

Newsletter



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Welcome to the Action Palestine Newsletter!

Since the success of last year's occupations, students working against the occupation in Palestine are increasingly asking how they can take forward the movement for Palestine on campus. Given the substantial concessions made by various universities, it is crucial that activists make sure that they are pushing their university bureaucracies in the appropriate ways to commit them to follow through on the demands to which they agreed. It is time to sit down, negotiate with the universities and see how far they can be pushed. All the while the threat of direct action should be brought up to keep any stubborn vice-chancellors on their toes!

In this regard, there really is no substitute for cooperation between societies. Winning scholarships for Palestinian students, boycotting Israeli companies and taking forward the other demands of the occupations are all made easier when people can look at other societies, analyse their approach, learn from the mistakes and gain a better understanding about how to best push for positive change for Palestine.

We hope you enjoy our first newsletter, you can stay in touch and get involved by emailing Action Palestine on comms@actionpalestine.org or to let us know what you're upto or to add anything to the newsletter email the media team on media@actionpalestine.org

All the best,

Action Palestine Media Team

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LSE Campaign to Free Student Trapped in Gaza

Othman Sakallah, a gazan student, was successful in applying to study a postgraduate course at London School of Economics in the coming academic year. His application was assisted by the Palestine Solidarity Initiative, which itself was founded by alumni and former governors of the School.



LSE student Othman Sakallah

However, the effects of the massacre undertaken by the Israeli military last Winter and the ongoing siege of Gaza by Israel has left Othman and his family with little hope of raising the funds needed to leave Gaza and take up his degree in Britain. Israel's arbitrary border controls will make it near impossible for him to leave Gaza without financial and diplomatic assistance. These problems have been compounded by the recent demolition of his family's home by the Israeli military.

As a result, Othman has personally written to LSE Director, Howard Davies, in an effort to secure their assistance. So far Davies is yet to reply, but students and alumni are hopeful that given the Israeli Occupation is now directly affecting one of its own offer holders, the university will look to assist Othman in any way possible. As a result, a broad based campaign is being built to bring pressure on the School to waive Othman's tuition fees, provide him with a basic living allowance and facilitate his exit from imprisonment in Gaza.

This is not the first time that the LSE's attention has been drawn to grave need for defending the Palestinian right to education. The LSESU has been mandated to provide support for the Palestinian Right To Education Campaign by popular student vote and last year around 40 students staged a successful occupation of a lecture theatre, demanding that the LSE provide more support for Palestinian students. The waiver of application fees for all Palestinians living under Israeli occupation was agreed, along with material assistance and a commitment to facilitate Palestine-specific scholarships.

In similar cases in the past international pressure has been brought to bear, as in the case of the students who were released to pursue their Fullbright scholarships in the US. James Caspell a co-founder of the Palestine Solidarity Initiative, and a former governor and student at the LSE, added, "Othman's story is a direct result of the systematic oppression and racism of the Israeli Occupation. There are millions of Palestinians like him, but in this case LSE has a direct responsibility to provide all the assistance necessary for one of their students to continue his education. This is not a time to feel sorry, but a time to demonstrate solidarity, which it is in the clear interests and ability of LSE to do."

When BAE Systems met the Rebel Clown Army

Edinburgh University Students for Justice in Palestine tackles the Careers Fair. 3

Upon hearing of the juicy line-up gracing our Careers Fair this semester, we couldn't resist the temptation to pop in and bid our greetings. One of the demands of our occupation was for the University to cut all links – particularly on campus recruitment – with firms whose weapons are proven to be in use by

the Israeli military. The third largest arms manufacturer in the world and long-time supplier for the Israeli occupation, BAE, was an unwelcome presence. The case against them is snowballing; they are once again being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office for seven counts of corruption in its international dealings, whilst the findings of the Goldstone Report echo countless reports

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Continued: When BAE Systems met the Rebel Clown Army

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....stating that BAE Systems was complicit in war crimes in Gaza. To deal with such a violent yet ludicrous organization, we responded with parallel levels of ridiculousness. We enlisted the surreal mayhem of the Rebel Clown Army...



