Hello and a warm welcome to our second newsletter from all of us at the Youth & Student Committee!

With this newsletter, we want to create a space for student Palestine societies and young members of PSC across the UK to publish their news and connect!

We want to celebrate and promote your campaigns and provide regular updates on the situation of Palestine activism across the UK.

We hope to include feature articles each month, with a focus on Palestinian voices, in addition to dedicating a space for those students campaigning for justice in the UK.

We want to build on our connection, cohesion and unity as a youth movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and make sure that everything any of us do is amplified so that we can build on our successes, learn from our failures and work more closely together in the fight for human rights and justice.

In solidarity,

*Palestine Solidarity Campaign Youth and Student Committee*
REPORT: STUDENT DAY OF ACTION

As part of the Student Day of Action for Palestine on November 25th, students from across the UK took action to demand their universities divest from companies complicit in Israel’s violations of international law and Palestinian human rights.

Earlier this year, PSC research uncovered that UK universities collectively invest £450million in companies complicit in Israel’s gross human rights abuses. This includes companies supplying the Israeli military with weapons and military technology.

In London, students kicked off the day by taking over key university buildings with light projections demanding they get apartheid off campus and divest for Palestine. Later in the day, students across the country took over PSCs social media with short videos explaining why their society was taking action to demand justice.

To back up the calls for institutional divestment, over 2000 people wrote to the Office for Students, demanding they address students’ concerns with university managements. The day highlighted the student led campaigns across the country fighting to get UK Universities to respect Palestinian human rights and international law.

The struggle continues!
Warwick Friends of Palestine Society (WFPS) campaigned hard for the Students’ Union referendum in Autumn.

WFPS put forward the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Motion (BDS): Divest, Break the links & Pledge to be Apartheid Free.”

And they also gave their full support to the motion “Warwick University to fully divest from all unethical industries and release all investments”

Unfortunately, the first motion was unsuccessful but close, with 1665 votes for, and 1917 against. The motion calling on Warwick University to divest from all unethical industries and release all investments was successful with 1713 votes for, and 1143 against.

We commend and celebrate the huge efforts made by Warwick students showing their solidarity with the besieged and occupied Palestinian people.

Whilst the BDS motion did not carry, it was close - testimony to the group’s efforts to educate their fellow students on the everyday oppression faced by Palestinians in the face of Israel’s brutal and relentless military occupation. The motion also faced a vicious counter-campaign run by anti-Palestinian opponents on campus.

The struggle goes on, and groundwork has been made in Warwick for continued education on how universities can divest from businesses complicit in Israeli apartheid. The motion which was carried gives grounds for much hope and further action. Whilst the BDS motion expressed a stance of solidarity, it is arguable that the unethical investments motion carries more scope for significant and concrete actions.

Students have laid an important precedent here in being able to challenge university complicity in human rights abuses wherever they are happening, whether that is the demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for expanded illegal Israeli settlements, or in weapons sales to regimes using those targeting civilians.

We are hopeful that this motion will allow many different groups across campus to join forces in confronting the university on its unethical investments and build the necessary pressure to make Warwick University DIVEST!

From PSC YSC - Well done Warwick Friends of Palestine Society!
REPORT: DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING WORKSHOP AT BDS CONFERENCE

On Saturday 14th November 2020, a digital workshop entitled, 'How to Keep our Campaigns Running During a Global Pandemic' was hosted as part of the Palestinian-led BDS Movement's Global Student Conference.

The virtual workshop, led by two members of PSCs Youth and Student Committee, was hosted over Zoom and had students attending from across Europe. It detailed information on running virtual campaigns and events during the Covid-19 pandemic. University success stories from the UK, Spain and Italy were explored, and strategies that students could use to encourage their own universities to divest were listed.

This included the importance of having an AIM, a TEAM and a STRATEGY in order to have a successful campaign. Case studies, such as the Liverpool Against the Electronic Arms Fair coalition, and the #BoycottPuma campaign were presented and actions taken by the activists were highlighted.

Concluding the workshop, attendees were into 2 groups to discuss the actions they could take on one of two presented scenarios. This allowed students to think about different potential actions that could be applied in real world situations. The workshop also highlighted the importance of digital security, and for students to stay in touch with their national Palestine Solidarity organisations that will always be there for support. Overall, the workshop was a success; delivering information on digital campaigning for Palestine, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY: ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK 2021

Israeli Apartheid Week has taken place for the last 16 years in over 200 universities and cities around the world. It aims to raise public awareness about Israel’s regime of systematic racial discrimination against all parts of the Palestinian people, which amounts to the crime of apartheid under international law.

Through meetings, rallies creative actions and cultural events, it calls on states, universities and other institutions to implement measures to end their complicity in Israeli apartheid, in order to effectively discharge their obligations not to be complicit in ongoing violations of international law.

In 2021, Israeli Apartheid Week will take place around the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Sunday March 21st. We want to make Israeli Apartheid Week 2021 bigger than ever! Watch this space for resources to help you organise events.

PSC will be working with the BDS Movement to bring events to your campus!
GAZA: MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

The neglect of the mental health crisis occurring within the realm of western funded war zones is becoming a recurring theme. Whilst having two thirds of children experiencing psychological distress in almost any country is enough to cause an international uproar, these statistics in Gaza, Palestine are perceived as nothing more than preordained collateral damage. In Gaza, the sounds of aircrafts acted as the biggest source of fear and distress in 78% of children (OCHA, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, over half of conflict-affected children in Gaza may be affected by PTSD (WHO 2019). And although the direct implications of the Israeli attacks and blockade are in the forefront of reasons behind the mental health crisis in Gaza, consequent implications on other aspects are often neglected. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), Gaza has one of the highest unemployment rates globally, reaching 49.1% in April-June 2020. Such a high unemployment rate pushed more than one million Gazan citizens below the poverty line within the 10 years of the Israeli blockade.

