homes were also destroyed in Anata, displacing more than 60 Palestinians.

During the camp, ICAHD provided an extensive educational programme. Afterwards the internationals, ranging in age from 18–75, said that the camp far exceeded their expectations. “This has been an intensely emotional experience. We’ve rebuilt a home, which is great – but knowing that we’ve rebuilt Beit Arabiya, the symbol of hope to all Palestinians, enabled us to participate in their steadfastness,” said Galen from the UK.

Since 1967 Israel has illegally demolished more than 26,000 Palestinian homes in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. ICAHD has rebuilt 186 of them and is determined to see this cruel policy stop. ICAHD Director, Dr. Jeff Halper, calls the rebuilding “an



Salim and Arabiya in the ruins of their home. Photo: Activestills



Rebuilding the house. Photo: Activestills

overtly political act of defiance. By rebuilding, we set alternative facts on the ground.”

The Shawamreh family applied three times to the Israeli Civil Administration for a building permit and was refused each time, as were 94% of Palestinian permit applications since 1993. Having no other alternative, they proceeded, as have thousands of other Palestinian families, to build their home, in which they lived for five years despite having been issued a demolition order.

On 27 June 27 the United Nations Human Rights Council received the annual report of Prof Richard Falk, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the OPT. Falk highlighted the disturbing case of Shawamreh family and stated it was “illustrative of a common Palestinian complaint that their property rights are indirectly usurped through the denial of formal permits and the subsequent issuance and execution of demolition orders.”

The UN expert further highlighted that “while it will be rebuilt once again next month, the family will live under the threat of having its home demolished at any moment. The ever-present threat of Israeli bulldozers perverts the sense of normalcy so essential for raising children.”

INTERNATIONAL ENVOYS BARRED FROM WEST BANK

A summit of the Palestine Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was cancelled in August after the Israelis refused entry to the occupied West Bank for delegations from Indonesia, Cuba, Malaysia and Bangladesh. The Committee then cancelled the meeting which was scheduled to include envoys from 11 NAM states and to express solidarity with the Palestinians.

The Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister, Riyad al-Malki, said that the Committee refused to convene with the reduced number of delegates or move the venue to an alternative location because the main reason for the meeting was to show solidarity by being in occupied Palestine.

Israel justified its action by saying that it has no diplomatic relations with the countries of the barred envoys. This was condemned by the PA which pointed out that Israel has in the past cleared entry for citizens of countries with which it has no diplomatic relations, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Speaking on behalf of representatives of member countries, Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamel Amr said: “The Non-Aligned Movement denounces the Israeli action which contradicts international law as well as Israeli responsibilities as an occupying power.” He said it would increase the NAM’s insistence on helping the Palestinians in seeking their right to a state.

The Non-Aligned Movement was founded during the Cold War to advocate the causes of the developing countries. In addition to Palestine, the NAM’s Palestine Committee includes 11 UN-member states: India, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cuba, Algeria, Bangladesh, Zambia, Senegal, Colombia and Zimbabwe.

Getting active for Palestine



PHOTO: BRIAN SHERIDAN

Despite a bit of a soaking on the second day, everyone involved in the PSC's 30th Anniversary Sponsored Walk agreed that they had had a glorious weekend in the beautiful Welsh countryside.

Twenty four walkers met in the Brecon Beacons and covered around 30 kilometres over two days with a five hour walk on the Saturday and a three hour walk on the Sunday. The weather was mostly good so they had wonderful views of stunning scenery and although the Welsh rain did come down on the Sunday there was sunshine later to dry them off before they were provided with delicious cakes and tea by Abergavenny PSC members.

When they reached the tops of the hills, they unfurled Palestinian flags and PSC banners together with the Milton Keynes branch's huge flag proclaiming "Voices of the Voiceless." Other curious walkers were directed to the PSC website.

The group was thrilled that Haya Alfarrar, a young Palestinian from Gaza who is working as the Second Secretary for the Palestinian Mission in the UK, joined them and agreed to be their "Poster Walker" along with Nadine Hassassian, daughter of the Palestinian Ambassador (pictured above).

As well as enjoying the walk and the scenery, people from all over the country got on well and made good connections. Hilary Wise said afterwards: "There was a lot of productive discussion and new



Milton Keynes members with their banner on the top of Table Mountain in Brecon

ideas for taking forward our work. Everyone was so pleased to meet our Palestinian walkers and this was also a bonus when the local Mayor of Crickhowell and his wife joined us for a meal in the hostel on

Saturday night as he wants to learn more about Palestine. Well done to all who took part and Abergavenny PSC for their help."

So far the walk has raised over £6000 for PSC funds, but it is not too late to swell that figure by sponsoring walkers now. If you don't know who joined the walk then please consider sponsoring Haya.

