



## Where is justice?



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Cover image: Mona Abu Salah holds a picture of her father, held in an Israeli jail, during a rally marking Palestinian Prisoners' Day on 17 April in Gaza City. Photo by Yasser Qudih, www.CorbisImages.com

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- 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

# Israel's slow suicide

By Hilary Wise

Where are Israel's true friends? I don't mean those who automatically justify and even applaud every violent incursion, every new illegal housing unit. Nor President Obama, whose visit to Israel and fleeting token trip to the West Bank suggested that his second term will bring the region no nearer to a just peace than did his first. Nor our own government, who claim to whisper disapproval in Israel's ear but who continue in their full tacit support of its policies. I mean people who are genuinely concerned with Israel's future.

Because confirming Israel's belief in its utter impunity to any form of sanctions does it no favours at all. It is in fact becoming untouchable in quite another sense. It is increasingly viewed – by all those with no *realpolitik* axe to grind – as a lawless and brutal state. As campaigners, we must focus on both of these defining characteristics.

Some of the brutality is clear for all to see. The carnage resulting from the large-scale attacks on Gaza does get media coverage and undermines Israel's image, despite attempts at justificatory spin. It is rather the daily thuggery – the casual sniping at children from watchtowers overlooking Gaza, the deaths when patients and pregnant women are kept for hours at checkpoints, the torturing of prisoners, the bulldozing of homes – that must be brought to the attention of our communities and our media.

In addition, we need to give the lie to Israel's claim to be a democratic, law-abiding state with "the most moral army in the world." There is a wealth of evidence from many Israeli and international human rights organisations attesting to daily violations of international law, over decades. The very fact that Israel responds to such criticism largely by hysterical counter-accusations of anti-Semitism shows the weakness of their position. More and more they are being forced back on biblical arguments to justify what they do – arguments that only Zionist extremists, either Christian or Jewish, find plausible.

In a recent spate of amazingly candid films (see page 27), Israeli judges and security chiefs themselves talk about both the lawlessness and the pointlessness of their actions. We must see that these are viewed as widely as possible. Another valuable resource is Abu-Zahra and Kay's "Unfree in Palestine" (see page 28), which shows how many of Israel's own laws are in direct

contravention of the laws recognised by the civilised nations of the world.

An ongoing focus of PSC's campaigning has been the treatment of non-Jewish prisoners in Israeli jails, precisely because this touches on so many aspects of Israel's criminal and racially discriminatory behaviour. The use of torture and criminal neglect of prisoners came to the fore in February, when 30-year-old Arafat Jaradat died in jail, Israel said of a heart attack, Palestinians say under torture (see page 16). More recently Maysara Abu Hamdiyeh died in hospital of throat cancer, having had no treatment despite his symptoms. Here again, human rights organisations provide an abundance of evidence. One of the main motives behind the ongoing hunger strikes is the notoriously widespread use of administrative detention (incarceration without charge or trial), which has also been globally condemned.

But it is above all the gross mistreatment of child prisoners, some as young as twelve, that shows Israel's legal system to be utterly inhumane as well as contrary to international law. Their stories must be told, together with the stories of all those children being denied a future by Israel's occupation and slow ethnic cleansing.

Our campaign against the security company G4S employed in Israeli jails and in the illegal settlements is not only raising awareness of Israel's treatment of prisoners and of its expansionist policies; it is sending a message that involvement with Israel and

with settlements is dangerous. The remarkable successes of the Veolia campaign have shown that such companies run the risk of losing contracts worth billions. The TUC, we should remember, has actually called for the boycott of any firms that benefit from the illegal occupation.

Time is running out for Israel, as its pariah status grows. And yet Netanyahu's supremely arrogant, far-right new government seems hell-bent on pursuing a path that leads to full annexation of the West Bank. But then what? The expulsion or murder of several million Palestinians, in the name of preserving a

Jewish state? Even America would not accept that. Nor could any Palestinian leader agree to head up a ghetto disguised as a state.

A more likely outcome is the formation of a brutally apartheid state, with a Jewish minority ruling over an ungovernable Palestinian majority. Israel's real friends should point out that, in the name of self-preservation, they must reassess their policies and bring them into line with the principles adhered to by truly democratic states.



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# What will Obama do?

Whenever a US president begins a term of office many people round the world are curious about what policies he may pursue on Israel-Palestine. They wonder if he will once again call on Israel to reduce its settlement activities as almost every president has done at least once. Will he condemn Israeli aggression, or only Palestinian rockets? Will he push a “peace process” in which virtually all the American mediators are Israel partisans or will a few non-Zionists be permitted to play a role?

As Barack Obama began his second term as president, these questions came up again. But, according to **Alison Weir**, executive director of **If Americans Knew**, these are the wrong questions. Instead, she says, to predict what he will do, one only needs to ask what the Israel lobby is likely to require.

**T**he president won't *always* do what the lobby demands – on rare occasions he may deviate a bit from its dictates – but a large percentage of the time he will dutifully do what the lobbyists command.

In other words, in order accurately to analyse American policies in the Middle East, to predict how they will change or not and to develop effective ways to revamp them in the directions that are so urgently needed for humanitarian relief and real peace, it is essential to understand the decisive role the Israel lobby plays in the United States.

Presidents and politicians from both major parties have long been extremely aware of this lobby. It may greatly improve or impede their chances of winning an election, of passing legislation, of receiving positive press coverage, of, quite simply, going on to bigger and better things.

Through the years the lobby for Israel has been a decisive factor in the defeat of Republicans Paul Findley, Pete McCloskey (at one time a Presidential contender) and Charles Percy (another Presidential contender) and Democrats Adlai Stevenson, William Fulbright, Earl Hilliard, Cynthia McKinney and quite likely many more.

Politicians from both parties attend the annual convention of its major lobbying arm, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and pledge their loyalty to this foreign country. President Barack Obama, whose early and major backing came from members of the Israel lobby, gave his first post-nomination speech at the AIPAC convention.

**“Despite the lobby’s inordinate power, most Americans are only minimally aware of it”**

Yet, despite the lobby's inordinate power, most Americans are only minimally aware of it. For decades surveys have shown that the large majority of Americans don't wish to take sides on Israel-Palestine, a reflection of a public that is uninformed about



how much of our tax money goes to Israel and how decisively our government is, indeed, taking a side.

This widespread lack of awareness about the role of the Israel lobby in determining American policies is particularly startling given that the movement on behalf of Israel has been active in the United States for over 100 years and that it played a significant role in Israel's creation.

By the 1920s it was able successfully to promote its policies over those recommended by the US State Department; by the 1940s it had added Pentagon policies to those it could overrule and both presidential candidates Harry Truman and Thomas Dewey were currying its favour; by 1967 it was able to push its cover story on Israel's lethal attack on the US naval ship *Liberty* in the face of opposition from high ranking admirals, the director of the CIA and the Secretary of State; and by 1977 the head of AIPAC could state with accuracy: “We have never lost on a major issue.”

Half a century ago the Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigating lobbying activities found an illicit cycle in which the Israel lobby succeeded in procuring money for Israel, some of this was then secretly funneled back into these groups, which then used this money to lobby for still more American tax dollars to Israel.

The hearings concluded that Israel operated “one of the most effective networks of foreign influence” in the United States. Yet, since the media reported on this so little, most Americans are unaware of these extremely grave findings.

The term “Israel lobby” fails to do justice to the extraordinary scope and composition of this special interest group. Below is a small sampling of the American organisations that work on behalf of Israel. Virtually all have multi-million dollar budgets; a few have endowments in the hundreds of million dollars and most of them are funded by tax-deductible donations:

- **The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC):** \$100 million endowment, \$60 million annual revenues.
- **The American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF):** \$26 million annual revenues.
- **The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP):** \$23.5 million net assets. \$9.4 million annual revenue.
- **Anti-Defamation League (ADL):** \$115 million net assets, \$60 million annual revenues.
- **International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (aka Stand for Israel),** \$100 million annual revenues.
- **The Israel Project:** \$11 million annual budget.
- **Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (FIDF) –** \$80 million net assets. \$60 million annual revenue.
- **Hadassah (Women's Zionist Organization of America):** \$400 million net assets, \$100 million annual revenues.
- **The Jim Joseph Foundation:** \$837 million net assets.
- **The Avi Chai Foundation:** \$615 million total assets.

- **Jewish Federations** – \$3 billion annual revenues.
- **Jewish Community Relations Councils**, in cities all over U.S.: Boston annual revenues \$2.5 million; Louisville annual revenues \$7–10 million; Detroit \$734,000, New York \$4.5 million, etc.
- **Hillel** – over \$26 million.
- **JINSA Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs**: \$3 million annual revenues
- **Center for Security Policy**: \$4 million annual revenues
- **Foreign Policy Initiative (PNAC 2.0)**: \$1.5 million annual revenues
- **MEMRI Middle East Media Research Institute**: \$5.2 million
- **Birthright**: \$55 million
- **David Project** – \$4.4 million
- **CAMERA Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America** – \$3.5 million

In addition to these nonprofit organisations, there are dozens of political action committees (PACs) that donate to political candidates on the basis of their positions on Israel. Most of these disguise their purpose by using such deceptive names as “Northern Californians for Good Government,” “National Action Committee,” “American Principles,” etc.

While other issue-based PACs almost always announce their focus publicly, in 2012 only two of the pro-Israel PACs made any reference to Israel in their names. While US media frequently discuss the gun rights lobby, the largely uncovered pro-Israel PACs gave almost twice as much money to candidates – and the donations went to both parties.

In addition, there are numerous individuals who play an extremely important role in the Israel lobbying effort. Two examples are political campaign mega-donors Haim Saban and Sheldon Adelson. Saban donated \$12.3 million to the Democratic Party in 2002 alone and has contributed millions more to pro-Israel organisations.



**Sheldon Adelson (left) and Haim Saban (right)**

Adelson, a billionaire casino magnate, set a new record in political donations by giving \$70 million in the 2012 elections, nearly triple the previous highest amount. He also funds such pro-Israel organisations as Birthright Israel which takes thousands of young Jewish Americans on recruiting visits to Israel.

In other cases, it is individuals with a different kind of power – the power to affect which information reaches the American public and which does not. One example is Eric Weider, whose Weider History Group publishes eleven history magazines in the United States, the largest history magazine publisher in America (and, according to its website, the world).

Given this reality, President Obama’s actions are unlikely to stray outside the parameters the Israel lobby is willing to accept. While the media are making a great deal over the very mild apology Israel made to Turkey for having murdered nine of its citizens on the Gaza aid ship *Mavi Marmara*, crediting Obama with this alleged breakthrough, none of the news reports seem to mention that Israel has largely failed to apologise to the US for the death of 19-year-old dual American Turkish citizen, Furgan Dogan, who was killed with five bullets, one to his face at point blank range.

It is also relevant to note that an AIPAC-drafted letter signed by 76 out of 100 Senators was sent to President Obama on the eve of

his visit to Israel in March.

Congressional actions can also be expected to remain within what the Israel lobby directs, though here, too, there may be rare occasions where the lobby seems to have lost – such as the confirmation of Chuck Hagel for Secretary of Defence.

However, the alleged triumph that some pro-Palestinian writers are proclaiming for Hagel’s appointment is a bit overblown. Before he was allowed to take his position, he was made to grovel humiliatingly before his Congressional interrogators, retract acceptable statements he had made earlier in his life and all but swear devotion to Israel (like all top government officials seemingly must do).

This degrading spectacle surely made it clear to Hagel that he better watch his step in the future and made it even clearer to ambitious Americans of all ages that they must be extremely careful about any statements they make about Israel and its lobby if they are to achieve their political ambitions.

## “There is a highly diverse movement that opposes this lobby and it is steadily growing”

Despite the power of the lobby, however, the situation is not as bleak as the above may suggest. There is a highly diverse movement in the US that opposes this lobby and it is steadily growing.

The Left, which for decades was largely silent on Israeli abuses of human rights, has finally become active on the issue. Similarly, both traditional conservatives and libertarians frequently oppose aid to Israel and this opposition is becoming more outspoken. While this stance is often motivated by fiscal considerations, in many cases it is also fuelled by outrage at Israeli cruelty and by genuine empathy with Palestinians.

The money being mobilised on this side is only a small fraction of the other and some of the groups within this movement could arguably be considered simply a more reasonable and compassionate arm of the Israel lobby in that their advocacy is often framed according to what “is good for Israel” while failing to address the inherent injustice of an ethnic state imposed on a multicultural region.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the opposition to current US policies is growing increasingly important. The tide may not yet have turned but it is certainly in the slowing phase that must come first.

To use another oft-quoted and particularly apt metaphor, lobbies thrive in the dark. More and more people in the US and elsewhere are shining light on this one, steadily reducing its power.

While there are numerous deeply significant issues, an increasing number of individuals are deciding to focus on this one, the core issue of the Middle East and the cause of war after war, including the current “war on terror” and demonisation of Muslims.

To use the framing posed by journalist Glenn Greenwald, an expanding number of people are refusing to prioritise domestic issues over the killing of Arab and Muslim children on the other side of the world.

Therefore, despite the enormous power of the Israel lobby in the US, this growing movement is quite likely to overcome the obstacles confronting it and to join history’s other successful movements against oppression.

The main question is how long this will take, and how many more massacres, and possibly wars, will occur in the interim.

**Alison Weir is the executive director of If Americans Knew and the president of the Council for the National Interest. The first volume in her two-part *History of US-Israel Relations, Against our Better Judgment*, will be published this spring; an uncorrected proof is posted on the organisation’s websites.**

■ Citations for this article are available in the online version at [IfAmericansKnew.org](http://IfAmericansKnew.org)

# Pinkwashing: a desperate strategy

By Frankie Green

**P**inkwashing, Israel's presentation of itself as a gay-friendly and therefore liberal, tolerant democracy, was identified at November's World Social Forum in Brazil as one of the main strategies used by the state to divert attention from the oppression of the Palestinians.

This propaganda smokescreen is part of increasingly desperate Zionist PR strategies. However, Israel's cynical ploy is challenged by the campaign against pinkwashing which works in solidarity with Palestinian groups such as Aswat and Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, and is integral to the global BDS movement.

**“Anti-pinkwashing events have proliferated internationally”**

The WSF agreed to promote the struggle against pinkwashing as part of the broader Palestine solidarity movement in the struggle against apartheid, occupation and colonisation. Anti-pinkwashing events have proliferated internationally and include a conference at City University in New York in April, organised by veteran activist Sarah Schulman, with speakers including Haneen Maikey from the group alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society.

In Britain, PSC members are active in the organisation “No Pinkwashing UK,”

alongside Trade Union and student campaigners, and made a massive intervention at 2012's World Pride, a huge central London festival of thousands of people from all over the globe. Israel's Ministry of Tourism's promoters were outnumbered by Palestinian flags, thousands of leaflets were distributed and a special video, “No Pride in Israeli

Apartheid,” was made. “No Pinkwashing” members also formed a contingent in the national demonstration against Israel's attack on Gaza in November and Unison highlighted pinkwashing at its November LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender) Brighton conference.

