

**Minutes of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign  
Annual General Meeting,  
24 April 2021**



**Opening of the AGM**

Kamel Hawwash, Chair of PSC, opened the AGM and welcomed members attending PSC's first virtual conference. This would be a rather different AGM and he thanked all the people who had worked hard to make it happen and the National Education Union (NEU) which was providing the facilities for it.

As in previous years, the AGM had been structured using the Annual Plan. The proposed plan for 2021 would be introduced, then each objective in the Plan would be introduced separately, with motions relating to that objective also moved within that discussion session. Any motions remaining at the end of the time allocated for that objective would be taken under the agenda item 'continuation of motions'. There would be a vote on the annual plan as a whole towards the end of the AGM.

We would be using an electronic system for all votes. Delegates would need to use the electronic hand function to indicate that they wished to speak. Dave Kimber from the NEU then explained the AnonyVoter voting system that we would be using, and a few practice votes were held.

The AGM APPROVED the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct (209 votes for, 0 against, 13 abstentions) and the Agenda (225 votes for, 0 against, 8 abstentions) as proposed

The AGM AGREED to appoint Dave Kimber to be the returning officer (230 votes for, 0 against, 2 abstentions)

**Minutes of AGM 2020**

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were APPROVED (178 votes for, 3 against, 47 abstentions)

**Emergency motions**

Three emergency motions had been received but they had been ruled out of order as they did not meet the criteria for emergency motions in the standing orders.

A delegate challenged the Chair's ruling and this was supported by more than 20 members

*Louise Regan in the chair*

The delegate spoke in support of their challenge to the chair's ruling and Kamel spoke in response

The challenge was REJECTED (79 votes in favour, 126 against, 32 abstentions)

The three motions were remitted to the Executive Committee (EC) in accordance with standing order 3.d

*Kamel Hawwash in the chair*

### **Membership appeal**

The AGM was advised that, under the PSC Constitution, the EC is given the responsibility for considering whether to terminate the membership of an individual found to have breached the constitution, subject to appeal at the following AGM. Ian Donovan, having had his membership terminated, had exercised this right of appeal

Mr Donovan had been advised that the format of the appeal (Standing Order 8) would be a submission of up to 400 words from him, coupled with a submission of up to 400 words on behalf of the Executive. Mr Donovan had been invited to submit a statement of this length on numerous occasions but had repeatedly declined to do so.

Therefore, as had been explained to Mr Donovan, the appeal would have to proceed in the absence of a submission by him. The submission from the Executive had been circulated to delegates.

Mr Donovan's appeal was put to the vote and was REJECTED

### **Treasurer's Report**

John Ellis, PSC Treasurer, moved the Treasurer's Report for the year to 31 August 2020, on pages 20-22 of the annual report. He described the year as being 'in two distinct and quite different halves' – the first was 'business as usual', resulting in a deficit for the first 6 months slightly higher than the Executive had budgeted.

Then Covid hit. Initially our activities shut down while we re-organised with staff working from home and activities moving online. Expenditure fell dramatically but income remained almost as budgeted, so the planned budgeted small deficit for the year ended up as a surplus. This, combined with repayment of legal costs by the Government following the victory in our Judicial Review, gave a surplus for the year of £143,564 compared with a deficit of £16,619 in the previous year.

The Income & Expenditure account showed that income increased slightly from £548k in 2019 to £563k in 2020, largely due to an increase in membership. The decrease in overall expenditure was accounted for by decreases in both campaigning and staffing expenditure, the latter being due to being unable to recruit to replace staff who had left just before Covid kicked in and the recruitment market drying up as no one wanted to change jobs during a pandemic.

John drew attention to the Net Current Assets on the Balance Sheet of £239,554 compared with £95,550 the previous year. The surplus for 2019/20 had ended several years of deficits which had substantially reduced our reserves and allowed us to replenish our Designated Funds, described on pages 20 and 21. The Working Capital fund had now reached the level recommended for voluntary sector organisations.

The statutory accounts had been independently examined by Knox Cropper, Chartered Accountants and were available to members from the office.

There were no questions, and the report was ACCEPTED by the AGM (208 votes for, 0 votes against, 6 abstentions)

## **PSC Annual Report 2020**

Ben Soffa, PSC Secretary, presented the annual report including the supplementary reports 'AGM 2021 Membership report' and '2020 AGM motions update'.