Building successful campaigns

Activists who attended Palestine Solidarity Campaign's conference, "21st century resistance: 21st century solidarity," in July left feeling inspired and reinvigorated to continue their campaign for justice for the Palestinians.

The day long conference, held at the University of London student union, began with a rallying speech by Ben White, author of *Israeli Apartheid: A Beginners Guide* and *Palestinians in Israel: Segregation, Discrimination and Democracy*, who outlined the vital need for a strong solidarity movement.

Hugh Lanning, Chair of PSC, spoke about his recent visit to Gaza on a delegation, the amazing resistance he witnessed of the Palestinians under siege and the rebuilding work that has been undertaken using recycled rubble from structures demolished during Israel's three week assault during 2008/9.



PSC EC member, Salim Alam, leading a workshop

The conference then split into workshops for the day the first of which, led by Amena Saleem of PSC and Shenaz Bunglawala of the media monitoring organisation, iEngage, focused on tackling media bias against Palestine. Amena gave examples of BBC bias which have included censoring the word "Palestine" out of a rap played on BBC Radio 1Xtra and claiming it did so because it didn't want to cause offence to people who say Palestine doesn't exist.

A workshop on building campaigns against Israel's pinkwashing (i.e. branding Israel as a tolerant country that is an ideal holiday destination for LGBT people) and greenwashing (branding Israel as an eco-friendly tourist destination) was led by Sarah Colborne, Director of PSC, Ben White and Richard Cooper from Jews for Justice for Palestinians.

There were further workshops on how to use international law and government lobbying to further the campaign; how to campaign

using new media, such as Facebook and Twitter; and how to challenge firms complicit in the occupation, such as G4S and Veolia.

The feedback from more than 100 activists who attended was overwhelmingly positive. One said: "It feels good to be working together to make change. We are now part of a growing coalition and there are reasons to be optimistic that the tide has turned. This was a very motivating event."

Pressure saves trees

After IDF soldiers invaded the Wadi Qana Valley in April and posted orders in nine olive groves for farmers to uproot some 2000 olive trees by 1 May (see *Palestine News*, Spring edition), the international solidarity movement swung into action.

Thousands of activists, including PSC members, galvanised the public and protested to their political representatives. The International Women's Peace Service (IWPS), based in Deir Istiya, put out an urgent appeal and started an online petition for Israel to revoke the orders which was signed by nearly 7000 people. The matter was brought to the attention of the parliaments of Britain and Germany, the British government put pressure on Israel and an international camp was organised in the Valley.

Israel claimed the trees were planted in a "natural reserve" and were not indigenous to it. However, the village of Deir Istiya has maintained olive groves in the Wadi Qana valley for hundreds of years. The farmers refused to uproot their trees and petitioned the Israeli court. After an agonising wait news came on 14 June that the High Court had stayed the order.

A spokesperson for IWPS said: "The power of the international community working with Palestinians and international activists on the ground cannot be overestimated. Saving 2000 trees which will be harvested this autumn and provide nine families with a livelihood until next season is a big win. IWPS worked closely with Zaytoun to raise the profile of this campaign in the UK and worked with Palestinian organisers to run a children's summer camp, providing opportunities for children to express their feelings about the trees through art."

Branches keeping busy

For another year many branches were very active before and during Ramadan encouraging people to avoid buying Israeli dates to break

their fast and to choose Palestinian dates where possible instead.

Meetings were held round the country with many distinguished guests, such as the Rev Stephen Sizer who responded to a lively Q&A session at **Portsmouth and South Downs** branch after the showing of his film *With God on our Side*.

Two Portsmouth members joined with two Southampton members to run stalls at the Romsey Beggars' Fair in July and at Tolpuddle. At Romsey they gave away free locally-grown herbs and asked people not to buy Israeli herbs from Waitrose. Both stalls generated a lot of interest. In addition, letters in Arabic were handed in to Moslem grocery shopkeepers in Portsmouth to encourage a boycott of Israeli and settlement produce.

Members took advantage of the summer fair season to run stalls and raise awareness. **Cambridge** branch took a stall at the annual Strawberry Fair and achieved good general outreach. They promoted PSC membership and Daphne Babouris, who had originally pressed for Cambridge PSC to attend this event, through pro-active leafletting obtained many pages of signatures for the Child Prisoners petition.

Richmond and Kingston branch made great capital out of their banning by the committee of the Richmond May Fair following complaints about the presence of PSC from three local Zionists the previous year. A letter revealing the situation in the local paper set off an amazing six weeks of coverage in the letters pages, most of it overwhelmingly positive, which ranged widely over the case for justice for the Palestinians and did much to raise awareness in the local community.

In addition, members defied the ban by setting up their stall adjacent to Richmond Green where the Fair was being held and attracted huge interest, with numerous people purposefully seeking them out to sign a petition in support, having read about the controversy.



