



# PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #11 • JUNE 2022



## CHAIR'S MESSAGE

**KAMEL HAWWASH**

The recent May Nakba demonstration brought over 15,000 people to the streets of London to send once again a message to the Palestinians that the British people stand with them as they continue to struggle to achieve their inalienable rights to return, to freedom, justice and equality, just like any other people.

The 14th of May demonstration came just days after the assassination of the highly respected journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh as she and her team were setting up to report on another violent incursion by Israeli troops into Jenin. The killing brought universal condemnation of Israel which was only amplified when the Israeli police then attacked her funeral in her hometown Jerusalem.

Throughout Ramadan, which preceded the killing of Shireen, Israeli forces attacked peaceful worshippers at Al-Aqsa and protected extremist settlers as they continued to break into holy place uninvited in a clear violation of longstanding agreements that allow coordinated visits but prohibit prayer by non-Muslims.

While Israel has been declared guilty of the crime of Apartheid by human rights organisations, the UK Government found space in the recent Queen's Speech to declare its intention to legislate against the peaceful BDS movement.

PSC, working with partners, will continue to lead the opposition to this legislation which if passed will send the message to Israel that it can carry on breaching international law and oppressing the Palestinians with complete impunity. That is not the way to reach peace.

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# VOICE FROM PALESTINE: SAVE MASAFAR YATTA

SAMI HUREINI

On 4 May 2022, Israel's Supreme Court, one of Israel's main institutions of apartheid, ruled in favour of the forcible expulsion of 8 Palestinian villages in Masafer Yatta in occupied Palestine. The decision also threatens the existence of Palestinians in other neighbouring villages.



This comes after 22 years of legal battles for the people of Masafer Yatta. In 1999, around 700 Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta were forced from their lands by the Israeli military, but they were able to return with a 'temporary' order for the past 22 years—until now.

The Israeli occupation has a plan to annex about 30,000 dunums of Palestinian land in the area of Masafer Yatta. They want to ethnically cleanse the land of us, the indigenous people, the Palestinians. This of course flies in the face of international law, but that fact alone does not stop Israel, though it should shock and shame the British politicians who are watching and taking no action to stop it.

Since the court order a few weeks ago, there have been two demolition operations carried out by the Israeli military: one was on 11 May, a week after the court decision, when Israeli military destroyed 19 structures in Masafer Yatta including houses, structures for sheep, and tents. Immediately on that day, we as a group of local activists, together with others who came to help, built emergency shelters and tents for the people to stay.

Then, on Wednesday 1 June, the Israeli arms raided again with JCB, Volvo, and Caterpillar bulldozers and destroyed the emergency shelters and other structures in the villages of Al Merkez and Al Fakhit.

It is important for people in Britain to know that JCB bulldozers (as well as Caterpillar, Volvo and Hyundai) have been destroying our homes and villages for decades. These companies are profiting from our ethnic cleansing committed by apartheid Israel.

Since the earlier eviction 22+ years ago, the Israeli forces have changed their tactics. In 1999, they came in to ethnically cleanse the people all at once, forcibly loading them on trucks and driving them away from their lands. The images of mass expulsion may have been considered to be 'bad press' even for the Israeli state, and that may have led to the political pressure to allow people to return the next year. Of course, we should not ever need the permission of an occupation army to live on our own lands, but this is the reality we live in.

Now the tactic is different, and it takes the shape of a slower ethnic cleansing, week by week, house by house, village by village. The Israeli occupation is making Palestinians in these villages homeless gradually until all are ethnically cleansed from the land they have been tending for generations.



As I mentioned, two demolitions were carried out in Al Merkez and Al Fakhit already. Now there are 13 structures with demolition orders in Taban village, putting so many people at risk. They have 96 hours. The demolition orders include family homes, sheep shelters, and even water wells. This is the step by step ethnic cleansing which we are facing.

Urgent actions must be taken to support our struggle against Israel's ethnic cleansing. British politicians must take serious actions, to pressure Israel to stop and to hold Israel accountable for all of the crimes against the Palestinian people, including in Masafer Yatta.

Political pressure is one of the most important things we can count on now—it helped in Khan al Ahmar and Susiya, and it could help us now to #SaveMasaferYatta. People in the UK must also pressure their municipalities and universities not to contract companies complicit in crimes against us, including JCB, Volvo, Caterpillar, and Hyundai Heavy Industries.