Tourism is a major focus of campaigning as Israel invests heavily in advertising in gay media. Many gay people are pledging publicly to boycott Israel, citing the unethical nature of enjoying Tel Aviv's beaches and clubs only miles away from the suffering in besieged Gaza.

Campaigners spread awareness that Israel's marketing of itself as a holiday destination is particularly callous when the worldwide diaspora of dispossessed Palestinians is prevented from return to its homeland. The anti-racist roots of the early



TV fashion guru Gok Wan at World Pride 2012

gay rights movement and its solidarity with oppressed peoples are resurfacing in this burgeoning campaign, with its concomitant challenging of oppressive gender roles and echoes of activism against South African apartheid.

Watch videos of actions and contact the group via its Facebook page and the website [www.nopinkwashing.org.uk](http://www.nopinkwashing.org.uk). The group holds monthly meetings in London, organises discussions on pinkwashing with student unions and can provide speakers for meetings. Material to distribute this year at Pride festivals around the UK is available from the PSC office.

To learn more, please see the Pinkwatching Kit produced collaboratively by alQaws, Pinkwatching Israel and PQBDS at the information hub <http://www.pinkwatchingisrael.com>.

## Palestinian prisoners get international support

**A**n international conference was held in Ramallah, 27-28 April, on the eleventh anniversary of the arrest of the political leader Marwan Barghout. More than 50 European and South

American countries and South Africa were represented, as well as a wide range of Palestinian political parties, human rights NGOs and international organisations.

Lawyer Fadwa Barghouthi, Marwan's wife, welcomed everyone with a moving message from her husband, who, together



with other political prisoners, signed a historic document in 2005 calling for reconciliation of all political factions. All agreed this would be a great help in the global solidarity movement as well as in the Palestinians' struggle for freedom and justice.

However, PSC Honorary President Betty Hunter urged the conference to forge ahead with the campaigns on political prisoners and child prisoners as this would not only turn the spotlight on Israel's multiple violations of international law but would also facilitate the reconciliation process. Hugh Lanning, Chair of PSC, reported on the growing support for these campaigns in the UK; the hunger strikes, he said, had inspired a massive Twitter campaign and opposing

the complicity of the security firm G4S was a way of focusing attention on the prisoners issue.

Organisations representing prisoners agreed that they would coordinate their efforts to provide a detailed and accurate data base of cases, together with videos, while solidarity groups said they would take up the idea of “adoption” of specific prisoners and of making prisoners like Marwan honorary citizens, perhaps of towns already involved in the twinning process. MEPs and heads of human rights organisations agreed to make the issue a priority in the coming months and promised to press for access to prisoners in jails – so far denied.

Hilary Wise

## Israeli football, racism and politics:

# The ugly side of the beautiful game

By Jonathan Cook

**A**dozen Palestinian teenagers from the West Bank village of Bilin stride forth in FC Barcelona jerseys, looking no different from thousands of other fans of one of the world's leading football clubs. But moments later the group remove their shirts and drape them over razor wire the Israeli army has uncoiled around the village. The youngsters then set fire to the jerseys.

This protest, captured on a YouTube video, is one of many by Palestinians and their international supporters as they step up their opposition to Israel's increasing integration into world football, at a cost, say Palestinians, to their own sporting ambitions.

Israel is celebrating its biggest-ever footballing coup this summer when it hosts the European Under-21 Championship. The decision to select Israel as the venue was taken by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), European football's governing body.

Many observers have been surprised that, at a time when Israel is refusing to revive peace talks, it is being warmly embraced by international football.

"Football is an effective vehicle for Israel to rehabilitate its image with the international community," said Tamir Sorek, an Israeli-Palestinian sociologist at the University of Florida who has written extensively on Israeli football. "A large sporting event is an ideal opportunity for Israel to present itself as a normal country."

It is precisely this scenario that frustrates Palestinians who fear that Israel is exploiting football as a way to distract attention from (the) occupation and the troubling record inside Israel of anti-Arab racism on the terraces and in the dressing room.

The touch paper for the torched jerseys was an announcement by Barcelona's club president, Sandro Rosell, that his team intended to play a friendly against a joint Israeli-Palestinian squad to "help the two peoples to reach peace." Rosell revealed his plans during a visit to Israel in February. Jibril Rajoub, president of the Palestinian Football Association, was left looking decidedly uncomfortable at a joint press conference. A short time later, he rejected the proposal. "The conditions are not ready for this idea," he told reporters. "Israel does not even recognise us as a sporting entity."

A similar logic to Rosell's – fostering peace through football – appears to lie behind UEFA's decision to stage the under-21 tournament in Israel, from 5-18 June. Michel Platini, the head of UEFA, wrote to the Israel Football Association saying the championship would "be a beautiful celebration of football that, once again, will bring people together."

Nonetheless, UEFA's choice of Israel has sharply divided opinion. Last November 62 leading European footballers signed a statement protesting UEFA's decision, saying the tournament would be "seen as a reward for actions that are contrary to sporting values," adding that Palestinians "endure a desperate existence under occupation."

The statement also noted Israel's repeated attacks on Palestinian sporting venues, the jailing of its leading athletes and Israeli restrictions on Palestinian teams' freedom of movement.

But it has not just been the treatment of Palestinians under occupation that has sparked opposition to Israel's staging of the tournament.

Scenes of extreme racial abuse on Israeli terraces in recent



**Scottish fans protesting about imprisoned Palestinian footballers**

months have also raised questions about the degree to which UEFA's decision squares with its stated commitment to "zero tolerance for any form of racism and discrimination."

One premier league club in particular, Beitar Jerusalem, has long prided itself on being the only major Israeli squad never to have fielded an Arab or Muslim player, despite a fifth of Israel's population being of Palestinian origin. Cries of "Deaths to the Arabs!" and "Muhammad is dead!" are commonplace at its matches.

When in January Beitar finally signed two Muslim players from Chechnya, large numbers of fans vented their fury. The pair were greeted with a torrent of abuse and a large banner declaring "Beitar: pure forever," they have been spat at and they have endured walkouts. Shortly after the signings, the clubhouse was burnt down by a hardcore group of fans known as La Familia.

Last year Beitar also made headlines when hundreds of fans rampaged through a Jerusalem shopping mall, beating Palestinian staff and customers.

Rifaat Turk, the most successful Arab player in Israeli football and the first to be selected for the national team, in 1976, recalled that it "started to rain" every time he stepped on the pitch there was so much spitting.

"Things have not improved. Racism is endemic to the Israeli game. By staying silent, it's as if the [Israeli] football authorities, the government and state officials approve of the racism."

Support for the Palestinian campaign (for a sports boycott of Israel) has been spreading. In Europe, Red Card Israeli Racism groups have been established, staging protests at UEFA offices to pressure officials. In April 40 activists occupied the offices of the French Football Association after its chairman, Noel Le Graet, refused to meet them.

Red Card's biggest protest will be in London on May 24 – see back page for details.

*This is an edited version of an article first published in The National on 25 April.*

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# The forgotten Golan

The Golan Heights cover some 1800 square kilometres of land on Israel's North East border, of which Israel occupies over two thirds. Seized from Syria in the 1967 war, the area is the source of 35–40% of Israel's water supply and now its hydrocarbons potential has also come to the fore. Syria tried to reclaim the area in the 1973 war, resulting in a UN-brokered truce and buffer zone monitored by a UN Disengagement Observer Force. Israel annexed it in 1981, but its annexation is illegal under international law and has never been recognised. Under the Assad regime the Syrian border has been Israel's quietest and Israel has taken that silence as a sign that it can do what it likes there – no one will object.

Now the crisis engulfing Syria will change the dynamic in the entire region in ways that no-one can predict. Syria specialist **Diana Darke** says that Israel sees both dangers and opportunities in the changes affecting this often forgotten aspect of its military occupation of others' lands.

The international community is largely silent on all matters relating to the Golan Heights. Scarcely a murmur was heard in global news coverage when in February the Israeli Energy Ministry granted the first-ever licence for oil and gas exploration in a 400-square kilometre area of the Golan to a local subsidiary of a New York-listed company, Genie Energy.

Closer examination reveals that Genie's shareholders include Rupert Murdoch and Jacob Rothschild and that former US vice-president Dick Cheney is an adviser. The licence is for exploration only, not for extraction – but if reserves were to be found, the oil/gas extracted would by rights be Syrian, and much-needed with its own current oil reserves on the wane.

Not so for Israel – the recent natural gas finds off its Mediterranean coast are now known to be among the largest in the world. When they come on stream later this year, Israel is set to become a significant energy exporter in the region, hoping to establish pipelines to Turkey and Jordan – clearly a driver in Israel's recent reconciliation with Turkey over the *Mavi Marmara* incident.

Also barely reported in the international media, the Israeli military began in December 2012 overseeing the construction of a "security barrier" along a 30km stretch of the Golan's border with Syria. Citing concerns over



developments inside Syria, especially since a few mortars and other projectiles fired from Syria landed on their side of the border in recent months, the General Staff of the Israeli Defence Force announced it had "decided to prepare for every eventuality."

With the rationale of "blocking infiltration" from Syria, they also declared they would be bolstering their radar stations on the 2814m-peak of Mt Hermon with extra state-of-the-art cameras, electronic surveillance and intelligence units. Construction of the 5m high fence, complete with trenches in places, is well-advanced. An Israeli army statement says it is being carried out "in a similar fashion to that of the Hourglass Project on the Egyptian border, which has proved its effectiveness recently in preventing illegal border crossings."

Can the timing of both these developments be purely coincidental? Nothing can be proved but the consensus among political analysts outside Israel is

that the Israeli government has seen in the Syrian crisis an opportunity to consolidate its grip on the Golan, changing the facts on the ground beyond the 32 settlements which already exist there. Now is the perfect timing, from its point of view, when there will be no foreseeable pressure to make peace with Syria.

At an event in London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), just one day after news broke of the oil/gas exploration licence in the Golan, former Israeli diplomat Dr Alon Liel gave a talk about Turkish/Israeli relations. I asked him about the awarding of the licence and what it meant to Israel. His reply was revealing: "We think we have won the lottery now in the Golan. When Obama comes next month and tells us we must return the Golan to Syria, we will say to him – 'But who shall we return it to – Bashar or the rebels? There is no Syria, there is no one to give it to!' It is ours now."

**"Israelis see the Golan as part of Israel, showing it as such on Israeli maps"**

He proceeded to talk about how well Israel had treated some wounded Syrians who had crossed the border earlier in February, giving them medical care. I asked him whether he was suggesting that Israel would take in Syrian refugees if they crossed from the Golan, as a humanitarian response. Would they be welcome in Israel? At that point he backtracked, saying he thought it unlikely that thousands of Syrians would

cross from the Golan into Israel. Small numbers of injured Syrian soldiers have in fact continued to be given medical care when necessary, either at the border itself, or at Israeli hospitals, before being returned to Syria. Israel says their identities are kept concealed, for their own safety.

At another SOAS event in March, a book launch for *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist* (Pluto Press), I asked the author Antony Lerman if he could talk about the Golan, where it fitted into the Zionist picture, and how the Syrian crisis might change things there in future. He replied that the Golan is most definitely part



**Angelina Jolie, actress and UNHCR special envoy, visiting Zaatari camp, Dec 2012**



**The Golan Heights (left) are the source of the Jordan river. Israel takes 50% of the water, Jordan 23%, Syria 19% and Palestinians 8%.**

of the maximalist Zionist picture and that Zionists feel it is theirs by right, despite the clear position under international law that it is not.

Israelis see the Golan as part of Israel, showing it as such on Israeli maps. Favoured for weekend getaways, it even has its own kosher winery and ski resort. Agriculturally its volcanic soil is the richest in the entire region, famed for its prize-winning vineyards and its apple farms, and when you look across the border from the Syrian side, the contrast is striking.

The countryside around Majdal Shams, the largest town on the Golan, is green, well-irrigated and well-organised with luxuriant farms and fields, compared to Syria's neglected villages. In the days before mobile phones the hill above Majdal Shams was known as the "Shouting Hill" where relations would use megaphones across the valley to their families on the other side. It was the only contact permitted.

Most of the 400,000 Syrians displaced in 1967 were Druze, for whom intermarriage is not allowed. From time to time Druze brides are permitted to cross to marry Druze grooms, with barbed wire the backdrop to their wedding photos. Some 17,000 Syrians still live on the Golan under Israeli occupation, most of them Druze, now sharing the territory with about 20,000 Israeli settlers who are out-breeding them.

Israeli archaeologists are engaged in trying to prove the Golan was part of biblical Israel back in the Iron Age to substantiate their right to be there, while Arab scholars claim the Amorites, Arabs of Semitic origin, lived there since the 3rd millennium BC. Today the reality

on the ground is that only the flattened city of Quneitra is under Syrian control.

A visit to Quneitra, bulldozed in an act of gratuitous violence by the Israeli army in 1974, requires a special permit from the Syrian authorities in Damascus, a tedious administrative process, albeit free of charge. The Assad regime encourages visitors, displaying it as a showpiece of Israeli aggression, rather than rebuilding it.

Beyond the consolidation of its presence in the Golan while Syria's eye is off the ball, Israel also sees the crisis in Syria as a real danger. What if the regime's chemical weapons were to fall into the hands of

Islamist extremist rebels? Might a new Islamic extremist government in Syria decide to take back the Golan by force with weaponry provided by Saudi Arabia and Qatar? All things are possible.

## **“Palestinian refugees have suffered heavily from regime bombardment in recent months”**

Palestinian refugees living in Syria, especially those in the Yarmouk unofficial camp, have suffered heavily from regime bombardment in recent months. Exact figures are hard to come by, but as well as the casualties, some will no doubt have left and become refugees for a second time. How many of the 100,000 refugees from the fighting in Syria now crowding into Jordan's Zaatari camp may be Palestinian, we do not know, but those who are Syrian can identify only too readily with the suffering of the Palestinians.

One Syrian refugee, longing to breathe the air of her homeland once again, summed up their overriding fear and grief as she fought back the tears: "I hope we don't have the same destiny as the Palestinians, who left their country and never went back."

The return of the Golan to Syria in exchange for peace with Israel was one of Obama's main stated foreign policy objectives in 2008. Barring some sort of miracle breakthrough, such an outcome during his second term seems further away than ever. At least the Syrian crisis may finally bring some much-needed focus onto the status of the long-forgotten Golan and its Syrian citizens.

