



Palestine Solidarity Campaign **Annual Report 2013**





2013 has been a year when, yet again, the Israeli state has continued its remorseless settlement-building, increased its ethnic cleansing policies and home demolitions. Yet more Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army, attacked by settlers, and imprisoned without charge or trial.

Palestinians in Gaza, who had relied on the partial opening of the Rafah border and the tunnels to provide medicines, food and fuel, have had this lifeline cut due to the deteriorating situation in Egypt. Suffering has intensified to horrific levels, with sewage flowing through Gaza's streets due to insufficient fuel available to power the sewage works. And only a few miles away, Palestinian Bedouin are fighting against the Praver Plan and for their right to remain on their land and in their homes.

The challenges for the solidarity movement have never been greater. And we have seen a great response by PSC's members, branches, affiliates and supporters.

As awareness continues to grow of Israel's crimes against the Palestinians, there is broader, and growing, solidarity with Palestine. At the public rally following the lobby of Parliament on Palestine, three shadow ministers spoke, and five political parties were represented on the platform. Hundreds of MPs were lobbied, demonstrating that all the work that is being carried out locally via branches and members is having a clear impact. The significant opposition to the Praver Plan was indicated by artists from Peter Gabriel and Brian Eno to sculptor Antony Gormley, fashion designer Bella Freud and writer Jemima Khan all signing the letter in the Guardian to coincide with the 'Day of Rage' across Palestine. Trade union

delegations, organised by PSC, have returned from visits to Palestine committed to developing solidarity inside their unions. Prisoners, and particularly child prisoners, has continued to be a central issue. The campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions is having such an impact that the Israeli Embassy is reported to have two members of staff working on monitoring and challenging BDS activity.

We are seeing solidarity with Palestine developing to levels never seen before. Despite incredible amounts of Israeli hasbara and media bias, people from all communities are seeing the campaign for Palestinian rights as something that they should be involved in. PSC has been working with those who care about Palestine – from peace organisations, faith groups, trade unions, Parliamentarians – on developing a shared understanding and a shared commitment to work together.



Palestinians are demanding their basic rights – of liberation, self-determination and the right of return. This is a critical time for us to step up the campaign, given Israel's intensified onslaught.

I would like to thank all who worked so hard on the campaign this year. To the branches, which have been doing fantastic work, and are the bedrock of PSC. To the staff and volunteers. To the Executive Committee, with a special thanks to those who are not standing again – Hilary Wise, Nicolette Petersen, and Kiri Tunks. And thanks to all of PSC's members. Together, we are building the solidarity movement, and together, we are working for a Free Palestine.

Hugh Lanning
PSC Chair

Ethnic cleansing, Israeli racism and the ongoing Nakba



Opposition to the Praver Plan, and responding to the Palestinian call for international action, was taken up PSC in 2013. Raising awareness of Israeli racism and apartheid practices is critical, and in February, together with Middle East Monitor (MEMO) and Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP), PSC organised a meeting with Sami Abu Shehadeh and Mahmoud Zwahre, which compared and contrasted the situation for Palestinians living as citizens of Israel and in the West Bank. We have updated info on the website and used social media to get the message out. We have kept pressure on the government by producing and promoting e-tools to lobby the Middle East Minister.

PSC has also organised online protests via twitter and facebook, reaching over 200,000 people; and publicised the level of opposition to the Praver Plan - from writers, directors, artists and academics, to trade union leaders and parliamentarians – including through a letter to the *Guardian* on 30 November.



As part of the Global March to Jerusalem, together with other groups, we organised a protest outside the Israeli Embassy in March, to highlight the ethnic cleansing taking place there.

PSC commemorated the anniversary of the Nakba in May – this time with a protest directly opposite Parliament. We handed in a letter to 10 Downing St in advance, and branches organised local commemorations.



Palestinian prisoners

We have been working with Palestinian partners through the year to raise awareness of Palestinian prisoners. Representatives from DCI-Palestine, Addameer, Al-Mezan and U-Free have all spoken on a variety of PSC platforms. We challenged the media's failure to report the political prisoner issue, both via social media and through writing articles about the BBC's failure to cover the hunger strikers.

