



The case for boycott

INSIDE:

Mahmoud Abu Rahma
The siege of Gaza
page 4



Mark Zeitoun
Water and politics
page 5



Noam Chomsky
The future in our hands
page 8



Ben White
Boycott: the backlash
page 16





Cover picture: Demonstration at Wembley, 8 September
ISSN 1477-5808

Also in this issue...

A new film by Mohammed Alatar: 'Jerusalem: the East Side Story' **page 21**



PSC on the web



Visit our website and keep up to date on issues surrounding Palestine. PSC's website provides details of all of the latest campaigns and events. It also has daily news updates and extensive searchable directories of articles on Palestine. The site's resource section provides many downloadable documents, including maps and pictures. There's also a comprehensive list of media contacts, so each time you hear biased reporting on Palestine, you can promptly complain to the right people!

Contents

- 3 Support for Palestine: the ethical norm**
Ilan Pappé senses a major shift in Western public opinion
- 4 The siege of Gaza**
Mahmoud Abu Rahma on the policy of collective punishment
- 5 Water and the politics of de-development**
Mark Zeitoun describes the crisis facing the inhabitants of Gaza
- 7 90 years on... time for an apology?**
Hasan Afif El-Hasan recalls Britain's role in the foundation of Israel
- 8 The future in our hands**
Noam Chomsky talks to PSC
- 10 Sabra and Shatila – 25 years on**
Dr Ang Swee Chai remembers her time in the camps
- 11 News in brief** – plus Eye on the Web
- 15 Consumer boycott**
Chris Osmond provides a user's guide
- 16 Boycott: the backlash**
Ben White examines the methods of the Zionist lobby
- 17 Universities:**
Update on the UCU debate and student news
- 18 Activism around the UK**
Campaigns and branch news
- 22 A stain on 'the beautiful game'**
Campaigning to kick racism out of football
- 23 Putting the fun into fundraising**
Nisa Ali talks to PSC branches
- 24 Conference news**
- 25 The capital of Israel?**
- 26 Tributes**
Laila El-Farra and Haidar Abdel Shafi
- 27 Arts**
Nabil Anani, Steve Sabella and Naji Al-Ali
- 29 Book reviews**
'Between the Lines', 'The First Six Days' and 'The Hollow Land – Israel's Architecture of Occupation'

palestine NEWS

A Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) publication. PSC does not necessarily agree with all opinions expressed in the magazine.
E-mail info@palestinecampaign.org

The editorial team

Editor: Hilary Wise
Siama Ahmad, Nisa Ali, Victoria Brittain, Sarah Colborne, Mike Marqusee, Glen Rangwala, Ben White, Ann Wright

Design and layout

Lithoprint Ltd: info@lithoprint.ltd.uk

If you would like to contribute or respond to one of the articles in this issue please write to:
The Editor, Palestine News, Box BM PSA,

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 anti-semitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli

Support for Palestine: the ethical norm

Ilan Pappé senses a major shift in Western public opinion

The occupation of the Palestinian territories has entered its fortieth year and there is no solution in sight. Another charade of peace is awaiting us this month in Annapolis, which can only produce what all the previous 'peace conferences' have: international reaffirmation of Israeli policies and pressure on the Palestinian leadership to surrender to yet another Israeli 'peace plan' designed to perpetuate the occupation and absolve Israel from any international rebuke or criticism. We also expect that the main actors on the international scene, the Quartet, will continue to boycott the democratically elected institutions of the Palestinian people.

The situation on the ground is worsening daily. Gaza suffers most, but the population in other occupied areas is also continuously being denied even the most basic human rights and is repeatedly harassed by the army and the settlers alike.

While international diplomacy only deepens and legitimises the oppression, the resistance movement, courageous and remarkable as it is, has failed to change in any significant way the realities on the ground. At best, it contains Israel in the Gaza Strip and provides some existential basis for the people living in the West Bank. But it cannot stop the next stages in Israel's plans to destroy the Palestinians by carving up the West Bank and ghettoising the Gaza Strip. It could have done better, had it been united, but to be fair it seems that even a more unified leadership in the Occupied

Territories would not be able to prevent the Israelis from expanding the occupation and escalating the oppression.

Even less encouraging is the state of the peace camp in Israel. Being myself an activist, I have nothing but admiration for the few who continuously and fearlessly challenge the Zionist ideology and the politics of occupation. But we know, after forty years, that the consensual Israeli politics of occupation and oppression have so far won the day and are likely to remain hegemonic in the years to come.

"I wish to be active in an environment where support for the Palestinian cause seems natural, ethical and essential"

A few rays of hope succeed in breaking through this gloomy picture and can inspire all of us to redouble our efforts and struggle in this coming year, the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba. The strongest is the evident change in western public opinion on the Palestine issue, including in the United States. But it is in particular in Europe, and even more so in the UK, that, for the average person, decency and morality dictate opposing the state of Israel and its policies. These impulses are not translated as yet into policies, but they may, if the effort is persistent and coordinated.

This is one of the reasons, not the only one, I have decided to move to England to try and help, where the new trend can easily be sensed and observed in civil society and almost every walk of life. I moved primarily

as I was pushed out by my university in Haifa and received an excellent academic offer from the university of Exeter. But no less important was the wish to be active in an environment where support for the Palestinian cause seems natural, ethical and essential.

There are two reasons why Europe in general, and Britain in particular, offer some hope. First is the work of the solidarity groups who maintain daily the Palestine issue in the public mind. The other reason Britain seems to signal a more hopeful future is the innovative nature of the struggle best manifested in the recent initiative of boycott in the UK (and similar credit is due to those who kicked off the divestment campaign in the USA).

The boycott initiative, with at its centre the academic boycott co-ordinated by BRICUP, has injected new energy into the overall solidarity campaign. Probably, and more importantly, since it was a response to a call that came from Palestinian civil society under occupation, it has also won the moral support of peace activists in Israel.

It is already undermining official Israeli confidence and the traditional pro-Zionist propaganda machine in this country. The campaign, and the panic-stricken reactions from Israel and from Anglo-Zionists, have made the occupation a major topic of discussion. The thinness of the Israeli justification for any of their oppressive policies pursued in Palestine has been easily exposed. At a time when Iraq, Afghanistan and terrorism in Britain are capturing the main headlines, it has been a significant achievement to reassert the centrality of the Palestine issue.

No less important is the way that Palestinian civil society under occupation has been galvanised behind the cultural and academic campaign. It is inspired in part by the anti-Apartheid model, in which a national movement could rely on a non-violent struggle in the West to empower it and complement its activity on the ground. Such a combination makes the struggle more inclusive than ever before, enabling Palestinians, Jews and anyone else caring for Palestine to play a role inside and outside the land. At the same time it targets the democratic veneer of Israel, which has so far served as a protective shield against any criticism or pressure. Exposing Israeli culture and values for what they really are – the value system of an oppressive and colonialist ideology – is an important step towards translating Western grassroots support into governmental policies.

PSC PATRONS

■ John Austin MP ■ Tony Benn ■ Victoria Brittain ■ Barry Camfield ■ Julie Christie ■ Caryl Churchill
■ Jeremy Corbyn MP ■ Bob Crow ■ William Dalrymple ■ Revd Garth Hewitt ■ Dr Ghada Karmi ■ Bruce Kent ■ Karma Nabulsi ■ Corin Redgrave ■ Keith Sonnet ■ Ahdaf Soueif ■ Baroness Tonge of Kew ■

The siege of Gaza

Mahmoud Abu Rahma examines the motives behind the Israeli policy of collective punishment

Gaza's population of 1.5 million has been imprisoned and punished for years; yet the questions currently being considered by the Israeli government have a particularly grotesque quality: How little can Gazans survive on without actually starving to death? What time is it best to cut-off electricity supplies? (It is better in the evening, say some, so families are deprived even of the minor diversion of TV.)

The designation of Gaza as an 'enemy territory' on 19 September 2007 has caused horrendous suffering to an already severely deprived population. The acute shortage of basic goods and foodstuffs resulting from the border closures has led to soaring prices. Employment, education and healthcare are badly affected. Electricity cuts endanger the functioning of hospitals and sewage and water services, and interrupt the operation of medical equipment, as well as vital household electrical equipment such as refrigerators. At the same time Israel has escalated its incursions into the Gaza Strip, during which it has killed 45 Palestinians and injured many more and destroyed homes and cultivated land. On the Egyptian side of the Rafah Crossing about 1000 Palestinians have been stranded since June 2007. About 5000 Gazans have not been allowed to leave the Gaza strip for health, education, employment and other urgent reasons.

Israel's PM promised that the new sanctions would not cause a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Israeli Attorney General, who has ruled against electricity cuts for the time being, argues that the sanctions do not constitute collective punishment, for in time of war states take hostile measures, including boycotts against other states. Israel says it therefore has a full right to defend itself and ensure the security of its subjects. Others in Israel assert that the real purpose of the sanctions is not punishment, but starting up further 'divestment' or 'disengagement' as many in Israel like to call it, so Gaza is less dependent on Israel.

These arguments overlook the fact that Gaza is under a level of control that equals effective occupation.

Whether Israel likes it or not, under



Women patients demonstrate outside AlShifa hospital, Gaza, against the sanctions

international law, control is associated with responsibility. It cannot control every aspect of Gaza's life and claim it has no responsibility for its people.

“For Israel, the timing can never be as perfect as it is now”

It also ignores the fact that Gaza is not in a state of war with Israel. It is a territory occupied by Israel, one that has been experiencing Israel's aggression and sanctions since 1967. Restrictions on movement have been in place for decades. Brutal aggression is not novel either. It did not come as a response to rockets coming out of Gaza. Children were killed when they simply demonstrated against the occupation and threw stones at soldiers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The new sanctions represent only a shift in the scope and the targets; Gaza's last gates have closed completely and the civilian population is openly targeted.

When it comes to encouraging 'self-

that Israel has closed the only airport and the only border crossing with Egypt, and blocked the construction of a seaport. Palestinians are not free to trade with others, for all trade has to come through Israel according to Israel's conditions. In fact, Gazans would be only too happy to buy cheaper fuel, electricity and foodstuffs from Egypt and enjoy greater control over their trade; however, they are not allowed to do so.

The logic behind the new sanctions seems to be: Gaza's civilians must learn that they have to stop attacks emanating from their territory against any Israeli targets, military or civilian. Everything would be fine only if the attacks stop; their life would return to normal. But for Gazans 'normal' is a mysterious notion: 'normal' here simply means acceding to Israel's occupation, settlement and control.

In fact security, ostensibly Israel's justification of the new sanctions, is at best a marginal concern: cornering Gaza's civilians can only backfire. Israel cannot demonstrate how collectively punishing Gaza's men, women, children and elderly will help preserve its security.

There is no way Israel can show the world that a 77-year-old man with a critical

Water and the politics of de-development

Mark Zeitoun describes the crisis facing the inhabitants of Gaza

It is almost impossible to believe that the Gaza Strip was ever an oasis. But Gaza's fresh sweet groundwater has been nourishing inhabitants for over 3,000 years. It was always the first stop of conquerors leaving Egypt for the riches of Syria. Like the Pharaohs before him, Alexander the Great sought the cool wells of Gaza at the end of his trek across the Sinai desert.

Wadi Gaza and Wadi Beit Hanoun, that used to run clear with fresh water, now stagnate like cesspits. Six people died in the torrent of raw sewage that burst the banks of the Beit Lahia wastewater treatment plant earlier this year. Nitrates and chloride levels are three to four times higher than the WHO drinking water regulations. The water crisis in Gaza is not looming, it is present.

The predicament is ultimately a result of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As the map shows, all water in Palestine is transboundary with Israel. Since 1967 Israel has banned Palestinians from using the Jordan River, on whose west bank they live. And according to the terms of the 1995 Oslo II Agreement, Israel controls 90% of the transboundary flows, Palestinians 10%. The only water available to Palestinians is the groundwater located in any of four large underground reservoirs (aquifers).

Aquifers are not infinite. As they rely on winter rains to be recharged, an aquifer can sustain a population or intensive irrigated farming only up to a certain threshold. With very little rain, the sustainable limit of the Gazan portion of the Coastal aquifer is limited indeed. The threshold was breached following the outcome of the Nakba in 1948 and the June 1967 war, which saw Gaza's natural 'carrying capacity' strained by the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who sought refuge there.

Heart condition posed a threat (Nimir Muhammad Shuheibar died at the Erez Crossing on Tuesday, 23 October, after having to wait for hours). Or that increased malnutrition among young Gazans will improve security. It is strange to assume that Gazans will become docile when they have no work and when levels of poverty reach 80% (70,000 workers in the industrial sector have recently joined the ranks of the unemployed).

In reality, the sanctions are carefully calculated measures that aim to bring about specific political gains. For Israel, the timing can never be as perfect as it is now, with Hamas in power, Palestinians deeply divided and the level of sympathy with them at an all-time low, both in Israel and the West.

'People are now obliged to carry their water up several flights to their flats, and an even greater amount of sewage seeps through the sand into the groundwater'

The more water that is pumped out of the wells, the faster the underground water table drops and is destroyed by the intruding Mediterranean Sea. The coast of Israel has also been affected by seawater intrusion since the 1960s, and may be one reason

why Israel chose to shift water-intensive crops like oranges and strawberries to Gaza. Water quality worsened following the 1995 Oslo II Agreement, when the newly-formed Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) was unable to enforce the bans on drilling that the Israeli Civil Administration had set in place. The competent but frustrated municipal and PWA engineers are fully aware how crucial it is to manage

the resource carefully, but the terms of Oslo II still bind, and do not facilitate their task.

Unlike Israel, which has alternative sources of water, Gaza's options are severely limited. PWA national plans once sought to avert the crisis through the bulk water imports from the West Bank and/or the production of desalinated seawater. The first option never materialised, as the hope of a West Bank — Gaza corridor vanished along with the Oslo process. The complete pumping restrictions on the Western and Northeastern Aquifers — agreed to under the Oslo II Agreement by the Palestinian negotiators — in any case ensure that Palestinians living around Hebron don't have enough water to irrigate their crops, much less to send across to Gaza.

The construction of large-scale desalination plants, distribution networks and wastewater treatment plants would go a long way to addressing Gaza's water problems. Such projects were planned, but are now caught up in the quagmire of the politics of donor assistance, where development funds are conditional on the

political shifts in official Palestinian-Israeli relations. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has become responsible for the security of the Israeli citizens — even those settling the West Bank and Jerusalem. The excuse of 'security concerns' enables the 'peace process' to be frozen and collective punishment further expanded. The PA is now in the position that it cannot protest, at least by any action, the murder or impoverishment of its citizens. Yet it is expected to respond positively to 'peace' moves. Second, Palestinians can only pose demands that have to do with their daily life; not their genuine national aspirations and rights

under international law. The functions of the new Quartet envoy, Tony Blair, briefed to look only at economic issues, reflect this clearly.

