



palestine NEWS

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Cover image: Arabiya Shawamreh, whose home in the West Bank has been demolished five times by the Israeli army, calls on Europe to stop trading with illegal settlements. Photo: Trocaire.

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palestine NEWS

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- Campaigning against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people
- Supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights including the Right of Return in line with UN resolution 194
- Promoting Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice
- Opposing Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states
- Opposing antisemitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state

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A New Year, A New Team

by Hugh Lanning

Every year our AGM gives us an opportunity to remember why the PSC exists. It is easy to get lost in the minutiae of motions, elections, rules. Unfortunately, a review of the headlines and facts reminds us all too graphically about the reality that is Palestine today.

From October until the time of going to press there have been 158 Palestinians killed and over 15,000 injured. In Gaza, not only does the siege remain, so do over 7,000 bomb remnants that have killed 16 people and wounded 90, including 38 children – so far.

Last year, settlements were identified as the vital issue by Palestinians. Another 1500 dunams near Jericho are to be colonised, Bedouin are being expelled from Jerusalem as well as their villages being destroyed. Life for Palestinians gets worse every day.

It's been a long time

It seems a long time ago, but there was a general election last May. Before, during and after the election there was a brilliant effort by members, branches and supporters. In September the PSC was present at all the major party political conferences and you could feel and see the growth in support – our Palestinian lanyards were the most popular freebie at the conferences (except, maybe, the Conservatives!).

Actual political movement is still painfully slow and inadequate but there is a momentum building up on settlements. Recently Ban Ki Moon denounced Israel's new settlement activity and even the US expressed its anger publicly. Perhaps most importantly the European Union finally took action on labelling settlement goods.

A busy year ahead

The year ahead is going to be very busy for PSC and its supporters but we will be working in a climate which is becoming harsher for pro-Palestinian campaigners. The Extremism Bill has become an Act. Legislation threatens the freedom of councils to act and invest ethically. Prevent policies are frightening people into silence at schools and universities. Behind this we know there is the pressure of our opponents to suppress our campaigns and BDS in particular.

PSC continues to grow

The good news is that PSC continues to grow. Following the inflow of donations during the onslaught on Gaza in 2014 we had thought our income would drop. It didn't. So we have been able to consolidate our increase in staffing, invest in a new database and start work on upgrading the website.

We are very sad to be losing our Director of seven years – Sarah Colborne. With years of activism before that, we thought she would always be there. She will remain involved in the campaign, but in new and different roles.

But it was with great pleasure that we were able speedily to appoint a new team. In January Sara Apps moved from her previous political and parliamentary role to become interim Director for six months whilst the permanent post is advertised. Tricia Rich, our Development Manager, took on the additional responsibility of acting as Deputy, with Martial Kurtz overseeing our Campaigns.

United going forward

The AGM debated, discussed, listened and then agreed a Plan, policies and priorities. The challenge now is to work together to deliver for Palestine. The TUC General Council will be visiting Palestine shortly. With every delegation, there is a sense of foreboding, because you know it will be worse. You know the Palestinians will be incredibly generous and hospitable, whilst praising the work we do in solidarity.

One ends up feeling more committed, yet guilty because it is not enough. In PSC we need to set our sights even higher, rolling that stone ever further up the hill. We need innovative, hard-hitting campaigns that are impossible to ignore. We need to embrace the new technologies that are now the norm – without losing the good and effective from the past. Branches are growing in number, but we want a hub for supporters to have access to in every town and city.

“The tipping point we must strive for is to get governments to act, not just speak”

The tipping point we must strive for is to get governments to act, not just speak. Through the arms trade, settlements, finance, the EU – there is the means to make Israel listen. What is lacking is the political will. Our pressure is growing yearly. In 2016 let's work for another turn of the screw.



Girl in house demolished by the Israelis near the giant illegal settlement of Maale Adumim. Photo: Mohamad Torokman.

What we did in 2015

Ben Soffa, Secretary of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, reviews the actions and achievements of PSC members over the past year

It was another year of campaigning advances for PSC but of continuing tragedy for the Palestinian people. Promises made by the international community after Israel's 2014 bombardment of Gaza – of renewed diplomatic efforts and of reconstruction – came to very little. Settlement expansion and the siege continued, life for Palestinians living within Israel became tougher still and many refugees outside of Palestine were forced to move yet again.

This stalemate only makes our work, and that of people of conscience the world over, even more important. It is our task and duty to bring the voices of the Palestinian people to the outside world and to pledge that, however desperate their situation may sometimes feel, they are never alone.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign plays a leading role in this movement, not just within Britain, but internationally. The movement we've built combines vigorous grassroots activism across the country with the ability to reach in to Parliament and the mainstream media.

And it is our members and supporters in local communities, faith groups, unions, political parties and elsewhere, plus those who spread the word online, who give us this considerable and growing strength.

We should probably take it as a compliment that Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu is deploying his top spin doctor, Mark Regev, as his next ambassador to London. I'm sure his arrival in March will act as a further spur to our communications and media work which we continued to develop in 2015.

The changing way in which people now receive their news means the PSC has become a significant media outlet in our own right. Two years ago, 20,000 people "liked" our Facebook page; today that's 465,000. On Twitter we have 23,000 followers.

The grim events of October and November showed how this base provides us with the ability to reach a huge number of people, especially in times of crisis. In an average week, between one and two million people see our Facebook posts, but in the middle of October we were reaching up to 1.5 million people per day online.

In addition PSC spokespeople appear regularly on domestic and international news channels and our Fair News volunteers have achieved several significant victories over inaccurate or biased BBC reporting. We have also been working to ensure we amplify Palestinian voices through our social media channels and this is something we want to do more of over the coming year.

On the campaigning front we started off 2015 with our most intensive general election campaign ever which saw PSC members and supporters contacting nearly 3,500 Parliamentary candidates to ask them about their views and policies on Palestine.

The responses we received not only gave us a snapshot of opinion in each political party, guiding the strategy that we used after the election, but provided us with specific insight into the views of many of those who went on to become MPs – including commitments we'll be holding people to in the coming years.

Now we have some great new advocates in parliament, including a growing number of Conservatives who recognise the

urgent need for justice for the Palestinian people. And, of course, one of our strongest Parliamentary supporters got himself a new job! Having Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party was not in PSC's Annual Plan for the year but now the Palestinian people have one of their keenest advocates right at the heart of Westminster.

We held a successful lobby of Parliament in June and expanded our presence at the Party conferences, with fringe meetings at the Conservative, Labour, and SNP conferences and other engagements around the Lib Dem and Green annual gatherings.

We've been active in highlighting the threat to peaceful campaigning on Palestine posed by the government's counter-extremism plans and have been working to bring together a range of groups to counter the chilling impact of the government's approach.

The first anniversary of Israel's murderous assault on Gaza saw a swathe of activity with branches across the country holding vigils. Outside Downing St we organised a "naming of the dead" ceremony, including laying flowers and delivering a letter to David Cameron, signed by thousands of supporters.

Members commemorated Nakba Week in various imaginative ways across the country and supported social media storms which informed new audiences about the catastrophe.

Work on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions remains a very significant part of our campaigning. Years of work put in by many supporters really started to pay off during 2015, with the waste management company Veolia finally ending its involvement in human rights abusing contracts in Israel and Occupied Palestine.

We kept up the pressure on G4S and once again dominated their shareholders' AGM with questions on the company's complicity in the abuse of Palestinian human rights.

Our campaign for Hewlett Packard to cease its involvement in the systems that restrict Palestinian freedom of movement launched in 2015, with almost 14,000 people co-signing our letter to HP ahead of the company's AGM.

(cont. on next page)



Taking the campaign forward

**By Sara Apps,
Interim Director of the PSC**

On a recent visit to the West Bank I met a Palestinian woman who described to me vividly how she felt the burden of Israel's military occupation of her land in every aspect of her life, every day..