And finally, our stories and the daily crimes committed against our people should become more visible and heard. You can learn more about our daily struggle by following @YouthOfSumud.

### Stories from Gaza: Commemorating 15 Years of Blockade

Join us for a live screening of Râbet's short documentaries, *Gaza Stories*, as well as a panel discussion with:

Mohammed Rafik Mhwaesh



Palestinian writer and researcher based in Gaza

Zainab Basheer



Palestinian translation student & writer

Thursday, 23 June

8:00pm Palestine time // 6:00pm UK

Co-hosted by Râbet/PIPD and PSC UK



## WEBINAR TONIGHT

Don't miss this important event commemorating 15 years of ongoing siege on Gaza!

JOIN US!

# SPOTLIGHT ON: ART AND CULTURE

Israel's project of colonisation seeks not just to colonise the land but to erase the memory of Palestinian presence, history and culture. Those of you who have visited Palestine will have seen written many times, especially on the apartheid wall that snakes its way through East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the slogan 'to exist is to resist'. And so in solidarity with the Palestinian artists keeping culture alive, PSC has been proudly celebrating Palestinian art and culture.

Our "Art As Resistance" monthly spotlight initiative identifies a different Palestinian artist every month, sharing their work across our social media channels and encouraging our followers to support them.



From filmmakers and musicians, to painters and photographers, to writers and spoken word artists, to puppeteers and beyond, **we have been platforming and continuously connecting with Palestinian artists** for the last 19 months.

We have also hosted a range of Palestinian cultural events. Our online cook-alongs throughout the last 2 years have been a huge hit, led by the fantastic Maha Salah who has taken us on a journey of Palestinian food and culture. From Ramadan and Eid traditions, to regional specialties, to dessert masterclasses, we have cooked together, feasted together and learned about Palestinian customs together. We have also hosted cook-alongs with MasterChef contestant Raheel Mirza and Palestinian author, cook and academic Laila El-Haddad both of which were fascinating, informative and delicious.

It's also been our pleasure to have been joined at numerous events by world-class oud player Saied Silbak, showcasing his celebration of Palestinian folklore from past to present. Palestinian music was also front and centre at our in-person showcase of Palestinian artists at Rich Mix London back in March. We were honoured to be serenaded by Ruba Shamshoum's riveting combination of poetic dream pop, jazz and Middle Eastern soul. Alongside her songs telling bold stories of femininity, Rafeef Ziadah joined us on the night for her **first live performance in 2 years**.

Our UN World Children's Day interactive webinar was one of our most memorable events to date. Joined by Gazan-based young artist Malak Mattar who took up painting during Israel's 2014 assault on the Gaza Strip, it was a chance to hear a reading from her debut bi-lingual children's book. We also showcased a live performance of "We Will Wait Until They Open The Gate", a truly moving play performed live on Zoom on the night by pupils from UNRWA Beach Elementary School in Gaza. The event was in partnership with the Hands Up Project, whom we will work closely with going forward to platform plays written and performed by Palestinian students.

We are also thrilled to be partnering with PaArt Collective, who are a group of artists, activists and academics committed to increasing the number of Palestinian voices and stories in the arts and media. Stay tuned for our work together!

# CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

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

## PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN

Our protect the right to boycott campaign to oppose upcoming anti-BDS legislation ramped up considerably over the past few months, starting with the launch of a civil society statement co-ordinated by PSC.

With over 50 signatories from across civil society including trade unions, faith groups and climate justice organisations, we sent a strong message to the government that such plans affect many of us and more important, will be opposed by many of us. You can read the collective statement at [righttoboycott.org.uk](http://righttoboycott.org.uk).

Our statement pre-empted confirmation of the government's plans to table this legislation which was confirmed in the Queen's Speech in early May. Following on from this, over 12,000 PSC members and supporters took action and contacted their MPs to express their concerns. Our campaign to oppose impending legislation will continue to grow over the next few months and has crossover with much of the work our campaigners do, including trade union engagement, parliamentary liaison, youth and student campaign and Local Government Divestment campaigns. We'll keep you updated about the actions you can take over the next few months.