We know that in international relations ethics and law never count, for states; only national interests do. But they do count for peoples, and disregarding them only fuels conflict. The world has the choice: to realise this when it is too late and Gaza becomes a powder keg threatening to de-stabilize the whole region — or to recognise Palestinian rights and aspirations and take genuine steps towards their implementation.

Mahmoud Abu Rahma is Communications Director of the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza

To join the campaign to break the siege of Gaza, visit www.end-gaza-siege.ps



Map adapted from the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), Center for Economic and Social Rights, Executive Action Team (USGS Overview of Mideast Water Resources).

Shared Water Resources: Jordan River, Wadi Gaza and four transboundary aquifers.

donors' agendas. There are no serious long-term plans to address Gaza's water crisis today.

The Israeli blockade of construction material and maintenance equipment means that even short-term mitigation plans are not possible. The wastewater treatment plant in Khan Younis lies uncompleted — resulting in raw sewage mixing with stormwater pools designed to replenish the aquifers through infiltration. With a water bill payment rate of about 5%, the PWA has no capacity to pursue its plans independent of the donors' politics.

The burden of the crisis is of course borne mainly by the most vulnerable in Gaza. Those who can afford it purchase household-level water treatment units. Those who cannot are obliged to purchase water from private vendors, though a recent PWA report reveals at least 30% of this water is unfit to drink. People who find water from private vendors beyond their means drink the contaminated groundwater supplied by the municipalities. 'Blue baby' syndrome, gastro-intestinal and advanced gum disease are just a few of the immediate and chronic consequences.

The only other source of water that might be considered is the purchase of water from Israel. Israel pumps water from the distant Lake of Tiberias down into the Negev desert beside Gaza (see map). Israel today sells a small quantity of water to Gaza - roughly 4% of total consumption. But water from Israel is up to ten times the price most people in Gaza currently pay. Purchasing water from Israel furthermore erodes the Palestinian negotiators' attempts to acquire its legal entitlement to the transboundary waters.

The same is true, of course, of the purchase of water from the Israeli desalination plant in Ashqelon, just north of Gaza. The seawater desalinated in Israel since 2005 provides an opportunity for resolution

produced from seawater in Israel at competitive rates, the argument goes, there is less pressure to maintain control over the flows of the Jordan River and transboundary aquifers. The Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department promotes this economically rational argument, and has recently proposed a 'win-win' freshwater water re-allocation scenario along these lines.

‘ “Blue baby” syndrome, gastro-intestinal and advanced gum disease are just a few of the immediate and chronic consequences’

However, serious negotiations addressing the immediate and future concerns of Gaza are not currently on the horizon and there is certainly no discussion of economic arrangements with Israel. The Israeli siege of Gaza is tightening, and making a desperate situation much worse. With its power plant attacked in 2006 and fuel imports restricted in 2007, electricity that runs the pumps and treatment plants is in gravely short supply. People are now obliged to carry their water up several flights to their flats, and an even greater amount of sewage seeps through the sand into the groundwater. The link between electricity and water is a vicious cycle. The people in Gaza are set back decades, in this latest era of de-development.

As politics are at the root of the water problem in Palestine, the solution is also political. Proper Palestinian water resources management is essential, but only possible in an improved political context. The solutions that have been tabled must be supported by the Palestinian, Israeli and international communities engaging in negotiations, activism and diplomacy.

Dr. Mark Zeitoun is a humanitarian-aid water engineer who has worked in conflict and post-conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East. His book *Power and Water in the Middle East: The Hidden Politics of the Palestinian-Israeli Water Conflict* (IB Tauris) will be available in early 2008.

The Spring issue of *Palestine News* will carry an article on the water situation in the West Bank.

LAURA BRAY, MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES



Private sector drinking water distribution

90 years on... time for an apology?

Hasan Afif El-Hasan recalls Britain's role in the foundation of Israel

Britain has never apologised for giving itself the right to grant a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, against the will of its Arab population, who constituted 93 percent of its inhabitants. Just in case anyone has forgotten, let us review the story of British colonialism in the region.

Eighteen months after the British-French Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, that divided the eastern Mediterranean Arab lands between the two countries, the president of the Zionist Federation, Baron Lionel Rothschild, was able to extract a ground-breaking promise from Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary. On 2 November 1917 Balfour presented a letter, that has come to be known as the 'Balfour Declaration', to Lord Rothschild, committing the British Government to support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Although the Declaration carried the name of Balfour, it was actually drafted by Zionist linguistic and legal experts, to lay the grounds for a future Jewish state and limit the rights of "the non-Jewish" population.

Two years after the Declaration, Weizmann said in a speech to a Jewish audience in London: '[The Balfour Declaration] is the golden key which unlocks the doors of Palestine and gives you the possibility to put all your efforts into the country'.

The explanations for the reasons behind the Balfour Declaration range from idealism to utilitarianism. It has been seen by some as a result of the pressure exerted by Zionists led by Chaim Weizmann, a scientist who made an important contribution to the British war effort in the World War I.

Weizmann established relationships with the future Prime Minister Lloyd George, the Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill and Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Lord Robert Cecil. He earned recognition at the highest level of government during the war for inventing a special fermentation process used by British navy guns. Throughout, he was promoting the idea of creating a Jewish homeland under British protection in Palestine, thus linking the success of the Zionist programme with the victory of the Allies in Palestine.

When Lloyd George became prime minister in 1916, there was consensus within his cabinet regarding the benefits to be gained by Britain from a partnership with the Zionists. Undersecretary Mark Sykes, a strong believer in the Zionist project, suggested that a Jewish presence in Palestine might serve British interests in defending 'the Suez Canal against attack from the north and as a station in the future air routes to the east'.

General Allenby was actually preparing for the invasion of Palestine in 1917 when Balfour asked Weizmann to propose a written draft of a declaration to commit Britain to a Jewish national home in Palestine, that he might present to the cabinet for approval.

On 4 August 1916, Lord Curzon wrote to Colonel French that the

terms of the Mandate for Palestine included the enforcement of the Balfour Declaration and that 'This should be emphasized to Arab leaders at every opportunity and it should be impressed on them that the matter is a "chose jugée" and continued agitation would be useless and detrimental'.

It can be argued that the Declaration by itself was not binding because it was not a treaty between two states. But it became binding when the League of Nations, which was dominated by Britain and France, incorporated it almost verbatim in Article 2 of the Mandate for Palestine: 'The Mandate shall be responsible for placing the country under such political administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home....'. The Mandate was made even more specific by referring

to 'the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine', in order to secure the implementation of the Zionists' programme.

Lloyd George stated in 1936 that Britain issued the Declaration in order to enlist the support of the Jewish people, including the American Jewish community, during the war at a time when Britain had lost the confidence of its allies. Other motives for the Declaration had to do

with the ideologies and the attitudes of the British leadership. It was suggested that both Lord Balfour and Prime Minister Lloyd George were ardent supporters of the Zionist movement due to their religious belief in the Bible and the Jews' right of return. In a memorandum written on August 11, 1919 Balfour stated that Zionism, whether right or wrong, 'good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions ... of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.'

The majority of British politicians believed that a Jewish state allied with Britain would serve the British interests in the Middle East and help protect the lines of communications with the Indian subcontinent, the Jewel of the British Crown. Some analysts have also suggested that British policy makers co-operated with the Zionists in order to divert East European Jewish immigrants to Palestine, rather than to Britain. Whatever the reasons, support for Zionism and disregard for the Palestinians' grievances have been the basis of the policies of British governments ever since.

No apology could make up for the suffering of the three generations of Palestinians, who were driven from their homes or treated as second class citizens and deprived of their human rights and dignity. But Britain should at least acknowledge its role in the dispossession of the Palestinians, and take steps to change its policy in the Middle East in a way that will foster a just peace.

'The Balfour Declaration is the golden key which unlocks the doors of Palestine'

Dr. Hasan Afif El-Hasan is a political analyst and author, from Nablus. *This article was first published in Palestine Chronicle.com on 7 November*

‘The future lies in our hands,’ says Chomsky

Professor Noam Chomsky responds to questions put by Wandsworth PSC, on the current situation in Palestine

What is your view of the situation in Gaza today? Could it mark the beginning of the end for the Palestinian Authority?

The end of the Palestinian Authority might not be a bad idea for Palestinians, in the light of JS-Israeli programs of rendering it nothing more than a quisling regime to oversee their extreme rejectionist designs. What should concern us much more is that US-Israeli triumphalism, and European cowardice, might be the prelude to the death of a nation, a rare and somber event.

Do you think that there are any conditions under which the US might change its policy of ‘unconditional support’ for Israel?

A large majority of Americans oppose JS government policy and support the international consensus on a two-state settlement — in recent polls, it’s called the Saudi Plan,’ referring to the position of the Arab League, supported by virtually the entire world apart from the US and Israel.

Furthermore, a large majority think that the US should deny aid to either of the contending parties — Israel and the Palestinians — if they do not negotiate in good faith towards this settlement. This is one of a great many illustrations of a huge gap between public opinion and public policy on critical issues.

It should be added that few people are likely to be aware that their preferences would lead to cutting off all aid to Israel. To understand this consequence one would have to escape the grip of the powerful and largely uniform doctrinal system, which labors to project an image of US benevolence, Israeli righteousness, and Palestinian terror and obstructionism, whatever the facts.

To answer your question, US policy might well change if the US became a functioning democratic society, in which an informed public has a meaningful voice in policy formation. That’s the task for activists and organizers, not just in this case. One can think of other possible conditions that might lead to a change in US policy, but none that holds anywhere near as much promise as this one.

Tony Blair has been appointed the Middle East quartet’s envoy.

What message do you think that this sends to the Palestinians



and others around the region?

Perhaps the most apt comment was by the fine Lebanese political analyst Rami Khouri. He said that ‘Appointing Tony Blair as special envoy for Arab-Israeli peace is something like appointing the Emperor

Nero to be the chief fireman of Rome.’ Blair was indeed appointed as an envoy, but not as the quartet’s envoy, except in name. The Bush administration made it very clear at once that he is Washington’s envoy, with a very limited mandate. It announced in no uncertain terms that Secretary of State Rice (and the President) would retain unilateral control over the important issues, while Blair would be permitted to deal only with problems of institution building, an impossible task as long as Washington maintains its extreme rejectionist policies. Europe had no noticeable reaction to yet another slap in the face. Washington evidently assumes that Blair will continue

to be ‘the spear-carrier for the Pax Americana,’ as his role was described in the journal of Britain’s Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Due to constant pressure and lobbying by Alan Dershowitz, Norman Finkelstein was recently denied tenure at DePaul

University. Why does someone like Dershowitz have so much

‘A sensible project would be to support the stand of the majority of Americans, that all aid to Israel should be cancelled until it agrees to negotiate seriously for a peaceful diplomatic settlement’

influence that he can make an institution break its own rules?

Dershowitz has been repeatedly exposed as a dedicated liar, charlatan, and opponent of elementary civil rights, and he is, uncontroversially, an extreme apologist for the crimes and violence of the State of Israel. But he is taken seriously by the media and the academic world. That tells us quite a lot about the reigning intellectual culture. As to why institutions succumb, few are willing to endure the deluge of slanders, lies, and defamation poured out by Dershowitz, the anti-Defamation League, and other apologists for the crimes of their favored state, who are granted free rein with little concern about response. Merely to illustrate, Dershowitz's books are treated with reverence by the Boston Globe, probably the most liberal paper in the country, but they refuse even to review Norman Finkelstein's carefully documented demonstration that they are an absurd collection of fabrication and deceit. Authentic scholarship knows better, as the record clearly shows. But it receives little attention.

For the late Edward Said, the solution was one state where all the citizens will have the same democratic rights. Do you think that because of the situation in Gaza and the ever-spreading settlements, the pendulum will now swing towards a one-state solution, as being the only possible end point to the conflict?

Two points of clarification are necessary. First, there is a crucial difference between a one-state solution and a binational state. In general, nation-states have been imposed with substantial violence and repression, for one reason, because they seek to force varied and complex populations into a single mold. One of the more healthy developments in Europe today is the revival of some degree of regional autonomy and cultural identity, reflecting somewhat more closely the nature of the populations. In the case of Israel-Palestine, a one-state solution will arise only on the US model: with extermination or expulsion of the indigenous population. A sensible approach would be advocacy of a binational solution, recognizing that the territory now includes two fairly distinct societies.

The second point is that Edward Said — an old and close friend — was one of the earliest and most outspoken supporters of a two-state solution. By the 1990s, he felt that the opportunity had been lost, and he proposed, without much specification, a unitary state, by which I am sure he would have meant a binational state. I purposely use the word 'propose,' not 'advocate.' The distinction is crucial. We can propose that everyone should live in peace and harmony. The proposal rises to the level of advocacy when we sketch a path from here to there. In the case of a unitary (binational) solution, the only advocacy I know of passes through a number of stages: first a two-state settlement in terms of the international consensus that the US-Israeli have prevented, followed by moves towards binational federation, and finally closer integration, perhaps to a binational democratic state, as circumstances allow.

Looking ahead, what do you consider to be the best case, worst case and most likely scenarios for the boundaries and control of occupied Palestine in the next 10 years?

The worst case would be the destruction of Palestine. The best case in the short term would be a two-state settlement in terms of the international consensus. That is by no means impossible. It is supported by virtually the entire world, including the majority of the US population. It has come rather close, once, during the last month of Clinton's presidency, the sole US departure from extreme rejectionism in the past 30 years. The US lent its support to the negotiations in Taba Egypt (January 2001), which came very close to a settlement in the general terms of the international consensus, before they were called off prematurely by Israeli Prime

Minister Ehud Barak. In their final press conference, the negotiators expressed some hope that if they had been permitted to continue their joint work, a settlement could have been reached. The years since have seen many horrors, but the possibility remains. As for the most likely scenario, it looks unpleasantly close to the worst case, but human affairs are not predictable: too much depends on will and choice.

The University and College Union in Britain recently voted in favour of considering an academic boycott of Israeli universities. Do you think that this and other type of boycotts (such as the boycott of Israeli goods) are appropriate measures and could have a positive effect on Israeli policies?

I have always been skeptical about academic boycotts. There may be overriding reasons, but in general I think that those channels should be kept open. As for boycotts in general, they are a tactic, not a principle. Like other tactics, we have to evaluate them in terms of their likely consequences.

