



PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BEN JAMAL

Since our last newsletter in June we've been extremely busy! We've had stalls and meetings at dozens of trade union conferences including the TUC, and at the SNP and Labour Party conferences. We've held 2 conferences of our own, one with trade union activists and a weekend conference with students building divestment campaigns at UK universities. Branches across the UK have campaigned in their local communities including via 2 national days of action on HSBC and Puma. And we don't stop there. As the country moves towards a General Election we will shortly be launching a Vote Palestine initiative, allowing you to contact candidates across constituencies asking where they stand in support for the Palestinian people. And on Nov 20th of course we have our big day in the Supreme Court as we fight for the right of local pension schemes to divest from Israeli apartheid! The Palestinian people need our solidarity more than ever. Onwards to freedom justice and equality!

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NEWS ON PALESTINE:

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

BY DR MUSTAFA BARGHOUTI

International solidarity is vital to the success of Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian cause has never been as threatened as it is today, and the Israeli government feels empowered by the lack of international response to its violations of international law and human rights.



The Trump administration is trying to pass a deal (the so called "Deal of the Century") which would liquidate Palestinian rights, including the right to self determination and independent statehood. They are also attempting to liquidate UNRWA and the internationally recognized Palestinian refugees' right of return. The plan includes normalization of the occupation and the system of racial discrimination at the expense of Palestinian people.

After 71 years of the ethnic cleansing of 70% of the Palestinian people, and 52 years of the longest occupation in modern history, the Israeli establishment has created the worst system of apartheid ever. This injustice cannot be overcome without the popular struggle of the Palestinian people. But to overcome injustice Palestinians we also need strong international solidarity similar to the solidarity that was organized in support of the South African struggle against Apartheid.

The Israeli occupation is supported in an unprecedented manner by the US government, and a powerful pro-Israel lobby, as well as by the silence of the international community which allows Israel to be above international law, and impunitively with its violations. International solidarity, like the courageous work of PSC is essential to the success of Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice.

BDS, like in the case of South Africa, has become a powerful form of solidarity because it transforms solidarity into an effective material and moral power. Spreading the right narrative about Palestinian struggle is very essential especially among the younger generation of Europe and the world. Any form of support to the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land is crucial, because the end result of our struggle will totally depend on our ability to stay in Palestine. That includes any support to health care, agriculture and education especially in areas threatened by the illegal Israeli settlements and the Apartheid wall, and in particular in the so called "area C" and Jerusalem.

Mobilizing trade unions, churches, students' unions and women's rights movements is of particular importance to enhance public support for Palestine. The success of solidarity depends totally on strong and systematic organization to counter a very well developed pro-Israeli lobby.

But success also depends on people's ability to stand up to the psychological terror that the lobby practices by trying to equate criticism of Israeli policy and occupation with antisemitism. The struggle for justice for the Palestinian people is in fact central to the broader struggle against all forms of racism. One cannot be a committed anti-racist without standing against Israel's system of apartheid.

As Nelson Mandela said, "the Palestinian issue is the most important moral issue of our time", and that is precisely how it must be approached.

Dr Mustafa Barghouti is a Palestinian politician, activist and General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative.

SPOTLIGHT ON...TRADE UNION WORK

BY SIMON DUBBINS - TUAC CHAIR



The UK trade union movement has been central to Palestine solidarity for many years now. 2019 saw a clear rise in activities in support of Palestinian rights and PSC.

A central part of the work of PSC is focused on taking part and engaging trade unionists at their unions conferences throughout the year. Since January we held stalls and fringe meetings at over 20 trade union conferences and events. This means we have met and shared information about our campaigns with hundreds of individuals around the country.

The main conference on the calendar is always TUC Congress and this year's highlight was the strong motion on Palestine, moved by the Artists' Union England and seconded by PCS, which was carried overwhelmingly in September. The policy, supported by speakers representing a number of major national unions, calls for full support for the protection of Palestinian collective rights, and a commitment to work with Palestine Solidarity Campaign and TUC affiliates to strengthen the work targeting complicit companies in the occupation, illegal settlements and the wall. The message from every major union at TUC Congress was clear: we understand the seriousness of the assault on the collective rights of the Palestinian people being mounted by Israel with the support of Trump and far-right allies. UK trade unions have recommitted to ramp up the collective response and reaffirm support for a policy of boycott and divestment.

In October we organised a conference for UK trade unionists, with the support of Unite the Union, UNISON, GMB, NEU, ASLEF, UCU, RMT, FBU, TSSA, CWU, PCS, TUC, Thompsons Solicitors. Featuring Palestinian speakers Dr Mustafa Barghouti and Samia Al Botmeh from Birzeit University, the event was designed to create the space to explore new avenues and provide tools for trade unionists to further our work for Palestine. A series of packed seminars on BDS, Apartheid and the development of core solidarity work, reinforced the need for stepping up our engagement with the trade unions in the future. A range of trade unionists shared their solidarity experiences during the day, notably from taking part in delegations to Palestine, where they got to see and hear first hand about the situation on the ground. The full day of exchange of ideas and discussions about the way forward was just the first step to further build the power of solidarity in the UK trade union movement.