**Diana Darke is author of *Syria's Silent Majority*, due to be published by AuthorHouse in September, 2013, and the Bradt guide to Syria**



**Palestinian refugees fleeing Yarmouk camp, crossing the Syrian border to Lebanon Dec, 2012**

# A joyful ride

**Frank Barat** describes five years of working as the coordinator of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine

**W**riting about my experience with the Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP) for Palestine News is very fitting – I am coming full circle.



The first time I heard about this initiative was when I was on the executive committee of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in 2008 and Betty Hunter and a few others mentioned that they had heard a popular tribunal on Palestine was about to be created.

The founders were based in Belgium and France and were keen on broadening their coalition to other countries. A meeting was due to take place in Brussels and due to the fact that I am French, it seemed like I was the perfect candidate to go and investigate. I self-titled myself “the UK envoy to the RToP” and felt somehow close to Tony Blair, despite the fact that I was not wearing an expensive suit, fake tan, was not English nor a war criminal.

These last five years since I became coordinator for the Tribunal have been an experience, an adventure, a joyful ride full of ups and downs with the ups always stronger, more powerful. Life with a capital L.

The closing session took place in Brussels in March. Before this, the Tribunal went to Barcelona, London, Cape Town and New York. I still have, like most people closely associated with it, to pinch myself to believe what I have just written.

It all seemed so improbable back in 2008. We managed to organise a press conference in Brussels, launching the Tribunal, in March 2009. The media turned up in numbers



**Harry Belafonte and Angela Davis**

mainly due to the fact that Leila Shahid, Nurit Peled, Stephane Hessel, Ken Loach, Paul Laverty, Raji Sourani, Jean Ziegler, Ken Coates, Pierre Galand and Luisa Morgantini were in the room.

We had no idea at this point if we were going to be able to organise our first session in Barcelona. Such an ambitious project requires money. Quite a lot of it. Fundraising was a daily chore from start to finish.

But we made it. Thanks to the work of a very small but dedicated team, thanks to the support of people around the world who sent hundreds of small donations via Paypal, thanks to Stephane Hessel who donated all the royalties of his book *Time for Outrage*, thanks to hundreds of charities, foundations, organisations... we did it. All together.

Barcelona in 2010, as our first “baby,” was very special for everyone but the sessions from then got better and better. London, which focused on Corporate Complicity, was crucial to link the Palestine struggle to a more global one. Cape Town was, and still is for many, where we reached our peak. The historic venue (District 6 Museum), the country, the people involved (Archbishop Tutu and Alice Walker among them) and the topic, “Apartheid,” made this session our most powerful to date.

**“We managed to organise the biggest pro-Palestine event ever to take place in the US”**

New York was very different but we heard countless times that we had managed to organise, with the support of a fantastic US committee, the biggest pro-Palestine event ever to take place in the US. New York also saw the arrival in our jury of two superstars: author and activist Angela Davis and Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters. In the audience, singer Harry Belafonte (who since became one of our patrons) for the first time took a stand on Palestine. Many saw this as a turning point. Only time will tell.

Since our closing session, I have had the same question in my head, constantly: “Have we really achieved something?”

In the grander scheme of things, Palestine is still occupied and colonised. The refugees have not returned and Jerusalem is still being judaised as I write.

But as anyone involved in a struggle will tell you, we have to focus on the small victories to one day make a much bigger



**Roger Waters**

difference. The people have written history before, have conquered mountains that seemed insurmountable. Regimes have fallen. Radical change has happened.

We, like the Palestinians, have to remain steadfast and optimistic.

The Tribunal, by putting international law at the centre of the Palestine question, has empowered our movement. We have the high moral ground AND we have the law. As Michael Mansfield, one of our jury members, said in Brussels; “It is time to start a legal intifada!” Israel knows the importance of this and the danger it represents for them. They have given it a name of their own: “lawfare.”

The tribunal has also helped globalise the struggle. “We are all Palestinians,” the phrase that many PSC supporters chant during demonstrations, is a concept that seems more and more real. The time has come for us to think as one.

**“The Tribunal, by putting international law at the centre of the Palestine question, has empowered our movement”**

We are all in this together. This is a victory in itself.

**Frank Barat is the editor of *Gaza in Crisis; Israel's War against the Palestinians*, published by Haymarket Books, 2010.**



The final session. Photo: Renaud Hoyois

## Findings

At the end of five meetings, the final session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in March summarised all the findings made in the previous four years and set out the conclusions of the jury as to future action.

Those conclusions include:

- an encouragement to everyone to visit Palestine and see the daily lives of Palestinians for themselves
- an urgent international appeal for pressure to be put on Israel to halt its violations of international law and to dismantle its system of apartheid
- support for Palestine to become a full member of the International Criminal Court and for the ICC to commence immediate investigations into Israel's crimes against humanity and war crimes
- support for calls from Palestinian civil society for Palestine to ratify other important international Conventions.

The Tribunal called for specific actions at the United Nations including for the General Assembly to reconstitute the UN Special Committee against Apartheid and to convene a session to consider the question of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

It said the UN should withdraw from the so-called Quartet<sup>1</sup> which needs

to be disbanded immediately as it has operated as a block on implementation of international law while giving the false impression of presiding over a meaningful peace process.

Turning to the European Union, the Tribunal urged the relevant EU bodies to implement the European Parliament's resolution calling for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and to ban the import of all settlement products.

All states were urged to aid the collection of evidence and the exercise of universal jurisdiction in respect of the actions of suspected war criminals, both Israeli and Palestinian, while the US was asked to stop its unequivocal economic, military and diplomatic support of Israel.

Evidence of the complicity in war crimes by corporations should be given to prosecuting authorities, shareholders etc. And the Tribunal commended and re-stated its support for the BDS campaign.

The Tribunal called on civil society movements worldwide to incorporate Palestinian solidarity into their work and on all informed civil society actors to engage in public education on the issue. It also called for the issue of Palestinian prisoners to be addressed urgently as a matter of major international concern.

At the end of the final session, each juror reaffirmed their commitment to continue working for peace and justice in Palestine and individually to spread the message as widely as they can.

- The full findings of the session are available at: [www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com](http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com)

## Eye on the web

### ● Prisoner of conscience

Conscientious objector Natan Blanc has been imprisoned eight times for refusing to be part of the occupation. Last jailed in April, the 19-year-old from Haifa has also refused

to work in a hospital for his national service because he would have to wear the IDF uniform.

He says that while there are few conscientious objectors in Israel, a lot of young people claim mental or medical problems to avoid military service. He does not do this because "I do not want to lie. It is important in this case to tell the truth as it is. There is nothing to be ashamed or afraid of by stating what you believe in."

See an interview with him at <http://tinyurl.com/d3lc4ce>



### ● The settlers' case

The Yesha Council, which represents the settlers illegally colonising the Palestinian Territories, produced a glossy brochure stating their claim to sovereignty over the West Bank for the visit of President Obama to Israel – complete with his picture on the front.

It is packed with honest admissions, such as that one of its main motivations for controlling the West Bank is that it is the source of 50% of what it calls "Israel's water," and breathtaking distortions and downright lies. These include the assertion that Palestinians in Area C "enjoy full freedom of movement."

<http://tinyurl.com/d8akqq8>

### ● Soldiers drag off kids

IDF soldiers dragged away 27 children on their way to school in Hebron, at least 14 of them under the age of 12, on 20 March on suspicion of "stone throwing."

This video of the incident was released by B'Tselem:

<http://tinyurl.com/bv4w5yj>

### ● Gideon Levy speaks

A documentary about Israeli hero journalist Gideon Levy, described as "the most hated man in Israel," and some of the courageous Palestinians he has attempted to help, was shown as part of the Al Jazeera World series.

See it online at:

<http://tinyurl.com/allaukb>

# Twitter wars

As Palestinians have gained increasing access to the internet, they have been able to reveal their plight directly to the world, including highly distressing images of people being injured and killed in Gaza.

This has provoked Israel into new efforts to try to manipulate its image via social media, as **Yukie Yamao**, Jerusalem Bureau Chief Correspondent of Japanese newspaper, *The Asahi Shimbun*, reported in March.

Computers line a long desk in a 40 square metre room that, at first glance, resembles a school library. The operators are young soldiers dressed in khaki uniform.

There is no sign of the heavy security usually found at military facilities. The building, near the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv, is nondescript and well worn. In fact, the New Media Desk in the Spokesman's Unit of the Israeli Defence Forces is so ordinary-looking that it comes as somewhat of a letdown, given the IDF's reputation as the most capable force in the Middle East.

This division's task is to use online social media such as Twitter and Facebook to convey the IDF's message to the world and thereby "seek understanding."

"I think that people around the world think that we are a very, very violent army," says Lt. Sacha Dratwa. "We have two goals, the first one is to really be a part of this media revolution, and the second goal is really to change the image of the IDF."

## Gaza launch

The IDF's social media strategy, developed over the course of four years, was put into full effect during attacks on Gaza in 2012.

On 14 November the IDF executed a lethal airstrike on a vehicle carrying Ahmed Al-Jabari, head of the military wing of Hamas. The New Media Desk uploaded footage of the attack to YouTube and declared the opening of hostilities via Twitter.

It posted further video of Israeli citizens fleeing from rocket attacks launched from Gaza and a blog entry explained the intentions of its operation. On Twitter, blow-by-blow updates announced "gains" such as airstrikes and reiterated Israel's view that Hamas is a terrorist organisation.

Then, another tweet shot out, this one aimed directly at Hamas: "We recommend that no Hamas operatives, whether low level or senior leaders, show their faces above ground in the days ahead."

Members of the Ezzedeen Al Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, follow their enemy's Twitter account. They replied swiftly to the IDF's declaration of hostilities: "Our blessed hands will reach your leaders and soldiers wherever they are."

This war of words continued until a ceasefire was reached seven days later. With the death toll at 160, the IDF had made over 330 tweets on its official Twitter account.

## Aiming for the world

The New Media Desk has more than 40 IDF members assigned to it, Dratwa said. Strategies are decided in meetings with commanders and desk staff then posted to social media accordingly.

The office operates five official accounts on Twitter alone and soldiers with native fluency in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew tweet the same content at virtually the same time. To top that off, the office maintains a pool of talent to rival an advertising agency, including programmers, photographers, content producers, graphic designers and editors, all of whom constantly contemplate how to present the IDF to the world.

To date, the IDF has been stuck with a negative image. The Gaza assault that began in late 2008 left more than 1,400 Palestinians dead, including approximately 400 children. Its approach of leaving no option off the table in order to achieve its objectives regardless of civilian casualties has been a point of ongoing criticism from the international community. As Israel sees itself as the only democratic nation in the Middle East, its poor reputation is a source of considerable concern.

Israel has a military censorship system that places strict limits on press reporting of national security issues. However, its power does not extend far enough to prevent negative coverage by foreign media.

So the IDF decided to generate its own media. Internet social media, which can deliver information to the world concurrently and instantaneously, is being used as a "weapon" against traditional media.

Meanwhile, there are also signs that social media has been used in covert operations during the latest conflict. Mohsen Alafranj, 42, media consultant at the Islamic University of Gaza, says it was used to try to recruit collaborators within Gaza.

Yasser Abu Heen, 34, of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, concurs: "People posing as foreign journalists used Facebook and other means to approach local journalists and to acquire information," he said.

## Civilians also making their voices heard

Thanks to the convenience of social media, it is not only the official versions of the truth that get out there.

Inspired by the Arab Spring, the people of Gaza took to using social media. The unfiltered footage and information they provided was more successful in capturing the world's attention than the propaganda spread by the Israeli military and Hamas.

A 21 year old popular female blogger based in Gaza is one of those who tirelessly posted photos and information in English on the situation in the territory during the most recent airstrikes.

"We were totally isolated during the attacks on Gaza that lasted from December of 2008 to the next month. Over night and day, all the time people were murdered, but we couldn't communicate with the world," she said.

"This time, I didn't want to feel the same. My blog received 20,000 page views daily. I got 4,000 new Twitter followers as well."

Hamas has noticed what citizen bloggers managed to achieve and has already begun to seek tie-ups with them.

"For example, how to post pictures. Arabs and Muslims get angry whenever they see people's bodies, but people in Western countries are appalled and just shut down the website," says Hamas Government Media Office director Ihab Al-Ghussein, 35.

"Now, we are trying to work on some courses for all youths on how to send the right message. We try to tell them how Western people think and how these people perceive the message and how we should send it to them."



# Silencing dissent

The Israeli documentary, *The Gatekeepers*, featuring in-depth interviews with all six surviving former heads of the internal security service, Shin Bet, all of whom say the occupation must end (see page 27), caused problems for Israeli diplomats round the world after it was nominated for an Oscar, *Ha'aretz* reported in March.

Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to the United States, outdid all the others when he claimed that the security chiefs compromised the state's public relations efforts, which he said were "in a kind of war."

In this subsequent opinion piece, **Daniel Bartal**, professor of political psychology at Tel Aviv University, and political commentator **Akiva Eldar** argue that Oren's statements were among many similar ones that express the symptoms of a dangerous disease that is attacking Israeli society.

Other symptoms include increasing delegitimisation of the left wing (and the Haredi population as well), with the purpose of silencing legitimate voices in public discourse; Culture Minister Limor Livnat's call to artists to practice self-censorship; the Education Ministry's dismissal of civics studies supervisor Adar Cohen because his liberal views were not to the liking of former education minister Gideon Sa'ar; the barring by Israel of Professor Rivka Feldhay from participating in a joint Israeli-German academic conference, apparently for her support for Israeli soldiers who refuse to serve in the Palestinian territories; and the attempts to shut down the Department of Politics and Government at Ben-Gurion University. All these are symptoms of the attempts to suppress free speech in Israeli society.

Oren and those who share his opinion claim that criticism of the leadership's policy is tantamount to damaging the State of Israel's standing and harming its interests. For the regime's spokesmen, their methods, ideology and goals are an inseparable part of the state. Therefore, disagreeing with them is equivalent to harming the state, and critics betray the state's interests.

This approach is reminiscent of the spokesmen of the Chinese regime who use the same reason to silence criticism from within and exert tight control over the media, cultural works and academia. The approach of Oren and his colleagues must therefore justify regimes that attempt to silence criticism of anti-Semitism in their countries for fear



US-born Michael Oren emigrated to Israel in 1979 and joined the IDF. During Israel's 2008–9 Operation Cast Lead he was a media relations officer. He was appointed US ambassador in May, 2009.

that making such criticism public might damage their countries' image and interests.

In professional terms, the attempt to create an absolute identity between the method of a particular group and the goals of the state is known as "monopolising patriotism." This is done by attaching conditions such as support of the leadership and its policies to the definition of patriotism. That is how people who do not meet those conditions are excluded from the patriotic camp and only those who meet those conditions may be considered patriots. Patriotism is thus transformed into an effective mechanism for shunning entire groups within society that do not agree with the leadership's policies.