Carefully targetted boycotts, which are comprehensible to the public in the current state of understanding, can be effective instruments. One example is calls for university divestment from corporations that are involved in US-Israeli repression and violence, and denial of elementary human rights. In Europe, a sensible move would be to call for an end to preferential treatment for Israeli exports until Israel stops its systematic destruction of Palestinian agriculture and its barring of economic development. In the US, it would make good sense to call for reducing US aid to Israel by the estimated \$600 million that Israel has

stolen by refusing to transmit funds to the elected government — and the cynicism of funneling aid to the faction it supports should be exposed as just another exercise of undermining democracy.

Looking farther ahead, a sensible project would be to support the stand of

the majority of Americans that all aid to Israel should be cancelled until it agrees to negotiate seriously for a peaceful diplomatic settlement, instead of continuing to act vigorously to undermine the possibility of realizing the international consensus on a two-state settlement. That however will require serious educational and organizational efforts. Readers of the mainstream press were well aware of the shocking nature of Apartheid. But they are presented daily with the picture of Israel desperately seeking peace but under constant attack by Palestinian terrorists who want to destroy it.

Finally, in April 2003 Gilbert Achcar wrote Letter to a Slightly Depressed Antiwar Activist, which ended with '[...] this movement's spectacular growth has only been possible because it rested on the foundations of three years of progress by the global movement against neo-liberal globalization born in Seattle. These two dimensions will continue to fuel each other, to strengthen people's awareness that neo-liberalism and war are two faces of the same system of domination — which must be overthrown.' What would be your message today to anti-war and human rights activists around the world about their importance in this worldwide struggle?

Gilbert Achcar is quite right, though we should recognize, as he surely does, that the North is a latecomer to the very promising global justice movements. They originated in the South, which is why the meetings of the World Social Forum have been held in Brazil, India, Venezuela, Kenya. Also of great significance are the solidarity movements that developed, primarily in the US, in the 1980s, something quite new in the hundreds of years of Western imperialism, and have since proliferated in many ways. The lesson to activists is stark and simple: the future lies in their hands, including the question of the fate of Palestine.

'The lesson to activists is stark and simple: the future lies in their hands'

Remembering Sabra and Shatila

Dr Ang Swee Chai was working as a surgeon in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon in 1982, when it was surrounded by the Israeli army after heavy aerial bombardment. Under their auspices, the Christian phalangist militia went in and murdered over two thousand unarmed men, women and children. Ariel Sharon, then a General in the IDF, was judged responsible for the massacres by an Israeli court, but no further action was taken against him. Here Dr Swee remembers that time.

The Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Israel has an engraving on the wall, saying: 'Forgetfulness leads to exile, while remembrance is the secret to redemption'. Having worked and lived with those in exile and under occupation, I know Palestinians never allow themselves to forget what they have endured over the decades.

Every September, survivors and witnesses commemorate the massacres. It is now a quarter of a century later and many of us have since died, while the rest are a lot older. Sabra's Palestinian refugee camp no longer exists, while Shatila is a shell of its former self. The initial international outcry has long faded and the current media focus has shifted from those in exile to those living under occupation in Gaza and West Bank.

This September, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the massacres, I went with others to visit the camps, to stay with the survivors and affirm our hope and confidence that one day they as a people will return to Palestine. The march to the mass grave was attended by several thousand people. Palestinians from refugee camps all over Lebanon came to the event, as well as Lebanese and international friends. It was grief mixed with pride as the youngsters played in their bands and marched towards the mass grave. A young mother came up to me and told me I had operated on her father 25 years ago, and she introduced me to her handsome teenage son. We met many old friends, made new friends, cried, laughed. For me it is not only memories, but also seeing a whole new generation grow up still firmly committed to returning to

Palestine, despite horrible persecution, fills me with hope. The youngsters from the Nahr el-Bared camp were especially brave.

On 18 September 1982, the last day of the massacre, I emerged from the basement operating theatre of Gaza Hospital in Sabra and Shatila. I had been operating for 72 hours to save a handful of people, only to see piles of mutilated bodies in the camp alleys. I saw the body of an old man whose eyes had been gouged out. A terrified mother tried to hand me her baby to keep in safety. She failed in her attempt — and both were killed.

'A young mother came up to me and told me I had operated on her father 25 years ago, and she introduced me to her handsome teenage son'

Military siege, starvation, arrests, bombs both conventional and unconventional, deportation and massacres are not new. They are weapons regularly deployed since 1948 to intimidate, terrorise and demoralise the Palestinians.

But I remain optimistic. Since I began my journey with the Palestinians in 1982, I have learnt that all the above repressive measures have failed. I have seen strength and resilience in the face of untold hardships and persecution. I still have with me my picture of destitute Palestinian children of Shatila camp standing amid the ruins and rubble. They survived the massacre but lost their parents and homes. But they raised their



hands, making the victory sign and said to me: 'We are not afraid — let Israel come'. I have returned many times to the camp but have never been able to find those children again. They must have perished since. But they live forever in my heart. Whenever the situation becomes unbearable, I revisit this picture for strength.

I recall how I first came to Sabra and Shatila a bigoted, self-righteous fundamentalist Christian. I believed in the goodness of the Western 'Christian' countries and the righteousness of Israel. I thought I knew the Bible, and that God was on our side. My favourite stories in the Old Testament at that time were how Joshua captured Jericho, and the story of David and Goliath. I rejoiced in the military triumphs of Israel. I celebrated the great Israeli military victory of the Six Day War of 1967, with the subjugation of Gaza and West Bank. I greeted the Foundation Day of the State of Israel as a day to rejoice.

On that morning in Sabra and Shatila my self-righteousness was destroyed, when I was made to confront the broken bodies in the camp alleys.

Dr Swee is an orthopaedic surgeon at the Royal London Hospital, and a founding Trustee of the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians. Her book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, relates her experiences in Lebanon.

In Brief

MORE LAND GRABS ON THE WEST BANK

On 24 September the Israeli army issued an order expropriating over 1000 dunams of land from four Palestinian villages — Abu Dis, Arab al-Sawahra, Nebi Musa and Talhin Alhama — between East Jerusalem and the illegal West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim. This will be used to build a new road to Jericho, which will in turn make land available for a long-planned Israeli development consisting of 3,500 apartments and an industrial park.

The Palestinians and the international community, including the United States, have long objected to this development plan, on the grounds that it would cut the West Bank in two as well as cutting off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Israel claims that the new road will solve this latter problem. It is being presented as a means of ensuring 'transportational contiguity among Palestinian population centres.' (This is code for ditching genuine territorial contiguity — a sine qua non of any viable state — in favour of linking a chain of ghettos with roads or tunnels that can be cut at a moment's notice.)

Similarly, a ring road east of Ma'aleh Adumim has been proposed, linking Hebron and Bethlehem, south of the settlement, with Ramallah to the north.



The settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim

OXFORD CAVES IN TO ZIONIST PRESSURE

In October a debate on Israel at the Oxford Union took place without the participation of any of the scheduled speakers, after US academic Norman Finkelstein, a longstanding critic of Israel's policies, was 'uninvited' by the president of the Oxford Union.

Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz, who was instrumental in ensuring that

Finkelstein was denied tenure at DePaul University, Chicago earlier this year, complained to the Union about Finkelstein's inclusion.

Dr Finkelstein said that the union had "shamefully capitulated" to the "bullying tactics" of Professor Dershowitz, and demanded an explanation from Union president Luke Tryl. He subsequently published Tryl's response, which confirms what Finkelstein suspected:

Dear Dr Finkelstein,

I hope that you are well, I'm so sorry for the confusion about the debate. There was an organisational difficulty at my end and my secretary hadn't seen your emails.

I would appreciate it if you could keep this bit between you and I. Many people expressed concern that the debate as it stood was imbalanced and people felt that as someone who had apparently expressed anti-zionist sentiments that you might not be appropriate for this debate. I tried to convince them otherwise but was accused of putting forward an imbalanced debate and various groups put pressure on me. I received numerous emails attacking the debate and Alan



A bastion of free speech?

LIEBERMAN ON 'TRANSFER'

On 2 November, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported on Avigdor Lieberman's meeting with Tony Blair, in which the Strategic Affairs Minister warned that any attempt to address the core issues surrounding the establishment of a Palestinian state at the US-hosted peace summit would 'bring about the collapse of the coalition and the government in Israel.'

These core issues include defining the permanent borders of a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, and the rights of Palestinian refugees around the world — questions that Israel has steadfastly refused to address, in any 'peace' negotiations.

Lieberman said, furthermore, that any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "must include Israel's Arab citizens as well, when the basis for an agreement should be a land swap and a population transfer." In other words, he sees the chance of realising his long-held dream of an ethnically pure Israel, by expelling those Palestinians who survived the ethnic cleansing of 1948, despite the fact that they supposedly enjoy full rights as Israeli citizens.



Avigdor Lieberman

► *Dershowitz threatened to write an Oped attacking the Union. What is more he apparently attacked me personally in a televised lecture to Yale.*

I hope that you understand my position, this is not ideal and I would be happy to welcome you as an individual speaker to the Union in a forthcoming term. I know that the President-Elect Emily Partington would be keen to host you in Hilary. I just did not want to see the debate compromised and given the Irving Griffin Controversy I couldn't fight a battle on all fronts.

*Best wishes
Luke*

Three of the academic community's most vocal critics of Israel — Israelis Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé and Palestinian Ghada Karmi — and Lord Trimble, then withdrew from the debate.

Professor Shlaim, who was due to speak against Dr Finkelstein, wrote to Mr Tryl saying: "Disinviting a speaker raises questions about the Oxford Union's commitment to free speech. Unless the invitation to Norman Finkelstein is renewed, I will not take part."

● ATTEMPTS TO SILENCE TUTU FAIL

This autumn, Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu was due to speak at the University of St Thomas in Minnesota, as part of their Justice and Peace Studies programme. The invitation was however hurriedly withdrawn when some of the local Jewish community objected to his presence.



"We had heard some things he said that some people judged to be anti-Semitic and against Israeli policy," said Doug Hennes, St. Thomas's vice president.

In the past Archbishop Tutu has been critical of Israel's policies, saying: "I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at roadblocks. It reminded me of what happened to us in South Africa [under Apartheid], where they battered us and heckled us and took joy in humiliating us. My heart aches. Have my Jewish friends forgotten their own history?" Following another visit to the region he said: "A description of what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank could describe events in South Africa."

There was an outraged response to the ban, from both local academics and the international community. Marv Davidov, a professor in the Justice and Peace Studies programme said: "As a Jew who experienced real anti-Semitism as a child, I'm deeply disturbed that a man like Tutu could be labeled anti-Semitic and silenced like this. I deeply resent the Israeli lobby trying to silence any criticism of its policy. It does a great disservice to Israel and to all Jews."

The decision to ban Archbishop Tutu was subsequently revoked. The President of the university Dennis Dease acknowledged it was a mistake to bar him from speaking, and invited him to participate in a forum to foster constructive dialogue on the issues raised by the episode.

● CORRIE CASE REJECTED

The parents of Rachel Corrie, the US peace activist who was crushed to death four years ago in Gaza as she was protesting against the demolition of Palestinian homes, have been refused permission to sue the company which made the bulldozer that killed her.

A federal appeals court ruled that Caterpillar Inc, the Illinois-based company that has supplied several specially adapted bulldozers used by the Israeli army in house demolitions in the Occupied Territories, could not be sued, as to do so would bring the judiciary into conflict with the executive branch of the US government.

A panel of three judges argued that the legal action could not have gone to trial "without implicitly questioning, and even condemning, United States

foreign policy towards Israel". (An argument that surely brings into question the independence of the US judiciary.)

Rachel's parents were acting with four Palestinian families who also lost loved ones in actions involving similar bulldozers. Among them was the family of Mahmoud Omar al-Shu'bi, from Nablus. His 85-year-old father, two sisters, brother and pregnant sister-in-law, with their three young children, were all killed when their home in the Old City was bulldozed in April 2002.

The families began legal proceedings in 2005. Lawyers acting for them alleged that, when the firm sold the machines to the Israeli government, Caterpillar knew, or should have known, that the equipment was going to be used to demolish homes in violation of international law, in incidents that at times led to the deaths of innocent people.

Caterpillar argued that the machines had been paid for by the Pentagon as part of the government's military aid to Israel — hence implicitly confirming the families' claims.

Cindy, Rachel's mother said: "Clearly there were war crimes committed here and we will continue to challenge Caterpillar and the US government."



Demolished homes in the Old City of Nablus

● LSE SILENT PROTEST

On 30 October over 20 students of the London School of Economics silently occupied a meeting of the School's governing body for over 30 minutes in protest at LSE Director Howard Davies' implicit support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Holding up banners stating "Academic Freedom for All" and "Equal Rights for Palestinians", the students peacefully entered the LSE monthly Council meeting, bringing it to a halt, and reissued a request for a meeting with Davies to discuss the matter, and for a statement

be displayed on the LSE website, recognising the right to education for Palestinians.

After lengthy deliberation, Davies and Council Chair Lord Grabiner reluctantly agreed to a meeting and said that a statement would be issued that acknowledged Palestinians' right to education.

More than 100 LSE students, staff, alumni and heads of student societies had previously written to Davies to protest his stance against any debate of a boycott of Israeli academic institutions, as proposed by the UCU (University and College Union) in May 2007. Davies had refused outright to meet with student representatives and declined to address or recognise the desperate condition of Palestinian academic institutions, stating that the School "has no corporate position" on this matter.

Student spokesperson Seph Brown said: "To condemn the discussion of an academic boycott of Israel, but to then ignore their blatant disruption and devastation of Palestinian academic freedom is entirely hypocritical."

● GORDON BROWN AND THE JNF

Shortly after becoming Prime Minister, Gordon Brown agreed to become a Patron of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), a supposedly charitable organisation that, from Israel's foundation, has had the task of acquiring land exclusively for the use of its Jewish citizens. It now holds 13% of the land of Israel and shares in the management

of a further 80% of Israeli land, effectively excluding non Jewish inhabitants from all but 7% of the land. The Fund is also involved in land projects and settlements in the Occupied Territories, making it complicit in war crimes.

A number of organisations, including PSC, have written to the Prime Minister demanding that he withdraw as Patron of JNF UK and, following pressure from Scottish PSC, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator is currently investigating the organisation's charitable status.

A *Jewish Chronicle* report noted that "Brown has long been known for his support of Israel." Other JNF UK Patrons include former Prime Minister Tony Blair, Conservative leader David Cameron and the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, who is reported to be a close personal friend of Brown.

Brown's decision comes at an unfortunate time. This summer the Israeli Knesset approved its preliminary reading of a racist bill that prohibits the sale of lands registered in the name of the JNF to citizens of Palestinian origin. This reverses the ruling in 2004 by the Israeli high court that it was illegal for the Israeli Lands Authority to refuse to sell or lease land to Arab citizens. (The Israeli Attorney General held that this 2004 ruling also applied to the JNF.)