It meant she had to pass through checkpoints daily with her children and be scrutinised or searched by heavily armed soldiers; she was barred from going to shop or worship in her capital city of Jerusalem, just a few miles from her home; she was unable to visit her family in Gaza.

Meanwhile her Israeli counterpart, even if she is a settler, carries on a normal, unfettered life. Why would an average Israeli woman call for her government to change its policies in these circumstances?

So this is where we come in. We in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and everyone who believes in justice and human

rights, must make sure that it is the government of Israel who feel the weight of the occupation – politically, economically and culturally.

We have to make it harder for Israel to withhold rights from Palestinians than to accept that everyone is entitled to their rights and freedom. And easier to end the illegal occupation than to continue.



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Our divestment work stepped up a gear and we experienced greater interest from councils and others in implementing stronger ethical guidelines. We worked with Unison on a new divestment toolkit – a document that was cited by the Conservative Party as they announced their intention to stop councils heeding ethical considerations when awarding contracts.

We gave full backing to the Red Card Israeli Racism campaign as it continued the push for justice in the footballing world and helped organise a successful march through Cardiff and demonstration outside the UEFA qualifying match between Israel and Wales in September.

An unexpected development during the year was the Co-Op Bank's decision to close PSC's account, along with those of dozens of other pro-Palestinian organisations. This has not had a major operational impact on us as we already had several other accounts elsewhere, but we are working through legal avenues to challenge Co-Op Bank's discriminatory decision.

It's a great strength of the PSC that we're both national and local. We now have 65 branches, hundreds of affiliated organisations and some 4,700 members doing great work reaching out into local communities, unions, political parties, colleges and faith groups.

We held an Action Summit in March which brought together people campaigning in different spheres. And our regular Branch Forums have played a key role in organising the work we do centrally and across the country.

We have continued to build on our excellent level of support within the trade union movement, with regular delegations of trade unionists visiting Palestine and events held at many union conferences throughout the year.

For students we created a new newsletter which goes to every university Palestine Society and the NUS Black Students

campaign distributes our materials to every students' union in the country.

Probably because of this vigorous grassroots involvement, our income did not fall away after the surge of activity around the 2014 attacks on Gaza but continued at that higher level, enabling us to grow our campaigning capacity.

Those were some of the major elements of our work in 2015 but, of course, there's a vast amount of activity which I don't have the space to mention. Suffice to say that we're increasingly a movement with real clout, especially when we prioritise and focus together, working to support our common goals.

I'd like to thank our staff, volunteers, EC members, branch officers, members and activists throughout the country for all your amazing work. You show a commitment and resilience that many a campaigning movement would be jealous of.





Alaa Abdul Rahman:
"You can't be silent in the face of injustice. You need to be part of a movement that confronts it."

In the PSC we have the enormous advantage of being able to draw on the huge energy of thousands of active, imaginative and innovative campaigners around the country. In order to be most effective, we need to focus this energy and for the last few years we have been doing that by organising around four key objectives which are approved by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

So, following the 2016 AGM in London in January, these are the agreed key objectives for the year ahead:

Objective One: To Build Solidarity

Settlements

The colonisation and settlement by theft and occupation of ever greater swathes of Palestinian land, including in East Jerusalem, has been identified by our partners in Palestine as the key priority issue on which to focus.

It is also the issue which has the greatest cross-party support in Parliament, as we discovered through our analysis of MPs' and candidates' views collected during the general election campaign. There is a strong consensus that the settlements are illegal, unacceptable and pose a real threat to any solution.

This view is becoming established also in Europe and worldwide and provides the most powerful lever for us to insist that governments start to take action.

Crucial will be challenging the media representation of "violent Palestinians," so a key focus will be building an understanding that the current situation is the result of decades of illegal military occupation and state supported violence by fanatical settlers.

At the same time we can emphasise that settler violence has become

terrorism, as defined as the use of violence targeted at civilians in order to terrorise them. The burning to death by settlers of baby Ali Dawabsheh in Duma is an example.

Actions: plan events, Parliamentary campaigning, stunts; use maps to visualise the settlements, the consolidation of apartheid, the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians inside Israel and the West Bank; make use of the statements by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in January that "Palestinian frustration is growing under the weight of a half-century of occupation and the paralysis of the peace process," and "oppressed peoples have demonstrated throughout the ages, it is human nature to react to occupation..."

Nakba – a week for Palestine

Nakba means 'catastrophe' in Arabic and is the time Palestinians commemorate the ethnic cleansing of 1948. Awareness of the Nakba remains low in the UK, leading to little recognition of the situation of Palestinian refugees. The week leading up to Nakba Day on Sunday, 15 May, is the opportunity to bring it into focus.

Actions: educational, cultural and political events with speakers, supported by nationally produced materials.

Refugees

Many Palestinians have been made refugees multiple times, disrupting their lives over and over again, including those fleeing from Syria. The current refugee crisis can be used to raise awareness of the plight of Palestinian refugees.

Gaza

Raise awareness that the majority of people living in Gaza are refugees, many of whose original homes are just a short bus ride away. Continue the campaign of local and national actions to increase pressure to end the siege, and mark the anniversary of Israel's 2014 bombardment of Gaza, the war crimes it committed and the lack of reconstruction.

Make links with people in Gaza to amplify their voices, including the Chat2Gaza conversations between students in London and Gaza.

East Jerusalem

Highlight the ethnic cleansing of East Jerusalem, the evictions of Palestinians and relentless colonisation by extremists settlers. Also state supported settler invasions of Al Aqsa mosque and attacks on Palestinians.

Prisoners

A delegation of UK lawyers, funded by the Foreign Office, who published in

2012 an independent report, Children in Military Custody, on the plight of Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israel, is due to return this year. One of the party will be former Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer.

The report made 43 specific recommendations and the UK government promised to take up the issues with the Israeli government. We can raise awareness of the new delegation and the lack of action on the original recommendations. Work with Action for Palestinian Children and other partners.

Delegations

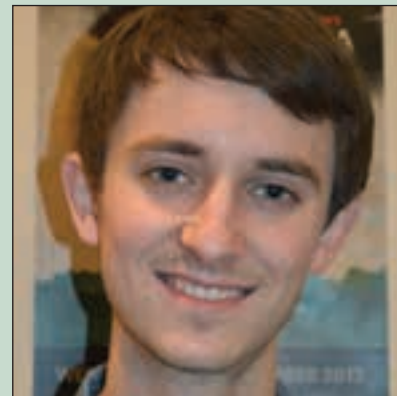
Organise delegations of trade unionists to visit a wide range of Palestinian civil society, to build "multipliers" to spread the message through their organisations.

Objective Two: To Strengthen Our Campaigning

PSC is using its increasing platform on social media – mainly via Facebook and Twitter – extremely effectively, reaching many hundreds of thousands of people, sometimes millions, with news about injustices done to Palestinians.

Social media is also a great tool for amplifying Palestinian voices and challenging the mainstream media narrative. The PSC and volunteers exert regular pressure on the BBC over its pro-Israeli bias and inaccuracy and the corporation has been forced to uphold a number of complaints.

Many new supporters can be reached through social media and training and support will be offered nationally to help local activists and branches make the most of it.



Ben Harvey:
"I volunteer with PSC because there's a basic injustice taking place."

Boycott divestment and sanctions – make Israel pay the cost

Boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) has been identified by our Palestinian partners as a crucial tactic in the campaign, particularly while there is a lack of political will by governments to act.