Stephen Sizer

Israel's plan for an attack on Iran

In a recently leaked document presented by Binyamin Netanyahu to his cabinet, the Israeli Prime Minister set out his chilling vision of a multi-pronged assault on Iran. The initial cyber-attack would "totally paralyse the Iranian regime and its ability to know what is happening within its borders. The internet, telephones, radio and television, communications satellites, and fibre optic cables" would be disabled – as would Iran's entire electrical grid.

Next, aiming at Iran's nuclear facilities, "a barrage of tens of ballistic missiles would be launched from Israel toward Iran. 300km ballistic missiles would be launched from Israeli submarines in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf. The missiles would not be armed with unconventional warheads [WMD], but rather with high-explosive ordnance."

At the same time, "a barrage of hundreds of cruise missiles will pound command and control systems, research and development facilities and the residences of senior personnel in the nuclear and missile development apparatus. Intelligence gathered over years

will be utilised to completely decapitate Iran's professional and command ranks in these fields."

In a second wave of attacks, "Israeli war planes [...] will damage a short-list of targets which require further assault."

The report is presumably intended to sway Israel's security cabinet, currently thought to have a 4-3 majority opposed to such action. But critics have pointed out that Iran's national defence system is not centralised but divided into 31 independent districts and that "senior personnel" are unlikely to be waiting in their homes like sitting ducks. Hence the high possibility of a major counter-attack.

■ For full text see <http://tinyurl.com/9qmqto7k>

Church of England backs EAPPI

The General Synod, governing body of the Church of England, voted overwhelmingly in July in favour of a Private Members Motion committing it to support organisations working with Palestinians, including the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council lobbied hard for Synod to reject the motion put forward by Dr. John Dinnen of Hereford Diocese. The Bishop of Manchester tabled an amendment which would have omitted support for the EAPPI, a World Council of Churches programme that has sent hundreds of volunteers to Palestine/Israel.

But in the debate numerous speakers praised the work of the EAPPI. And the vote was decisive: the bishops voted 21 to 3 in favour with 14 abstentions, clergy 89 to 21 (44 abstentions) and laity 91 to 30 (35 abstentions).



Blood diamond in the Tower



Activists protested at the Tower of London in June against a display of the Steinmetz Forevermark Jubilee Pink Diamond because the Israeli diamond company Steinmetz backs the notorious Givati Brigade of the Israeli military which is responsible for war crimes.

One of the Givati Brigade's most infamous massacres was that of the Samouni family during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. In January, 2009, soldiers of the Givati Brigade ordered around a 100 people into the Wa'el Sammouni house then bombed it, killing 29 people. They then shot at emergency crews for four days if they approached the house. When rescue workers finally gained access they found children traumatised beside the corpses of their parents and siblings. The Givati left a message daubed on one of the remaining walls of the house: "The only good Arab is a dead Arab."

The De Beers diamond company, which works closely with Steinmetz, sponsored the re-presentation of the Jewel House at the Tower of London and presented the Queen with the huge 35.60 karat pink diamond to display in a spectacular exhibition marking her 60 years on the throne.

Steinmetz, through its foundation, supports the Tzabar Unit of the Givati Brigade, a unit designed specifically for diaspora Jews who choose to move to Israel and serve in the army. The foundation "fosters a close relationship with the commanders and their soldiers, helping the brigade to organise events, buying equipment for end-of-course ceremonies and giving aid to needy soldiers."

One of the survivors of the Samouni massacre, Helmi Samouni, said he was "shocked and disappointed" by De Beers' action. "We the Samouni family call on the Queen of England and the British people to decline this gift. We demand that De Beers be instructed to remove this offensive blood diamond display immediately."

Disney dishes Ahava

Abigail Disney, the granddaughter of Roy O. Disney, who co-founded the Walt Disney Company with his brother, Walt, announced that she is disclaiming her share of the family's investment in the Israeli cosmetics company, Ahava, because it is located in the West Bank and is engaged in the "exploitation of occupied natural resources."

Disney, 52, a filmmaker and businesswoman, announced in July that she will donate the profits and a sum equal to the worth of her shares to "organisations working to end this illegal exploitation." Her move, however, has more of a symbolic significance than a financial one. Shamrock Holdings, the family firm in which she is a partner, has demonstrated a distinct interest in investing in Israel.

According to media reports, Shamrock has invested some \$400 million in Israeli companies – about a fifth of its capital. It has invested at least \$12 million in Ahava, which is based in Kibbutz Mitzpe Shalem, an Israeli settlement located on the Dead Sea in the West Bank.

In a statement, Disney said: "I cannot in good conscience profit from what is technically the 'plunder' or 'pillage' of occupied natural resources and the company's situating its factory in an Israeli settlement in the Occupied West Bank.

"Because of complicated legal and financial constraints I am unable to withdraw my investment at this time, but will donate the corpus of the investment as well as the profits accrued to me during the term of my involvement to organisations working to end this illegal exploitation."

