



# PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #10 • MARCH 2022



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**BEN JAMAL**

In recent weeks the 'tectonic plates' of the international order have shifted with Russia's appalling invasion of Ukraine. In response, Western Governments including our own have called for sanctions for what is a clear breach of international law. Furthermore, there has been widespread encouragement for public, cultural and sporting bodies to take their own actions to ensure Russia's political, financial, diplomatic and cultural isolation.

All of this is in stark contrast to the Government's response to Israel's ongoing violations of international law. Not only does it refuse to impose any form of accountability measures to address these, it actually takes action to prevent others holding Israel to account. So in the same week that Michael Gove writes to Local Government Pension Schemes affirming their responsibility to divest from companies complicit in Russian crimes, the Government passes an amendment to Pensions Law that is designed to stop those same bodies taking similar action in relation to Israel. The hypocrisy is stark & evident and the illegitimate arguments used to sustain inaction in relation to Israel for decades, that Israel is a liberal democracy overseeing an illegal occupation that it wishes to be temporary, withstands no scrutiny.

Last week we saw the latest report from UN Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk who has followed B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in affirming what Palestinians have been articulating for years: That Israel is practising the crime of apartheid. At Our AGM this month, we passed a comprehensive plan to continue to expose this reality and to campaign for an end to the complicity of our Government, public bodies, companies and corporations in supporting this apartheid regime.

On Saturday May 14th, we need you to join us in your thousands as we march again on the streets of London to mark 74 years of Nakba and to call for an end to occupation, apartheid and settler colonialism. None of us are free until all of us are free!

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# VOICE FROM PALESTINE: ON THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT

BY DR. SARA HUSSEINI



Last month, Amnesty International published a 280-page report concluding that the State of Israel is committing the crime of apartheid, and provided a clear set of recommendations and remedies for accountability under international law.

Amnesty's report represents an important contribution to a body of work spanning decades: by Palestinian organisations like al-Haq and al-Mezan, international entities such as UN ESCWA and Human Rights Watch, Israeli NGO B'TSelem, as well as scholars, lawyers, and human rights defenders in Palestine and beyond. The report takes into account the lived experience of millions of Palestinians. And it benefits from solidarity efforts which have paved the way in the UK and elsewhere, through initiatives such as the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, Israeli Apartheid Week across campuses, and years of grassroots campaigning.

The report also reflects a broader moment: a long overdue shift in narrative towards a more accurate representation of the situation in Palestine, led by Palestinians, whose perspectives have traditionally been silenced and marginalised.

The apartheid analysis highlights the singular nature of Israeli rule from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. In doing so, it also highlights the reality of Palestinians as one people - the object of apartheid across that same geographical area - including those prevented from returning to their homeland. In May and June of last year, we saw an unapologetic reassertion of this reality, epitomised by general strikes across the whole of historic Palestine and the Diaspora. Palestinians came together to call for a new Intifada, "a long one in the streets of Palestine and in streets around the world; an intifada that fights the hand of injustice wherever it tries to reach, that fights the batons of cruel regimes wherever they try to strike." People in the UK responded, turning out on the streets in their hundreds of thousands.

The road to political change in the UK is still long. But Amnesty's report provides another tool with which to prise open the cage of an Oslo-era narrative premised on fragmentation and permanent subjugation. This deeply flawed framing, which has permeated the political echelons for almost 30 years, has served to marginalise the refugee question, ignore the presence of Palestinians in Israel, and treat the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip as separate entities to be 'managed' in a piecemeal way, rather than recognise all Palestinians as subject to the same overarching settler colonial project and a single system of apartheid.

Mainstreaming the reality of apartheid is an imperative step towards change. At a time when international community responses to Russia and Ukraine remind us that international law still exists and that sanctions are still considered an appropriate response to the acquisition of territory by force, we must keep working to expose double standards in the policies and actions of the British government. We must keep demanding that international mechanisms of accountability are applied consistently. And we must continue to build our broad campaign across communities and constituencies - whether in the face of authoritarian crackdowns on our right to protest, the treatment of refugees and immigrants, arms trade, or any other abuse of human rights – here in the UK or elsewhere.

Brave and persistent solidarity efforts played a crucial role in the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. Amnesty's report represents both a contribution to, and a result of, brave and persistent solidarity efforts for Palestine. We are one step closer – let's not let up now.