The trade union work inside PSC is coordinated by the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), composed of representatives of all national affiliated trade unions, and chaired by myself. Meeting on a quarterly basis the committee is discussing current issues, planning policy and ongoing work, and is the body in charge of developing PSC's work in the trade unions, including events such as the recent trade union conference. Trade unions have thus been crucial this year, offering much needed support, notably for our major events such as the National demonstration for Palestine in May.

Simon Dubbins is the director of the International department at Unite the Union, as well as being a member of the PSC's Executive Committee.

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 - HALIFAX

Over the summer we've continued to support the Stop Arming Israel Campaign, with monthly actions at the HSBC branch in Halifax, as well as supporting calls to action from Manchester PSC whenever feasible. We've also held several Saturday stalls in Halifax Town Centre, as well as at a Family Fun day in West View Park. At the start of September, we co-hosted a public meeting with the Green Party in Hebden Bridge, at which the keynote speaker was Musheir al Farra, Chair of Sheffield PSC.



Our monthly branch meetings are now quite well attended, with members taking it in turns to lead political discussions – the next one is on Hamas. Future plans include supporting the PUMA day of action, an event on Palestinian Child Prisoners in late November, and a Palestinian film festival next March. Halifax is also involved in plans by the Northern Women for Palestine network for events to mark International Women's Day next year, as well as supporting a get together of Northern branches later in the autumn.

MIDLANDS & CENTRAL - WOLVERHAMPTON

On June 15th we decided to branch out our campaigning in order to support some of our PSC members in Bridgenorth, Shropshire for the HSBC protest. Our leafleting got a very good positive response from people on the high street. On 28th June we held a public meeting with speaker Musheir El Farra, discussing the situation in Gaza and his book 'Gaza: When the Sky Rained White Fire'.



On 7th July we held our annual Garden Party and with 45 or more present. This was a very good turnout, especially since we chose a date which clashed for some of our regulars including one MP. We have just sent off a cheque for £312.10 which was the total raised from this event. Then on 7th September we held another HSBC protest outside Wolverhampton Branch. Going forward, our planned forthcoming events include a public meeting on 1st November on Conservation in Palestine in collaboration with the Palestine Museum of Natural History, as well as the November HSBC protest on the 9th November.

WALES & WEST & SOUTH-WEST - ABERGAVENNY

Since we participated in the national demonstration back in May with our beautiful brand new banner made by a member, we've been busy with a whole range of events this summer. We held a talk from Women in Hebron collective about daily life in Hebron where sold some craftwork. We also supported the Right to Movement team of Palestinian runners in the Welsh Castles Run. We hosted a talk by Hamed Qawamseh from HIRN, and following on from this we did some fundraising for HIRN through a local event at the Community Canteen which involved cooking a collective meal for 70 people. We organised a trip on October 16th for the Palestinian Ambassador to visit the Welsh assembly to meet assembly members and Welsh International Relations Minister. We also arranged a meeting with trade unions, Cardiff Council and with Palestinian Community. Planned events include screening the film Gaza on 25th October, hosting Hazam Jamjoum to speak on 29th November, and getting involved in the PSC lobby of Parliament.



EAST & SOUTH-EAST - NORWICH

Since the last newsletter we agreed to make a £100 donation to to Bethlehem University. In terms of events, we held a successful meeting with Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh which was very positive and a good attendance. We also had a presence at the well-renowned and bustling Burston Rally, an annual event to celebrate the longest strike in history!



On top of this we also took part in HSBC national day of action with a stall and placards outside the local HSBC branch. Then on 12th October Adie Nistelroy from Manchester PSC came down to talk about the #StopArmingIsrael campaign and recent direct action undertaken by activists at an Elbit arms factory. This was co-organised with the newly formed Norwich Young PSC, with whom we also collaborated on the recent #BoycottPuma day of action. Looking forward, we are involved in the "Palsup" event on 9th November - an uplifting evening of authentic middle eastern food prepared by the Neesa project. It will include a short film and talk about the work of Palestine Trauma Centre.

LONDON - MERTON

On 3rd July we screened "Vivien Sansour, the Seed Queen of Palestine", in which she described growing up in Palestine and sought now to reintroduce traditional farming methods, experimenting in her garden next to the separation wall by growing from ancient "heirloom" seeds, watched by Israeli soldiers. On 7th August Huda Ammori, PSC Campaigns Officer, inspired us with her talk on BDS campaigns and activism.



On 4th September David Harrold described the work of the Palestine Trauma Centre, set up by volunteers in 2007 in Gaza which provides medical and therapeutic help to traumatised families. The British-based UK branch had since 2010 provided financial and practical support. On 2nd October Stuart Sweeney spoke on behalf of CADFA, the Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association, about the visit they had arranged at the end of November by a Palestinian Girls' football team. Merton PSC was one of the sponsors of the visit and would be arranging the itinerary for part of it, including a visit to a local school. We continue with our monthly stalls in Wimbledon Town Centre and members have taken part in demos and protests including against the Arms Fair and Puma. Financial donations have been made amongst others to UNWRA, CADFA and the PSC Fighting Fund.