Disney had been deputy chairman of Shamrock Holdings which was founded in 1978 by her grandfather, Roy. The firm bought a 17 percent stake in Ahava in 2008, worth \$12 million at that time.

Shamrock also has a stake in the Teva Naot footwear company, which is located in the Etzion Bloc south of Jerusalem, and in the Orad company which makes, among other things, control and monitoring technology for the Wall.

Norway's Ministry of Finance decided in June to exclude Israeli construction firm Shikun & Binui Ltd from the Norwegian Government Pension Fund's global investments because it is "involved in the construction of settlements in violation of international law in East Jerusalem," including Ma'aleh Adumim, according to media reports. Companies already being boycotted by the Norwegian pension fund for their activities in the OPTs include Africa Israel Investments and Danya Cebus.

Alice Walker won't be published

Distinguished American novelist, Alice Walker, refused Israeli publishers Yediot Books permission to publish her book, *The Color Purple*, because Israel is practising apartheid.

In a letter detailing her reasons sent in June, the author says that when she was a jurist at the Russell Tribunal on Palestine which met in South Africa last year, the evidence she heard about the Israelis' treatment of Palestinians was "devastating." She added: "I grew up under American apartheid and this was far worse. Indeed, many South Africans who attended, including

Desmond Tutu, felt the Israeli version of these crimes is worse even than what they suffered under the white supremacist regimes that dominated South Africa for so long."

She said she hoped the BDS movement would "have enough of an impact on Israeli civilian society to change the situation" and signed the letter in "faith that a just future can be fashioned from small acts."



PCS SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS, FREEDOM AND EQUALITY

PCS fully supports the TUC and Palestine Solidarity Campaign call on consumers not to buy goods from those firms who profit from their complicity in the occupation, settlements and the wall.

We welcome the decision of The Co-operative Group to end trade with companies which export produce from illegal Israeli settlements and profit from this activity and urges all major UK supermarkets to follow their lead.

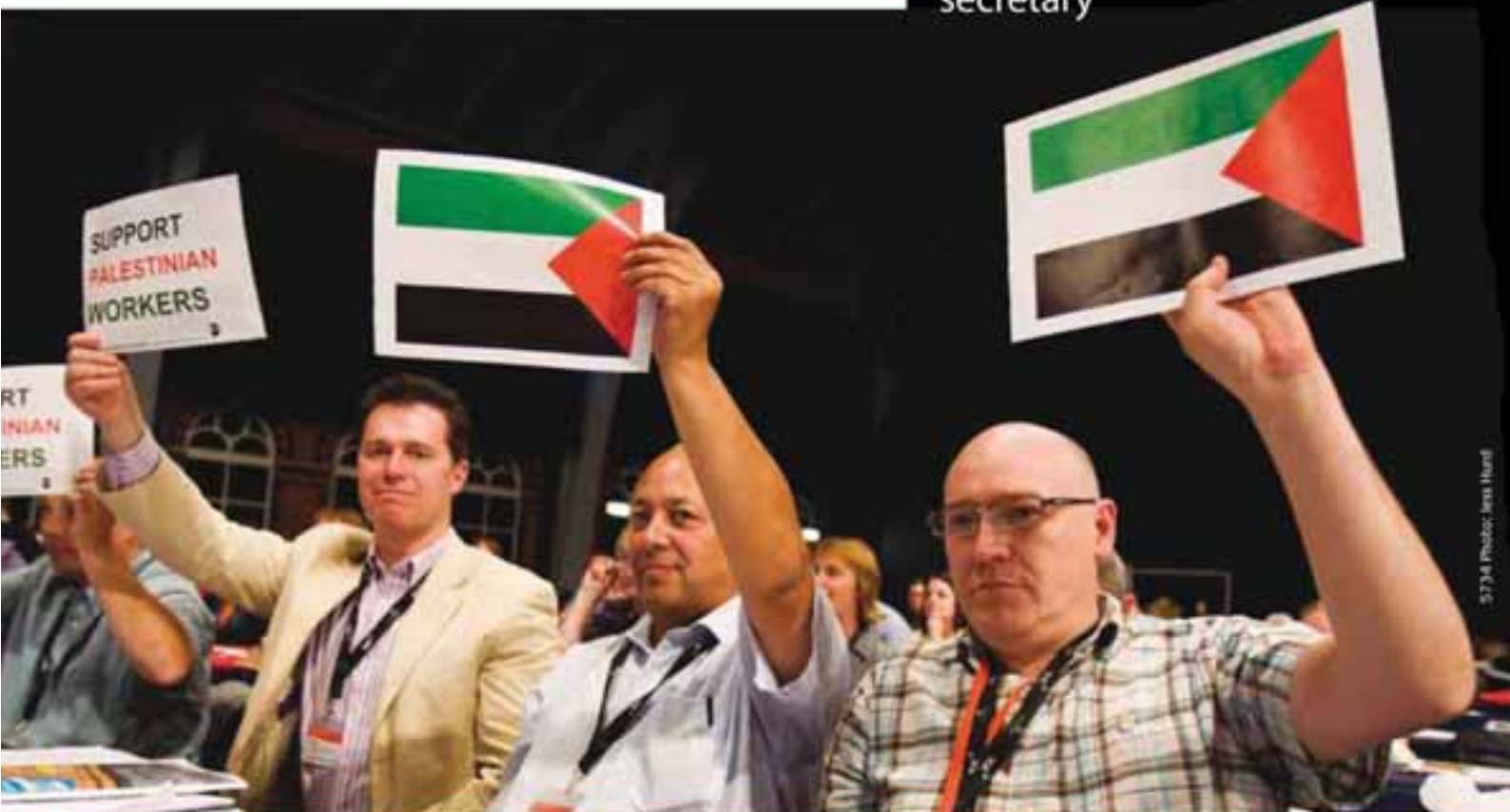
PCS supports international rights and freedom and equality for Palestinians, and calls on the international trade union movement to urge the EU and UK government to end the siege on Gaza, and the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is essential to build unity and peace.

