



World demands justice



INSIDE:



Suffer the children
Gill Swain
page 4



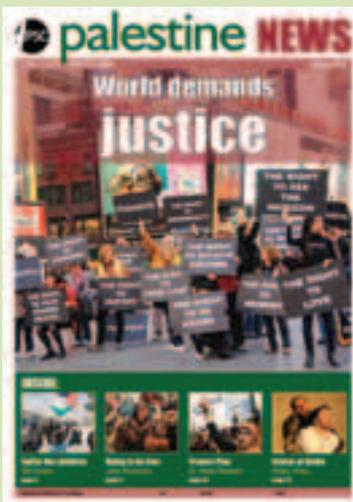
Dying to be free
Julia Richards
page 9



Prayer Plan
Dr Yeela Raanan
page 16



Ashtar at Globe
Hilary Wise
page 27



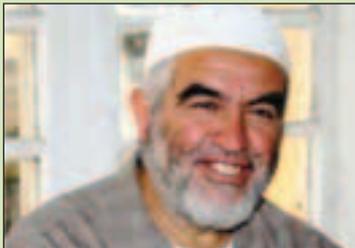
Cover image: Land Day In Times Square, New York

Photo: BUD KOROTZER/DESERTPEACE

ISSN 1477 - 5808

Also in this issue...

page 10



Sheikh Raed exonerated

If you want to contact a member of the Executive Committee or the PSC office, here is a list of those with particular areas of responsibility. Contact via PSC.

Chair – **Hugh Lanning**
 Deputy Chair – **Kamel Hawwash**
 General Secretary – **Ben Soffa**
 Honorary president – **Betty Hunter**
 Trade Unions – **Fiona Bowden**
 Parliamentary Affairs – **Nicolette Petersen**
 Publications – **Hilary Wise**
 Campaigns – **Ruqayyah Collector**
 Trade Union Liaison – **Nick Crook, Simon Dubbins**
 Students – **Fiona Edwards, Khaled Al Mudallal**
 Director of Campaigns – **Sarah Colborne**
 Branches, members – **Martial Kurtz**
 Administration – **Steve Sibley**

Check out

our website

www.palestinecampaign.org

Contents

- 3 The ticking clock**
Hilary Wise examines the increasing internal and external pressures on Israel
- 4 Suffer the children...**
Gill Swain reports on the children abused and tortured in the Israeli court system
- 6 Playgrounds and car parks**
Kat Hobbs describes the destruction of the only playground in Silwan
- 7 Healing traumatised children**
Interview with Nader Abu Amsha, director of a children's counselling programme
- 8 Students connect**
Amnah Rehman describes a PSC scheme linking students in London and Gaza
- 9 Dying to be free**
The Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike has grown to include over 2000
- 11 Planting olives – keeping hope alive**
Hansa Shah recalls her life-affirming trip planting olive trees
- 12 UN finds Israel guilty of apartheid**
Dr Michael Kearney says academics and lawyers must now get to work
- 14 Olympics security firm profits from occupation**
Diana Neslen reports on the Who Profits? investigation into G4S
- 16 Total destruction of Bedouin way of life**
Dr Yeela Raanan analyses the Praver Plan
- 18 €49 million of development projects destroyed by Israel**
European citizens' money funds eco projects reduced to rubble
- 19 More than just a tree**
Manal Abdallah reports on her UK trip with olive farmer Abu Kamal
- 20 Green Party condemns the JNF**
Deborah Fink reflects on the Green Party's backing for "Stop the JNF"
- 21 Fundraising – it's absolutely vital!**
How you can help – go on the sponsored walk, join the 100 Club, leave a legacy, hold an Auction
- 22 News from the branches**
Women from Palestine tour, Cambridge members sing, Bristolians dress as animals!
- 24 In brief**
The Freedom Bus plans tour, South African and Palestinian musicians collaborate, conscientious objector imprisoned, Israel severs contact with UN body, and more...
- 26 Arts and Reviews**
Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians, by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé; *Ashtar Theatre at Globe 2 Globe*; *Palestine Film Festival*; *The other side of paradise* – exhibition by Laila Shawa; *Threat: Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israel*, edited by Abeer Baker and Anat Matar; *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*, by Nur Masalha

palestine NEWS

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

E-mail: info@palestinecampaign.org

The editorial team

Editor: Gill Swain
 Deputy editor: Hilary Wise, Betty Hunter, Victoria Brittain, Ben White, Diane Langford

Design and layout

Mulberry Design

If you would like to contribute or respond to one of the articles in this issue please write to:

The Editor, Palestine News, Box BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX

Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- Campaigning against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people
- Supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights including the Right of Return in line with UN resolution 194
- Promoting Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice
- Opposing Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states
- Opposing anti-semitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state

The ticking clock...

By Hilary Wise

Does there come a point when naked aggression becomes just too blatant to ignore? When governments are finally embarrassed into some kind of action? We may soon find out.

The strain of attempting to maintain the threadbare myth of democracy while violating the whole panoply of international law is beginning to show, both in Israeli society as a whole and within the political elite. Former Kadima leader Tzipi Livni – no dove, as we saw from her role in Operation Cast Lead – said, on her resignation from the Knesset: “Israel is on a volcano, the international clock is ticking, and the existence of a Jewish, democratic state is in mortal danger.”

Presumably in an effort to salvage his own political career the current head of Kadima, Shaul Mofaz, got into bed with prime minister Netanyahu to form a “unity government.” Only two months earlier he had called Netanyahu a “liar” and vowed never to make a deal with his “weak, incompetent and deaf government.”

Top Israeli politicians, soldiers and spies have been queuing up to condemn the warmongering of Netanyahu and his Minister of Defence, Ehud Barak. The present army chief of staff, Lt Gen Benny Gantz, said he did not believe Iran was preparing for a nuclear war, as the Iranian leadership was composed of “very rational people,” while Meir Dagan, former chief of Mossad, called plans to bomb Iran “the stupidest thing I have ever heard,” warning that this would have a “devastating impact” on Israel.

Former Shin Bet chief, Yuval Diskin, also accused the government of misleading the public on Iran and said it threatened to “lead us into an event on the scale of war with Iran or a regional war.” On Israeli society he added: “Over the past 10-15 years Israel has become more and more racist... There is racism toward Arabs and toward foreigners, and we are also becoming a more belligerent society.”

Like many others he is deeply disturbed by the rise of “extremist Jews, not just in the territories but also inside the Green Line” – referring to groups that are implanting settlement-like communities in mixed towns and villages within Israel, to establish or maintain Jewish majorities and to intimidate the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants.

These same ultra-orthodox groups seek to impose not just segregation between Jews and Palestinians, but between Jews and Jews, and between Jewish men and Jewish women. Many non-orthodox Israelis see them as a threat. Upper Nazareth council member, Samyon Baron, said: “Upper Nazareth is a secular city in which, for instance, stores remain open on Shabbat... The Haredim will change the character of this town; they will weaken

it, not strengthen it, and at some stage they will take over Upper Nazareth.”

Add the soaring cost of living and the yawning gap between rich and poor to these political, religious and racial splits within Israel and one wonders whether the Zionist state will simply implode, irrespective of external pressures.

As Livni is aware, attitudes around the world are indeed changing, despite the power of the Zionist lobbies. Israel’s image is irredeemably tarnished and attempts to bind the nation together by escalating levels of paranoia simply backfire. In a desperate effort to portray Israel as the eternal victim, the Israeli authorities responded to the current mass hunger strikes in Israeli jails by calling them a form of ‘terrorism’ and punishing the strikers (see page 9).

This is typical of Israeli responses to any kind of protest or resistance: jail, shoot, bomb – and seize more land. Netanyahu’s decision to “legalise” and enlarge Bruchin, Rechelim and Sansana, outposts of existing illegal settlements – in effect, creating three new settlements in the West Bank – was greeted with shock

and condemnation by western governments. Foreign Secretary William Hague made his strongest statement to date, saying:

“By seeking to entrench illegal settlements in the West Bank, as this decision does, the Israeli government risks sending the

message that it is not serious about its stated commitment to the goal of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, called upon the Israeli government to reverse their decision, saying: “Settlements are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and threaten the viability of a two-state solution,” while the Russian foreign ministry expressed its “serious concern.”

Even a US state department spokeswoman, referring to American efforts to restart negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, said: “We don’t think this is helpful to the process and we don’t accept the legitimacy of continued settlement activity.”

In a recent, highly critical report, the UN stated that Israel’s occupation “exhibits features of colonialism and apartheid, as well as transforming a *de jure* condition of occupation into a circumstance of *de facto* annexation” (see page 12).

While Israel’s own intransigence is the root cause of this critical backlash, credit must be given to activist organisations around the world for turning the tide of public opinion, through decades of campaigning.

Israel still wields huge political influence and is undoubtedly a regional superpower, militarily; but if it is seen as threatening the stability of an already highly volatile region and the interests of its friends, even they will be forced to act. Sometimes, realpolitik and grassroots activism find common cause.

“Sometimes, realpolitik
and grassroots activism
find common cause”

PSC PATRONS

■ Dr. Salman Abu Sitta ■ John Austin ■ Tony Benn ■ Rodney Bickerstaffe ■ Sir Geoffrey Bindman ■ Victoria Brittain ■ Julie Christie ■ Caryl Churchill ■ Jeremy Corbyn MP ■ Bob Crow ■ William Dalrymple ■ Pat Gaffney ■ Rev Garth Hewitt ■ Bruce Kent ■ Ghada Karmi ■ Ken Loach ■ Lowkey ■ Kika Markham ■ Dr. Karma Nabulsi ■ Prof. Ilan Pappé ■ Prof. Hilary Rose ■ Prof. Steven Rose ■ Alexei Sayle ■ Keith Sonnet ■ Ahdaf Soueif ■ David Thompson ■ Baroness Tonge of Kew ■ Dr. Antoine Zahlan ■ Benjamin Zephaniah

Suffer the children...

By Gill Swain

Israel's 45-year long, increasingly brutal occupation of the Palestinian Territories has had a severe impact on every aspect of Palestinian life. But perhaps the impact has been most devastating on the most vulnerable – the children.

Some carry their toys to school for fear that their homes will be demolished while they are gone; hundreds a year are arrested – grabbed off the street or ripped from their beds in the middle of the night – and all adolescent boys fear it; thousands suffer from anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder.

In the past 11 years alone, around 7,500 children, some as young as 12, are estimated to have been detained, interrogated and imprisoned within the military court system. This averages out at between 500-700 children per year, or nearly two children each and every day.

Defence for Children International has produced a major new report: **Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children held in military detention**, which is the culmination of four years' work in which sworn testimonies were collected from 311 children held in Israeli military detention.

The testimonies reveal that the majority of children are detained by the army in the middle of the night in what are typically described as terrifying raids. Most children



have their hands painfully tied behind their backs and are blindfolded before being taken to an unknown location for interrogation.

The arrest and transfer process is often accompanied by verbal abuse and humiliation, threats as well as physical violence. Hours later the children find

themselves in an interrogation room, alone, sleep deprived, bruised and scared. They are not accompanied by a parent and are generally interrogated without the benefit of legal advice or being informed of their right to silence.

Most children undergo a coercive interrogation, mixing verbal abuse, threats

The report includes 25 detailed case studies of children. This is just one.

Name: Ahmad F. Age: 15

Date of Incident: 6 July 2011.

Location: Iraq Burin village, near Nablus

At around 2am, Ahmad was up late socialising with family members who had just arrived from Jordan. "We were all sitting on the balcony when we heard people climbing up the stairs. Suddenly, many soldiers stormed the house. They started shouting at us and ordering us into the living room."

About an hour later, Ahmad was informed that he was "wanted for interrogation." "One of the soldiers tied my hands from the front with three sets of plastic cords. The ties were very tight and caused me much pain. Then another soldier grabbed me by the arm and took me out of the house."

Ahmad's brother asked where he was being taken and was attacked by a soldier. "He started hitting him hard with the barrel of his rifle in front of the family,

including the children who became horrified and started crying."

Ahmad was blindfolded and reports being led about 50 metres to some waiting vehicles which then transported him to Huwwara interrogation centre. He was pulled out of the vehicle and made to stand beside it. "They were chanting, laughing and shouting in my ears. They were making fun of me.

"One of them placed his mobile phone beside my ear and played a police siren so loud. Then one of them grabbed me by the arm and placed my head against the car engine, as another one kept stepping on the accelerator. My whole body started shaking."

Ahmad reports that he was taken inside the gates of the centre but left outside from about 5am until 3pm the following day. He was not brought any food. He reports being verbally abused and told: "We want you to die out here." Whenever he tried to sleep a soldier would start shouting and kicking him to keep him awake.

At one point some soldiers brought a dog and Ahmad was pushed to the ground. "I

managed to see the dog from under my blindfold. They brought the dog's food and put it on my head. I think it was a piece of bread, and the dog had to eat it off my head.

"His saliva started drooling all over my head and that freaked me out. I was so scared my body started shaking because I thought he was going to bite me. They saw me shaking and started laughing and making fun of me. Then they put another piece of bread on my trousers near my genitals, so I tried to move away but he started barking. I was terrified."

Later that day Ahmad was taken to the police station in Ari'el settlement and interrogated. "The interrogator removed my blindfold but kept me tied. He accused me of throwing stones, but I denied it."

The following day Ahmad was transferred to Megiddo prison, inside Israel. He was not provided with any food during the eight hour journey, and was strip searched on arrival at the prison."



and physical violence, generally resulting in a confession. In 29 percent of cases, the children are either shown, or made to sign, documentation written in Hebrew, a language they do not understand.

Within eight days of their arrest, the children are brought in chains to a military court where, in most cases, they will see a lawyer and their parents for the first time. Although many children maintain their innocence, in the end at least 90 per cent will plead guilty as this is the quickest way out of a system that denies children bail in 87 per cent of cases.

Nearly two thirds of the children are transferred to prisons inside Israel in violation of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In consequence many children receive either limited or no family visits.

The report finds that a pattern of systematic ill-treatment emerges, much of which amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as defined in the UN Convention against Torture, and in some cases, actual torture – both of which are absolutely prohibited.

The testimonies reveal that most children are arrested from villages located close to friction points such as illegal settlements and roads used by the Israeli



PHOTO: ALA KHOURI

“The waste of human life...”

Under 18s killed since September, 2000: 129 Israeli, 1476 Palestinian.

Remember These Children lists details of every one of the 1605 deaths of children since the second Palestinian intifada broke out – the child’s name, hometown and how he or she was killed. The information has been collated from a wealth of sources including the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Palestinian State Information Service.

The website says: “The documentation, though painful, conveys the personal reality of these terrible statistics. The waste of human life – of hope and future promise – is almost too great to contemplate.

“Too many of these children died in the course of what should have been normal childhood pleasures – playing soccer, eating pizza, shopping for candy, or going to or from school. Others were

at home, looking out their window, eating dinner or playing in their front yard.”

Child labour in the illegal settlements

Between 500 and 1,000 Palestinian children – some as young as 13 – work for Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley, according to a report published by Maan. Starting work as early as 5.30am, they pick, clean and package fruit and vegetables and have to work in the simmering summer heat of 50°C and also when the temperature drops to zero in winter.

The report says most child labourers are informally employed and therefore receive no benefits. They “earn” 50–60 NIS (£8–10) per day. Their wages are less than the wages of Palestinian adult males, who earn 60–100 NIS (£10–16) a day, about one third of the official Israeli minimum wage.

army or settlers. The report includes 10 recommendations designed to reduce the level of ill-treatment, but it says: “No one should be under any illusion that the treatment documented in the report can be eliminated so long as the friction points remain and Palestinian children are treated as second-class individuals.”