Oren and his ilk do not accept the basic principle that patriots who love their country and their people are allowed to disagree with the political leadership's vision and policy. They deny the approach that heterogeneity of thought is one of the most obvious and necessary signs of an open and pluralistic society. Not for a moment does it occur to them that perhaps their goals and policy are what is causing damage to the state.

Individuals and groups in society have different opinions, and it is important that these opinions be expressed in the public discourse,



'The Gatekeepers'

in cultural expressions, in textbooks, in classroom discussions. Attempts to restrict free speech and weaken critical discussion – whose intent is actually to repair society – harm democracy and lead the state down the road of becoming a totalitarian regime in which everyone must express an identical opinion.

# Gaza–London: a meeting of minds

A wide range of analysts, academics and activists exchanged views on the current situation and future campaigning in front of a packed audience at London's School of Oriental and African Studies for the PSC conference "Lessons from Gaza" in April.

MP Jeremy Corbyn, who visited Gaza recently, stressed the acute environmental problems in the Strip and noted the huge human potential of the people: 55% of the population are graduates and there is 0% illiteracy. However the unemployment rate is nearly 25% and farmers are having to throw away crops intended for export because of the siege.

Activist Diana Alzeer told the conference of the widespread grassroots resistance across the OPTs, greatly facilitated by access to social media. She called for democratic elections, open to all Palestinians, in order to produce a fresh leadership capable of meeting the challenges facing them today.

Professor Nur Masalha (pictured) put the resistance into a historical perspective, emphasising it had always been a popular movement, and stressed its very diverse nature. Professor Kamel Hawwash spoke from a very personal point of view, showing the audience the Jerusalem residence permit of his wife whose family has lived in the city for generations. Now both she and their son may be denied this right.

The most valuable aspect of the conference was probably the opportunity to talk directly to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank via Skype. Jamal El-Khoudary, independent MP in Gaza, provided some grim facts and figures in relation to the siege, political detainees etc, while lawyer and activist Raji Sourani, founder of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, said the situation in Gaza had never been worse but promised that the people would refuse to be "good victims." Resistance was a necessity and an obligation, he said.

Jamal Juma', founder of Stop the Wall, said another popular Intifada was needed to



PHOTO: STEPHEN SIZER

stop the creeping annexation of Palestinian land. Very worrying signs, he said, were both Obama's pressure on the Palestinians to negotiate "land swaps" and the discussion of a possible "confederation" between Palestine and Jordan.

## "Another popular Intifada is needed"

Several of the Palestinian speakers emphasised the urgent need for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah but none saw it as very likely in the short term. Maha Razeq (originally from Gaza) saw the division as being actively supported by Western governments. She believed that armed resistance, in the face of the kind of military occupation Palestinians have suffered for decades, is both legal and morally defensible.

PSC student representative, Azeem Sayani, reported on London students' weekly contact with students in Gaza. Phyllis Starkey, a senior commentator and analyst, proposed pursuing "small but concrete" steps with our government and with the European Parliament, using ministers' own statements as the basis for our demands.

For example, since the government professes to support a two-state solution we should be pressing for a halt to the annexation of the West Bank. She saw positive signs in the European voting pattern on the UN vote for Palestinian observer membership, in the progress on legislation on labelling of settlement goods and the ban on future joint EU-Israeli scientific research projects if the settlements are involved.

Patricia McKeown, of Unison and the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, also spoke of considerable progress on the trade union front. The problem, she said, was translating verbal support for BDS into real actions on the ground.

Some key areas highlighted for ongoing campaigning were the plight of prisoners, especially child prisoners and those held in Administrative Detention, (with G4S being a target due to their involvement in Israeli jails). Pushing for an end to the political isolation and physical blockade of Gaza must also be a major priority.

Speakers from the floor reminded the meeting of the huge amount of work being done by PSC branches and of the variety of actions being undertaken, from campaigns relating to child prisoners and Administrative Detention to the campaign to kick Israel out of international football.

(cont. from previous page)

The demand to express full support for the leadership's methods and refrain from criticism sabotages any attempt to promote a solution to the crisis. Defining the situation as "a kind of war" is a demagogic and manipulative use of words whose purpose is to convince people to support the leadership.

Oren and those like him are dictating to the public what the government believes to be the rules of appropriate behaviour.

Conservative groups operating on the ground strengthen these messages by keeping track of statements that are made or written and then smearing anyone who expresses opinions that differ from the leadership's. This is how a political climate is constructed in which people are afraid to express their opinions and where free speech, one of the most prominent characteristics of a democratic society, is restricted.

■ [www.haaretz.com/opinion/patriotism-in-the-service-of-silencing-dissent.premium-1.512081](http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/patriotism-in-the-service-of-silencing-dissent.premium-1.512081)

# Drones, Gaza and UK involvement

By Rod Jones

**W**elsh branches of the PSC and Stop the War Coalition are organising a conference on the military use of drones to take place in Cardiff in late May. The aim is to establish an all-Wales alliance against military drones in order to bring pressure to bear on the British government to change its policy on the provision of components and spare parts for Israel's drone programme as well as to lobby the Welsh Assembly government (WAG) to withdraw its support for the drone testing facility at Parc Aberporth in West Wales.

In 2005 the WAG invested £21million to develop Parc Aberporth as a centre for the civilian uses of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as part of its aim to expand the aerospace industries in Wales. In fact the site was quickly leased to the Ministry of Defence which in turn handed operations to QinetiQ. This is a multi-billion dollar partnership between the British government's defence laboratories which were privatised in 2001 and the Carlyle Group, a Washington-based global asset management firm specialising in private equity.

In the same year, with a £500 million award from the British government, Israel, France and the UK embarked on an ambitious programme to build 100 Watchkeeper drones for the British army based on Israel's Hermes 450, the IDF's principal attack drone in Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9 and Pillar of Defence in November, 2012. In 2007 QinetiQ joined the programme as sub-contractor to provide testing services at Parc Aberporth.

In April, 2010, Elbit Systems, the Israeli partner in the consortium, signed a \$70 million deal to provide maintenance and logistical support for Watchkeeper on the same day it made its maiden flight at Parc Aberporth. Unspecified problems have delayed what will be Europe's largest and most advanced drone from going into production at the consortium's manufacturing base in Leicestershire.

Beyond Watchkeeper, the facts that Hermes's Wankel engine is built in the UK by a subsidiary of Elbit, that the UK lease Hermes from Israel for use in Afghanistan and that British drone pilots are being trained in Israel by Elbit to fly both Hermes and Watchkeeper, reveal the extent of cooperation between Israel and the UK in drone development and manufacture.

MPs are becoming increasingly concerned about these arrangements given mounting evidence of Israel's illegal use of drones. Reporting on Israel's Operation Cast Lead assault on Gaza, the New York-based Human Rights Watch concluded that



**Watchkeeper on its test flight, April 2010**

the IDF failed to take all reasonable precautions to verify targets as combatants and thus failed to distinguish adequately between civilians and the armed wing of Hamas.

Given that the Israeli authorities have failed to conduct a credible investigation into numerous incidents including those involving drones, and bearing in mind that those violating the rules of war by exhibiting criminal intent either intentionally or recklessly are committing war crimes, HRW have urged the UN Security Council to bring actions against Israel at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The majority of the UNHCR-sponsored Goldstone Committee and other human rights organisations have urged the same course of action based on their own similar findings.

But none of this seems to cut much ice with the British government. Scottish Labour MP Katy Clark recently tabled an Early Day Motion (788) calling for the government to re-examine its relations with Israel. This followed a letter from Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt confirming government approval of export licenses for drones to the IDF "due to the continuing risk of rocket attacks from Gaza and on the basis that allowing the export of these goods which form an important part of Israel's surveillance of Gaza, the rocket threats can be more easily located, reducing the ongoing risk to Israeli civilians."

Bearing in mind that UK equipment was used in Cast Lead and probably in Pillar of Defence, Katy Clark has called on the government "to assess the possible use of UK-supplied equipment by the IDF and fundamentally re-examine all military relations between Israel and the UK... until the long-term security of Palestinian civilians is secured."

Members of the European Parliament have recently voiced similar concerns about US drone use in Pakistan. After a briefing from UN Special Rapporteur for Counter Terrorism and Human Rights, Ben Emerson QC, the European Justice and Human Rights spokeswoman, Sarah Ludford, condemned US drone killings because they operate outside the established legal framework.

She went on: "European complicity in the 'War on Terror' in defiance of legal norms... still haunts Europe as well as the US. It is incredible that the US is making renewed attempts to rewrite the international legal code and we could get hurt again too."

Both the US and Israel exist in the same permanent state of exception and emergency because they suppose themselves to



**A plaque erected to drone victims by anti-war activists**

# Tortured to death

By Gill Swain

The death of young, fit, father of two, Arafat Jaradat, in Israeli custody apparently from torture sparked huge anger and waves of protest across the West Bank.

Arafat Jaradat, 30, was a third year political science student at the Al-Quds Open University, an athletic young man who loved to play

soccer and basketball and earned his living pumping gas at his uncle's filling station. He was asleep at home in the village of Sa'ir, near Hebron, with his four months pregnant



wife, Dalal, four year old daughter, Ya'ara, and two year old son, Mohammed, when a dozen Israeli soldiers burst in soon after midnight on 18 February.

They arrested Jaradat on suspicion of throwing stones in a demo three months earlier during Israel's Operation Pillar of Defence in November. His neighbours later said that after they had gone only a few dozen metres, the soldiers began beating him and his screams were clearly heard.

Jaradat was taken straight to a Shin Bet security service interrogation facility at Jalameh. The last person to see him alive, apart from his interrogators and jailers, was attorney Kamil Sabbagh from the public defender's office. He met his client for the

first time in the Samaria Military Court in Jalameh on 21 February.

"He had serious pains in his back and other parts of his body because he was being beaten up and hanged for many long hours while he was being investigated," Sabbagh told Ma'an news agency. His notes from the court hearing describe his client as "extremely afraid" of returning to his cell.

Sabbagh requested that the judge have Jaradat examined by a doctor. The judge ordered the examination, but it is not clear if it actually took place. Two days later, after six days of interrogation, Jaradat was dead and his pregnant wife a widow.

By then he was in Megiddo prison – it is unclear when he was transferred – and the Israeli prison service said he had suffered a cardiac arrest and any external injuries were the result of attempts to resuscitate him. A Palestinian pathologist who also conducted a post mortem said the young man's arteries were clear and that the state of his body suggested he had been severely beaten.

**"Israel cannot shrug off the responsibility for his blood"**

As rage ripped through the West Bank, a gigantic tent was set up across from the gas station where Jaradat worked as a focus for the hundreds of people who came to offer condolences, including MK Mohammed Barakeh who said: "Arafat Jaradat's death was a result of torture. Israel cannot shrug off the responsibility for his blood."

More protests broke out in April following the death of Maysara Abu Hamdiya, 64, a

retired Palestinian general imprisoned by Israel since 2002 who had been refused medical treatment in jail since he had been diagnosed with cancer in January.

A report by the UFree Network, *Torture in Israeli Jails*,\* based on interviews with former prisoners, says Israel uses both physical and psychological torture methods. Physical torture includes beatings, tying the hands and/or legs together for long periods, violent shaking, forcing the prisoner to sit on a small chair for sometimes days, exposure to very loud music, sleep deprivation, suffocation, electric shocks, spraying gas in the face, pouring cold water on the prisoner while asleep.

Psychological methods include dripping water on the prisoner's head, starvation, using dogs to frighten prisoners, threats of sexual abuse, threatening family members – including that their wife would be sexually abused, being forced to defecate or urinate in front of fellow inmates, lying to the prisoner that his family were due to visit or that a family member had died, forcing them to abuse their national or religious symbols, torturing relatives in front of the prisoner.

The PSC led events and campaigns across the country for Palestinian Prisoners' Day in April, focused against G4S which, among other things, provides services at Megiddo prison where Jaradat was pronounced dead. The campaign is ongoing – see the PSC website for details.

The Palestinian prisoners' rights group, Addameer, re-launched its "Stop Administrative Detention" campaign on Prisoners Day with a global day of action and a video available from [stopadcampaign.com](http://stopadcampaign.com) or [www.addameer.org](http://www.addameer.org).

■ For the full report see <http://www.ufree-p.net/uploads/1366158459.pdf>.

(cont. from previous page)

be threatened by a deadly foe who will stop at nothing. And both countries reserve the right to defend themselves using whatever means they deem to be necessary for their survival even in contravention of international law. Finally, both have chosen to fight this war at minimal risk to themselves by using mechanical surrogates.

Drones are integral to the control of Gaza as part of the blockade. Their constant presence terrorises and intimidates civilians in order to disrupt and undermine the routines of everyday life in line with Israel's stated aim to keep Gaza on the brink of social and economic collapse without actually bringing it about.

Israel is attempting to present Gaza as a feral, failed mini-state where ill-educated and disaffected young men, driven by rage and rebellion, are drawn into the milieu of terrorist extremism while Israel becomes a representative of the new global order in the "War on Terror."

Israel can be indicted for its illegal use of drones on three counts. First, as has already been said, drones have been used either recklessly or intentionally to target civilians including children. Second, drones are used in a secret campaign routinely to

assassinate Palestinian leaders from the comfort and safety of some video suite deep inside Israel. In the absence of due process, these actions are clearly illegal under international law.

And third, by deliberately blurring the distinction between observation drones and their weaponised counterparts, Israel wages psychological warfare against a captive and defenceless people which results in widespread trauma, stress, anxiety and other forms of dysfunctionality especially among children.

Drones have effectively turned Gaza into the new Guantanamo. They represent a major advance on that journey towards the kind of post-Enlightenment dystopia envisaged by George Orwell. As the anti-personnel land mines of the 21st century, they must be banned. Achieving this will be an immensely difficult task but we can take some comfort from the fact that in the UK at least, the process is already underway.

■ Lobby your MP now to sign EDM 788 on UK-Israel military relations.  
 ■ All Wales Anti-Drones Conference, 25 May, 1.30–5.30pm, Wallace Lecture Theatre, Cardiff University. For full programme, email: [Cardiff\\_troopsout@hotmail.com](mailto:Cardiff_troopsout@hotmail.com).

Rod Jones is a member of Abergavenny PSC

# Gaza's Ark: ship of hope



PHOTO: SEBA ASMAA

*A boat like one of these in the port of Gaza will be refitted to become Gaza's Ark.*

Gaza's Ark is a direct action campaign jointly undertaken by Palestinians in Gaza and international solidarity activists to rebuild a former fishing boat in order to challenge Israel's blockade by carrying a cargo of Palestinian export products out to the world. Steering committee members **Audrey Bomse** and **David Heap**, who have both taken part in previous Gaza flotillas, appeal for your support.

The inhuman blockade of Gaza which has been declared illegal by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross and by most international law experts, has tragic consequences on all aspects of life in the Strip, including on the economy.

