PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #3 • JANUARY 2020

IN THIS ISSUE

News on Palestine • P.2

Spotlight on...volunteering with PSC • P.3

Branch reports • P.4 & 5

Campaign highlights • P.6 & 7

Upcoming events • P.8

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

KAMEL HAWWASH

I wish you a happy New Decade and Year. The last decade has not brought justice for the Palestinian people and while the start of 2020s has brought us a Government that is supportive of Israel and blind to the injustice that befell the Palestinians in 1948, PSC will continue to champion the rights of Palestinian people and to fight to ensure that our right to do this is not restricted.

The Government has committed to introduce legislation that will prohibit public bodies from supporting BDS campaigns and PSC is at the heart of the push back against this misguided and dangerous initiative. Our response as a movement should be to increase our solidarity sending a message to the Palestinians that they have not been forgotten.

NEWS ON PALESTINE:

BDS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS IN THE TRUMP ERA

BY **OMAR BARGHOUTI**

This is an extract of the speech given by Omar Barghouti at the PSC Annual General Meeting on Saturday 25th January 2020.

You can read the full version on our website here.

With all the serious economic, social, racial and climate challenges the UK is facing, why on earth is Boris Johnson's newly elected government so preoccupied with undermining the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights? Why does it want to prohibit public bodies, including universities and local councils, from acting ethically by refraining from procuring from or investing in companies implicated in Israel's far-right regime of military occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid? Johnson is not only following Trump's footsteps by enlisting in Israel's desperate war of repression against the advocacy of Palestinian rights, he is also following the example of Margaret Thatcher, who in 1988 banned local councils from boycotting apartheid South Africa.

Begun in 2005 by the broadest coalition in Palestinian society, BDS has become a key part of Palestinian popular resistance and the most effective form of international solidarity with the struggle of the Indigenous people of Palestine for freedom, justice and equality. It calls for ending Israel's 1967 occupation, ending its institutionalized and legalized system of racial domination and discrimination, which meets the UN definition of apartheid, and upholding the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the homes and lands from which they were uprooted and dispossessed since the 1947-1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine, or the Nakba.

The BDS movement is deeply rooted in decades of Palestinian popular nonviolent resistance and is inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the US Civil Rights movement and, to an extent, the Indian and Irish anti-colonial struggles. Anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the BDS movement has consistently and categorically opposed all forms of racism and discrimination, including antisemitism. One's identity, the movement upholds, should never diminish or restrict one's entitlement to rights. Our movement targets complicity, not identity.

It is crucial to emphasize that since there is nothing Jewish about Israel's regime of occupation, siege, ethnic cleansing and apartheid, there is nothing inherently anti-Jewish, then, about a nonviolent, morally consistent human rights struggle to end this system of oppression.

When faced with smears and intimidation, we should never fall into a defensive posture, because that's exactly what our oppressors want. We must continue to defend our right to freedom of expression and against anti-democratic repression, but above all, our main response to their attempts to silence us must be to further grow our BDS campaigns everywhere. We've raised the slogan: They attack, we fight back. They oppress, we BDS.

Omar Barghouti is a Palestinian human rights defender, Gandhi Peace Award laureate, and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement

SPOTLIGHT ON...VOLUNTEERING WITH PSC

Whether protesting or holding public meetings, lobbying Parliament or holding a national day of action, sorting petitions or entering membership data - everything PSC does relies on a network of valued and skilled volunteers, whose work mainly goes on beyond the scenes. Whatever PSC does, they are there, ensuring PSC can maintain its heavy calendar of events throughout the year.

While some volunteers work in our office with administrative tasks such as dealing with phone calls, sending out literature, doing data entry and packing equipment for events, others help with specific campaign projects. For example, volunteers aided in researching our newly released database of university investments.

Some volunteers can't give up the time to come into the PSC office, so help on the ground at events; stewarding, running our merchandise stall, helping us set up and pack away. Our events simply couldn't happen without them. We have an event volunteers e-mail list, so you can be notified of upcoming events where we'll require some help.

We are always looking for enthusiastic and committed volunteers to join us. If you would like to offer us your skills, please e-mail a CV and a brief description of what you'd be interested in doing to **info@palestinecampaign.org**

YANN - PSC VOLUNTEER

"I have been a volunteer at PSC for 4 months.