*Dr. Sara Hussein is Director of the British Palestinian Council, an independent voice on British policy towards Palestine, and a former advisor to the PLO.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON: LGPS DIVEST CAMPAIGN

Across Britain, members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) have continued mobilising, through their trade unions, and with the support of PSC, to end the LGPS's investment in companies complicit in Israel's grave abuses of Palestinian human rights. In February, campaigners demanded action to be taken by a number of funds. Here's just two examples.

In Hertfordshire, campaigners presented a petition of 1000+ locals to the County Council, demanding action be taken to divest the fund from companies active in, or with, Israel's illegal settlements – reiterating the call of UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Palestine, Professor Michael Lynk. Campaigners are awaiting a full response.

In Merseyside, campaigning by local trade unions led the local pension committee to assess their complicit investment. After deliberating, a proposal was put to the pensions committee meeting which would have meant the committee would have taken a step towards addressing the funds investment in companies on the UN OHCHR's list of business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements. Unfortunately, 6 councillors, 4 Conservatives and 2 Labour Party, decided to ignore the wishes of scheme members, and vote against the proposal. The issue is coming back to the committee at a later date, and scheme members and campaigners are going to keep up the pressure!





These 2 events came in the same week as an amendment, proposed by disgraced former Minister Robert Jenrick, was voted by Parliament, as part of the Pension Services and Judicial Offices Bill. The worrying amendment allows Ministers to issue 'guidance or directions on investments which it is not proper for pension scheme managers to make in light of UK foreign and defence policy'. This follows comments to the press stating Jenrick's wish to 'outlaw Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions,' and it comes in the context of the government's intentions to introduce primary legislation to prevent public bodies from 'imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestment, or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries.'

The worrying amendment is opposed by a wide range of civil society and human rights campaigns, for the chilling effect it could have on a number of human rights and justice campaigns.

While the amendment is disgraceful, we have to be clear what it does. It does not outlaw BDS, and it does not prevent funds from listening to their scheme members, and divesting from companies complicit in Israel's violations of international law.

The amendment is an attempt to stop us campaigning, and to stop us amplifying the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, and equality. We can't let it.

If you're a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme, or any other public sector scheme funded by investment, demand they divest. Get together in your trade union and with other scheme members and take action – you'll find resources, model motions, and template letters to councillors at <https://lgpsdivest.org>.

# CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

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

## PROTECT THE RIGHT TO BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN

It's been over two years since the UK Government first announced its intention to table a bill that would prevent public bodies from making their own boycott, divestment, or sanctions decisions. Unfortunately, we're now expecting that legislation to be tabled within the next few months.



Our campaign to oppose this 'anti-boycott bill' continues to take shape. We've engaged with dozens of organisations from across civil society who share our concerns about the impact any such legislation would have on our ability to campaign for international, climate, and social justice.

Unfortunately, in a move which we view as a precursor to this legislation, Tory MP Robert Jenrick tabled an amendment to pension legislation that enables the government to issue guidance to make it more difficult for pension schemes to divest from harmful funds, such as those complicit in Israeli apartheid. Despite high level interventions from PSC, UNISON and Amnesty International, and thousands of people contacting their MP's, this amendment passed.

However, this amendment and the way in which it was introduced has paved the way for more scrutiny of the governments upcoming bill and engaged many more people in the campaign against it. As we wait for the government to introduce this legislation, we continue to build what will be one of our biggest ever campaigns and we will keep you updated.

## TRADE UNIONS

2 years after the outbreak of Covid in the UK, we are now ready to start going back to pre-pandemic levels of activism with our trade union partners. We already have plans to have a presence at dozens of union events around the country, from March to November, with stalls and in some cases fringe events at major conferences. This includes NEU, GMB, the BFAWU and UNISON in spring and summer.

Our main focus will be, firstly to continue to increase awareness of the apartheid narrative, based on the recent release of the Amnesty international report.

We are working to ensure UK unions upgrade their policy, for the few who haven't yet done so, to include full support for BDS. We are developing a series of resources to that effect, including literature on Palestinian worker's rights.

Secondly our aim is to increase affiliations to PSC by union branches and regions. We are planning to reach pre-pandemic levels of affiliations later in the year.

Finally, in line with the expected outcome at the PSC AGM, PSC is looking to organise a conference for trade unionists later this year, as well as returning to organising trade union delegations to Palestine.