Last Christmas, we focused on 'three wishes' for Palestinian children, and over 900 cards were handed to the Foreign Office in a sack, by Alexei Sayle dressed as Santa. Action for Palestinian Children's tour in November, with Defence for the Child International –

Palestine and an ex-child prisoner reached a wide range of communities from Abergavenny to Exeter.



Westminster Uni students supporting hunger strikers

17 April, Palestinian prisoners' day, was a focus for international activity. Protests took place around the country, including outside G4S' HQ in London.

Ex-hunger striker and Palestinian footballer Mahmoud Sarsak toured the country, speaking at many PSC branches, and joined in Red Card Israeli Racism's protest outside UEFA's Congress in May, in protest at their holding of a tournament in Israel. Mahmoud also spoke at PSC's fringe meeting at the TUC.

PSC's campaign against G4S has also provided a way to further highlight the treatment of Palestinian prisoners (see BDS section for more details).

Breaking the siege on Gaza



PSC marked the anniversary of the start of Israel's war on Gaza in 2008/9 with a protest outside the Israeli embassy on 27 December, and followed by a meeting in Parliament on 15 January, addressed by MPs and Rania Khalil, a student from Gaza.

The humanitarian disaster in Gaza has deteriorated sharply since the crisis in Egypt. PSC has worked to increase pressure on MPs, via their own constituents using PSC's e-tools demanding government action. PSC organised a letter by MPs to the Egyptian Embassy urging them to open up the lifeline that was provided by the tunnels and the Rafah crossing. And PSC has worked to increase awareness of the suffering in Gaza, via the Chat to Gaza blog, and the links with students.



Owen Jones at PSC's stall, Labour Party conference

PSC's conference on 13 April, 'Lessons from Gaza: transforming public support into political action', looked at the impact of the ongoing siege on Gaza and the situation of Palestinians from Jerusalem, the West Bank and inside the Green Line, to the diaspora. The conference heard from a wide range of Palestinian speakers including Nur Masalha, Jamal Juma', Diana Alzeer, Lubna Masarwa, Mona ElFarra, Maha Rezeq, Raji Sourani and Jamal ElKhoudary, who were joined by MPs, campaigners and trade union representatives to look at how to transform support for Palestine into a change in policy. PSC has been discussing with the TUC how to implement policy for a senior trade union delegation to visit Gaza when circumstances allow.



Legal redress for Israel's criminal assault on the Freedom Flotilla is continuing, with PSC Director Sarah Colborne and others who were on the Mavi Marmara registered as complainants and have given evidence to the trial in Istanbul, which will continue in 2014. In 2013, the International Criminal Court also opened an investigation into Israel's attack.



Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions is a vital tool for the international solidarity movement, and this year we have seen significant advances in support for the Palestinian call. Stephen Hawking's announcement that he would not be going to Israel provided a springboard for BDS to gain even more publicity, and move into the mainstream. Even when Tom Jones refused to support the call for boycott, despite Cardiff PSC's petition with over 2000 signatories, he admitted that many other artists have decided to boycott Israel.



PSC responded to the call by Palestinian agricultural organisations and the BNC that 9 February be a day of action against Israeli agricultural export companies. We lobbied supermarkets both via email and through branch actions outside supermarkets, with over 40 supermarkets targeted, overwhelmingly Sainsbury's. Almost a thousand people sent 5,788 emails via PSC's

e-tool to supermarkets, calling on them to follow the Coop's example and stop trading with companies which profit from the settlements. At PSC's AGM in January, Sainsbury's was identified as a focus for the agricultural goods campaign. Sainsbury's have come under pressure, including at their AGM, with calls for them to adopt ethical policy and stop using suppliers who trade in settlement goods. PSC branches around the country have been outside their local supermarkets for many years, urging shoppers not to buy Israeli goods – and many branches have also taken up the call to focus on Sainsbury's. PSC's patrons have also taken up Morrison's mislabelling of Israeli dates.

Thanks to sustained work over the last years, the campaign to boycott Israeli dates has become a focal point of activities during Ramadan, with branches organising leafleting of mosques. Response this year was even more positive.



Complicit companies are also feeling the pressure of the boycott campaign, with both Veolia and G4S announcing their intentions to pull out of some contracts with Israel. This demonstrates the impact of the solidarity work

that is being done up and down the country, and internationally.

