



# BOYCOTT



# Flotilla boosts campaign

## INSIDE:



**Flotilla attack**  
Sarah Colborne  
page 4



**Women workers**  
Kiri Tunks  
page 9



**MK targeted**  
Georgina Reeves  
page 15



**Palestinian films**  
Maha Rahwanji  
page 27



Cover image: Carlos Latuff  
<http://latuff2.deviantart.com/gallery/>

ISSN 1477 - 5808

### Also in this issue...

page 11



Dockers back boycott

If you want to contact a member of the Executive Committee or the PSC office, here is a list of those with particular areas of responsibility. Contact via PSC.

Chair – **Hugh Lanning**  
 Deputy Chair – **Kamel Hawwash**  
 General Secretary – **Betty Hunter**  
 Trade Unions – **Bernard Regan**  
 Parliamentary Affairs – **Nicolette Petersen**  
 Publications – **Hilary Wise**  
 Campaigns – **Ben Soffa**  
 Trade Union Liaison – **Nick Crook, Simon Dubbins**  
 Students – **Fiona Edwards, Khaled Al Mudallal**  
 Director of Campaigns – **Sarah Colborne**  
 Branches, members – **Martial Kurtz**  
 Communications – **Ruqayyah Collector**  
 Administration – **Steve Sibley**

**Check out**

our website

[www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)

# Contents

- 3 Beyond the pale**  
 Hilary Wise comments on Israeli violence and the world's reaction
- 4 Murder on the high seas**  
 Sarah Colborne describes the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*
- 6 The deadly closing of the Israeli mind**  
 Prof Ilan Pappé examines the mindset that leads to crimes against humanity
- 7 Brutal treatment of Palestinian Israeli prisoners**  
 Lubna Masarwa reports on being kidnapped and abused
- 8 Threat of mass expulsions**  
 A new military order allows the IDF to deport Palestinians en masse
- 9 Organising women**  
 Kiri Tunks interviews Neda Abu Zant of PGFTU
- 10 Torture of children**  
 Gerard Horton on how children are ill-treated in the Israeli legal system
- 11 Dockers join boycott**  
 Bernard Regan gives a round-up of union reaction to the flotilla attack
- 12 The obliteration of Al Walaja**  
 Victoria Brittain describes a struggle to resist ethnic cleansing
- 14 The ongoing Nakba**  
 Gill Swain talks to Hazem Jamjoum about the roots of the Palestinian tragedy
- 15 The silenced minority speaks out**  
 Georgina Reeves looks at the courage of Arab Israeli leaders
- 16 Israel's Negev 'frontier'**  
 Ben White examines the plight of the Bedouins
- 17 Stop the JNF — Stop Greenwashing Apartheid**  
 Michael Kalmanovitz reports on the launch of a campaign against the JNF
- 18 Why there are no 'Israelis' in Israel**  
 Jonathan Cook on a state with no common nationality
- 19 Backlash against BDS and Universal Jurisdiction**  
 Israel's measures to combat boycott actions
- 20 Activists acquitted**  
 Decommissioners found not guilty, plus flotilla fallout, Nakba day, and more
- 22 A matter of instinct and conscience**  
 Palestinians join in worldwide BDS campaign
- 24 In Brief**  
 Palestinian elections postponed, Israelis pursued for war crimes, judicial murder in East Jerusalem, Frankie Boyle protests, Israel and the bomb, and more...
- 27 Arts and Reviews**  
 Elia Suleiman at the Palestine Film Festival, interview with *Fatenah* animator Ahmad Habash, Hugh Humphries' *Countdown to Catastrophe*, JNF e-book, Vol II, Ted Conover's *The Routes of Man*, Michael Morpurgo's *The Kites Are Flying*, Kenneth Ring's *Letters From Palestine*

### 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](mailto:info@palestinecampaign.org)

#### The editorial team

Editor: Gill Swain  
 Deputy editor: Hilary Wise  
 Victoria Brittain, Chris Cox, Isabelle Humphries, Maha Rahwanji, Ben White

#### Design and layout

Mulberry Design

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,  
 London WC1N 3XX

### 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 state

# Beyond the pale

By Hilary Wise

The past year has seen Israel reacting more and more wildly against any form of resistance, or even criticism. The Goldstone Report, which called Israel's assaults on Gaza in 2008–2009 war crimes, was dismissed as anti-Semitic; Obama was publicly humiliated by Netanyahu when he called for a halt to settlement building; then Israel forged British and German passports in order to assassinate the Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai, showing open contempt for its most assiduous allies.

This April Israel brought in legislation that will enable the IDF to deport hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank (see page 8), possibly its most flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention to date.

All this against a background of illegal occupation, house demolitions, land-grabs and the building of an apartheid state.

Then came the act of war against the Freedom Flotilla, showing Israel at its most arrogant (pages 4–8). If Israel believes that the outrage provoked by the murders on the *Mavi Marmara* will fade, they have badly misjudged the public mood. In the aftermath, UNISON, the largest union in the UK, came out strongly in favour of an out and out boycott of Israel, other unions around the globe are refusing to handle Israeli goods, the Methodist Church is boycotting settlement goods, writers, academics and musicians are cancelling their visits to Israel; increasingly, Israeli leaders dare not travel abroad for fear of arrest. And far from being cowed by Israeli violence, people are queuing up worldwide to go on the next flotilla, the next road convoy.

How can one explain Israel's crazily self-destructive actions?

The whole Zionist enterprise is an elaborate, rickety edifice, built on the founding lie of "a land without a people for a people without a land." At some level of consciousness Israelis must know that if one of the props is removed — the claim, for instance, that a yearning for security drives their most violent actions — then the entire building will come crashing down. Hence the increasing wildness of Israel's actions and the shrillness of the dwindling voices raised in their defence. Its claims to be "the only democracy in the region" are revealed as empty, as it seeks to expel four Palestinian parliamentarians from East Jerusalem and while Haneen Zoabi, member of the Israeli Knesset, is facing constant threats (page 15).

The present leaders of Israel are a far cry from the urbane, intellectual founders of the state; nowadays they are a mix of

unashamed racists from Eastern Europe and extreme religious fundamentalists, all with a militarist background and training. They rule over a disparate collection of people whose sense of community is shaped principally by a carefully nurtured sense of paranoia. Such a regime endangers world peace.

Initially, Britain's new coalition government reacted to Israel's attack on the flotilla with strong words. Immediately after the attacks, Prime Minister David Cameron told Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu that he "deplored the heavy loss of life" and urged him to lift the three year blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg called the blockade "unjustified and untenable" and said that "what is going on in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe." Foreign Secretary William Hague and his French counterpart, Bernard Kouchner, called for "a credible and transparent investigation" into the attack.

Yet they have now all accepted that Israel will conduct the inquiry — Clegg has called it "an important step forward." They have "welcomed" Israel's pathetic sop to demands for an impartial investigation of appointing Lord David Trimble and retired Canadian general Ken Watkin as "observers."

They have also gone quiet over the siege of Gaza since Israel started allowing in a few more supplies, even though Gazans are still imprisoned and still prevented from exporting their goods and therefore developing their economy.

And David Cameron, like Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, is still a patron of the Jewish National Fund which has always been and continues to be instrumental in the colonisation of Palestine and the expropriation of Palestinian land (pages 16–17).

Meanwhile President Barack Obama made it crystal clear in his recent meeting with Netanyahu that he cares far more about Israel's strategic value as an American military ally in the Middle East than he does about human rights or democracy.

Our leaders may appear paralysed and impotent, but ordinary MPs are more in touch with the growing mood of outrage in this country. When the new parliament reconvened, an Early Day Motion condemning the flotilla attack and the blockade in the strongest terms was immediately signed by 167 MPs. There is a huge amount of work to be done with our MPs, our local councillors and our union branches; they have seen what Israel is capable of and, properly informed and encouraged, they will act.

In the meantime, the immediate focus of our actions should be on both freeing Gaza and strengthening the boycott. So support the next flotilla or the next road convoy, due to set off in September. If you cannot go yourself, collect supplies or donate funds through Viva Palestina. At the same time, let's send Israel the message of boycott — boycott at all levels. Only then will they understand that the price of colonisation is to become a pariah state.

**“At some level of consciousness Israelis must know that, if one of the props is removed, then the entire edifice will come crashing down”**

## PSC PATRONS

■ John Austin ■ Tony Benn ■ Rodney Bickerstaffe ■ Victoria Brittain ■ Barry Camfield ■ Julie Christie ■ Caryl Churchill ■ Jeremy Corbyn MP ■ Bob Crow ■ William Dalrymple ■ Revd Garth Hewitt ■ Dr Ghada Karmi ■ Bruce Kent ■ Ken Loach ■ Lowkey ■ Karma Nabulsi ■ Ilan Pappé ■ Keith Sonnet ■ Ahdaf Soueif ■ Baroness Tonge of Kew ■ Ruth Winters ■ Dr Tony Zahlan ■ Benjamin Zephaniah

# Murder on the high seas

PSC's Director of Campaigns and Operations, **Sarah Colborne**, was on board the *Mavi Marmara*, the largest ship in the Freedom Flotilla, which was attacked by Israeli forces. This is her graphic account of what happened — and of the lessons that must be learned.

**W**e are witnessing an historic moment for the solidarity movement with Palestine in response to Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla which was carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza such as medical supplies, electric wheelchairs, cement, children's playgrounds and baby milk. In the early hours of 31 May, 2010, on the *Mavi Marmara*, Israeli military forces killed nine and wounded 54 passengers.

The *Mavi Marmara*, with 577 people on board, was organised by the Turkish NGO, IHH, which also worked closely with Viva Palestina and the PSC on the last land convoy. Security was taken very seriously and when we boarded the boat at the Turkish port of Antalya, all our luggage was x-rayed and we went through airport-style security.

As we waited in international waters for the other boats in the flotilla to join us I talked about Palestine with people from around world. My fellow passengers included MPs from Egypt, Yemen, Algeria and Germany and over 50 journalists, plus humanitarian activists from across Turkey. The chief engineer's partner and one-year

old child were on board and the oldest passenger was 89.

On that boat, I witnessed the best and worst of humanity. I watched people whose only aim was to bring relief to the besieged people of Gaza being murdered and critically injured and the survivors being subjected to horrific treatment by our captors — the Israeli military. But I also saw great acts of heroism and bravery, particularly from the doctors and first-aiders who desperately tried to save lives.

It was 11pm on 30 May when the captain of the *Mavi Marmara* detected Israeli warships on the radar. We were told to put on lifejackets and the flotilla decided to move further out into international waters where we believed that maritime law would make us immune from being rammed or boarded, as had happened to previous flotillas.

Although our satellite broadcasting system was being jammed, we managed to get some messages out, explaining that we were civilians, on a humanitarian aid mission in international waters and appealing for action to be taken to stop Israel from attacking us.

At 2am, we were advised to go to sleep as it would be a long day ahead. No-one expected the Israelis to attack when we were still 73 miles away from their territorial waters so when I heard the call to prayer at just after 4am and I went onto the top deck with Nicci Enchmarch, also from PSC and Viva Palestina, I was shocked to see Israeli boats surrounding us.

There were warships on all sides, helicopters whirring overhead and zodiac boats speeding alongside filled with commandos toting all kinds of weaponry. According to the subsequent IHH report on the attack, four battleships, three



*A zodiac boat approaches the flotilla*

helicopters, two submarines and 30 zodiac boats took part.

I watched Israeli soldiers swarming down ropes from the helicopters. I could hear the unmistakable sound of live fire and people on the boat shouting "gas" to warn others of the clouds of white smoke.

I could not believe that live bullets were being used against unarmed peace activists. It was a terrifying experience but seemed so unreal that I was calm, as if frozen. Images I saw later and the autopsy evidence of the trajectory of the bullet wounds have shown clearly that shots came from the helicopters above.

Minutes after the assault began a young man was carried to the deck where we were and I could see that he had been shot in the head, between the eyes. He was Cevdet Kılıçlar, a 38-year-old journalist and photographer from Kayseri in Turkey who had been organising the communications and media facilities for IHH on the ship. Nicci and a doctor held him as he died.

We were ordered to go downstairs into the saloon while Jamal El Shayyal and other journalists stayed on the top deck, broadcasting news of the attack for as long as possible before they joined us downstairs. Through the saloon windows Israeli soldiers shouted and gestured to us to shut up and pointed guns at us using their red laser sights on our heads to intimidate.

As more dead and injured were brought in, those with medical skills tried frantically to help them while the rest of us sat trying to keep calm. People called to the Israeli troops over the tannoy, pleading with them in English, Arabic and Hebrew over the critically injured victims who urgently needed help.

Those tannoy announcements started at 5.15 am but it was not until 7am that the Israelis finally allowed the first injured person out of the saloon. As each of the injured left, the medical staff accompanying them were forced away from the patient and immediately had their hands cuffed.

Everyone was then moved out onto the decks and our hands were bound with cable ties. All mobiles and cameras were taken and from this point until we were released



*Sarah arriving at Heathrow, still wearing her grey prison outfit*



**On the Mavi Marmara, awaiting attack**

on Wednesday 2 June, we had no contact with the outside world.

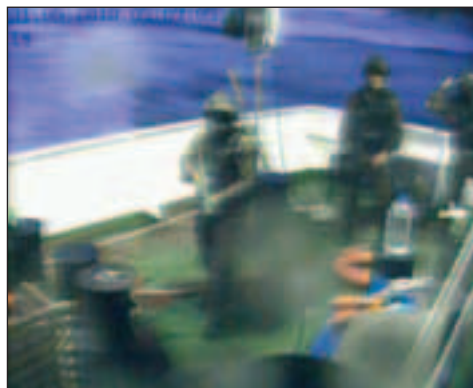
This part of the operation was critical for Israel as it was determined to prevent us from telling the truth about its crimes while it spun its own web of lies, painting a story that turned reality upside down. We were the kidnap victims of an act of state piracy but the Israelis wanted the media to relate that its soldiers only acted to defend themselves.

In the end the lies Israel told — including that soldiers were shot at by guns taken from them, that their soldiers were being “lynched,” that they fired paint balls or only shot at people’s legs — have all been exposed through eye witness accounts, post mortem reports and some video footage a few journalists managed to smuggle out.

I saw no paint balls being shot and no paint on the deck. The activists’ “weapons” displayed by the Israelis were a few kitchen knives and some of the ship’s maintenance tools. Video footage shows passengers tending to bruises suffered by a couple of the assault soldiers.

We were taken on deck and made to sit or kneel in the sun, handcuffed and forbidden to move even for visits to the toilet for many hours. We were then taken down into the sweltering saloon with the air conditioning switched off until we reached the Israeli port of Ashdod where we were taken to prison. We were not released until Wednesday — some passengers were still being interrogated and beaten in Tel Aviv airport until late on Wednesday evening.

The world has been shocked by Israel’s attack on unarmed peace activists sailing in international waters but in reality it was simply a continuation of its policy towards



Palestinians. Israel’s policy of mass arrests, deportations, occupation and humiliation hasn’t worked. Even its brutal and inhuman siege on Gaza hasn’t managed to crush the Palestinian desire for freedom and justice. So the Israeli military gets rolled into action again and again to kill and injure tens of thousands of Palestinians.

But the international response to this attack has been overwhelming. Mass demonstrations expressed a much deeper determination than we have seen before —

that enough is enough — Israel’s crimes against Palestinians, and its crimes against humanity, must end.

In the midst of those demonstrations, the Reut Institute, an Israeli think-tank, came on a field trip to London — identified by Israel as the main hub for what it calls the “delegitimisation network.” With such widespread outrage from all sectors of British society it should have been clear to even the most delusional Zionist that Israeli troops murdering civilians in international waters would create a disaster even for Israel’s slick public relations machine.

Israel intended to put an end to flotillas — and scare away future participants. It has done the opposite. Plans are already in place for the next convoy and flotilla — breaking the siege by land and sea. PSC will be actively involved.

The attack on the Freedom Flotilla had a widespread impact. It gives further ammunition to lawyers seeking to bring Israeli war criminals to justice. Artists pulled out of concerts in Israel and the movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions has grown massively with significant trade union support.

I will never forget the terrible scenes I witnessed on the *Mavi Marmara* but it has made me even more determined to build on our success here in Britain through working together in unity to create a mass solidarity

movement. In this we have been inspired by the decades of struggle of Palestinian people. We are joining them in that struggle and this same inspiration is now bringing in wide mainstream support against Israeli apartheid.

We have been developing close links with the Muslim community both at the national level and via local PSC branches, as well as with other faith groups, professions, communities, political groups and trade unions. This is the critical issue for all who wish to see a fair and just world.