We have up-to-date written materials including a pull-out briefing that folds down to a wallet-sized leaflet as a tool for activists – a why/who/ how guide to boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Our campaigning is going to come under serious attack through the government's Prevent strategy and Extremism Bill, plus the proposals to bar local councils from including ethical considerations when awarding contracts, and increasing retaliation from supporters of Israel to the growth of the BDS movement. We will seek to mount legal challenges to these moves wherever possible.

Actions:

Boycott targets

- The arms trade with Israel: work with partners such as the Campaign Against the Arm Trade and Stop Arming Israel, and focus on Israel's attacks on Gaza and the West Bank
- Hewlett Packard: focus on the security products and services HP provides to Israel's illegal occupation and challenge its branding as an ethical company
- G4S: organise attendance at the G4S AGM again and maintain the pressure for G4S to end its complicity with the occupation
- Agriculture: develop local campaigns to boycott Israeli dates during Ramadan 6 June–5 July
- Cultural and academic: work with partners including Red Card Israeli Racism on football and BRICUP

Divestment

- Sustained engagement with local government, pension and investment funds to counter the government's attack on the ability of local councils to act ethically and the attempts to stop ethical decision-making in pensions/procurement
- Campaign for Palestine during the local elections in May 2016 and explore the possibility of developing a network of pro-Palestine councillors
- "Follow the money": identify and target the sources of global finance for the colonial settlements

Sanctions

PSC will build a multi-party alliance to press for government action to take sanctions against the arms trade with Israel and to put an end to complicity



Ndella Diouf:
"What is happening is the same as in South Africa during apartheid and we all have to fight against it."

with the occupation and colonising of Palestine.

Communications

PSC's website is being redesigned and will be launched in the Spring. Written materials are being updated and email communications will be better targeted.

We also want to provide more space for Palestinian voices by telling people's stories in written form and in video messages.

Students

We will develop the network of student activists and work with student unions on implementing NUS policy on BDS, focusing on divestment.

Objective Three: To Organise for Growth

Membership

We have around 4,700 members in 65 branches and we need to increase that number, engage with them more effectively and encourage them to be active. We also have almost 200,000 online supporters. We could look at new strategies, such as holding a "Palestine tea and talk," similar to the annual Macmillan coffee morning, and connect with faith and other groups who are sympathetic on Palestine.

Our work with diverse partners will continue to develop. Examples include the No to Pinkwashing campaign, the TUC and other trade union links.

Fundraising

Maintaining financial stability and a continual flow of funds remains vitally important to support our campaigning work. We will link particular campaigns

with fundraising to show how PSC spends its money and encourage regular, ongoing donations through relaunching the 100 Club as "Friends of PSC."

Objective Four: To Build Alliances for Political Action

Widening and deepening the growing consensus amongst politicians and opinion formers that Israel's illegal occupation and colonisation of Palestine is the major obstacle to the peace process will be a major priority in the coming year.

This will be achieved by developing links with pro-Palestinian MPs and MEPs of all parties, holding meetings in Parliament to launch initiatives, planning briefings by Palestinians and integrating local and national lobbying.

Looking ahead

At the PSC we have a committed and talented team from the Executive Committee, the staff and volunteers in the office to the branches and members across the country.

But we want to make it even more effective by finding out more about you. What made you get involved? What motivates you? What do you love about PSC, and what infuriates you? We will be conducting a survey to find out more about all of these things.

We have an incredibly ambitious programme but we can succeed in all our aims if we work together. We must get out of our comfort zone, try new things and talk to new people.

This is our duty – none of us will rest until Palestinians enjoy the same freedoms as we do.



Daniela Enzinger:
"I'm eager to help in any way I can to help the Palestinians win their freedom. That's why I volunteer."

Sarah Colborne

– inspiring, courageous and tireless

Serving for seven years as Director of PSC, Sarah Colborne lived and embodied its values – total commitment to Palestinian rights and a unquenchable thirst to see wrongs put right. As she stepped down in January co-workers, fellow activists and friends were queuing up to pay their heartfelt tribute to her contagious passion, energy and phenomenal capacity for hard work.

Sara Apps, who has taken over as interim Director until a permanent appointment is made, said that Sarah threw herself into building the movement; when she started there were only three full-time members of staff, that has grown to an office bursting at the seams, with almost ten employees and many volunteers.

Being Director of PSC is one of the most demanding and – at times – stressful roles in the campaigning environment in the UK. “Sarah did an incredible job and PSC now has hundreds of thousands of supporters and levels of political support that were simply unimaginable even two or three years ago.”

On top of the everyday stresses, Sarah was on board the Gaza aid ship, the *Mavi Marmara*, in 2010 and suffered the trauma of witnessing Israeli troops murdering fellow activists. EC Member Ben Jamal recalls meeting her at Heathrow after she had been released from several days in Israeli custody.

“Unsurprisingly, she looked in a state of shock but went immediately to Central London to speak about what she had witnessed and the broader context of the siege on Gaza. She spoke with clarity, courage and an extraordinary dignity. As I worked with her these were qualities she brought to all of her work.

“As Director Sarah would sometimes be the subject of personal attack. These attacks were painful, but I never once saw her lose her commitment to the Palestinian cause, nor her personal integrity.”

PSC Chair, Hugh Lanning, also saw Sarah operating under pressure when the two of them were trying to join up with a convoy going to Gaza in 2012. “We were trying to travel through Sinai and Sarah’s system fell victim to Egyptian hygiene. During the night I could hear her troubles had not subsided, but those noises were joined by beeps and flashes of light. In the dark, so as not to disturb, Sarah was not wasting her time being ill – she was using her Blackberry to keep in touch with the convoy, issue instructions to London and let the world know what was going on via Twitter and Facebook – literally 24/7.”

“The next year we went to the unveiling in Gaza of a memorial to the *Mavi Mamara* victims. Everyone wanted to meet Sarah – why? They must have seen the video of her on the ship – surrounded by a large group of men twice her size, following her leadership as she shouted a message of defiance to the world. Brave indeed.”

At the AGM Palestinian Ambassador Manuel Hassassian paid a heart felt tribute, saying he could not find the words, either in Arabic or English to express his gratitude and admiration for Sarah’s tireless and diligent work for Palestine. He said



Sarah at the House of Commons

she had left an indelible mark on every achievement of the PSC.

Bruce Kent, former chair of CND whose offices are in the same building, said: “I greatly miss that smiling face which always greeted me when I puffed my way up to the PSC office. Warm, courageous and imaginative as well as modest, Sarah would have well earned a PSC medal if there were any.”

Wishing Sarah well in the future, Sara Apps added: “I learnt so much about solidarity working with Sarah. She really did always remember it isn’t about how we feel, it isn’t about what we think. Our movement is led and shaped by Palestinian voices. We also miss her wicked sense of humour in the office. But she has left us with the legacy of utter determination to make a difference.”

Nakba Week of Action

7 to 15 May, 2016

The Nakba – “catastrophe” in Arabic – in 1948 saw Israel forcibly expel around 750,000 Palestinians from their land and destroy hundreds of villages. They have never been allowed to return. The ethnic cleansing continues – in 2015, over 600 Palestinians lost their homes due to Israeli demolitions.

■ Organise demos, stalls, talks, actions. See back page for more info.

■ **We will not forget – End the Nakba now – Free Palestine!**



HP Day of Action

16 April

Hewlett Packard (HP) is best known for producing printers and laptops. But it is also complicit in Israel’s brutal occupation of Palestinian land and grave breaches of international law. HP profits from providing technologies which are integral to Israel’s system of oppression of the Palestinian people.

■ Organise demos outside shops stocking HP products, distribute leaflets, join the Twitter storm.

■ And sign the pledge at www.palestinecampaign.org/hp-pledge



Big strides for academic and cultural boycott – but still a way to go

By Jonathan Rosenhead and Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi

Last year saw an explosion of interest in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, with news of both the academic and cultural boycott of Israel making waves in mainstream British media.