I have been following the struggle of Palestine for a while, so when I finished school and decided to take a gap year, volunteering for PSC felt like a natural progression for me.

In my time as a volunteer at PSC I have done a wide variety of things, from filming promotional messages with celebrities to helping research subjects for campaigns, as well as more day-to-day things such as preparing welcome packs to be sent out to all the new members.

Volunteering for PSC is an interesting and varied role, so if you have the time to spare, please consider giving it to PSC - your help will be greatly appreciated."

BRANCH REPORTS

FIND OUT WHAT PSC BRANCHES ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAVE BEEN UP TO OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS! THIS SECTION WILL FEATURE ONE BRANCH REPORT PER ISSUE FROM OUR 5 BROAD REGIONS: **NORTH, MIDLANDS, WALES & WEST & SOUTH-WEST, EAST & SOUTH-EAST, LONDON**.

TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BRANCH GO TO THE BRANCHES SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.PALESTINECAMPAIGN.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/BRANCHES/

SCOTLAND & NORTH - SHEFFIELD

We continue to hold regular and well-attended monthly actions outside HSBC bank. We have been very active in the Stop the JNF campaign, having proposed the AGM motion last year, and will be holding a talk, conference and workshop linked to the campaign in March and April featuring Salman Abu Sitta. This year we will once again be collaborating with local community groups to organise the Small Park Big Run, with parallel events in Gaza and the West Bank, to raise money for Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund and Gaza Children's Projects.

We continue to fundraise for a range of children's projects in Gaza - Afaq Jadeeda, Never Stop Dreaming, New Horizons and a Play and Heal centre. We've held a number of public meetings over the last few months including a "Gaza" documentary screening and discussion and a general election candidate hustings event. In February we will host Zaytoun representatives talking about "Trees for Life: Trees for Palestine" and in March we will host Justin Schlosberg who co-authored "Labour Party, Anti-Semitism and the Media". We've also run various awareness-raising events including a "Jazz for Palestine" event, a vigil for the end of Operation Cast Lead, and a creative action and a decorated car cavalcade through the city finishing with a rally for the UN day of solidarity with Palestine.

MIDLANDS & CENTRAL - NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Northamptonshire PSC has been going since March 2015 so we are a relatively new branch. Since then we have developed an email contact list of nearly 200 people, a national PSC membership of 33 and a Facebook group with over 250 supporters.

Over the past 12 months we have held a fundraising meal, donated over £500 towards the national PSC fighting fund, organised four #StopArmingIsrael protests outside HSBC banks, written to all Northamptonshire MPs on arms sales to Israel, and held two public meetings - one with Jeff Halper (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions) and Hishan Sarabati (Hebron Defence Committee), and another with Dr. Mona El-Farra (Middle East Children's Alliance). Future activities early in 2020 will include another fundraising meal with Andrea Watts (USDAW and Labour Parliamentary candidate in the recent election) and Louise Regan (National Education Union and PSC Exec), further protests outside HSBC and an informal discussion with local Palestinians and the NPSC committee on "One State or Two State solution?".

WALES & WEST & SOUTH-WEST - CARDIFF

Throughout 2019 we have supported the PSC's national campaigns by establishing monthly protests in Cardiff city centre, targeting HSBC and PUMA as well as supporting PUMA campaigns in Newport and Swansea. In May we provided a coach from Cardiff to London for the National Demonstration. We've organised numerous events to raise awareness of the Palestinian struggle and to promote Palestinian culture. In April we supported an event organised by PALUK to host Nihaya Mahmud Abu-Rayyan, a social worker from Hebron. In May we screened Jon Pullman's film Witchhunt followed by a well-attended discussion. In October we welcomed the Palestinian Ambassador Husam Zomlot to Wales, where he met the Welsh Minister for International Relations and Leader of Cardiff Council. We have also supported other campaigns, joining protestors from Kashmir when India revoked article 370 thereby removing Kashmir's partial autonomy, and supporting a demonstration against Trump's visit to the UK. We have recently established links with a newly formed group of Palestinians in Cardiff and we hope to plan joint events with them in the future.