## The Dead of the *Mavi Marmara*

**Ali Haydar Bengi**, aged 38. Six gunshot wounds: left chest, belly, right arm, right leg, left hand twice

**Cengiz Akyuz**, aged 41. Four gunshot wounds: back of head, right side of face, back, left leg

**Cengiz Songur**, aged 56. One gunshot wound: front of neck

**Cevdet Kiliçlar**, aged 38. One gunshot wound: middle of forehead

**Cetin Topcuoglu**, aged 54. Three gunshot wounds: back of head, left side, right belly

**Fahri Yaldiz**, aged 42. Four gunshot wounds: left chest, left leg, right leg twice

**Furkan Dogan**, aged 18. Five gunshot wounds: nose, back, back of head, left leg, left ankle

**Ibrahim Bilgen**, aged 61. Four gunshot wounds: right chest, back, right hip, right temple

**Nedet Yildirim**, aged 31. Two gunshot wounds: right shoulder, left back

*The 54 injured ranged in age from 19-year-old Abdullah Taha Can to Ali Ekber Yaradilmis, aged 57.*

## Turkey’s furious reaction

Turkey, which was once Israel’s closest ally in the Middle East, reacted angrily and decisively to the murder of its citizens. It recalled its ambassador to Israel, banned Israeli military flights from its airspace and boycotted the International Conference on Holocaust Education and Remembrance in Jerusalem in June. It also demanded an apology and compensation for the victims’ families, an international inquiry and the lifting of the blockade on Gaza.

Although the Israelis eased the blockade slightly — a gesture dismissed as next to useless by the Gazans as building materials are still excluded — none of its other demands have been met and relations between the two countries are at crisis point.

**Sarah Colborne** writes: “The role that the Turkish government played, including ensuring that we were all released from Israeli prison and brought to Istanbul and continuing seriously to increase pressure on Israel to lift its siege on Gaza, is exemplary. We should be calling for nothing less from the British government and for an end to the ‘get out of jail free’ cards that Israeli war criminals seem to think they have an inalienable right to.”

# The deadly closing of the Israeli mind

By Ilan Pappé

At the top of Israel's political and military systems stand two men, Ehud Barak and Benjamin Netanyahu, who are behind the brutal attack on the Gaza flotilla. Although they come from the left (Defence minister Barak from the Labour Party) and the right (Prime Minister Netanyahu from Likud) of Israeli politics, their thinking on Gaza in general and on the flotilla in particular is informed by the same history and identical worldview.

At one time, Ehud Barak was Benjamin Netanyahu's commanding officer in the Israeli equivalent of the SAS. More precisely, they served in a similar unit to the one sent to assault the *Mavi Marmara*. Their perception of the reality in the Gaza Strip is shared by other leading members of the Israeli political and military elite and is widely supported by the Jewish electorate.

And it is a simple take on reality. Hamas, although the only government in the Arab world elected democratically by the people, has to be eliminated as a political as well as a military force. This is not just because it continues the struggle against the 40-year occupation by launching primitive missiles into Israel — more often than not in retaliation to an Israel killing of its activists in the West Bank. It is mainly due to its political opposition for the kind of "peace" Israel wants to impose on the Palestinians.

## Peace is not negotiable

The forced peace is not negotiable as far as the Israeli political elite is concerned and it offers the Palestinians a limited control and sovereignty in the Gaza Strip and in parts of the West Bank. The Palestinians are asked to give up their struggle for self-determination and liberation in return for the establishment of three small bantustans under tight Israeli control and supervision.

The official thinking in Israel, therefore, is that Hamas is a formidable obstacle for the imposition of such a peace. And thus the declared strategy is straightforward: starving and strangulating into submission the 1.5 million Palestinians living in the densest space in the world.

The blockade imposed in 2006 is supposed to lead the Gazans to replace the current Palestinian government with one



Protest rally outside Downing St

which would accept Israel's dictate — or at least would be part of the more dormant Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. In the meantime, Hamas captured the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, and so the blockade became tighter. It included a ban of the most elementary commodities: for want of food and medicine, for want of cement and petrol, the people of Gaza live in conditions that international bodies and agencies describe as catastrophic and criminal.

There are alternative ways for releasing the captive soldier, such as swapping the thousands of political prisoners Israel is holding with Shalit. The Israelis have dragged their feet in negotiations over such a swap which are not likely to bear fruit in the foreseeable future.

## Israel's strategy is not meant to succeed

But Barak and Netanyahu, and those around them, know too well that the blockade on Gaza is not going to produce any change in the position of Hamas and one should give credit to the Prime Minister, David Cameron, who remarked at Prime Minister's Questions after the attack that the Israelis' policy, in fact, strengthens, rather than weakens, Hamas' hold on Gaza. But this strategy, despite its declared aim, is not meant to succeed — or, at least, no one is worried in Jerusalem if it continues to be fruitless and futile.

One would have thought that Israel's drastic decline in international reputation would prompt new thinking by its leaders. But the responses to the attack on the flotilla indicated clearly that there is no hope for any significant shift in the official position.

This is not surprising. The Barak-Netanyahu-Avigdor Lieberman government does not know any other way of responding to the reality in Palestine and Israel. The use of brutal force to impose your will and a hectic propaganda machine that describes it as self-defence, while demonising the half-starved people in Gaza and those who come to their aid as terrorists, is the only possible course for these politicians. The terrible consequences in human death and suffering of this determination do not concern them, nor does international condemnation.

The real — unlike the declared — strategy is to continue this state of affairs.



As long as the international community is complacent, the Arab world impotent and Gaza contained, Israel can still have a thriving economy and an electorate that regards the dominance of the army in its life, the continued conflict and the oppression of the Palestinians as the exclusive past, present and future reality of life in Israel.

## Joe Biden gives unconditional support

The US vice-president Joe Biden was humiliated when the Israelis announced the building of 1,600 new homes in East Jerusalem on the day he arrived to try to freeze the settlement policy. But his unconditional support now for the latest Israeli action makes the leaders and their electorate feel vindicated.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that American support and a feeble European response to Israeli criminal policies are the main reasons for the protracted blockade and strangulation of Gaza. What is probably most difficult to explain to readers around the world is how deeply these perceptions and attitudes



are grounded in the Israeli psyche and mentality. And it is indeed difficult to comprehend how diametrically opposed are the common reactions in the UK, for instance, to such events to the emotions that it triggers inside the Israeli Jewish society.

The international response is based on the assumption that more forthcoming Palestinian concessions and a continued dialogue with the Israeli political elite will produce a new reality on the ground. The official discourse in the West is that a very reasonable and attainable solution is just around the corner if all sides would make one final effort: the two-state solution.

## An offer of imprisonment

Nothing is further from the truth than this optimistic scenario. The only version of this solution that is acceptable to Israel is the one that both the tamed Palestine Authority in Ramallah and the more assertive Hamas in Gaza could never ever accept. It is an offer to imprison the Palestinians in stateless enclaves in return for ending their struggle.

Thus, even before one discusses either an alternative solution — a single democratic state for all, which I support — or explores a more plausible, two-state settlement, one has to transform fundamentally the Israeli official and public mindset. This mentality is the principal barrier to a peaceful reconciliation in the torn land of Israel and Palestine.

**Professor Ilan Pappé directs the European Centre for Palestine Studies at Exeter University and is the author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. This article first appeared in the *Independent*, Sunday, 6 June 2010**

# Brutal treatment of Palestinian Israeli prisoners

**Lubna Masarwa was a Free Gaza Movement representative aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. This is an edited version of an account she wrote from her house arrest in Kfor Qara, Palestine.**

**D**uring the Israeli attack I was inside the body of the ship where the wounded and corpses were brought in from the deck. We were held for several hours with four bodies and dozens of wounded, some in critical condition. Blood was pouring from the bodies of the dead and the injured.

One Turkish woman was crying and saying goodbye to the body of her dead



husband, petting his face and reading the Quran over him. Another man had a bullet wound in his head and was dying.

*Once the activists had been transferred to the upper decks and handcuffed, Lubna writes:* Heavily-armed soldiers with guns and knives strapped to their arms and legs stood guard over us with dogs. They were standing around us with the blood of their victims on their boots, joking and making lewd sexual suggestions to each other about the female prisoners. Then Israeli personnel came and strutted around the ship. I was held there until 1:40am on 1 June.

As soon as the Israeli occupation forces learned that I was a Palestinian Israeli citizen, I was treated more harshly and isolated from the rest of the passengers. I was taken to a prison in Ashkelon where I was held in isolation and subjected to humiliations such as strip searches four times a day.

The next day we were brought to court and I was held in a small metal box inside the police car for eight hours with my hands and legs shackled. We were subjected to various accusations, from attacking soldiers to carrying weapons. The judge gave the police permission to extend our detention for another eight days.

After international pressure forced the Israeli authorities to release all the foreign

prisoners, the Palestinian citizens of Israel were taken to court again. This time, the judge ruled that we would be subject to house arrest and would be forbidden to leave the country for 45 days.

As an occupier and a coloniser, Israel depends on the principle of “divide and conquer” in order to maintain its control. It is especially threatened by people like the Palestinian delegation from 1948 (what is now referred to as Israel) who sailed to Gaza on the *Mavi Marmara*, because we defy Israel’s attempt to divide us as Palestinians. By struggling with our sisters and brothers under the siege, we also send the message that we are one people and our struggle is one struggle. Israel is threatened by solidarity.

Israel feels entitled to besiege, to kill and to attack civilians in international waters. This results from the silence of the world that makes Israel believe it has the right to do so.

This is the time to break the silence and to take action. Israel’s impunity must end. Israeli war criminals, such as the ones who committed piracy and murder on the *Mavi Marmara* and their superiors, must be held accountable for their crimes in international courts.

■ Lubna can be reached on Lubna@gmail.com

# Fight to hold Israel accountable

**B**ecause the *Mavi Marmara* was sailing under the Turkish flag and was in international waters it was, in legal terms, a part of Turkey. Other ships were flying the flags of Greece and the US.

Post mortem examinations of the dead carried out by Turkey's Forensic Institute Physical Examination Board revealed that the Israeli forces used semi-automatic and automatic firearms and shot to kill the activists. Almost all of them were shot from above with a high angle.

The bodies had been washed before leaving Israel so no gunpowder residue was left making it impossible to judge the range of most shots and clearly revealing Israel's intention to cover things up.

Lawyers in Turkey said the legal action would consist of three elements: action against Israeli officials within Turkey by the families of victims, activities to mobilise international authorities to take action and legal moves in the countries of each flotilla activist.

Lynda Brayer, an Israeli human rights lawyer based in Haifa specializing in the laws of war, said that since no state of war existed at the time between Israel and the countries whose flags the convoy ships were flying, the attack on the vessels constituted an act of war against those countries.



**Irish Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Mairead Maguire (right) who was on the Rachel Corrie**

Brayer quoted Article 6 of the Charter Provisions of the Nuremberg Trials and the 1907 Hague Regulation Convention regarding the right to capture ships in naval war and said Israel had committed "crimes against peace" and "crimes against humanity."

"These are crimes that have international jurisdiction. Israeli political and military personnel can be named in trials held in any and all countries of the world. If the Israelis do not attend the trials, they can be tried *in absentia*, and those decisions in which the Israelis are found guilty can be executed anywhere in the world," she said.

"Because unarmed civilians were murdered by a preplanned military attack, capital crimes have been committed. These crimes give rise to damage claims for huge sums of money and Israeli

accounts can be blocked using decisions finding them guilty."

On the subject of Israel's contention that its soldiers came under attack from the activists, Professor Ben Saul, who served on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, said: "Government military forces rappelling onto a ship to capture it illegally are treated no differently to other criminals. The right of self-defence in such situations rests with the passengers on board: a person is legally entitled to resist one's own unlawful capture, abduction and detention."

## Threat of mass expulsions

**I**n April a new Israeli military order took effect which will enable the army to deport tens of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank. Residents may also be prosecuted on "infiltration" charges, which carry long prison terms.

The Israeli daily *Haaretz* said that the first candidates for expulsion will be people whose ID cards carry an address in the Gaza Strip; this would include children born in the West Bank and Palestinians living in the West Bank who have lost their residency status for various reasons. The deportation can be executed 72 hours after the order has been issued.

In its editorial, *Haaretz* warned: "Implementing this new military order is not only likely to spark a new conflagration in the territories, it is liable to give the world clear-cut proof that Israel's aim is a mass deportation of Palestinians from the West Bank.

"While all Jews can settle wherever they wish, in Israel or in the territories, Israel is trying to deprive the Palestinians of even the minimal right to choose where to live in the West Bank or Gaza. The prime minister and defence minister should immediately shelve this military order before the IDF feels free to begin carrying out expulsions."

Expulsions have already begun. On 21 April Ahmad Sabah was forcibly deported to the Gaza Strip immediately after his release from prison. Sabah was born in Jordan to a refugee family and lived briefly in Gaza in 1994-5, when he was a member of the Palestinian defence forces. Then he moved to the West Bank

where he married and raised a family. His family only found out after his deportation that he would not be coming home.

On 27 April 19-year-old Fadi Ayiada Al Azazma, who has lived in Hebron for 15 years, was also deported to Gaza. Neither of the two men have been given leave to appeal.

Since 1996, in violation of the Oslo Accords, Israel has forbidden the Palestinian Authority to change the identity card address of people who moved from Gaza to the West Bank. The "freezing" of IDs was extended to all addresses in 2000. This has enabled Israel to classify such people — including foreigners who have married Palestinians and established their families in the West Bank — as "infiltrators" in their own homes.

The military order constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in particular of Article 49 which prohibits any

kind of forcible transfer of civilians from occupied territory.

Hitherto Israel has focused on expulsions from East Jerusalem, illegally annexed in 1967. Since then at least 13,000 Palestinians have been stripped of their residency rights in the city, usually on the pretext that they have stayed away too long. (No such strictures are applied to Jewish residents.)

On 24 June Israel announced it plans to expel from Jerusalem four Hamas politicians, democratically elected to the Palestinian legislative assembly in 2006. They were jailed immediately after the elections and have just been released. This is the first time membership of a political party has been cited as the reason for deportation.

**"Israel is trying to deprive the Palestinians of even the minimal right to choose where to live"**



# Organising working women

The Women's Department of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) trains activists in how to organise women in the workplace. **Kiri Tunks** spoke to the Department's Secretary, **Neda Abu Zant**.

## How has the occupation affected day-to-day life for women?

Over 6,500 martyrs have been killed since the Second Intifada in September 2000 which means families have lost many breadwinners. This has turned many women into the heads of the households and it is often these families who are the poorest. There is also a psychological and social impact on families who have lost a source of protection.

There has been extensive destruction of the infrastructure of cities and villages including the provision of electricity, water and public buildings as well as the destruction of private homes, property, cars and other personal belongings making it harder for women to fulfil family responsibilities.

Restrictions on the movement of goods and people caused by the Wall and checkpoints prevent some 300,000 workers from reaching their workplaces on a regular basis. They stop students and teachers from reaching their schools and universities, farmers their lands, patients and doctors their hospitals: this all tears at the social fabric of our society. We live in cantons, isolated from each other, with Israel controlling all the roads that connect us.

## What are the particular effects of the occupation on women?

These measures have badly affected all Palestinians but their impact is more severe on the rural population and on women. Poor families find it hard to provide basic foodstuffs and there is a rise in the incidence of anaemia, particularly in pregnant women. There is also a high level of maternal and child mortality.

The occupation means that many girls resort to early marriages as a response to fear and also to alleviate the economic burdens on the family. This practice is high, especially among the poor and marginalised, and is increasing due to limits on movement, in turn leading to an increase in congenital abnormalities.

Palestinian women are also caring for the wounded and those with disabilities in the absence of any infrastructure or institutional services at a time when proper rehabilitation is needed. These additional roles are an impediment to active participation in the development of Palestinian society. Along with the other barriers, this impedes women from taking part in education or work.

## How and where do women work?

Tens of thousands of people from Palestine work in settlements and inside Israel because of lack of employment opportunities. Some

have permits but others work illegally. Many women are badly paid (70,000 women are paid less than 400 NIS per month, about £70) and work in difficult conditions because they do not know their rights. Women workers face daily humiliation by Israeli soldiers and security companies. They are abused and strip-searched.

## How easy is it for women and girls to access education?

It is enshrined in Palestinian law that all groups have the right to education and particularly that women receive equal opportunities to men. It is also emphasised that barriers such as poverty or lack of nearby schools should not stand in the way of those from low-income families. The occupation makes this very difficult yet there has been a steady increase in school numbers with more than 50% of the school population being female.

## What about women who challenge the occupation: how are they dealt with?

The suffering of women captives is beyond description. Women held in Israeli prisons suffer brutality and repression. They face torture and abuse including the threat of rape. The authorities do not recognise the international covenants and norms and the conditions in which women are kept are very poor.

Women suffer medical neglect and poor nutrition which puts them at risk of disease. Their living conditions are poor with no ventilation or heating and a lack of privacy. Women who give birth in prison are chained to their beds and suffer medical negligence. It is something we want the world to know about.

Women prisoners have fought since the beginning to improve their conditions and to challenge their treatment by the Israeli authorities.