At the end of October a full page advertisement appeared in the Guardian bearing the names of 343 courageous professors, researchers, lecturers and other academics employed at UK universities, stating that they will not collaborate in any way with Israeli academic institutions until Palestinian rights are respected.

Publicity resulting from the news pushed to 700 the number of academics signing the commitment. We hope hundreds more will add their names online.

The commitment indicates growing support for BDS on British campuses but there is still huge resistance to the academic boycott, not least because it is deliberately misrepresented by the pro-Israel lobby. Campaigners frequently face the question – why are you attacking Israeli academics when they are often critical of their government and friendly towards Palestinians? How can you justify denying them academic freedom?

Let's be clear: even though there are tragically few Israeli academics who actively support the campaign for Palestinian freedom, we don't boycott, or advocate boycott, of Israeli university teachers and researchers. This is in accordance with guidelines from PACBI (the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) which explain how BDS distinguishes between individuals and institutions.

In essence it leaves interactions with individual Israeli academics unaffected, while targeting state institutions and those that take government money specifically to sell Brand Israel round the world.

We advocate and practice the boycott of Israeli universities because they are part and parcel of the system of oppression which has kept Palestine in thrall for decades. And we try to persuade UK academics not to accept invitations to visit Israel in their professional capacities, unless it is to work with those who are actively opposing Israel's policies.

The necessity for boycott was underlined when a European delegation led by BRICUP (British Committee for the Universities of Palestine) undertook a fact finding visit last April, introducing

academics from France, Iceland, Norway, the UK and Sweden, to presidents, senior staff, trade unionists and students at six West Bank universities (Gaza proved inaccessible).

As well as seeing bullet holes and debris left behind by Israel's armed incursions onto Palestinian campuses, the delegates heard consistent testimony about the petty-minded, arbitrary, and all-embracing way in which Israel attempts to make normal Palestinian academic life impossible. As just one example, a senior staff member responsible for running a major unit at Al Quds University, reported spending over 30 percent

of his time trying to negotiate entry for teaching staff, exit permits for staff to attend international conferences, and to arrange the continuing education of students in Israeli jails.

The cultural boycott also hit the headlines last February as more than 600 artists, including well-known actors, authors, dramatists, film directors, poets, comedians, performance artists and musicians, announced that they had signed the UK Artists' Pledge for Palestine.

It stated: "We support the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality. In response to the call from Palestinian artists and cultural workers for a cultural boycott of Israel, we pledge to accept neither professional invitations to Israel, nor funding, from any institutions linked to its government until it complies with

international law and universal principles of human rights."

The pledge, which has now more than 1000 signatories, was launched by a new organisation – Artists for Palestine UK (APUK) – which went on to publish *The Case for a Cultural Boycott of Israel*, the definitive booklet explaining why BDS in the arts is a valid and necessary part of the struggle for Palestinian freedom.

As in academia, cultural boycott supporters are constantly vilified by opponents alleging denial of free speech and insinuating antisemitic motives. One attempt to spread disinformation of this kind appeared in October when some famous UK figures – among them JK Rowling, Hilary Mantel and historian Simon Schama – joined well-known pro-Israel lobbyists in defending Israel against boycott.

The attempt could be said to have backfired as artists queued up to defend the boycott tactic after Rowling and co urged cultural "coexistence" and "dialogue about Israel and the Palestinians" and called the Palestinian boycott campaign "divisive and discriminatory."

Actor and Pledge signatory Miriam Margolyes retorted: "It is Israeli policies towards Palestinians which are divisive and discriminatory. Artists used the tactic of boycott against apartheid in South Africa and we are doing it again in support of Palestine because no one else is holding Israel to account."

- Sign the academic commitment at www.commitment4p.com
- See the PACBI guidelines at www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1108
- The report of the BRICUP delegation is at www.bricup.org.uk/2015DelegationReport.pdf
- The APUK list is at www.artistsforpalestine.org.uk



Pledge signatory, film maker Asif Kapadia. Photo: Kamla Show

End all business in the settlements

– Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch has called on businesses worldwide to end completely all their activities in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem.

In a report published in January, this major international NGO said there was no way of doing business in settlements without participating in Israel's crimes. It also urged all governments to stop giving aid to Israel.

"Settlement businesses unavoidably contribute to Israeli policies that dispossess and harshly discriminate against Palestinians, while profiting from Israel's theft of Palestinian land and other resources," said Arvind Ganesan, director of the business and human rights division at Human Rights Watch.

"The only way for businesses to comply with their own human rights responsibilities is to stop working with and in Israeli settlements."

"The only way for businesses to comply with their own human rights responsibilities is to stop working with and in Israeli settlements"

Ali Abuminah, writing a summary of the report for the Electronic Intifada, said that it "will likely enrage Israel. It will also prove a useful tool for the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement to explain to companies why they must end their complicity in Israel's crimes."

According to the report, *Occupation, Inc.: How Settlement Businesses*



Contribute to Israel's Violations of Palestinian Rights, more than half a million Israelis live in 237 settlements across the occupied West Bank.

With its sweeping new recommendation, Human Rights Watch is departing from its earlier position that firms could "mitigate" the damage of doing business in settlements without necessarily pulling out completely. The group now concludes that "the context of human rights abuse to which settlement business activity contributes is so pervasive and severe" that companies must end all activities, including construction of housing or infrastructure and providing services such as waste disposal.

"They should also stop financing, administering, trading with or otherwise supporting settlements or settlement-related activities and infrastructure," the report states.

The 162-page report examines in detail the ways businesses benefit from and contribute to Israel's grave abuses of Palestinian rights, sometimes amounting to war crimes.

These include: benefitting from Israeli discrimination which allows companies to exploit Palestinian resources and workers; benefitting from and participating in the theft of land from Palestinian individuals and communities; assisting Israel's destruction of the Palestinian economy; and making the settlements more viable by providing them with services and paying taxes to their municipalities.

Israel's colonisation also favours development in Jewish settlements while actively suppressing Palestinian economic opportunities.

The report provides a strong refutation to frequent Israeli claims that settlement businesses should be tolerated or even celebrated because they provide employment and development for Palestinians.

It cites, for instance, a World Bank estimate that the Palestinian economy could generate an additional \$3.4 billion – a 35 percent boost in GDP – if Israel lifted its discriminatory restrictions on Palestinian economic activity.

Similarly, economists have estimated

that up to 200,000 jobs would be created if Palestinians were allowed to farm the occupied West Bank's Jordan Valley, most of which Israel has seized for the exclusive use of settlers.

Near the Bethlehem-area village of Beit Fajjar Israel has refused to license Palestinian-owned quarries and constantly harasses businesses by confiscating their equipment. As a result of such policies, jobs are scarce.

By contrast, Israel has licensed a dozen Israeli-run quarries on confiscated Palestinian land. One of them, Nahal Raba, is run by the German company, HeidelbergCement, helping Israel violate international law that prohibits the theft of resources from an occupied territory.

In a case study of a 96-unit development in the Ariel settlement, HRW cites the role of the US-based global real estate franchise RE/MAX and an Israeli bank in financing, marketing and profiting from the illegal colonisation of Palestinian land.

It also describes the devastating impact Ariel and its ever-growing extensions has had on the villages whose land has been stolen for their development. By supporting such housing developments, the report states, firms like RE/MAX and the Israeli bank "help the illegal settlements in the West Bank to function as viable housing markets, enabling the government to transfer settlers there."

This transfer is a crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

HRW does not name the bank in its case study, stressing that the companies profiled in the report are examples among hundreds doing business in the settlements. However the official marketing brochure for Green Ariel – the development mentioned in the report – offers mortgages from Mizrahi Tefahot Bank. This is one of five big Israeli banks from which several major pension funds have recently divested because of their role in financing settlements.