Young demonstrators use slingshot against Israeli troops

MAANIMAGES/MOTI MILROD

● BIL'IN VICTORY

In a symbolic but embarrassing blow to Israel, the Supreme Court has ordered the state to redraw the route of its West Bank barrier near the Palestinian village of Bil'in. Like dozens of other villages, it was separated from its fields and orchards by the barrier.

The site has been a focus of protest and resistance for nearly three years, with many international volunteers and Israelis supporting the villagers in their legal and physical struggle to regain their land.

The expropriated land was intended to expand the illegal settlement of Modi'in Illit, which has already stolen land and built houses for religious settlers. However, even with the court order, there is no guarantee that the Wall will be relocated. There is even less likelihood that Israel will comply with the 2004 UN Resolution calling on Israel to dismantle the Wall wherever it is built on Palestinian land (i.e. for most of its length) and to compensate the Palestinians affected by its construction.

Eye on the web

• **Don't miss** an excellent 10-minute programme on the misrepresentation of the Occupation in the US media.

Hardhitting comments by Fisk, Chomsky, Hanan Ashrawi and others.

There's an interesting analysis of the language used by the media (no 'settlements', please

– only 'neighbourhoods') and good use of maps. See: <http://tinyurl.com/yt4y2s>



• **Put yourself in the position** of someone whose village is being encircled by the Wall. See <http://al-nueman.tripod.com/> for a short but powerful video that invites you to share the feelings of Palestinians affected by the Occupation and land grabs.



Al-Nueman, a small village between Jerusalem and Bethlehem

• **Read online** or download full text of Badil's latest report on the situation of Palestinian refugees worldwide: badil.org/publications.

Badil, the Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, together with Al-Awda (al-awda.org.uk) has the fullest documentation of the historical, legal and humanitarian aspects of the refugee issue.



● 'JERUSALEM...THE EAST SIDE STORY'

Jerusalem has just seen the premiere of a new documentary film by Mohammed Alatar, director of the memorable Iron Wall. A key theme in the film was reflected in the fact that the packed audience contained few people from Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Jericho, Gaza, Rafah, and Hebron. They are all prohibited by Israeli regulations from entering Jerusalem without special permits — that are rarely issued. Some were able to attend a parallel premiere in Ramallah.

The film documents the Judaization of the city and the pressure on Palestinians to leave, through house demolitions and the construction of the Wall that cuts through Palestinian neighbourhoods. Although it recalls a hundred years of history, using archive footage, the focus of the film is on the last forty years of Israeli military occupation.

As with The Iron Wall, Alatar lets the inhabitants — Muslim, Christian and Jewish — tell their personal stories. If the success of his earlier film is anything to go by, the UK premiere will also be packed out, and the new film will prove to be a great campaigning tool. Watch the PSC website for further details.

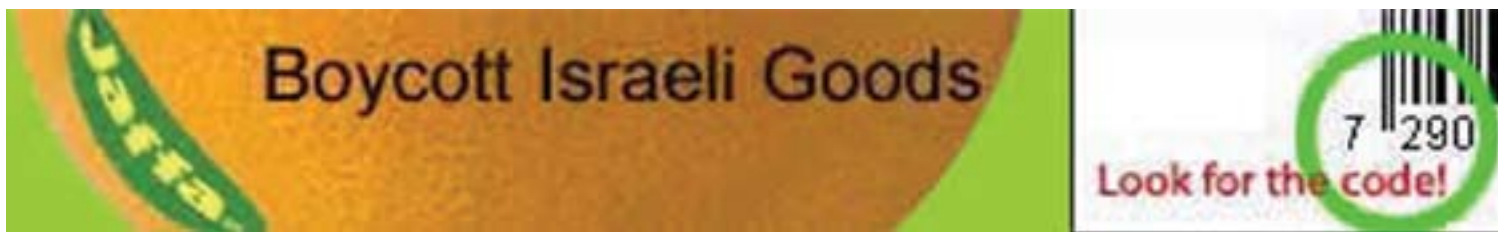
● OLIVE HARVEST GOES AHEAD

Despite the usual harassment from settlers, and the problems of accessing the olive groves due to checkpoints and the now nearly complete Apartheid Wall, Palestinian farmers, with the help of volunteers of many different nationalities, succeeded in bringing in a good crop.

Joint Advocacy Initiative



International volunteers help in an olive grove near Bethlehem.



Consumer boycott: a user's guide

Since the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign (BIG) was launched by PSC in 2001, in the House of Commons, the campaign has grown and diversified. It was given added momentum in 2005, when 171 organisations representing Palestinian civil society called for 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' (BDS), after a UN resolution was passed, condemning Israel's Apartheid Wall.

This year trade unions, including the NUJ and Unison, passed conference motions supporting consumer boycott, while grassroots PSC groups around the country regularly picket and leaflet supermarkets and local stores to discourage them from selling Israeli products — and shoppers from buying. Even more important is the opportunity to discuss the issues involved with the general public. One ploy, used to great effect by some branches, is to fill a trolley with Israeli goods, and to explain at the checkout, with the help of leaflets, why buying the goods is morally indefensible.

Some businesses, including the Free and Wild chain, the Harvest Wholefood Co-Op in Bristol and Taj in Brighton, have in fact been persuaded not to sell Israeli products.

This summer, a new group, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG) has participated in actions against Agrexco, the Israeli company that imports fruit and vegetables from the West Bank, and have done much to stimulate a debate on the boycott in the media.

Europe

Israel exports nearly half of all its fresh produce to Europe, and enjoys preferential status under the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Under this Agreement Israeli produce is exempt from export tariffs. However, the terms of the Agreement apply only to produce from '1948' Israel and not to produce from illegal Israeli settlements. Moreover, the Agreement requires signatories

to abide by European Human Rights legislation. On both counts, Israel is in violation of the Agreement.

Israeli exporters are notoriously vague and evasive in the labelling of their products and many settlement products in fact benefit from the trade agreement. At the European level, MEP Caroline Lucas has been trying to exclude settlement produce from the EU-Israel Association Agreement, and to work towards ending Israel's preferential status.

“The partially state-owned export company Carmel Agrexco employs child labour on settlement farms and packing houses in the Jordan Valley”

Israeli goods, even those from illegal Israeli settlements, are marketed as organic luxury produce throughout Europe. The truth is that goods sold as organic in Waitrose and other supermarkets are often produced on settlements using pesticides and insecticides by workers given no protective clothing, working without contracts, holiday pay or sick pay. Stop the Wall report that the partially Israeli state-owned export company Carmel Agrexco employs child labour on settlement farms and packing houses in the Jordan Valley. The company exports produce to Europe, often from the Israeli-occupied Jordan Valley, under the

Carmel, Coral and Jaffa brands.

Thanks to arrests, destruction of property, seizure of land, clampdown on movements within and out of Palestine, Palestinian international trade is, of course, virtually zero.

Direct action

The campaign against Carmel Agrexco has continued unabated this year. Since 2004 campaigners have targeted their UK depot in Hayes, Middlesex. After a twelve-hour blockade of the depot in 2004 the company attempted to have eight protesters prosecuted for aggravated trespass. The protesters argued that Agrexco's business was unlawful and demanded disclosure of the company's dealings with Israeli settlements. The protesters were found to have no case to answer and since then Agrexco has asked police not to prosecute protesters, despite campaigners causing serious disruption to their business. Since then the company has faced dozens of similar blockades. In February over a hundred demonstrators picketed the depot in protest against the import of Valentine's Day flowers from Israel. In May, a group of activists entered the depot, took photos of the produce inside, took down the Israeli flag and hoisted the Palestinian flag. In June, sixty people joined by anti-air-freight protesters from the 'Camp for Climate Action' locked on to the gates of the depot, occupied the car park and trashed the company's offices. Still the company is reluctant to prosecute — and have their business practices aired in court.

Chris Osmond

- BIG's website, www.bigcampaign.org, aims to be a resource for groups working worldwide. In December PSC is calling on local groups to take part in a BIG day of action. Watch the website for more details.
- BDS leaflets, stickers and badges can be obtained from the PSC office.

Boycott: the backlash

Ben White examines the arguments



In the UK, the Boycott campaign was launched by PSC six years ago. However, it has been attempts at a boycott of Israeli academic institutions that has really raised the profile of Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) — and also provoked a fierce counter-movement.

Various bodies, like BICOM (Britain and Israel Communications & Research Centre: www.stoptheboycott.org) and Engage (engageonline.org.uk), have set up issue-specific websites; while the former may have deeper pockets, Engage has proved to be more of a rallying point for the anti-boycotters. Their website includes voluminous attacks on the boycott and plenty of articles condemning what they perceive as an anti-Semitic singling-out of Israel.

Launched shortly after the AUT boycott decision, Engage's opening salvo revealed the campaign's guiding principles: misrepresentation of the boycott movement, a commitment to — and whitewashing of — Zionism, and a liberal emphasis on 'dialogue' between Israelis and Palestinians.

Misrepresenting or smearing the boycott movement has consistently been a core part of Engage's work. A firm favourite has been to ask why the boycotters are 'singling out' Israel and ignoring other international human rights abusers. The claim is that 'the choice to boycott Israeli Jews rather than anyone else in the world is effectively anti-semitic', even if those arguing for a boycott 'do not feel a hatred of Jews', 'do not intend to be antisemitic', or indeed, are themselves Jewish'.

The charge is, of course, ridiculous. Would a Tibetan activist be accused of unfairly 'singling out' China, or a Chechen human rights campaigner of picking on' Russia? The boycott has never been a prize for 'the World's Worst Human Rights Record'. The implication is that Israel's Jewish identity should protect it from criticism, and that the motives of those attacking the state must

be related to the state's Jewishness.

Another typical misrepresentation of the boycott (or "Jew-hunt" as Hirsh likes to call it) is that it presents the conflict as one 'between good Palestinians and evil Israelis', and critics are accused of 'treating Israel as though it were a demonic force'. It's a laughable caricature of the BDS movement's position, which is in fact shaped by the historical reality of Palestine's ethnic cleansing, and the present day dynamic of coloniser and colonised.

This brings us to the second characteristic of the anti-boycott movement: its defence of Zionism. For Hirsh, 'Zionism is not racism. Zionism is Jewish nationalism and it is not fundamentally different from other forms of nationalism'. Even if that were true at the purely theoretical level (which it isn't), when Zionism realised the goal of a state, it was achieved at the direct expense of the Palestinians — simply because they weren't Jewish.

'The boycott has never been a prize for the World's Worst Human Rights Record'

The anti-boycotters are keen to conceal the power asymmetry between Israel and the Palestinians, describing the 'complex' conflict as being between 'two peoples' both 'with tear-stained histories'. One writer even likened it to an 'abusive marriage' where 'both parties cause, and suffer' damage. Hirsh protests that the Jews arriving from Europe did not go as colonists and that the boycotters 'fail to understand how Zionism was a response to European antisemitism, a utopian movement, a social-democratic experiment'.

It all amounts to some neat sidestepping. Many Jews fleeing Europe

did not go as colonists but they certainly arrived as ones, their plight a gift to the Zionist leadership who had long been seeking to create a Jewish majority state in Palestine. Anti-Jewish persecution certainly helps to explain how Zionism emerged, but hardly justifies the treatment meted out to Palestine's indigenous inhabitants. Pity the Palestinians, who, in the name of a 'social-democratic experiment', had to endure massacres, death-marches, and ethnic cleansing.

No boycotter claims that the violence, or even racism, is one-sided. The point is the power structure: Israel is the occupier, a state armed and funded by the world's superpower and the Palestinians are stateless, colonised, and exiled. To compare Hamas with the Israeli state infrastructure and occupation is frankly absurd.

The anti-boycott movement also spends a lot of time trying to rubbish any parallels between Apartheid South Africa and Israel. In an article co-authored with Simon Schama, Anthony Julius wrote that 'minorities in Israel are guaranteed equal rights under the basic laws', while another Engage online article notes that in Israel, 'Jewish and Arab babies are born in the same delivery room, with the same facilities, attended by the same doctors and nurses, with the mothers recovering in adjoining beds in a ward'. This is patently false, since there is a raft of racially discriminatory legislation: from land for Jewish purchase only, to 'unrecognised' Palestinian villages, and the gross funding disparity for basic services between the two communities.

Similarly Haifa is often cited as a city where 'Jew and Arab' coexist in harmony and prosperity. Omitted is the fact that there would be many more 'Arabs' (Palestinians) in Haifa today if 70,000 hadn't been dispossessed in 1948. That these expulsions across Palestine led to the ethnic cleansing of almost 800,000 men, women and children, is described on the Engage website as 'a tragic consequence of war'. The fact that Israel subsequently ignored the UN resolution calling for the return of the refugees is of course not mentioned.

Finally, the anti-boycott movement has repeated ad nauseam the need for 'dialogue' and 'engagement', particularly in academia. Hearty discussions on campus are what will bring Israeli apartheid in the OPTs to its knees. Can anyone seriously believe that 40 years of military occupation and rapacious Israeli colonialism will simply melt away, through the promotion of 'dialogue and reconciliation'?

Academic boycott — the heat is on

The academic boycott of Israeli universities has been one of the flashpoints of the boycott movement, raising near hysteria in Israel, in some parts of the UK Jewish community and in Harvard lawyer Alan Dershowitz. Recent developments have kept the temperature bubbling.

In May the University and College Union (UCU) Annual Congress passed a motion which called for a membership debate on the issue of boycott, to be informed by a campus tour by Palestinian academic trade unionists. This vote was taken despite strenuous opposition by JCU's General Secretary Sally Hunt and the team of officers.

This decision provoked an escalation of the pro-Israel/anti-boycott rhetoric: editorials in all the main newspapers, statements from phalanxes of University Vice-Chancellors (UK) and Presidents (US), £1m campaigns promised by Jewish community leaders. Dershowitz excelled himself by threatening to sue and bankrupt any boycotting UK academics.

By late September Sally Hunt had finally issued invitations to Palestinian trade unionists. But within a week the tour was cancelled. Sally Hunt announced that she had legal advice that a boycott would be unlawful, and persuaded the union's Strategy and Finance Committee (SFC) to suspend the tour. No details of the advice were given – the UCU press release implied that either anti-discrimination law, or UCU's aims and objectives would be violated.