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

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

APARTHEID OFF CAMPUS

UK universities invest £100s of millions and hold links with companies and institutions complicit with Israeli apartheid. To expose this complicity, we have compiled a database from the results of 152 FOI requests sent into UK universities, which details and lists complicit investments from UK universities in a user-friendly format. This will be being published very soon!



On 5th-6th October, students from from around 20 UK universities came together in Manchester for the national student BDS conference, organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The event was an opportunity for student activists from across the UK to hear from experienced campaigners, and gain key tools and techniques to end their university's links to Israeli apartheid. Workshop topics included pinkwashing & Palestine, building key campaigning skills, press and comms training, and many more. Attendees were also given an opportunity to see a draft version of PSC's upcoming database, which will be a crucial resource for student activists to support them in planning effective divestment campaigns to get #ApartheidOffCampus! Following on from the student conference, we have set up channels to communicate with all students and have regular calls on the national #ApartheidOffCampus campaign, and have decided to hold an #ApartheidOffCampus national day of action on Dec 4th.

STOP THE JNF UK

Over 4000 PSC members and supporters took part in our e-action to the Charity Commission and Attorney General asking them to launch an investigation into the charity status JNF UK due to its support for the Israeli military and complicity in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. This body of letters demonstrates the huge support for the campaign – charity benefits should not be afforded to an organisation involved in ethnic cleansing.

While the Attorney General did not reply to this body of letters, the subsequent reply from the Charity Commission asked PSC to submit evidence in relation to regulatory issues surrounding JNF UK. [Read our reply here!](#)

We look forward to the Charity Commission investigating the issues raised. Moving forward, the campaign working group is planning a series of resources, including videos, posters, and articles on the JNF, to draw attention to their role in the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people, centring the voices of Palestinian refugees, and their rights to justice and return.



STOP ARMING ISRAEL

In September, DSEI - the world's largest arms fair - returned to London, featuring a designated area for Israeli arms companies to market their "battle-tested" weapons i.e tested on Palestinian civilians. We organised, alongside War on Want, the "Stop Arming Israel" day as part of a #StopDSEI week of action, occurring the week before the arms fair was due to take place. We held numerous workshops, speeches and activities in the day and a successful "Dance to disarm for Palestine" street gig in the evening, which saw DJs, bands and spoken word artists perform outside the excel centre.



Furthermore, we have taken steps forward in our HSBC campaign. After a successful campaign to pressure HSBC into divesting from Elbit Systems, which was announced December 2018, we continue to amplify the pressure for HSBC to divest from Caterpillar and all companies arming Israel. This was successfully achieved on our last day of action (September 15th) which saw over 30 actions across the country outside local HSBC branches. In addition, we continue to work with Banktrack and other environment groups on joining alliances with our campaigning for HSBC to stop funding destruction - including environmental breakdown and Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. This has recently included a joint webinar to educate campaigners on the whole effects of banks unethical investments.

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR
CAMPAIGNS BY DONATING
TO PSC TODAY!**

2019 LOBBY DAY

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the General Election, we have had to cancel the planned 2019 lobby date of 27th November. We will rearrange the event for some time in the New Year and will let members know as soon as this is nailed down - watch this space!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **PSC IN THE SUPREME COURT**
Wednesday 20th November, London. Please keep donating to our 2019 Fighting Fund to help cover our legal costs - **CHIP IN NOW!**
- **NO TO TRUMP - NO TO NATO (PALESTINE BLOC)**
Tuesday 3rd December, London. Join us to protest against war and military aggression and make it clear that Trump is not welcome! **MORE DETAILS TBC.**
- **APARTHEID OFF CAMPUS STUDENT DAY OF ACTION**
Wednesday 4th December, across the UK! Take action on your local campus to call on UK universities to get #ApartheidOffCampus! **Click here for more info.**
- **PSC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**
Saturday 25th January, 9:30am–5pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1 4RL. All PSC members welcome - **click here to register!**
- **LOBBY DAY IN PARLIAMENT**
New date TBC, London. Help us raise the voice of Palestine in Parliament! Due to the General Election we will be rearranging this for some time in the New Year - watch this space!

JUDICIAL REVIEW UPDATE: Earlier this year PSC **won the right** to challenge the Court of Appeal's upholding of Government regulations that restrict Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS) from divesting from companies complicit in Israel's human rights violations. Our day in court is on **November 20th** - less than a month away! If we win, it will be a huge victory for the BDS movement. But it will cost us £60k. Please keep giving to PSC's 2019 Fighting Fund to cover our legal costs and fund our wider campaigning. **CLICK BELOW TO DONATE!**

PSC'S 2019 FIGHTING FUND

This year we're taking on the Government in the Supreme Court over ethical pensions divestment - and it will cost us £60k. But we also need crucial funds to sustain our campaigns. Can you help? **DONATE NOW!**



PSC ONLINE SHOP

Buy Keffiyahs, t-shirts, accessories and more Palestine-related products by visiting our online shop!

All money raised goes towards funding our crucial campaigns for Palestinian rights.

shop.palestinecampaign.org