EAST & SOUTH-EAST - BRIGHTON

We're a large and lively PSC branch, with about 250 paid-up members and a further 800 or so on a supporters' email list. Like most PSC branches we're fully committed to the BDS movement and the Stop Arming Israel campaign. Currently our priority targets are HSBC Bank and Puma. We've been protesting outside the main branch of HSBC in Brighton since July 2017 – we're there on the third Saturday of every month, and we have lunchtime pop-up protests on a different day each week. The response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive. We've shifted thousands of leaflets, raising awareness of the key issues. For many years we've run a stall in the city centre for two hours every Saturday afternoon. Here again, the response from the public in Brighton is largely very supportive. That said, for the past 18 months or so the local pro-Israel group, Sussex Friends of Israel, has turned up for an hour every fortnight to try to disrupt and provoke us. Our approach is to ignore them: for us, it's business as usual. Our message is too important to waste time engaging with apologists for apartheid.

LONDON - TOWER HAMLETS

We were formed 5 years ago out of the long-standing Tower Hamlets – Jenin Friendship Association, and retain close links with Jenin in the north of the West Bank. In recent years we attracted a great deal of attention by taking a local artist, Tim Sanders, on a tour of the West Bank with the Jenin Freedom Theatre. His images are available for PSC branches to use.

After the hurried adoption the of IHRA definition of antisemitism by our Labour Council, we decided to lobby for the adoption of a free speech caveat, but we were unsuccessful. Last year we applied to the Council to hold the final rally for The Big Ride for Palestine (which raises money for a Gaza children's charity) in a local park. After we were turned down, FOI requests uncovered the shocking truth that the refusal was a direct result of fears among officers that the event might be antisemitic due to references to ethnic cleansing and apartheid on the Big Ride website. We have held a number of events around this and are now applying again to use a Council Park for the Big Ride 2020. In February we are launching a new Branch, East London PSC, which will enable us to campaign in Newham next door to us, and in other boroughs further East.

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

READ ABOUT HIGHLIGHTS FROM SOME OF OUR CORE CAMPAIGNS OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS!

APARTHEID OFF CAMPUS

At the end of last year, we launched our university complicity database. We've exposed that UK universities invest over an estimated £450million in companies who supply and finance Israel's settlement economy and military regime. Our database also lists other complicit links that UK universities hold with Israeli apartheid, including exchange programmes with Israeli universities which involve sending UK students to stay in occupied East Jerusalem. Over 20 student groups in the UK are now using this database as a tool to hold their institutions to account and to demand divestment and an end to university complicity.

We continue to support students in taking action, through holding workshops and events at universities across the UK, focused on strategising and building effective BDS campaigns. To accompany this work, we have just released our new "10 step guide to building an Apartheid Off Campus campaign" resource. In the coming months, we will be coordinating Israeli Apartheid Week 2020, which is due to be held on the week of the 16th March, coinciding with the UN day against racism. Across the country, students, academics and the general public will be joining forces with other anti-racist campaigns, to centre Palestine in the global struggle against racism and demand an end to UK complicity with Israeli apartheid. Time to get #ApartheidOffCampus!

STOP THE JNF UK

On 2nd December, activists from Stop the JNF campaign handed in over 4000 letters from members of the public to the Attorney General, calling on him to launch an immediate investigation into the charity status of JNF UK. This comes months after a First Tier Tribunal (Charity) refused to grant legal "standing" (i.e. legal right) to the descendant of an expelled Palestinian, Kholoud al-Ajarma, to challenge the charitable status of the JNF UK, even though the Charity Commission's barrister noted that JNF UK "may have infringed the legal rights" of her family.

The letters were sent as part of an e-action to both the Attorney General and Charity Commission, set up by PSC. The Attorney General is the only office holder with "standing" to require the Charity Commission to act further on this matter and to examine whether JNF UK has broken UK Charity laws. The Stop the JNF Campaign will continue to place pressure on the Attorney General, and explore legal avenues to challenge the Charity Commission. Activists are also poised to announce a day long conference in Sheffield on April 18th, focusing on issues of the JNF, historic and ongoing ethnic cleansing, and the right of return. The conference will also provide space for further campaign planning.