## How does the PGFTU work with women?

Women sometimes neglect the right to collective bargaining because of their fear of job loss in the absence of adequate legal protection for them during the performance of trade union action. The PGFTU is working on training field staff to visit women in the workplace to educate them about their rights of association and non-discrimination. We persuade women to work with us and we run workshops on Palestinian labour law, health, occupational safety and violence against women.



**Kiri Tunks (fourth from left) and Neda Abu Zant (fifth from left) with women trade unionists at the PGFTU HQ**

# Torture of children

By Gerard Horton

In the early hours of 26 May 2010, Israeli soldiers moved quietly into a village near Hebron, in occupied Palestine, and arrested four boys — 15-year-old Ibrahim was one of those boys.

*"I was sleeping when I woke up to banging on the front door," recalls Ibrahim, who was beside his father when he opened the door and was told by soldiers to leave the house. "We all came out except my one year old brother, but one of the soldiers said to my father that everyone should leave without exception. My father told him that my brother is only a one year old and if he comes out, he might start coughing and feeling cold, but the soldier insisted that he must come out."*

The family's I.D. cards were checked and Ibrahim was singled out, tied and blindfolded, before being placed on the floor of a military vehicle. The soldiers gave no explanation as to why they were detaining Ibrahim or where they were taking him. Once the vehicle started to move, Ibrahim was beaten on the back with an assault rifle and told to "shut up" when he asked for his hand ties to be removed.

Ibrahim was first taken to a small settlement where he spent the rest of the night sitting tied and blindfolded on a chair. Although he asked to use the toilet, his request was refused. At around 10am, he was again placed in a military vehicle and transferred to Etzion Interrogation and Detention Centre, located inside the Israeli settlement of Gush Etzion, half-way between Hebron and Bethlehem. It was in the police station inside this settlement that Ibrahim was interrogated.

**"I confessed because I didn't want to be tortured all over again"**

Ibrahim's plastic hand ties were removed and replaced with metal handcuffs before he was ordered to sit on the floor by the interrogator. He remained blindfolded. *"Don't you want to tell me who threw stones with you?" asked the interrogator. "I didn't throw any stones and I don't know who threw stones either," replied Ibrahim. "You're a liar, motherf\*\*cker," replied the interrogator who then kicked Ibrahim in the back before leaving the room. The interrogator returned about five minutes later with what Ibrahim believes were car battery jump leads. "He placed one end on my handcuffs and the other end on my penis and I felt great pain and started screaming. He said 'I want you to confess or otherwise I will plug in the cable and you will never have children.'"*



A child awaits trial in a military court. Photo: Annie Tritt

Initially Ibrahim refused to confess but the interrogator kicked him in the back several times and placed his foot on his handcuffs. *"I confessed to throwing stones a few weeks before as well as two years ago. I confessed because I didn't want to be tortured all over again,"* recalls Ibrahim.

Twelve months after the UN Committee Against Torture reviewed Israel's compliance with the Torture Convention, ratified by Israeli in 1991, the use of abusive techniques on Palestinian children still appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalised. Ibrahim's case is not particularly unique. On 7 June 2010, DCI-Palestine submitted a report to the UN, supported by over 100 pages of sworn affidavits taken from children as young as ten, who reported being mistreated and abused during Israeli detention in the course of the previous year. This submission follows a review by DCI-Palestine of 100 sworn affidavits collected from children in 2009 highlighting the extent of the problem. The results of this review are presented in the table.

Lawyers for DCI-Palestine represent approximately 20–30 percent of the 700 Palestinian children who are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year. In the majority of these cases, children are arrested from their family homes between midnight and 4am at gunpoint. They are rarely told why they are being arrested or

where they are being taken. In 2009, over 61 percent of the children represented by DCI-Palestine were accused of throwing stones at soldiers, armoured vehicles, settlements, settler vehicles, and, in some cases, even the Wall. Regrettably, this abuse is unlikely to end until Israel withdraws its army and settlements from the West Bank. In the meantime there are some simple measures that, if introduced, might go to minimising the level of abuse. These measures include the presence of lawyers and video cameras during all interrogations in order to

provide some measure of independent oversight to an inherently abusive system.

**"Children are arrested from their family homes at gunpoint"**

And as for Ibrahim, he was released from detention six days later, after his father and uncle each agreed to sign guarantees of NIS 20,000 (£3,500). Ibrahim is now back in his village and has yet to be charged with any offence.

**Gerard Horton works as International Advocacy Officer for Defence for Children International — Palestine Section**

■ For further information please visit DCI-Palestine's website at [www.dci-pal.org](http://www.dci-pal.org)

## Torture and ill-treatment – Sample of 100 cases from 2009

Ill-treatment	Percentage
Hand ties	97%
Blindfolding	92%
Confession during interrogation	81%
Beaten or kicked	69%
Arrested between midnight and 4am	65%
Verbal abuse	50%
Threats or inducements	49%
Signed confession in Hebrew	32%
Position abuse	26%
Solitary confinement	14%
Threat of sexual assault	12%
Sexual assault	4%

# Dockers join boycott

By Bernard Regan

A number of trade unions, most notably dockworkers, in countries across the globe responded to the murderous attack on the Gaza Flotilla by refusing to load or unload Israeli vessels.

Amongst those who took action were dockers in Sweden who, in the 1970s and 1980s, had also refused to handle cargo from Chile when it was under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet and boycotted shipping from apartheid South Africa.

The Swedish dockers' union's decision to take action did not go unchallenged. Their employers, Ports of Sweden, threatened legal action to stop the blockade, originally planned for 15 to 24 June. The action was therefore re-scheduled for 22 to 29 June while Norwegian dockworkers decided to take action on the dates previously announced by their Swedish counterparts.

Eric Helgeson, of the Swedish union, explained that the action was not only in protest at what had happened to the flotilla but was mainly in opposition to the continuing blockade of Gaza and the collective punishment imposed on its people by the Israeli government.

At the end of the action, which attracted widespread international attention, the union reported that containers with a total weight of approximately 500 tonnes had been blocked around the country. In addition, large quantities of Swedish wooden export goods had been kept under blockade.

The union said it had also informed the Swedish Ship to Gaza organisation and others that if aid ships wished to depart from Swedish ports the union would organise voluntary teams of workers to handle the loading and work towards making the employers provide cranes, space and other necessary resources free of charge.

Across the other side of the



Oakland picket. Photo: Bill Hackwell, [www.PSLweb.org](http://www.PSLweb.org)

world dockworker members of the Longshoremen's Union in Oakland, California, refused to cross a picket line established by a coalition of peace groups in the area. The picket by 800 people — the first ever at a US port in support of Palestine — began at 5.30 am on Sunday 20 June and lasted all day because the Israeli Zim Shipping Company tried to circumvent the action by delaying the docking of the ship till the evening.

These actions were inspired by a decision taken in February, 2009, by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) not to offload a cargo ship from Israel scheduled to arrive in Durban following the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip which resulted in the murders of 1440 people and led to the Goldstone Report.

The actions by dockers in Sweden, Norway, South Africa and California give proof that the campaign for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions is growing across the world. At the end of June the Turkish Dockworkers' Union, Liman-Is, also decided that its members would no longer handle Israeli ships.

The advances will not be uniform since the situations faced in each country will differ. In Britain, the joint Trade Union Congress/Palestine Solidarity Campaign activity to boycott settlement goods is

created by the merger of the Transport Workers Union and AMICUS. The motion adopted overwhelmingly at the first Policy Conference of the new union called upon the Executive "to actively and vigorously promote a boycott of Israeli goods and services similar to the boycott of South African goods during the era of apartheid."

The motion also said that "the representatives of UNITE (should) raise these issues at the forthcoming TUC conference and with the European TUC and call upon concerted EU-wide trade union solidarity action to protest at the indifference of EU governments, at the failure of the strategy of 'constructive engagement' with the state of Israel, and at what is effectively the appeasement of the Israeli aggression and territorial expansionism."

This policy, coupled with that of UNISON, PCS, FBU and others, will provide an important platform on which to develop solidarity work. In the coming months it will be important to turn the words of such policies into actions that have a real impact and will send a message to the Israeli government and those who give them comfort like the United States Administration.

■ To follow news on developments in the unions see: <http://tinyurl.com/35dj93o>

an important step in bringing the message of solidarity with the Palestinians to millions of people. Whilst it is building, unions have also been discussing ways of strengthening the campaign.

Amongst the highly significant decisions to have been taken is that by UNITE, the two million strong union

## Unions cut relations with Histadrut

Last September the TUC agreed to review its relationship with the Histadrut (the umbrella organisation for Israeli trade unions), following a similar decision by Scottish TUC. PSC has been seeking a positive outcome to these reviews in terms of trade unions understanding the Histadrut's historic role in supporting the Occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people and also of ending the unions' traditional "even-handed" approach to Histadrut.

After the attack on the Freedom Flotilla, Histadrut released a statement, part of which read: "We are saddened by the fact that an action whose goal is apparently humanitarian assistance deteriorated to the violence that led to loss of life. Unfortunately, the conduct of the flotilla organisers, through the rejection of the Israeli

proposal (to unload the ships at Ashdod) was to attain provocation to strengthen Hamas, agitate the real peace efforts in the region... and create an incident which now threatens to unravel the delicate diplomacy which had... brought about a renewal of peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority."

This support given by the Histadrut to the act of war carried out by Israel on the *Mavi Marmara* focused the minds of delegates to trade union conferences. An emergency resolution to the UNISON conference declared: "Conference condemns the Histadrut's

(cont. overleaf)

# The obliteration of Al Walaja

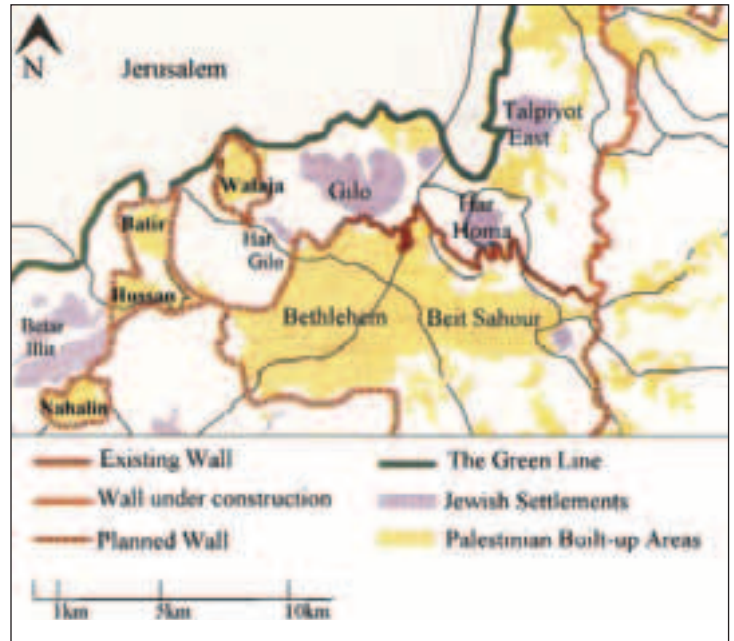
By Victoria Brittain

**W**EEK after week this spring the internet and the Arab media have shown pictures of Israeli security forces removing or arresting peaceful protesters at Al Walaja village outside Bethlehem. Five years of regular Friday protests against the Wall in villages such as Ni'ilin and Bil'in in the West Bank and against house seizures and demolitions in East Jerusalem have seen many arrests and casualties and have ensured the names of these areas are internationally known. But nevertheless, the dispossession of Palestinians by land seizure, Wall building, settlement construction, by-pass and tunnel road building, marches on relentlessly.

Al Walaja, set in the hills just outside Beit Jala, presents a microcosm of this story. From certain angles and on particular days, the village presents a biblical era scene of peace: a young man on his donkey riding to his olive trees, cream stone houses, gardens full of ancient fruit trees shading carefully tended vegetables and



**A new road for settlers above — a tunnel beneath it for Palestinians**



colourful roses, geraniums, bougainvillea and oleander bushes.

Old almond, apricot and fig trees lean over the narrow road. Just outside the village is a legendary olive tree which Swiss, Italian and Japanese experts have variously dated as 4,000 or 5,000 years old. The backyard of Al Walaja, deep in woods where the villagers used to walk and picnic and have their football pitch, is the large Italianate Cremisan monastery of the Silesian order, built in 1885 on land donated by the village. The monks are famous for their wine, and they also offer theology study to students from many countries.

But all this harmonious rural life will soon be no more. Al Walaja is situated right in the line of the rapidly expanding illegal settlements of Har Homa, Gilo and Har Gilo, in an arc south of Jerusalem. The Separation Wall will cut the village off from the monastery, the woods, the football pitch — and the land that the villagers live off.

The noise of bulldozers and a haze of construction dust has reached the edge of Al Walaja. The Israeli government is hacking a wide trench through the village for the Separation Wall, condemned by the International Criminal Court in 2004; builders are hard at work on the extension of Har Gilo settlement within yards of the village; house demolition orders threaten 49 houses with their historic gardens, fruit trees and farms; new roads are under construction

(cont. from previous page)

statement of 31st May which supports uncritically the Israeli government's action against the flotilla and agrees to suspend our relations with the Histadrut pending the outcome of our review of our relations as previously agreed by National Delegate Conference."

Earlier the University and College Union had agreed "to sever all relations with Histadrut and to urge other trade unions and bodies to do likewise."

After unions affiliated to the PSC asked for clarification of the PSC attitude to the Histadrut in the light of its statement, the PSC

executive agreed the following:

**"Recognising the democratic processes unions would wish to follow, the PSC would urge all British trade unions to review and end any direct bi-lateral relations with Histadrut and welcomes UNISON's decision to suspend relations whilst the review is conducted.**

**"The PSC welcomes the STUC's review of relations with Histadrut and is confident that the most recent statement will be taken into account when deciding whether or not to suspend bi-lateral relations later this year.**

**"The PSC would hope that the British TUC will take a similar approach in the future."**



**Saleh Khalefeh, Mayor of Al Walaja**

which will link the settlers to the main road, while a tunnel under it will be the villagers' only way out to Beit Jala and Bethlehem for markets, schools and health care.

The whole complex history of Palestine can be read on this one hillside. The elected Mayor of Al Walaja, Saleh Khalefeh, tells the story of how, before 1948, its 67,000 dunums made it the biggest village around Jerusalem and the key supplier of agricultural products to the capital. Al Walaja then had 1,914 inhabitants, 320 houses and a daily income of 1800 Palestinian pounds a day, when the Palestinian pound was equivalent to the British pound.

## “The whole complex history of Palestine can be read on this one hillside”

But then came the Nakba. “In 1948 everybody became refugees — from fear. It is complicated: the armistice line originally put the village on the Jordanian side of the line, but they swapped it for another village, north of Jerusalem, as the Israelis wanted ours because of the railway line. They took the part with houses. We had only 7,000 dunums left. Then in 1956 they destroyed the whole village. People came back and rebuilt these houses you see now, before 1967. But most people had left for Jordan — there are 20,000 refugees there now from this place and we are only 2,400 here.”

No-one told the villagers that half of Al Walaja had been designated in 1967 as part of Jerusalem — eight kilometres away

— until the mid 1980s. So villagers, with West Bank status, not Jerusalem rights, were not allowed to live in that half. In 1984 house demolitions began and 23 houses and farms were demolished in the last 25 years. Many have been rebuilt, demolished again, rebuilt again.

Today Mr Khalefeh is one of the 49 house owners who have cases in the court to block their demolition and the new seizure of land. “They have great lawyers, but all these are not cases that are ever going to be won,” said one legal expert. Their first case, about land confiscated to connect the Har Gilo settlement to the main Route 60 north/south highway, was indeed lost in 2007/8 and is now in the Supreme Court. And on top of that uncertainty, these 49 have been fined over one million shekels (£172,000) for building without Israeli “permission.”

In the modest, neat village council office, under a picture of Yasser Arafat, Mr Khalefeh spread out maps of the village, with the known plans for the Wall superimposed. He went on: “The Israelis’ aim is to force people to leave. It is not just the Wall and the settlers’ roads but the cutting of our trees and the blocking of access to our water springs.

“We are over the Southern water aquifer and we used to have 23 springs in 1948 — today there are only three and the sweet water of one of those, El Hariya, is forbidden to us. It is on the settlers’ road. In fact, the villagers do not have enough land to live on now and if the Israelis implement these plans, we will lose 4,000 of the 7,000 dunums we have. And, studying the plans, we expect to lose even more — taking us down to 1,200 dunums. The truth is, some villagers have left — so the Israelis have succeeded.”

Al Walaja’s desperate unemployment rate of 45%, especially high among the young, is the story of the whole occupied Palestinian territory’s economic strangling. Palestinians can no longer work in Israel, there is little work in most of the West Bank, agricultural products cannot compete with the mechanised farming of the settlements for markets, and, as Mr Khalefeh said, “most people now work in government institutions, not farming.”

From the village about 1,200 people go every day to work in Bethlehem or Hebron. There is no high school, nor health facilities.