Ben said that PSC had rapidly transitioned a year ago to online only work, and thanked the staff team for both re-working our campaign activities so effectively and for keeping all our administrative systems running without access to the office. The shift to online events had allowed us to give a platform to a wider array of Palestinian voices than would ever have been possible when flying people over to the UK, and we planned to retain this even as in-person meetings started to become possible again.

We had continued to devote significant resources to defending our right to campaign and had a significant victory in April when the Supreme Court ruled in PSC's favour, overturning government attempts to ban Local Government Pension Schemes from divesting from complicit firms. Ben thanked everyone who had made this possible through both political and financial support in what ended up being a three year battle.

Other work defending the space to campaign had included an updated toolkit for use when the IHRA definition is being considered locally, and work to amplify voices promoting alternatives to it. PSC had also worked to defend the rights of students and academics to campaign on campus, with regular meetings with bodies representing universities, multiple communications to every Vice Chancellor, support for local campus campaigns and a legal guide for students on how to protect their rights.

Alongside "defending the space" we had continued to focus on creating space by taking forward key campaigns - on annexation, for action against settlements, on child prisoners, the siege on Gaza, Stop the JNF and all manner of BDS work.

Whilst branch activity was also hugely disrupted by Covid, there had been all manner of creative local activism and symbolic gatherings of the size that Covid regulations allowed. Many branches had also done brilliant work keeping themselves not just functioning but thriving online, organising their own meetings with speakers domestic and international. At the end of 2020 the number of PSC branches stood at 64, an all-time high.

In a breakthrough move the 2020 Trades Union Congress passed a motion describing recent Israeli actions as "another significant step in the creation of a system of apartheid" - the first time the TUC had used the framework of apartheid rather than merely of occupation.

At the end of the 2019/20 financial year, individual membership stood at 6,480 - a 3% increase on a year before, but with 19% increase in membership income as the proportion of members paying higher amounts worked its way through. There were now

14 national unions affiliated, welcoming the Musicians Union and the National Association of Probation Officers last year, plus hundreds of union branches.

In conclusion, Ben said that, as part of this report, he was asking the AGM to ratify all membership decisions made since the 2020 AGM.

There were several questions. In response, Ben said that PSC currently had 7 full time and 3 part time staff members, and that there had been significant changes during the previous two years in how we deal with membership. The majority of members were now paying either by Direct Debit or recurring card payments; this had seen a 21% increase in the average payment per member and massively helped with retention.

The report was ACCEPTED by the AGM (196 votes for, 2 against, 10 abstentions)

### **PSC Annual Plan 2021**

Ben Jamal, PSC Director, introduced the proposed Annual Plan for 2021, (pages 10-19 in the Annual Report). He said that a number of priorities provided the frame for all of the work outlined in the plan, the first being what Karma Nabulsi always refers to as 'solidarity 101' - providing platforms for Palestinian voices to be heard and for Palestinian stories to be told so that people become aware of the history of the Palestinian people and the ongoing injustice to which they are subject.

The second was shifting the narrative and understanding from that dominant in mainstream political discourse of territorial conflict requiring processes of reconciliation and mediation to one that speaks to the reality of colonialism and ethnic cleansing that has led to the establishment of a state which meets the legal definition of apartheid.

Thirdly, campaigning to end all UK complicity – of our government though its failures to meet its responsibilities under international law, of public bodies who continue to support apartheid though institutional links and investments in complicit companies, and of those companies themselves though targeted campaigns.

The fourth was mainstreaming - taking this message to all arenas of decision making and influence including parliaments, political parties, trade unions, civil society, faith groups and universities, the last being a crucial part of our work to involve young people and build the next generation of activists

The final priority was building the resources we need through increased membership, branches and income to continue to grow our campaigns.

The plan also addressed the political terrain in which we are conducting our campaigning, and in particular how we combat the efforts to delegitimise our cause and prevent advocacy for Palestinian rights including through false narratives of antisemitism.

The plan was the product of detailed conversations with branches, with core Palestinian partners including the Boycott National committee and with core partners in the UK

within the solidarity movement. The plan would be kept under review to respond to developing realities.

*Louise Regan in the chair*

### **PSC Executive Committee elections**

The nominated candidates for the following officer positions were elected unopposed: Chair Kamel Hawwash; Vice Chair Louise Regan; Treasurer John Ellis; Trade Union Liaison Officer: Simon Dubbins.