Businesses financing, selling and promoting settlements are also active participants in Israel's officially endorsed system of anti-Palestinian racism.

"Given the character of settlements as almost exclusively Jewish and the rules that effectively bar Palestinian residents of the West Bank from living there, agents selling property there effectively contribute to discrimination against Palestinians," HRW states.

The report cites Israeli sources confirming that separate and unequal development is the *raison d'être* of the settlement enterprise; the government-backed World Zionist Organisation Settlement Division has said, for instance, that colonisation of the West

Bank is aimed at "strengthening Jewish settlement in the country's periphery."

“Separate and unequal development is the *raison d'être* of the settlement enterprise”

"I don't buy from or sell to Arabs. It's not racism, I just prefer not to deal with [them]," one RE/MAX agent who lists settlement properties in occupied East Jerusalem told HRW.

The report also focuses on an Israeli company that produced bed linens for a US retailer in the Barkan Industrial Zone, a West Bank settlement built on land confiscated from Palestinian owners.

It is one of approximately 20 Israeli-run industrial zones in the occupied West Bank where companies can move to avoid environmental regulations.

This company paid Palestinian workers much less than the Israeli minimum wage. Women received \$2 per hour and said they did not get holiday pay, sick days or overtime.

HRW did not name the company "because it has since relocated from Barkan to Israel." However, the description provided fits a company called Royalife, which markets its linens through the US retailer Pottery Barn.

Hani, a Palestinian university student from Salfit village, worked at a factory in Barkan making Hanukkah candles. He told HRW that he worked 12-hour shifts with a single 30-minute break and was paid \$2 per hour, a third of Israel's minimum wage.

The fact that Palestinian workers are totally dependent on Israeli occupation authorities for work permits makes it all but impossible for Palestinians effectively to challenge these abusive conditions. HRW says the reality belies claims by settlers and their supporters that places like Barkan are models of "coexistence" that build "bridges to peace."

This kind of pro-settlement propaganda is regularly promoted by liberal Zionists in the US, including *Jewish Daily Forward* editor Jane Eisner.

In defending Sodastream's

settlement factory, Eisner's newspaper insisted that the company was providing "well-paying jobs" for Palestinians and was not "profiting from the occupation."

But such "rosy sentiments ignore the deeply discriminatory environment in which settlement businesses operate, and Palestinian workers' vulnerability to abuse," HRW states.

Among its recommendations, Human Rights Watch urges states to "avoid offsetting the costs of Israeli government expenditures on settlements by withholding funding given to the Israeli government in an amount equivalent to its expenditures on settlements and related infrastructure in the West Bank."

Ali Abuminah comments: "Given the billions it is estimated to spend on settlements, that would all but wipe out aid to Israel."

This call for cutting aid is likely to fall on deaf ears. Before he leaves office next January, President Barack Obama hopes to conclude a deal that could see annual US military subsidies to Israel boosted by up to 50 percent. Meanwhile the European Union has continued generously to fund Israel, including its military research and its settlements.

The EU recently required the accurate labelling of imports from the illegal settlements but staunch Israeli allies, including Greece's left-wing Syriza government, are actively trying to undermine this already minimal policy.

Abuminah writes: "Amid such destructive complicity, the call by Human Rights Watch to end all settlement business is a welcome, if belated, move in the right direction.

"It provides a clear endorsement and boost for those who have been working for years to bring real and effective pressure on Israel and its accomplices to end their crimes."

Ali Abuminah is co-founder of The Electronic Intifada and author of *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*, published by Haymarket Books.



Armed settlers in the West Bank

Attacked for picking olives

By Jenny Kassam

October is the month when I like to go olive harvesting. The fact my yearly olive picking takes place in the occupied West Bank places my enjoyment in stark contrast to my surroundings. This I experienced personally on 14 October last year while picking olives less than 500m from the illegal Israeli settlement of Yitzhar, whose inhabitants are among the most fanatical and violent in the West Bank.

I was working with the Palestinian owner of the grove, Ibrahim, his friend and two members of a group to which I belong, mainly from the UK and Ireland. It is during the olive harvest that Palestinian farmers are most prone to attack by Israeli settlers as well as to being prevented by the Israeli Forces from accessing their own olive groves. As foreign witnesses, we aim to deter such attacks and prohibitions by our presence. The grove where we were working overlooked the village of Huwara, south of Nablus, and the nearby village of Burin where our group was staying.

After a couple of hours harvesting, we noticed two settlers watching us from a terrace about 200m above the grove. Ibrahim and his friend were apprehensive and prepared to leave, but the three of us (Helen in her fifties, David in his mid-sixties and myself, in my late sixties) decided that we would stay put for the time being.

Minutes later swarms of young settlers, their faces and hair masked by scarves, came running down the hill from the settlement, some towards us, shouting and throwing rocks, and others fanning out to the sides. Every 25 metres or so they paused to set fire to strips of dry undergrowth.

Ibrahim and his friend made a dash to escape, fearing for their lives. We were planning to run too when we heard gun shots which seemed to be aimed downhill. Deciding it was preferable to remain where we were rather than being shot, we took cover under a tree, trying to remain calm.

The smoke and fires were spreading down the hill as a group of about eight settlers approached us in a wild frenzy,



Jenny, right, helping David. Photo: ISM.

as if drugged, and yelling “Go! Go! Go!” They continued this way during the whole encounter. Helen shouted back to them, repeating: “We’re British!” while David was slowly getting up from his prostrate position under the tree.

“David keeled over onto the ground, blood now spreading over the top of his head, face and shirt”

With my heart pounding, I tried to communicate with the settlers by calmly repeating, “Yes, we are going.” But in reply the tallest settler, standing a metre away, picked up a grapefruit-sized rock and threw it with force at David’s head. Blood started to trickle from the wound. Helen, still fearful of us being shot at if we went down the hill, asked coolly, “Which way shall we go?”

The response was immediate: another rock thrown at David’s head. He keeled over onto the ground, blood now spreading over the top of his head, face and shirt. As he landed, the stone thrower and another settler kicked him hard three or four times in the upper back and shoulders, still yelling “Go! Go! Go!”

Helen and I were shouting at them to stop, but as David was slowly raising himself off the ground, the tall settler threw a third rock at his head which, in David’s words, “made my whole spine judder.”

Helen and I, fearing the worst for David, were preparing ourselves for the same fate when, miraculously, he started to rise to his feet. At that point the stone thrower snatched his mobile from his hand and tore my camera away, breaking the strap. As I turned to help David, the same settler grabbed my rucksack from my back and ran back up to the settlement with his booty.

Covered with blood, David slowly made his way down the hill supported by Helen and myself. He vowed to ensure the attack would receive maximum



publicity, as he assumed (correctly) that it would not be investigated by the Israeli police.

Meanwhile, the settlers were continuing to run down the hill behind and alongside us, still setting fire to the undergrowth.

Finally we reached an olive grove near the main road where other members of our group were working. The farmer drove us to a waiting ambulance and David was rushed to hospital.

Our friends told us later that before we arrived at their olive grove they had a visit from the *ravshatz*, a settler with a long red beard in charge of security for Yitzhar and who is also the settlement's liaison with the Israeli Forces. This year during the harvest, he habitually drove his 4x4 along paths around the olive groves, armed with an automatic rifle, threatening farmers. That day he had approached the Palestinian owners holding his rifle. Protective presence helpers shouted at

him to get off the land and he departed.

Shortly after we left in the ambulance, the *ravshatz* reappeared with soldiers in the back of his 4x4. Instead of arresting the settlers, the soldiers told the farmers to leave their own land. Fire engines could not get to the fires that were raging down the hill as the Israeli Forces barred them from using the settler road to Yitzhar, the only means of access. Volunteers and civil workers tried to put out the flames using shovels and branches, with limited success. That day,

about 100 olive trees were destroyed.