## POLITICAL PRISONERS

Each year on 17 April, Palestinians mark Prisoners Day to uplift the cause of political prisoners and their struggle for justice. We marked the day this year by hosting speakers from our incredible Palestinian partner organisations, Addameer and Defence for Children International – Palestine. [Watch a recording of the event here.](#)

Much like other colonial powers throughout history, Israel uses arbitrary detention for political repression, to punish Palestinians for opposing apartheid. Currently Israel holds over 4500 Palestinians as political prisoners, including 600 held in administrative detention, without charge or trial.

One administrative detainee is Salah Hamouri, a Palestinian human rights defender who has been repeatedly detained over the past two decades, his family harassed, and his phone tapped with spyware. Now he is imprisoned without charge and facing deportation from his home city of Jerusalem.

PSC is supporting the #JusticeForSalah campaign as a part of our wider efforts to press Israel to free all political prisoners.



## JCB: OFF TRACK

JCB continues to supply Israel with machines used to build illegal settlements and bulldoze Palestinian homes, but the campaign against them is gaining momentum. PSC has teamed up with partner organisations – including War On Want, Amnesty International, Amos Trust, and ICAHD UK – to fight back against JCB’s complicity in crimes against Palestinians.

A UK government watchdog concluded in November what we already knew – that JCB is failing to carry out due diligence human rights checks over the use of its equipment in demolishing Palestinian homes.

Palestinian children are amongst the most vulnerable and traumatised by home demolitions, which is why

we’re calling on the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to end its charitable partnership with JCB.



Last month PSC led a day of action, where thousands of you joined us on twitter to remind the NSPCC of their slogan “every child is worth fighting for”. This includes the many Palestinian children who have been made homeless by JCB’s machines. By continuing to take JCB’s dirty money, and in doing so laundering JCB’s reputation, the NSPCC is whitewashing the company’s complicity in abuse against Palestinian children. This must stop.

Keep an eye out for our upcoming actions against JCB!

## YOUTH & STUDENT

In the last few months Stella, our Campaigns Officer for Youth and Students, has continued supporting campus organising, visiting Students’ Unions and Palestine Societies to run talks and workshops on how students can organise in solidarity with Palestine. These have been well-received, and allowed Stella to support a new Palestine Society be formed at Loughborough University.

Along with the Youth and Student Committee, Stella organised a Youth Bloc for our national

demonstration on the 14th May, bringing together student groups from different universities to march together.

It was brilliant to see so many young people at the rally, including taking roles as stewards. In the build up to the rally, we had a Young PSC Instagram takeover, which you can see in the Highlights over on our Instagram account.

We’re now approaching the end of the year for students, so we will be looking at maintaining campaigns and handover for next year’s cohort of student organisers.



# PSC'S 2022 AGM

Thank you to all PSC members who joined our second virtual AGM and to the NEU team for assisting us to ensure that we had a good experience. We had wide-ranging and robust discussions and managed to get through most of the business which concluded with the passing of the annual plan. We adopted a revised constitution that will ensure that we now have a constitution that is fit for the PSC as an organization that has been through change and growth. I thank everyone involved in this process.

We are currently considering the timing and format of next year's AGM. While the virtual meetings over the past two years were necessitated by the COVID pandemic and they helped us continue to operate and plan, many members indicated to us how much they had missed the face-to-face meetings. Here follows a link to the motions that we passed at our AGM, which together with the plan, form our work for the year ahead, plus details of those elected to PSC's EC: [Click Here](#).

- PSC Chair Professor Kamel Hawwash

## A TRIBUTE TO BRUCE KENT

On June 8th, we were deeply saddened to hear the news of the death of our Patron for over 20 years, Bruce Kent. PSC published [a statement from our Honorary President Betty Hunter](#).

Here our Director Ben Jamal, adds some personal reflections.