The reactions were strong and immediate. Israeli ministers and UK newspapers celebrated the death of the boycott. But UCU members are outraged that the law has been brought in to nullify a democratic decision by Congress, the union's supreme body. Even members who are anti-boycott are signing up to

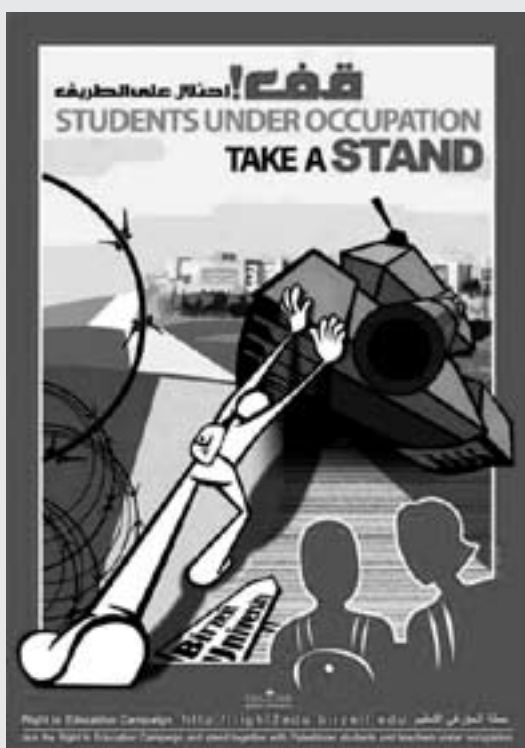
motions protesting the process that has been used. Under pressure from the membership it has been agreed that the UK tour of Palestinian academics will go ahead next term (so long as no votes are held).

Sally Hunt is still refusing to publish the advice. Not even SFC has seen it. It is now known that its author was (Lord) Anthony Lester, an eminent anti-discrimination lawyer. But other lawyers cannot understand how he could come to the conclusions claimed by Ms Hunt. Other trade unions are concerned that this opinion, if upheld, could threaten their international solidarity work.

There are no current moves to challenge the Union's decision in the courts. But opinions are being taken on whether the UCU hierarchy can be compelled to reveal the Lester advice. If available this could be challenged by other opinions, with a view to getting the National Executive Committee (NEC) to lift the 'gagging order' completely. The NEC (of which SFC is a subcommittee) is due to meet at the end of November.

In any case, an academic boycott is not carried out by a union. It is carried out by individual academics. The campaign to persuade them to consult their consciences goes on, and the unending controversy, which continues to bring to light information about Israeli

“Under pressure from the membership it has been agreed that the UK tour of Palestinian academics will go ahead”



To support the right of Palestinian students living under occupation to education go to: right2edu.org.

Let Khaled study!

Khaled Al-Mudallal is one of an estimated 640 students trapped in Gaza, with visas and places to study abroad, but prevented from studying because of Israel's closure of all Gaza's borders. These students face losing an entire academic year, and possibly their place at the university.

The campaign to allow Khaled to return to his final year of studies at Bradford University is growing, with supporters including the University and College Union, PSC, NUS Black Students Campaign, the University of Bradford Union, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies and the General Union of Palestinian Students.

The Israeli embassy has claimed that Khaled had the option of leaving Gaza via the Nitzana crossing but has chosen not to do so. This was rebutted by Israeli human rights organisation Gisha, who pointed out that Khaled has in fact made every effort to leave via the Nitzana crossing – an option it describes as 'purely theoretical'. Khaled is currently 4,845 on the list of would-be returnees. Gisha is taking the case of Khaled and other students trapped in Gaza through the Israeli courts.

On 3 November, Khaled spoke via a live audio link-up to a PSC student conference at the London School of Economics. He told the conference 'I was born in Rafah refugee camp in Palestine... Throughout my life and studies in Palestine I went through difficult times because of the continuous Israeli restrictions.' Khaled moved to Britain at the age of 16, and had returned to Gaza over the summer to marry his wife, Duaa, intending to return with her to Bradford. Students at LSE have campaigned for Khaled to be elected as honorary vice-president of LSE Students Union, and the conference was told that he had won this election.

Over 2000 people have signed the petition calling on Khaled's right to education to be respected by the Israeli government: see www.letkhaledstudy.co.uk.

Branches bring home r

First-hand accounts of what is happening in the Occupied Territories featured on the programme of a number of branches, drawing large audiences.

West London PSC invited members of a political delegation returning from Palestine, including local **MP Andrew Slaughter**, to report to a packed meeting. They were deeply shocked: 'You have to see it to believe it', said Slaughter.

Hackney PSC also held a meeting in September, with Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, at which two members reported on their visit to Palestine, organised by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. The two speakers gave vivid accounts, with a slide presentation, of the brutality of the Occupation and racial segregation within the Israeli state. The **Kingston and Richmond** branch invited **Hamed Jawasmeh**, who works in the UN's Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Bethlehem and Hebron, documenting the occupation.

The meeting was part of a tour to raise funds for communities isolated by encroaching settlements.

Edinburgh hosted a visit by **Fathy Khdirat**, who was Mayor of the North Jordan Valley for 10 years and is now an activist in the Palestine Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, while in October **Hadeel** and **Equal Exchange** co-hosted a visit from **Nasser Abufarha**, the founder and chair of the Palestine Fair Trade Association, a 1700-strong network of producer cooperatives based in Jenin. (He is also a director of Canaan Fair Trade, which promotes products in international markets with the support of **Zaytoun**.)

The **Lambeth and Wandsworth** branch held a public screening of Maya Sanbar's film **Goal Dreams** as part of the publicity for the planned tour of the Palestinian U19 football team. The film tracks the thwarted attempts of the senior Palestinian football team to reach the World Cup. The Palestinian/British director of the film, **Maya Sanbar** and British co-ordinator of the Palestinian

under 19 football team tour, **Rod Cox**, held a discussion after the screening at the Whirled cinema in Brixton in early September.

Linking up with like minds

Exeter PSC met the international officer of Devon County UNISON and agreed to link their websites and to hold a stall at the union's regional conference in October. At the Respect Festival and the Green Fair sponsored by the **Bishop of Exeter**, local spring water was given out with information about Palestinians' lack of access to water. The branch also provided short DVDs about Palestine for people to take away. Links between **Plymouth PSC** and **Exeter PSC** resulted in a joint Palestinian cultural event in October in Plymouth.

Glasgow PSC is planning a two day conference to mark the 60th anniversary of the Nakba. Groups represented include **Scottish Friends of Palestine**, **Medical Aid for Palestine**, **Scottish Forum for Palestinians**, **Jews for Justice for Palestinians**, **Glasgow**

Their lives on the line

Muthanna Al Qadi, a young Palestinian photo-journalist already well known in the UK for the exhibition he took around the country earlier this year, toured the Oxford, Halifax and Sheffield branches this autumn. In Oxford, he spoke about his work in Nablus and showed the film **One Step More** about the death of his colleague **Nazeh Darwazeh**, fatally shot in the head by Israeli snipers while filming. Muthanna said that seven students from his class at journalism school in Palestine had been killed. In Sheffield he introduced the documentary **Shots that bind — Palestinian photojournalists in Nablus** that gives a rare and unique glimpse of a tightknit group of Palestinian war photographers and the obstacles they face as they risk their lives to capture the daily images of violence, tragedy and loss.

Contact the PSC office if you would like to host a Palestinian speaker, or invite other branches to co-host a speaker coming to your



Muthanna Al Qadi, a young Palestinian photo-journalist, is shown in profile, looking at a photograph displayed on a wall. He has his hand to his chin in a thoughtful pose. The photograph on the wall depicts a young boy in a red and white striped shirt running towards a woman sitting on the ground. The setting appears to be an exhibition or gallery space.

ality of the Occupation

Palestine Human Rights and Women in Black. While continuing its regular Saturday stall in the city the branch also set up a stall at the **Edinburgh Festival** and are planning a public meeting in November.

Halifax PSC is working with **York** on education materials, and took part in a joint lobby of **MEP Richard Corbett** in July. Halifax members have written to MPs about the refusal of visas to the Under 19 football team. Their boycott group produced tabards to be worn while leafleting. A 'Boycott Israel/Buy Palestinian' event is planned at the Spirals shop in **Hebden Bridge**, which is keen to promote Palestinian goods. The local Madni Mosque collected over £1000 for Halifax Friends of Palestine which was sent to a children's project in Gaza. Perveen Hussain gave a talk about the situation facing Palestinians living in Israel, based on Jonathan Cook's book, **Blood and Religion**. The branch was also addressed by a delegate to the Sabeel International Conference for Young Adults in the West Bank.

Star attraction

On 26 September **Reem Kelani** gave a moving performance at PSC's 25th Anniversary dinner in East London, attended by over 100 guests, including founding members.

In October, Reem held a two hour singing workshop with local choirs in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Halifax.

On 30 November, she and her group will be performing in Square Chapel, which will be **Halifax PSC's** main public event before Christmas. Reem also appeared at **Sheffield PSC's** Concert 4 Palestine on 17 October with her band.

Sheffield also held an 3-mile fun run in the Peak District. Money raised will go to children's projects in Gaza. The branch held a Boycott Israeli Goods (BIG) vigil at Sheffield town hall.

ran an Arts for Palestine stall at the **Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival** in Sefton Park in July. Its Palestinian Poetry Evening at the Everyman was a great success, so another is planned for November.

My Name is Rachel Corrie was performed at the Unity Theatre and the branch also organised the showing of **Reel Bad Arabs** at the independent FACT Picturehouse.

Marcel Khalife's concerts at the Liverpool Royal Philharmonic concert hall were superb. The branch continues to make contact with local unions on the boycott campaign and ran a stall at the **Merseyside Stop the War Coalition's** working lunch for trade unionists. The annual **Breakfast for Palestine** in July raised £1400 for the **Union of Health Work Committees in Gaza** and **MAP** for their sewerage and clean water project in Gaza. Liverpool also ran a stall at the **Green Party** conference in September, where **Caroline Lucas, MEP** and **Terry Gallogly**, spoke on the crisis in Palestine.

Media savvy

Liverpool was delighted at the response to their stall at the **Peace & Ecology**



South Wales sponsored walk

festival organised by Merseyside CND. **Nahida Yasin's** amazing quilts depicting life in Palestine attracted a lot of attention and was covered in the following Monday's Liverpool Daily Post and Liverpool Echo. Maha Rahwangi of **Brent** branch went on **Ramadan Radio**, which has a worldwide audience via the internet, and was able to promote the October conference and November lobby of parliament. An executive member of **PSC Cymru** — who visited Palestine and was deported from Israel for his peace activities — has had a number of letters to the press published about the crisis in the region. Cymru branch has campaigned against the apartheid wall, in support of the boycott campaign, and raised money for ICAHD and medical aid to Gaza and the West Bank. £900 was recently sent to Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) to support the relief effort in Gaza and Dheisheh refugee camp. Petitioning and letter writing takes place on a weekly basis. Branch members went on a sponsored walk of the heritage coastal path in South Wales. A big thanks to **Côr Cochion** whose singing voices are a brilliant tool in the campaign to keep Palestine in the public eye.

In October **Tower Hamlets** held a very successful Evening of Music for Jenin, featuring Garth Hewitt, Miranda Barber and Steve Parker. In the summer, **York PSC** met with its three MEPs, one of whom supported the branch's **York Declaration**, which voices its concerns



Reem Kelani: the highlight of PSC's 25th anniversary dinner



PSC presence at West Midlands carnival

for the situation in Palestine. The branch will collect endorsements and signatures and send this to parliaments across the world. York held a public meeting with Rt Hon Clare Short MP, former Secretary of State for International Development, who visited Palestine with ICAHD earlier this year, where she witnessed a house demolition. A Hadeel craft stall graced the **York and Hull District Methodist Synod**. The branch plans to leaflet the 2000-strong crowds coming in for the main Christmas carol service at **York Minster**. Stephen Leah prepared some material on the occupation for Methodist preachers and ministers for inclusion in Christmas services. He has written alternative versions of the carols ***O Little Town of Bethlehem*** and ***In the Bleak Midwinter***. The branch hopes to get these published in parish magazines nationwide.

Refugee children take to the stage

This summer the **Oxford** branch helped organise the visit of children from the **Al Amari refugee camp** with the **Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association**. The children participated in a drama workshop with local teenagers, culminating in a stage performance. In September, Oxford members joined the England Israel football match protest at Wembley and linked this to campaigning against the decision to ban the Palestinian under 19 team. **Oxford East MP Andrew Smith** promised to raise the issue in Parliament after the branch lobbied him. Oxford plans a series of meetings, a showing of ***The Iron Wall*** and stalls at Christmas fairs.

The **Flying Checkpoint** street theatre project performed in Leeds, Leeds University, Sheffield, York and Edinburgh

re-enacting daily life in the Occupied Territories.

West Midlands PSC joined in the **Handsworth Carnival** in Birmingham in August to spread the word about Palestine, the need to build solidarity and to boycott Israeli goods. (A weekly boycott stall is held in the city centre.) The event was combined with a fundraising social. The branch is also building a twinning link with Ramallah, hosting a visit from its mayor, and supporting the academic boycott.

Star of the North

Sheffield is one of the oldest PSC branches, that has been campaigning continuously for well over 20 years, including during the Oslo negotiations, when much solidarity work stagnated.

One of the distinctive elements of Sheffield's campaigning work is its close links with children's educational and play projects in three Gaza refugee camps, plus another project in the very poor area of Khan Younis. These links have been fostered by Sheffield PSC's chair, Musheir El-Farra, who is from Khan Younis.

Branch members find that solidarity activities involving these projects enable them not only to make a positive contribution to the refugee children; they also help publicise the human rights abuses and injustices heaped upon the Palestinian people. Sheffield PSC believes strongly that the relationship with each project is one of equal partners, rather than of donor to beneficiary.

Developing these links presents unique challenges. Since the outbreak of the second Intifada, no Sheffield PSC supporters have been able to travel to the Gaza Strip. Musheir attempts to go twice a year to support the projects, to take funding and to discuss the projects' needs, but on numerous occasions visits have had to be cancelled.

However, in 2005 one of Sheffield's most ambitious projects came to fruition, when they brought over the Al Asria tour, 11 teenagers from a dabke folk dance



Working in partnership with children from Gaza

group based in Jabalia refugee camp for a two week tour of the North of England, including five concerts, school workshops and various youth activities. Twice they were prevented from travelling by Israeli closures, but they made it in the end. The experience gave Sheffielders a taste of what it is to be Palestinian, under Israel's absolute control.

Sheffield's ethos is that humanitarian work and cultural activities are key tools in political campaigning. Activities such as the annual **concert4palestine** help to raise broader awareness and interest in the full range of our political activity. In May 2007, with the support of other



In Edinburgh, the Flying Checkpoint Company re-enact

'Israeli' dates and 'Peace Oil'



Palestinians from the small village of Fasayil, in the heart of the Jordan Valley near the illegal Israeli settlement of Tomer, are bussed daily to the nearby factory. Some are children no older than 12 or 13. There they work from 6am – 4pm for about 10 shekels per hour (about £1.20p – way below the going rate in Israel), packing dates destined mainly for the European market. In the packing sheds you can see line upon line of conveyor belts with box upon box of dates, all labelled “Made in Israel”. This is to ensure they benefit from Israel’s preferential trade agreement with the EU, although such labelling is contrary to the agreement, which excludes goods produced on stolen Palestinian land. British supermarkets such as Waitrose wittingly or unwittingly stock such goods – an obvious target for the boycott campaign.