At Rafedya hospital, David received five stitches to his head. We were relieved to see Ibrahim whose hand had been cut and badly bruised when he had put it behind his head as he was running, to protect himself from the rocks being thrown at him. He confirmed that the shots were aimed at him and his friend.

Journalists and TV crews from Palestine and many other countries converged on the hospital to interview David. But not the BBC. One report – the only one published in the British press who telephoned David that evening – included an intriguing comment from the Israeli police: “The altercation began after stones were thrown at a car belonging to an Israeli woman.”

In fact no altercation took place and there were no roads for cars to drive along in the olive groves. The Israeli police did telephone us and we agreed to make statements, providing a member of

the British consulate was present. They never rang back and to our knowledge have never pursued the case.

We believe no forensics team went to search for evidence to identify either the attackers or the arsonists. None of this is surprising: the Israeli Human Rights organisation, Yesh Din, reports that only 2.5% of complaints about settler attacks against Palestinians result in convictions and 91.5% of investigations are closed without indictments.

On the advice of the British consulate in Jerusalem, David, together with Ibrahim, went to lodge a complaint about the attack at a police department in Ariel settlement. David was received courteously, his complaint accepted and he received a document confirming this fact.

“Only 2.5% of complaints about settler attacks against Palestinians result in convictions”

Ibrahim's complaint, in contrast, was not accepted. He was interrogated harshly and told finally that he could not distinguish between Israeli settlers and hostile Palestinians!

This incident has left lasting impressions. On a personal level, I feel I should have done more to try to stop the settlers from attacking David. I also have a slightly better understanding of the experiences of Palestinians living in the West Bank where settler violence and violence against property occur on average once a day.

Then there is the position of West Bank settlers in Israeli society. So often, the media refer to the settlers as if they are disconnected, autonomous groups, unanswerable to the law. However, they are Israeli citizens like any other and subject to civil law (unlike the Palestinians who are subject to military law). But the Israeli Forces and police, institutions of the Israeli state, pay little heed to criminal acts committed by settlers towards Palestinians.

The experience has made me more determined than ever to return to the West Bank. Being of Jewish descent with a 2,000 year history of persecution, I have every reason to show my solidarity with a population whose repression and abuse may be ignored by the West, but is a focus for much concern by all those who care about justice, human rights and dignity and the right of Palestinians to their own homeland.

■ Yesh Din report ‘Law Enforcement on Israeli Civilians in the West Bank,’ 27 Oct 2015 – www.yesh-din.org



Jerusalem at the heart of the conflict

Violence has erupted in Jerusalem in recent months with scores of deaths and regular clashes between Palestinian protestors and Israeli Occupation Forces. Here **Kamel Hawwash**, a native of East Jerusalem and vice chair of PSC, explains why the future of the city lies at the heart of any peace agreement.

The issue of Jerusalem was one of the final status issues under the Oslo Accords, one that was so sensitive that the peace process may not have been set up if it had been one of the issues the Israelis and Palestinians had to tackle first. But after 22 further years of futile negotiations, the peace process has now failed in its entirety. Meanwhile, on the ground, Israel has created facts that make the achievement of peace based on what is termed “the two-state solution” unattainable.

Jerusalem has suffered more “facts on the ground” than most. This is because after Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, it illegally annexed the city and successive Israeli governments have referred to it as the eternal united capital that will “never be divided.” They have pursued a policy of the Judaisation of East Jerusalem in an attempt to destroy its Palestinian Arab, Muslim and Christian character.

Fast forward to 2015/16 and, apart from the iconic skyline of Alaqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock compound, the city is unrecognisable. Many Israeli flags flutter over the city, both in the old part and where illegal settlements have been deliberately planted in what used to be completely Palestinian neighbourhoods like Attur and Silwan.

The settlements are built on Palestinian land which mainly ended up in the hands of settler organisations through shady deals, for example where Palestinians believe they are selling to other Palestinians but find they are victims of an act of deception. Israel also uses the law of absentees to confiscate Palestinian land and homes handing them over to settlers with Israeli courts generally approving these immoral acts.

In addition Israel has almost completely encircled Jerusalem with a belt of settlements built on illegally occupied land in the West Bank to cut the city off, making it impossible for East Jerusalem to become the capital of a Palestinian state. The rest of the area in the centre of the West Bank, often referred to as E1, is subject to regular Israeli plans for construction which the international community strongly opposes as filling the area with settlements would finally kill off any prospect of the two-state solution.

As well as building settlements, the Israelis have evicted many Palestinians from homes in Jerusalem neighbourhoods like Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah because settler organisations claim they used to belong to Jews before 1948. Apart from the immorality of these acts, the effect is that space for



Palestinians protest to Israeli police as a group of Jewish Israelis tour the Harem el Sharif, or Temple Mount

Palestinians to build and develop is reduced and opportunities for young people to set up homes in their neighbourhoods are almost nonexistent. Meanwhile they are forced to watch Jewish Israelis develop their lives on land illegally taken from them as a people.

When Israel occupied East Jerusalem it issued the indigenous Palestinian population with special identity cards carried in a blue wallet which denoted residency rights. But the Israeli authorities can take away the “blue ID,” as it is known, at any time if they judge that Jerusalem is longer the “centre of your life.” This can be if a Palestinian moves to work in the West Bank or live or study abroad. A Jewish Jerusalemite who leaves the city to work elsewhere in Israel or to live abroad does not lose the right to live in Jerusalem.

Israel has also used the route of the separation wall to exclude tens of thousands of Jerusalemites from the city. They have to pass through checkpoints to reach services they used to access prior to the construction of the wall such as education or health. They pay taxes to the city’s council but do not receive services in their neighbourhoods and Israel bars the Palestinian Authority from offering alternative services. This leaves residents of areas such as Abu Dis and Alram in no man’s land.

Palestinians are also witnessing a replacement of Jerusalem’s Palestinian history with a Jewish one by stealth. This can be seen through road signs which no longer list the road or neighbourhood name in Arabic using its historical Arabic name but by a Hebrew replacement. So young Palestinians and visitors will use the Hebrew replacement thus providing further Judaisation of the city.

Under PM Binyamin Netanyahu’s government, the number of “visits” by Jewish settlers to Alaqsa mosque has increased. They take place without invitation or coordination with the Jordanian

The EU must stop supporting settlements

The European Union needs to act faster and further in ensuring that Israeli settlements in no way benefit from EU-Israel bilateral relations, according to a report produced last summer by the European Council on Foreign Relations.

ECFR fellows Hugh Lovatt and Mattia Toaldo, use the word “differentiation” to refer to the EU’s obligation under international law and its own rules to differentiate between Israel and the settlements in EU-Israel bi-lateral relations.

Their report, *EU Differentiation and Israeli settlements*, argues that the EU’s legal requirement to comply with its own non-recognition of Israeli settlement activity has given rise to a nascent, legally driven, consensus around differentiation.

The paper argues that this differentiation is one of the most powerful tools at the EU’s disposal for challenging the incentive structure that underpins Israeli support for the status quo.

But the EU must do more to own – and deepen – its use of the language of differentiation to explain its legal responsibilities to distinguish between activities in the Occupied Territories and Israel and also to push back against Israeli attempts to conflate differentiation with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.



Settlement goods labelled

In July the EU Foreign Affairs Council reaffirmed its commitment to the two state solution. Following that commitment, the report calls for the European Commission to task its directorates general with reviewing their existing interactions with Israel to assess whether they differentiate between Israel proper and the settlements.

It also calls for a more coherent use of business advisories across Europe of the

potential legal and financial consequences of doing business with Israeli entities in the Occupied Territories.