■ For the full report see: www.dci-palestine.org



#	Common complaints and areas of concern	Number of cases	Percentage of children
1	Hand ties	296	95%
2	Blindfolds	281	90%
3	Physical violence	234	75%
4	Detention inside Israel in violation of Article 76	196	63%
5	Arrested between midnight and 5:00am	188	60%
6	Confession during interrogation	180	58%
7	Threats	178	57%
8	Verbal abuse and/or humiliation	169	54%
9	Strip searched	102	33%
10	Transferred on floor of vehicle	98	32%
11	Signed/shown documents written in Hebrew	91	29%
12	Solitary confinement	38	12%

Playgrounds and car parks

By Kat Hobbs

The bulldozers arrived before sunrise to demolish the only children's playground in Silwan, East Jerusalem, and a cultural centre that was a precious community facility for the people in the area.

After the machines, made by the iconic British firm JCB, had done their work in February, Jawad Siyam, director of the Madaa Creative Centre which owned the playground and demolished buildings, said: "This was the only place in the area to meet, to sit together. It was the only place for children in Silwan. The children were very upset to see their treasured place destroyed."

The playground had been recently improved with funding from international NGOs including the American Middle East Children's Alliance, Playgrounds for Palestine and War Child International. The centre attempted to get a permit to build on this piece of privately-owned land but the Israeli-controlled Jerusalem municipality refused.

Siyam said that Palestinians in Silwan have received fewer than 40 permits for building since East Jerusalem was occupied and then illegally annexed by Israel in 1967, leaving them with no choice but to carry on construction projects without permits. The Jerusalem municipality and the National Parks Authority carried out the demolition with Israeli police officers closing off the street.

Silwan, situated just outside the Old City walls, was already under enormous pressure with several of Israel's most influential settlement organisations acquiring property in the area. It sits on the supposed site of the biblical City of David and there are plans to turn it into a National Park and tourist hotspot – the children's playground is earmarked for a car park.

The Al-Bustan district faces total destruction as 88 homes are scheduled for demolition, threatening over 1,000



Children march through Silwan.

people with homelessness. Children carry their favourite toys to school for fear their homes will be rubble by the time they return.

The children's sports field at the Madaa centre was used for football, basketball and the popular children's "summer games" events. Madaa provides a range of activities from music, sports and dancing lessons to cookery and language classes.

Last year the summer games, in their fifth consecutive year, culminated in a closing ceremony and a massive march through Silwan under the banner of "I Love You Silwan." Children called for the right to live in dignity alongside all other youth and for freedom from Israeli persecution and kidnapping and they released balloons inscribed with their hopes and aspirations.

The demolition of the Madaa Centre is a serious blow to the community. Like most of East Jerusalem, Silwan suffers serious overcrowding and high rates of poverty but it also faces particular problems; over half of its residents are under 18, and, after years of chronic under-investment in the area, there are few schools and even fewer safe places for children to play.

Most children have to bus out of the district to attend classes and the school drop out rate is 50%. With so many young people and nowhere for them to go, children are often forced to play on the streets. But with around 350 settlers living in the heart of Silwan in heavily guarded compounds, the streets are a dangerous place.

As a result of the settlers takeover, about a quarter of all of the public

areas are now closed to the local residents and have been transformed into private tourist sites. Entry into them now requires a fee and a security check, so Palestinians are effectively barred. Schools and community spaces are constantly invaded by the Israeli army.

The month following the playground demolition was a difficult one for children in Silwan. The Israeli military frequently arrest minors and in the two weeks after the demolition 16 children were arrested. Many were held for several days and released only when their parents paid hundreds of shekels in bail.

In addition to the arrests, school children in Silwan found themselves the target of harassment by the Israeli Border Police. In March a mobile checkpoint was erected by Border Police in Batn Al Hawa area and approximately 20 children were stopped on their way home from school.

Shari Kassahun from the Madaa Centre said: "The children were asked to open their school bags which were searched and some of their notebooks were torn apart by the Border Police before they were allowed to continue their way home."

And it isn't just school children who face intimidation. On 12 March, Israeli forces entered a Silwan school and arrested the teacher, Mr Salah Mahaisen, in front of the children. A request by the school that the teacher be allowed to leave the school grounds before being arrested to avoid causing distress and alarm to the students was ignored. The incident is significant as it marks the first time that the Israeli armed forces have arrested a teacher inside a school run by the Jerusalem municipality.

■ Kat Hobbs works for War on Want's Save Silwan campaign:

<http://tinyurl.com/c37sb72>
savesilwan@waronwant.org

Healing traumatised children

Thousands of Palestinian children struggle with mental health problems and reintegration into society after they are detained by Israel, a new report on child detention says.

According to the study released by Save the Children Sweden and YMCA-East Jerusalem, *Impact of Child Detention: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 90.6 per cent of detained children suffer post traumatic stress disorder after release.

Around 700 children are detained every year. Released minors often are unable to return to school, experience bed-wetting, anxiety attacks and nightmares, the report says. Families and communities suffer from stigmatisation and become increasingly conservative as fear grows of further detentions.

Nader Abu Amsha is the director of the Beit Sahour branch of the East Jerusalem YMCA rehabilitation programme which provides counselling to Palestinian children released from Israeli detention facilities. He was interviewed for the DCI-Palestine report, *Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted*.

Q. Can you tell me about the programme?

Nader: It started three years ago. We are treating on average 350 children per year through 11 counselling teams that work all across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.



Our work starts from the moment the child is arrested. Our counsellors start working with the family to help them cope with the situation and advise them on how to deal with the child when he or she is released from prison.

The parents tend to think that when their child is released, that is the end of the story. We always tell them it is only the beginning. The family needs to understand that the experience of arrest and imprisonment might have changed the child and affected his development.

Q. In what ways does prison change a child?

Nader: When children come out of prison they feel old and mature and they think they know it all. For the parents though, he is still the same child who left three, four or five months ago, so they tend to become over-protective. This causes problems and disputes within the family. Through our programme, we try to help both the child and the family so that the home remains a place where the child feels comfortable and safe.

The children want to talk about what happened to them; they want to narrate the sequence of events from the moment of arrest as if it was a movie. They do not talk much about their feelings.

But when we start digging and asking specific questions, the children start talking about their feelings. They get very emotional and start sharing their frustration, their anger, perhaps their desire for revenge etc.

Q. What are some of the other things you notice?

Nader: We have noticed that one of the most traumatising experiences for the

children is being arrested in the middle of the night in big raids, finding the soldiers in their rooms pointing their weapons at them, the shouting, and the breaking of things in many cases.

This makes the detention very traumatic from the first minute. Also, the handcuffing, the blindfolding, being transferred in the floor of the military jeeps, being beaten, threatened and humiliated during interrogation. Being alone during all this process is a terrifying experience for the children.

The child feels that the whole Israeli military system is against him, and he has no one to protect or accompany him. Then, being imprisoned for months far from the family, with people he doesn't know, sometimes even with adults, not being able to talk about his feelings and having to deal with the conflict between the different political affiliations of other prisoners, it's all a very difficult experience for the child.

Q. What are the methods you use to help the children?

Nader: Our counsellors and social workers are trained to help the children disclose all their feelings, because once they start talking, that's when the therapy really begins. This is how the children release all the stress and reduce their anxiety. The therapy helps them organise their thoughts and channel their feelings in a positive direction.

Q. Does this always work?

Nader: In some cases the children are too traumatised by the experience, by the ill treatment, and they refuse to open up. Being tortured might lead the children not to trust anyone.

Many times our counsellors have to make a big effort to earn the child's trust. In cases where despite all our efforts the child refuses to open up, we still help him return to school or with vocational rehabilitation and re-integration into the community.

We have also noticed that one of the most difficult issues for the children to deal with – and this is very sensitive – is Israel's attempt to recruit them as informants or collaborators, and the use of the 'stick and

carrot' method to get information out of them.

Many children often say the Israelis tried to recruit them, but they never say they accepted, although in some cases they might have due to fear and the desire to end the ill-treatment and to get out of the situation.

It is very hard to deal with these cases, because they are related to many other issues, such as the security of the child, community values, the fear it generates in the child and the need for protection.

Q. What are the biggest challenges you encounter?

Nader: The issue of returning to school is one of the most difficult because these children tend to look for all kinds of excuses not to go back to school. Most of them come from poor families, so they say they want to start working to help the household.

We challenge their arguments and make them see the advantages of completing their education, as well as the difficulties in finding a good job without the necessary qualifications. However, if the child decides not to go back to school, we have to respect his decision so we help with vocational training.

We use a very effective system for vocational assessment, and have signed agreements with a number of companies, workshops etc. where the children can have training in different areas, such as carpentry, mechanics, etc. It is important that the children undergo this training within a system, because this is pivotal for the success of the counselling process. These children should not be left alone.

Q. How would you rate the success of the programme?

Nader: In general the programme is very successful. Most children recover from the trauma and re-integrate well into the community, but of course they never forget what happened to them. They will have flashbacks all their lives, but they learn how to cope with these memories. In some cases the children get re-arrested, and as soon as they are released they immediately come back to our programme.

■ For the full Save the Children/YMCA report, see: <http://tinyurl.com/d9mq5t>



Students connect

PSC is working with Al Fakhoora, an organisation dedicated to promoting access to education for Palestinians, on a new project connecting up students in the UK and Gaza.

We are bringing the students together every week using Skype to talk to each other about their lives, their studies and their hopes for the future. The idea is to empower UK students with the knowledge to act as advocates in this country for their Palestinian contemporaries while giving Gaza students the opportunity to make friends beyond the borders of their besieged land.

The UK students – from Westminster University and Imperial College, London – “met” with the students from the Islamic University, Gaza, for the first time just days after Israel's latest bombing of Gaza in which 27 Palestinians were killed in four days. The Gaza students told how their lives had been affected by this massive aerial bombardment.

The Gaza students described their fear of the bombing, one said his newly-married friend, aged 24, had been killed, and they



Left to right: Daniel Brooks, Azeem Sayani, Hanan Ak, Selin Avlak from Westminster University.

spoke about how they were surviving on around six hours of electricity a day, with cooking gas running low and no fuel for cars.

Here **Amnah Rehman**, of the University of Westminster, describes her experience of the project.

Throughout my life I have heard many poignant stories about the Palestinians and how their lives are completely ruined under the dangerous occupation. But never did I imagine that I would get a chance actually to hear their stories directly.

My experience of talking to students from Gaza moved me immensely for it was such an amazing opportunity to gain an insight to their hardships and struggles. What mesmerised me most was the great optimism and positivity the students displayed, despite the dangers and fear which undoubtedly stay with them continuously.

One week's topic of conversation was the notion of families. The students from Gaza explained how their bonds with their families grow stronger whilst being in completely fearful circumstances. They feel that their families are the people who support them in everything from education to work and much more.

One of the students stated: “Strong family bonds help us cope with problems like no fuel, no water.” However, the students also described their biggest fears: one of them being losing their family members due to the bombing and airstrikes.

This was such an emotional statement that it made me ponder how lucky many of us are, for we don't live with this fear of losing our families. After talking to the students from Gaza, it has given me an escalating feeling of sympathy for them.

One profound statement from one of the Palestinian students which I will never forget was: “One day the occupation will be over. Palestinians always have hope that things will be better. We are always optimistic.” I truly admire their optimism!

■ Follow the students' weekly conversations on Twitter @Chat2Gaza

Heritage in the needle

The gorgeous Palestinian embroidery products which are becoming increasingly familiar in our craft shops are generally produced by women working at home, often linked together in a co-operative which organises the selling side.

Now one of those organisations, the Idna Cooperative Association for Craft and Embroidery (also known as Women in Hebron), is looking for people in the UK who are willing to sell their lovely purses, bags, dresses, scarves and pillowcases.

The Co-operative was founded in 2005 by Nawal Slemiah who has a long background of working with local women. Around 30 women from the Hebron area village of Idna participated and they were later joined by groups from other villages, enabling Nawal to open a shop in the Old City of Hebron. Now around 120 women from eight villages are in the group.

The shop is the only one run by women in the area and faces many challenges. One of these arose when they applied for a business licence to the local authority. They were told it is required to have a large amount of money in a bank account – a criterion the small cooperative cannot meet.

Nawal says the objectives of the cooperative are to:

- Maintain and preserve the Palestinian cultural heritage and increase awareness abroad
- Raise living standards of Palestinian women through economic independence
- Support women whose families cannot provide for them
- Encourage resident and commerce steadfastness in the Old City of Hebron in the face of the continuing suffering that settlers and the Israeli army are causing to the community.

The cooperative also educates women in hand embroidery processes, computer skills and basics of English and advises them on their rights.

In the ghost town that the Israelis have created in the Old City of Hebron to protect the small band of fanatical settlers living there, the Co-operative's shop struggles for custom. So now they are calling to the outside world to support them.

Ways to do this include buying their products online, spreading the word, eg via their pages on Facebook and Flickr, and becoming a retailer. Volunteers are very welcome to come to stay with Co-operative

members to help the women with their English and computer skills, or you could come for the day and be taken on a guided tour.

Nawal says: “Any support – financial as well as moral – is most welcome! Being a relatively small and still young cooperative we rely on help from friends all over the world.”

■ For more info see:

www.womeninhebron.com

■ E-mail: nawal@womeninhebron.com or idnacooperative@gmail.com.



Nawal in her shop with UK visitor, Megan Clay-Jones

Dying to be free

The Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike has grown to include over 2,000 prisoners, according to some reports – not that you would know that from the UK media, which has almost completely ignored the issue even though several prisoners have already come very close to death.

Of the nearly 5000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, over 300 are held in Administrative Detention – that is, without charge or trial. This unjust and hated form of imprisonment means that the detainees have no means of defending themselves and no knowledge of their release date.

Protests against Administrative Detention have been the main focus of the hunger strikes which have been multiplying in Israeli jails over the last few months. The numbers and the determination of the hunger strikers are significant developments in the increasingly widespread non-violent civil resistance movement in the West Bank.



PHOTO: RAQUEL RIVAS

Demo in Ramallah, Palestinian Prisoners' Day.

Israel punishes hunger strikers often by condemning them to solitary confinement and denying them contact with the outside world. This was applied to Marwan Barghouti, the Palestinian political leader condemned to four consecutive life sentences, when he called for mass civil resistance to Israeli colonisation of Palestinian territory.

On 1 April Barghouti said in a statement from prison that “the launch of large-scale popular resistance at this stage serves the cause of our people,” asserting that the idea of ending the occupation and achieving a state through negotiations was an illusion.

Worldwide campaign

The first of the hunger strikers to come close to death was 34 year-old Khader Adnan, after 66 days – at that point the longest hunger strike in Palestinian history – in protest at being held in Administrative Detention. Even when he was taken semi-conscious to the prison hospital, Khader's arms and legs were kept shackled by the prison wardens. His plight and that of other prisoners was only noted by mainstream media after a worldwide campaign for his release. Catherine Ashton, the EU foreign affairs chief, said that his case was of “great concern,” adding: “Detainees have the right to be informed about the charges underlying any detention and be subject to a fair trial.”

Khader ended his hunger strike after the Israeli authorities agreed to release him on 17 April – a triumph for the pressure of public opinion.



Khader Anan with his family. Photo: Oren Ziv, Activestills.org.

Hana Shalabi, 30, whose brother Samir was killed by the Israeli army in 2005, endured over two years of Administrative Detention from September 2009 to October 2011. For part of that time she was incarcerated with Israeli criminal offenders who subjected her to constant threats and abuse.

Hana was released as part of a prisoner exchange deal in 2011 – but like others was re-arrested just three months later and again placed under Administrative Detention. She immediately went on hunger strike, only ending it after 43 days on the promise of release. However, she was deported to Gaza for a period of three years instead of being returned to her home in the West Bank.