### **8 ordinary member seats on the Executive**

The vote for the 8 ordinary member seats on the Executive then took place. The result of the election was as follows:

Iyas al Qasem	214 votes	Elected
Omar Mafeed	212 votes	Elected
Neha Shah	200 votes	Elected
Alex Snowdon	180 votes	Elected
Sybil Cock	179 votes	Elected
Bernard Regan	169 votes	Elected
Julia Simpkins	160 votes	Elected
Ed McNally	157 votes	Elected
Jackie Lewis	155 votes	Not elected

**Guest speaker:** Amany Khalifa, Grassroots al-Quds, then addressed the AGM. Grassroots Al-Quds was established in 2011 with the goal of supporting Palestinian sumoud (steadfastness and resilience) in Al-Quds. Its work includes research, creating knowledge that supports community mobilization, and building networks between the different Palestinian communities in Jerusalem.

There was then a **break** of 15 minutes

*Louise Regan in the chair*

### **Annual Plan 2021**

A delegate sought to move a procedural motion to refer the proposed Annual Plan back to the Executive Committee

The chair advised that there was no such procedural motion in the Standing Orders

The delegate then moved a procedural motion (SO 6a.c) that the Annual Plan be remitted to the EC, which was seconded. The delegate spoke in support and Ben Soffa spoke against on behalf of the EC.

The procedural motion was LOST (46 votes for, 143 against, 29 abstentions)

## **Annual Plan Objective 1: To build solidarity**

Objective 1 of the Annual Plan was introduced by Bernard Regan on behalf of the EC.

Composite motion A COVID Motions 3 and 4, the amendment to motion 3 and Amendment A to motion 4 had been composited into one motion. Amendment B to motion 4 had been withdrawn.

Composite A was moved, debated and CARRIED (210 votes for, 2 against, 10 abstentions)

## **Annual Plan Objective 4: Organising for Growth**

Objective 4 was introduced by Iyas al Qasem on behalf of the EC

Motion 6: PSC Use of Online Campaigning Platforms was moved, debated and CARRIED (185 votes for, 8 against, 4 abstentions)

The AGM **adjourned** for lunch and breakout sessions:

Cook-along with Palestinian chef Maha Salah: a quick lunchtime cook-along, providing a chance to cook one of her family's favourite recipes, makaronah bil laban, a go-to in the Levant for a delicious and fast meal.

Oud Performance - Saied Silbak, a Palestinian Oud player and composer, born in Shafaa`mr, a city located in the lower Galilee. His music has been performed around the world at festivals and concert series in Palestine, the UK, Belgium, France, Morocco and Argentina.

*Kamel Hawwash in the chair*

## **Annual Plan Objective 2: To strengthen our campaigning**

Objective 2 was introduced by Sybil Cock on behalf of the EC.

Motion 1: Campaign for the Implementation of UN Resolution 242 was moved. The amendment to motion 1 was moved, debated and CARRIED (174 votes for, 21 against, 15 abstentions)

Motion 1, as amended, was then CARRIED (178 votes for, 14 against, 11 abstentions)

Motion 2: Campaign Issue Motion FELL as neither the mover or seconder were present

*Louise Regan in the chair*

In the debate on Objective 2, speakers made observations on a range of campaigning matters including the chilling effect of the IHRA, the launch of the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism [check name], campaigning to end the arms trade, views on Palestine Action, and work being done relating to universities

### **Annual Plan Objective 3: To organise for growth**

Objective 3 was introduced by Simon Dubbins behalf of the EC.

Motion 5: Israel and Nuclear Disarmament The amendment to motion 5 was accepted. Motion 5, as amended, was moved, debated and CARRIED (190 votes for, 3 against, 0 abstentions)

Motion 7: TUC Statement on 'Apartheid' was moved, debated and CARRIED (195 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstention)

### **Break and Breakout workshops**

After a break, delegates were able to attend one of 4 workshops - European Legal Support Center; The Freedom Theatre and Creative Destruction; Zaytoun; The Big Ride

*Kamel Hawwash in the chair*

### **Continuation of motions**

Motion 8: PSC AGM and Executive Committee Composition was moved, debated and CARRIED (130 votes for, 12 against, 23 abstentions)

### **Annual Plan 2021**

The annual plan was then formally moved and APPROVED by the AGM (149 votes for, 11 against, 11 abstentions)

**Closing speaker** The AGM was addressed by Dr Mustapha Barghouti, the secretary general and cofounder of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI), and founder and chair of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS).

### **Close of AGM**

A minute of silence was held in remembrance of those PSC members who had died in the last year

Kamel then closed the AGM, thanking the NEU for facilitating the AGM being held virtually, the returning officer, staff, EC and members