Besides Al Walaja, there are six other Palestinian villages in the area equally threatened by the settlement plans. This west Bethlehem region is a key link in the planned massive expansion of the Gush Etzion settlements which will cover the north, west and south of the Bethlehem area, from Jerusalem to Hebron, with Israelis.

Al Walaja, like other Bethlehem villages such as Battir, Al Jaba, and Ni’ilin, is already economically strangled. All over the West Bank the creeping ethnic cleansing, which long ago closed all possibility of a viable two state solution, is the most meticulously documented of undeclared wars. The legions of diplomats and western aid agency personnel who live and work in Jerusalem and the West Bank have no excuse for not knowing the extent of the historical injustice worsening by the week, as Israel creates its new facts on the ground in defiance of any modest dissent in the outside world.

There is no reason to believe that, after 60 years, there will be any change in the slow strangling of the Palestinians under an Occupation which has become normalised in the consciousness of an indifferent Western world. The people of Al Walaja, Battir and so many other Palestinian villages today are the victims of the Nakba that has never ended.

## Unions behind BDS

**A**t the second annual Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions conference, held in Nablus on the day of the flotilla killings, Hugh Lanning gave a speech saying that British trade unions were fully behind the BDS call.

Hugh, chair of the PSC and deputy general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, gave examples of five unions which disseminate massive amounts of material on the

Palestinian issue and BDS achievements to their members. These unions — FBU, PBS, UNITE, UNISON, and GMB — also campaign for a nuclear-free Middle East and to defend Universal Jurisdiction in Britain.

During the conference, organised by the Palestinian Boycott National Committee (BNC), various speakers addressed two different panels: Boycotting Israel Internationally and Boycotting Israel Nationally. After lunch, workshops were set up to discuss grassroots work, civil society organisations, public sector, private sector, Palestinians in the diaspora, students and international BDS.

# The ongoing Nakba

Six hundred families in al-Lydd and 400 families in Jaffa are facing expulsion from their cities and demolition of their homes; 100,000 people in “unrecognised” villages in the Negev get no water, electricity, sewage, refuse, health care or education services.

These are citizens of Israel, the state that boasts it is “the only democracy in the Middle East,” and they are, of course, Palestinian. In fact, Israel’s treatment of its own citizens on the basis of their ethnic group provides even more stark evidence of the racist nature of its ideology than its treatment of the population of the occupied West Bank. **Hazem Jamjoom**, communications officer for the refugee rights organisation, Badil, and editor of al-Majdal, tells **Gill Swain** that this is “the ongoing Nakba” for the Palestinian people.

**B**adil — which means “alternative” in Arabic — was set up in 1998 following concern that the plight of the refugees had been marginalised by the Oslo accords which left the question as part of the “final status” talks and therefore postponed indefinitely.

In the mid-90s families from some of the 531 villages which the Israelis destroyed during their ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948 began to form village societies to preserve their history and campaign for the right of return to their homes.

The first popular conference for the right of return was held in a former military detention centre in the Jordan Valley. “Many of the participants had been detained and tortured there in the past,” says Hazem.

This was followed by other conferences which formed the basis of the right of return movement. One of the recommendations to come from the meetings was that there was a need for professional research to determine exactly what the refugees’ rights were under international law.

Hazem, a qualified lawyer, says: “There isn’t any debate in legal circles about the right of return. It is absolutely irrefutable. People are always saying the Israel-Palestine situation is complex but actually, it is very simple. Many Palestinians could reach their home villages in 20 minutes if there were enough buses.

“What bars their return is simply the

racist ideology of Zionism that gives superiority and privilege to the group that colonised the country over its indigenous population. If the refugees were Jewish, they would have no problem returning.”

**“There isn’t any debate in legal circles about the right of return. It is absolutely irrefutable”**

The second Intifada interrupted the growth of the movement but also enabled activists to take the issue back to its roots, Hazem says: “By the 90s most people internationally were only talking about Palestine in terms of the Occupation. The refugees had become the ‘refugee problem’ and the talk was of them giving up their rights and resettling.

“The movement pushed people to look at what happened before 1967, specifically at the racism of Zionism as the root cause of the original sin of the Nakba which needed to be remedied.”

Hazem believes the most practical solution would be one democratic, secular state with equal rights for all its citizens but he said the right of return was not conditional on how many states there are.

“There could be one, two or 17 states so long as people can go back, get restitution of their property that was stolen or destroyed and compensation for injuries inflicted. The Nakba was a criminal expulsion of a population and therefore a war crime and a crime against humanity.

“As such, the remedy is not just to be found in human rights and refugee law but in international criminal law. That means a full package of reparations plus an official admission of the crime that was committed and an apology.”

Such a scenario is often dismissed as impractical but Hazem says research has been done which shows the opposite. “Salman abu Sitta, for instance, showed that around 84% of the land of the destroyed villages is vacant. Jewish immigrants mostly live in cities on the coast.”

Though Israel blatantly flouts international law on a massive scale and seems immune to all condemnation, Hazem still believes legal challenges and things like the Goldstone report are vital.

“We need some kind of moral common ground in international relations that you can use to say this is wrong. That language is provided by international law,” he says.

“Also, the strength of the BDS movement comes from saying not only that Israel’s actions are wrong, but that they are illegal. The TUC voted to boycott settlement goods because they could rely on the firm foundation of international law.”

We were talking during Hazem’s lecture tour of Europe and Scandinavia in which he was raising general awareness of the fight for the right of return and also highlighting the lesser known plight of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Much of Badil’s work is now concentrated on exploring the international laws relating to apartheid and gathering evidence of specific instances where Israel is violating them. And by linking the roots of the Palestinian tragedy with the brutal oppression and inhumane harassment still being inflicted on the people, Hazem hopes to provide a framework for activists to understand the current political situation.

**“Around 84% of the land of the destroyed villages is vacant”**

“There is a possibility that in the next two years a Palestinian Authority official will declare a Palestinian state on the bantustans. I am concerned that many activists will find this confusing and it may pull the rug out from under our campaign,” says Hazem.

“There will be pomp and fanfares, and probably Nobel Peace Prizes flying around. But what it will mean will be the entrenchment of Israel’s apartheid regime.”



# The silenced minority speaks out

By Georgina Reeves

For a state that ignores international laws and conventions in murdering Palestinians and internationals and shrugs off all condemnation with no apology or regret, it's little surprise that Israel spends a great deal of energy persecuting voices of dissent within its own citizenry. Particularly when that voice of dissent is Palestinian.

Ameer Makhoul, Omar Said, Haneen Zoabi, Sheikh Raed Salah, Lubna Masarwa and Mohamad Zeidan are all Palestinians with Israeli citizenship; and they are all paying a high price for their political activism challenging and confronting a state that would rather expel them than accept them as equal citizens with equal rights.

On 22 April, Ameer Makhoul, director of Ittijah, a Palestinian NGO based in Haifa, was prevented from leaving Israel. Israeli minister of the interior, Eli Yishay, stated: "I have reached the conviction that the exit of Ameer Makhoul from the country poses a serious threat to the security of the state." Two weeks later Makhoul's home was raided in the dead of night by Israel's internal security service, the Shin Bet. Makhoul was arrested and computers and papers were seized from his home and office.



**Ameer Makhoul**

**"Makhoul has been repeatedly tortured to obtain a confession"**

Makhoul has since, at various stages of his detention, been denied access to a lawyer, been repeatedly tortured to obtain a confession and, as is common with political persecution of Palestinians, neither he nor his legal team has been given access to any evidence the state claims to have. The charges are serious: assistance to the enemy in a time of war, conspiracy to assist an enemy, aggravated espionage and contact with a foreign agent. Makhoul

vigorously denies all charges.

Prior to Makhoul's detention, Dr Omar Said, a leading expert in traditional Arabic herbal medicine and an environmental activist, had already been arrested. He is also leader of the Arab nationalist party, Balad, and a committed proponent of co-existence between Arabs and Jews. He, too, has been charged with espionage.

In both cases the authorities slapped a gagging order on the press. It was through the strenuous activities of political activists, both inside Israel and beyond, that the details of the cases against Makhoul and Said became public knowledge. Said also vehemently protests his innocence and those of us who know both men do not believe that the charges against them are true. Israel uses political persecution as an attempt to delegitimise Palestinian demands for equality.

Hot on the heels of these cases of political persecution came the lethal raid on the Gaza flotilla. Among the passengers were a number of Palestinian Israelis. Lubna Masarwa is an organiser with the Free Gaza Movement.

Haneen Zoabi is one of the few Palestinian members of the Knesset, Mohamad Zeidan is chairman of the Arab Higher Monitoring Committee and Sheikh Raed Salah is a leader of the Islamic Movement.

Following the commando assault on the *Mavi Marmara*, passengers who had not been killed or injured were transferred to Israel and held in prison. Masarwa, Salah and Zeidan were then released to house arrest (see Masarwa's account, P7). As an MK, Zoabi should have parliamentary immunity, but was stripped of this on 13 July.

The scenes that followed, particularly in the Knesset chamber, demonstrate the antagonism toward Palestinians in Israeli society. While Zoabi was trying to speak at



**Haneen Zoabi**



**Sheikh Raed Salah**

the podium, hostile MKs verbally and then physically attacked her. Zoabi was branded a traitor, has received numerous death threats and now has bodyguards to protect her. There have been calls for her citizenship to be revoked.

**"MKs verbally and then physically attacked her"**

Individually, each of these cases is shocking. Israel, after all, persists in describing itself as a democracy. The hostility against the people concerned and the lengths to which Israel goes to suppress them is extraordinary.

But it is important to view these cases in a wider context. Politically active Palestinians who criticise Israel and actively promote the right to a Palestinian identity automatically become targets. Israel has always viewed its non-Jewish citizens as enemies, linking their legitimate activities in demanding equal rights and recognition as citizens of Israel to the resistance of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and beyond.

The hostility Palestinians face in daily life is ever present and is now increasing at a dangerous pace. The rise in such public attacks on Palestinian Israelis also paves the way to more extreme legislation that will be used to force vocal Palestinians into prison or exile.

Israel is desperately trying to ensure this minority is silenced by any means necessary but this strategy is likely to fail. Israel uses propaganda to place Palestinians within a framework of violence, terrorism and, more recently, radical Islam. It has succeeded to a degree, but as recent public support has shown, this rhetoric is being challenged more and more. And as attacks against Israel's Palestinian minority continue to rise, so too does the prospect of greater internal conflict.

**Georgina Reeves worked for Ittijah, based in Haifa, in 2001 before moving to work in the West Bank**

■ Family and supporters urge you to write to Ameer Makhoul at Room 4, Department 1, Gilbou Jail 10900. Email a scanned copy to janabdu@gmail.com.

# Israel's Negev 'frontier'

By Ben White

**O**n this year's Land Day, tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel marched in Sakhnin, a Palestinian town in Israel, to protest against past and present systematic discrimination. But there was a second protest that day which was just as significant.

In the Negev (referred to as al-Naqab by Palestinian Bedouins), over 3,000 attended a rally at al-Araqib, an "unrecognised" Palestinian Bedouin village whose lands are being targeted by the familiar partnership of the Israeli state and the Jewish National Fund.

The historical context for the crisis facing Bedouins is important as the Israeli government and Zionist groups try to propagate the idea that the problems, so far as they exist, are "humanitarian" or "cultural."

## Alienated and "unrecognised"

During the Nakba, the vast majority of Bedouins in the Negev — from a pre-1948 population of 65,000 to 100,000 — were expelled. Those who remained were forcibly concentrated by the Israeli military in an area known as the "siyag" (closure).

The military regime experienced by Palestinian citizens until 1966 meant further piecemeal expulsions, expropriation of land and restrictions on movement. Ultimately, only 19 out of 95 tribes remained.

The defining dynamic between the Israeli state and its Palestinian minority has been the expropriation of Arab land and its transfer to state or Jewish ownership.

When Israel adopted the Planning and Construction Law of 1965, 45 villages in the Negev were simply left off the map and the state has refused to acknowledge they exist ever since, despite the fact that some are the result of the Israeli military's forced relocation drives.

An estimated 70,000 to 80,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel live in these "unrecognised villages" which are shanty towns refused any state services including water, electricity, education, health care and waste collection.

Meanwhile the Israeli state has created, or "legalised," a small number of towns and villages — which they call "concentration towns" — in the hope that more Palestinians will move into them.

Yet even this policy, often presented as a "humane" response to "Bedouin needs," highlights a disparity: Jewish regional authorities and individual farms enjoy a massively lower population density compared to the space allotted by the state to Palestinian



A water station outside an "unrecognised" village. Bedouins are denied access to the water. Photo: Ameer Makhoul

townships which are ranked among the most deprived communities in the country.

## "Developing the Negev"

The Israeli government, meanwhile, along with agencies like the Jewish National Fund and Jewish Agency, are preoccupied with the idea of "developing the Negev," and boosting its population.

In March, the "Negev 2010" conference was held in Beir al-Saba' (Beersheva), drawing hundreds of politicians and business people, with the focus being a drive to attract 300,000 new Jewish residents to the area.

Speakers included Shimon Peres, the Israeli president, Silvan Shalom, the Negev and Galilee development minister, and Ariel Atias, the housing minister.

Last year, Shalom held a joint press conference with religious Zionist rabbis to outline plans for increasing the south's population, with one of the rabbis stressing the need for a "Jewish majority" in the region.

Atias, for his part, has expressed his belief that it is "a national duty to prevent the spread" of Palestinian citizens.

It is not, therefore, hard to read between the lines when Israeli policy makers and Zionist officials from organisations like the Jewish National Fund talk about "developing the Negev."

## Zionist frontier

The Negev is the location for classic, unfiltered Zionist frontier discourse.

The Jewish National Fund in the UK talks about supporting "the pioneers who are bringing the desert to life," while an article in the Zionist magazine *B'Nai B'Rith* called the Negev "the closest thing to the tabula rasa many of Israel's pre-state pioneers found when they first came to the Holy Land."

The idea of the "empty" land sits uncomfortably alongside another important emphasis — "protection" or "redemption."

As the Jewish National Fund's US chief executive put it in January 2009: "If we don't get 500,000 people to move to the Negev in the next five years, we're going to lose it." To whom, he did not need to say.

There were no illusions about the meaning of this discourse, and its consequences, at a conference sponsored by the British Academy and Exeter University's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies and Politics Department in February which brought together academics and experts specialising in issues facing the Bedouins of the Negev.

Through the seminars and discussions, one theme became clear: the relationship between the Palestinian Bedouins and the Israeli state was rapidly deteriorating.

A number of the organisers of, and speakers at, *Rethinking the Paradigms: Negev Bedouin Research 2000+* were themselves from the Negev where overcrowding, home demolitions and dispossession are features of everyday life for Palestinians.

## Excluded from discourse

Western media coverage of the structural discrimination and discriminatory land and housing policies experienced by Bedouins has generally been poor. The Negev is usually portrayed as a vast, wild desert; a frontier to be civilised, while the Bedouin are either invisible or portrayed as exotic savages, objects of benevolent philanthropy.

Furthermore, the international "peace process" has meant that the question of Palestine has become the story of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Core issues facing Palestinian Bedouins — land control, zoning, bureaucratic and



physical boundaries of exclusion — are not considered suitable fare.

This nonexistent or weak coverage is regrettable, particularly as Israel's policies in the Negev towards the Bedouin minority are highly illuminating for understanding



the state's position vis-à-vis the Palestinians in a more general sense.

Moreover, tension is building in the Negev over Israel's continued apartheid-like policies. Bedouins resist the strategies of the Israeli state and Zionist agencies through legal battles and grassroots organisation, like the Regional Council for the Unrecognised Villages.

Perhaps one of the main kinds of resistance is the Palestinians' determination to stay. The recent protest in al-Araqib might only be a foretaste of things to come as Palestinian Bedouins demand equality from a state seemingly unwilling to change.

## Stop the JNF — Stop Greenwashing Apartheid

By Michael Kalmanovitz,  
IJAN UK (International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network)

The launching of a new international campaign against the Jewish National Fund was set in motion at a conference in Edinburgh in May attended by 25 activists from a number of countries, including Palestine.

The conference, hosted by Scottish PSC, aimed to ensure that the JNF, a crucial and under-publicised component of Israeli apartheid, is accepted as a legitimate focus of those of us in the BDS movement.

Organised by Scottish PSC, the Palestine Boycott National Committee, IJAN, and Habitat International Coalition, the conference was both educational and action-orientated.

We agreed a campaign name, finalised a call to action, planned targets for the next three years and set up working groups — campaigning, legal, research and website — to carry these plans forward. We also agreed that Jewish people would issue a petition to undermine the JNF's claim to act for a "Jewish nation."

The JNF, calling itself "Israel's leading humanitarian and environmental charity," has charitable status in over 50 countries, including in the UK.