The campaign against G4S has gathered steam. In the run-up to its AGM in June, a letter to G4S' then CEO was signed online by PSC supporters, who also lobbied their MPs to sign an Early Day Motion on G4S' role in Israeli prisons. At G4S' AGM, Palestine was the key issue, with PSC members joining others from the Stop G4S coalition in grilling the board inside. Meanwhile, a loud and lively protest outside the AGM drew attention to G4S' involvement in Israel's prisons and detention centres, where torture of Palestinians is widely reported. PSC has also been mobilising pressure on the BBC, with over 2000 supporters

urging them not to award a security contract to G4S. PSC has also been liaising with MPs and trade union leaders in order to increase pressure on G4S.



The campaign against SodaStream has also rapidly grown this year, with weekly protests organised by the Brighton PSC branch outside their flagship store. A national day of action, called on 28 September, saw protests organised by branches around the country, and launched a regular fortnightly protest outside John Lewis' store in Oxford Street. New postcards have been produced, and PSC is in correspondence with John Lewis' management, urging them to stop stocking SodaStream.



Challenging Israel's pinkwashing

Following on from a very successful year in 2012, which saw a picture of Palestinian flags tweeted to well over a million people, for 2013, new leaflets from the No Pride in Israeli Apartheid/No to Pinkwashing group were printed and distributed at a number of LGBT events including London and Manchester Prides. Haneen Maiky, founder of Al-Qaws, spoke at a reception organised jointly with the Safra Project in July.

Ending 'business as usual' with apartheid

In July, the EU announced guidelines excluding illegal Israeli settlements from EU and member state agreements. We have been told that lobbying from PSC's members made a real impact, and counteracted the intense lobbying from pro-Israel organisations. Email lobbying was also critical in urging support for the principles in negotiations over Horizon 2020, and Britain topped the poll in terms of numbers who used the cross-European lobby tool to contact their MEPs.

PSC was also involved in a lobby of the European Parliament in November, meeting with senior officials as well as MEPs, and Hugh Lanning participated in the conference organised by the European group of Socialist and Democrat MEPs.

We have also kept pressure on the British government, at one point deluging the Foreign Office, with almost 6000 emails sent to their EU desk team using PSC's e-tool.

Students

PSC has been working on raising the issue of the right to education and the impact of the siege on Gaza via regular Skype link-ups and virtual meetings between students in London, and Palestinian students from Gaza. On 6th February, there will be a one-off VM between students in Gaza and students at Cardiff University, Wales. This follows on from the successful VM at Liverpool University last year.



PSC organised a stall at NUS conference with three Al-Fakhoora students from Gaza

PSC has organised two student meet-ups in 2013, based in D'Gaf in London, with attendance from a wide range of student unions, and a further student

meeting will take place in the P21 Gallery in December. PSC Student Freshers Fair packs were sent out to over 50 student unions. PSC student officer Selin Kavlak spoke at NUS Black Students Conference and the Nakba rally, alongside NUS Black Students' Officer Aaron Kiely; and Azeem Sayani spoke at PSC's Lessons from Gaza conference and at a meeting in Westminster Uni on Gaza.

In November, Palestinian journalist Yousef Al-Helou, from Gaza, and PSC's Amena Saleem embarked on a speaking tour of student unions – including the University of West England, London's Westminster and Greenwich Universities, Leicester and Nottingham.

Trade union support grows

It was very clear, at the TUC Congress in September, that Palestine is now seen as a key and mainstream issue for the trade union movement. Although a motion was not passed at TUC Congress this year specifically on Palestine, it is seen as an important issue for trade unions. The PSC's fringe meeting at TUC heard from Mahmoud Sarsak, and some who had been on PSC delegations to Palestine.

The warm response to the PSC's stall from delegates, compared to the sidelining of the Trade Union Friends of Israel stall, spoke volumes. At TUC Black Workers' Conference, policy was passed opposing Israeli racism and apartheid. PSC has been meeting with the TUC to look at effective implementation of the TUC's policy on Palestine.