Amnesty International said: “Instead of deporting her to the Gaza Strip, where access to specialised medical care is limited, due to the Israeli blockade and the ongoing fuel crisis which threatens hospitals, she should be released along with other Palestinians held in Administrative Detention, or promptly charged with a recognisable criminal offence.”

From her hospital bed Hana appealed for a worldwide campaign to free all Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. She added: “I would like to advise young Palestinian generations to keep up the struggle and never fear Israeli detention. Just be steadfast, just be steadfast and you will eventually win your freedom.”



Hana Shalabi on her release from jail.

At the time of going to press, other long-term hunger strikers risk death, including Tha'er Halahleh, 33, and Bilal Diab, 27, both of whom have been denied access to independent lawyers

(continued overleaf)

and doctors. Tha'er, who began his strike on 29 February, was kidnapped by the Israeli army in June 2010 at his home in the West Bank and has been held under repeatedly renewed Administrative Detention ever since.

On 7 May, the 70th day of their hunger strike, the Israeli High Court rejected petitions regarding the Administrative Detention orders of both men. In complete disregard of their critical medical condition, the Court stated that "hunger strikes are not relevant to decide on length of Administrative Detention as such."

The Court recommended in Tha'er's case that, since he has already spent nearly two years in Administrative Detention, the Israeli Security Service should investigate more in depth before extending his detention order to see if there are any possible alternatives. The Court further stated that if his detention order is extended, a more thorough interrogation should occur. The Court reiterated that these recommendations were irrespective of his hunger strike.

Sheikh Raed exonerated, Home Secretary discredited

Sheikh Raed Salah, who came to Britain in June 2011 on a 10-day lecture tour, finally returned home on 16 April, after a gruelling struggle to resist deportation and clear his name.

The Sheikh is an Israeli citizen who campaigns for Palestinian rights within Israel, opposing the discrimination, house demolitions and attempts at ethnic cleansing practised by the Israeli authorities. He spoke in a public meeting in

London before being arrested and detained on the orders of the Home Secretary, Theresa May, on the grounds that his presence in Britain was "not conducive to the public good." There followed a well-orchestrated smear campaign in the media, in which the Sheikh was represented as a dangerous anti-semitic preaching hatred and violence.

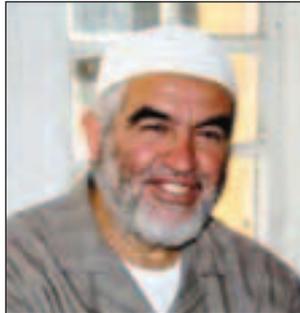
It later transpired that the Home Secretary had been misinformed by the Community Security Trust, a registered charity which monitors anti-semitic attacks in Britain, who had sent her a report accusing the Sheikh of grossly anti-semitic statements. It seems she failed to check on the claims of the CST, but acted immediately to exclude him.

After months of wrangles through the courts and after hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money had been spent, all charges against Sheikh Raed were thrown out by the Upper Immigration Tribunal on 5 April. In his ruling, Mr Justice Ockelton, the President of the Tribunal, said Ms May had been "misled" on the case, noting that the CST had been the only source of information used by the Home Office.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, who hosted a meeting in Parliament that Sheikh Raed was supposed to attend, supported the Sheikh throughout the legal proceedings. He called for a public inquiry into the way the whole affair was handled: "Previous Home Secretaries have been forced out of office for less than this. I think we need an open, independent inquiry into the whole process." At the same time he renewed his invitation to the Sheikh to return to the UK to speak in Parliament and to tell the British people about the plight of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Jeremy has since been pursued and smeared by the CST, who have accused him of anti-semitism and likened him to Nick Griffin of the BNP, for raising the question of how Theresa May came to ban Sheikh Raed.

Before leaving the UK Sheikh Raed said: "Despite the Israeli policy of 'transfer' – another term for ethnic cleansing – the Palestinians will not go away. The Israeli state can occupy our lands, demolish our homes, drill tunnels under the old city of Jerusalem – but we will not disappear."



In Bilal's case, the Court also suggested that if his Administrative Detention order is renewed, and his health permits extended detention, he should also be re-interrogated. The Court recommended that the Security Service shorten his order from six months to three or four.

Palestinian prisoners include 6 women, about 200 children and 27 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The ways in which Israel violates international law regarding the manner of arrest, interrogation and detention of Palestinians, including evidence of torture and degrading treatment, have been well documented by human rights organisations. See www.addameer.org, www.alhaq.org, www.btselem.org, www.hamoked.org and www.phr.org.il.

■ Follow developments on #PalHunger.

Environmental crime – 2000 olive trees to be uprooted

Palestinian, Israeli and international peace activists are keeping a vigil to try to prevent the Israeli army from uprooting 2000 olive trees in the Wadi Qana area near the West Bank village of Deir Istiya.

Notices ordering nine farmers in this major olive producing area to destroy 1400 of their trees were placed on retaining terraces, rocks and fences in April. They stated that, if the orders were not carried out by 1 May, the farmers would face punishment which could, according to Deir Istiya mayor, Nazmi Salman, include large fines and imprisonment.

That shocking number was already 400 more trees than the total number uprooted in all of 2011. A few days later, another farmer found the same order for 600 trees to be uprooted, bringing the total number to 2000. By the time of going to press, the orders had not been carried out but the Israeli Occupation Forces could enforce it at any time.

Taysir Arbasi, from Zaytoun in Palestine, said the trees were between three and 15 years old and planted on privately-owned Palestinian property. They produce around 5,000 kg of olives a year.

The Israeli government has unilaterally declared this Palestinian land as a "protected natural area" – a designation it gives to land in order to expel Palestinians from it. The real reason for turning productive land into a "nature reserve" is likely to be the proximity of eight large settlements which have been built on, or adjacent to, 15,000 dunums of Palestinian land.

Wastewater from the outposts around these settlements is illegally dumped into a natural spring used by the olive farmers. Last autumn over 100 trees in Deir Istiya were destroyed by flooded wastewater.

Additionally, fanatical settlers harass the villagers and commit acts of violence, including arson. Earlier this year settlers desecrated a mosque during a wave of "price tag" revenge actions sparked by the demolition of an Israeli outpost.



Planting olives – keeping hope alive

By Hansa Shah

There is something so life-affirming and hope-inspiring about planting trees. And hope is what the people of Palestine need at this time.

Helping to keep hope alive is the Olive Planting Programme which started in February, 2008, and is organised by the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) and the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG). Many people from around the world come together every year to assist Palestinian farmers who are hindered from planting their olive trees because of restrictions imposed by the Israeli government or military forces or harassment from Israeli settlers.

Besides planting trees, the programme includes eye-opening visits to Jerusalem, Hebron, Ramallah and Bethlehem in which participants get to witness and learn about the ongoing injustices committed against the Palestinian people. Many international participants have described the experience as “life-changing.”

I had some qualms about being up to performing hard physical work like digging but I found that I was able to meet the challenge with few aches and pains. Besides, working in pairs or in teams of three made it much easier.

We worked only in the mornings and, at lunchtime, local farmers served us with delicious homemade food, usually rice and chicken or stuffed vine leaves, yoghurt and salad. This year there were about 50 of us from ten countries and we planted nearly 2000 olive trees over four days.

We worked in four villages around Bethlehem located in area C. We worked in Al-Khader where St. George is believed to have been imprisoned (he was from Syria Palaestina, not England!), Beit Umar, Beit Eskaria and Jaba'. The fields selected were either at risk of confiscation or vulnerable to Israeli settler violence.

Our instructions were that, if soldiers from the Israeli Defence Force or settlers were to appear, we were to carry on planting, leaving the local farmers or our organisers to do the talking. Soldiers did appear on various occasions but made no attempt to disrupt our planting.

Whilst working in Beit Eskaria, we were also warned of the appearance of Women in Green, a group of right-wing Israeli women who tend to descend on Palestinian fields claiming the right to plant trees on what they call “Israeli soil”. That morning it poured with rain, which perhaps deterred them, for they were nowhere in sight.

In Jaba' the fields where we worked were at risk of confiscation by Israeli authorities even though they had been in Ibtisam's family for years. Any “uncultivated” land in area C, no matter how long it has belonged to a Palestinian family, is open to such a risk, we were told. Our olive planting, we hope, made a tangible difference.



Hansa with a young friend. Photo: Kerstine Dahlberg.

For me, the experience was enhanced by that of living with a Palestinian family in Beit Sahour. My hosts, a couple in their 70s, owned a restaurant. It was clear that they had seen better days. With the construction of the Wall, tourism had suffered, as had their business.

I learnt that during the siege of Bethlehem in 2002, they had lost a daughter who had developed complications during her pregnancy. By the time they obtained a permit to move her to the hospital in Bethlehem, it was too late to save either mother or baby. I could not help but admire their spirit, for in spite of the day to day hardships of their lives, they could be so generous and steadfast in their faith.

I would like to finish with the words of local people. Over and over again we heard this: “Thank you for coming to our country. It helps to keep up our spirit and carry on our non-violent resistance. Shukran.” As our guide, Karim, bade us good bye, he said: “Friends, your holy mission does not lie here. It lies back in your own country. Tell your people about our situation. Tell them what you have seen.” Can we do anything less?

■ For more information, see: www.jai-pal.org

(Names of local people have been changed.)

New travel guide

By Amena Saleem

When I visited Gaza with an aid convoy two years ago, I was struck by what a beautiful holiday destination this could be if it wasn't for Israel's occupation and destruction. I could see all the raw ingredients for the potential tourist – the Mediterranean coast, swaying palm trees, a sweet sea breeze and fresh lemonade to sip while taking it all in.

A new travel guide to Palestine delves even deeper, looking at both Gaza and the West Bank from a traveller's perspective – the historical, cultural and geographical sights and the potential delights of becoming acquainted with the Palestinian people and cuisine.

Palestine: the Bradt travel guide is written by Sarah Irving, who is firmly rooted in the Palestinian cause and the writing is politically aware and quietly supportive. She introduces the reader to the remains of winter retreats for Umayyad sultans, Byzantine mosaic art, cliff-face monasteries, soap factories and village walks, alongside the better-known wonders of Jerusalem, Nablus and Jericho.

Gaining entry to Gaza, as the book says, is near impossible but, for anyone wanting to visit the West Bank, this guide – “the first standalone Western guide to Palestine,” according to Bradt – is the one to take.

■ Published by Bradt Travel Guides, November 2011. www.bradtguides.com



UN finds Israel guilty of Apartheid – time for lawyers to act

In March the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – the body entrusted with monitoring states' compliance and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – issued its most recent Concluding Observations on Israel's compliance with the Convention.

Dr Michael Kearney, Fellow in Law at the London School of Economics, says that the Committee's statement is significant in that it finds Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to violate the Convention's prohibition of Apartheid, and also because of the Committee's distinctly harsh words for the Israeli government. Academics and lawyers must now get to work to enforce accountability.

As a body whose modus operandi is to follow a firm, yet softly softly approach aimed at avoiding conflict with states in order to ensure continued dialogue with governments, the nature of CERD's critique of Israel's policies and practices, not just in the occupied territory of Palestine and Syria, but within Israel itself, is quite striking.

That Israeli practices in occupied territory constitute Apartheid is a claim that has been argued for many years. It has gained particular resonance and intensity since the dual administrations of the PA and Israeli military occupation developed during the Oslo process. This formalised not just bureaucratic separateness, but also physical separateness, as seen in the prohibition of Palestinians from using certain road networks or accessing areas such as the Jordan Valley that are reserved for Israelis only.

“The Committee used its Concluding Observations wholeheartedly to criticise racist Israeli practices and policies”

Even as political leaders such as Ehud Olmert discussed in 2007 the likelihood of Apartheid becoming entrenched in the

OPTs, there remained significant opposition on the part of many apologists for Israel's occupation policy to countenancing any suggestion that the Apartheid label could be justifiably applied. Richard Goldstone's *New York Times* op-ed of October 2011, “Israel and the Apartheid Slander,” is a case in point. Prompted by the Russell Tribunal's session on Apartheid then underway in Cape Town, Goldstone dismissed those who would apply the Apartheid label to Israel as peddlers of a “false and malicious” myth “calculated to retard” peace negotiations.

The international legal framework can be rightly criticised for favouring powerful states and interests and for consistently failing to facilitate the Palestinians in achieving a modicum of justice. But that is not to say that international law should be systematically rejected. Following the conclusion of the Russell Tribunal session on Apartheid, its representatives, joined by coalitions of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, went to Geneva to present their arguments in opposition (primarily) to those submitted by the Israeli government to the CERD Committee.

“Israel denies that it owes human rights obligations to the Palestinian population”

After hearing from both sides, the Committee used its Concluding Observations wholeheartedly to criticise racist Israeli practices and policies. The Committee began by criticising Israel for failing even to report on its practices in the occupied territory. Israel consistently denies that it owes human rights obligations to the Palestinian population



Hebron, March 2009. Photo: Mamoun Wazwaz, Maan Images.



CARLOS LATUFF

of the occupied territory, and thus ignores them when reporting on its human rights record. This position has been rejected comprehensively by the International Court of Justice.

The Committee then turned to examples of segregation within Israel itself, noting the existence of two systems of education, “one in Hebrew and one in Arabic,” separate municipalities, discriminatory laws on land issues, discriminatory laws on work and social benefits.

The Committee called for revocation of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law and the withdrawal of the proposed Law for the Regulation of the Bedouin Settlement in the Negev, on the basis of their discriminatory effects. Having noted discrimination towards minorities within Israel’s Jewish population, and against asylum-seekers and refugees, the Committee also criticised the increase in racist and xenophobic attacks against Palestinians in Israel.

While framing these divisions of Israeli society into Jewish and non-Jewish sectors as falling within Article 3 of the Convention, (see box) the Committee focused on the concept of “racial segregation.” Turning

to the situation in the OPTs, the Committee again drew on Article 3 but this time chose to emphasise Article 3’s prohibition of Apartheid also. What distinguishes Apartheid from racial segregation is the intent behind the practice, namely that Apartheid constitutes not just racial segregation, but also “*inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining*

domination by one racial group over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

The Committee’s analysis of the situation in the OPTs led to its expressing “extreme concern” at the implementation by Israel of two entirely different legal systems and sets of institutions for Jewish settlers on one hand and Palestinians on the other. Urging Israel to prohibit and eradicate policies and practices constituting racial segregation and Apartheid, the Committee declared itself to be “particularly appalled” by the hermetic character of the separation of two groups “who live on the same territory but do not enjoy either equal use of roads and infrastructure or equal access to basic services and water resources.”

The Committee continued to note that Israeli planning and zoning policy in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, “seriously breaches a range of fundamental rights under the Convention,” called on Israel to eliminate any policy of “demographic balance” from its Jerusalem Master Plan and to rescind the blockade policy of Gaza, and urged an end to Israel’s

practice of Administrative Detention “which is discriminatory and constitutes arbitrary detention under international human rights law.”

While it is important that individual violations of human rights are noted by the Committee, it is crucial that the systemic nature of the racist regime has been recognised as one of Apartheid. This assertion legitimises a description that has been considered highly emotive because of the link back to the racist regime in South Africa. Israel’s practice of Apartheid is different from that seen in South Africa yet shares several of the same key pillars, namely discriminatory legislation, segregation and fragmentation of population and reliance on a repressive military and “security” policy to suppress dissent or criticism.

This development represents a striking turn for a provision of international law that many had assumed to be an historical artifact. Having first been reprieved by NGOs and legal activists, the findings of the Committee reinforces the fact that prohibition of Apartheid in international law remains relevant.

At this stage it is necessary that academics and lawyers make the effort to better understand the nature of the crime itself and to work towards developing further strategies for implementation and enforcement of accountability before domestic and international criminal tribunals. While enforcement in international (or national) courts is likely to be a long way off, the Committee’s statement provides a key tool for NGOs and activists with which to lobby and to use in advocacy and education.