The authors raise the possibility of extending a differentiation policy to new areas including: the integration of the European and Israeli financial sectors, the charitable status within the EU of organisations that support Israel’s settlement enterprise and the validity within the EU of legal documents issued by Israeli authorities in the Occupied Territories.

Launching the report, Mattia Toaldo said: “For years now, Europeans have been, de facto, pursuing a process of differentiation but have been reluctant to acknowledge it. It is now time to own and defend this policy. Differentiation can help modify the calculations that underpin the status quo on the Israeli side and ultimately create the conditions for a meaningful peace process.”

(cont. from previous page)

Waqf, which under the various agreements administers the Muslim Holy site. The settlers are accompanied by Israeli Occupation Forces and clashes erupt regularly between Palestinian worshippers and the settlers.

In order to facilitate the settler visits, Israel regularly bars Palestinians from entering the mosque. This has led Palestinians to believe that Israel plans eventually to divide the site between Jews and Muslims and to fear that the number of settlers who wish to replace Alaqsa with a Jewish temple is increasing both in number and influence in what is a settler-led government.

In Jerusalem Palestinians and Israelis interact regularly, unlike other parts of the West Bank. At times of rising tensions, this can lead to friction and in some cases outright violence. While Israelis are protected by the occupation forces, Palestinians feel vulnerable as they have no confidence in the occupation forces offering protection. Incidents such as the burning alive of Palestinian child Muhammed Abu Khdeir in 2014 and the lack of justice for him confirm these fears.

The impact of all these things has been to create a feeling among the Palestinians of Jerusalem that they are losing their city to the colonisers. Israel controls every aspect of their daily lives and does all it can to control the demography of the city to at best maintain the current proportions of Israeli Jews and Palestinians but at worst to change it over time to ensure a clear Jewish majority.

This has helped ferment a state of continuous Palestinian anger as they see their city being taken away from them. This anger can explain the recent Palestinian uprising which started in October in which over 150 Palestinians have lost their lives in alleged attacks against Israeli civilians and occupation forces. Because the Palestinian Authority, which exercises a security



cooperation with Israel in the rest of the West Bank, has no presence in annexed East Jerusalem, it has paradoxically allowed the population to hit back at the occupation with acts of revenge that have at times been violent.

As the French try to initiate another attempt to find a way forward to peace, all stakeholders should see East Jerusalem Street as the barometer for the seriousness of any initiative. If Palestinians can see an end to the rabid Israeli colonisation of their city, then peace might have a chance of coming to the Holy Land. Without this, the current rise that started in Jerusalem could morph into a full intifada.

Let's teach the truth



By Kiri Tunks

A ten year old boy shows a film crew the things that make up the reality of his daily life. He takes them through the area between his home and school in the illegally occupied Old City of Hebron and points out the checkpoints he has to pass through, the soldiers who watch his every move, and the graffiti daubed by settlers on his neighbours' walls saying "Death to Arabs."

Saleh describes how his family lives with constant harassment from soldiers and settlers. The Israeli Forces have placed a military watchtower on the roof of his house and have fired live ammunition from there over the garden. The front of his house is enclosed behind concrete barriers and his access to the nearest shop is down a tiny path surrounded by razor wire and concrete.

This short film is the first in a series in which young Palestinians talk about their lives which is part of a package of

teaching resources aimed at conveying to British schoolchildren what life is like for their Palestinian contemporaries in the West Bank and inside Israel.

Under the title "Beyond the Wall," the resources were produced in collaboration between the National Union of Teachers, the General Union of Palestinian Teachers and the UK charity, Edukid, and were launched at the NUT annual conference at Easter, 2015.

As well as the films there are follow-up activities based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They encourage enquiry and reflection on the whole question of human rights both abroad and in the UK.

The boy's experience in "My Name is Saleh" is far from unusual. In a statement in February 2015, the UN reported:

"Incidents involving school children and schools almost tripled in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from 2013 to 2014, affecting nearly 25,000 Palestinian children in 2014. Affected children grow up exposed

to violence from an early age and many suffer from emotional and psychological distress, including experiencing recurrent nightmares and bed-wetting. Over 77 per cent of students in Hebron showed symptoms of moderate to severe post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a recent study."

These are the circumstances in which Saleh lives. But showing the truth about a child's life under Israeli military occupation produced a backlash.

On 30 July, a piece appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* criticising the resources and accusing them of being one-sided. This was swiftly followed by a piece in the *Daily Telegraph* which alleged that schools were "teaching pro-Palestinian extremist agenda" and the NUT was accused of "spreading political propaganda." The story was picked up by the *Express* and the *Sun* and various overseas news sites.

A key accusation was that Saleh refers to Jews as opposed to Israelis and that the film risked "inciting tensions between faith communities." This is entirely untrue.

The new Executive Committee

Elections at the AGM resulted in the appointment of a new Executive Committee.

Chair: Hugh Lanning

Former Deputy General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, Hugh has been Chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign since 2009.

Vice Chair: Kamel Hawwash

A British Palestinian academic, based in Birmingham, Kamel's family originates from East Jerusalem. He regularly represents the PSC on both Arab and English media.

Secretary: Ben Soffa

Head of digital organising for the Labour Party, Ben is involved in many of PSC's activities, from parliamentary work to representing us in the media.

Treasurer: John Ellis

A chartered accountant who has worked primarily with the not-for-profit sector, John is familiar with the particular difficulties experienced by voluntary organisations.

Campaigns Officer: Stephen Bell

Stephen has wide political experience and recently has been

primarily involved in the trade union work of the PSC.

Trade Union Liaison Officer: Pia Westin

Pia works for a trade union and has been on the EC for three years. She contributes to the PSC Twitter feed and the Facebook page.

Ordinary Members:

Salim Alam

Chair of West London branch, Salim brings practical branch organisation and campaign experience to the EC. He is a leading campaigner on PSC's BDS targets.

Betty Hunter

The former General Secretary of PSC for ten years, Betty now lives in Abergavenny and is active in RCIR and A4PC and building PSC in Wales.

Ben Jamal

As CEO of a domestic violence charity, Ben, whose father was Palestinian, brings experience of organisational management, fundraising and lobbying.

Jackie Lewis

A member of UNISON's National LGBT Committee, Jackie is co-convenor of the "No to Pinkwashing – No Pride in Israeli Apartheid" group.

Ellie Merton

With over 25 years of campaigning for Palestinian human rights, Ellie offers strong experience of effective campaigning from letter writing to direct action on an inclusive, cross-party basis.

Bernard Regan

Formerly the PSC Trade Union Officer, Bernard is a retired teacher, NUT trustee and chair of the Southern and Eastern Region TUC International Committee. He recently led two NUT delegations to Palestine and edited the Delegation Report.

Tapash Abu Shaim

Active in many BDS campaigns, especially Israeli dates during Ramadan, Tapash also organises fundraisers for PSC which raised over £20,000 in 2015 with over £30,000 pledges to follow.

Kiri Tunks

A secondary teacher and junior vice president (elect) of the NUT, Kiri focusses on Palestinian child detention and education. She is helping to produce the Edukid teaching resources which give a voice to young Palestinians.

(cont. from previous page)

Throughout the film, Saleh refers only to soldiers and settlers.

Another allegation was that the resources were unbalanced. Is showing a truthful account of daily life for a child living under occupation inherently unbalanced? Should that child not have the right to tell his story? How would you balance out Saleh's story?

The inference is that the NUT should have created resources about Israeli young people but the simple fact is that these young people do not live under military occupation; they do not face the same oppression and violence as the Palestinians.

The demand for balance in a situation that is not balanced is one that we are all used to in the campaign for justice for Palestine.

Prompted by the furore, the Charity Commission undertook an investigation into Edukid which resulted in the film being temporarily withdrawn. But they could find nothing wrong and are taking no further action.