With the immense pressure applied on the breadwinners of the family that struggle to provide for their families, 24 cases of suicide have been reported in 2020 alone, many of which heavily attributed to financial troubles. Bearing in mind that this number does not reflect the unreported cases of suicide and attempted suicide due to the possible legal ramifications as well as the social stigma in Gaza as an Islamic and conservative community.

Further, with domestic abuse against women and children being an increasingly prominent issue around the world especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, a rise in domestic violence has been evident in Gaza as well, mainly affecting women and children. Substance abuse, which is usually linked to depression and mental illness, is also much higher and increasingly so in the Gaza Strip, where 10,047 cases of high-risk drug users reported (UN 2017). Similarly to suicide, many cases aren’t reported due to Gaza’s views on drug use. It is always important to be mindful of the whitewashing happening in regards to any crisis, even in cases where it is as implicit as it is in Gaza.

It’s crucial to be conscious of any shifting of focus on the sufferers rather than the perpetrator and their fault. Especially when used in interpreting such a conflict in a way that enforces the idea that wars, along with their traumatic implications, are inevitable, and ultimately, this acts as a distraction from the urgency to address the grave human rights violations occurring every minute of every day.
THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

In recent months the situation for Palestinians on the international stage has deteriorated under the Trump Administration’s relentless drive to dehumanise and dispossess the Palestinian people through both its attempts to retrospectively legalise Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank and its savage budget cuts to the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

However, globally, there have also been positive developments in terms of increased levels of vocal support for Palestinian human rights from grassroots anti-racist movements such as Black Lives Matter, trade unions, and key figures in progressive politics, especially in the United States.

At the Palestinian level, the recent election victory of Joe Biden in the US presidential elections has led to the de-facto collapse of intra-Palestinian peace talks between Fatah and Hamas, as Fatah and its internal security forces in the PA seek to double down on their security collaboration with Israel in the hope of gaining favour with the incoming Joe Biden presidency which they see as being more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. With Israel more entrenched than ever in its decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory and riding high on its recent normalisation deals with UAE, Bahrain and Sudan, the prospects of meaningful negotiations between the occupier and the occupied remain bleak.

However, further afield, there are reasons for cautious optimism for the global solidarity movement. Despite the deafening silence, if not outright hostility, shown by mainstream political leaders here in the UK towards Palestinian human rights, the BDS movement, seeking the end of the occupation, return of Palestinian refugees, and end to discriminatory laws and policies targeting Palestinians in modern-day Israel, continues to grow in strength and chalk up successes.

The support of national trade unions in the UK, and prominent progressive politicians in the US such as Ilhan Omar, are helping to mainstream the Palestinian struggle against dispossession, occupation and oppression. We must continue the fight for freedom, justice and equality for all, learning the lessons from the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and calling for our public institutions and pensions to divest from companies complicit in Israel’s human rights abuses.

Each and every one of us must mobilise our collective efforts to stand up against oppression, recognising our recent successes as well as setbacks. Though the struggle for justice always faces obstacles and barriers to overcome, we must unite and continue our struggle with the steadfastness and resilience demonstrated by the Palestinians in the face of their plight.
'Booza Rukab' Translates to Rukab ice cream. Rukab being the name of the family who owns the top-secret recipe. Sarah Rukab first installed her ice-cream shop in Ramallah in 1941, which, has firmly stood its ground ever since. The most famous and traditional flavours include chocolate, strawberry, lemon, pistachio and milk.

This ice cream is SO delicious that Israelis have even admitted to sneaking into Ramallah to grab a tasty bite of the forbidden fruit.

But what makes this ice-cream so irresistible? It is the addition of the resin gathered from the Pistacia lentiscus tree (AKA Arabic gum) that results in a stretchy, taffy-like consistency and unique flavour.

One of my fondest memories of Palestine was in Jerusalem; playing in my great-grandmothers garden. Suddenly, a booming voice over a megaphone would sound, 'Yalla Rukab! Booza Rukab!'. We would freeze and dart over to the gate, patiently waiting for the Booza Rukab man to approach. He knew the daily drill: hand us each a large cone of delightful stretchy ice cream from his cooler, in exchange for 8 shekels (£1.80!) each.

The Rukab family have had such success that they have opened another shop in Houston, Texas.

Follow them on Instagram: @booza1941

For the first time ever, the biblical city of Bethlehem in the south of the occupied West Bank, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, lit their Christmas tree ushering in this year’s celebrations with the absence of thousands of pilgrims and international tourists who usually attend the occasion.

A Christmas tree was erected in Manger Square outside the Church of Nativity in the city and was lit with only some religious leaders in attendance, in addition to Bethlehem Mayor Anton Salman and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Rola Maayah.

This year, the ministry of health in Palestine had recommended the lighting ceremony in Manger Square be limited to 50 people, with the lights of the tree and area restaurants closed at 9 p.m. throughout the Christmas season. In its recommendations, it said religious services on Christmas Eve should also have limited attendance.

Christmas festivities are typically a boost for Bethlehem, which is surrounded by Israel's illegal Separation (Apartheid) Wall cutting the city off from the rest of the occupied West Bank.

In addition to Israel's apartheid wall, there are 100,000 Israeli settlers surrounding the town, including within the expanded "Jerusalem municipality". This has left Bethlehem with less than 13% of its original territory.