The "Stop the JNF — Stop Greenwashing Apartheid" campaign will expose the JNF's anti-charitable history of political and financial support and military intelligence for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and its activities of building parks and forests to hide villages destroyed in 1948 and 1967.

It will also highlight the JNF's current projects, including land and water theft from Bedouin communities in the Negev and illegally acquiring lands and houses in occupied Jerusalem through its private subsidiary, Hemnuta.

Ismail Zayid, a Palestinian now living in Canada, told the conference of his village, Beit Nuba, razed to the ground along with Dir Ayyub, Imwas and Yalu in 1967 on the orders of Yitzhak Rabin (later Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate!). Those villages are now hidden under Canada Park, a recreational site built with tax-deductible dollars.

Faisal Sawalha, from the Negev, spoke about the "unrecognised" Palestinian Bedouin villages — that is, unrecognised by the Israeli authorities who replace whole communities with Jewish-only developments.

The JNF and the Israel Lands Authority (whose board is half-appointed by the JNF) "manages" 93% of pre-1967 Israel lands. The JNF was established to acquire Palestinian land and to hold it "in trust" for Jewish people in perpetuity — a perfect example of state racism that Israel has hidden behind legal and parliamentary mechanisms.

We learnt that the JNF plans to name a forest after Coretta Scott King, the activist widow of Dr Martin Luther King, and to put up a plaque to the great African American singer, Paul Robeson. This exploitation of people of colour to hide land theft should encourage anti-racists actively to campaign against the JNF.

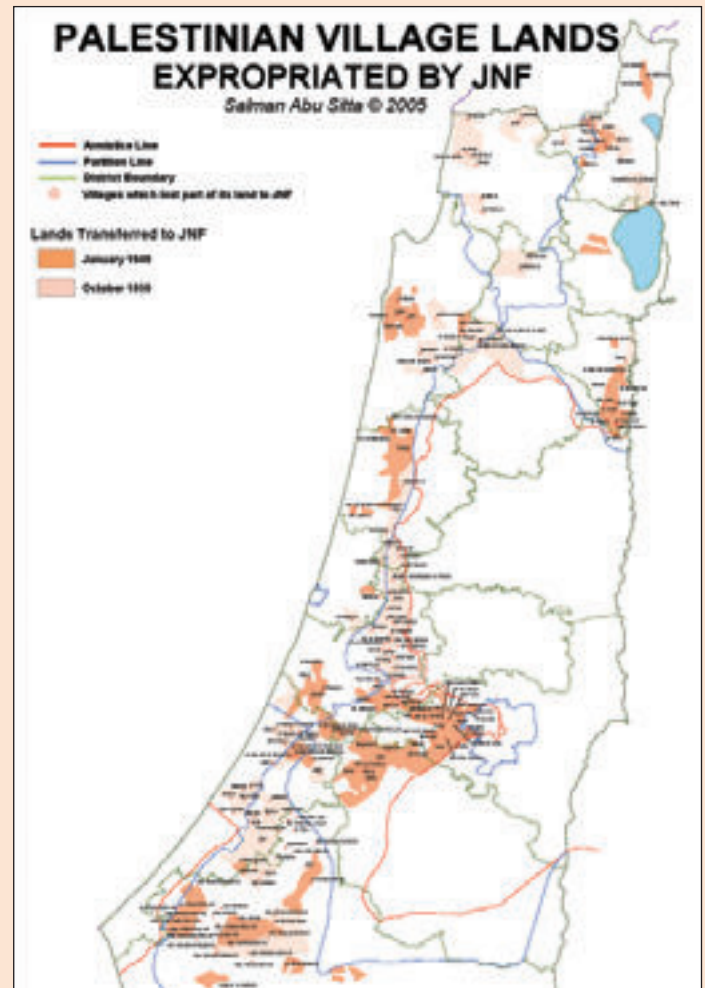
We in the UK have work to do: a British Park is built on the ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages of Ajjur and Zakariyya. The Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, this month inaugurated a new forest

named after him — the JNF claims this will help "forestall climate change." David Cameron is a patron of the JNF.

The Stop the JNF campaign intends to change public understanding. Whenever the JNF is mentioned, it will immediately be identified not with charity or the greening of the environment or recreational projects but with the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Join us in exposing and documenting the role of the JNF in the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine, protesting against its fundraising activities, opposing its charitable and tax exempt status, condemning its activities through popular tribunals and truth commissions, supporting Palestinian and Israeli organisations resisting the forced displacement of Palestinians in the Negev and Galilee, and urging organisations that collaborate with the JNF, especially those with environmental and anti-racist mandates, to break ties with it.

- To endorse the call and join the Stop the JNF campaign [stopjnf@bdsmovement.net](mailto:stopjnf@bdsmovement.net)
- For more information, see the JNF e-books, Vol 1 and 2, available from Scottish PSC



# Why there are no “Israelis” in Israel

By Jonathan Cook

A group of Jews and Arabs are fighting in the Israeli courts to be recognised as “Israelis,” a nationality currently denied them, in a case that officials fear may threaten the country’s self-declared status as a Jewish state.

Israel refused to recognise an Israeli nationality at the country’s establishment in 1948, making an unusual distinction between “citizenship” and “nationality.” Although all Israelis qualify as “citizens of Israel,” the state is defined as belonging to the “Jewish nation,” meaning not only the 5.6 million Israeli Jews but also more than seven million Jews in the diaspora. Israeli ID cards and passports identify the holder’s nationality as Jewish, Arab, Druze or others.

Critics say the special status of Jewish nationality has been a way to undermine the citizenship rights of non-Jews in Israel, especially the fifth of the population who are Arab. Some 30 laws in Israel specifically privilege Jews, including in the areas of immigration rights, naturalisation, access to land and employment.

Arab leaders have also long complained that indications of “Arab” nationality on ID cards make it easy for police and government officials to target Arab citizens for harsher treatment.

The group’s legal case is being heard by the supreme court after a district judge rejected their petition two years ago, backing the state’s position that there is no Israeli nation.

The head of the campaign for Israeli nationality, Uzi Ornan, a retired linguistics professor, said: “It is absurd that Israel, which recognises dozens of different nationalities, refuses to recognise the one nationality it is supposed to represent.”

## “Some 30 laws in Israel specifically privilege Jews”

The government opposes the case, claiming that the campaign’s real goal is to “undermine the state’s infrastructure” — a presumed reference to laws and official institutions that ensure Jewish citizens enjoy a privileged status in Israel.

Mr Ornan, 86, said that denying a common Israeli nationality was the linchpin of state-sanctioned discrimination against the Arab population.

“There are even two laws — the Law of Return for Jews and the Citizenship Law for Arabs — that determine how you belong to the state,” he said. “What kind of democracy divides its citizens into two kinds?”

Yoel Harshefi, a lawyer supporting Mr Ornan, said the interior ministry had resorted to creating national groups with no legal recognition outside Israel, such as “Arab” or “unknown,” to avoid



CARLOS LATUFF

recognising an Israeli nationality.

In official documents most Israelis are classified as “Jewish” or “Arab,” but immigrants whose status as Jews is questioned by the Israeli rabbinate, including more than 300,000 arrivals from the former Soviet Union, are typically registered according to their country of origin.

“Imagine the uproar in Jewish communities in the United States, Britain or France, if the authorities there tried to classify their citizens as ‘Jewish’ or ‘Christian,’” said Mr Ornan.

The professor launched his legal action after the interior ministry refused to change his nationality to “Israeli” in 2000. An online petition declaring “I am an Israeli” has attracted several thousand signatures. He has been joined by 20 other public figures including two Arabs; several members have been registered with unusual nationalities such as “Russian,” “Buddhist,” “Georgian” and “Burmese.”

Mr Ornan said the lack of a common nationality violated Israel’s Declaration of Independence, which says the state will “uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race or sex.”

Some of those who have joined the campaign complain that the lack of an Israeli nationality has damaged their business interests. One Druze member, Carmel Wahaba, said he had lost the chance to establish an import-export company in France because officials there refused to accept documents stating his nationality as “Druze” rather than “Israeli.”

## “What kind of democracy divides its citizens into two kinds?”

The group also said it hopes to expose a verbal sleight of hand that intentionally mistranslates the Hebrew term “Israeli citizenship” on the country’s passports as “Israeli nationality” in English to avoid problems with foreign border officials.

The campaign is likely to face an uphill struggle in the courts. A similar legal suit brought by a Tel Aviv psychologist, George Tamrin, failed in 1970. Shimon Agranat, head of the supreme court at the time, ruled: “There is no Israeli nation separate from the Jewish people... The Jewish people is composed not only of those residing in Israel but also of diaspora Jewries.” That view was echoed by the district court in 2008 when it heard Mr Ornan’s case.

The judges in the supreme court indicated at the first appeal hearing that they too were likely to be unsympathetic. Justice Uzi Fogelman said: “The question is whether or not the court is the right place to solve this problem.”

■ [www.jkcook.net](http://www.jkcook.net). This article first appeared on *Dissident Voice*: [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org)

# Israeli backlash against BDS and Universal Jurisdiction

Israel is clearly taking very seriously the effect of the boycott campaign and the call for prosecution of Israeli war criminals. Just as the new Palestinian boycott of settlement goods got under way (see p22) 25 Members of the Israeli Knesset presented a bill which, if passed, will criminalise any involvement in economic or academic boycott.

The bill, named "Prohibition on Instituting a Boycott, 2010," states that any Israeli citizen or resident promoting boycott can be prosecuted and obliged to pay heavy damages to those whose businesses may have been affected. Similarly, foreign citizens involved in boycott activities can be barred from entering Israel for ten years. And "foreign governmental entities who engage in boycott activity against Israel will be banned from engaging in any activity in Israeli bank accounts, Israeli stocks, or Israeli land and assets."

Furthermore, in the Occupied Territories boycotters could be prosecuted and forced to pay compensation to settlers who claim their businesses have suffered.

## NGOs and activists under fire

The bill is obviously intended to intimidate not only individuals in Israel and inhabitants of the West Bank but also NGOs such as the Israel-based Coalition of Women for Peace who provide information on Israeli and international corporate involvement in the occupation (see their website [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org)).

Another Israel-based group, Boycott from Within, has been active in supporting the cultural boycott which has resulted in a number of concert cancellations this year. Gush Shalom, who support the boycott of settlement goods, called boycott "a distinct tool of peace and justice seekers, against the entire establishment of the settlements whose essence is racism, oppression and deprivation." These and many more organisations would be threatened with prosecution.

Another bill put before the Knesset in June, an amendment to



the Associations Law, 2010, aims to close down any NGO if "[it] was involved in, or will provide information to, foreign entities regarding legal proceedings abroad against senior Israeli government officials or military officers for war crimes." This bill clearly seeks to undermine international human rights law and the ability of Israeli NGOs to demand accountability for human rights violations committed by Israeli officials.

The MKs introducing the bill specifically targeted the Coalition of Women for Peace, Adalah — the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights, Physicians for Human Rights — Israel and the Committee Against Torture.

In a formal resolution, the European Parliament has already expressed its "concern about pressures towards NGOs involved in the elaboration of the Goldstone Report and in the follow-up investigations, [calling] on authorities on all sides to refrain from any restrictive measures towards the activities of these organisations" (March 2010).

## Academics targeted

In a separate development, a right-wing Zionist advocacy group, Im Tirtzu ('If you will it'), has alleged that "anti-Zionist trends" are growing in some of Israel's universities.

In a statement to the Knesset on 16 June, Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar, referring to Im Tirtzu's reports, criticised Israeli professors who have backed calls to boycott Israeli universities. "This is something that is impossible to accept," he said. "There will be measures taken vis-à-vis the heads of these institutions. This matter is on our agenda — and we plan on taking action over the course of the summer."

Professor Yossi Ben-Artzi of the University of Haifa expressed concern about the growing crackdown on Israel's academics: "I hope he [the Minister] will understand the gravity of the very fact of monitoring and informing on lecturers," he said. Some academics have received death threats due to their position on boycott.

## Eye on the web

### ● 42% of West Bank controlled by settlers

The Israeli peace group, B'Tselem, has produced an authoritative report and a moving film revealing that 500,000 Jewish settlers now control 42% of the land area of the West Bank. Using official state data and documents including Attorney Talia Sasson's report on the outposts, the database produced by Brigadier General Baruch Spiegel, reports of the state comptroller and maps of the Civil Administration, the report analyses the cynical and criminal means settlers employ to gain control of land.

*By Hook and By Crook: Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank* <http://tinyurl.com/2cgbndf>



### ● Boycotting the boycotters

An excellent opinion piece by Gideon Levy in Haaretz pointed out the irony of Israel's outrage over the boycott campaign when it is itself "one of the world's most prolific boycotters."

He wrote: "Israel has imposed a cultural, academic, political, economic and military boycott on the Territories... Yet the thought of boycotting the boycotter? Now that's inconceivable."

<http://tinyurl.com/3yc7dcz>

### ● Spoof video apology

The Israeli government was forced to apologise for distributing a video link to foreign journalists of a spoof video mocking activists on the Freedom Flotilla. The YouTube clip features a group led by the *Jerusalem Post's* deputy managing editor, Caroline Glick, dressed in keffiyehs and waving weapons and singing: "There's no people dying (in Gaza) so the best that we can do is create the biggest bluff of all."

Press office director Danny Seaman said the video did not reflect official state opinion but in his personal capacity, he thought it was "fantastic." And the inimitable Mark Regev, Israeli government spokesman, said: "I called my kids in to watch it because I thought it was funny."

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOGG\\_osOoVg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOGG_osOoVg)

# Activists acquitted

**O**n 2 July the seven activists who decommissioned a Brighton arms factory to prevent Israeli war crimes in Gaza were found not guilty of conspiracy to cause criminal damage. This was a unanimous verdict in Hove Crown Court.

The seven entered the EDO MBM weapons factory near Brighton on 16 January 2009, causing nearly £200,000 of damage and shutting down production. They offered no defence other than the prevention of imminent war crimes.

At the trial, Judge George Bathurst-Norman said to the jury: "You may well think that hell on earth would not be an understatement of what the Gazans suffered in that time."

Green MP Caroline Lucas said: "I am absolutely delighted that the jury has recognised that the actions of the decommissioners were a legitimate response to the atrocities being committed in Gaza. I do not advocate non-violent direct action lightly; however in this situation it is clear that the decommissioners had exhausted all democratic avenues and, crucially, that their actions were driven by the responsibility to prevent further suffering in Gaza."

Professor Noam Chomsky also sent a message of support and congratulation.

Leading activist Chris Osmond said, "This action was taken because of EDO MBM's illegal supply of weapons to the Israeli military. We brought the suffering of ordinary Palestinians into a



**Activists and supporters celebrate**

British courtroom and confronted with the evidence they took the brave decision to find that our actions were justified."

## Nakba remembered

**A**part from the national Nakba Day rally at Downing Street, meetings were held at many branches. **Aberystwyth** attracted a good audience, including the local MP, with a film on the Nakba and singing by the local choir.

On the theme "Discover Palestine," **Halifax** organised a whole series of summer events, starting with a three-day "Dreams of Home" photographic exhibition to mark the Nakba with background material of books and maps and a talk on Palestine by a historian from Bradford University.

Later an art project, "This is Where I Live," in two local schools introduced children to daily life in Palestine through art work by Palestinian children and a Palestinian story book, while there were embroidery workshops for the adults — even the Mayor joined in!

Future plans include singing workshops with famous Palestinian singer Reem Kelani, culminating in a concert and, hopefully, the visit



**Baroness Jenny Tonge speaks to the media at Downing Street**

**At many branch meetings money was collected for the Gaza flotilla — an ongoing cause for which members will be asked to dig deep!**

of 15 young people from Aida Camp near Bethlehem, with Dabke Dance workshops. The same group hopes to visit **Sheffield** as part of the Yorkshire Palestine Cultural Exchange.

**Norwich** prefaced their Nakba meeting and stall with interviews on the local radio, which helped to attract more people to the events. The local press also obliged with some free publicity for later events — the local TUC meeting officers of the PGFTU (Palestinian trade unionists) on their UK tour and the Norwich Peace Cycle in June.

## Flotilla fallout

**T**here was a huge response around the country to the events of 31 May on the high seas and to the ongoing siege of Gaza. There were spontaneous demonstrations, not only around the UK but across the world. In London the national demo was 20,000 strong, and thousands gathered also in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Bradford, Sheffield, Manchester, Oxford and Cambridge.

The Bishop of Bradford joined the 2,000-strong demonstration in the city centre, together with the father of Mohammed Bhaiyat, one of the peace activists on the *Mavi Marmara*.



**Piccadilly on 5 June**

## New branches!

**W**elcome to **Leeds, Guildford, Tower Hamlets** and **Gloucester!** We look forward to hearing their news and meeting them at the next Branch Forum (11 September, Manchester).

The list of PSC branches can be accessed via [www.palestinecampaign.org/branches](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/branches)

There was, as usual, much better coverage of all the demos and protests in the local and regional media than on the national TV channels and press.