Fringes and stalls were organised at the major trade union conferences, and PSC organised a series of trade union delegations in 2013: in January for Unite/TSSA; and a further delegation in November for

Unite. In July, PSC took 3 representatives from ASLEF; 1 from Unison; and 1 from Thompsons solicitors to Palestine, and also facilitated an NUT delegation in October. Following the delegation, ASLEF carried an article in its journal, following the last PSC delegation, looking at the history of rail in Palestine and the way that rail is being used to cement the occupation today – thus reaching a new audience. This reflects the developments inside the unions on Palestine, where organising on local branch/regional level is taking place, and moves to raise the issue amongst members in creative ways.

Lobbying for change

The lobby of parliament on 27 November was supported by an even wider range of organisations than previous lobbies, and 231 MPs were contacted to request meetings in advance. The lobby was demanding that the government challenge ethnic cleansing and racist policies; ban settlement goods; respect prisoners' rights including an end to the abuse of Palestinian children; and act to end the siege on Gaza

PSC used both the TUC and Labour Party conferences to arrange strategic discussions about how to push forward support for an ethical foreign policy; how to reflect trade union policy on Palestine inside the Labour Party; and how to develop support inside trade unions (including at branch level) for Palestine.

PSC's fringe meeting at Labour Party took place at the beginning of conference and acted as a 'scene-setter' for debate on Palestine during the conference. Around 1000 people attended one or more of the events on Palestine, and the stall at conference was a hive of activity, with delegates keen to know more about Palestine and the PSC.



Communicating the message

PSC launched a new website this year, in an attempt to improve our online campaigning activity, which has received very positive feedback.

It is linked directly with PSC's facebook and twitter, and our presence is also increasing via social media. At the beginning of 2013, we had over 16,000 followers on our Facebook page and group, and over 6,000 Twitter followers. By the end of November, this had increased to over 23,000 Facebook followers, and almost 7,500 Twitter followers.

This year, several complaints have been upheld against the BBC. A few of them include: Newsnight, for claiming not all of the West Bank is occupied; the World at One for saying Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza on the same day as Rachel Corrie; Radio 4 news bulletins which misrepresented the intentions of the campaign against Habima; and BBC World News for presenting Jonathan Sacerdoti as an independent commentator when he is actually a member of the Zionist Federation and pro-Israeli institutes. We have press released these, and gained more publicity for these wins and PSC's media work through Electronic Intifada articles. Thanks to all our members who have pursued issues of media bias.

Fundraising for the campaign



Please support freedom, justice and equality for Palestinians

DON'T BUY sodastream

SodaStream makes products in an illegal Israeli settlement on stolen Palestinian land

SodaStream is profiting from the theft of valuable Palestinian resources and exploitation of Palestinian labour

Please do not buy SodaStream products or products from Israel and Israeli settlements

Palestinians have called on people of conscience to support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against companies such as SodaStream

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Don't buy SodaStream products
- Tell your family and friends why they shouldn't buy SodaStream products either
- Write to managers of stores stocking SodaStream products (there is a model letter on the PSC website)



www.palestinecampaign.org/boycott | facebook.com/palestineboycott | twitter.com/palestineboycott | phone: 020 7308 8192

PSC members, supporters and branches have provided essential support for PSC this year, raising much-needed funds for PSC's work. A sponsored walk organised by West London and Kingston and Richmond PSC branches had over 50 participants. A

fundraiser at East London Muslim Centre was also very well attended. And branches up and down the country give regular donations in order to fund PSC's campaigning work.



Supporting PSC

As we approach 2014, PSC needs to do so much more, in order to step up the campaign against Israel's siege on Gaza, its settlement-building, its ethnic cleansing and racism. If you aren't already a member, please do consider joining PSC's 100 Club, set up a standing order, or send us a donation. We rely on you – PSC's members – to build the movement for a Free Palestine. And with your help, we can do just that.



PSC relies on its members, supporters and affiliates to fund our campaigning activity. Much of our funding comes from small, regular amounts from our members - even a standing order of £2 a month means that we can budget, and campaign effectively.

We need to step up the campaign to tell the British government that there can be no 'business as usual' with a state that practices apartheid and racism, and which violates international law with impunity.

And with your help, we can ensure that companies that profit from Israel's crimes feel the pressure. Please consider helping PSC in the year ahead.