Let's look again at some of these dates. The resources were launched at Easter 2015 at a national conference with over 1000

delegates and representatives of the national press. In May, *The Teacher* magazine, with a circulation of 400,000, published a full-page article on the resources.

But it was not until 30 July that the *Jewish Chronicle* published its attack, the same day that Yishai Schlissel, from the illegal settlement of Modi'in, stabbed six people at the Gay Pride march in Tel Aviv.

“Much discussion is now being shut down, largely self-censored, under cover of the Prevent programme”

Hours later, a group of illegal settlers set fire to the Dababsheh family home in Duma, causing the deaths of 18 month old Ali, and later his father Saad and mother Reham.

Would it be too cynical to suggest that apologists for Israel's acts chose that week to attack the resources in the media to draw attention away from the heinous

acts being carried out under the cover of Israeli policies?

Schools now have a statutory duty to teach “British” values but much discussion is now being shut down, largely self-censored, under cover of the Prevent programme. Yet there is a crying need to cover these fundamental questions in school.

Young people use social and other media and know what is happening. By failing to create spaces in schools to discuss these questions, we are at risk of creating resentment and anger, of teaching “British” values but failing to uphold them. We want universal human values that apply to all children in Palestine as well as here in Britain.

■ The second film, *Just Like Us*, is available here: www.edukid.org.uk/countries/palestine/videos

■ The NUT delegation report is here www.teachers.org.uk/files/palestine-report-a4.pdf

Kiri Tunks is a secondary school teacher, Junior Vice President (Elect) of the NUT and a newly elected member of the PSC Executive Committee

Co-op bank closes us down

By Tricia Rich,
Interim Deputy Director

As many *Palestine News* readers will already know, we have recently witnessed a spate of account closures by the Co-operative bank. From Abergavenny to York, from Oxford Students PalSoc to national PSC, organisations working for Palestine have been told by the bank that we no longer fit within their “risk appetite.”

So far we know of 28 organisations working for Palestine that have had their Co-op bank accounts closed.

When it happened to our main bank account, we called on our members and supporters to take action. We had a huge response with hundreds of people writing in to say they had closed their account in protest or complained to the Co-op bank CEO, Niall Booker.

The bank responded rapidly with the statement: “For customers who operate in, or send money to, high risk locations throughout the world, advanced due diligence checks are required by all banks to ensure the funds do not inadvertently fund alleged or proscribed activities. Depending on the particular circumstances it may not be possible for us to complete these checks to our satisfaction.”

“The decision to close a number of accounts, including the PSC and some of its affiliates, is the inevitable result of this process. Unfortunately, after quite extensive research, the charities involved did not meet our requirements or, in our view, allow us to fulfil our obligations.”

The Co-op bank decided to share this statement with the media and articles appeared in the *Daily Mail*, *Telegraph*, and *Jewish Chronicle*, some inferring that the bank’s statement suggested that PSC funds terrorism. Eventually, after several weeks of the bank using this statement publicly, they even sent it to PSC!

On the bank’s “due diligence” argument, it is deliberately false to suggest that PSC’s money could be used to fund “proscribed activities,” even inadvertently. The PSC does not carry out high risk transactions – we make a small amount of transfers to Palestine to pay for scarves and embroidered wrist bands, and for hotels and transport when we take delegations.

We are, of course, particularly careful about the transactions we make abroad and have worked with the Co-op bank whenever they have asked questions. But rather than raise any of their supposed concerns with PSC, the Co-op bank decided just to close the account.

And the bank’s “due diligence” checks did not discover that many of the accounts they closed had never made any transactions outside of the UK, so quite where the quoted “high risk” locations were we don’t know. Perhaps advanced checks are required for certain areas of Norwich.

Nationally we have been working with our lawyers to explore possible legal action – they are quite clear that they believe the bank has acted in a discriminatory way. We sent a “pre-action” letter to the bank in November and are exploring pursuing a court case. We have to take costs into consideration – not only ours but those of the bank if we lost the case.



Legal action is not the only way forward. Local groups have already staged protests outside their local branches. Journalist Peter Osborne has taken a keen interest and wrote a supportive piece in *Middle East Eye* calling out the bank’s “harassment.”

And in Parliament MPs have been taking up the case; Diane Abbott, Shadow Secretary for International Development, called for the Treasury to “produce a new code of practice,” to include banks being compelled to give “detailed reasons” for closing NGO’s accounts and to provide the right to appeal. Paula Sheriff, MP for Dewsbury and Mirfield, called the Co-op bank to a meeting in Parliament where she questioned them about the account closures – they have agreed to respond to questions in writing.

We will keep on fighting to stop the account closures and for the Co-op bank to apologise and retract the public statement made against PSC.

What to do if your account has been closed

- Set up a new account as soon as possible. Nationally PSC has moved to the Unity Trust bank, as have some local groups. Others have moved to credit unions or building societies.
- Make the new account in the same name as your old one – the Co-operative bank has been issuing cheques with any remaining balance to the old account name and so cannot be cashed if the new account is different.
- Let Tricia at the PSC office know of your account closure (Tricia.Rich@palestinecampaign.org).
- Complain to the Co-operative bank so they know the strength of feeling about the closures.
- Take action outside your branch, ensuring the public are aware of the behaviour of this so called ‘ethical bank’.

The Peace Cycle 2016

3-14 April

Sign up for this amazing journey, cycling from Nazareth to Jerusalem, visiting Palestinian NGOs and families, and Israeli human rights organisations.

It's an incredible personal adventure, and a unique opportunity to show solidarity with those seeking justice and peace.

Email for an Information Pack:
thepeacecycle@aol.com
www.thepeacecycle.com



The Big Ride 2016

6-8 August



Four regional cycle rides for Palestine:

- London and the south east
- Manchester and north west England
- Sheffield and north east England
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All roads will lead to a major public event in Birmingham. From Birmingham there will be a mass cycle 15 miles to Shenstone, Staffs, base of UAV Engines which makes military drones used to attack Gaza.

For more info contact **thebigride@redspokes.co.uk**

Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Join PSC / make a donation

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

E-mail

Individual £24.00 Unwaged £12.00

Plus a donation (optional) of

I enclose a cheque of (payable to PSC)

Affiliation fees for trade unions and other organisations are: £25 local; £50 regional; £100 national.

To cover the additional costs of overseas membership please pay the equivalent of US\$35 in your local currency.

By joining PSC you are agreeing to our aims and objectives which can be found on our website: www.palestinecampaign.org/about/aims

Standing order

Paying this way helps PSC plan ahead more effectively

Name of Bank

Address

Postcode

Account number

Sort code

Please pay £12 £24 Other £

Monthly / Quarterly / Yearly (delete as applicable)

To: Unity Bank
 Account No. 20333702 (sort code 60-83-01)
 From (date) ___ / ___ / ___ until further notice

Name
 Signature

Please return this form to:
 PSC Box BM PSA London WC1N 3XX



♀ NAKBA WEEK OF ACTION ♂

Saturday 7 to Sunday 15 May 2016

We will not forget – End the Nakba now – Free Palestine!

The Nakba (which means 'catastrophe' in Arabic) – in 1948 saw Israel forcibly expel around 750,000 Palestinians from their land and destroy hundreds of villages. They have never been allowed to return. The ethnic cleansing continues for Palestinians today. In 2015, over 600 Palestinians lost their homes due to Israeli demolition policies.



Join us to commemorate the Nakba around the country and say 'no more'.

- **Events: talks, films, concerts**
- **Actions: Boycott, divestment and sanctions, protests, stalls**
- **Online actions and campaigns**
- **And much more**

Get involved: organise where you are ■ raise awareness around you
■ use our resources ■ let us know your plans ■ check your local group



More here: www.palestinecampaign.org/nakbaweek

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