Apartheid is a concept that is universally understood, recognised and reviled and it is a label that accurately assists in describing the nature of the occupation. With support from respected bodies such as the CERD Committee, there is much greater leverage in responding to Israel’s apologists and in working to convince the public and politicians to take a firm and determined stand to support the Palestinian right to self-determination, and to recognise the necessity of moving beyond the sham process that the Quartet and the international community has been happy to peddle for too long.

Defining the crime of apartheid

The International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was adopted in 1965. Article 3 specifies the obligation of States Parties to the Convention to oppose apartheid: States Parties particularly condemn racial segregation and apartheid and undertake to prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of this nature in territories under their jurisdiction.

The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973) confirmed that not only were states to be prohibited from committing apartheid but that

individuals responsible for such action were to be held liable as criminals.

Additional Protocol I (1977) of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 is applicable in times of international armed conflict and recognised apartheid as a “grave breach” thus giving rise to individual criminal responsibility. (art. 85, paragraph 4 (c)).

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines apartheid as a crime against humanity. Article 7.1.h of the Statute provides that, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack, the crime of apartheid constitutes a crime against humanity. 121 states are signatories to the Rome Statute.



Olympic security firm profits from Occupation

By Diana Neslen

The red, black and white logo of the giant multinational company G4S is becoming ever more familiar, emblazoned as it is across the country's secure facilities, local authority transport systems and even on our ambulances. The tunics of paramedics advertise the company's role as "working in partnership with the NHS."

Now it is set to become even more well-known as it is the company which will be running all the security and cash services outlets for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. For Palestinians, however, G4S is one more in the catalogue of companies which profit from the occupation of their land and are complicit in violations of international law.

According to Who Profits? the Israeli investigative project run by the Coalition of Women for Peace, G4S began to profit from the misery of Palestinians living under occupation since it purchased the Israeli security company, Hashmira, in 2002.

G4S, a joint British-Danish company, is one of the world's largest international security corporations and has taken over many of the functions of governments in numerous countries, particularly in the field of welfare to work, immigration controls, prisons and transportation.

Who Profits? says that G4S involvement in Israel and the Occupied Territories can be summarised thus:

1. G4S provides security equipment and services to incarceration facilities holding Palestinian political prisoners inside Israel and in the occupied West Bank.
2. It offers security services to businesses in settlements.
3. It has provided equipment and maintenance services to Israeli military checkpoints in the West Bank. It declares that it will withdraw from these contracts but Who Profits? has no credible evidence that it is doing so.
4. It continues to provide security systems for the Israeli police headquarters in the West Bank.

In response to increasing concerns raised about its activities within the OPTs, G4S stated that it would terminate contracts to provide services to the military checkpoints in the West Bank but would continue to provide services to settlements. It also stated that it would withdraw from some of the services it provides to the prisons. However Who Profits? discovered that it will only withdraw from one, thus far nameless, prison and that will only happen in 2015.

The second thing that G4S did was to obtain an opinion from a Danish professor of international law, Hjalte Rasmussen, who found that the company's activities were compliant with international law. However, that opinion has been contradicted by legal opinion obtained by British G4S campaigners and endorsed by Professor John Dugard, chair in public international law at Leiden University in the Netherlands, who found that indeed G4S is complicit in Israel's violation of the Geneva Convention with respect to Palestinian prisoners.

Under Article 76(1) prisoners from the OPTs should be detained within that territory and not outside it. Most prisoners are detained within Israel. By providing services to the prisons where they



G4S chief executive, Nick Buckles

are held, G4S is assisting in grave breaches of the 4th Geneva Convention.

The issue of Palestinian prisoners has slowly risen up the agenda. Israel does not distinguish between political prisoners and those it regards as guilty of crimes against the Israeli state but treats all Palestinian prisoners as "security" prisoners.

Once this label is attached to the prisoner, whatever the nature of their "crime", they are treated with the same brutality. This encompasses vicious arrest, denial of legal advice, solitary confinement, torture, illegal interrogation methods and on occasion, Administrative Detention without trial or the ability to challenge the secret evidence used against them.

Walid Daka, a Palestinian citizen of Israel serving a life sentence for alleged involvement in the kidnapping and murder of an Israeli soldier, talks in the book *Threat*, by Anat Matar and Abeer Baker, of the control systems operated by technologies of the kind supplied by international corporations like G4S. These mean that cameras are everywhere, doors and locks are controlled electronically and one warden can control 120 prisoners, leaving them alone in a world without human contact.

G4S supplies services to Ofer prison in the Seam Zone where terrified children are brought in shackles to the military court. These children are often kept in Al Jalame (Kisharon) prison where abuse is common place.

Having lost the argument about illegality, G4S is now trying desperately to use the same defence as Veolia, namely that all the companies allied to it operate separately. However this is for public relations consumption only, as a cursory glance at their web site shows exactly how interlinked all their operations are.

This is how they present themselves: "G4S has the international reach and resources to meet the security needs of the global age. We operate in more than 125 countries and have more than 635,000 employees worldwide. Whether you require a security solution in one location or across multiple continents, our global experience is always on hand to bring you advantages."

We in the Group4campaign contend that they cannot have it both ways. We believe that the fact that they are trying to pull the wool over people's eyes tells us that they are beginning to realise that they are in a hole. So we have everything to gain in bringing their

behaviour to public attention and campaigning against awarding of contracts to them.

While G4S may eventually stop supplying services to the Wall and checkpoints and may limit its activities to providing security services to shopping facilities in the illegal settlements, as long as it maintains its commitments to the prison service in Israel it is guilty of complicity in gross violations of the Geneva Convention and could, in theory, stand trial in countries that accept evidence of corporate complicity in violations of the Geneva convention.

On 17 April, Palestine Prisoners' Day, Palestinian civil society and human rights organisations called for a campaign to target corporations profiting directly from the Israeli prison system, in particular "for action to be taken to hold to account G4S... which helps to maintain and profit from Israel's prison system, for its complicity with Israeli violations of international law."

On the same day it was announced that G4S had lost the contract to supply security services to the European Community. Many organisations throughout Europe had lobbied against the renewal of this contract.

It is beyond belief that in the UK this company is being garlanded with praise for its contribution to the Olympics, embraced as a partner for our beleaguered Health Service and chosen as the preferred partner in the privatisation of the prisons and criminal justice system. In addition it has won contracts to provide social housing across the country with its latest one covering



the Midlands, East of England, North West and Yorkshire and Humberside, worth a staggering £203 million.

Surely our public services should be more selective about the company they keep and we as a society should be campaigning against the granting of any contracts to G4S in light of their actions in Israel and occupied Palestine.

- Diana Neslen works with the Group4campaign. Email: Group4campaign@gmail.com. A blog for all the organisations working to target G4S is at: <http://notog4s.blogspot.co.uk>
- For the full Who Profits? report on G4S, see www.whoprofits.org/g4s_report

Social media has impact

An article analysing how social media brought global attention to the Palestinian hunger strikers and to a new website called Love Under Apartheid that examines the impact of Israeli occupation on Palestinian intimate and family relationships was posted in March on Electronic Intifada.

Written by Abraham Greenhouse, a solidarity and BDS activist based in New York, the article explores just why the campaigns were effective – a question that is vitally important for activists who want to harness the global power of social media on behalf of demanding justice for the Palestinians.

Activist Tanya Keilani organised Love Under Apartheid (<http://loveunderapartheid.com>) after learning of the occupation-related problems a Palestinian friend was having in planning her wedding. "I was really upset that her future was so uncertain; love is hard enough to navigate without such policies," she said.

The website, launched on the eve of Valentine's Day, includes moving videos of lovers and married couples describing their problems under Israeli restrictions. Tanya looked at what social media channels were best for the campaign. "Twitter and Facebook were obvious choices but it was really useful to release a promotional video that was entertaining, well made, and easily accessible to multiple audiences, and to host the video on a site normally untouched by political campaigns (FunnyOrDie)."

The campaign for the hunger strikers, beginning with Khader Anan, was less centralised but also had clear goals. Firstly it was to increase the visibility of the strike within the social media sphere, then to encourage mainstream media to report on the story. Read the full article at <http://tinyurl.com/bu666cv>.



Lana and Taiseer on Love Under Apartheid.

Eye on the web

● Palestinian Christians and the Israeli Ambassador to the US

The Israeli Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, made the absurd claim on the CBS programme, 60 minutes, on 22 April that Palestinian Christians were leaving the West Bank due to Muslim extremism, not Israel's occupation. The Institute for Middle East Understanding collected responses from Palestinian Christians: <http://tinyurl.com/d9aw7xv>.

● Truth told on Israeli "Big Brother"

The truth about what Israel is doing to the Palestinians found a brilliantly eloquent and forceful champion in the figure of 27-year-old Tel Aviv-based artist, Saar Szekely, in the unlikely forum of the Israeli version of Big Brother.



Szekely debated with his co-stars saying things like: "Israel doesn't want peace. It wants land" and "Israel is on the brink of catastrophe and your eyes are closed." Such views are rarely aired in Israel but the show had its highest ever ratings as 40% of Israeli TVs were tuned in. <http://tinyurl.com/br76n17>

● Land Day Demos

At least one person was killed by the IDF and 130 injured in big demonstrations marking Palestinian Land Day. In addition, people from 82 countries took part in actions in front of their embassies in the Global March to Jerusalem.

There's a good report on RT: <http://tinyurl.com/cg2xa7n>.

● Life in a refugee camp

In a new UNRWA documentary, *Someone Like Me*, a young Lebanese man visits Burj Barajneh Camp. The 24-minute film offers a rare glimpse of life inside a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. <http://tinyurl.com/cyev96t>

● Excess baggage in the OPTs

If you missed the BBC Radio 4 travel programme, hosted by John McCarthy, on travelling in the OPTs, catch it again at: <http://tinyurl.com/7pu72lg>.

The Praver Plan:

Total destruction of Bedouin way of life

In January the government of Israel published the memorandum of a bill named “Regulation of the Bedouin settlement in the Negev” – commonly known as the Praver Plan – which states the steps to be implemented forcibly to remove the overwhelming majority of the residents of Israel’s “unrecognised” villages – around 30,000 people – and confiscate about two thirds of the land remaining in their possession.

Here **Dr Yeela Raanan** analyses the methods the government is planning to use to defeat the widespread resistance to its unjust plans.

This bill is currently going through the legislative process in the Knesset and soon will become law. And this is what the Bedouin are now facing:

- The bill’s main aim is to force the Bedouin to give up the little land they are still holding onto.
- In order to do so, the bill spells out an intense, violent and destructive process, utilising family pressure, bulldozers and incarceration.
- The bill is written in a confusing manner, so that the majority of the Bedouin community are incapable of even understanding what the government is putting before them. Ironically, they are expected to give their comments via the web.
- The government is spending a very large amount of money to send emissaries to “convince” the Bedouin that accepting this bill is to their benefit. At the same time the media is cooperating with the government and remaining silent regarding all protests and criticisms against this dangerous bill. Thus, the two amazing demonstrations of the Bedouin – of over 10,000 in Beer Sheva and another 6,000 in Jerusalem – were not covered at all by the Hebrew media.

Just a couple of items from the bill will show you the monstrosity of it:

1. Cynically utilising family pressure

Members of the Bedouin community are not interested in monetary compensation for their lands; they want the land itself. A person can receive up to 50% of his land in “compensation” IF he convinces ALL his siblings and cousins to sign that they

are giving up their land claims too (again for 50% in land compensation). However, if any of the siblings does not wish to play along, then *all* other siblings will receive less land in compensation but instead receive some insignificant monetary compensation.

What does this mean? *It means that there will be strife in all the Bedouin families.* As all Bedouin are people, they will not always agree. Therefore one person will receive far less land because his brother will refuse to sign his land away. From this point on, they will not speak to each other

for generations... and to think that the government is creating this kind of strife within families – is horrendous.

2. According to the bill, when it is time to “clear” a piece of land of Bedouin this is the process:

- The prime minister signs that this specific area is now to be cleared.
- The Bedouin have two weeks in which to clear out everything: structures, animals, trees, people and movables.
- The government may then demolish anything left in the area and incarcerate for two years anyone remaining.
- The bill prevents the intervention of the courts, as it states that there is no need for a court injunction to demolish the structures and that the court may at the most postpone the “clearing” by one week.

This process will be implemented upon the entire area of the unrecognised villages within five years.

Where will the people go to? It is not specified. Does the government need to provide those it is clearing out with another place to go to? It is not specified. Do the residents of the villages, as they are being cleared off, have any say in where they will have to move to? It is not specified.



Bedouin women protesting against the Praver Plan. Photo: Silvia Baorini, Demotix.



A Bedouin family and their demolished home. Photo: Adalah.

Nowadays the Bedouin do not have sufficient land to live their lives in ease. A stark statistic is that each Bedouin in an agricultural community has an average of half an acre of land to use. In comparison, every Jewish person living in an agricultural community in the Negev has over six acres.

And it is important to remember that many more members of a Bedouin agricultural community actually make a living from agriculture than of the Jewish communities. This bill, if it succeeds, will reduce the half-acre of agricultural lands to 0.001 of an acre per person.

It means that this is an end, a total destruction, of Bedouin traditional life and their ability to live off the land. Considering that about 20% of the Bedouin today live from agriculture, it is devastating.

What can you do to help?

1. Contact your representatives and ask them to ask Israel difficult questions regarding its policies towards the Bedouin.
2. Help spread this information. Since the Bedouin are a weakened community, the

government of Israel feels it can do anything it wishes to this community, and no one will care. Let's show them we care!

3. Start bombarding Israeli government officials with your faxes, emails, phone calls. Here are the important figures:

- Minister Binyamin Begin. He is the person assigned to listen to the community and make amendments to the bill according to their needs. (All he is doing is trying to convince the Bedouin that this is the best deal for them and they must join the process.) Email: bbegin@knesset.gov.il; Tel: 02-6408022, 02-6703382; Fax: 02-6703386.

- Yehuda Bahar, the one in charge of implementing the plan, head of the Authority for the Settlement of the Bedouin. Tel: 08-6268735; Fax: 08-6268729; Email: YehudaB@moch.gov.il.

- Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Tel: 02-6705512; Fax: 02-5664838.

- The Israeli Ambassador in your area.
- Your Ambassador in Israel.

We call on the government of Israel to take measures concerning the integration of the Arab-Bedouin community of the Negev into the region based on the principles of partnership, equality, human rights and a future of prosperity for all the Negev residents.

Dr. Yeela Raanan works with the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev (RCUV).
<http://rcuv.wordpress.com>
Email: negevedouin@gmail.com

Empowering Bedouin women

By Ann Davies

The Sidreh project, a programme of education and empowerment of Bedouin women, is becoming a blueprint for the unrecognised villages in the Negev. Already the scheme, which teaches literacy and leads to further education, operates in 15 of them and enables women to recognise their rights and gives them a voice in the community.

Sidreh has helped over 1400 women to read and write. The director of its education and community programme, Hanan Alsaneh, said she was optimistic for the future when she spoke recently at Fair Trade events and to the Scottish Women's Convention at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

Mrs Alsaneh described how women have revived the Bedouin tradition of weaving woollen rugs on home-made ground looms. The Lakiya Negev Weaving programme, set up in 1991, welcomes visitors to the centre and

organises tours giving opportunities to observe Bedouin life. It supports 70 families, being their only source of income.

Economic success for Sidreh is accompanied by growing political involvement which led to 700 women protesting in Jerusalem against house demolitions and a new sense of empowerment. "As a result, women are not afraid to say in public what their rights are," Mrs Alsaneh said.