BOYCOTT PUMA

The #BoycottPuma campaign is really kicking off! Palestinian football teams paved the way for this campaign when over 200 clubs called on Puma to stop sponsoring the Israel Football Association (IFA). Over the last year PSC has worked hard, with our international partners, to amplify their voice. The Israel Football Association (IFA) is part of the illegal settlements infrastructure. Six IFA football teams are located in settlements, on land stolen from Palestinians. Puma's sponsorship of the IFA is being used to sportwash these Israeli war crimes.

Puma is trying to ignore the call from Palestine, so we are making them listen through a targeted campaign of their partners. Over the last few months more than 45,000 emails have been sent to football clubs across the UK calling on them to ditch Puma in the name of human rights. Chester F.C responded to PSC's twitterstorm saying they will not renew their contract with Puma, and Liverpool F.C has also confirmed they will not sign Puma next year. Momentum is growing around this campaign, and regular days of action - including local demonstrations outside high street stores selling Puma clothing - ensuring our message is being heard: complicity with Israeli war crimes has consequences! Join the #BoycottPuma campaign here.

AIRBNB

Airbnb has become a key battleground in our campaign against companies that profit from and legitimise illegal settlements. A little over a year ago Airbnb made a commitment to remove all holiday homes listed in Israeli settlements, but they quickly broke that promise. Caving to Israeli pressure, Airbnb have decided to continue supporting war crimes in the name of profit. Despite being on stolen Palestinian land, Israelis are still able to advertise and make money from their illegal properties. Whilst foreign tourists and Israeli travellers are welcomed into settler communities, Palestinians are cut off from their land by military checkpoints. This is apartheid in action, not a vacation destination.

In response to Airbnb's flip-flop and policy betrayal, PSC is leading calls across the UK for the company to grow a moral backbone and stop advertising settlement homes. As part of the international campaign to #DeactivateAirbnb we've seen creative tube and bus stop subvertising messages, protests outside Airbnb's headquarters, and thousands have written to Airbnb's CEO and closed their accounts. We must not allow Airbnb to set a dangerous precedent for other companies - such as Booking.com, Expedia, and Tripadvisor - to also ignore calls from human rights organisations to cut ties with illegal settlements. Join us in showing the consequences to complicity with Israeli war crimes. TAKE ACTION NOW!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **PSC BRANCH FORUM**
  Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th March, London. At the forum we will strategise and plan our campaigns for the year, as set out in the Annual Plan agreed at the AGM; looking at how we drive our movement forward on the ground, including the Stop Arming Israel and Boycott Puma campaigns. ***It is important that representative(s) from your branch attends!***

  - CLICK **HERE** TO REGISTER AND REQUEST ACCOMMODATION
  - CLICK **HERE** IF YOU ARE LONDON-BASED AND CAN HOST BRANCH ACTIVISTS DURING THE WEEKEND

- **ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK**
  Monday 16th - Sunday 22nd March, across the UK! Including a student national day of action on 18th March and a "Beats for Boycotts" gig in London on 21st March. More details coming soon!

- **DAY OF ACTION TO MARK THE START OF THE GREAT RETURN MARCH**
  Tuesday 31st March, across the UK. PSC members across the country will be taking creative action in solidarity with the Palestinian people to mark two years since the start of the Great Return March. More details coming soon.

- **STOP THE JNF UK CONFERENCE**
  Saturday 18th April, Sheffield. This event will explore issues of the JNF, historic and ongoing ethnic cleansing, and the right of return, as well as providing space for further campaign planning. More details coming soon.

- **LOBBY DAY IN PARLIAMENT**
  Wednesday 29th April, Houses of Parliament. This is the new date for the lobby day after our November one was cancelled due to the election. More details coming soon.

DONATE TO PSC

Across the world, Israel & its allies are cracking down on attempts to hold it to account for its war crimes. In the UK, the government is now seeking to ban public bodies from supporting BDS campaigns.

We will fight this, but we need your support: **bit.ly/PSCdonate2020**

PSC ONLINE SHOP

Buy Keffiyahs, t-shirts, accessories and more Palestine-related products (including our brand new tote bags) on our online shop! All money raised goes towards funding our crucial campaigns for Palestinian rights.

Shop now: **shop.palestinecampaign.org**