Israel’s territorial policy is implicit in the marketing spiel to be found on one company’s website: “Known for their rich sweetness and high juice content, Medjoul dates are grown in Israel’s Jordan Valley...”

It was noted recently that a Christmas catalogue for Good Gifts, run by the Charities Advisory Trust (CAT) as a source of ethical gifts, is advertising ‘Peace Oil’ from Israel. The

claim is that the oil brings together Jews, Arabs, Druze and Christians employed in its manufacture. However the company does nothing to challenge the injustices of Israeli rule, which has been instrumental in uprooting many thousands of Palestinian olive trees, confiscating agricultural land and reducing hundreds of farmers to poverty.

Moreover “Peace Oil”, able to draw on huge marketing resources, risks displacing genuinely fairly traded Palestinian oil brought into the UK by cooperatives like Zaytoun (www.zaytoun.org). Zaytoun has made representations to CAT, backed by PSC, Christian Aid, War on Want, Sabeel, and other organisations. We await a response.

northern PSC branches, they used this approach to help create the second Northern Rally for Palestine, a large

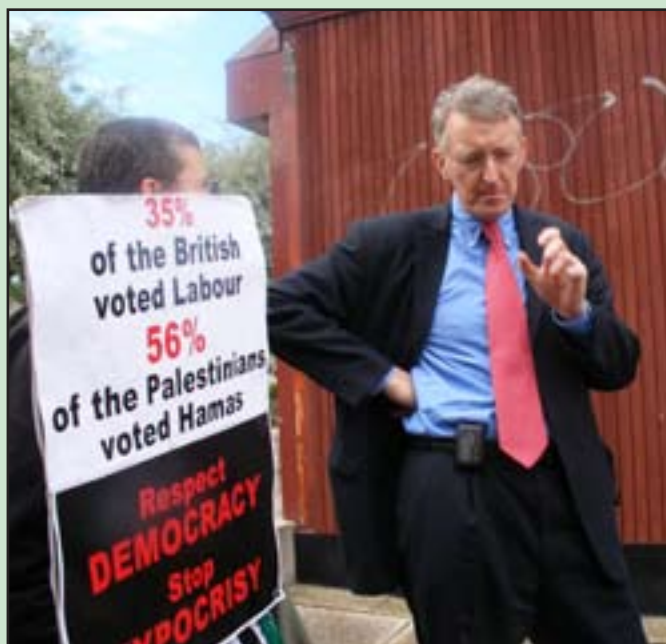
political rally combined with a festival of Palestinian culture. The cultural aspects of the day, including dabke dancing, photographic displays and the sale of

Palestinian crafts and produce, attracted ordinary Saturday shoppers, and created ‘Palestine for a day’ in the centre of the city. (See Palestine News, Summer 2007).

Lobbying ministers

Members of PSC North lobbied the Environment Secretary, Hilary Benn at his Leeds constituency this summer. He shook hands with the group and entered into half an hour of serious discussion with them on issues relating to Palestinian rights, including the effectiveness of boycott. He did not condemn this outright, and as he left to meet

his waiting constituents, he called back **‘KEEP UP THE PRESSURE — and I DO mean that!’** giving the impression that the Palestinian people may have at least one



friend in the Cabinet. In 2006 Sheffield women came together to organise a programme of events for International Women’s Day, out of which was born the **Sheffield Palestine Women’s’ Scholarship Fund** which supports women in the Gaza Strip who could not otherwise afford to continue their education.

In addition, the branch organises regular public meetings and film showings, sells all manner of Palestinian goods including Zaytoun olive oil, holds fundraising dinners, provides speakers, makes films, runs a resource-rich website, and organises city centre protests on a regular basis, attempting always to increase the number of local people prepared to support justice for the Palestinian people, in whatever way they can.

● For general information visit: www.sheffieldpssc.org.uk

● For the annual concert see: concert4palestine.org

A stain on 'the beautiful game'

On Saturday 8 September 2007 about 250 supporters of Palestinian human rights gathered to protest at Wembley stadium, against the England-Israel qualifying match for the Euro 2008 competition.

Dozens of banners and placards displayed the slogans: 'Show Israeli Racism the Red Card', 'Fair Play for the Palestinians' and 'Kick Israeli Apartheid Out of Football'.

Others highlighted Israel's catastrophic human rights record in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and demanded that Israel be suspended from international fixtures until it abides by international law.

A spokesperson for the Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods Campaign, Naomi Wimborne-Drissi said: 'We are here today because it is time Israel woke up to the fact that Jews around the world do not support racist policies designed to drive Palestinians off the remnants of their land. It's a myth that Israel acts only to protect security. On the contrary, they endanger us all! If Israel wants to be treated like other sporting nations, it must abide by international law and cease its daily infringements of Palestinian human rights.'

Dozens of sports clubs and footballers from the Gaza Strip sent messages of support to the campaign, as well as dozens of Palestinian organisations, including the Palestinian Football Federation, the Palestinian Basketball Federation, the Union of Social Workers and Psychologists, the bda'a Sport Club (Palestine Basketball Champions), the Bethlehem University Student Senate, the University Teachers' Association in Palestine and the Jenin Branch of the PGFTU.

Ibrahim Sheikh, retired footballer and board member of the Gaza Sporting Club said: "I think that it is the moral responsibility of the UK to help bringing Israeli Apartheid to an end in the same way the world fought against Apartheid in South Africa. To play soccer with Israel, while its soldiers are killing children in Gaza and erecting a monstrous wall in the West Bank is unethical."

Mick Gosling, Chair of NUJ-P&PR Branch said 'We take the same view as with the sporting boycott of Apartheid South Africa. JEFA will use the old mantra of keeping politics out of sport, but politics and sport are closely intertwined in the Middle East. The sporting boycott had a huge effect on South African politics'.

Youth team denied entry

Other banners and slogans referred to the Palestinian Football Youth Team, denied entry to the UK two weeks earlier. A UK tour had been arranged for the team, from Gaza and



the West Bank, but the British embassy in Tel Aviv denied them visas, on the grounds that the Israeli authorities would probably not allow them to return to Palestine. Tour organiser Rod Cox commented: 'It seems to be designed either to provide a figleaf for the expected refusal of the Israelis to issue exit or re-entry permits, or just part of government policy to keep Gaza under siege.'

The planned tour was a unique chance for the young Palestinian players to hone their skills, as a team, in an international setting. (On their home ground it is almost impossible for them to meet and practice as a team, as the system of permits and checkpoints severely limits movement within the Occupied Territories.) They would have been able to forge links with youth teams in this country — and seen how much support there is for the Palestinian cause in the UK.

The player that made it

Palestinian-American Morad Fareed, member of the Palestinian national team, visited the UK in September, to hold public meetings around the country and to discuss the film 'Goal Dreams', which followed the Palestine team (in which he played) in its attempt to qualify for the 2006 World Cup. (For details see www.goaldreams.com.) Morad also played in friendly matches in the UK and held some informal coaching sessions for local children at PSC branches. Expressing his disappointment at the exclusion of the Youth Team, Morad said: 'Football is one of the very few institutions that Palestine has to compete, to show our statehood, to be on the world stage.'

Political satirist Mark Steel was inspired by the visa fiasco to write an ironic tour de force

in the Independent on 22 August. It ends:

'Maybe this is all just practise for the English strategy to win the next World Cup. Within a couple of years almost every decent foreign footballer in the world will be playing here in the Premier League, then just before the tournament starts we'll refuse visas to all of them and give ourselves a chance. But most likely is simply that the Foreign Office has been leaned on by the Israeli government to refuse entry to the team. Because the Israelis do have a record here. In March last year they bombed the only football stadium in Gaza.'

● For more information see www.bigcampaign.org



Morad Fareed with Palestine National Football Team T-shirt (available from PSC)

Putting the fun into fundraising

Although fundraising is sometimes seen as a chore, it is absolutely essential to the work of PSC. It can bring people together, raise awareness of the key issues — and be a lot fun.

Next year PSC will face the challenge of nouncing a major demonstration to mark the 50th anniversary of the Nakba, supported by public meetings, new factsheets and the soon-to-be-relaunched website. This represents only a small part of the work of the head office in North London, staffed by three people. PSC Director Jenny Najar said: 'The budget for next year is going to be about £260,000. That covers the cost of running the office, our campaigning, our international and branch work. Fortunately, a great deal of work is also done by a team of dedicated volunteers, which helps to keep our costs down.'

The national demo alone, on 10 May, will cost £10,000. But there are other demands, such as sponsoring speakers from Palestine, advertising, conferences, branch forums and mailings and publications. Sales of merchandise bring in some cash, but the main sources of funding are the membership, affiliation fees and donations. These do not however cover running costs. Jenny urged members nationwide to sign up for the next sponsored walk and to publicise the next art exhibition, which will be in London in May. 'We are appealing for about £500 per branch, which would bring in £20,000', she said. 'We are not a charity', she explained, 'because that would restrict our campaigning and political work — but this means our access to funding is restricted.' The finances of the growing organisation have, however, been improved by the recent appointment of Islam Malik as finance officer (see below).

So what are the best ways of raising the badly needed hard cash? The backbone of

both branch campaigning and fundraising remains the weekly stall. Mike Gwilliam, treasurer of the York branch, believes their regular stall, in the middle of the main shopping area, is very effective. It sells badges, keffiyahs and Palestine News and also offers fact sheets and leaflets. 'It both raises a fairly regular income and, above all, draws attention to the Palestinian problem. Over the last year, we have raised hundreds of pounds for PSC. It's probably the best single thing we do.' Mike advises: 'Keep it simple and keep repeating it — people like to know you'll be there next week.'

Brighton and Hove's position by the sea means that sponsored walks and cycle rides are favourite methods of fundraising. Local member Zoe Mars said: 'You need so little preparation, if you can get 15 people in the branch to get four people each to sponsor them for £5, you get £300!' But if you haven't got a seafront walk or downs near you, Zoe had other ideas: 'We do jumble sales, car boot sales and a garden party once a year.' The branch has access to a community centre which only charges £8: 'In the course of a morning, you can make at least £100.' She also suggested using community and local newspapers, which sometimes have free columns, to advertise events.

If a member has a large garden, then a summer party is a lovely way to bring people together. Throwing a themed dinner party at, say, £20 a head is another excellent form of fundraising, together with coffee mornings — stimulating conversation guaranteed!

Kay Manassah from Lambeth and Wandsworth branch, recruited comedian Jeremy Hardy to chair the branch's pub quiz. 'It attracted a lot of people and was a laugh. He is a member of PSC and people came to see him', she said. 'We raised £700 on the night. We asked for £5 per person with a minimum of five people on a team. We must have had about 100 people in the pub', she added. 'Jeremy gave a talk at the beginning



Jeremy Hardy: draw the crowds with a celeb guest

about the situation in his comedy way. It was a few days before the ENOUGH! march, so we had leaflets on the tables about that as well.' She recommends trying to get hold of a sympathetic celebrity because it attracts new people, who may not know anything about Palestine. And the prize to the winning team? Bottles of Palestinian olive oil, soap and zaatar!

Nisa Ali

PSC has benefited from a welcome addition as Islam Malik joined as finance officer recently. 'I have a very special feeling for the people of Palestine. I thought I could make a contribution to this cause,' he told Palestine News. Islam, who has extensive experience in accounts, will attend to PSC's finances as the organisation grows. He is in the office twice a week and is regarded as a huge plus by his new colleagues. 'I'm a very happy man here. The staff are very friendly and I'm settling down nicely,' he added.



Lib Dems launch new policy on Israel

At their recent National Conference the Liberal Democrats ratified a new policy on Israel and Palestine that calls for suspension of the EU/Israel Association Trade Agreement if human rights continue to be breached.

The new policy includes a call for the European Union to scrutinise more stringently Israel's adherence to Article 2 of the Trade Association Agreement. Article 2 spells out that the upholding of human rights in national and international policies of signatory parties is an essential element of the Agreement. It also calls for the formation of a 'Quintet' that will give the UN a lead role, along with the inclusion of the Arab League. An amendment to the Motion called for the EU to suspend the Agreement only if it was presented with evidence of human rights breaches under Article 2.

During the debate on this amendment, Baroness Jenny Tonge, Chris Davies MEP and other representatives of the Lib Dem Friends of Palestine explained why



Baroness Jenny Tonge

the amendment was needed – spelling out the many daily breaches by Israel of international humanitarian law on the one hand, and of the EU Trade Association Agreement's Article 2, on the other.

So far the EU has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to calls for suspending the Agreement, preferring instead to maintain dialogue with Israel, despite being shown a wealth of evidence detailing Israel's breaches of international humanitarian law in its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. What is all the more puzzling about the EU's line and that of the Brown Government is that whilst both parties frown on sanctions against Israel as being counter-productive to positive dialogue, the EU and the UK immediately applied crippling sanctions against the Palestinians without a second thought, after the 2006 Palestine elections.

Conference supported the Motion with

Planning for 2008

At the beginning of October, PSC convened a two-day international conference to explore methods of coordinating an effective campaign for solidarity with Palestinians.

It was attended by approximately 70 delegates representing organisations from 13 countries, from North America, Europe, the Middle East and South Africa. Twelve delegates from Palestine representing organisations from across the political spectrum, grass root networks and

NGOs were represented. These included Palestinians from the West Bank, Lebanon and Israel. Two delegates from Gaza were unable to attend due to travel restrictions, and provided written contributions.

Two sessions took place on the first day; 'Palestinian expectations of the international solidarity community and the campaign in 2008' and 'Key issues for solidarity in 2008'. A packed public rally with a dozen speakers from Palestine took place on the Saturday evening.

Ghada in Australia

Palestinian writer, activist and PSC Patron Dr Ghada Karmi recently returned from Australia, where she was invited to give the Edward Said Memorial Lecture at the University of Adelaide. She also spoke at meetings in Perth, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, where she reported on the situation in Palestine and outlined the current campaigns of academic and medical boycott in the UK. Ghada drew large audiences and got excellent media coverage, with several interviews on ABC radio.



Ghada with Kerry Nettle, Australian Greens Senator for New South Wales.