Sixty women have finished high school and a special curriculum has been developed. Twenty-two teachers have been trained to work in the unrecognised villages. Because of the Bedouin tradition prohibiting women from travelling, 53% of women in the recognised townships and nearly 90% in the unrecognised villages over the age of 40 could not read or write.

Mrs Alsaneh, the only girl in a family of nine sisters and two brothers to go to university, became angry over the plight of women who felt helpless in the community, faced with violence, health and economic issues.

"Before 1948 Bedouin women were producers: they worked in agriculture and wove the family tent, giving them status," she said. "After 1948 they were reduced to being consumers. Their traditional role in the family had vanished because of Israeli government policies forcing them off the

land. A hundred thousand Bedouin now live in only 3% of Israel and the government want to reduce it to 1%."

Asked how supporters in the UK could help, Mrs Alsaneh said buying the rugs gave women income and increased their self-empowerment. She urged people to tell the Israeli government to stop their policies against the Bedouin, particularly regarding the land.

Lakiya is in partnership with Palcrafts/Hadeel, the charity and Palestinian Fair Trade crafts centre in Edinburgh where small rugs are on sale.

■ See www.hadeel.org.



Hanan Alsaneh, left, and Hadeel volunteer, Kathleen Campbell

€49 million of development projects destroyed by Israel

Israel has destroyed development projects in Palestine worth €49.2 million over the past decade, of which €29.4m were funded by the European Union or its member states, according to the European Commission.

The figures – the most detailed yet on damage by Israeli attacks – were provided in March by Štefan Füle, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, in response to a question from Chris Davies, a British Liberal MEP.

Füle also provided a list of 82 projects damaged in Israeli attacks against the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, of which the largest is Gaza airport, built with €9.5m in funding from Germany, Spain and Sweden, and damaged in 2001–02. Also in 2001, the IDF destroyed camps used by Palestine's civil police in the Gaza strip, built with €4.6m in funding from by the Commission.

Chris Davies said: "As fast as the EU pays out, the Israelis reduce our efforts to rubble, or so it sometimes seems.

"We should be able to expect better from a close partner like Israel but the EU refuses to apply any sanctions against Israel's misbehaviour so we will continue to be treated with disregard and contempt."

In his response, Füle said: "Discreet démarches are often more effective than public announcements on such occasions." He confirmed that the Commission had not received any compensation from Israel for the damage.

For the full report: <http://tinyurl.com/cnyhc5w>.

Renewable energy projects to be demolished

Six EU-funded wind and solar energy projects worth over €200,000 which provide electricity for 600 West Bank Palestinians were put on a "demolition list" by Israel in February, allegedly in response to an EU heads of mission report which called for laws to prevent the financing of settlements.

West Bank project managers say the 'stop work' orders served against the projects are "a first step to almost automatic demolition." Elad Orian, the co-founder of Comet-ME, which oversaw the projects, said that 400 people would be left completely without electricity if the demolition plan went ahead.

"The people will be left without light or the ability to charge cellphones, which is the only means of communication there," he said. "You will have no refrigerators, which are crucial for the economic sustainability of farming communities, and women will be burdened with a lot of very gender-specific manual labour."

In all, the initiative backed by Comet-ME and the German group, Medico International, has built 15 solar plants and hybrid systems electrifying villages with a combined population of some 1,500 people.

Some EU diplomats – and many NGOs – see a link in the timing with a confidential report by the EU's top regional diplomats into settlement building and house demolitions in Area C. It called on



the Commission to draft legislation "to prevent/discourage financial transactions in support of settlement activity."

Less than two weeks after the report was leaked, notices were served on clean energy projects in Haribat al-Nabi, Shaab al-Butum, Qawawis and Wadi al-Shesh. "It is not just the Germans that were slapped in the face but the whole EU," said Tsafirir Cohen, a spokesman for Medico International. "That was their answer to the Area C report."

EU delegates also produced a report into East Jerusalem which found that Israel was working to annex it – a policy the EU sees as illegal. It said that Israel's policies since 2001 have encouraged the emigration of Christian residents and "have run counter to its stated commitment to a sustainable peace with the Palestinians through the two-state solution."

The report recommended that EU officials should not meet Israeli representatives in East Jerusalem and that they should share information on violent settlers in order to assess whether to allow them to enter EU member states.

- EU Heads of Mission Report – Jerusalem 2011 <http://scr.bi/ySUjGq>
- EU Report on Area C and Palestinian State Building, July 2011 <http://scr.bi/zulhV0>

800 US nuclear triggers smuggled to Israel

An espionage ring smuggled 800 krytons to the Israeli Ministry of Defence for use in the clandestine Israeli nuclear weapons programme, according to FBI files declassified in March.

A kryton is a gas-filled tube which can be used as a trigger for nuclear weapons.

The files reveal

California-based MILCO International Inc shipped 15 orders totalling 800 krytons through an intermediary to the Israeli Ministry of Defence between 1979 and 1983.

MILCO obtained the krytons from EG&G Inc. Arnon Milchan, an Israeli movie producer who became successful in Hollywood for such movies as *Brazil*, *JFK* and *Pretty Woman*, brokered the transactions with MILCO through his Heli Trading Company after the US government rejected several requests for kryton export licenses to Israel.

MILCO President, Richard Kelly Smyth, was indicted on 30 counts of smuggling and making false statements in May, 1984. Smyth and his wife promptly fled to Israel but were captured in Spain in July 2001 and Smyth was extradited to the US where he pleaded guilty to violating the Arms Export Control Act. In November, 2001, he was sentenced to 40 years in prison and fined \$20,000 though he was freed within four years because of his advancing age. No charges were filed against Milchan or those who secretly helped Smyth flee or who covered his living expenses abroad.

A 2011 biography, *Confidential: The Life of Secret Agent Turned Hollywood Tycoon, Arnon Milchan*, by Meir Doron and Joseph Gelman, claims that Milchan was recruited into Israel's LAKAM economic espionage unit in his 20s. He is also the close confidant of Shimon Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu.

- See the FBI files at www.IRmep.org/ila/krytons



More than just a tree

For Fair Trade Fortnight, the Palestinian olive oil importer, Zaytoun, hosted **Abu Kamal**, an olive farmer from Al Rameh and part of the Palestine Fair Trade Association, on a UK tour. The 15 members of the PFTA co-operative in Al Rameh, near Jenin, produce around 10 tons of olive oil a year. Here **Manal Abdallah**, of Canaan Fair Trade, who accompanied him, describes what the visit meant to them.

Fair Trade Fortnight for us was more than just a way to promote our products. It was a way for us to say: we are farmers from Palestine, a nation that has a long history, rich with its culture and heritage, that deserves to exist and to live in dignity.

It was a pride for us to carry the Palestinian olive oil bottle to every event we participated in. A bottle that says this product is MADE IN PALESTINE. It doesn't say made in Area A, B, or C. It doesn't say Made in the West Bank, or the OPT. It is a bottle that acts as an ambassador for Palestinian farmers, carrying with it a taste of their history, their attachment to the land, their homes and their olive trees.

“It was a pride for us to carry the olive oil bottle to every event”

It was a pleasure for us to meet hundreds of people who listened to our story with full attention and complete interest. During discussions, we felt how touched the audiences were after hearing Abu Kamal talk about how Fair Trade changed his life and the lives of 1700 other farmers like him.

Abu Kamal talked about the importance of the olive tree. “For us it is more than just a tree. It is a main source of income for the Palestinian families. It represents our culture, our heritage, our history, our humanity and presence. We inherited this tree from our ancestors who planted it so that we can eat from it. It is our duty to take



Abu Kamal and Manal Abdallah with supporters in Dundee. Photo: Zaytoun.

care of it and protect it so our children and grandchildren can eat from it.”

Abu Kamal also talked about the challenges farmers face because of the Israeli occupation in terms of denial of accessing their properties and denial of accessing water resources, and the continuous settlers' attacks. “Knowing how sacred and important this tree is for us, imagine what it feels like when someone comes and takes it away from us! When someone comes and simply uproots or burns our olive trees. When someone comes and builds a wall through our lands taking away big portions of it, splitting it into pieces to which we are denied to access.

“But regardless of all these challenges, we will endure and continue to exist, because this is our way of resisting occupation and oppression.”

Abu Kamal also talked about how Fair Trade in Palestine was a way to include women to participate in bringing income for their families. In Palestine's Fair Trade Association, we now have six women co-operatives engaged in producing organic products like za'atar, couscous, almonds, bulgur, sundried tomatoes and soap. Those products are now exported to 17 countries.

“This is our way of resisting occupation and oppression”

Fair Trade had a direct and visible impact on the Palestinian farmers' lives. Because of the much higher income he now received,

Abu Kamal was able to pay his son's university tuition fees which he couldn't afford before. Knowing there was a market for his products, Abu Kamal started to care more about his lands, his trees and his crops. He even swapped from conventional to organic farming, even if it cost him higher.

“Now I don't have to worry about how long it would take me to sell my products. Because of Fair Trade, I can assure my whole crop will be sold in the season,” he said.

Through the Fair Trade premium, farmers are able to invest in social projects benefitting their communities and co-operatives. “With the premium, we were able to bring new computers to schools in my village, a new fridge to store the medicine in the health care centre and new heating systems and air conditioners in the kindergarten,” Abu Kamal said.

What impressed me the most, personally, is how much people care about Fair Trade in the UK. Visiting all these Fair Trade schools, villages and supporters, gave us a push to continue what we're doing, to keep on planting, enduring, resisting and investing in the spirit of Fair Trade regardless of all the challenges.

Abu Kamal always ended his talk by inviting people to visit Palestine, to share with our farmers the joy of the olive harvest season, to experience the generous hospitality of the Palestinian people, to celebrate with them the fruit of their accomplishments, and to taste delicacies from the Land of Milk and Honey! We look forward to really seeing you all at Canaan and in Palestine very soon!

■ www.canaanfairtrade.com
■ www.zaytoun.org

Green Party condemns the JNF

Green Party of England and Wales members voted overwhelmingly in February to support an international call for action against JNF practices in Israel and the OPTs and to revoke its charity status in the UK.

In moving the motion, **Deborah Fink** alerted the conference to “JNF greenwash” and said that “the JNF is a major impediment to realisation of Green Party policy on the Middle East, therefore the JNF should be condemned. As a charity, the JNF gets tax advantages so, through our taxes, we are subsidising injustice.”

Here she explains why she feels so strongly.

I joined the Green Party of England and Wales two years ago because of its support for social and environmental justice, human and animal rights, and its position on Palestine – it supports BDS.

These are all reasons for the party to take a stand on the JNF; an organisation which masquerades as eco-Zionism and greenwashes the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The JNF is known for establishing forests and parks over the remains of destroyed Palestinian villages. It occurred to me that support from GPEW would be a potential boost to the “Stop the JNF” campaign and that this was something I could do.

“The response of Green Party members was astounding”

The response of Green Party members at the Spring Conference was astounding. There were no opposing speeches and only three people voted against the motion.



This is the latest blow to the JNF. As well as the resolutions against it, 68 MPs, including Green Party leader, Caroline Lucas, have signed EDM 1677 against the JNF. For the first time in the history of the JNF, our Prime Minister is not a patron and neither are the leaders of the other main political parties.

The level of support indicated at Conference for the campaign against the JNF should encourage all of us to move similar motions at our trade union branches and with the organisations that we are involved in. In the UK, as in over 50 countries, the JNF is rewarded with tax benefits for their direct role in ethnic cleansing. There is much more for us to do!

Please join the Stop the JNF Campaign and seek affiliation from your branch. www.stopthejnf.org or email uk@stopthejnf.org.

**Deborah Fink is co-founder of
Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods**

New Centre for Palestine Studies

An exciting new centre of teaching and research in London, the Centre for Palestine Studies, which will be part of the London Middle East Institute of the School of Oriental and African Studies, was launched in March.



Professor Gilbert Achcar, Chair of the Centre (pictured), explained to a packed auditorium that SOAS already had 35 members of staff from a variety of disciplines with interests in this field: it made sense to formalise and exploit this wide-ranging expertise by bringing them together into one institution to promote the study of all aspects of Palestinian history, politics, economics and cultural life – and to bring these to the attention of a wider, non-academic public.

One major project will be the development of an interdisciplinary MA programme in Palestine Studies, and an active research programme will also be encouraged. The vibrant programme of lectures, conferences and cultural activities already hosted by SOAS will be further enhanced.

Dr Karma Nabulsi, a member of the Centre's Advisory Committee, spoke about the development of Palestine Studies from very modest beginnings to the present day. Outside Palestine, the Centres in the universities of Exeter and Columbia in the US are flourishing; SOAS' new Centre will collaborate closely with them and with universities in Palestine.

Professor Ilan Pappé spoke of the hegemony of the Israeli narrative up to the 1970s, with Palestine being seen merely in relation to “the conflict.” He stressed the need to have input into the British public and political scene; for example, topics like the boycott campaign should be part of that informed debate. The ultimate aim of the Centre, he felt, should be overtly political: a free Palestine.

For more information see www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cps.

Fundraising – it's absolutely vital!

In any not-for-profit organisation, the need for fundraising is ongoing. But in these straitened economic times, it is at the same time more vital and more difficult.

PSC has a solid core strength – the commitment of its members, branches and affiliates. We continue to grow and expand in influence, building the mass solidarity movement that is so desperately needed and placing Palestine as the key international solidarity issue of our time. But we cannot do this without a generous and steady flow of funds to support the running of the office, produce the literature and organise the campaigns.

So please do your best to raise whatever you can as an individual, or as a branch. Here are a few ideas to inspire you!

Join the PSC 100 Club

The 100 Club is a group of PSC members and supporters who commit to a regular donation of at least £100 a year through a standing order. Having a solid and predictable income is great for helping us to plan ahead effectively and to remain in the forefront of solidarity work in the UK and Europe.

Auction raises £10,500!!

It took a lot of planning and hard work but when we in the Richmond and Kingston branch totted up the total and found we had raised an astonishing £10,500 from our Auction of Promises, we felt it had all been worthwhile.

An Auction of Promises is a simple idea that can be done on any scale – not every community has the resources to donate as much as ours did in a well-heeled and politically aware London suburb.

On whatever scale, however, it can be both effective and an enjoyable occasion in which to spread the word about the work of PSC.

The way it works is that you persuade people to donate Promises, then you organise an Auction in which people bid for them – with the money going to PSC.

For the Promises, we thought of anyone we knew who could do anything. For example, one friend runs a website design business and donated two hours of her time, another is a builder and donated half a day, one is a gardener and gave three hours work, two are freelance cooks – one is doing a “food and wine matching” demonstration and the other teaching “how to cook dinner for eight in two hours.” There was dinner in the House of Lords with Baroness Jenny Tonge and tea in the House of Commons with Jeremy Corbyn, MP.

Three people who own holiday homes generously donated a week each. We got tickets for concerts and local theatres and vouchers from restaurants. Think creatively! Anyone with a passion or skill, for instance for fishing, embroidery, playing cards, pigeon fancying, whatever, could offer to give a couple of hours of instruction.

We ended up with 36 Promises – far too many to be auctioned in one go – which brings me to the second essential

element for success: careful organisation. We decided from the start to focus on making it a fun night out so as to draw in people who are generally supportive but don't usually attend PSC events.

We hired a hall attached to a pub and organised food to be supplied by the Palestinian Maramia Restaurant in London's Notting Hill – it was delicious! We invited the fine oud player, Firas Jabloun, who very generously played for nothing.

For publicity we created “brochures” listing the Promises, attractively laid out with pictures, which we emailed to anyone we thought might be interested and invited people to come in exchange for a £15 donation to cover our costs (better to avoid formally selling tickets so as not to fall foul of ‘elf ‘n’ safety requirements).