Those whose livelihood depends on manufacturing have seen their ability to produce decline as a result of lack of raw materials. At the same time they cannot export what they produce. This creates a dependence on foreign aid, in an area that used to have a vibrant export economy. Agricultural exports are reduced to a trickle compared to their former level and are only allowed out at the whim of the occupier.

Knowing the economic potential of their land and people, Palestinian civil society organisations have said repeatedly that they do not want to depend on humanitarian aid. What they need instead is full freedom of movement – for trade, education, family, health and other peaceful purposes – both within Palestine and with the rest of the world. Our campaign will not only create a modest amount of shipbuilding employment in the otherwise depressed port of Gaza, we

are facilitating the sale of Palestinian goods to international buyers for shipment via Gaza's Ark.

## Sailing outwards against the blockade

Our fundamental goals are, however, political, rather than economic or humanitarian. The Gaza's Ark campaign is part of the international Freedom Flotilla Coalition which engages in direct non-violent action against the blockade of Gaza. The FFC also campaigns in solidarity with the fishing fleet of Gaza which is once again cruelly constrained by the Israeli navy to just three nautical miles from the Palestinian coast. By challenging the blockade from the inside out, we are also drawing attention to Israel's false "security" claims: outbound navigation poses no conceivable threat to anyone's security and yet it is forbidden by the Israeli navy.

When we sail against the sea blockade we are also sailing against our own governments' complicity in the Israeli blockade of all of Palestine, as part of a larger struggle for full freedom of movement for all Palestinians.

We affirm the right of all Palestinians to export goods via the port of Gaza, from any part of historic Palestine, in opposition to the Israeli policy of territorial separation. By exposing the many barriers that olive oil from Jenin, wood-working from Bethlehem or embroidery from Al-Khalil face in even reaching the port of departure, we are drawing attention to the obstacles to commerce from Palestine which Europe-Israel trade deals are supposed to prohibit.

## Buying into hope

We are inviting you to support the campaign through a donation online\* or by buying symbolic shares in the Ark. We have only raised part of the approximately \$300,000 needed so all contributions are deeply appreciated.

The website also contains a growing list of products available from Palestinian producers. Community organisations, solidarity businesses or groups of individuals are encouraged to place orders thus becoming "part of the voyage" without leaving home. Note that all producers will be paid in full for their products before the Ark's departure: the Palestinian producers in Gaza will not bear the economic risk of this voyage.

The FFC is, of course, very aware of the risks of sailing against the Israeli blockade: many of our voyages have been illegally attacked by the Israeli navy in the past, as are Palestinian fishing boats on a regular basis. Therefore, we invite international purchasers to assume the commercial risk of buying into a part of the cargo that offers some Palestinians in Gaza an opportunity to overcome Israel's stranglehold on their ability to earn a living. In doing so, you run the risk that the goods you purchase may be stolen by the occupier's navy.

Supporters from Great Britain to Australia, from Canada to South Africa, are also being asked to pay a modest transport fee to Gaza's Ark for shipment to our first port of call – at this point, an undisclosed (for obvious reasons!) destination in the eastern Mediterranean.

We clearly cannot guarantee delivery of the goods that Palestinians will try to export. We can only promise that by buying into Gaza's Ark and its cargo, you are buying into hope for a peaceful future without restrictions on freedom of movement.

You will be directly challenging the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the occupation of the rest of Palestine. Without leaving home, you will be "on board" as part of an international direct action against the blockade that is suffocating the only Mediterranean port closed to commercial navigation.

\* [www.GazaArk.org](http://www.GazaArk.org)



**Palestinian farmers burning three tons of herbs in April after Israel closed the border**

# UN demands: clear the settlements

By Eric Willoughby

**A** new UN Human Rights Council report\* on the impact of Israeli settlements on the Occupied Palestinian Territories is one of the most important, hard-hitting and meaningful since 1948. Almost every phrase is a condemnation of Israeli policy. And the recommendations are not requests, they are demands.

The report is so powerful that as a result Israel became the first – and only – nation in the world to withdraw from the UNHRC, calling it “one-sided.”

Just the first few lines of the press release give an indication of the level of indictment: “The report states that a multitude of the human rights of the Palestinians are violated in various forms and ways due to the existence of the settlements. These violations are all interrelated, forming part of an overall pattern of breaches that are characterised principally by the denial of the right to self-determination and systemic discrimination against the Palestinian people which occur on a daily basis.”

## Illegality confirmed

The report is the outcome of a fact-finding mission conducted by three high level experts – Christine Chanet as Chair, Asma Jahangir and Unity Dow – appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council in July, 2012.

Not least in value of their findings is their catalogue of applicable international statutes to the occupation and settlements which categorically answers Israel’s claim that the illegality of the occupation is a matter of dispute.

## The report states:

- **As the occupying power, Israel is bound under international humanitarian law by a set of obligations which are provided for in the Hague Regulations 1907... recognised as forming part of customary international law, and Geneva Convention IV relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1949 (“Fourth Geneva Convention”), to which Israel is a High Contracting Party**
- **Palestinians living under occupation are “protected persons” and thus the focus of Israel’s obligations under humanitarian law**
- **The applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territories has been decisively established by the International Court of Justice**

## The rights of Palestinians are spelled out

■ **Self-Determination:** Palestinian life is “put at risk” by Israel which has migrated 8% of its population to the West Bank since 1970. The separation wall “chops up” Palestinian space and is “severely impeding the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination.”

■ **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** The report says that “distinct legal systems exist in the OPT and are applied separately to Israeli settlers and Palestinians.”

■ **Religious Freedom and Related Intolerance:** The attacks on the Al-Aqsa and other mosques and destructive excavations are noted and religious violence is specially noted in Hebron, Silwan and Old Jerusalem. It says that “the Palestinians’ right to freedom of religion is being restricted due to the settlements.”

■ **Dispossession and Displacement:** The seizure of Palestinian land “breaches a range of fundamental rights” of Palestinians.

■ **Freedom of Movement:** Israel’s focus on improving transport links between itself and the settlements has “a detrimental impact” on Palestinian life and closures, the wall and checkpoints have direct consequences on the ability of Palestinians to earn a living.

■ **Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly:** Protests are frequently met with disproportionate violence and military action, at Bil’in and Nabi Saleh in particular. Examples of casualties and indeed fatalities from the use of live ammunition by Israeli forces are detailed.

■ **The Right to Water:** The report highlights the “high discrepancy” of access to water between Palestinians and illegal settlers. The drilling activities of the Israeli Mekorot and Mehadrin companies are detailed and the report states: “The denial of water is used to trigger displacement, particularly in areas slated for settlement expansion.”

■ **Economic Rights:** The dispossession of land and denial of access for farmers has had serious effects on the economic life of West Bank Palestinians. This has driven some to find employment in Israel or even in the illegal settlements.

■ **Settler violence:** Settler violence and intimidation is given a separate section in the report. There are daily accounts of thuggery, vandalism, damage and destruction to the indigenous population, often observed benignly by the IDF and sometimes assisted by IDF dogs. The report states emphatically that “all spheres of Palestinian life are being significantly affected by a minority of settlers who are engaged in violence and intimidation with the aim of forcing Palestinians off their land.”

It cites complaints about these problems dating back to 1979 and notes that “between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012, Israeli settlers injured 147 Palestinians, including 34 children.”



# Fair Trade in Edinburgh

Over 100 guests attended the re-opening party in Edinburgh in March of Scotland's unique Palestinian Fair Trade shop, Hadeel – the store where “every stitch tells a story.”

The shop had moved to George Street after ten years of successful trading in Shandwick Place in the city. Hadeel, owned by the Scottish charity, Palcrafts, was delighted to welcome the Scottish Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf, to cut the ribbon in the opening ceremony.

He said: “Hadeel is helping to provide a sustainable future income for many Palestinians and their families by ensuring that the profit from the sale of their goods goes back into the community.

“That chimes with the Scottish government’s own vision of Scotland as a good global citizen, committed to playing its part in addressing



**Humza Yousaf, Runa MacKay and Carol Morton at the Hadeel reopening. Photo: Tania Pramschufel.**

poverty. Our commitment to that was made clear with the recent news that Scotland has become one of the world’s first Fair Trade Nations.”

Also speaking was Dr Runa MacKay who, over a span of 40 years, worked as a medical doctor serving Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon.

Greetings from Hadeel’s producer partners were read – a deaf school in Gaza, a church centre embroidery project in Ramallah, and an Arab/Jewish women’s Fair Trade organisation in the Galilee, who said that Hadeel’s relationship with them embodies “the true meaning of fair trade – trade that advances solidarity and social change.”

Carol Morton, director of Hadeel, said: “Hadeel’s work gives people hope, empowers women particularly and those with special needs, ensures that a rich culture will survive despite decades of military occupation. These factors are every bit as important as the income generation ensured.”

Hadeel is both an importing and retail member of the British Association for Fair Trade Shops and builds upon work begun in 1988 in Jerusalem.

■ For further information see [www.hadeel.org](http://www.hadeel.org) or call 0131 225 1922.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The 117 conclusions and recommendations of this report are stark. Unlike most previous reports, there is no holding back: this time the UN says what Israel MUST do. Also unlike other reports, this one calls on all other nations to apply international law to Israel, particularly in their business dealings with what it calls “a State breaching peremptory norms of international law.”

### It states that Israel must

- cease all settlement activities without preconditions
- immediately initiate a process of withdrawal of all settlers from the OPT
- compensate Palestinians for the harm they have suffered
- put an end to the human rights violations that are linked to the presence of settlements
- end the policy of impunity for settlers
- stop the arbitrary arrest and detention of the Palestinian people, especially children
- observe the prohibition of the transfer of prisoners from the OPT to the territory of Israel

### Member states urged to act

The report calls on UN member states to comply with their obligations under international law and to assume their responsibilities in their relationship to a State breaching norms of international law – specifically not to recognise an unlawful situation resulting from Israel’s violations.

Private companies must assess the human rights impact of their activities and take all necessary steps – including by terminating their business interests in the settlements – to ensure they are not adversely impacting the human rights of the Palestinian people.

What happens next depends on the United Nations as a whole. The US will undoubtedly veto any further resolutions or enforcement, but the message is clear to the rest of the world – regard Israel as a rogue state until it takes the right steps in terms of Palestinian human rights.

Even more welcome is the appeal for trading nations to end their business relationships with the settlements which are a stain on the reputation of so many otherwise decent businesses.

This is a real shot in the arm for the BDS movement and a heartening revival of spirit for activists. Israel is not invincible, or even untouchable.

\* Report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. <http://tinyurl.com/ac5ues8>



**Armed settlers in Hebron**

# In Brief

## EU OFFICIALS SAY STOP

A group of senior former European officials sent a forthright letter to EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in April giving a “stark warning” that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories is “actually being entrenched by the present Western policy.”

The 19 officials, including seven former Foreign Ministers, four former Prime Ministers and one former President from 11 European countries, including the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland, appealed to Ashton to “recognise that the Peace Process as conceived in the Oslo Agreements has nothing more to offer.”

The officials – all members of the European Eminent Persons Group on the Middle East Peace Process – said: “We have watched with increasing disappointment over the past five years the failure of the parties to start any kind of productive discussion... We have also noted with frustration and deep concern the deteriorating standards of humanitarian and human rights care of the population in the Occupied Territories.”

They added that the growth of the settlements and the entrenchment of Israeli control over the OPTs “indicate a permanent trend towards a complete dislocation of Palestinian territorial rights.”

The letter recommended new initiatives including “explicit recognition” that Israelis are responsible for rights violations and the well-being of Palestinians. Another said that Israeli settlements beyond the Green Line should “not be recognised as one of the starting points in any new negotiations” though Israel insists that its colonies are “facts on the ground” that must be accepted as a launching point for talks.

Among the signatories are Giuliano Amato, former PM of Italy; Lionel Jospin, former PM of France; Miguel Moratinos, former Foreign Minister of Spain; Jeremy Greenstock, former UK ambassador to the UN, and Javier Solana, former EU Foreign Minister, NATO Secretary-General and EU representative in the Quartet which was supposed to lead the peace process.

The signatories called for a recognition of the state of affairs in the West Bank as occupation; an action against the erosion of the '67 borders by Israel and a re-evaluation of financial arrangements with regards to the Palestinian Authority – in other words, they want the EU to stop bankrolling the occupation.

For the whole letter, see: <http://tinyurl.com/c8znyrm>.

*The Palestinian leadership will temporarily refrain from taking unilateral action against Israel through the UN or pursuing a case through the International Criminal Court to give US-brokered peace talks a chance to resume, according to a Palestinian official speaking anonymously to AFP in April.*

*The suspension would last for two months while US Secretary of State John Kerry held fortnightly meetings with leaders of both sides to try to revive the peace process. But the official warned that if Israel failed to halt settlement building the PA would immediately begin working through the international bodies again.*

*“Settlement building in E1 is a red line and erecting so much as one stone in the area... would destroy the (possibility of a) two-state solution,” he said.*

## LAND GRAB UP BY 182%

Data published by the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) revealed that Palestinian land annexed by settlements has increased by 182% in the past two decades, from 69 square kilometres in 1990 to 194.7 km<sup>2</sup> in 2012.

In the same period the number of Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories went from 240,000 to more than 693,000 – an increase of 189%.

The report added that although Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu declared in November 2009 a ten-month settlement freeze in the West Bank, various Israeli ministries and bodies published plans for

building 25,000 housing units in the colonies during that period.

Meanwhile it was revealed in March that the Israeli authorities have allocated less than one per cent of so-called state land in the West Bank to the Palestinians, compared to 37 per cent to the illegal colonisers. The total area of such land is just over 320,000 acres of which Palestinians have received just 2,100 acres compared to over 100,000 acres given to settlers.

The details were revealed in documents submitted to a West Bank court by Israel’s Civil Administration. They showed that the land was registered in Israel as “state land” in 1979, prior to which it was registered in the name of the Jordanian government. The change was made after the Israeli Supreme Court ruled against confiscating Palestinian land under the pretext of security. Despite this, the government has used it to build settlements and, according to *Ha’aretz*, has admitted that the change of status was made specifically to facilitate settlement growth.

## FREEDOM BUS TOUR

For 13 days in March the Freedom Bus Tour, coordinated by the Jenin Freedom Theatre, travelled through the Jordan Valley and the South Hebron Hills. Combining improvised theatre, folkloric arts, information seminars and volunteer work, the tour was meant to bring international attention to some of the most contentious areas of the occupied West Bank.

The events and excursions were met with sometimes violent opposition from the Israeli forces who arrested and deported one of the Freedom Bus Tour participants.

The tour kicked off in Jenin with the Freedom Theatre’s signature “playback theatre” where participants told stories of their lives and the troupe of four actors, all from Palestine or Israel, acted out the events. After each performance, local Palestinian poet Abu Naji walked onto the stage singing zajaal, a form of traditional improvised poetry that retold the scene just performed in prose.