Palestine at the party conferences

At the Labour Party conference, PSC had a strong presence, with a stall that generated considerable interest. A packed fringe meeting in Bournemouth organised by PSC with War on Want heard a first hand report from Richard Burden MP, chair of the all-party Parliamentary group on Palestine, who had just returned from Gaza, and detailed the disastrous impact of the closure of Gaza upon people living there. MPs Shahid Malik, International Development Minister, and Emily Thornberry MP, also spoke. Prof Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian General Delegate, and Sabri Saidam, former Minister of Telecommunications, spoke of the impact of the Israeli occupation while Ismail Patel, chair of Friends of Al-Aqsa, issued a strong call for solidarity. Successful meetings also took place at the Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences, organised by the Friends of Palestine groups in those parties.

Parliamentary criticism of British policy

This interest in Palestine at party

inside Parliament over British foreign policy, which is being reflected in the increasing number of MPs willing to sign Early Day Motions, and pressure from Parliamentary Committees to change British policy towards the Palestinians. Following the report of the International Development Committee earlier this year, which called for the EU-Israel trade agreement to be reconsidered, over the summer the Quadripartite Committee reported on its study on arms export licences to Israel, and the Foreign Affairs Committee issued a strongly worded report critical of the government's attitude towards Palestinian unity and calling for negotiations with Hamas.

To help ensure that this increasing concern inside Parliament is maximised as pressure on the British government, please urge your MP, of whatever party, to sign up to Early Day Motions relevant to Palestine, and become actively involved in the all-party Parliamentary Group on Palestine. For copies of the parliamentary reports see

Hands up who knows: What is the capital of Israel?

The status of Jerusalem is one of the most emotive issues arising from the Israeli occupation. The Old City was for centuries the hub of Palestinian commercial, cultural and spiritual life. After 1948 it enjoyed a degree of protection by being designated an international zone by the UN, but when it was occupied in 1967 by Israel, all that changed. The Israeli regime set about expelling Palestinian families that had lived there for generations and imported Israeli settlers, in blatant contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The eight-metre high wall that slices through the city, and the illegal settlements encircling it, have effectively cut Jerusalem off from its West Bank hinterland.

So when publishers refer to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel they are, wittingly or unwittingly, supporting Israel's claims to ownership that the international community — including the US — has rejected on many occasions. All foreign embassies are based in Tel Aviv, despite ferocious lobbying by Israel. You might think that when the error is pointed out, the mistake would be corrected. Not so easy. It took PSC and a number of informed MPs two years to get the House of Commons diary amended, to indicate Tel Aviv as the Israeli capital.

More recently, the London-based Future Mapping Company, whose maps and website give Jerusalem as Israel's capital, absolutely refused to make any changes, claiming that 'a wide range of sources' support their view. When challenged, they were unable to cite any of these. This company is only one of many; branches may like to do some research into websites (Wikipedia's entry on Israel for a



Here's a clue...

start), guidebooks, maps and educational material which propagate this misconception, and demand that they be changed.

You can quote our own Foreign Office website (<http://tinyurl.com/2h6ahl>), which states, among other things, 'Our Embassy to Israel is in Tel Aviv, not Jerusalem. In East Jerusalem we have a

Consulate-General, with a Consul-General who is not accredited to any state: this is an expression of our view that no state has sovereignty over Jerusalem.'

Experts at Chatham House, home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, can also confirm our Government's position, and the legal situation.

The UN General Assembly has also passed various resolutions regarding Jerusalem. The most recent dates from 29 January 2007 and states explicitly:

'All legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, in particular the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, were null and void and must be rescinded forthwith' (See: <http://tinyurl.com/yusyhs>).

Working together, lobbying the offending publishers, PSC branches can help to halt the propagation of yet another insidious myth in the making.

Ian Gilmour

Lord Gilmour of Craigmillar, whom PSC was very proud to have as a Patron, died on 21 September, aged 81, after a short illness.

A barrister by training, Ian Gilmour was actually more interested in journalism, becoming editor and proprietor of the Spectator magazine for several years in the 1950s. At the time of Suez, he famously called Prime Minister Anthony Eden a liar, over Britain's invasion of Egypt. With a lifelong interest in and knowledge of Middle East affairs, he was outspoken in his support of Palestinian rights, especially after the 1967 war — so much so that Menachem Begin labelled him with the usual calumny of anti-Semite.

served as Defence Secretary during Edward Heath's administration, before becoming Lord Privy Seal in Margaret Thatcher's first government. However, he was sacked by Mrs Thatcher in 1981 and remained an outspoken critic of her social and economic policies. He remained on the back benches until he went to the House of Lords in 1992.

His belief in the justice of the Palestinian cause led him to speak and write widely about the issues, both in Parliament and outside. In July 2006 he was a signatory to a letter to the Guardian which accused the British government of complicity in Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and the IDF's extreme violence in Gaza: 'Israel has bombed the only power station in Gaza, destroying electricity and water supplies to hundreds of thousands



of Palestinians, and forcing tens of thousands to flee from their homes. These are crimes against humanity.' For a number of years he was President of the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians, and became a Patron of PSC in 2003. Only a few months before his death he attended a PSC meeting with other Patrons, to discuss future campaigning

A lifetime of service

Haidar Abdel Shafi, leading Palestinian nationalist and physician, died on 25 September at the age of 88 in the Gaza Strip, where he was born.

As a young doctor during the Nakba he treated Palestinian fighters and hundreds of refugees. Later he told an interviewer: 'It was the situation of the Palestinian people that drew me to public work. A doctor lives the problems and the hardships of the people.'

In the early 1950s Shafi studied surgery in the US and entered public life in Palestine in the early 1960s. In 1964 he



was a member of the first all-Palestinian conference in Jerusalem, that established the PLO, and by 1966 had become the leading PLO figure in the Gaza Strip. Deported by Israel in 1967, he returned to Gaza in 1971 and a year later founded the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. During the first Intifada, which broke out in December 1987, he was able to use his authority to unify the rival factions.

Shafi came to international prominence when he led the Palestinian negotiating team at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, and then two years later, at the Washington 'peace talks'. However he resigned his negotiating post in 1993 over the Oslo Accords with Israel, predicting that the process would collapse due to the failure to tackle the issue of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

In the 1996 elections to the Palestinian legislature Shafi won more votes than any other candidate. But later that year he walked out of a meeting, in protest at Arafat's decision to amend the charter of the PLO to recognise Israel, when the Jewish state refused the Palestinians independence. He resigned from the legislature in 1998, saying it was powerless to effect real change.

Shafi was always adamant that any viable peace agreement must implement the 'principle of equality' between Israelis and Palestinians. 'Mutuality and reciprocity,' he said, 'must replace domination and hostility.' His eloquence, independence and integrity won him the lasting respect, not only of Palestinians of all political persuasions, but also of statesmen and activists around the world.

Remembering Laila

Musheir El-Farra pays tribute to his mother, a patriot and a great teacher.

From a hospital bed in Khan Younis, came her fading voice: 'Be strong', she repeated three times. For nine long days Laila called my name, Mona's, Manar's, Mai's and Mones's but to no avail. None of us could break the Israeli siege to be with her. Maha was the only one privileged to be there.

Forces of oppression, who claim to be the protectors of democracy and human rights, denied us the simple right to be at her bedside during her last precious moments. We were denied the comfort of a final kiss.

Standing between us was an army of occupation, barbed wire, the Apartheid Walls, checkpoints designed for cattle. Also barring our entry was the bureaucracy and inertia of UN and Human Rights organisations, who did nothing until it was too late. The British Embassy, too, terrified of upsetting the occupier, was unable to help.

Laila, whose ancestors escaped from the Caucasus and the brutality of the Russian Tsars to take Palestine as a homeland, moved from Haifa as a toddler to Tubas, Nablus, Tulkarim, Ramallah and finally Khan Younis in Gaza.

Engraved on my memory are the stories she told us children, and her pupils, of the suffering and dispossession of the Palestinians in the thirties and forties, and of the injustice that still prevails. I will never forget that autumn night in the seventies, when a platoon of Israeli soldiers stormed our house — how strong she was resisting them, how fierce in defending us.

My friend Zakaria came to give his condolences and told me how, in 1972 when he was nine, he threw stones at an Israeli army jeep. He ran to the school where Laila was the headmistress, with



Laila (right) with teacher and pupil

the soldiers in pursuit. Laila came out to stop them, closing the school's main gate, shouting 'This is an educational institute, these are just children, you have no right to enter'. They pushed her and she fell, but by that time, he was disappearing into the adjacent fields.

Many of Laila's pupils achieved a lot in education, but she also helped to solve many domestic problems over the three decades of her teaching career, laughingly comparing her office to that of a 'tribal chief'.

In 1975 the Israeli military governor of the Gaza Strip met with the UN education officials and all UN schools

headmasters and mistresses. 'Teach your pupils that their homeland is where they were born, not where their parents or grandparents were born', he said, in a clear reference to the refugees' right of return. Laila interrupted him: 'I am an educator, I cannot lie; their homeland is Asdod, Yafa, Haifa, Al Majdal, and other areas inside the Green Line. How about you, you were born in Poland, why do not you practice what you preach? Why did you come to Palestine to uproot its indigenous population?' The Israeli military governor very angrily banged on the table and declared the meeting closed. He ordered a disciplinary action against Laila — something the director of the UN education authority never implemented. Such was Laila. She spoke the truth and feared no one.

To join the campaign against Israel's systematic denial of entry to the Occupied Territories visit www.righttoenter.ps

Musheir is Chair of the Sheffield branch of PSC and his sister Mona is a musician and artist who publishes a newsletter from Gaza

One man's journey

In mid-September Nabil Anani, renowned veteran of the Palestinian art scene, held a one-man exhibition in Foyle's Gallery, in London: A Journey into Script. It was a tremendous success, artistically, socially and politically.

At the private view well known journalists, including Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and George Alagiah, joined the crowd of longstanding admirers of Nabil's work, together with many discovering it for the first time.

He is closely involved in the social and political life of Palestine, an involvement clear from the themes of his works, and from his pioneering use of local natural materials: leather, wood, clay, henna, copper, beads. His artistic commentary on the political and human situation in Palestine has been unflinching out resolutely non-didactic; some of his most recent works, such as 'Dislocation', which incorporates a poem by Mahmoud Darwish dealing with violence and humiliation, focus on the enforced schism between Gaza and the West Bank.

A recent installation was a massive concrete kite, recalling both one of the few children's games that can still be played in relative safety, and the Apartheid Wall which steals much of the land and water resources of the West Bank. In another, collaborative work with Tayseer Barakat, a pile of cars crushed by



Israeli tanks was used as a canvas by some of Nabil's young pupils.

In recent years Nabil has become increasingly fascinated by the incorporation of text and calligraphy in his work, both for its decorative qualities and for the message it transmits. Although not especially religious, much of the work in his exhibition is a homage to his Arab and Islamic heritage. Verses from the Quran, popular poetry and proverbs, are interwoven with images of his homeland (the foundations of his own village of Latroun now lie buried beneath the newly landscaped 'Canada Park' in Israel).

Despite many opportunities to live and work abroad, Nabil says: "I am glad I was born in Palestine,

I am a part of this land, and can't be away from it for any length of time. The main problem for me is one of freedom of movement and contact, with family, friends and colleagues, an effect of the whole background of the Israeli incursions, closures and land grabs."

Teaching, at all levels, has been central to Nabil's career: he was instrumental in developing the arts curriculum for schools in the Occupied Territories, and his most recent initiative, with other colleagues based in the West Bank, is the setting up of the first Academy of Contemporary Art in Palestine, offering a degree course for practising artists, rather than for teachers of art. Created with the cooperation and

support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Academy will provide opportunities for exchanges of students and teachers in Palestine and Scandinavia, and beyond.

Commenting on the exhibition, British art critic and curator, Sacha Craddock, said: "This work is a continuation of the questions asked by generations of Palestinian artists about how and whether to hold onto the art of the past, while looking to the future. Anani's art is a reminder that whatever the vision or method of artistic expression, the experience and living memory of Palestine and what it means to be Palestinian is ever-present... the history of a place cannot go away."

Steve Sabella: recreating Jerusalem

Steve Sabella, born in the Old City of Jerusalem, is an internationally known artist and photographer. He is currently involved in a project 'Jerusalem in exile – tangible memories', that explores the visual images of Jerusalem in the minds of Palestinians globally. The project is based on the assumption that Jerusalem currently exists as a city in exile', since Palestinians are forbidden from accessing it.

create a new perception of Jerusalem; liberating it from clichés and slogans. It will culminate in a book containing one hundred images, and a variety of texts, that reflect Jerusalem as captured in the collective memory of Palestinians of different ages and generations and from different regions across the world. To contribute to the project, or to learn more about Sabella's work visit www.jerusalem-in-exile.net

Steve's beautiful image from a church in Bethlehem is this year's PSC Seasons Greetings card.

● To order contact PSC (£4.50 for 10 cards + envelopes). All proceeds go to PSC.



'Bethlehem 2007' by Steve Sabella

The enduring pen of Naji Al-Ali

The political cartoonist Naji Al-Ali is perhaps best known as the creator of the character Handala, a ten-year old boy who appeared for the first time in Al-Siyasa newspaper in Kuwait in 1969. 'Handala' is the name of a bitter-tasting shrub that can survive the harshest treatment and most arid climate.) The figure turned his back to the viewer from the year 1973, with his hands clasped behind his back.

'He is an icon that stands to watch me from slipping. And his hands behind his back are a symbol of rejection of all the present negative tides in our region,' said Naji. Handala remains a symbol of Palestinian identity and defiance, to this day.

Naji was born in 1936, to a middle class family, near Nazareth in the Galilee. His family was driven out during the Nakba in 1948, and he spent his youth in a refugee camp.

After working for some time as an art teacher in Kuwait, where he developed his skill as a cartoonist and his political

awareness, he was deported to Beirut. There he was jailed by the Lebanese authorities, but continued to draw: 'I started to use drawing as a form of political expression while in Lebanese jails... I drew on the prison walls, and Ghassan Kanafani, a journalist and publisher of al-Huria magazine — he was assassinated in Beirut in 1971 — saw some of those drawings and encouraged me to continue, and eventually published some of my cartoons.' Later he worked for the Lebanese daily, AlSafeer, and his work was published daily in Cairo, Beirut, Kuwait, Tunis, Abu Dhabi, London and Paris in publications ranging from far Right to far Left.

After the massacres of Sabra and Shatila he moved to London where he worked for Al Qabbas newspaper. On 22 July 1987 he was assassinated, shot in the face at point blank range, as he left the London office. He died after lying in a coma for five weeks.

Naji was posthumously awarded the annual Golden



Pen award of the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers in 1988 by a jury composed of publishers from 28 member countries. The award is given in recognition of outstanding contributions to the freedom of expression. For more examples of his work visit www.najjalali.com

This year's *Colors from Palestine* 2008 Wall Calendar is dedicated to the memory of Naji.