*I first encountered Bruce Kent from a distance, as part of the crowd at Glastonbury Festival in the early 1980s watching this towering figure speak for CND from the stage. As a member of PSC's EC in the 2010s I was sometimes handed the role of managing the speakers at the big rallies in Hyde Park. Anyone who has done this knows it is a lesson in managing egos, finding out who must speak in a certain slot and will resist being shunted further down the line-up, who will be amenable to any last minute changes. Bruce was consistent. He would turn up, introduce himself, indicate that he would speak at whatever point suited, and then find a spot to sit and chat vigorously with his fellow speakers. After I became Director in 2016 I encountered Bruce more frequently and grew to love him. Many of you know that PSC shares an office with CND. Bruce, then in his late 80s, would be a regular visitor and whilst he was still able would always find time to ascend the narrow staircase to the 3rd floor to say hello to all of the PSC staff and to sit down with me for an update on the campaign. He was invariably encouraging and full of wisdom. Bruce always made a point of attending the joint PSC/CND volunteers party held at Xmas as a thanks to all of those who gave time to support both organisations. As well as delivering a speech of thanks, he always made time to speak individually to everyone there. His was an extraordinary and long life well-lived. We will miss him as an inspiration and as a friend.*

*Rest in peace and power dear Bruce.*



# BERNARD'S BOOK CLUB!



*Many people have asked for the names of books on Palestine that they should look at. The intention here is to give a brief introduction to books on and about Palestine that may interest you. I will take a look at history, poetry and literature more generally that might be of interest. Please also send in your suggestions of books you think we should take a look at - Bernard Regan*

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## **A Map of Absence: An Anthology of Palestinian Writing on the Nakba (Saqi Books 2018)**

In 1948 over 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes by the actions of Haganah paramilitaries. There are a number of books which have documented these events recounting the scale and the sheer horror of what happened including the atrocities that took place at Deir Yassin and elsewhere.

It is impossible for anyone who did not experience that war crime or has not shared the experiences resulting directly from its consequences to fully appreciate its scope and significance. Everyone other than the Palestinians themselves are at a point of remove from those events. This anthology, gathering a variety of styles of writing, prose and poetry, brings together contributions which offer a broad range of recollections, reflections, accounts of the events of the Nakba which offer insights that expand our attempts to imagine what 1948 meant and means for the Palestinian people.

The book contains the writings of Palestinian authors over the last 70 years whose works is well known beyond the Palestinian or Arabic speaking world. Here we find excerpts from the works of Palestinian men and women like Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, Emile Habibi, Salman Abu Sitta, Fadwa Tuqan and others but we also find many writers whose names may be less well known at this point.

The poems are complete whilst the prose in some cases are excerpts from different genres of writing including novels, short stories, autobiographical and journalistic pieces or from longer prose. However they are well chosen reflecting diverse sensibilities and insights into the catastrophe of that year. The book is a collection both of a variety of writers from different generations but also a variety of forms of writing and should stimulate further reading of all of these authors and their wider appreciation beyond the Arabic language world.

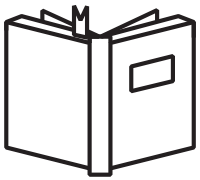
In any effort to render the full meaning of a poem originally written in one language and translated to another there are challenges. How do you ensure that the authors intentions are retained? How do you retain the significance of the language, the imagery used, the cultural and historical references embedded in the texts? Whatever the difficulty in the task the translators have done an excellent job. The pieces here are powerful and convey the profundity of the experience their authors are reflecting on.

This is a book which can be read as a whole or can be dipped into selecting writings at random. It's an excellent collection of writings that deserves to be read widely.



# RESOURCES

Every newsletter, we will be bringing you recommendations for a book, a film and a podcast on Palestine!



**Come What May** by **Ahmed Masoud** is a poignant novel following the life of Zahra Beiso whose husband Ammar, was killed in 2014 and written off as one of the two thousand or so casualties of war. However, Zahra is convinced that her husband was murdered by a fellow Palestinian, not an Israeli airstrike. When she finally finds a detective who agrees to investigate however, Zahra begins to regret it almost immediately as the policeman uncovers the truth behind the murder, along with a network of deception, lies and corruption. [Purchase here.](#)



From The Institute for Middle East Understanding's *This Is Palestine* podcast, this episode titled **Remembering Shireen Abu Akleh** and focuses on the trailblazing Palestinian journalist who spent decades covering Israel's brutal military occupation of Palestine. [Listen here.](#)



**The Crossing** by Ameen Nayfeh is a powerful gut-punch of a short film that communicates the frustrations of immobility experienced by families separated by the wall, focusing on three siblings who are trying to cross to see their ill grandfather.

[Watch The Crossing on Netflix](#)

## PSC ONLINE SHOP

Check out these beautiful olive wood products now available on our shop, all handmade in Bethlehem. [Browse these items & much more here!](#)