Then we added our star attraction – a very fine auctioneer in the person of former Labour MP, QC, author and wit, Bob Marshall-Andrews. We were very lucky in that he lives locally and had done it before and he proved to be magic on the night. The key is to find someone with the gift of the gab who can “talk up” the Promises to get the bidding going.

One pitfall to be wary of is “Auction fatigue.” After eight or ten Promises, the crowd's attention inevitably flags. So we split our Promises into a Live Auction and a Silent Auction – where they are listed on a board and people place their bids throughout the evening.

We split the 18 Promises remaining in the Live Auction into two halves, with a break in between for the food and entertainment. We created a Powerpoint of pictures to display while Bob weaved jokes and anecdotes around the serious business of persuading people to part with their cash.

A friend kindly decorated the tables with cloths and napkins in the colours of the Palestinian flag and 120 people crowded in. The atmosphere was great and afterwards many people said what a good time they had had. We were pleased not only to raise the money but also that people went away with a positive image of the PSC and the Palestinian cause.

More details of how to organise an Auction of Promises, and our brochures, will be on the website in due course.



Guests study the Promises brochures.



Firas Jabloun.

Leave a legacy

Remembering the PSC in your will means you will continue to help us to end injustice for Palestinians. Nearly three-quarters of us give to causes in our lifetime – but less than five per cent leave anything for causes after their death. It's sensible to make a will. And when you do, please think of the PSC.

30th anniversary sponsored walk

There will be the most stunning mountain scenery. There will be comfortable accommodation in a truly beautiful converted barn with gorgeous views. There will be exercise, fresh air, relaxation and great company. This is the delicious recipe for the PSC's 30th anniversary sponsored walk from 3 to 5 August – how can you resist!

The walk marks a return to our first outing in 2007 in the Brecon Beacons National Park. We have sole use of the Wern Watkin



Bunkhouse located high up on Mynnedd Llangattock and offering direct walking access to the mountainside, ancient woodland, caves, cliffs and industrial heritage of the area.

Wern Watkin is a Visit Wales five star graded bunkhouse which sleeps up to 30 people in seven fully en-suite bedrooms. There is a massive dining room/seating area and a wonderful outdoor space opening out onto ancient woodlands. There is under-floor heating throughout, excellent drying facilities and ample hot water.

The weekend will start on the evening of Friday, 3 August, when we will meet up and socialise. On Saturday, 4 August, we will have two levels of walk, lasting about six hours. In the evening there will be a social with a Welsh and a Palestinian flavour to which local supporters will be invited to come and meet the walkers. On Sunday, 5 August, we will have two shorter walks of about three hours finishing at a local pub before people set off home.

Comedian Mark Thomas, who created the enormously successful show, "Walking the Wall," sent this message of support:

"Palestine is the moral issue of our age; the military occupation and apartheid-style subjugation of Palestinians by the Israeli state is unconscionable and abhorrent. In the struggle for human rights and justice, the PSC has been a consistent critic of the Israeli regime and supporter of the Palestinian cause for freedom, so I am delighted to support their work.

"I hope anyone reading this will either join the fundraising walk in Brecon Beacons or sponsor someone doing it. In solidarity, Mark Thomas."

For more details: email psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org, or phone 020 7700 6192.

Gill Swain

News from the branches...



From left to right: Kholood Ersheid, Zayneb al Shalalfeh, Maha Rezaq, Kholoud al Ajarma, Sameeha Elwan.

The wonderful women of Palestine

Women from Gaza, the West Bank and Nazareth conducted an inspiring week-long speaking tour of the North of England in March, coinciding with International Women's Day. The women were welcome guests in **Bradford, York, Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Rochdale** and **Manchester**; one speaker also visited **Durham** and **Newcastle**, maximising the impact of the tour.

The PSC branches which organised the event wanted to celebrate the centrality of women in the Palestinian struggle for justice, a role which dates back to the Nakba when Palestinians began to lose their lands and women had to hold the family

together. The speakers exemplified that strand in Palestinian life: they are young but their experience gave them a poised analysis of the issues, coupled with a wealth of personal evidence and striking anecdotes which made their testimony unforgettable.

"The PSC branches wanted to celebrate the centrality of women in the Palestinian struggle"

The speakers were **Kholoud al Ajarma**, of Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem, a worker in a human rights organisation and volunteer in the Lajee Cultural Centre; **Zayneb al Shalalfeh**, from Hebron, who works for Life Source, an organisation focusing on the right to water; **Sameeha Elwan**, a teacher from Gaza, whose blog during Operation Cast Lead was closely followed by many; **Kholood Ersheid**, from Nazareth, who works with abused women and with a group trying to prevent house demolitions, and **Maha Rezaq**, from Gaza, who worked for NGOs and now studies in London.

The women's life experiences were varied but their analysis of the problem consistent. The refugee experience emerged as a theme because, although only Kholoud al Ajarma lives in a refugee camp, the families of all the women had been refugees.

Members reported there were many memorable moments, such as: "Being invited to listen to the witness statements of women whose homes had been demolished: 'a house is a memory, not just about walls,' and hearing of one traumatised child's residual fear of yellow, the colour of the bulldozers which wrecked her home.

"Learning about a speaker's mother who, when ill, was obliged to crawl through a tunnel to get medical treatment because the

Co-op expands boycott

In a terrific BDS milestone, the Co-op decided in April to expand its boycott of goods produced in Israeli settlements into a complete boycott of all Israeli companies that source any goods in settlements.

The Co-op, which is owned by its six million members, is the UK's fifth biggest food retailer with 4,800 stores across the UK, more than 106,000 employees and an annual turnover of £13 billion. The decision made it the first major European supermarket group to end trade with companies that export produce from the illegal settlements.

The announcement came just before the company's regional AGMs, many of which were due to discuss motions on the issue. Many Co-op members had spent months voicing their concerns about trade with complicit companies through co-ordinated letter-writing and discussions with local offices.

The move will have an immediate impact on four suppliers: **Agrexco, Arava Export**

Growers, Adafresh and Mehadrin, Israel's largest agricultural export company. A spokesperson from the Palestinian Union of Agricultural Work Committees said: "Trade with such companies constitutes a major form of support for Israel's apartheid regime over the Palestinian people, so we warmly welcome this principled decision by the Co-Operative."

Cultural boycott and protests

The Irish band **Dervish**, which performed at the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest, pulled out of a series of Irish music concerts in Israel in June, so as not to violate calls for the cultural boycott. American rock musician, **Cat Power**, also cancelled her show in Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, the **Batsheva Dance Company**, identified by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as "the best known global ambassador of Israeli culture," faced protests throughout its recent US tour.

Churches heed the call

The General Conference of the **United Methodist Church** in the US called for a boycott of all Israeli companies "operating in the occupied Palestinian territories" – which means the great majority of Israeli corporations.

Meeting in Tampa, Florida, the Conference also gave overwhelming support to the "Kairos Palestine" document and its call "for an end to military occupation and human rights violations through nonviolent actions" which include BDS.

Also in the US, the **Presbyterian Church's** full General Assembly Mission Council voted in February to approve a recommendation from its Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) committee to divest from its holdings in Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions. All three sell equipment, technology and communication systems to the Israeli military.

Israeli soldiers would not let her pass. Winning books in a writing competition and having to wait two years to come to Britain to get them because the Israelis didn't allow them into Gaza. Gazan students here in England speaking of the heaven of libraries and bookshops and receiving post through the letterbox - something never experienced before.

"Mothers using the same water over and over, to wash children and clothes and then finally to flush toilets. Showers timed to the minute and the contrast with the water-indulgence in illegal settlement flower beds. Blogging because the internet has no borders, no soldiers, no apartheid wall."

Singing protest

Protesters from **Cambridge** held a "sing-in" outside a church in March to urge choir members to pull out of a concert tour of Israel with the Israel Camerata and the Academy of English Voices.



To the tune of Bach's "O sacred head now wounded," the singers performed the words:

"Oh land so pained, insulted, by masters of Zion
Oh land of fruit, of olives and water now shorn
Oh land of blood and partings, you soon will be restored
For Palestine's stolen soil will shed its crown of thorns."

Several branches, including **Liverpool**, marked Palestinian Prisoners Day by holding protests about the hunger strikers. In **Glasgow** members marched through the city centre and occupied the BBC Scotland Headquarters demanding media coverage of the hunger strike.

Actions against council contracts being awarded to Veolia have been continuing all over the country, including in **Bristol** where members dressed up as animals to protest against the company's



sponsorship of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year award. Other branches which keep beavering away include **Faversham and Whitstable, Lambeth and Wandsworth, Leeds, West Midlands, Richmond and Kingston, Cambridge, Manchester, Aberystwyth, Brent and Harrow, West London and Merton.**



In Brief

THE FREEDOM BUS – RIDE FOR JUSTICE

The Freedom Theatre, based in Jenin refugee camp, is organising a nine-day international solidarity ride through the West Bank in September, using Playback Theatre to listen to and enact audiences' own stories of life under occupation.



Playback Theatre is a technique used in over 50 countries as a tool for community building, public dialogue, trauma recovery, social activism and popular education. Audience members share thoughts, feelings, memories and autobiographical accounts, then watch as a team of actors and musicians improvise theatre pieces using words, sound, movement, music and poetry.

As part of the lead-up to the ride, the Freedom Bus troupe has been holding Playback Theatre performances in towns, villages, refugee camps and Bedouin encampments since December 2011. The project will also use live video links to connect with Palestinians in Gaza, Israel and in neighbouring countries.

Endorsers of the Freedom Bus include Alice Walker, Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Judith Butler, John Berger, Mairead Maguire and a range of prominent Palestinian artists, scholars and human rights advocates.

The ride will be from 23 September to 1 October. For more information or to join in, see www.freedombus.ps.

THE NEW BLACK

A first ever musical collaboration between a South African band and a Palestinian oud player has created an incredibly powerful music video called "The New Black," referring to the musicians' common struggle against racial intolerance.



The New Black was written and composed by Jeremy Karodia and Ayub Mayet as "a musical reaction to the horror of the Gaza Massacre of 2008/2009 and then subsequently inspired by the book 'Mornings in Jenin' by Susan Abulhawa," according to notes accompanying the video.

It was recorded by the band, The Mavrix, in South Africa while oud player, Mohammed Omar, recorded his part in Gaza. The release of the song and video was marked on 12 March with a Skype link up between the Soweto Palestine Solidarity Alliance and activists in Palestine to launch Israeli Apartheid Week.

Naazim Adam of South Africa's Palestine Solidarity Alliance said: "This was a momentous moment as it not only signalled a growing impatience with apartheid Israel but also asserted a common bond of struggle against oppression and for a just peace between South Africans and Palestinians.

"Despite being over 1000km apart, Palestinians and Sowetans were able to feel the common brotherhood and sisterhood that unites people against racial intolerance."

Watch the video on Youtube – then Facebook and Tweet it!
<http://tinyurl.com/dykszly>.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR IMPRISONED

Noam Gur, an 18 year old from Kiryat Motzkin near Haifa, declared her refusal to serve in the Israeli Army as it is an occupying force when she was supposed to begin her national service in April and was sentenced to ten days in a military prison.

She had tried to get conscientious objector status but had been refused so had to report for service. In her declaration she

wrote: "I refuse to join an army that has, since it was established, been engaged in dominating another nation, in plundering and terrorising a civilian population that is under its control."

In an earlier letter to the army, she wrote: "For years I have been told that the control over the Palestinian people is supposed to protect me, but information about the suffering caused due to the terrorising of the Palestinian population was omitted from that story. The road to dismantling this apartheid and achieving true and just peace is long, and hard, but as I see it, actions taken by the Israeli army only push it further away.

"Over this past decade, the Palestinian people have been increasingly choosing the path of nonviolent resistance and I choose to join this path and to turn to a popular, nonviolent struggle in Palestine, rather than to serve in the Israeli army and continue the violence."

ISRAEL CUTS CONTACT WITH HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

When the United Nations Human Rights Council decided to establish an international investigative committee on the West Bank settlements in March, Israel responded by cutting all contact and



PHOTO: OREN ZIV, ACTIVESTILLS

ordering its envoy in Geneva to ignore any phone calls from the Council's chief commissioner.

An Israeli official said they would also bar the Council's fact-finding team from entering Israel and the West Bank to investigate settlement construction.

The resolution establishing the investigation, which also demanded a reversal of the settlement policy, was adopted with 36 votes in favour and ten abstentions. Only the United States voted against it.

The head of the Council, Uruguayan ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, said the decision to dispatch investigators "revealed widespread cross-regional support."

"This shows the attention that the Human Rights Council pays to the expansion of Israeli settlements," she said, adding that the Council "has always valued Israel's participation." Their decision to sever ties "would be most regrettable," she added.

MARATHON PROTEST

Poppy Hardee, a British woman living in Bethlehem, decided to run the Jerusalem marathon in protest on behalf of her Palestinian friends who were forbidden to access the city for the event. She was abused by Israeli soldiers while she ran, with one of them snatching the Palestinian flag she was carrying and spitting on it.

The race was heavily promoted worldwide and everyone was invited to participate – including, in theory, Palestinians. In reality, however, most West Bank residents could not get permission from Israel to go into Jerusalem for the event.

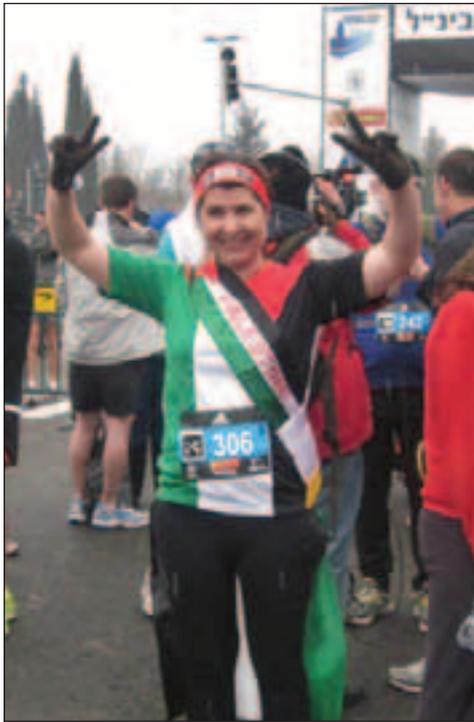
Hardee applied for the marathon and started training with a Palestinian friend, a resident of the West Bank, who also intended to run. They were dismayed to find out he was barred from Jerusalem for the race for "security reasons."

"He doesn't ever get permits, because of 'security' issues, so he can't go," Hardee told Emily Lawrence for the Electronic Intifada. "A lot of my friends from the West Bank wanted to come and support me on the day, but they couldn't. It's just not a normal race."

Another issue with the marathon was its misleading presentation of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. "I am proud that Israel's capital is part of the marathons held throughout the world," read a letter from Jerusalem's mayor, Nir Barkat, in a booklet presented to runners. While Israel declared Jerusalem as its capital shortly after its "declaration of independence" in 1948, most governments in the world have never recognised it as such.

Even the route of the marathon gave a one-sided view of the city. It was described as a "run through history," but it presented an exclusively Israeli history while sidelining Palestinian history and presence.

Hardee, who recently also ran a half marathon organised by the UNWRA in Gaza, tried to get her \$60 registration fee back when she realised it went to the Jerusalem Municipality which discriminates against Palestinians but was told it was not refundable. So she decided to run as a form of protest wearing the Palestinian colours of red, green, white and black, a sash which said "Palestine" and carrying a flag.



"I think it's a good idea to boycott it, but boycotting is not a visible thing," she said. "I think it's better to highlight the disadvantages than not do it at all."

On the day of the race, Hardee found most of her spectators and fellow runners to be surprisingly encouraging about her outfit but things changed when she got amongst a group of Israeli soldiers running on behalf of "Standing Strong Against Terror."