To view the calendar go to www.resistanceart.com (available from PSC at £12 + p&p)

Framing Gaza

'Framing Gaza', a photographic exhibition in London's Arts Club, on Dover Street, attracted a crowd of 250 people on its opening night. Guests included Sir Jeremy and Lady Greenstock, Clare Short, Brigid Keenan and Harriet Walter.

The show was designed to highlight the 40th year of the Occupation. 'We felt photographs were the best way of raising awareness,' said Virginia Constable Maxwell, one of the exhibition's six organisers.

Black and white photographs from 1948 onwards depict a moving narrative. Small girls rundle belongings in prams across the Jaffa streets in an early UNWRA photograph. Inge Morath photos show refugee children being taught trades in Lebanon camps in the 60s.

Particularly stunning were Abbas' photographs of Palestinians driving horses and carts through the sea to reach Khan Younis.

A strong series of photographs by John Tordai show the realities of daily life under Occupation: a young amputee recovering in hospital, children scavenging to earn money, people herded within the wire of the Erez crossing. But Tordai does not only depict wilderness: an image of Palestinian women harvesting recalls traditional activities, still maintained despite the Occupation. 'We wanted to show the dignity of the Palestinians, as well as their suffering,' said Mrs. Maxwell.

The young Gazan photographer Sharif Sarhan was also represented: in one photograph a small boy sits

by the roadside reading a UN teaching book on Human Rights.

A strong opening speech by Sir Richard Dalton, former ambassador to Iran, criticized UK politicians, quoting Alvaro de Soto: 'Policy makers... cower before any hint of Israeli displeasure.' He added: 'The

state of Gaza is a scar upon the conscience of the nation.'

The organisers are hoping to tour the show in other cities and are currently seeking further sponsorship.

● If you would like to be involved contact Sally FitzHarris at salfitz@btconnect.com



SHERIF SARHAN

Unemployed seamster in Gaza

Between the Lines — Readings on Israel, the Palestinians and the US 'War on Terror'

Edited by Tikva Honig-Parnass and Toufi Haddad
Haymarket Books, Chicago, Ill., 2007

This work is a powerful compilation of articles relating the story of the al-Aqsa Intifada to its broader context — 'the continuation of the Zionist colonial project, which has aspired to control all of historic Palestine with the full backing of US imperialism.'

Contributors include Marwan Barghouti, Azmi Bishara, Sami Shalom Chetrit, Saleh Abdel Jawwad, Husam Khader, Eileen Kuttub, Ian Pappé, Graham Usher and Jamal Zahalqa.

The articles read sequentially, as published in the Israel-based magazine 'Between the Lines' during its brief existence in Jerusalem during the Intifada — articles which display disconcerting foresight in relation to later developments. These are followed by additional essays on more recent events, most specifically the Hamas electoral victory and the Hezbollah military success in Lebanon.

Other themes include the transformation of the Israeli Left (the Labour Party) into a partner for the Zionist Right (the Likud), with their project of redeeming 'Eretz Israel' and ethnically cleansing the Palestinians. Accompanying this is Israel's adoption of

neo-liberal economic policies, including IMF restructuring ideas that have led inevitably to a larger income gap in Israel, the use of imported labour and a general deterioration of social services for the poor (largely the Mizrahi Jews from the African diaspora and 'Arab Israelis').

An important element in the overall narrative is the elaboration of the Allon Plan, the subtext to all the political manipulations throughout the Peace Process, 'disengagement', 'convergence', and on into the 'war on terror.' The underlying aim of ethnic cleansing relies heavily on the idea of the 'demographic danger' that Palestinians are supposed to present — a political rallying point, especially within 1967 Israel.

Along with these themes is the ever-present one of media manipulation. Despite the freedom of 'Between the Lines' to publish material from Israeli sources that condemned Israeli actions, little of that has ever reached the Western press.

The final section looks at the unsuccessful attacks on Lebanon and the election of Hamas. In Lebanon, an unnamed Israeli minister explained that their desire was 'to turn Lebanon into a wasteland. After that, things will be good.' Again, the Western media

presented the Hezbollah attack as a unique provocative attack, rather than one of many back and forth engagements.

The Hamas victory is seen as 'the pinnacle of the mass popular movement that began with the Al Aqsa Intifada, to definitively displace the Oslo process paradigm and its infectious repercussions upon the Palestinian national movement... Hamas unapologetically preserved and implemented, at times, the Palestinian right to resist, using force as a political tool.' This of course fits well within the UN Charter on occupation and defensive war — no doubt one reason why Israel and the US are planning their own 'peace summit' with neighbouring Arab countries, without a UN presence.

The authors' conclusion is uncompromisingly bleak: 'The stakes have risen to such a level that one cannot preclude, in both the near and distant future, the possibility of accelerated ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their lands, the ignition of expanded regional wars, and the possible use of nonconventional weaponry.'

Jim Miles

The First Six Days

Edited by Nandita Dowson and Abdul Wahab Jabbar
Camden-Abu-Dis Friendship Association, 2007

This book is the tale of a people dispossessed, humiliated and beaten, but not defeated.

The plain spoken narratives of 21 Palestinians from the village of Abu-Dis near East Jerusalem represent part of the oral history of a nation which has been crushed and trampled upon by a superior military power that struck at dawn on 5 June 1967.

The inhabitants of Abu-Dis stoically confronted their fate, re-living their past as refugees once again fleeing to the caves surrounding their village.

The Israeli forces displayed sheer contempt for the Fourth Geneva Convention, which protects the lives and rights of civilians in time of war. "Israeli aeroplanes used to drop bombs especially on roads, and created so much chaos that many people left their wives, parents, old people and children on the

streets as they ran to survive", re-calls one of the interviewees. Palestinian families who fled in panic to Jordan were prevented from returning home by a constant barrage fired by the Israeli patrol units "guarding" the bank of the river Jordan.

Israel's policy of removing the indigenous population of the West Bank was accompanied by blatant attempts to erase any sign of Palestinian heritage. "After 1967, the Israeli authorities started to send Israeli employees to the school ... They used to search the libraries and the books in the school and they took away all the books which mentioned the name of Palestine, or the borders of Palestine, or anything that talked about Palestine as a state" — an act of "memoricide", documented in Ilan Pappé's book 'The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine'.

Is there a solution? Campaigning in this country, including twinning, lobbying the media and parliament and promoting boycott, can contribute to a growing national awareness and an increasing pressure on

Israel. The Saudi peace proposal should be developed into a working plan, to be negotiated by the parties involved in the conflict. Ideally, the Arab League should use its economic muscle to promote the plan — although this appears to be a remote possibility at the present time.

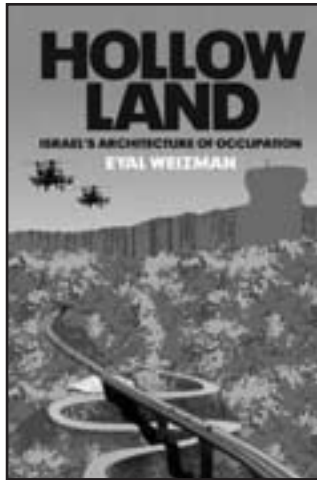
In the early stages of the negotiation, the West Bank and Gaza should be granted a special status of a re-constructed UN nation on the lines of the post Second World War Marshall Plan. The new Palestinian state would thus become an equal partner in the negotiation of the core questions of final borders, East Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees — issues which remain close to the heart of the Palestinian people, to whom 'The First Six Days' is a humble tribute.

Ruth Tenne

The book can be obtained from camdenabudis@

Hollow Land — Israel's Architecture of Occupation

Eyal Weizman
Verso Press, 2007



Anyone who thinks architecture and planning are not political should read Eyal Weizman's new book. It brilliantly dissects the whole Israeli enterprise of colonising and controlling the Occupied Territories, with the underlying intent of transfer of the indigenous population.

The enterprise is seen as a deconstructed architectural entity — an extension of Weizman's earlier thesis of the politics of verticality', in which a sophisticated military machine combines with architects, planners, engineers, politicians and the whole construction industry to achieve political aims.

The military tactics of "grabbing every hilltop", as Ariel Sharon put it, as a dual civilian/military strategy made Sharon the chief architect of the Occupied Territories, with the settlers as the instruments and agents of security for the state. The geology and archaeology below ground are employed to emphasise Israel's biblical justification for 're-establishing' the state, from the Jordan to the Sea. Surveillance by air uses satellite "aerial photometry" and mapping with infra-red technology, while on the ground, the whole communications and transport infrastructure, dominated by the fortified hilltop settlements, monitors and fragments the Palestinian population in West Bank. "A complex fabric of laws, regulations and military orders" turns Israel's land seizures "into a de-facto project of annexation". All the separate tracts of 'state and' throughout the West Bank create "a non-contiguous archipelago of thousands of separate islands".

If the Palestinians can't be transferred, they must be made invisible, and totally controlled in every aspect of their lives, even when passing from one border (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Green Line) to another. Palestinian villages are seen as part of the biblical landscape. "Like a theatrical set, the panorama is seen as an edited landscape put together by invisible stagehands, who must step off the set as the lights come on." Or, as the head of the architecture department in Ariel College in the West Bank says about his students watching out of their classroom windows: "They see the Arab villages, but

don't notice them. They look and they don't see."

Thus the matrix of settler-only roads, going through tunnels or across bridges, bypassing checkpoints, allows the settlers to travel over the whole West Bank landscape "without seeing an Arab." "Israel's conception of security ... includes a complex territorial, institutional and architectural apparatus, conceived in order to manage the circulation of Palestinians through Israeli space." The system of identity cards, surveillance by

one-way mirrors, special permits to move between their own towns and cities and the checkpoints (some, like Qalandia, designed like airport terminals) make the Apartheid pass system look amateurish.

The Wall is the ultimate in the philosophy of separation. It has its own "elastic" architecture, its route adjusted by reluctant High Court decisions, by settlers wanting to be included on the "Israeli side" and even, occasionally, by the persistent resistance of local villagers and activists, as in Bil'in. Israeli architects have commented ruefully that they could at least have produced a better design for it, and some have actually been drafted in to beautify or camouflage the landscape around it.

Generals are sent to architecture schools to study the latest post-structuralist architectural theory, that is then extended to military tactics in re-arranging the dense casbahs of cities like Nablus and of refugee camps, as was done in the ruthless Defensive Shield operation in 2002. Instead of using the roads and alleyways in hunting out and eliminating 'terrorists' and militants, holes are punched through the walls of houses (with their residents still in them), to home in on the targets, who are also spotted by hi-tech electro-magnetic weaponry that can 'see through walls'. Mock Arab villages are set up in the Negev as training camps for war tactics, whose surveillance and control methodology is being used by the US and UK and other countries in the Iraq and Afghan wars, to deadly effect.

Painstakingly researched by Eyal Weizman from direct experience in the field, 'Hollow Land' is a masterpiece of elegant writing laced with sardonic irony, exposing Israel's mask of respectability as a liberal democracy. Like its iconic predecessor, 'A Civilian Occupation', it should be read by all who are interested in exposing the horrors and

injustices of the Occupation. It should also be read by pusillanimous politicians, reluctant to disturb Israel's position of impunity to the dictates of international law.

Abe Hayeem

Chairman of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine www.apjp.org

Pluto victorious

Anyone involved in the issues surrounding Palestine will have read at least one book by the indefatigable British publishing house, Pluto Press. They have bravely gone where other publishers feared to go, bringing out dozens of books that critically examine the history and politics of the region by Palestinian, Israeli and other authors, which otherwise might not have seen the light of day.

This summer, along with the University of Michigan Press (their US distributor) Pluto came under attack by Stand With Us (a Zionist lobby group), who were objecting to the distribution in the US of 'Overcoming Zionism', by distinguished professor Joel Kovel, on the grounds that it contained "racist hate speech". In the subsequent furore the University halted distribution of the book. Roger van Zwanenberg, Pluto's Director, said: "The vitriolic attack questioned the University's relationship with Pluto generally and denigrated 'Overcoming Zionism'." He called for a campaign to counter the Zionist lobby's attempts to stifle, yet again, open discussion of the Israel/Palestine issue.

In October the Executive Board of the University Press met and unanimously agreed to distribute the book and continue their contract with Pluto Press.

Van Zwanenburg said: "I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has written in on our behalf to the University. For us at Pluto this has been an epic struggle. We have all been heart warmed that so many people across the United States and across the rest of the world have taken the trouble to be involved in a personal capacity. This is also a victory for the University of Michigan, they have stood up for everything that is best in our culture, the freedom of speech."



EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK

With the help of PCS, UNISON and Unite the Union (Amicus Section) PSC has produced this invaluable tool for campaigning on Palestine in the UK

The CD/DVD Disc, which can be used in a computer or viewed via a TV/DVD player includes:

- A Powerpoint presentation, with notes
- Fact sheets and maps illustrating the history of the region
- Copies of key documents such as UN Resolutions
- Reports from the UN, Oxfam, Amnesty International, the World Bank
- Copy of the illustrated PSC pamphlet: 'Palestine — the case for justice'
- Short film clips showing the impact of the Wall and the settlements, plus a longer film on the plight of Palestinians working in Israeli industrial zones
- Suggested books and websites for further information.

The Pack is suitable for people fresh to the topic as well as containing more detailed material.

Available from the PSC: £5 for individual copies, £3 for bulk orders. Phone 020 7700 6192 or email info@palestinecampaign.org

Buy one for yourself, your union or your PSC branch

PRE-CHRISTMAS FAIR A Taste of Palestine!

School of
Oriental
and African
Studies
Malet Street,
London WC1

Saturday 1 December
and Sunday 2 December

Products of Palestine
Olive oil, wine, dates, almonds, couscous,
za'tar, honey, tahini, olives, sundried
tomatoes, soap, embroidered goods,
carvings in olive wood and mother of pearl,
jewellery, leisurewear, silk nightgowns,
artwork and prints

Ideal Christmas gifts for all the family!
For more information phone : 0781 4477188

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 organizations 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

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 PSC Cooperative Bank

Account No. 65147487 (sort code 08 92 99)

From (date) ___ / ___ / ___ until further notice

Name

Signature

Please return this form to:



You are invited to

VOICES FOR BETHLEHEM

PSC Christmas Concert

Friday 7 December, 7pm

Bloomsbury Central,
Baptist Church,
235 Shaftesbury
Avenue,
London WC2

The concert will feature
a traditional English
choir, celebrated Oud
master **Firas Jabloun**
and seasonal readings by
Egyptian author **Ahdaf
Soueif**

Advance tickets: £10
(£8 for concessions:
unwaged and PSC
members)

On the night: £12
(£10 for concessions)

Free for children under 12

Available from PSC:
phone 0207 7006192,
or send a cheque to PSC,
Box BM PSA, London
WC1N 3XX