Sue Bond

PCS vice president and chair international committee

Hugh Lanning

PCS deputy general secretary



Palestine Sunbird Pavilion

A stunning wood sculpture representing Palestine's national bird made an appearance in an unusual and intriguing exhibition called "The Palestine Sunbird Pavilion" which was held in London in the summer as part of the British Council's International Architecture and Design Showcase 2012 – a global gathering of cultural projects that investigate architecture and design from across the world.

Situated in the Dream Space Gallery in East London, the event was also in collaboration with Riwaq, a NGO dealing with architectural conservation which is working to reconstruct the Palestinian cultural identity through the spatial potential of old historical areas.

The exhibition, whose opening was attended by Palestinian ambassador, Manuel Hassassian, included recent projects by the Palestine Regeneration Team (PART) which use design to think, act and creatively explore different "fragments of possibilities" inspired by Palestinian everyday life and culture and using recycled materials.



The centrepiece was the Palestine Sunbird, a delicate representation of the beautifully coloured bird which is a commonplace sight in the skies over the West Bank, a region known for being one of the busiest corridors for bird migration. The piece aimed to suggest a freedom of movement and hopefulness that lies beyond the control of enforced borderlines.

Young musicians visit

Four young Palestinian musicians spent a week living and working with young British musicians on orchestral and chamber music courses throughout the UK in August before coming together for four days in London for intense study in workshops, rehearsals and classes at the Royal Academy of Music as well as some sightseeing.

The talented youngsters – viola player Marina Eichberg, 18, from Beit Jala; pianist Sasha Khoury, 16, from Ramallah; and violinists Sama Tarazi, 15, from Beit Hanina, and Naji Alali Esrawee, 14, from Jenin – were chosen after a round of auditions to take part in the British Council/Choir of London Bursary Scheme.

Since the Choir of London paid its first visit to Palestine in 2004 to participate in performances of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, it has been seeking ways to support and enhance the work of music schools in the West Bank. It held a series of workshops, masterclasses and collaborative performances during three further visits to the region and ran a pilot bursary scheme in 2008.

After he was chosen to take part, Naji said: "Since my early childhood, music has played an important role in my daily life, with Fairuz's voice warming the atmosphere in our little house in the mornings and the songs of Marcel Khalifa and Umm Kulthum and Abdel Wahab. Most important of all for me was the sound of my mother's voice singing.

"When I had the opportunity to attend Al Kamandjati Music School in order to study music in 2007, my love of music grew and has led me to be fully committed to learning the violin. In five years of playing the violin, I have had many teachers – both Palestinian and foreign. In all honesty, the presence of foreign teachers in Palestine puzzled me and I found myself asking 'Why are they making this effort to teach music to us?' until one of them answered: 'Because music has no colour or race but is for all humanity.'

"I am looking forward to using this bursary to represent my people and Palestine. I would like to change the idea in the West that the Palestinians have failed and are not good at doing things – and to show that we are hard-working, talented and successful."

The young musicians' visit culminated in an informal concert at the Mosaic Rooms in West London with singers and musicians from the Choir of London directed by Graham Ross.



Naji

A further emblem of Palestine and Palestinian identity – the keffiyeh – was worked into fabric-formed concrete, the soft red contours of the scarf breaking up the concrete surface. It could symbolise the Wall and checkpoints and the attempts to humanise and resist these structures, or perhaps be regarded as a memorial to the homes and everyday life lost as walls are destroyed when the Israelis demolish Palestinian houses.