## Festival time!

**B**ranches are making the most of the long hot summer and the many local festivals to campaign for Palestine.

In the spring, in a village near Bangor in Gwynedd, the weekend **Bangor to Bethlehem International Festival** was opened by veteran statesman and activist Tony Benn who helped to pull in a large audience from all over the UK. As well as enjoying



Protestors in Sheffield

top Welsh bands, the edgy stand-up comedy of Ivor Dembina and fantastic Palestinian food, the audience heard from activists and writers with direct personal experience of living and working in Palestine.

Profits went to the Bustan Qaraaqa permaculture farm near Bethlehem, a project established by former students of Bangor University in opposition to land-use policies in Israel-Palestine. See [www.bustanqaraaqa.org](http://www.bustanqaraaqa.org).

**Liverpool's Arabic Arts Festival** in early July showcased a number of Palestinian films, including *Checkpoint Rock*, *Amreeka* and the moving animated feature, *Fatenah*, about a young woman in Gaza stricken with breast cancer (see interview with director Ahmad



Ivor Dembina stands up for Bethlehem

Habash, p 28). This provided a great opportunity for campaigning and awareness-raising on Palestine.

**Cheltenham's Greenbelt Festival** (27–30 August) attracts thousands of people and always has a strong Palestinian flavour. Quite apart from the great music, Sami Awad, Director of the Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem, Clare Short, Abe Hayeem, founder member of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine and Professor Ilan Pappé — among others — should be well worth listening to.

## Putting candidates on the spot

**A** number of branches, including **West London**, **Portsmouth** and **Brent**, organised formal meetings to ask candidates in the national and local London elections where they stand on Palestine. Those already committed to Israel (e.g. as "Conservative Friends of Israel") generally declined the invitation but on the whole the response was very encouraging. It was clear that many candidates were quite poorly informed on the issues — but keen to learn.

Those elected should expect regular visits, invitations and updates from their constituents.

The Spring issue of Palestine News has been sent to all the new MPs, with an invitation to receive complimentary copies in future. Remind your MP of this great opportunity to keep up with the politics of the region!

**West London** have found that one of their local MPs, Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith), is more than happy to participate in PSC meetings, such as the recent presentation by ICAHD activists Salim and Arabiyya, who talk movingly about the multiple demolitions of their home.



Several branches are already corresponding with MEPs on the **suspension of the EU-Israel Trade Association Agreement**, given Israel is in violation of the terms of the treaty (see [www.bigcampaign.org](http://www.bigcampaign.org) for details.)

Two **Bristol** men were aboard the Freedom Flotilla and one of them, Cliff Hanley, spoke at a meeting of the City Council in support of a motion calling on the government to "hold Israel to account for this illegal action" and to impose sanctions on the country until it "complies with international law and ceases perpetrating human rights abuses." The motion was carried by a substantial majority.

## Boycott is still the issue

**B**oycott activities have become a regular part of most branches' calendars but many made a special effort on 9 July, the International boycott day of action. All noted an increase in public interest and support after the Gaza flotilla massacre.

**Liverpool** linked their BDS campaign to the flotilla in a highly successful action outside Tesco's, at which shoppers were treated to singing by a local group.



Protest in London on Boycott Israeli Goods day, 9 July

**Norwich** targeted the largest Tesco in the area, while **Bangor** focused their attention on Waitrose, after some amiable negotiation with the local police. **Sheffield** and **York** are targeting Morrisons, who stock not only Israeli produce but settlement goods. **Halifax** made the Co-op the focus of a sustained letter-writing campaign, which eventually got a response, and incorporates the boycott theme into most public meetings.

Outside Sainsburys, **West London** found a good tactic was to post up details of the Israeli fruit and veg on sale on a sandwich board, as well as handing out printed slips and fact sheets.

**PSC** member Jo Hammond, who is a keen Rambler, has been raising with them their inclusion of Israel as a holiday destination, sending fact sheets to back up her arguments. They eventually responded to her letters and, two years on, the Ramblers brochure no longer advertises walking holidays in Israel. What's more, their magazine 'Walk' recently featured a short piece on a Scottish group who went walking in Palestine, inspired by Raja Shehadeh's 'Palestinian Walks.'

We can never be sure precisely what effect lobbying has but it's important to keep up the pressure. Keep an eye on Ramblers' publications — and check out the nature of the holidays offered by Explore and other companies working in the region.

Ecumenical Accompaniers, who help to mediate in the OPTs, and protect Palestinians from settlers and soldiers, continue to be very popular speakers at local branches. For more information contact [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org).

## Buy Palestinian!

**M**any PSC branches now stock Palestinian olive oil. For details of where to find it, and other Palestinian goods, see [www.zaytoun.org](http://www.zaytoun.org) and [www.equalexchange.co.uk](http://www.equalexchange.co.uk).

# A matter of instinct and conscience

Inspired by the drive towards **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** round the world, Palestinians launched a door-to-door campaign to spread the word about the law approved by President Mahmoud Abbas in April banning trade in the West Bank in goods produced in Israeli settlements.

Around 3,000 young people started visiting some 427,000 homes to distribute booklets listing banned settlement goods and informing families about the dangers they pose to the struggle for a Palestinian state in a campaign organised by the Karama (Dignity) Fund, established to promote the economy and assist people harmed by the new restrictions. This was followed by a "Shop-to-Shop" campaign in which volunteers visited 66,000 shops to inspect them for settler goods.

Palestinian Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, launching the shop campaign at a Ramallah supermarket, said it was "an important part of the efforts, both official and popular, to cleanse the market of all settlement goods by the end of the year. This is also part of our efforts to bring about economic independence and self-sufficiency on the path to freedom and the end of the occupation."

Palestinian economy minister, Hassan Abu Libdeh, who accompanied Fayyad on the visit, said the number of Palestinians working in settlements had declined by 25 percent since the boycott was announced. The government has said it intends to ban Palestinians from working in the settlements but there are concerns that tens of thousands of workers would not be able to find alternative jobs.

Twenty-year-old volunteer, Ahmad al-Najjar, said: "This campaign is much stronger than throwing stones at the Israeli army. These settlements are built on our land so we have to fight them by all means."

## Biting where it hurts

The main settlers' organisation, the Yesha Council, reacted with fury in predictable terms. They called the campaign "an act of terrorism and ill will," demanded the closure of "all Israeli ports to Palestinian imports and exports" and suggested Palestinian funds held in Israel should be used to compensate affected companies.

Their howls of protest were not the only sign that BDS actions are beginning to bite where it hurts. In June the Jerusalem tabloid, *Maariv*, reported in its business section that Israeli companies were being pushed out of the settlements because of BDS. And



**Young volunteers in the house-to-house campaign. Their T-shirts read: 'Do not bring the settlements into your home.'**

*The Guardian* reported that 17 factories have shut down in Mishor Adumim settlement.

Some settlement factories sell about 30% of their output to the Palestinian market which is altogether worth around £133 million a year to Israeli businesses, so they have a lot to lose. *Maariv* quoted Yaakov Malach, CEO and owner of a company located at the Barkan Industrial Zone in the West Bank, as saying: "There is not a single factory in Barkan today that is not searching for alternative locations inside Israel, particularly if the construction freeze continues."

Malach told the paper his company, which is the leading factory for halva and one of the leading manufacturers of tehina and pastries and exports about 25% of its products, is also encountering increasing difficulties with clients in Europe because it is situated over the Green Line. He said: "It is difficult to reach sales points in Europe because of the fact that our products are marked as 'Made in the West Bank.'"

He added: "Now the situation is even more complicated because of the Palestinian boycott, which affects clients abroad. What will break us down, and other factories in Barkan, is the fact that starting on 1 January, 2011, Palestinian workers will no longer be permitted to work in Israeli factories over the Green Line."

## Shunned by artists, writers, academics

Israel is being shunned by a growing number of artists and musicians. Following the murders on the Gaza flotilla, world-renowned British crime writer **Iain Banks** called for a cultural and educational boycott of Israel.

In a letter to *The Guardian* he said he had instructed his agent to turn down any further book translation deals with Israeli publishers. "Appeals to reason, international law, UN resolutions and simple human decency mean — it is now obvious — nothing to Israel," Banks wrote.

"I would urge all writers, artists and others in the creative arts, as well as those academics engaging in joint educational projects with Israeli institutions, to... convince Israel of its moral degradation and ethical isolation, preferably by simply having nothing to do with this outlaw state."



British rock star, **Elvis Costello**, pulled out of two concerts. In a statement entitled "It Is After Considerable Contemplation..." he said: "One lives in hope that music is more than mere noise, filling up idle time, whether intending to elate or lament.

"Then there are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act that resonates more than anything that might be sung and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent." He added: "It is a matter of instinct and conscience."



Following **Gil Scott-Heron** — who announced his decision from the stage — veteran American rock band, **Pixies**, plus the **Klaxons**, the **Gorillaz Sound System** and **Carlos Santana** all cancelled their planned concerts. The **Swedish** under-21 football team refused to play in Israel, following a similar decision by **Turkey's** under-19 team.

Hollywood actors **Meg Ryan** and **Dustin Hoffman** backed out at the last minute of attending this year's annual Jerusalem Film Festival in July.

The **University and College Union** at its annual Congress decided to "seek in conjunction with other trade unions... to establish an annual international conference on BDS, a trade union sponsored BDS website and a research centre on commercial, cultural and academic complicity with Israeli breaches of international law." The Congress also voted to campaign actively against the EU-Israel Association Agreement and to investigate boycotting Ariel College, an Israeli institution built in a West Bank settlement.

## Churches vote for boycott

In a highly significant move which shows how much the BDS campaign is gathering strength, the **Methodist Church of Britain** voted at its annual conference in July to boycott settlement goods and to encourage Methodists throughout the country to follow suit.

The Church said it had noted the call for an international boycott of settlement produce from the **World Council of Churches** in 2009 and the support for it by **Christian leaders in Palestine** in the Kairos document, Palestinian civil society and a growing number of Jewish organisations.

After the vote, Christine Elliott, secretary for the Methodists' external relationships, said: "The goal of the boycott is to put an end to the existing injustice. It reflects the challenge that settlements present to a lasting peace in the region."

The British Methodists' move follows the historic vote at America's Northern Illinois Conference of the **United Methodist Church** in June to divest from their holdings in three international corporations — General Electric, Caterpillar and Terex — that "profit from the occupation of Palestine."

And in July the **US Presbyterians** discussed the report by their Middle East Study Committee, "Breaking Down Walls," at their 219th General Assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A call has gone out for all physicians and alternative medical practitioners to boycott the **International Conference on Integrative Medicine** to be held in October in Jerusalem.

Leading the campaign, Dr Derek Summerfield said: "The Israeli medical establishment has been in active or passive collusion with the Occupation and its impact on the health and wellbeing of Palestinian people and on the right of Palestinian physicians, academics and medical students to pursue their work without danger of being killed or wounded, to study, attend conferences etc.

"Apart from a few honourable exceptions (eg. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel), neither the IMA nor Israeli doctors at large have ever protested. Indeed large numbers of Israeli doctors have done military service in interrogation units where torture is routine and doctors are part of the process."

## Success against Agrexco

Two premier Italian supermarket chains, **COOP** and **Nordiconad**, announced the suspension of sales from settlement goods importer, Agrexco, following a lobbying campaign which was conducted by the Italian Coalition Against Carmel-Agrexco. Efforts are being coordinated with similar movements in Europe, including the Coalition Contre Agrexco in France, which unites more than 90 groups opposing plans to base the Israeli company at the port of Sete in Languedoc-Roussillon.

In Italy the campaign culminated on March 30, Palestinian Land Day and Global BDS Day, with coordinated protests, sit-ins and awareness-raising initiatives in supermarkets in several cities which then led to meetings with the management of the COOP and Nordiconad. For more information, see the coalition website: [www.stopagrexcoitalia.org](http://www.stopagrexcoitalia.org)

## Veolia breakthrough!

**S**wansea City Council passed a resolution in June excluding Veolia from all future contracts — the first council in the UK to do so. The resolution, put up by the Labour Party, mentioned the UN's view that settlements contravene international law and went on: "**The international trading company, Veolia, is a leading partner in a consortium seeking to build a light railway system linking Israel to illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem, a project that clearly not only contravenes UN demands but is in contravention of international law.**

"**This Council therefore calls on the Leader and Chief Executive not to sign or allow to be signed any new contracts or renewal of any existing contracts with Veolia or any other company in breach of international law, so long as to do so would not be in breach of any relevant legislation.**"

The motion was narrowly passed 19–18 with some Liberal Democrats voting against and most abstaining. This can clearly be used as an example for other councillors of conscience to follow.



## British writers in support of Palestine

**B**righton and Hove branch member, Naomi Foyle, who is a writer and poet, is involved in a letter-writing campaign to help make UK writers, poets and academics more aware of BDS and in particular the cultural and academic boycott.

With poet Judith Kazantzis and novelist Irving Weinman she has co-written a letter to this effect and is gathering as many signatories as possible from other writers and academics. To sign up contact Naomi, of British Writers in Support of Palestine (BWISP) by email at [anothercountry@yahoo.com](mailto:anothercountry@yahoo.com).

■ An edited version of the letter was published in the *Independent on Sunday* on June 6th, see <http://tinyurl.com/25yu4j7>

■ And there is a BWISP blog: [www.bwisp.wordpress.com](http://www.bwisp.wordpress.com)

# In Brief

## ISRAELI POLITICIANS PURSUED FOR WAR CRIMES

Two Belgian lawyers, working on behalf of a group of Palestinians, are to charge 14 Israeli politicians, including Ehud Olmert, Ehud Barak, Tzipi Livni and Matan Vilnai, for crimes against humanity and war crimes. They were all members of the government at the time of Operation Cast Lead, 2008–2009, when over 1400 Gazans were killed.

Among the plaintiffs is Anouar El Okka, a Belgian doctor of Palestinian origin. His inclusion is vital since, in Belgium, the law states that there must be a connection between the crimes and a Belgian citizen in order to prosecute using the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Okka claims that his olive grove in Gaza was bombed and then set on fire with white phosphorus by Israeli forces. The other 13 plaintiffs are all Palestinians who were wounded or lost a relative in the attack. The complaint also cites the bombing of the Ibrahim al-Maqadna mosque, in which 16 civilians including several children were killed.

An earlier case involving Belgium and Israel was in 2001, when there was a criminal complaint on behalf of 21 survivors of the 1982 massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut. Ariel Sharon, Israeli Defence Minister at the time of the massacres and later Prime Minister, was charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It was after this case that the law was changed to include a clause about a Belgian connection, in an attempt to get Israeli politicians off the hook.

## MURDER IN EAST JERUSALEM

On June 11 in Wadi Joz, a Palestinian neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, a policeman executed 41-year old Ziad Jilani, a driver who ran into — but did not kill — a group of police officers.

Witnesses said that men leaving a mosque after Friday prayers had thrown stones at the police, and that one had struck and shattered Jilani's windscreen, causing him to swerve and run into the police.

After the accident Ziad fled on foot. There was no attempt to arrest him; after he was brought down by bullets in his leg and back, he was shot twice in the head at point blank range. He was unarmed.

The Border Police who patrol East Jerusalem are heavily armed and notoriously trigger-happy — where Palestinians are concerned.

Amira Hass of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* said: "The Border Police on the scene were victims, witnesses, prosecutors, judges and executioners."



*Jilani and his American wife, Moira, and one of his three daughters.*

## BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Palestinian medical students studying at Al Quds University in East Jerusalem have been subject to coercion by the Israeli internal security service (known as 'Shabak' or 'Shin Bet'), who demand collaboration in return for the necessary entry permits.

Students undertake their internships in the six Palestinian hospitals located in East Jerusalem, including al-Makassed and St. Joseph's. This practical training is a requirement for a Palestinian license to practice medicine.

Complaints of coercion have been received by Physicians for Human Rights — Israel and investigative journalist, Amira Hass, published an article in the liberal Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on 12 May, exposing Shabak's methods. The secret service use psychological and sometimes even physical pressure in order to recruit students. Those who refuse to co-operate have their permits withdrawn without any credible justification.

Both Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations have written to the Israeli Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Attorney General demanding that they issue orders to the Security Service to desist from this coercion.

The letter points out that the practice violates the students' rights to dignity and liberty. Preventing their entry also prevents them completing their medical studies and practicing the profession of their choice, which violates their right to education and employment.

Once again, Israel is in violation of international humanitarian law, which strictly prohibits the occupying power from demanding collaboration from the occupied protected persons. Such acts are even prohibited under Israeli criminal law, as they constitute "extortion under threat."

For more details see [www.mezan.org](http://www.mezan.org), under Press Releases.

## VANUNU BACK IN JAIL

In 2004, having spent 18 years in jail, most of them in solitary confinement, for telling the truth about Israel's nuclear weapons programme, Mordechai Vanunu was let out of jail but kept under virtual house arrest.