From Jenin, the tour continued to villages in the Jordan Valley where they stayed for several days in each to do voluntary work such as building schools. One of the organisers, Ben Rivers, said: “We work mostly in communities that experience high levels of violence and in many cases people choose to tell their story as a way of experiencing some kind of relief and support.”

On World Water Day, 22 March, the Freedom Bus teamed up with Thirsting for Justice and the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign in a 200-person solidarity walk between Palestinian communities with an inadequate access to water.

On the last day of the tour the participants joined another solidarity walk through communities in the South Hebron Hills partly to mark Land Day but also to bring attention to eviction orders that



PHOTO: AHMAD AL-BAZZ / ACTIVESTILLS

had been issued to more than 1,000 local people.

The Israeli army blocked the road and began to single out participants who they believed to be leaders of the group. Walkers made human barriers around each other in attempts to prevent more arrests to which the army reacted with force. Sonja de Vries, a poetry therapist from Louisville, Kentucky, was injured along with Freedom Theatre organiser, Alia Alrosan, as they tried to stop the arrest of Luke Nephew, a poet, educator and hip-hop artist from New York. He was eventually arrested and given a deportation order and a ten year travel ban to Israel.

Despite the continued confrontation from Israeli forces that the tour faced, the group will continue its efforts. "The communities we've gone to have clearly requested that we do this again and again," said Rivers. "So there will be another ride in September of this year."

## THE HUMAN COST

The documentary film, *My Neighbourhood*, which tells the story of the human impact of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem through the words of Mohammed El Kurd, a Palestinian teenager whose family has been evicted from part of their home by Israeli settlers, was awarded the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award for distinguished achievement in electronic media.

The 25-minute film, directed by Julia Bacha and Rebekah Wingert-Jabi for Just Vision, was first aired on Al Jazeera English's *Witness* programme in April, 2012, and has since gained a wider audience. It also won awards at the Warsaw Jewish Film Festival and Al Jazeera's Documentary Festival.

■ The film is available in English, Arabic and Hebrew at: [www.justvision.org/myneighbourhood/watch](http://www.justvision.org/myneighbourhood/watch).



## HUMAN SHIELD, AGED 9

Israeli soldiers used nine-year-old Mustafa Wahdan as a human shield during confrontations with Palestinian demonstrators in February, Defence for Children International-Palestine Section reported.

Mustafa testified that he was on his way home from his brother's car-wash service close to a checkpoint near Ofer, an Israeli prison in the West Bank, when clashes intensified.

After he took shelter in a nearby store, Israeli soldiers rushed after him.

Mustafa was taken into custody and ordered to raise his hands behind his head. The soldiers forced him at gunpoint to walk among them to protect themselves from the anger of the protestors.



"Whenever they wanted to fire tear gas or shoot bullets at the protesters, they would take me with them. I was really scared that a stone might hit me or something," said Mustafa.

He was released after his father, Mohammad, arrived on the scene. "At home, Mustafa was still very scared. He was silent and did not have his dinner. In the morning, my wife told me that Mustafa was shaking while he was sleeping. The following night, he wet himself," Mohammad told DCI-PS.

The use of human shields is prohibited by international humanitarian law. Since 2004, DCI-Palestine has documented 20 cases of Palestinian children being used as human shields by Israeli forces. Nineteen of these cases occurred after 2005, the year the Israeli high court prohibited the practice under Israeli domestic law.

## WORLD PRESS PHOTO WINNER

Swedish photojournalist, Paul Hansen, of the daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter won the World Press Photo of the Year in the Spot News category with this powerful study of grief in Gaza City in November 2012.



The bodies of two-year-old Suhaib Hijazi and his elder brother Muhammad, almost four, are being carried by their uncles to a mosque for their funeral. The children were killed when their house was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike on 19 November. The strike also killed their father, Fouad, and severely injured their mother and four other siblings.

## MISUSE OF THE LAW

An academic who took the University and College Union to an employment tribunal claiming that it was institutionally anti-Semitic because of its policy on Palestine was strongly rebuked for misusing the legal process. The verdict was a comprehensive defeat for Israel's "lawfare" project.

Ronnie Fraser, a further education lecturer and founding director of Academic Friends of Israel, called several witnesses including Howard Jacobson, the Booker Prize winning novelist, John Mann MP, the former MP Denis MacShane and numerous leading Jewish academics.

But all 10 of his claims were "dismissed in their totality" in March with words of scorn such as "without substance," "devoid of any merit," "palpably groundless," "untenable," "obviously hopeless." Tribunal

members said the case showed a "worrying disregard for pluralism, tolerance and freedom of expression."

Mr Fraser, the child of refugees who fled Nazi Germany, was viewed as a "sincere witness" but the tribunal noted his "political experience" and were not impressed by his claim that the tone of several debates at the UCU's annual congress "violated his dignity," thereby constituting harassment.

"He chooses to engage in the politics of the union in support of Israel and in opposition to activists to the Palestinian cause.

"When a rugby player takes the field he must accept his fair share of minor injuries. Similarly, a political activist accepts the risk of being offended or hurt on occasions by things said or done by his opponents (who themselves take on a corresponding risk)."

The "sorry saga" took up a 20-day hearing involving 23 volumes of evidence which was "manifestly excessive and disproportionate," the tribunal said. Public resources had been "squandered" and "nor should the [UCU] have been put to the trouble and expense of defending proceedings of this order."



## APARTHEID BUSES

Two “Palestinians-only” bus lines were launched in March after illegal settlers complained that Palestinians travelling on mixed buses were a “security risk.”

The lines are to be used by Palestinian labourers travelling between the West Bank and Israel for work. Jessica Montell, director of the Israeli human rights group, B’Tselem, called it “a revolting plan.” She added: “This is simply racism. Such a plan cannot be justified with claims of security needs or overcrowding.”

The Israeli Transport Ministry said the two new lines would “improve public transport services for Palestinian workers” and replace pirate buses charging them “exorbitant prices.”

It said that Palestinian workers were not prohibited from travelling on public transport in Israel or the West Bank but human rights groups voiced concern that Israeli police at checkpoints would remove Palestinian passengers from regular bus lines and order them to use the new ones.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said all Palestinians returning to the West Bank would be searched for stolen property, describing this as a routine Israeli precaution. He said he did not know whether and how this might affect Palestinian travel on regular buses.

## FOUL PUNISHMENT

Israeli forces sprayed Palestinian homes in the village of Nabi Saleh with raw sewage as a twisted form of “punishment” for people organising weekly protests against the Apartheid Wall which is built on their land.

Human rights watchdog B’Tselem published a video showing Israel’s armoured tanker trucks fitted with “water cannons” which spray the foul fluid and said in a statement that the powerful jet broke windows and caused extensive damage in the houses. “It also causes environmental damage,” it pointed out.

## DISCRIMINATORY LAWS

Adalah, the campaigning group for Palestinian Israelis’ legal rights, launched the Discriminatory Laws Database in March. It is an online resource that collects more than 60 Israeli laws enacted since 1948 that discriminate against the state’s

Palestinian citizens in all areas of life, including land and planning, education, budgets and access to state resources, prisoners and detainees, civil and political rights.

The database also includes several controversial discriminatory bills proposed in the 18th Knesset (2009–2012) which may be introduced again. The database includes summary texts of each law and the full texts in Hebrew. Where available, Adalah has also provided translations of the laws, additional analyses, and petitions to the Supreme Court against the most egregious laws.

The group said: “Revealing the depth of the institutionalised discrimination against Palestinians, we hope, will contribute to the end of the unequal system and will lead to a more just future.”

■ <http://adalah.org/eng/Israeli-Discriminatory-Law-Database>

## GIRLS BEAT PALESTINIAN WOMAN

A group of Israeli girls beat a Palestinian woman at a light rail station in Jerusalem in February.

The Israeli news source nrg.co.il reported that the light rail security guard as well as some 100 religious Israeli men stood by and did nothing as the woman, Hana Amtir, was beaten at the Kiryat Moshe rail station. The attackers also managed to pull her headscarf off.

Eyewitness Dorit Yarden Dotan, who was horrified by the violence and took photos of the beating with her telephone, reported that the security guard even “watched and smiled.” “It was simply terrible,” she said.



PHOTO: DORIT YARDEN DOTAN, NRG.CO.IL

Three teenaged girls were arrested in April for the assault and taken to court where a police officer said they had run into the woman randomly, asked her if she was an Arab and attacked her after she answered affirmatively.

The officer said the girls spat at the woman, called her an “Arab bitch,” punched her and removed her head scarf.

Following the hearing the court decided on the lightest possible punishment – the violent attackers were released under the mildest of restrictions: two were banned from Jerusalem for 45 days, the third for 30.

## CENSORSHIP? OR SELF-CENSORSHIP?

A bizarre press conference took place in Jerusalem in April about the report produced by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on the treatment of Palestinian children held in Israeli custody, titled *Children in Israeli Military Detention, Observations and Recommendations*.

The report, produced in February, was damning and unequivocal about the appalling abuse of children. Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the government would study its conclusions and “work to implement them through ongoing co-operation with UNICEF,” noting that Israel had joined UNICEF’s board this year.

So Jerusalem journalists were keen to cover the UNICEF press conference on the report, only to be told by its Jerusalem chief, Jean Gough, that only the first five minutes could be filmed and no officials could be quoted. A press conference where you couldn’t film? Or quote officials?

In the first five minutes, Gough praised Israel for its dialogue over its system of trying children from the age of 12 in military courts. “I want to thank them,” she said. But once the cameras were off, a totally different story was told – one official said the ill-treatment of Palestinian children was “widespread, systematic and institutionalised,” another told how children were “beaten, slapped and kicked” by Israeli soldiers.

## PALESTINE STRINGS AT PROMS

The Palestine Strings ensemble will be performing Vivaldi’s ever popular The Four Seasons with iconic violinist Nigel Kennedy and some members of his own Orchestra of Life at the BBC Proms.

The ensemble was formed at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, a conservatory which has branches in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus and Gaza City with a total of more than 1000 students. It toured the USA in 2011 and performed with Kennedy last year.

The concert is on Thursday, 8 August, in London’s Royal Albert Hall, 10.15pm. Tickets from [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com).



# Getting the message out there

## SodaStream's bubble bursts

**A** campaign of letter and email writing, plus a demonstration, ended with great success in Devon when members of **Plymouth** branch persuaded a local family run business to stop stocking SodaStream products.

SodaStream was originally a UK company with a factory in Peterborough. The company was sold to an Israeli company in 1998 and one of its factories is now in Mishor Adumim in Area C of Occupied Palestine. Mishor Adumim is a huge settlement built on the confiscated land of seven Palestinian towns, a land theft which, according to Who Profits – the Israeli organisation monitoring occupation-complicit firms – is “considered the largest single expropriation in the history of the Israeli occupation.”

PSC members learned that Lawsons, which has stores in Plymouth, Tavistock, Totnes and Ivybridge, were selling SodaStream products and launched their campaign. Lawsons were unaware of the significance of the change in ownership of SodaStream – not surprising as the company creates a deliberate false impression by plastering their products with the Union Jack.

**“The managing director listened to PSC’s arguments and agreed not to order any new SodaStream products”**

The managing director of Lawsons listened to PSC’s arguments and as a result agreed not to order any new SodaStream products. They also said they would make clear to customers the true origin of their remaining stock.

Plymouth PSC said: “We are delighted that Lawsons have decided to take this principled stand. We would like to thank Lawsons and everyone who supported this campaign. It is great to be able to report some positive news on the SodaStream boycott campaign.”



## Prisoners' day



### Portsmouth and South Downs

There was a lot of activity by branches all around the country to mark Palestinian Prisoners' Day on 17 April. **Portsmouth and South Downs** held an action in Southsea where several keffiyeh-wearing supporters carrying placards were chained up with big black paper chains to trees and benches while others gave out literature about prison conditions, administrative detention and the role of G4S.

A protest was held on 19 April outside the headquarters of G4S in Victoria Street in **London** to highlight the role of the company in Israel's prisons and security companies.

Sahar Francis of the Palestinian prisoners' representative association, Addameer, made a tour and spoke to several branches including **Richmond and Kingston** and **Portsmouth** where members had to fend off an invasion by angry Zionists, followed by plain-clothes police officers.

**Bristol** PSC held a one day fast and vigil in January in the Stokes Croft area of the city as part of the global hunger strike in support of five hunger striking prisoners.

The fast lasted a marathon nine hours from 9am to 6pm and there was constant interest throughout the day with people stopping to discuss the situation and express their sympathy. The fasters collected about 100 signatures on a petition and handed out over 1500 leaflets.



**Bristol**

The five Palestinian hunger strikers were released in the 2012 prisoner exchange but were subsequently rearrested and were being held in Administrative Detention. Vigils were held around the world involving several thousand people who had pledged support via Facebook.

## Touring speakers

Members held the usual rich variety of meetings with touring Palestinians or UK residents who had recently made visits to Palestine. In **Exeter** they heard a presentation from Dave Clinch who had lived and taught in threatened villages in the South Hebron Hills. They also held a benefit event for the village of Umm Al Kheir kindergarten which they have agreed to support.



### Milton Keynes

**Milton Keynes** branch had a meeting with Taysir Arbas from Zaytoun while **Portsmouth** held a highly successful Day for Palestine in which a packed audience heard Green MEP Keith Taylor talk about his ceaseless battle to raise the Brussels Parliament's awareness of the situation in Palestine; Ecumenical Accompanier Leah Levane talk about the situation in Hebron; Angus Geddes report on Veolia; Jackie Alsaïd talk about Palestinian prisoners; Zuber Hatia propound his ideas for a one state solution and PSC's Amena Saleem talk about bias in the BBC. Portsmouth's Jenny Flintoft reports: "There were a lot of new faces in the audience, which was very encouraging."

**Southampton** PSC supported Israeli Apartheid Week, organised by Students for Palestine at the University of Southampton. In addition to film screenings of *5 Broken Cameras* and *Roadmap to Apartheid*, there were talks by Palestinian poet and activist Rafeef Ziadha and Mike Cushman of Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods. A final event consisted of a talk by Dr Salman Abu-Sitta on the catastrophe of 1948 and the right of return, followed by food and Palestinian dancing.

## Supermarket action



### Sheffield

Protests continued outside supermarkets, including at **Sheffield**, urging shoppers to boycott Israeli goods.

And members held regular stalls promoting the PSC's campaigns, such as one in Kingston, Surrey, run by the **Richmond and Kingston** branch. They are focussing on collecting signatures for a petition asking the council to exclude Veolia from all contracts. If they collect 500 signatures the council is obliged to debate a motion on the issue and they are over half way to their target.



### Richmond and Kingston

to prisons and detention centres within Israel which hold Palestinian prisoners illegally transferred from the Occupied Territories in violation of the 4th Geneva Convention, including children.