Eye on the web

● Pro-Palestinian adverts in US Metro stations

Adverts showing shrinking Palestinian territory and saying 4.7 million Palestinians are classed by the UN as refugees were posted up in 50 American metro stations attracting a blaze of publicity.

Henry Clifford, the chairman of a group called the Committee for Peace in Israel and Palestine, spent \$25,000 of his own money on the ads. When asked what he hoped to achieve, he said he wanted to "educate people. Simply to open their eyes and let them see what has happened on the map."

Dovid Efun, the editor of a Jewish newspaper, *The Algemeiner*, called the ads Anti-Semitic. "It paints Jews as aggressors, as imperialists, as people that are stealing or taking land from others," he said.

<http://tinyurl.com/97ddlqg>

● Apartheid road system in West Bank

Stophewall has an excellent infographic on the apartheid road system in Palestine and more from Visualizing Palestine. <http://t.co/8vP5iDaS>

● Border Policeman kicks child

Many will have already seen this sickening video of a shameful Israeli Border Police officer deliberately kicking a Palestinian boy while he wails in fear, recorded by the Israeli NGO, B'Tselem. The incident took place on 29 June in Hebron. The video shows a Border Police officer ambushing the boy as he rounds a corner, dragging him on the ground and holding him while a second Border Police officer appears and kicks the child. www.btselem.org/video/201200629_soldier_kicks_boy

● Israeli settlers attack mosque

In one of the many attacks by Israeli settlers, they set fire to a mosque in the Palestinian village of Jab'a, southeast of Ramallah... www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7YxQFSxdWc

Youth theatre in the West Bank

Young actors from around the world met in the West Bank in July to participate in a ten day International Youth Theatre Festival. This was hosted by students of the Ashtar Theatre group in Ramallah that brought *Richard II* to the Globe Theatre in London earlier this year.

Fifteen nationalities were represented, with 60 young people and eight directors living and eating together, performing and taking part in daily workshops that culminated in a two-hour production – *A Step into Tomorrow* – in the Ramallah Cultural Palace. One of the actors said: “Any technical hitches were compensated for by the actors’ professionalism, and by the end everyone was beaming, with tears in their eyes. It even went out on national and international television.”

“We saw that the cultural scene in the West Bank is alive, ambitious, enthusiastic and very much engaged”

One group participating in the Festival was the pan-European, Teatro di Nascosto (Hidden Theatre), which specialises in theatre reportage based on direct personal testimonies. Their production *The Auction* (so called because the audience bids for the tales they wish to hear told) drew on encounters in Palestine and Iran.

Dutch director Annet Henneman said:



Rehearsing in Ramallah

“It’s so important to tell the stories of ordinary people who live the consequences of wars, politics, the decisions of people on high.” Ali, a British participant, explained: “*The Auction* deals with the commodification of people’s suffering. In hindsight this was particularly relevant, given the talk of inactive corrupt NGOs in Palestine and foreign aid that ultimately fuels the occupation.”

At a preview of the show held in London before the actors left for Ramallah, members of the audience were given envelopes in which to write a message for the Palestinians

at the Festival. Ali said that, when the group performed at the Freedom Theatre in Jenin, “Almost half the audience were in tears, grateful that their stories were being told. The greatest honour was to hear Palestinians telling us that the stories felt real, accurate and that the theatre work did them justice.

“We saw that the cultural scene in the West Bank is alive, ambitious, enthusiastic and very much engaged.” The visitors were also able to explore the towns and villages of the West Bank, staying with families, and many stayed on to cement friendships made during the Festival.

“Palestinians in Israel: Segregation, Discrimination and Democracy”

By Ben White

Published by Pluto Press

Ben White, in this indispensable companion to his earlier book on Israeli Apartheid, has distilled with forensic research from volumes of evidence, the myth of Israel’s claim to be a European-style democracy. His wry and lucid commentary highlights the absurdity and paradoxes of Israel’s laws fabricated institutionally to discriminate against Palestinians’ true equality as Israeli citizens. Israel is in reality an ethnocracy, giving pre-eminence to its Jewish citizens. Palestinians are given inferior status as a favour rather than a right, with some trappings of democracy.

Especially in the fields of land and home ownership, labyrinthine and Kafkaesque laws like the Absentee Property Law expropriated the bulk of land from Palestinians in 1947/48, prohibiting Palestinian “citizens” from living in 93% of Israel. Apart from seven sub-standard Bedouin townships, there has never been a new Arab town planned, in contrast to hundreds of towns for Jewish Israelis which, in law, deter Palestinians from living in them.

Currently, in its drive to further “Judaise” the Negev and Galilee



in continuation of the Nakba of 1948, Israel is driving the Bedouin from unrecognised villages like Al-Araqib. In this process of “de-Arabisation,” Jewish settlers are even infiltrating Arab neighbourhoods in mixed cities like Jaffa and Acre. This is all to “ensure the homogeneity of Jewish national identity, free from Palestinians with a collective identity.” Further chapters detail the vast inequalities in provision of education, civic and social services.

