



PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BEN JAMAL

As I write this, news has just broken of PSC's victory against the Government in the Supreme Court over ethical pensions divestment. This is a hugely important win and **you can read more about it here**. Thank you to all members for your continued support in this case.

Since we last wrote to you, the world has become engulfed in the Coronavirus crisis. For Palestinians, the reality of Coronavirus is of course experienced in the context of ongoing oppression. This week, as Palestinians prepare to commemorate Nakba Day, our job remains to do all we can in the UK to allow their voices to be heard, to support their resistance to the ongoing Nakba, and to confront and end UK complicity in their oppression. Onwards together to freedom, justice and equality.

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NEWS ON PALESTINE: IN PALESTINE, COVID-19 MEETS THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

BY YARA HAWARI

*This is an extract of a policy memo written
for Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network*

[*You can read the full version here*](#)



The West Bank and Gaza Strip are confronting COVID-19 from a reality of Israeli military occupation, which weakens the ability of the Palestinian authorities and the Palestinian people to respond effectively to the deadly virus. While many health care systems around the world are struggling to deal with the pandemic, the 53-year occupation has seriously depleted medical capabilities in the West Bank and Gaza. The donor-dependent system has shortages in equipment, medication, and staff due to such issues as military raids and restrictions on imports. In the Gaza Strip in particular – deemed unliveable by the UN as a result of over 13 years of blockade and multiple wars – the health care system already struggled to deal with medical cases before the pandemic. Indeed, Gaza currently has only 78 ICU beds and 63 ventilators for a population of two million.

Meanwhile, daily manifestations of the occupation persist, such as the continued demolition of Palestinian homes and military raids on Palestinian villages and towns. There have also been direct Israeli attacks on Palestinian attempts to confront the virus, such as the destruction of a COVID 19 clinic in the Jordan Valley and the arrest of Palestinian volunteers attempting to distribute supplies to impoverished communities in East Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation authorities are also failing to take any preventative measures to protect Palestinian political prisoners, who are being illegally incarcerated within a military prison system that fails to meet even basic health and sanitation standards.

In effect, the Israeli regime, which maintains a violent military occupation and has depleted the capabilities of the Palestinian health care system, is being praised for allowing in tidbits of medical supplies from international actors, despite its responsibility under international law as an occupying power to provide the supplies itself. It is essential that international actors not only support vital humanitarian efforts for immediate medical relief in Palestine but that they also insist on Israel's responsibility to finance Palestinian medical needs.

It is also imperative to shift the narrative from cooperation and to highlight the Israeli occupation as an instrument of comorbidity. In other words, not only does the occupation exacerbate the conditions that increase Palestinians' susceptibility to infection, it is also directly responsible for those conditions. It is therefore disingenuous to argue that now is the time for cooperation and dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian authorities to confront the pandemic. Now is the time, as it was before, to demand the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the end of the military occupation of the West Bank.

Yara Hawari is a Palestinian academic, writer, feminist activist, and the Palestine Policy Fellow for Al Shabaka - The Palestinian Policy Network.

SPOTLIGHT ON...CAMPAIGNING DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS



Like many other organisations, PSC has had to reflect on what the Coronavirus crisis means for our campaigning in solidarity with Palestine. As public health advice and policy continues to evolve, it is not yet clear how every aspect of our campaigning will be impacted and for how long. However, it is likely that our ability to do physical campaigning in the streets will be restricted for the foreseeable future.

But this absolutely does not mean that we will reduce or stop our campaigning for Palestine. As long as the Palestinian people are denied their fundamental rights and freedoms, we still have work to do.

In response to this new context, we're getting creative with how we do campaigning. That means making the best use of online organising platforms and digital forms of lobbying and awareness-raising to ensure that we continue to amplify the Palestinian people's call for freedom to every corner of the UK. And PSC members and supporters have already had a big impact in this area!

So far, we have launched several new online e-actions, held a nationwide digital day of action (which saw #EndtheSiege and #ExistResistReturn trending in the UK!), released a video about the Great March of Return which got over 55k views on social media, kicked off a series of online mass webinars which have attracted hundreds of participants, held a #StopArmingIsrael Twitter storm targeting HSBC during their Annual General Meeting, and coordinated a phone and email jam of Puma's communication channels as part of the #BoycottPuma campaign - and there's still much more planned!

PSC Branches have been getting creative at a local level too. For example, Norwich PSC is hosting an online film club! They are asking supporters to watch a Palestine-related film before joining a collective discussion online. Meanwhile, West Midlands PSC activists have hosted two fantastic online webinars on the situation in Palestine and the threats posed by Coronavirus. The first explored the situation in Gaza, while the second touched on the West Bank.

In times of crisis, it can be all too easy to turn our focus inwards. But it is solidarity, in all its forms, that is needed now more than ever. Solidarity with all of our fellow citizens around the world battling with the impact of the virus on themselves and their loved ones. Solidarity with the Palestinian people fighting these same challenges whilst still living under the oppression of apartheid. Whether or not we are physically together, our community of thousands of people standing up for Palestinian rights is so powerful.