## BOYCOTT PUMA

On February 12th, as part of an international day of action, hundreds across Britain joined over 25+ actions at PUMA stores and stockists, to call on them to end their complicity in Israeli apartheid.

In Manchester, PUMA's offices were occupied by campaigners – while in London, dozens protested outside PUMA's flagship store, letting customers know they must give PUMA the boot.

Online, thousands took to social media to share Amnesty's report on Israeli apartheid with PUMA's CEO, telling him to read the recommendation that calls on businesses to cease activities that "contribute to or benefit from the system of apartheid."

The day of action came at a crunch point for the international campaign to force PUMA to end its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA). With PUMA's contract with the IFA up in June, they have a window of opportunity to end their relationship, and move to the right side of history.

We know that our campaigning is piling pressure on PUMA. In a leaked internal memo, PUMA admitted that its celebrity ambassadors and business partners are increasingly raising ethical concerns over its support for Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights. Now's the time to press!

So, until they end their complicity - we'll keep coming back and protesting at PUMA stores and stockists across the country!



## YOUTH & STUDENT

In January, Stella Swain joined the team at PSC as our first full time Youth and Student Organiser. Before joining PSC, she worked as part of the COP26 Coalition to coordinate civil society's response to the COP climate summit. In her time at PSC so far, she's been working on plans for Israeli Apartheid Week (21st-27th March), including running workshops for student organisers, giving talks for university Palestine Societies, and co-ordinating actions with our Youth and Student Committee. This year's Israeli Apartheid Week theme is art against apartheid: centring artistic resistance to oppression and building connections across movements with the hashtag #UnitedAgainstRacism.

We have already seen significant action in the student movement this year, with a hugely successful protest in Cambridge against Israeli ambassador Tzipi Hotovely drawing large numbers, and a united response from the NUS and UCU rebutting Nadhim Zahawi's suggestion that students chanting 'From the River to the Sea' should be reported to the police. PSC ran a packed-out workshop at the NUS's 'Student Strike' on the 3rd March, and Stella has been working on linking our campaigns with younger school students, as well as broadening our network of university contacts.





# 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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## **Sharon and my Mother-in-Law - Ramallah Diaries by Suad Amiry (Granta Books 2005)**

In much of the main-stream media Palestinians are frequently portrayed either as terrorists or victims. Such one-dimensional portrayals are blown apart in Suad Amiry's engaging book Sharon and my Mother-in-Law – Ramallah diaries. The book is much more than a chronological account of her life between 1981 and 2003. In it she recounts a series of tales and encounters from different moments in her life which in a personal and vivid way illustrate the multi-layered complexity of life for a Palestinian woman who is living under Israeli occupation and is an embodiment of Palestinian resistance. Whilst the book is truthful about the brutal realities of life under occupation it is infused with a lively sense of humour which forensically demolishes the ugly reality. Irony it appears is a word not understood by the security forces whose omnipresence intrudes into every facet of Palestinian life.

Simultaneously intelligent, humorous, engaging, emotionally moving, courageous and witty Amiry recounts numerous episodes in her life which expose the brutality of the Israeli occupation and a resilience which can turn the horrific and oppressive into moments of subversive humour. Returning home via Tel Aviv airport she relates how she was quizzed by the Israeli security as to what had been the purpose of her trip to London. Unwilling to explain she had been to Scotland to visit friends she had not seen for years and to complete work on a thesis her inspired anarchic humour turns the situation into the farce that it is.

“And what were you doing in London.” (Asks the Israeli airport security guard).

“I went dancing,” I answered, looking her straight in the eye, with an expressionless tired face, and voice even more assertive than hers”.

Obviously this is not the answer that the guard anticipated. The guard is unable to make sense of her response. What should they do? The situation escalates as the guard, unable to interpret what this means, in her terms, calls her superior and the interrogation begins afresh. The new interrogator can make head nor tail of it. Eventually Amiry simply asserts she is leaving and walks out. The very authors of this theatre of the absurd cannot even understand their own creation.

The story, one of numerous even more hilarious others her diaries tell, is a microcosm of the plight of Palestinians living lives that have to conform to certain preconceived notions authored by the oppressor. Quite possibly the response was thought of as even more disruptive of the presumed relationship that ought to be that between guard and traveller, because it came from a woman. It reminded me of a friend who was pulled over in the same airport and asked where she was going – was she going to the West Bank. She asked that security guard if he thought it a good idea and would he go there. The inversion of the quiz puzzled him and, unable to cope, he waived her through.