"One of the soldiers pushed me over, took my flag and spat on it, and swore at me," she said. "Another woman pushed me and told me 'This is Israel, Jewish land' and told me to go back to Gaza."

NO MORE CHEAP GAS FOR ISRAEL

The decision by the Egyptian authorities to stop the export of natural gas at preferential rates to Israel came as a blow to Tel Aviv and underlined both the tensions and the transformation in relations between the two countries, Dr Daud Abdullah, director of Middle East Monitor, wrote recently.

In 2005, the government of Egypt, where 50 per cent of the 85 million population live below the poverty line, signed a 20 year agreement to export natural gas to Israel for between 70 cents and \$1.5 per million thermal units. The current price on the world market is \$5 per million thermal units.

Many believed the former Egyptian dictator, Hosni Mubarak, gave this mind-boggling concession to Israel to curry favour with the Americans. Since Mubarak's overthrow in February, 2011, the pipeline conveying the gas to Israel has been blown up 15 times in the North Sinai region.

Dr Abdullah wrote that the decision to end the supply of cheap gas "suggests that Egypt is emerging from its political coma and is now on a trajectory to resume its natural leadership role in the region. Under Mubarak, the virtual giveaway of Egypt's natural gas to Israel while besieged Gaza was kept in the cold and dark was seen as patently unpatriotic and, indeed, treacherous."

Israel believes that exploitation of two major natural gas fields recently discovered off the country's northern coast could compensate for the loss of Egyptian gas. It is moving to exploit the fields, signing a deal with Cyprus to mark out maritime borders, but it faces challenges from Lebanon which claims that the gas fields lie in its territorial waters.

A report on Al Jazeera said that, because of the attacks on the pipeline, Israel had to purchase gas supplies from countries as far away as Mexico and the price of electricity had gone up 20 per cent.

LAPTOPS FOR TENT DWELLERS

The Villages Group, a Palestinian-Israeli group which supports villages in the southern part of Area C, delivered a laptop computer donated by Liat, a Tel Aviv school teacher, to Sara – a student living in Susiya, a Palestinian village consisting of makeshift cabins and tents in the South Hebron Hills.

After they issued an appeal in Hebrew for a laptop, a further five were given to help the 20 students the group supports. Electricity for the computers comes from wind and solar sources supplied by the Israeli-Palestinian team of COMET-ME. However, the Israeli Civil Administration has served demolition orders on many of them.

Meanwhile residents of the Jewish settlement of Susiya have lately joined the far Right "Regavim" advocacy group and are acting with it to urge the Civil Administration to destroy the homes of Sara's family and other families in Palestinian Susiya.

A spokesperson for the Villages Group said: "Nothing is easier than demolishing the dwellings of Sara and her family. Sara's aspirations for freedom, knowledge and brotherhood, however, are far more



steadfast in the face of harm and destruction and reinforced by all peace and freedom lovers in Israel and abroad.”

<http://villagesgroup.wordpress.com>

ISRAEL LOVES IRAN – AND VICE VERSA

The “Israel Loves Iran” Facebook campaign started by Israeli graphic artists Ronny Edry and his wife, Michal Tamir, has received numerous responses from Iranians who said they bore no ill-will towards Israelis and only wanted peace.

The campaign began with dozens of Israelis putting up pictures of themselves with the words, “Iranians, we will never bomb your country, we [heart] you.”



In response, many Iranian posts read: “My Israeli friends, I do not hate you; I do not want war. Love, Peace.” Most of the Iranians posted their messages with their faces partially veiled, probably out of fear of the Iranian authorities.

One message stated: “Dear Israeli Friends and World! Iranians love peace and we hate hate!... and we don't need any Nuclear Power to show it!”

In addition to Edry and Tamir's initiative, a new Facebook group titled “Israelis against a War with Iran,” was begun. “The newspaper headlines tell the tale: The prime minister is trying to legitimise an Israeli attack on Iran, which is expected soon,” a post on the group's page reads.

“Most of the Israeli public is opposed to an adventure of this sort

that may have catastrophic consequences. Many experts warn of the results an attack on Iran and a declaration of war of this sort may bring.”

UK STUDENT LEADERS CONDEMN ISRAELI STUDENT RACISM

At the time of going to press, over 130 UK student leaders had signed a letter condemning a decision by Zefat Academic College Students' Union in Israel to limit the Union presidency to those who have served at least two years in the Israeli military, effectively barring the country's Palestinian citizens – who constitute about 60% of the student body – from standing.

Palestinian citizens of Israel – 20% of the population – are not required to complete National Service and as a result are often disadvantaged in employment where many businesses and public sector posts make it a condition.

Student leaders in the UK were shocked by the racism of the policy, particularly when they learned this is the first year that Palestinian students at the College have put up for election to several positions within the Student Union – including President.

Palestinian students in Zefat are exposed to racism on a daily basis. There is an ongoing campaign by dozens of municipal chief Rabbis to pressurise Jewish property owners not to rent flats to Palestinian students. Eli Zvieli, an 89 year old holocaust survivor who rented out his spare rooms to three students, was threatened with having his house burned down and called a traitor to Israel.

The UK students' statement, published on the website “We Are All Hana Shalabi,” says the Zefat College policy “clearly targets Palestinian citizens of Israel.” It goes on:

“The implicit racism of this policy is deeply concerning as it raises the wider question of the attitude towards Palestinian students who study alongside Israeli students at institutions such as Zefat College. We call for the policy to be revoked, and for Palestinian students to be granted the same opportunities to represent, and be represented, as their fellow students.”

For the statement and signatories, see <http://tinyurl.com/clmd3q5>.



Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians

By Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, edited by Frank Barat

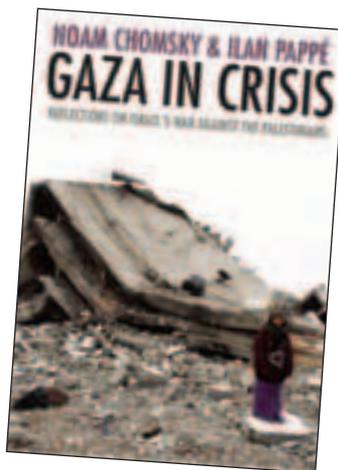
Published by Penguin Books

This book is based on a number of interviews combined with essays given to Frank Barat by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, both of whom are respected academics who have written extensively on Palestine. Chomsky is a US professor of linguistics and Pappé is an Israeli historian.

In his introduction Barat, a human rights activist and writer, explains that he didn't want to publish another book on the Palestine-Israel conflict merely for the sake of it as there are already hundreds of books on the subject. So what would be different about this one? To answer this, Barat asked himself: “Why has this ‘conflict’ lasted for so long, who can stop it and how?”

His initial conclusions were: ignorance, the people and popular resistance, adding, “I sincerely believe that what is happening in Palestine would never have lasted this long if the public were properly informed about what had been really taking place in this part of the Middle East.” Therefore the main function of the book is to give the reader an alternative narrative to that of the mainstream media, especially the Israeli/US version of events.

Pappé explains that American public opinion was initially shaped by Christian missionaries whose message was often misinformed



and distorted. For example he describes a Texas preacher, Cyrus Scofield, who produced a fundamentalist version of the Bible which, Pappé says, was “the most explicit sketch of the three prongs that form the basis of US policy today: the return of the Jews, the decline of Islam and the rising fortunes of the United States as a world power.”

In the chapter “Exterminate All The Brutes: 2009,” Chomsky described Operation Cast Lead as a planned attack of state terrorism against the civilian population that had its roots in the 2006 election when Palestinians “voted the wrong way.” However the effect of the Israeli offensives in Gaza served only to infuriate the population and “arouse bitter hatred of the aggressors and their collaborators.”

In the chapter “The Killing Fields of Gaza, 2004–2009,” Pappé describes the assaults on Gaza, such as Operation Cast Lead, as a policy of genocide, as opposed to merely war crimes.

On the issue of BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) Pappé supports such action as it has the potential to develop from a grass roots level into actual policies. However, it will not be easy due to the strategic and economic interests of the US in the Middle East.

This book not only gives readers an insightful analysis of the crisis in Gaza but also enables the reader to gain some historical context to the situation. It is a concise and compelling read.

Ashtar goes global

London's Globe 2 Globe festival, in which all 37 of Shakespeare's plays are being performed in 37 languages, gave Palestinian actors the chance to shine.

A visiting company can rarely have been given such a rapturous reception – especially one presenting one of Shakespeare's less popular plays, *Richard II* – in Arabic, without surtitles. But the packed audience was spellbound by the intensity and pace of the Ashtar Theatre production and gave the cast a standing ovation, calling them back four times and throwing roses at their feet.

Meeting some of the dynamic cast was a reminder of the versatility characterising so many Palestinian actors and artists. Acting, producing, teaching, writing, promoting, Ashtar's key players have been bringing theatre to Palestine and to the wider world for more than thirty years. Husband-and-wife team Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun (playing Northumberland and the Duchess of Gloucester) founded the Ashtar Theatre in 1991, in Jerusalem.

Now based in Ramallah, it is perhaps best known outside Palestine for producing the Gaza Monologues, the personal stories of children from Gaza following the massacres of Operation Cast Lead, during which 431 children were killed. In an amazing feat of global cooperation the Monologues were performed simultaneously by over 1500 youngsters in 36 countries all over the world on 17 October 2010. To date, they have been translated into 14 languages.

At the Globe Theatre on London's South Bank, Sami Metwasi's King Richard was a riveting tour de force, swinging from arrogant self-belief to abject despair as his kingship slips from him to reveal a complex and vulnerable human being. Although firmly rooted in Palestine, Sami has worked all over the world, composing as well as acting, writing and directing, in theatre and film; many in the UK will remember him in the acclaimed Palestinian film *Rana's Wedding*.

Another face and voice familiar to us was George Ibrahim, founder and Director of the Al-Kasaba Theatre. He was playing both York and Gloucester, whose cold-blooded murder opened the play.

Amer Khalil, who played Bagot, is yet another multi-talented actor, singer, writer and producer and veteran of the Hakawati theatre, who founded Jerusalem's Pocket Theatre in 1996. Playing in venues ranging from schools to people's living rooms, the troupe meets with local communities to explore broad themes of identity and freedom through workshops and improvised performance, with the aim, above all, of



The death of Richard (Mohammed Eid and Sami Metwasi). Photo: Creation theatre: Mohammad Haj Ahmad.

“bringing communities together, to give a voice to people who have lived in enforced isolation for so long.”

Talking to *PN* about Ashtar, producer and artistic director Iman Aoun outlined the range of its activities: “We have

“We explore all kinds of current issues with local communities – often problematic, even painful subjects”

intensive theatre training programmes for young people from 12 to 22, giving them a chance to perform on stage but, even more important, equipping them with skills that go beyond acting: leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

“The training is fairly text-based. We

introduce our students to the established Arabic repertoire – works from all around the Arab world.

“Since 2007 we've also been functioning as the Middle East regional centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed. This involves exploring all kinds of current issues; often they are problematic, even painful subjects – like honour killings, early marriage, collaboration with Israel, water and the settlements... As you can imagine, they provoke fierce debate!” As many audiences are unable to get to Ramallah, Ashtar takes the theatre to them, despite the massive hassle of permits, checkpoints and detours imposed by the Israeli army.

The company puts on several productions every year in the Occupied Territories and abroad, often in cooperation with internationally known actors and directors. These can range from classical productions like *Richard II* (performed in Jericho and Ramallah before coming to London) to the experimental *48 Minutes for Palestine*, in which two people tell the entire story of Palestinian dispossession using no words at all! Iman herself starred in the premiere of ‘I am Jerusalem,’ in which a woman embodies the changing identity of the city over its 5000 years of history. This is available on DVD in Arabic, but not – as yet – in English.

In the discussions surrounding the Globe production, people were keen to raise political questions, like the effect of the Occupation, and cooperation with Israeli individuals and organisations.

When I asked Sami Metwasi about the latter, he laughed wryly: “During the Oslo years, many people were optimistic. But I soon discovered it was all about money: money was being thrown at joint

(continued overleaf)

Mark Rylance, the founding artistic director of the Globe, was one of 37 people to sign a letter expressing “dismay and regret” at the Globe's inclusion of the Habima theatre's production of *The Merchant of Venice* as part of the festival.

They wrote: “By inviting Habima, the Globe is associating itself with policies of exclusion practised by the Israeli state and endorsed by its national theatre



company. We ask the Globe to withdraw the invitation so that the festival is not complicit with human rights violations and the illegal colonisation of occupied land.”

Other signatories included the directors Mike Leigh and Jonathan Miller, playwrights Caryl Churchill and Trevor Griffiths and the actors Emma Thompson, David Calder, Harriet Walter and Miriam Margolyes.



projects supposedly promoting mutual understanding. I worked with Israeli actors who initially sounded very moderate and liberal; but later I was shocked by their reversion to extreme, even hostile attitudes.”

Iman added: “Most of these projects are about giving Israel a better image. Even those Israelis who quite genuinely want to work with us, it would be better if they worked with their own communities, to get them to understand their government’s

policies. We understand them all too well!”

What about the protests in the UK, demanding the Globe withdraw its invitation to the Israeli company, Habima? Sami said: “What matters is that these issues have been raised and brought to the attention of the British public. If Habima hadn’t been invited, that would not have happened. Whether they perform or not is less important.”

Hilary Wise

Not to be outdone, the London-based Alzaytouna group are currently rehearsing an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Henry V* – with dabke. Who could miss that! Keep an eye on www.alzaytouna.org.

The 2012 Palestine Film Festival

presented an extraordinary range of works, from a century-old piece of documentary footage to feature-length contemporary drama. Here are just a few of the highlights.



Pride of place at the opening night at London’s Barbican went to Sameh Zoabi’s award-winning *Man Without a Cell Phone*, a cross-cultural, cross-generational dramatic comedy focusing on Jawdat, a young Palestinian Israeli who is a bit of a drop-out. He can’t pass his Hebrew exams to get into university and he’s only got dead-end jobs in view. He and his mates spend much of their time checking out girls on their mobile phones. They hope learning a bit of Russian will help their chances of scoring (“Russian girls aren’t afraid of Arabs – they teach you things” – “Oh yeah? Wait till they join the army!”)

Problems arise when Jawdat’s conservative father starts to believe that his village is being poisoned and the olive harvest threatened by the local mobile phone transmitter and gets up a petition to have it removed. The very real issues of inequality are somehow subsumed under this ill-fated campaign, into which Jawdat is unwillingly drawn. To complicate matters, the Israeli authorities get suspicious when Jawdat starts fishing for girlfriends across the green line in the West Bank. A gentle, humorous film with a serious subtext.

The power of dreams

Passion permeates three short films about Palestinian athletes striving to make their mark. Sawsan Qaoud’s *Women in the Stadium* looks at the burgeoning world of women’s soccer in Palestine, with four pioneering players telling their personal stories. Nothing can stop these girls – not the lack of facilities, nor the hours of waiting at checkpoints, nor the problems of finding time for their studies and family obligations. They have won over families to whom the idea of girls playing football – in shorts! – was, at first, shocking. But from small beginnings a national team has emerged: Honey Thaljieh, the team’s first captain, goes out to small towns and villages in the West Bank to inspire and nurture new talent and persuade parents to let their daughters play. She has



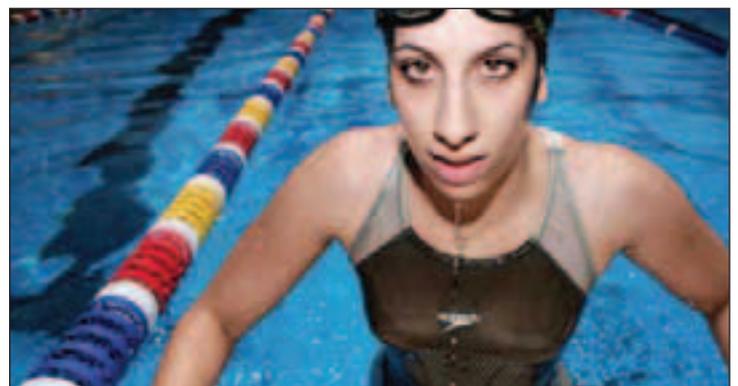
Honey Thaljieh.

also become something of an ambassador for Palestinian women in sport: you can see an interview with her at the Bristol film festival on <http://vimeo.com/34560242>. There she talks about the problems of creating a truly national team, why she would not play against an Israeli team, how she dreams of one day becoming Minister of Sport – and how she got Cristiano Ronaldo to wear a keffiyeh.