Six years later, at the age of 56, he has been imprisoned once more and placed in solitary confinement — this time for having a relationship with a Norwegian woman (he is forbidden from speaking to foreigners).

Malcolm Smart, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East Programme, said: "Mordechai Vanunu should not be in prison at all, let alone be held in solitary confinement in a unit intended for violent criminals.

"He suffered immensely when he was held in solitary confinement for 11 years after his imprisonment in 1986 and to return him to such conditions now is nothing less than cruel, inhuman and degrading."



## ISRAEL AND THE BOMB

The international conference in New York in May, reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, called for the setting up of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East. It actually mentioned Israel by name — unlike the 2005 review, where the US stepped in to exclude Israel from the discussion.

Specifically, the conference called on Israel to sign the treaty, mentioning "the importance of Israel's accession to the treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards." Despite Israel's best efforts, Iran was not mentioned in the final report. Another conference is planned for 2012, "to be attended by all states of the Middle East," to further the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the region.

Israel has been known to possess nuclear weapons since the 1960s but, with the collusion of the US, has always had a policy



of “don’t ask, don’t tell”: neither confirming nor denying possession. It has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has never allowed UN observers to view its nuclear installations.

## APARTHEID NATIONS SHARE NUCLEAR SECRETS

On the day Vanunu was sent back to jail and just as the nuclear non-proliferation talks were getting under way, hitherto secret South African documents revealed that Israel offered to sell nuclear warheads to the apartheid regime in 1975. This is the first unequivocal official documentary evidence of Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons.

The minutes of “top secret” meetings show that South Africa’s defence minister, PW Botha, asked for nuclear warheads and Shimon Peres, then Israel’s defence minister and now its president, was happy to offer Jericho missiles “in three sizes” – referring to conventional, chemical and nuclear weapons.

Botha and Peres also signed a military agreement that included a clause stating that “the very existence of this agreement” was to remain secret.

The present South African government declassified the documents despite protests by the Israeli authorities. Peres’ office has denied that any such negotiations took place and declined to comment on the authenticity of the documents.

The question of Israeli-South African military cooperation is the subject of a recently published book, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel’s secret alliance with apartheid South Africa*, by American academic Sasha Polakow-Suransky.

In the event, Botha did not go ahead with the deal, partly because of the cost. But cooperation continued, with South Africa eventually building its own nuclear bombs and later providing some of the uranium that Israel required to develop its weapons.

## IS GERMANY FINDING ITS VOICE?

For obvious historical reasons, Germany has always been reticent about criticising any aspect of Israel’s foreign or domestic policy.

However, two recent issues have provoked clashes between the two governments.

One relates to the assassination in Dubai last January of Hamas official Mahmoud el-Mabhouh, in which forged German as well as British passports were used by the Israeli secret service.

Germany has demanded the extradition from Poland of Uri Brodsky, alleged to be an Israeli spy involved in procuring a German passport for one of the assassins. Israel protested at Brodsky’s arrest in Poland and has asked Germany to drop the demand.

The German government has said it will not intervene to stop the investigation, saying Brodsky should be “dealt with according to purely judicial considerations.”

Then on 20 June, Germany sharply criticised Israel for denying its Development Minister entry to the Gaza Strip to visit a humanitarian project co-funded by Berlin.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said: “We do not allow senior politicians into Gaza because Hamas will manipulate such visits to gain legitimacy.”

German Development Minister Dirk Niebel said it was “a big diplomatic mistake” adding that he was dismayed that Israel was “making it so difficult for even its truest friends to understand its behaviour.”



**Jericho 3 missile, with a range of 4,500 miles**

## FRANKIE BOYLE UNREPENTANT

Frankie Boyle has lashed out at the BBC, branding them “cowardly” and “cravenly afraid of giving offence,” after they censured one of his jokes.

The Corporation’s governing body issued an apology for a joke Boyle made on Radio 4’s *Political Animal* two years ago. A listener complained that the gag was anti-Semitic — although the Jewish show host, Andy Zaltzman, had not objected.

Boyle responded: “Obviously, it feels strange to be on the moral high ground but I feel a response is required to the BBC Trust’s cowardly rebuke of my joke about Palestine.

“As always, I heard nothing from the BBC but read in a newspaper that editorial procedures would be tightened further to stop jokes with anything at all to say getting past the censors.

“In case you missed it, the jokes in question are: ‘I’ve been studying Israeli Army Martial Arts. I now know 16 ways to kick a Palestinian woman in the back. People think that the Middle East is very complex but I have an analogy that sums it up quite well. If you imagine that Palestine is a big cake, well... that cake is being punched to pieces by a very angry Jew.’

“I think the problem here is that the show’s producers will have thought that Israel, an aggressive, terrorist state with a nuclear arsenal, was an appropriate target for satire. The Trust’s ruling is essentially a note from their line managers. It says that if you imagine that a state busily going about the destruction of an entire people is fair game, you are mistaken. Israel is out of bounds.

“The situation in Palestine seems to be, in essence, apartheid. I grew up with the anti-apartheid thing being a huge focus of debate. It really seemed to matter to everybody that other human beings were being treated in that way. We didn’t just talk about it, we did things. I remember boycotts and marches and demos all being held because we couldn’t bear that people were being treated like that.”



## ELECTIONS POSTPONED

It was announced by the Palestinian Authority on 8 July that the municipal elections due to be held in the West Bank on 17 July have been postponed indefinitely. By way of explanation the Ministry of Local Government said the decision was in response to the demands of some Arab nations and a number of “friends in the world.” The latter phrase is interpreted by some as meaning pressure from the US and Israel to avoid a major defeat for Fatah, who would then be shown to have no popular mandate to take part in negotiations.

Fatah spokesman, Hussam Khader, said: “The national interest requires preserving what remains of the Fatah movement because even if Fatah wins the elections, it will lose the most in the long term.”

Mustafa Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and head of the Palestinian National Initiative party, called the decision “unacceptable and harmful to the democratic process.”

## FROM WARSAW TO GAZA

On 27 June Israeli and Polish activists met in the ruins of Warsaw’s old Jewish Ghetto. They sprayed ‘Liberate All Ghettos’ in Hebrew, and ‘Free Gaza and Palestine’ in English, on a wall in the ghetto and also hung Palestinian flags from the wall.

Yonatan Shapira, former Israeli Air Force captain and now refusenik and BDS activist, said:

“Most of my family



came from Poland and many of my relatives were killed in the death camps during the Holocaust. When I walk in what was left from the Warsaw Ghetto I can't stop thinking about the people of Gaza who are not only locked in an open air prison but are also being bombarded by fighter jets, attack helicopters and drones, flown by people whom I used to serve with before my refusal in 2003.

"I am also thinking about the delegations of young Israelis that are coming to see the history of our people but also are subjected to militaristic and nationalistic brainwashing on a daily basis. Maybe if they see what we wrote here today they will remember that oppression is oppression, occupation is occupation, and crimes against humanity are crimes against humanity, whether they have been committed here in Warsaw or in Gaza."

## ARSON IN THE WEST BANK

In the early hours of 4 May a fire gutted a mosque in the village of Albon Asharkiyeh in the occupied West Bank, near Nablus. The fire was declared an act of arson by the Palestinian governor of Nablus, Jibril al-Bakri,

after a joint Palestinian-Israeli investigation. Eyewitnesses saw settlers fleeing the scene.

The chairman of the local council, Jamal Daraghmeh, said that witnesses heard cars approaching the mosque. "There are three illegal settlements near the village; Ailla, Pune and Shiloh," he said. "More than 30% of the land belonging to people in the village has been seized by the Israelis." The settlers set fire to copies of the Qur'an and the mosque's curtains before fleeing back to their settlements.

Mr. Al-Bakri said the Palestinian Authority had received warnings from the Israeli government that settlers from Shilo may attack "because of the eviction of five families from illegal homes in the settlement by the Israeli army."

This is the third mosque to be attacked by settlers in the West Bank since December. And in the nearby village of Hawara, witnesses said they had seen settlers setting an olive grove ablaze.



**Charred remains of a holy text.**  
Photo: Abu-Rob/Btselem

## HUMAN SHIELD CASE

On 4 May two Israeli soldiers were charged in a military court with forcing a 10-year-old Palestinian boy to act as a human shield during Israel's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. They are alleged to have made him handle objects they suspected of being booby-trapped.

The soldiers were charged with exceeding their authority and behaviour unbecoming of a soldier.

An army spokesman said that, prior to the Gaza attacks, it was "made clear to Israel Defence Force troops that any and all attempts to force civilians to carry out operational responsibilities, especially ones with a risk to their lives, are absolutely forbidden."

However, Yehuda Shaul, who heads the dissident soldiers' group Breaking the Silence, said: "The use of human shields in Operation Cast Lead was not so exceptional. By prosecuting two low-ranking soldiers, the military is trying to shift the discussion away from the big policies that came from high up in Cast Lead and which were wrong: permissive rules of engagement or mass destruction of property that had nothing to do with protecting our troops."

## BLACKLISTED

Noam Chomsky, possibly America's most famous intellectual and outspoken critic of Israel's colonialist policies,

was denied entry into the West Bank on 16 May, together with his daughter. He was due to speak at Bir Zeit University, near Ramallah.

Chomsky said the interrogators at the Allenby Bridge had told him he had written things that the Israeli government did not like. "I suggested [the interrogator try to] find any government in the world that likes anything I say," he said, wryly. He added that he could not recall "comparable actions, outside of totalitarian states."

His Palestinian host, Dr Mustafa Barghouti, called the decision "a fascist action, amounting to suppression of freedom of expression."

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel said: "A democratic country where freedom of expression is a guiding principle does not close in the face of criticism or ideas that are not comfortable and does not deny entry to guests only because it does not accept their opinions. Instead, it deals with these opinions through public discussion."



## COMMUNITIES RESIST VIOLENT SETTLERS

Between 20 and 30 armed settlers from the Maskiot settlement in the Jordan Valley, supported by the Israeli army and police, erected a tent flying Israeli flags just ten metres away from the entrance to the Palestinian Bedouin community of El Maleh in April and ordered the people off the land.

Because the people could not then enter or leave El Maleh, members of Jordan Valley Solidarity, the Brighton Tubas Friendship Group and the International Solidarity Movement stayed overnight in the Bedouins' tents to give support and solidarity and sent in food and water for the people and their animals.

Maskiot was the first new settlement to be approved in the West Bank for over a decade when it was established in 2008. It is now home to around 25 strongly Zionist families, most of whom used to live in settlements in Gaza. Their website declares them "pioneers" wanting to "repopulate" the Valley.

A spokesman for Jordan Valley Solidarity appealed to the Palestinian Authority and the international community to support El Maleh. "We must help this community to resist and stay; if it is these homes being threatened today, it will be other tents tomorrow and the next day after that," he said.

This was not an isolated incident: ten days previously the Israeli army cut the water pipes to Al Farisiya, a nearby Palestinian community, to intimidate villagers, destroy their crops and make their existence in the Jordan Valley impossible. A few days before that the water supply to the village of Bardala was cut off at the critical crop growing time.

For more information, see [www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org](http://www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org) or [www.brightonpalestine.org](http://www.brightonpalestine.org)

## COURT ORDERS THE STATE TO EXPLAIN

On 5th May Israel's Supreme Court gave the state 90 days to explain why it had failed to carry out an order to demolish the outpost of Amona, built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank.

In 2005 the government destroyed several buildings in the outpost but since then much has been rebuilt and no further action has been taken despite repeated orders.

While the rest of the world says all Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land are illegal, the government only views the 100 or so outposts, which are built without its official approval, to be outside the law but almost never carries out its own enforcement orders against them.

# Palestine on screen

This past year has seen a profusion of new Palestinian films, many of them show-cased this spring in one of the best Palestine Film Festivals to date. Over 60 films were screened at the Barbican and SOAS in London, with panel discussions and question and answer sessions with some of the directors.

The themes were as multifarious as the situations facing Palestinians today. The horrors that Gazans are living through, daily life in the West Bank, the changing roles of women, the struggle of Palestinian Israelis for normality and equality are captured in films ranging from short video documentaries to animated films, political essays and full-length feature films.

The highlight of the Festival was Elia Suleiman's latest film, *The Time That Remains*, the last of his largely autobiographical trilogy.

Suleiman comes from a family of "present absentees" — the term used by Israelis for Palestinians who were not expelled in 1948, but who lost their homes. The absurdity inherent in the phrase sets the tone for much of the film.

It begins in Nazareth, with the Nakba of 1948. Many families were divided as to whether they should stay and resist, or flee, with the hope of returning when hostilities have died down. The narrator's father is a resistance fighter who narrowly escapes with his life. His son is brought up in the same spirit, but there are friends and neighbours who conform to the new regime and even teach their children patriotic Zionist songs. Eventually, the son is implicated in political activity and has to flee to the West Bank. The major turning points in the life of the family are told with simplicity and restraint, through the mother's letters to her family scattered abroad.

Less surreal than his award-winning *Divine Intervention*, the film still has an eye for fantasy and farce. The pointless heroics of Arab volunteers in 1948 are summed up in the antics of an Iraqi marching grimly, he knows not where, to liberate his Palestinian brethren who observe him laconically from a roadside cafe.

Later, in Ramallah, a young man sauntering out of his house, immersed in his mobile phone, is oblivious to the giant barrel of an Israeli tank aimed point-blank at his head. As he chats and jokes and wanders around in the road the barrel follows his every move. At one point in the film the central character solves the problem of the Wall by simply vaulting over it with a gigantic pole.

Each shot in the film is largely static and beautifully framed, as if to invite the viewer to reflect on its content. Even the potentially most dramatic scenes — those of the looting and casual murder of civilians that



took place during the Nakba — are viewed with a detached, almost impassive gaze. This detachment only adds to the poignancy of the narrator's parents' decline and death. In the end, his mother becomes, in a very tragic sense, a "present absentee."

**“The themes are as multifarious as the situations facing Palestinians today”**

Completely contrasting in style is *Ajami*, now on general release, co-directed by Scandar Copti, a Palestinian Israeli, and Jewish Israeli, Yaron Shani, and nominated in this year's Oscars for best foreign film. *Ajami* is a run-down district in Jaffa where Jews, Muslims and Christians live in close proximity.

You have to hold on tight to keep track of the multiple, intertwined plots. The focus is on 19-year old Omar, who finds himself head of a family involved in an expensive blood feud, and on teenage Malek, from the West Bank but working illegally in a Christian-run restaurant. His mother is gravely ill and he is desperate for money to pay her hospital fees. Omar and the restaurant owner's daughter are in love, but the religious divide makes it a hopeless passion; the father sets up Omar to be caught by the police when he

tries inexpertly to get into the drug-dealing business.

Omar's friend, Binj, wants to live in Tel Aviv with his Jewish girlfriend but his life too is wrecked by the prevailing drug culture. We witness a string of senseless deaths, some from different angles as the film backtracks in time. We see Dando, an overworked Israeli cop, both with his family and on the beat. He has a brother on military service who goes missing in the Occupied Territories; the body is later found in a cave near Nablus.

There are neither goodies nor baddies in this film, only people caught up in a terrible spiral of poverty and injustice and bound by traditions that can both crush and sustain. The direction and acting are so good that you empathise with all the key protagonists; you also gain some insight into what life might be like in the lower echelons of that fatally warped and complex society.

■ For more information about the films shown at the Festival see [www.palestinefilm.org](http://www.palestinefilm.org).

**Hilary Wise**



# What kills Fatenah is time

**T**he incredibly moving animated film, *Fatenah*, by Ahmad Habash, was a highlight of the Palestine Film Festival and is now on general release. It has won the Jury Special Mention Middle East Short Award at the Middle East International Film Festival, Abu Dhabi, and the Noor Award for best short fiction at the 13th Annual Arab Film Festival, USA, among others.

Based on the true story of the humiliation and frustration suffered by 28-year-old Fatma Barghout as she tried to enter Israel from Gaza for treatment for breast cancer, it was funded by the World Health Organisation.

**Ahmad Habash, 34, was born in Bagdad, Iraq, the son of Palestinian refugees who eventually returned to the West Bank. Ahmad's future projects include writing, directing and animating short and feature stop-motion animation, developing and creating experimental installations and writing and illustrating graphic novels.**



**Maha Rahwanji talks to him about his life and work.**

**Q. Are you pleased *Fatenah* has won so many awards?**

A. The best prize I always get is when I hear people cry when they see the film. It was a huge challenge to evoke so many emotions in an animation. The Gazan actress, Buthainah Sumairi, added a beautiful voice to *Fatenah* and gave her authenticity.

Fatenah preferred to die in Gaza than in a sterile Israeli hospital ward longing for her family, particularly her sister. *Fatenah*, and the real person, Fatma, on whom the character was based and who died in 2004, represent all the people in the Gaza Strip: simple people with simple dreams who want to survive.

What kills *Fatenah* is time. Time waiting. Time is a weapon. Time, for a cancer patient, is a slow death.