# BERNARD'S BOOK CLUB!



The story however is not the most comical absurdity she recounts. There is the arrest for staring at an Israeli policeman. Perhaps the most absurd is her meeting with a dog which she adopts. The dog is treated in an Israeli veterinary practice. After the treatment the vet says that a licence must be issued and since his practice is in Jerusalem the dog will get a Jerusalem Identity. The owner, of course, does not have and cannot get a Jerusalem ID. The dog's identity however subsequently proves useful when its status manages to persuade the checkpoint guard that both the dog and the owner can enter Jerusalem.

This is a book about relatives, neighbours and their children, friends, chance meetings; it is about the challenges of love and partnership. The life affirming simple acts of human solidarity which in themselves are displays of samud, the Palestinian will to resist.

Amiry recounts other more gruesome descriptions of the reality of life in Ramallah. The entries to her diary cover the period in which Yasser Arafat was besieged in his Ramallah headquarters, the muqata'ah and the whole city, along with the rest of the West Bank, was placed in under heavy curfew. Everyday tasks became nightmares, shooting of individuals by the military is unpredictable and arbitrary as even the perverse normal of the occupation is usurped. Collaboration by individual Palestinians with the Israeli authorities, the consequence of petty venal chance encounters as threats induce compliance, is a tragic ever present. Lives are destroyed. In response the resistance operates at many levels from physical confrontation to collective banging of pots and pans and more subversive displays of collective humour. This book does not present a rosy picture but it is an insight that inspires.

On a personal note I remember vividly one time going to Nablus with a delegation of trade unionists who had spent several days listening to Palestinians talking about the reality of the occupation – in fact the group contained members who made and are still making major contributions to develop work on Palestine inside the unions. At the end of a long day of meetings we were invited to a wedding. Though tired and a little reluctant to leave our warm hotel we all went. It was for me the highlight of the visit. A real lively evening of singing and dancing that I think for many on the delegation blew away the cobwebs and any danger of a one-sided view of the Palestinians. Suad Amiry's book reminded me of that night in all its lively, rebelliousness. Read this book and I think you will get an insight into what I mean.

You may have to go online to buy this book – but it is worth searching out.

**Bernard Regan, 3rd March 2022.**



## #EXISTRESISTRETURN

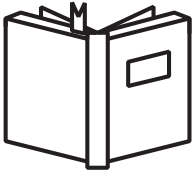
74 years ago, Zionist forces ethnically cleansed and eradicated over 500 villages and cities in Palestine. The Nakba continues today and Israel continues its policy of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Join us on Saturday 14th May to call for an end to Israel's oppression and to assert the right of the Palestinian people to live in freedom with justice and equality.

**JOIN US!**



# RESOURCES

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



**The Stone House by Yara Hawari** is a groundbreaking novella from the Palestinian writer, political commentator and senior analyst at Al-Shabaka. In her fiction debut, she harnesses the enduring power of memory in defiance of the constrictions on Palestinian life and creates a vivid, haunting tale of intergenerational trauma and survival under Israeli occupation. [Purchase here.](#)



From Al-Shabaka's Rethinking Palestine series, this podcast episode titled **Ongoing Resistance in the Naqab with Riya Al-Sanah** explores the latest escalation by the Israeli regime against Palestinian Bedouin communities in the Naqab, and situates it within the context of ongoing settler-colonial ethnic cleansing across colonized Palestine. [Listen here.](#)



**In Vitro** by Larissa Sansour is set in the aftermath of an eco-disaster. A vast bunker under the biblical town of Bethlehem has been converted into an enormous orchard and a conversation between two scientists soon evolves into an intimate dialogue about memory, exile and nostalgia. Central to their discussion is the intricate relationship between past, present and future, with the Bethlehem setting providing a narratively, politically and symbolically charged backdrop.

[Watch In Vitro on Netflix](#)


## PSC ONLINE SHOP

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**COOK-ALONG FUNDRAISER**  
**WITH CHEF LAILA EL-HADDAD**  
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DANA DAJANI  
WEDNESDAY MARCH 30TH AT 6PM BST



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