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

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

HSBC

While HSBC's AGM may have taken place behind closed doors, we made sure they couldn't ignore our calls for them to divest from companies complicit in Israel's war crimes. We ran two public-facing actions to keep up the pressure.

Firstly, we coordinated a letter-writing campaign to the HSBC CEO and group chairman calling on them to divest from complicit companies, like Caterpillar - whose bulldozers are used to destroy Palestinian homes and structures - and Raytheon - whose 'bunker buster' bombs were used to kill Palestinian civilians in Israel's 2014 aerial bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza.

Secondly, we ran a 'Twitter storm' during the AGM, asking you to post a series of sample tweets with a mock HSBC ad attached. The hashtag we used, #HSBCAGM20, gained 162.3k impressions during the twitterstorm, and across social media our video has been viewed over 10,000 times. It was the most used hashtag surrounding their AGM! Thank you to everyone that took part - we will be running more digital actions like this in the future.



STOP THE JNF UK

While the Stop the Jewish National Fund national conference may have been unable to take place, the campaign has been busily devising a digital alternative, launching a series of monthly webinars exploring the JNF's role in the historic and ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, and how the JNF was crucial in forging the racist character of the Israeli state.

The webinars also look at how we can grow the campaign against the JNF, including how we can continue to push the Charity Commission to deregister JNF UK from its list of UK charities.

With a range of expert speakers from across the world, including Salman Abu Sitta and Omar Barghouti, they are not to be missed! The webinars take place on the first Saturday of the month, at 4pm BST. **Please register here.**

Land Theft

NOT

Charity!

Stop JNF UK

BOYCOTT PUMA

PSC is leading the #BoycottPuma campaign in the UK, with a fantastic response from all of you during the global day of action on May 4th. Even though we weren't able to physically protest on high streets and outside Puma stores, we still made sure our message to respect Palestinian rights was heard loud and clear.



Just days before Puma's AGM, hundreds of you joined our telephone protest. Puma's customer service hotline was jammed up with PSC supporters calling to say why they are boycotting the brand. Over 37,000 emails were sent to Puma using our e-action at the same time, and the hashtag #BoycottPuma made over 12million impressions during the global twitterstorm. We know our actions are paying off and Puma is feeling the heat. Forest Green Rovers F.C have responded to PSC to say they are joining the #BoycottPuma campaign, and we heard from a Puma attorney that we're "making their lives miserable".

Despite the growing pressure, Puma remains the main sponsor of the Israel Football Association (IFA) - which includes teams in illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land. In addition, Puma's exclusive licensee in Israel is Delta Galil Industries, which was listed in the UN database of companies complicit in illegal settlement enterprise. We will continue campaigning to #BoycottPuma until they respect the rights of Palestinians. **Find out more and how you can get involved by visiting our website.**

SETTLEMENTS

PSC continues to push for a complete ban on trade with illegal settlements, working with European partners on a Citizen's Initiative within the EU, but also focussing our attention here in the UK and Parliament. Every Israeli settlement is a war crime under international law, and sustaining them through trade makes the UK complicit in these crimes.

In February the UN released its long-awaited database of over 100 companies operating in illegal Israeli settlements, and PSC used the opportunity to table Early Day Motion #225 in Parliament. Over 50 MPs have already signed this motion, which crucially calls on the Government to fulfil its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention by banning all UK trade with settlements.



We are delighted to be hosting a Virtual Lobby Day on the 13th May. Thousands of you have written to your MPs, letting them know Palestine matters in your constituency, and asking them to attend our special online Parliamentary briefing session. We have arranged an exceptional panel of experts – including the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights – who will lobby MPs to implement a complete ban on trade with settlements, and to impose sanctions against Israel in response to annexation of Palestinian land. **Please join the Virtual Lobby by contacting your MP.**

EVENTS

VIRTUAL LOBBY

We need your voice in Parliament! We have prepared an expert panel on 13th May to brief MPs on the illegality of Israeli settlements, and to push for a complete UK ban on trade with them. You can get your MP to attend the briefing - **click here to send them an email!**

NAKBA DAY RALLY

Join the mass online Nakba rally on Friday 15th May - starting at 7pm UK time - in partnership with Jewish Voice for Peace, BDS Movement and South Africa BDS Coalition. We'll be hearing from Palestinian speakers, performers and artists, as well as key figures in the solidarity movement, including DAM, Janna Jihad, Diana Buttu, Roger Waters, Ken Loach and more! **Click here to register!**

STOP THE JNF WEBINAR SERIES

Join guest speakers and experts in a monthly webinar series to explore the role of the Jewish National Fund in the historic and ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. Meetings take place on Zoom at 4pm on the first Saturday of every month. **Click here to register!**

DONATE TO PSC

We could not have defeated the UK Government's latest crackdown on BDS in the Supreme Court without your help. Now the fight continues.

Will you support us in standing by the Palestinian people, and donate to PSC today? bit.ly/PSCdonate2020



PSC ONLINE SHOP

Buy Keffiyahs, t-shirts, accessories and more Palestine-related products (including our brand new tote bags) on our online shop! All money raised goes towards funding our crucial campaigns for Palestinian rights.

Shop now: shop.palestinecampaign.org