**Q. When were you happiest?**

A. I am happiest when I am engrossed in animation and living in Ramallah. For me it's like therapy, relaxation and yoga. When I get angry, I do animation, as it makes me escape, like floating in outer space.

**Q. What is your earliest memory?**

A. I store memories like sketches or scenes from a film. During the time my family were moving from one country to another they sent my sister and me to Syria to stay with relatives for what seemed to be two very long months. I remember this hard time when we were separated from our parents like a slide show of pictures: on the borders, with a relative, in a car, in a house, sitting with the family eating and of course when I was being punished for something naughty that I had done.

**Q. Which living person do you most admire?**

A. My Mum. That will sound so cheesy but it's not for the regular reasons. She's a really strong person, she survived all the hardships of moving around and yet she still enjoys life somehow.

**Q. What makes you unhappy?**

A. The list is long but generally it's growing old, watching people waste away. I feel like we are living in an unhappy time; we are trying to fix things but we are not really smiling, we are always tense and we can't trust each other. We don't even trust ourselves, somehow. When I walk along, I don't feel the love from one person to another. I think this weakens us.

**Q. What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

A. I've just come out of a long-distance relationship. Simple things such as booking a ticket, getting a visa and travelling are hard as a Palestinian because it is such a long process. It really makes me feel like I don't want to do it anymore — it's so exhausting. The whole ordeal got on top of both of us.

It is a little hard to fall in love as a Palestinian. We can't trust anyone in the world because we have been cheated by everyone.

**Q. If you could meet a historical figure, who would that be?**

A. If you had asked me that question in my twenties, I would have said Che Guevara. Now, it would be Winsor McCay, Hey Harryhausen and Jan Svankmajer who were masters in animation. I would have loved the chance to work with them.

**Q. What's the worst thing anyone has said to you?**

A. "You Palestinian!" during an awkward

moment when I was young, at university in Cairo. It hurt and I was choked up. Now it doesn't make sense because I am so proud of being a Palestinian.

**Q. Which living person do you most despise?**

A. I could have answered that question better in my twenties but now I cannot despise anyone, hate anyone, I can't even hate my enemy because I can understand them. They have their own passions, their own reasons. When I am at the border or checkpoints I give the soldiers a calming smile and this disarms them.

**Q. What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

A. Just to be good to people, always take it easy and for me to be easy on myself, although I don't do that perfectly. Always to try as much as possible to enjoy life and not to worry too much.

**Q. Who has influenced you most, artistically?**

A. My ex, who was also an artist. And she introduced me to artists like Duchamp, Dali, Magritte and many others who have been greatly influential in my work.

**Q. What message would you like to give to the campaigners of PSC?**

A. I would say good luck and thank you very much for what you are doing because the campaigners have a goal and they try, try, try and this is something I really respect.

■ More information on Ahmad and his work can be found on [www.ahmadhabash.com](http://www.ahmadhabash.com).

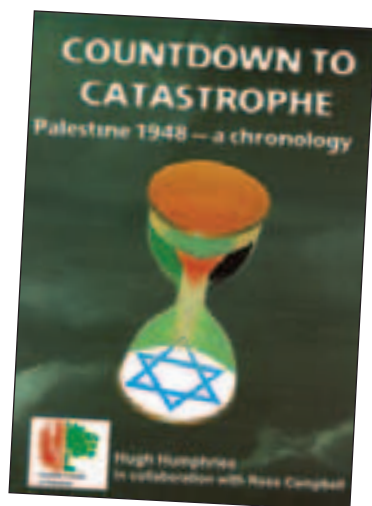
■ *Fatenah* can be seen on [www.fatenah.com](http://www.fatenah.com)



## Countdown to Catastrophe

By Hugh Humphries

Published by Scottish Friends of Palestine



Throughout 1998, the 50th anniversary year of the Nakba, Scottish Friends of Palestine distributed weekly e-mails outlining events as they occurred during that fateful year. Two years later, a 373 page book, *Countdown to Catastrophe*, based on the e-mails, was published by Scottish Friends of Palestine and launched within the precincts of the Scottish Parliament.

**“Countdown is a daily chronology of events as people were driven from their homes”**

*Countdown* is a daily chronology of events as people were driven from their homes by the Israeli army, or fled to keep their families safe, believing their exile would be temporary. For those who wish to learn of Zionist intent and the Palestinian response, as the Nakba unfolded, this book is an essential read.

The book was acclaimed by the then Palestinian General Delegate, Afif Safieh, who attended the book launch. It has since been used as a linchpin by Professor Claudine Dauphin in her work on tracing and recording the paths of Palestinian exiles.

Now in this 62nd year of the Nakba, the book is available again for purchase from SFoP — which is both the publisher and sole distributor. Within the UK the price is £10, including P&P, and can be ordered from:

Scottish Friends of Palestine  
31 Tinto Road  
Glasgow G43 2AL

Cheques should be made payable to  
“Scottish Friends of Palestine”

■ For more information or to pay by Paypal, contact Hugh Humphries at [Info@scottish-friends-of-palestine.org](mailto:Info@scottish-friends-of-palestine.org)

## JNF E-book, Volume II: Preparing for Legal Action — Focus: Canada Park

Edited by Uri Davis

Foreword by Salman Abu Sitta

This second volume in the project to de-mask the sinister origins and workings of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) analyses the organisation's work through the prism of its status in Canada. This is largely undertaken in the context of the construction of the controversial Canada Park on top of the ruins of three Palestinian villages which were destroyed and whose 12,000 inhabitants were displaced in 1948; a park that depended on contributions from JNF Canada (JNFC) for its construction.

The book seeks to shift opposition to the JNF from the more traditional political and educational realms towards an effective legal challenge to its past and its present behaviour. The objection is that the JNF's charity status means it was able to use tax-deductible Canadian dollars and Canada's name in conjunction with the building of Canada Park.

Editor and contributor Professor Uri Davis says that the eye witness reports in this volume are all admissible as evidence in a court of law. His own contribution features an extraordinary account from a reserve soldier in the IDF at the time of the destruction of the three villages, which is a powerful, deeply human portrayal of the



Prof Uri Davis

suffering of the villagers at the hands of the Zionist forces.

It becomes clear that the young Israeli soldiers were unprepared for such a shocking and inhuman duty, and perhaps one can see the birth of today's slick Israeli propaganda machine in the way in which the growing state was compelled to justify its actions to its own soldiers in the wake of the devastation.

The shockingly cynical moves in the history and growth of the JNF are drawn out in each contribution in different ways. One anecdote that is worth mentioning comes in the chapter by a Palestinian refugee, now living in Canada, Dr Ismail Zayid, where he explains that, following his public campaigning against the Canada Park, he was sent a certificate from the JNFC saying that they had planted

a tree in the park in tribute to his name.

That Dr Zayid's campaign, on a platform of opposition to war crimes and abuse of human rights, should be responded to in such a derisory and insulting manner says much for the inhumanity of those at the head of the JNF.

■ Download the book from [www.humanrightsfund.org/images/documents/JNFeBookVol2.pdf](http://www.humanrightsfund.org/images/documents/JNFeBookVol2.pdf)

**Pete Jones,**  
a former journalist now working to raise awareness of Israeli human rights abuses in the Palestinian Territories

## The Routes of Man: How Roads are Changing the World

By Ted Conover

Knopf Doubleday

Through a series of six journeys, covering regions as far ranging as Peru, China and the Himalayas, this book explores how roads are shaping the modern world by transforming landscapes and impacting on communities — uniting them in some cases, dividing them in others.

In the chapter on Palestine, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author travels with Palestinians in the West Bank, experiencing at first hand the daily ignominies they suffer at checkpoints and describing the fragmentation of the Palestinian road network resulting from the Wall, checkpoints and the parallel road system that has been built for the settlers.

Conover also spends time with Israeli occupation forces, which may grate somewhat with *Palestine News* readers. This could simply be because he wishes to describe both points of view. Another possibility is that, being a US publication, there was a need to avoid any apparent bias in favour of the Palestinians. This said, the book gives a vivid, albeit depressing, picture of what remains of the road system in the West Bank. Overall this is an interesting book with a unique perspective on road travel and its impact on people.



Riyad Tibi

## The Kites Are Flying

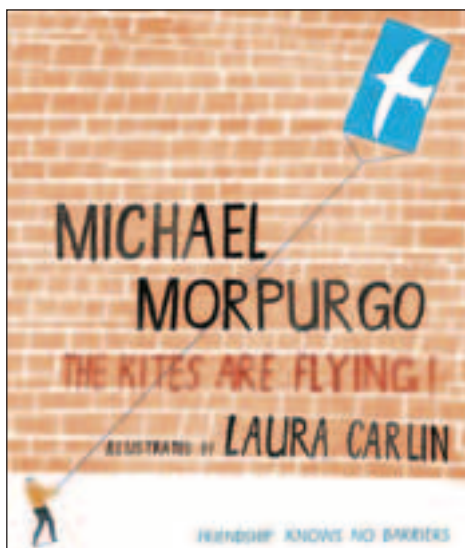
By Michael Morpurgo

Walker Books

How does one explain the situation in the West Bank to children? Through the story of the developing relationship between Max, a British documentary film maker, and Said, an eight year old, “elective” mute, Palestinian shepherd boy, Michael Morpurgo, in *The Kites Are Flying*, goes some way to doing so.

The class of Year Six children I read the short story to (there are only 80 pages and a number of those are taken up by Laura Carlin’s spiky illustrations) liked the fact that the story is written as a mystery. Why does Said make so many kites and what does he write on them? Where is his brother Mahmoud? Why isn’t Said’s father with the family? Why doesn’t Said speak and who is the mysterious girl in the blue headscarf?

Those questions are answered as we read Max’s diary, kept in the four days he spends with Said’s family whilst he recuperates from a self-inflicted accident, experiences Palestinian hospitality and gains a deeper understanding of the plight of an occupied people. He had intended to film from both sides of the Wall, to tell both stories objectively; Morpurgo, however,



keeps him firmly on the Palestinian side. We see the present through Max’s eyes and the past through Said’s, but it is the boy who represents hope for the future and his Uncle Yasser, “Uncle Gasbag,” who represents the past and the present.

The author, who was the Children’s Laureate in 2003/5, has written a number of books that introduce children to difficult issues, most successfully, perhaps, in Kensuke’s Kingdom, which dealt with the bombing of Nagasaki. This book deals with the same underlying theme: our common

“Max gains a deeper understanding of the plight of an occupied people”

humanity. Morpurgo rightly never demonises the other, however.

I am writing this review the day after the Israeli attack on the ships attempting to bring humanitarian aid into Gaza. It is difficult, with that and other horrors in mind, not to find the final chapter of this well-written book to be simplistic and sentimental. This book is for children, but if they are to reach some genuine understanding of major events in the world today, the pill should not be so saccharine-coated; the ending should not be so Hollywood. It is only in the final pages that I found *The Kites Are Flying* unsatisfactory; the rest is a good read with Jeremy Bowen’s Afterword helping children’s comprehension.

**Jasmina Ljuhar,**  
Year 6 teacher in a  
London primary school

## Letters from Palestine

By Kenneth Ring and Ghassan Abdullah

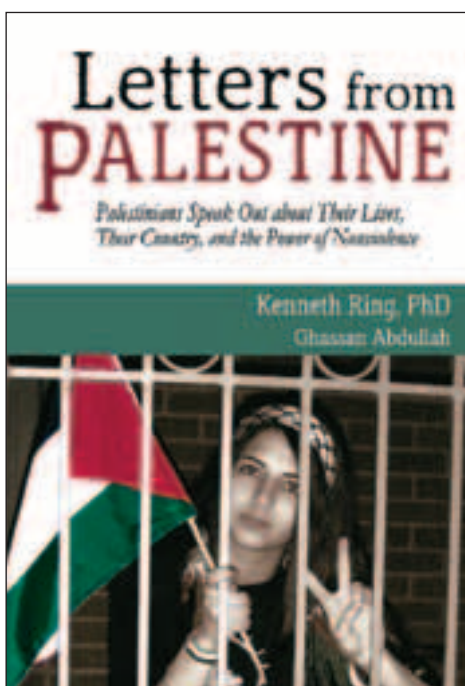
Published by Wheatmark

This collection of 30 personal stories from Palestinians inside and outside the Occupied Territories provides remarkable insights — sometimes harrowing, sometimes funny, always fascinating — into their daily lives and thoughts.

In letters written to their American friend, professor of psychology Ken Ring, they reveal the Palestinians’ strength of character. After 60 years of betrayal and humiliation they still bubble with humour and friendship and show a gritty determination to overcome the tragedies inflicted on them.

“Being Palestinian reminds me every day that justice and human rights can never be taken for granted”

One young lady says that, for her, the *adeyat phalastin* (question of Palestine) is the ultimate fight for humanity and justice, and “being Palestinian reminds me every day that justice and human rights can never be taken for granted.”



A Palestinian-American woman visiting family members in Birzeit comments: “Despite the occupation, Palestinians still remain some of the most educated people in the Arab world. They sit at the checkpoint if they can’t make it to school and read their books, or have class right there if their teacher happens to be around...”

Accounts of terrified families trying to survive the horror unleashed by Israel on

the Gaza Strip in December 2008 are very powerful but the book’s hard message is softened by humour and I laughed out loud at the pithy jokes.

But I was brought down to earth with a jolt by Ramzy Baraud’s heartbreaking account of how his freedom-fighter father, ill and prevented by the Israelis from leaving Gaza for treatment, died there alone, cut off from his family.

Discovering that two of Ring’s contributors are friends of mine was a wonderful surprise. One is a survivor of the infamous 40-day siege of the Church of the Nativity. The other is that young Gazan photo-journalist, Mohammed Omer, whose professionalism and determination earned him the coveted Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism in 2008. Mo tells the shocking story of how, on the way home from receiving his award in London, he was brutally beaten up by Israeli security thugs.

Palestinians have been stripped of nearly everything and are left with only their education and their culture. *Letters from Palestine* will put you through the emotional wringer — you’ll share the laughter, pride, despair, anger and even the camaraderie.

**Stuart Littlewood**  
Author of *Radio Free Palestine*, which  
tells the plight of the Palestinians  
under occupation. See  
[www.radiofreepalestine.co.uk](http://www.radiofreepalestine.co.uk)

## CARE ASSISTANT WANTED



**My name is Eklas. I live with my mother in Al Azzeh refugee camp in Bethlehem. I have muscular dystrophy and use a wheelchair and I need help with daily activities.**

In spite of my disability I enjoy life and I have the same dreams and needs as every young woman. I do not see volunteers as care givers but as friends and people who can become part of the family. I speak Arabic, German, English and a little Swedish.

- Are you looking for an adventure in the Middle East?
- Do you want to know more about the Palestinian-Israeli situation?
- Do you want to learn a new language, about a new country and a new culture?

If so then maybe this is the experience you are looking for. If you are interested send me a mail with some information about yourself: [echlas2006@yahoo.com](mailto:echlas2006@yahoo.com)

## Clinicians' Study Tour November 2010



**A unique opportunity to learn about health care in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.**

Tour includes:

- visit Palestinian hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centres and teaching establishments
- compare treatment offered to Israelis and Palestinians
- meet key leaders and specialists

*"I felt it an immense privilege to go on this trip which is meticulously organised and for me was a once in a lifetime opportunity." Dr Alison Payne, Coventry, November 2009*

The tour is being coordinated with Physicians for Human Rights — Israel, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, the International Medical Educational Trust 2000 and British Doctors for Palestine. It is administered by Experience Travel Tours.

For more information call 01367 244 636 or email [fay@experiencetraveltours.org](mailto:fay@experiencetraveltours.org).

## Human Rights Volunteers

The **International Women's Peace Service (IWPS)** is inviting applications from women who would like to volunteer.

IWPS is a team of international female human rights volunteers in Palestine who provide accompaniment to civilians, document and non-violently intervene in human-rights abuses and support acts of non-violent resistance to end the Israeli military occupation.

Successful applicants will serve a minimum of one 3-month term in the West Bank, as well as supporting our work outside of Palestine.

Short term volunteers are also needed for periods of three weeks. For more information see [www.iwps.info](http://www.iwps.info). For an application pack contact [applyiwps@gmail.com](mailto:applyiwps@gmail.com)



# Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

### Join PSC / make a donation

Name   
 Address   
  
  
 Postcode   
 Telephone   
 E-mail   
 Individual £24.00 Unwaged £12.00

Plus a donation (optional) of

I enclose a cheque of

(payable to PSC)

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

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

### 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:  
 PSC Box BM PSA London WC1N 3XX

# Ramadan 2010

Check the label —  
don't break your fast  
with Israeli dates



Order  
leaflets  
now



Get involved: [www.palestinecampaign.org/check-the-label-dates](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/check-the-label-dates)

# Help end the siege of Gaza

Support the next  
land and sea  
convoys this  
September



Find out how: [www.palestinecampaign.org/convoy](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/convoy)