There is compelling evidence of torture in some facilities supplied by G4S and that detained children are subject to continuing abuse. G4S therefore aids, abets and is complicit in Israel's serious violations of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law (which may constitute war crimes) and as such G4S is guilty of grave misconduct.

The BBC has every right to take these matters into account during procurement. Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, a public body may reject a bid where the organisation has "committed grave misconduct in the course of their business or profession." The Regulations derive from an EU Directive which refers to "grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authorities can demonstrate."

## G4S and the BBC's security contract

**H**aving learned that the BBC is putting its security guarding services out to tender, seeking one provider for the whole BBC estate, the PSC sent a letter signed by its patrons asking the Corporation to exercise its legal rights under UK and EU legislation to exclude G4S from bidding for this or other contracts on the grounds of "grave misconduct," in particular the company's complicity in the abuse of human rights.

G4S already provides security guards at Media City in Salford. The company directly supports Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands through provision of guards to illegal settlements and electronic systems in checkpoints. It supplies security services

## Ben & Jerry's unethical ice cream



Activists in Vermont, USA, confronted the ice cream makers, Ben & Jerry's, over their practice of making ice cream in a factory in Israel located on land that once belonged to a Palestinian village and selling it in the illegal settlements.

They highlighted the campaign on the company's "Free Cone Day" in April by wearing "conehead" hats and handing out leaflets saying: "Your ice cream is free today – PALESTINE IS NOT."

Ben & Jerry's is one of the iconic leaders of the "values based" business movement and trumpets in their Social Mission Statement a "progressive, nonpartisan social mission that seeks to meet human needs and eliminate injustices in our local, national and international communities."

### "Your ice cream is free today – PALESTINE IS NOT"

They opened a factory at Be'er Tuvia, adjacent to the town of Kiryat Malachi, in 2010 with the blessing of the US ambassador. Kiryat Malachi is one of four Israeli localities located on the lands of the former Palestinian village of Qastina, destroyed by Israeli troops in 1948. Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel say that by doing business in Israel and in the illegal settlements, Ben & Jerry's violates its own Social Mission and engages in unethical practices.

## Guerrilla research

Therezia Cooper and Tom Anderson – pen names for researchers with the UK-based cooperative, Corporate Watch – wrote a handbook for BDS activists after a research visit to Palestine in 2010. Earlier this year they made a return visit which they described in a piece for the Electronic Intifada in March.

Much of Corporate Watch's research has come from field visits to Israeli settlements and the pair said they were often asked how they managed this. Though they have a few tricks up their sleeve, "basically it just requires a cover story and a lot of luck. We have explained our presence in the settlements by pretending to be confused tourists, curious students or enthusiastic Zionists but, more often than not, our investigations have proved surprisingly easy and all of them could be replicated by other BDS activists.

"For example we successfully established that one company, EDOM UK, was working with the settlements by turning up at export packing houses posing as travellers in search of organic fruit and vegetables to buy.

"We have been detained a few times and have had a few threats from angry settlers. However, the net results of our research – a wealth of new information for the BDS movement – has definitely outweighed any difficulties we have faced."

They say that there is still a lot of work to be done to identify smaller and less obvious organisations supporting the settlements. One example is Christian Friends of Israeli

## Expose Britain's role

On our first visit to Palestine we in Haringey Justice for Palestinians thought we knew what to expect, but it was far worse. Taking a guided tour through towns and villages, meeting people in schools, universities and refugee camps, we were confronted with the reality of what it is like to live under an aggressive colonial state.

We also thought we were politically prepared. We knew the role of the Zionist state: how it had established and maintained its oppression of the Palestinian people for 65 years. What I was not ready for, however, was the accusatory finger pointed at us British visitors by young Palestinians who were beginning to learn about the history of their country; they clearly understood that British colonialism was the initial cause of their present troubles.

These young people knew that the collective punishments meted out by the Zionist state – house demolitions, stolen land and destroyed olive groves – had been pioneered by the British when they were in control. The devious way the 1917 Balfour Declaration promised the Zionists a homeland in Palestine was not lost on them either. Less well known were Britain's motives: it wanted a base in the eastern Mediterranean from which it could control the Suez Canal and dominate the routes through Egypt to its colonial possessions in East Africa, India and the Far East – particularly important as oil in Iraq and Iran was then coming on stream. It was in its interests to establish a client class in Palestine who owed their influence to the British government.

But what could the politically aware Palestinians we met do about publicising this long-buried historical betrayal? They are daily confronted by the armed might of the Zionist state, they are poor, they are prevented from travelling to put their case to the wider world and their own government is in the pocket of the Israeli oppressors. We visitors represented one way in which they could begin to expose the role the West has played. This is what the Palestinians we met demanded of us and what we have since tried to do.

As part of this effort Haringey Justice for Palestinians has launched a campaign to get 100,000 signatures on an e-petition aimed at forcing the British government to acknowledge its historical guilt. Sign the petition online at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/42768>.

**Alan Watts, secretary HJfP**

Communities, a "charity" with offices in Israel, the US, Germany and the Netherlands. It does fundraising for projects in the West Bank and encourages Christian tourists to visit the settlements.

"Christian Friends currently has 13 projects planned in settlements in the Jordan Valley, as well as in settlements such as Kfar Adumim and Susiya, which are strategically close to the vulnerable Palestinian communities Khan al-Ahmar and Susiya. On our most recent trip we came across a Christian Friends-sponsored playground in the Maale Efrayim settlement."

Cooper and Anderson say research on the ground is also very important for getting international activists to work with, and listen to, Palestinians directly affected by the companies targeted by BDS campaigns. For instance, they interviewed a number of Palestinians who had been in jails where G4S provides equipment and services.

On their way back into the UK, Cooper and Anderson were detained at Luton airport by Bedfordshire Police and questioned under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000. They were warned that they could be arrested if they refused to answer questions. Cooper said it "becomes very obvious that the reason they stopped you is not because they think you've got anything to do with terrorism but because they want to gather information on activists doing Palestine-related work and other kinds of activism."

Therezia Cooper and Tom Anderson are the authors of *Targeting Israeli Apartheid: A Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Handbook* published by Corporate Watch. Corporate Watch's Palestine project can be followed at [www.corporateoccupation.org](http://www.corporateoccupation.org) or via twitter @corpoccupation.

# EU hypocrisy rules

The settlements, bombing raids, checkpoints, arrests, abductions and all the other brutal machinery of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian Territories are highly visible but there is another "unseen occupation" of West Bank life. Almost unnoticed but far more insidious, it is the huge amount of income Israel gathers from goods grown, processed and manufactured in their illegal colonies.

At last the figures have been at least partially quantified in a disturbing and hard-hitting independent report, *Trading Away Peace*, compiled by a consortium of European NGOs.

The inescapable conclusion is the utter hypocrisy of the EU in repeatedly condemning the settlements whilst extending favourable trading terms to Israel as if it were an EU member.

It is almost a dictionary definition of hypocrisy though the report confines itself to describing it as "contradictions," summarised thus by one of the contributing bodies, the Swedish Diakonia organisation: "On the one hand, the member states of the EU condemn the settlements. On the other hand, financial support is given in many cases in the form of tariff reductions, as the system that's supposed to distinguish Israeli products from settlement products has major flaws."

The complication is that the EU trades with Israel as if it were a normal EU member but on paper boycotts goods from the illegal settlements. If it sounds impossible, that's

because it is. Anything can be printed on a label. This is part of the "major flaws" argument. As Diakonia points out, the EU has become the primary market for goods produced in settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. The report also explodes the myth that only high-value items and produce are sold from the settlements.



The figures are stunning. The EU imports 15 times more from the illegal settlements, in financial terms, than from the remaining Palestinian Territories – the most usual estimates are around 230 million euros per year for illegal settlement produce and 15 million euros for legitimate

Palestinian produce. Under the Oslo Accords, Palestinians have the same trading rights with the EU as Israel.

And because of the spread of industrial estates such as Mishor Adumim, where Sodastream is manufactured, the product mix is far from purely agricultural. What's more, the estates are mainly built on cleared former Palestinian villages.

The most common settlement products sold in Europe include dates, citrus fruits and herbs, and manufactured products including cosmetics, plastics, textiles and toys. Whilst the buyers for European companies know very well that they buy illegal settlement goods, they are happy to label them "Product of Israel" or even worse "West Bank produce" giving the impression of Palestinian origin. For example, the massive Tesco organisation recently stated: "At the moment the only products we are sourcing from the West Bank are dates from Israeli settlements."

The Trading Away Peace report actually goes much further than mere economic activity, ranging into the social, political and human rights aspects of Israeli illegal settlements. Resources, employment, militarisation and the very survival of Palestinians are also covered.

The report's recommendations reflect both its wide scope and its central theme of the EU's



## Dates grown in Tomer settlement, according to Corporate Watch

double standards on settlement goods.

The recommendations are:

- 1) Ensure correct consumer labelling of all settlement products.
- 2) Discourage companies from trading with and investing in settlements.
- 3) Ban imports of settlement products.
- 4) Ensure settlement products do not benefit from preferential market access.
- 5) Exclude settlements from bilateral agreements and cooperation instruments.
- 6) Exclude settlement products and companies from public procurement.
- 7) Remove organisations funding settlements from tax deduction systems.
- 8) Prevent financial transactions supporting settlements and related activities.
- 9) Discourage citizens from buying property in settlements.
- 10) Issue guidelines for European tour operators.
- 11) Draw up a list of companies misstating the origin of settlement goods.
- 12) Insist that Israel disaggregates settlement data for the OECD.

The stark reality is, until West Bank labelling is fully controlled with independent supervision – which Israel would never allow – products from illegal settlements will keep flowing into the EU as if from fellow EU nations.

There are only two other possibilities – a complete EU ban on Israeli goods or the end of the occupation. The latter would solve all the immediate problems. An end to the hypocrisy of the EU – so eloquently detailed in this report – would be equally cathartic.

Either would be a miracle, but they do happen....

■ Trading Away Peace. How Europe Helps Sustain Israeli Illegal Settlements. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Full report and details: [http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/trading\\_away\\_peace](http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/trading_away_peace)



Palestinian women collecting rubbish in the Mishor Adumim industrial zone, overlooked by Ma'ale Adumim settlement

Eric Willoughby

# The camera – mightier than the F16?

By Hilary Wise



Emad Burnat and his five cameras

This has been a fantastic year for films about Palestine. Some will be immensely influential in opening the eyes of new audiences to what life is like for a population under military occupation for decades.

Millions of people have now seen the Oscar-nominated documentary, *5 Broken Cameras*, filmed by Emad Burnat, a farmer in Bil'in, and edited by Israeli film maker, Guy Davidi. Burnat documented the peaceful resistance in his village to the encroaching Wall over six years. At the same time he filmed the first years of the life of his newly born son, Gibreel, using cameras which, one by one, are smashed by IDF soldiers who are seeking to crush the resistance. We get to know his cousin, known as Phil, a gentle giant very popular with the village kids, who is killed when an Israeli soldier fires a tear gas canister at him at close range.

Ironically, when Emad Burnat arrived with his wife and son in Los Angeles for the Oscar awards ceremony they were detained in customs. Apparently the officials couldn't believe that a Palestinian filmmaker had been nominated for an Oscar. Michael Moore, the well known American director of films such as *Bowling for Columbine*, had to be called in to verify his story. The incident served to garner even more publicity for the film while Burnat only commented laconically: "When you live under occupation, with no rights, this is a daily occurrence."

**“We win the battles  
but we are losing the war”**

The calm, dogged persistence of the activists in *5 Broken Cameras* provides a telling contrast with another documentary short-listed for an Oscar – *The Gatekeepers* by Israeli director Dror Moreh. The title refers to six former heads of Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, who speak with astonishing candour about their work: the interrogation methods that amount to torture, the pressures used to force Palestinians into becoming informers, the “clean, elegant” precision of targeted killings – even if these sometimes result in massive “collateral damage.”

However, looking back on their careers, they agree that politically they have achieved nothing: the settler movement is out of control and a threat to the stability of Israel; the resistance movement is

stronger than ever; and they no longer recognise the democratic, law-based country they once dreamt of helping to create. One of them even compares Israel's occupation of the West Bank with the Nazis' behaviour towards the non-Jewish population of Western Europe in WWII. At the end of the film Ami Ayalon sums it up: “We win the battles but we are losing the war.”

These two films should be seen in conjunction with *The Law in These Parts*, another Israeli film which won the Best Documentary award at the Sundance Film Festival and was shown in London as part of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival. It too was based on interviews – this time with nine retired military judges – interspersed with other documentary footage.

The judges know that torture is used to extract information and confessions but, as the voiceover suggests, they believe “security is above the law.” They are somewhat frustrated by the (rather mild) constraints imposed on them by Israel's Supreme Court which has to be more aware of international opinion. On the whole though, they say that the Court condones what they do and acts as a convenient legal figleaf for their decisions.

This spring London also saw a Palestinian Film Festival which was bigger and better than ever. Thirty eight films were shown in the Barbican, SOAS and UCL over two weeks and there was also an international conference on “Palestine and the Moving Image.”

The highlights of the festival included *Apples of the Golan*, a study of the Druze community in an often forgotten area of Israeli occupation. Although most of the villages there were destroyed by the Israelis, the surviving communities find ways of forging lives enriched with music, dance and intrigue, despite the ever-present IDF forces. A challenging film was Shlomi Elkabetz's *Testimony* in which he has the verbatim testimonies of Palestinian survivors of torture spoken by Israeli actors, in Hebrew.

A wonderfully eclectic day of shorts offered films ranging from Omar Robert Hamilton's debut *Though I Know The River Is Dry* in which a returnee to Palestine faces some impossible choices, to Maryam Kashkoolinia's disturbing animation of an imagined journey through the Gaza tunnels. A more upbeat offering from Gaza was the heart-warming *Flying Paper* showing around 8000 children in Gaza determined to beat the Guinness World Record for mass kite-flying.

■ For films that are available to buy from the PSC, including *5 Broken Cameras*, take a look at the new resource on our website – **Films about Palestine** – under “Information.” And let us know when you come across films you think should be added.



*Flying Paper*

# Unfree in Palestine: Registration, Documentation and Movement Restriction

By Nadia Abu-Zahra and Adah Kay

Published by Pluto Press

The most widely documented injustices suffered by the Palestinians tend to be those of mass expulsion, seizure of land, targeted killings and the like. But even more insidious is the steady erosion of all human rights, including the right to education, to work, to travel abroad and return. This book details the methods Israel uses to exercise control over every aspect of the lives of Palestinians, both within Israel and across the Occupied Territories.

Never has the saying that “knowledge is power” been more true: Israel has amassed an enormous amount of data on all non-Jews in the region, a process which began in the 1930s under the British, with Zionist groups compiling detailed information about individuals and village communities to assess potential resistance and collaboration.