The paranoid fears of equality are expressed by MK David Rotem: “I am not ashamed that I want to maintain this country as a Jewish and democratic state. In your way there would be no state. Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, not a state of all its citizens.”

Ben’s talent for unearthing damning quotations reveals the sheer unabashed racism of not only today’s far-right MKs but of Israel’s founding fathers. His concluding chapter links the situation of Palestinians on both sides of the green line and asks us to consider the only scenario that can change the current situation of relentless colonisation by “re-imagining the Jewish and Palestinian presence in Palestine/Israel and a future based on a genuine co-existence of equals, rather than ethno-religious supremacy and segregation.”

Abe Hayeem

Rafeef Ziadah captivates Birmingham

The internationally renowned Palestinian poet, Rafeef Ziadah, stunned the audience into silence with her powerful performance at the Library Theatre in Birmingham in July as part of Poetry Parnassus, a series of cultural events organised by the South Bank Centre and Speaking Volumes to bring great poetic minds to stages across Britain.

Birmingham's Poet Laureate, Jan Watts, introduced the poet by saying: "Rafeef is an intense and exquisite performer who speaks her uncompromising words with truth and integrity. I was rocked to my foundations when I saw her perform earlier this year."

During the performance it was quite evident that many people could sense Rafeef's pain and frustration with some being moved to tears. Many members of the



audience were unaware of the true nature of the Palestinians' terrible plight under Israeli occupation. However, by the end of the night that was no longer the case, such was the impact that Rafeef's lyrics had on them.

Her words captured the essence of life and the daily struggle for Palestinians.

Rafeef, a third-generation Palestinian refugee, began by giving a concise and succinct history of the Nakba and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. Her poems and lyrics then encapsulated the human suffering and tragedy behind the politics and so-called peace negotiations and also explored the biased role of the media. It was a fine display of performance poetry that was not only poignant and evocative but very moving and powerful.

It was a fine example of using the arts and drama as a form of cultural resistance and of bringing the issue of Palestine to the stage. No doubt we'll be hearing a lot more from Rafeef Ziadah in the near future.

Eugene Egan

Intolerable Tongues

By Ellis Sharp

Published by Zoilus Press

A spoil of the First World War, abandoned in the post-World War II crumbling of empire, the British Mandate in Palestine lasted for 30 years. There has been little attention paid to this legacy in English fictional writing since.

Now Ellis Sharp's *Intolerable Tongues* takes a surgical knife to the buried carcass in a brave, fierce and uncompromising novel which, viscerally, lays bare that legacy.

Dr. Donald McCollum, a Scottish Zionist cleric, travels around Palestine in 1939 during the suppression of the Arab Revolt. He has been commissioned to write a book "in search of the life of Christ and the landscape which saw the birth of Christianity" but the publisher wants no mention of "The Emergency" and suggests that "the Natives should appear... strictly in roles which were comical, poignant, amusing and delightful." He is told that "negativity" and "unpleasantness" are to be avoided.

However, what we experience as readers is everything that is *not* in the travelogue that McCollum produces: the truth excised from the record. McCollum is a damaged man from a lonely, cold, unloving Calvinist background. He is tortured by constipation and tormented by, only sometimes repressed, sexual desires.

During the course of his travels he meets other similarly damaged souls who are actors in and propagandists for the ongoing imperialist suppression, prominent among whom are Bernard Montgomery and Orde Wingate. Montgomery, in an "accent marinated by English privilege," tells him: "What's happening in Palestine is not a national movement. These people we are up against are bullies. We are smashing them. That's what The Emergency is all about."

Wingate explains his attachment to Zionism within an imperialist design: "The Jews are loyal to the Empire... You would be amazed to see how they have made the desert blossom like a rose... Such energy, such faith, such ability, such inventiveness as the world has never seen. Palestine is essential to our Empire. England is essential to world peace. That is why we must ruthlessly suppress any attempt at opposition. Islam is out of it, out of it, out of it."

In his internal monologue McCollum recognises the unpleasant realities of these men but rationalises their Christian imperialist value. McCollum's entire public persona, like his anodyne published travelogue, is a sham, a writhing nightmare of hypocrisy; and the atrocity at the Cave of Jeremiah with which the novel ends, is, in terms of his flaws and demons, believable and, perhaps,

predictable. Symbolic of the Nakba, it is a scarring reminder of our nation's guilt.

Sharp's previous fiction has been experimental, playful and comical, but always political. It has never been easy. *Intolerable Tongues* is his most accessible work yet. The subject matter demands it. Sharp is an unsung talent. This book is an ululation. Read it!