Free Running in Gaza is full of painful irony; two young men, Mohammed and Abdullah, have trained fanatically for six years in the sport of ‘parkour’ which requires a supreme level of physical fitness and courage. We see them sprinting down the narrow alleys of the refugee camps of Khan Younis, somersaulting across rooftops, scaling three storey-high ruined buildings and back-flipping ecstatically down sand dunes and into the sea. This is the entire focus of their lives, both an obsession and an escape. In the evening they often go and watch the sun setting over Egypt and wonder what life is like out there, where people really can run free.

Mohammed says: “This sport has given me the strength to face the pressures of the occupation. Parkour has its own philosophy; it challenges the imagination.” They long to be able to share their talent with the world and part of their dream has been realised, thanks to Aljazeera, who have posted the film on youtube: <http://tinyurl.com/3trmg5b>.

Inshallah Beijing is equally poignant: four athletes – two swimmers and two runners – were chosen to represent Palestine in the 2008 Olympics. Their training facilities were almost non-existent:



The other side of paradise

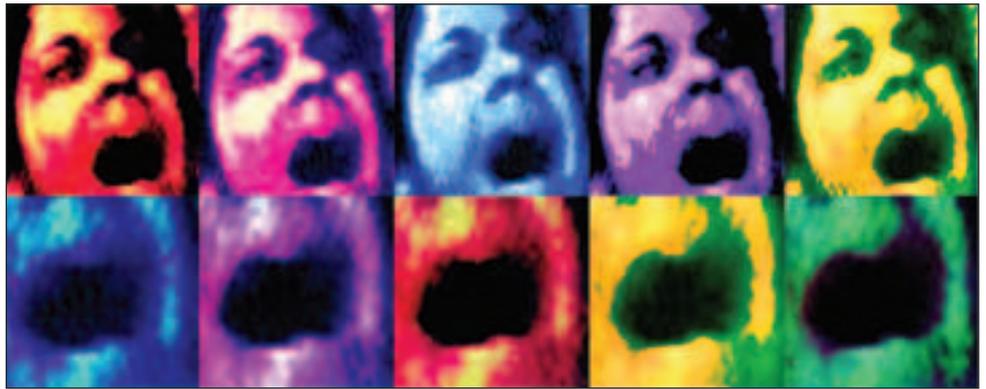
Betty Hunter talked to internationally acclaimed Palestinian artist **Laila Shawa** about her recent exhibition in London's October Gallery.

When Laila Shawa saw the Channel 4 video of a captured young woman would-be suicide bomber, she immediately thought: "Who gave her the bomb? Why was she chosen?" That was in 2007 and since then the seeds of this exhibition have been germinating.

Laila is angry. And her exhibition "The Other Side of Paradise" is a roar of anger at the fate of women in her homeland. The question of why the woman herself might choose to die in this way is not so difficult to understand when every family has suffered loss and grief and sometimes whole families have been killed by the Israeli occupation. But accompanying this is the knowledge that she has been used. Finally, as she is made to strip in a military cage, it is the occupiers who are the controllers as she rages with impotence when the bomb fails to detonate.

This incident has inspired work ("Trapped" series) which demands attention with bold, colourful images freeze-framing the woman's scream overwritten with Arabic script and others recalling the celebrity repeat images by Andy Warhol.

In a range of works in different media, Laila shows women as prisoners of their culture as well as of the Israeli occupation.



Scream, image courtesy of the October Gallery.

One of the effects of occupation is to drive women more into the home and, as more young women wear the veil, she asks who is controlling their hidden bodies?

Laila said: "I am concerned that the pressure from families for conformity, for the preservation of 'honour,' is increasing and may even be the motivation of some women who choose the desperate step of suicide bombing."

The "dressed" torso mannequins in her "Disposable Bodies" series challenge us to consider the possible stories of young women driven to extremes but affected individually by fashion and sensuality as well as social mores, history and politics. The link between current western fashions and terrorism is further explored in the "Fashionista Terrorista" works featuring the ubiquitous keffiyeh.

Gaza, now an open prison, is the "Paradise" of the title, once known for its

fertile cultivated plains. To many, Paradise suggests hoped for immortality, often a motivation for martyrdom. Laila repeatedly refers to these motifs in the different works which often use photographs and decorative eastern art to highlight the horror of Cast Lead and other acts of aggression against Gaza, where she was brought up, and its people.

Summing up her pessimism about the future of Palestine, Laila Shawa has produced an ironic statement about Palestine's non existence with the work "Stamp for a Lost Country." However this amazing exhibition is a showcase of her vibrant and continuing work demanding that the world wakes up to the situation of Palestine.

■ See the works from the exhibition at: www.octobergallery.co.uk/artists/shawa/index.shtml.

the swimmer from Jenin, which has no swimming pool, could not obtain a military permit to get to nearby Nazareth. Nader, the 28-year-old runner from Gaza had been training hard for 10 years but it took months for him to get a permit to travel to Jericho where the pre-Olympic training takes place. Even here, equipment consists simply of old tyres put to a multitude of uses and it took weeks of bureaucratic wrangling to get proper running shoes and some sort of uniform.

But somehow they make it to Guangzhou for two months of training and acclimatisation before the games, adapting to a city of 20 million people and food they find truly bizarre. None of them achieve a medal but the awed silence with which Nader's family in Gaza watch their son on TV, carrying the Palestinian flag at the opening ceremony, bears witness to a pride that goes way beyond sporting achievement.

A clip of the film can be found on <http://tinyurl.com/c6nk2kj>.

Bilel Yousef's *Back to One's Roots* looks at the dilemma facing the Druze community in Israel by following the emotional struggle of Yaman, whose brothers and uncle lost their lives serving in the IDF. Coopted by the Israeli state as a vulnerable and isolated community, the Druze have traditionally found employment in the army and police force, while remaining suspect in the eyes of many Israelis. Used as "cannon fodder," as one participant put it, their losses create antagonism towards their Palestinian neighbours and tend to cement loyalty to the Israeli state. Yet the Druze have lost most of their land to Israel and feel they inhabit a kind of social and political no-man's-land.



Yaman and his family mourn his brothers.

Yaman became a warden in a jail holding Palestinian activists. He had been taught to view them as terrorists but he discovered many of them were highly educated and morally responsible and learnt a lot about the Palestinian national struggle. After much heart-searching he changed the entire direction of his life, studying law and then defending the prisoners he had been guarding.

■ The Palestine Film Festival curates a huge library of films. See www.palestinefilm.org • Email: info@palestinefilm.org.

Threat: Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israel

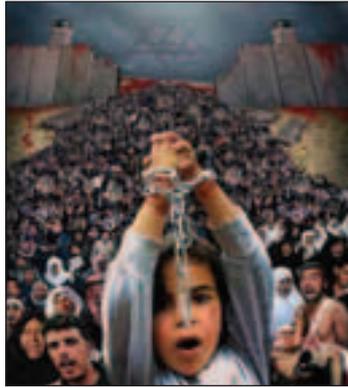
Edited by Abeer Baker and Anat Matar

Published by Pluto Press

Many voices have contributed to this revealing and often shocking collection of papers: men and women, Palestinians and Israelis, lawyers, academics and former prisoners together document an intricate and ingenious system clearly aimed at demoralising and dehumanising the Palestinian population as a whole.

An extraordinarily high proportion of the male population has suffered incarceration: in some refugee camps nearly half the men in the 25–40 age range have spent time in an Israeli jail. The offence may be as trivial as throwing a stone at a tank of the occupying army, or even seeking to organise a peaceful demonstration. The most usual form of evidence adduced is a confession, extracted under pressure, since detainees are told they will get a heavier sentence if they do not sign. If a detainee is classified as a “security prisoner,” he or she is deprived of rights afforded to those judged to be merely criminal – and a person may be considered “a security risk” just on the basis of having “nationalistic motives” or belonging to an “unauthorised” organisation.

The infamous system of Administrative Detention, whereby a prisoner is held without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time, is paid special attention. It is the aspect of the Israeli legal apparatus which has caused the greatest anger and anguish to both prisoners and their families and has been the focus of most hunger strikes, including that of Hana Shalabi (see page 9). The widespread and continued use of torture, despite rulings by the Israeli High Court, is clearly documented. The obstacles that visiting relatives



and legal representatives have to overcome are Kafkaesque in their complexity and ultimate insurmountability. In this they resemble other aspects of Israel's laws applicable only to the Palestinian population, such as the permit system which prevents farmers from cultivating their land and then claims the land for Israel because it has been neglected.

The lawyers' chapters set out very clearly how detainees are deprived of their rights at every turn: from the manner of their abduction to the interrogation process under military law, without adequate (or any) legal representation, to sentencing based on evidence withheld from the prisoner and his or her lawyer. Israel's violations of international legal norms are shown to be both systematic and extensive.

In jail, attempts at recruiting informers, even children, using physical and psychological pressure, are widespread. (Child prisoners are one topic which is not treated in any depth here. For this, one should go to Cook, Hanieh and Kay's harrowing *Stolen Youth*, published in 2004 but still sadly relevant today.)

Nothing gives the lie to Israel's claims to be a democracy more clearly than the dual judicial process within the Occupied Territories: a harsh and opaque system of military law for Palestinians, a much more transparent and humane process of civilian law for Israelis, including the illegal settlers, who are invariably treated with great leniency even when they perpetrate violent crimes against the local population.

The descriptions of the social and psychological effects on the prisoners and their families are heart-rending. Indeed this would be an unremittingly grim volume if it were not for the accounts of the prisoners' own achievements in creating systems of mutual support and educational development in jail. Both men and women report on achieving a much deeper political understanding during their incarceration, and on assuming positions of leadership in their communities on their release.

Hilary Wise

■ For the PSC's updated Fact Sheet on prisoners, see: <http://tinyurl.com/d5h8jcg>

The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory

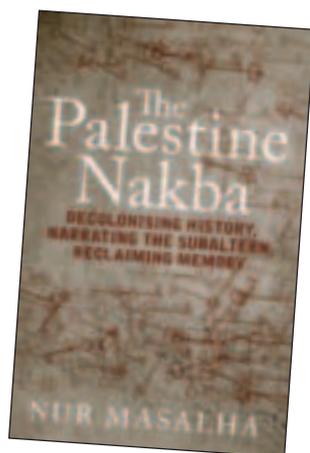
By Nur Masalha

Published by Zed Books

The word “Nakba” is hugely significant to Palestinians but remains largely unknown to much of the world. Nur Masalha's new book begins to redress this and should be read by everyone who wants to appreciate its multi-layered character and to understand the way in which the Israeli state, its army and agencies like the Jewish National Fund worked and are continuing to work assiduously to erase any record of the Palestinians from their homeland.

As Masalha says, “The Palestinians share common experiences with other indigenous peoples who have their narrative denied, their material culture destroyed and their histories erased or reinvented by European white settlers and colonisers.”

What might shock the reader is the systematic nature of this process. The book details some of the massacres which took place, many after fighting had finished. One example is Lydda where between 250 and 400 men and women were gunned down, just one amongst a long list of “white flag” war crimes. Towns and villages destroyed and their names changed, mosques turned into bars and restaurants, theme parks and nature reserves developed on Palestinian lands. The object was, quite literally, to wipe the Palestinians off the map.



Many academics perpetuate the myth that there are no Palestinian archives. The truth is that many Palestinian records have been destroyed, books burnt and archives plundered. In an act of what Masalha, and others, have called “memoricide”, the aim is to remove all evidence of the Palestinians' presence in the land, substituting for it a synthetic history of Jewish continuity.

That “history is written by the victor” is well known but Masalha explains the importance of oral history in recapturing the past. He rightly asserts the validity of this process as a way of regaining authorship of Palestinian history. It is an important way for the victim – or subaltern – to regain their voice.

There is much to commend in this book, not least Masalha's critique of the “new historians” and his analysis of the different approaches adopted by Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé in particular. Masalha points out that Morris and Shlaim write as though everything began in 1967 and the events of 1948 belong to another time.

Their weakness he identifies as stemming from their inability, or refusal, unlike Pappé, to accept the nature of the ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Zionist forces. Morris's subsequent claim that the problem was that the Zionists did not go far enough in 1948 has led to his work being put under a more rigorous scrutiny.

Shlaim's work, however, has not been subject to a similar process of evaluation and, although far from the position of Morris, it suffers from the fact that it considers the contenders of 1948, the Zionist terrorists and the Palestinians, as engaged in a symmetrical struggle for liberation.

Masalha's work is a major contribution to redressing the gaps in our understanding of the Nakba and the way in which it is presented in the west. Palestinian history didn't begin with the “new historians”. Nur Masalha's work and that of a large number of Palestinians historians deserves to be much more widely read and appreciated. Begin by buying this book!

Bernard Regan



Join us for Alternative Tours of Israel and Palestine

Autumn 2012 tours include:

- Specialist tour for Clinicians on health care in the OPT – 7 days
- Tour with international law focus targeting those from a legal background – 7 days
- Study tour visiting both sides of the divide on what a truly just and lasting peace would entail – 11 days

Half day tours also available

www.icahd.org • Email: tours@icahd.org

Questions Without Borders: Dual narrative study tour Israel and the West Bank

27 December 2012–6 January 2013

The Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine invites you to explore the land, the people, the narratives on our 3rd amazing tour!

For details:

www.fodip.org/studytour.html



Tour leaders Pasha Shah and Rabbi Warren Elf



Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI) provides protection by presence, monitors human rights abuses, supports Israeli and Palestinian peace activists and advocates for an end to the occupation.

Ecumenical Accompaniers

Working as Human Rights Observers based in the West Bank and Israel in 2013:

18 vacancies for 3 months' service
2 vacancies for 4.5 months' service
 living allowance + benefits

Deadline for applications: 21st June 2012

For more information and to download an application pack please check our website:

www.quaker.org.uk/applyeappi

(Please note that we will not be sending hard copies of the application pack and we can only receive electronic forms)

Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Join PSC / make a donation

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

E-mail

Individual £24.00 Unwaged £12.00

Plus a donation (optional) of

I enclose a cheque of

(payable to PSC)

Affiliation fees for trade unions and other organisations are: £25 local; £50 regional; £100 national.

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

Standing order

Paying this way helps PSC plan ahead more effectively

Name of Bank

Address

Postcode

Account number

Sort code

Please pay £12 £24 Other £

Monthly / Quarterly / Yearly (delete as applicable)

To PSC Cooperative Bank

Account No. 65147487 (sort code 08 92 99)

From (date) ___ / ___ / ___ until further notice

Name

Signature

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

Have a fabulous weekend – walk for Palestine!

Sponsored walk in Brecon Beacons National Park
August 3–5

For more about the walk, see inside, P22

Details from PSC:

www.palestinecampaign.org

020 7700 6192



Support the political prisoners!

Say No to Administrative Detention!



Join the demos ● contact your MP
● protest to the Israeli embassy