This was augmented by access to Ottoman, Palestinian and British records when the British left. Subsequently both the amount of data and the uses to which it is put have grown exponentially, far exceeding the scope and grip of even the most repressive regimes, like those of South Africa or the Soviet Union.

Key to the system is the “hawiyya,” or ID card, without which it is impossible to survive. Not only is it illegal not to carry an ID, you need one to obtain any sort of permit and there are currently 101 different types of permit governing movement alone. You need one to travel with a patient in an ambulance, to travel to a wedding, to pray in certain mosques, to attend a funeral or a court hearing, and so on.

In 1987 Meron Benvenisti, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, said the system was threatening to turn Israel into “the ultimate police state.” It is no coincidence that Israel is at the forefront of the digitised technology used to collect and access personal data; as with their hi-tech weaponry, they have been able to use the Palestinian population as guinea pigs.

The fear of losing one’s ID is exploited by the IDF and security services in order to obtain information or to coerce people into becoming informers. It is also a simple

means of humiliating Palestinians at checkpoints, where IDs have to be shown. The authors recount reports of people being made to dance, or wear a donkey’s saddle or commit obscene acts for the amusement of the soldiers in charge.

The sense of power generated by this total control is evident in the testimony of one high-school student being trained to hunt down Palestinians without the required work permit: “I consider it a form of pleasure. It simply provides me with values and I love the action.” What “values,” one wonders.

Instead of being the basis for entitlement or protection, the ID for Palestinians has become “like a tattoo or a brand” which they cannot eradicate. Any Israeli official can, through the ID, log into a huge database which tells him, for instance, whether the bearer has been detained at some point (even if they were released without charge), which in itself is sufficient reason for denying them some permits. Blacklisting can also extend to a person’s family, even his whole community, with collective punishments being widespread.

While international law has progressively strengthened the rights of indigenous peoples to live in their homelands, or to return to them, Israeli legislation has been moving in the opposite direction, seizing every opportunity to define

Palestinians as illegal aliens.

In the years following the Nakba a mass of legislation was directed at both preventing Palestinians from returning and expelling those who had remained. Up to

1966, 40 per cent of convictions in Israeli courts were for “political status offences” – i.e. for being Palestinian.

Not only after the Nakba were Palestinians denied the right of return. After 1967, when Israel declared the West Bank a closed military zone, more legislation ensured that less than five per cent of the 400,000 who had taken refuge in Jordan were allowed to return.

The knock-on effects of this control are also documented. Restrictions on movement alone have led to reduced access to health and education, as well as to the undermining of the economy of the OPTs, now totally reliant on foreign aid. A community leader and landowner in Budrus summed up Israeli policy: “I think their aim is to emigrate us voluntarily from our land.”

**“They can do  
what the hell they want.  
But I’m staying”**

In the face of this Orwellian control, Palestinians have developed many different strategies to survive and resist, largely rooted in strong community solidarity. The high visibility forms of resistance are the protests against the onward march of the Wall, month after month, and the organising of the “freedom rides” in segregated buses.

But above all, as one interviewee put it: “At the end of the day, they are not going to win. Because we’re stubborn. We’re stubborn bastards, right. This is my home. They can do what the hell they want. But I’m staying.”

Hilary Wise



PHOTO: MADELINE MCGIVERN

## The Gaza Kitchen: a Palestinian culinary journey

Laila el-Haddad and Maggie Schmitt  
Just World Books

This book is a feast for the eyes, as well as a stimulant for the tastebuds. Dozens of beautiful photos introduce us to a wealth of dishes, from street food and simple mezze to sumptuous feasts that require a great deal of chopping, pounding, kneading and sieving.

We also get to know many larger-than-life characters whose existence is focused on food: Um Sultan, whose original agricultural land in Gaza was destroyed in an Israeli incursion but who now farms rented land and produces a wonderful array of fruit and veg for sale; Jamal, who runs a communal oven that serves his whole neighbourhood; Nafi Attar, who keeps a small herd of Dutch dairy cows in a residential area (their feed has to be imported through the tunnels); Fatema Qaadan, famous for her buttery rice and rabbit dish; the enthusiastic women of the Zeitun Cooperative, who provide large quantities of food for parties and special events.

This is not of course the stereotypical image of life in Gaza. But the book reminds us of the rich history of the region. Lying as it does at the crossroads

of the ancient trade routes between Egypt and the Levant and between Europe, Arabia and the Indian Ocean, Gaza developed its own distinctive cuisine over centuries. It is still known for its complex use of herbs and spices, especially of hot chilli and fresh dill, which it adds to Middle East favourites like falafel and stuffed vine leaves.

Today, most of the inhabitants of Gaza are refugees, many from the area in and around the port of Yaffa, who have brought with them their local dishes – what the authors poignantly call “ghost cuisines” of communities long dispersed or wiped out on their home territory. These are handed down from one generation to the next like precious heirlooms.

Problems like acute water shortages, aid-dependence, power cuts and the near eradication of the once thriving fishing industry are not side-stepped. But the overall impression is one of upbeat



resilience. You could say food is a form of resistance in the face of the ongoing siege and Israel's violent attempts at de-development.

Wherever there is space, in a back yard or on a roof, people raise pigeons, chickens or rabbits and grow vegetables in old oil drums. More than ever, food – growing it, preparing it, sharing it – is important as the centre of family life and a means of preserving one's history and identity.

If you want to give someone a life-affirming glimpse of the true spirit of Palestine, this is the perfect gift.

Leila Hakim

Remember you can enjoy authentic Gazan cooking at the **Maramia Café** in Notting Hill, London. Tel: 020 3181 0030.



Authors Maggie Schmitt and Laila el-Haddad

## A Month by the Sea by Dervla Murphy published by Eland

In this account of the realities of life in Gaza after Operation Cast Lead, veteran travel writer Dervla Murphy interweaves historical facts and information with the moving stories of the people she meets. It is an important book as it offers a frank and open discussion on many aspects and problems existing in the Gaza Strip today.

As well as her personal, empathetic accounts of individuals and families, Murphy gives us detailed facts and statistics to provide the political and economic context with which to reflect on the realities of present day Gaza. There is no doubt that she has studied the whole situation in depth having previously visited the West Bank and East Jerusalem, finally being able to visit Gaza in July 2011 after Egypt slackened restrictions at the Rafah border crossing.

The origins of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, starting with Sheikh Yassin and others setting up Mujamma in the 1970s (with the acquiescence of Israel) as an Islamic social support network and changing from violent actions against occupation into the current political party, are told by many of the protagonists.

Two of the author's concerns keep recurring: Murphy is interested to hear views on a bi-national state and on the place and treatment of women. But she ensures that in her conversations with people of all ages and experiences, she listens rather than interrogates.

She talked to academics, mothers, Fatah and Hamas supporters, students, medics, refugees, Islamists, taxi drivers, rich and poor, and all had stories which need to be heard again and again. Stories of the wanton murder of the mass attacks such as Cast Lead, the cruelty of the daily expectation of drone and missile attacks and



Dervla Murphy

the punishment of a kilometre-wide “buffer zone” where farmers still try to plant and children gather rubble to rebuild homes at the risk of death and injury. And there are stories of profound loss and separation alongside resilience and tenderness.

Murphy is scathing about the way Gazan women are becoming more hidden, both by their clothes and in the restrictions imposed on their movements. She is scathing about the disunity nurtured by the US and Israel and aided by a corrupt PA and even more scathing about the Quartet, the UN and world leaders who all prop up Israel despite its violations of international and humanitarian law. For her, the concept of “international law” in the Palestinian context is “humbog” since there is no enforcement. Meanwhile brave Palestinians and internationals (mostly in ISM) work to protect the vulnerable and help to rebuild.

She constantly reminds us that the situation facing the diverse population of Gaza is the responsibility of Israel. Reading the detailed descriptions of the cruel punishment meted out indiscriminately and relentlessly, I had the recurring image of Israeli soldiers using The Strip as a digital game: killing, torturing, wounding and destroying at will.

Murphy is clear that the imposition of the blockade is the decisive factor driving the social changes in Gaza, with the Hamas leadership making concessions to the minority Salafists and the PA playing its part in holding up vital supplies while blaming Hamas for the difficulties faced by the people.

A sense of pessimism exists as even at the end, during her exit to Egypt, small-minded rivalries between Palestinians serve to make life difficult.

On the other hand, there is optimism: in the humanity shining out of the rubble, the cleanliness sparkling through the desolation, the determination of the people to have a future as Palestinians and the increasing willingness to discuss wider political solutions for the future, including a bi-national state. This is a book in which stereotypes are challenged and which offers an enlightened and thoughtful look at the contradictions and complexities of life in the open prison which is Gaza.

Betty Hunter

## The Invention of the Land of Israel: From Holy Land to Homeland

By Shlomo Sand  
Verso Press

Shlomo Sand's illuminating sequel to his earlier book, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, will further infuriate the Zionist proponents of "hasbara" and makes fascinating reading. Sand deconstructs Jewish territorial history through the centuries and explores the essence of "the Land of Israel" together with the mythologies of the Bible itself, of "homeland" and "the people."

He shows how the "Promised Land" was not an irrevocable gift to the "Chosen People" but conditional upon the degree to which they adhered to God. It remains a "loan," not to be regarded as territorial property. In all the books of the Bible, Canaan never served as a homeland or property of the children of Israel, so is never referred to as "the Land of Israel."

Jerusalem and the Holy Land became significant, more as spiritual yearning and a feature of "redemption" than being the centre of a homeland to which Jews wished to "return." Like today, most Jews throughout history did not seriously consider moving there and in fact Rabbis through the ages were against it.

Sand shows how the Old Testament, with its angry God and its descriptions of Joshua annihilating the local inhabitants (another myth) to make way for the Chosen People, became the model for colonialism which was then promoted by the rise of Puritanism in Europe and formed the basis for the creation of European colonies in America, Africa, Australia and ultimately in Palestine.

The Bible was taken literally by the colonial powers of Europe and later by Jewish Zionists as history and fact. They then created an ethnocentric nationalism that disregarded the indigenous peoples who were thus not considered as a presence in the "empty land."

Zionism, and the claims of "historical right" which were developed seriously in the mid-19th century, owed as much to Christian Zionists like the Earl of Shaftesbury and Lord Balfour, who

wished the Jews to return to the Holy Land, as it did to its secular Jewish founders like Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizman. Combined with Britain's desire for an imperialist foothold in the Middle East, Zionism was used as a way to direct the mass emigration of Jews away from Britain and the US, especially after the Holocaust. This helped to propel the UN Partition of Palestine at the end of the British Mandate in 1947 into a Jewish and Arab State.

Sand explores the relationship of Zionism to Judaism and shows clearly that Zionist aims are contrary to the real ethics and spirit of Judaism, replacing the worship of God with the worship of land, and that to use force to acquire land is forbidden by Jewish Law. Yet Israel used the Bible to claim its "rights" to all the land, even to the extent of dispossessing the indigenous people.

Israel's dream of a "Full Israel" came to fruition in the 1967 war when Sand was a young soldier. He expresses his feelings of guilt over the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948 in a moving epilogue from his study as professor of history in Tel Aviv University, built over the ruins of the village of Sheikh Muwannis.

Sand exposes the injustices and incongruity of the way the land which forms the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories was acquired and the Zionists' combination of military power and nationalised religion. He strongly believes in an Israeli state within the 1967 "borders" with equal rights for all its citizens. But he is unable to accept the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees "because of the numbers that would be involved" and places himself in the same camp as the "liberal soft left" that he earlier castigates.

The absurdity of claiming territory on the basis of a mythical book written 2000 years ago while expelling its indigenous people is highlighted throughout. For there to be a just and peaceful resolution for all, Sand declares that the Zionist dystopia will need to be dis-invented.

Abe Hayeem



## Banipal 45: Writers from Palestine

Edited by Samuel Shimon

Published by Banipal Publishing

A special issue of Banipal, the English language periodical celebrating modern Arabic literature, was produced to mark its fifteenth year of publication and was dedicated to writers from Palestine.

Introducing the 45th issue of the publication, Fadhil Al-Azzawi wrote in the editorial that Banipal "reflects the real achievements in the contemporary literature of Arab authors." He added that to be published in English translation in Banipal "means a kind of recognition for many young Arab writers."

The works of the 23 writers in the "Writers from Palestine" section include individual chapters from novels, short stories and poems. Mostly young, their writing offers, says Anton Shamma, in the introduction to the section: "a new and refreshing literary map of that forsaken country."

Even when they are not young in age, he says, they present "a fresh and ingenious look at Palestinian realities." They "no longer seem to be the passive captives of a nationalist utopia" but are



instead "the more realistic and sober anti-heroes, full of doubts and questions and anxieties..."

Shamma says there are no sacred cows any more for Palestinian writers, including criticism of the PLO. "Nothing now is above criticism... nothing is sacred or untouchable; nothing is protected by old loyalties or from new desires and appetites."

Almost half the writers featured are women. They include Maya Abul Hayyat, whose extract from her novel, *Secrets*, describes the lives of the dysfunctional family of a Palestinian refugee in Beirut; Dalia Taha whose poems confront violence and death; Ibtisam Azem, whose novel, *Sleep Thief*, gets inside the mind of a young male Palestinian Israeli who joins West Bank Palestinians resisting occupation, and Einas Abdullah whose chapter from her novel, *There Are No Angels in Ramallah*, follows the thoughts of a passionate 26-year-old woman trying to make sense of her life "in that damned despairing whirlpool: the futility of daily life."

Not everything in this collection is gloomy, despite the difficulties the writers – like all Palestinians – cope with daily. There are flashes of humour, for instance in Aliaa Saqqa's vignette, *A Case of Love*, about how she loves Fairouz songs so much she cannot be prised out of a service taxi whenever one is playing.

Above all the collection reflects the diversity of Palestinian life and the strength of the Palestinian culture – full of energy and spirit.



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# Kick Israeli Racism Out of UEFA

NO UEFA EURO 2013 IN ISRAEL



**Demonstrate @  
UEFA annual congress,  
Grosvenor Hotel, London  
May 24th**

## Would you let a country like this host an international football tournament?



In November 2012 Israel's security forces killed over 140 Palestinians. The dead included teenagers playing football. Sports facilities were also destroyed.

"Israel hosting the UEFA Under-21 European Championship, under these circumstances, will be seen as a reward for actions that are contrary to sporting values."

*Frederic Kanoute, supported by 51 international players.*



Palestinian national team player Mahmoud Sarsak, held for three years without charge in an Israeli gaol, was only released on 10 July 2012 after a 92-day hunger strike and an international outcry on his behalf.

"For athletes in Palestine, there is no real freedom of movement and the risks of being detained or even killed are always looming before their eyes."

*Jibril Rajoub, President of the Palestinian Football Association.*

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