Keith Rowley, Norwich PSC

Volunteer for International Women's Peace Service (IWPS)

IWPS is a small human rights organisation which maintains an international presence in Palestine and supports the participation of women in resisting the illegal occupation.



Have you ever:

- Wanted to give your time to the Palestinian struggle?
- Wanted to document the human rights abuses taking place in the West Bank?
- Wanted to work alongside women from different backgrounds?

If this is you then join the IWPS programme for 2012-2013.

You need:

- Good communication and technological skills
- Have some knowledge of the current situation in Palestine with a willingness to learn
- Reliability and commitment

Visit our website <http://iwps.info> to get more information including the application pack.

"Through volunteering with IWPS I have a better understanding of the less 'dramatic' parts of the Occupation," said one volunteer from the UK. "At times Salfit, where IWPS is based, can be 'quiet,' but this is when you can really start understanding settlement expansion and gain an insight into the incredible resilience required to emotionally and mentally survive the Occupation."

"Israeli-Arab" Political Mobilisation: Between Acquiescence, Participation, and Resistance

by Nida Shoughry

Published by Palgrave Macmillan

The 150,000 Palestinians left on their land when Israel was created in 1948 became citizens of a state that saw them as unwanted aliens. In the face of this, Nida Shoughry found herself "puzzled" as she was growing up by "what appeared to be a relatively passive behaviour of my own community."

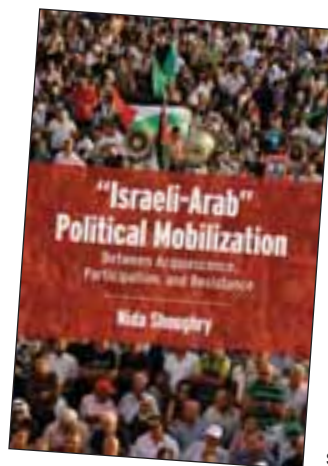
Using social-movement theory and original research she examines why, despite the daily struggle against discriminatory policies, many chose passivity or acquiescence and why it was many years before individual grievances coalesced into organised resistance.

Before Military Rule ended in 1966, protest carried a heavy personal risk. Estrangement from Palestinians beyond the Green Line, and the privileged sub-group of Druze, compounded the identity crisis engendered by war and dispossession. While this – and the non-contiguity of the Galilee, Little Triangle and Negev – delayed the emergence of a collective consciousness, it did not thwart the growing conviction that resistance against land confiscations and house demolitions was not merely justified but possible.

Using exclusively non-violent tools such as strikes, protest marches and festivals of remembrance, their leaders strove to maintain calm, keep within legal bounds and avoid undermining their status as Israeli citizens. Though unable to identify with the Zionist mission of building a Jewish national home on Palestinian land, they joined political parties, formed alliances with progressive, democratic, Jewish forces and gained seats in the Knesset.

Participation in the legislature brought equivocal results. While it might have blocked the most extreme racist laws, it conferred legitimacy on many others hardly less discriminatory. Confidence in the justice system also waned as Israel used with impunity the same iron fist against its own Palestinians as in the OPTs.

The majority Jewish population regarded with indifference the killing of fellow citizens peacefully demonstrating for their rights. Most Hebrew media reflected the military establishment view that Arab communities required a security – not a political – response.



Optimism invested in the Israeli "left" likewise turned to disillusion. In the 1999 elections Palestinians overwhelmingly supported Ehud Barak whose policies only brought them further hardships.

Reliance on their own resources matured them politically. They turned more and more to civil liberty groups worldwide, developing confident NGOs in solidarity with those in the OPTs. While still not confrontational, their demands are today framed in firmer, less apologetic language.

Though it is hard to be optimistic about the future, it is likewise hard to imagine a Knesset Speaker ever again writing the kind of reply once sent to Rev Shehadeh, one of the Land Day organisers. He recalls writing to every Knesset member with "a simple request: please stop the expropriation!" The Speaker replied: "I received your letter, it seems like you called the wrong address, thank you."

This book is an important addition to the scholarship on Israel's Palestinians.

Elizabeth Morley



ASLEF is proud to support the work of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

We stand alongside the Palestinian people in their struggle for justice and freedom and call for an end to the occupation.

We call on all trade unionists to back legislation for a ban on trade of goods from illegal Israeli settlements.

Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

ASLEF the train drivers' union
www.aslef.org.uk

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2-6pm, followed by an evening rally in Parliament

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- oppose the EU strengthening ties with Israel
- speak out in Parliament

Help us reach all MPs in Parliament. Be part of it!
Visit www.palestinecampaign.org/lobby to find out more
and for a simple guide on how to lobby.

PSC Annual General Meeting 2013

**Saturday 26 January,
10am–5pm
Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Square,
London WC1 4RL
(Holborn tube)**

Motions to the AGM and nominations to the executive
must be received in the PSC office by 30 November 2012.