At 1700 hours on the 07th October, a battalion of clowns laid siege to the careers fair. Heavily armed with sarcasm and fluorescent clothing, the clowns were swiftly removed from BAE's room by security. However they proceeded to whistle, toot, chant and parade, distributing flyers to undo the BAE whitewashing, before conveniently "dying" immediately in front of the entrance to BAE's room. The mass of limp and wailing clowns on the floor made it somewhat tricky for students to get through to the BAE stall and virtually impossible for BAE to disguise the true nature of their work.

Taking action as clowns was accompanied by anonymity and playfulness, the refusal to give BAE a window for their pathetic and air-brushed explanations. The primary aim was to ensure that BAE were sufficiently ridiculed to deter them from coming back on to our campus next year. In fact, last year BAE were absent from our careers fair, since they had been humiliated by the Clown Army the year before that. This shows how much effect coordinated and committed action against such a firm could have; if a student group on every campus in the UK took action against BAE at careers fairs, BAE's participation at graduate events could be significantly reduced. But even if BAE does come back each year, it's invaluable that we are there to provide the alternative and truthful information, the sub-text to their glossy spiel about national defence and slick engineering.

THE PRIMARY AIM WAS TO ENSURE THAT BAE WERE SUFFICIENTLY RIDICULED TO DETER THEM FROM COMING BACK ON TO OUR CAMPUS NEXT YEAR



Excitable, yet strictly non-violent clowns sabotage BAE's attempts to ensnare Edinburgh graduates. October '09.

Crossing Milestones for the Students of Gaza

Crossing Milestones for the Students of Gaza

The BERCIA Project at King's College London, by Zainab Rahim

It is needless to say that when we presented our eight demands to the Principal of King's College London in January this year, the very same man who had awarded Shimon Peres only two months earlier, we were thinking big. Real big.

Demand number seven stated that "any old books, computers or other unwanted teaching/administrative resources should be donated to universities or schools in the Gaza Strip". And so, soon after hundreds of bodies had been tragically lain on Gazan soil, KCL Action Palestine sent off a letter to the management regarding this demand and were invited to a meeting with the Vice Principal for Student Affairs. Before entering the building, four of us stood there worriedly preparing our defences in case of any objections. But to our surprise, our VP was exceptionally welcoming and helped us coordinate a plan of action. This entailed allocating points of contact at all campuses to receive surplus equipment from staff and assigning a storage room for this purpose. For the first time in the history of the university,

equipment which was often casually disposed of by yearly contractors was being collected for a charity – in what KCL officially called the 'BERCIA' project (Books and Equipment Recycling for International Aid).

The sheer amount of surplus equipment, new, use-able and almost ready to be thrown away, was shocking in itself. Science companies, who regularly deliver to KCL, were able to donate boxes and bubble-wrap, and over the month of September we had plenty of volunteers coming in to our central location to take part in the packing process. We have had ups and downs with coordination but the experience has been invaluable. Our final challenge now is to get the stuff into Gaza, hopefully on the Viva Palestine convoy. Due to the ongoing siege, this task will be far from easy, but our efforts will continue.

In the future I hope to see all London universities coordinating their equipment collections together, because together we are undoubtedly stronger. Let us not forget, too, that universities have valuable resources that they have set aside for student affairs, so campaigning and communicating with the management is absolutely vital. And the greatest lesson I have learnt is this: think big to achieve big.

LSE students disrupt Israeli Foreign Minister lecture

Students protested and disrupted a lecture tonight at the London School of Economics (LSE) by Daniel Ayalon, the controversial Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel.

Over 50 students and activists greeted Ayalon outside of the lecture on LSE's campus with placards and banners, whilst inside audience members heckled the controversial Minister as a "racist" and "murderer" in relation to the illegal occupation and violence carried out by the Israeli state.

Ayalon was in the UK to meet British government officials and speaking at the LSE ahead of these talks in a lecture titled "The Middle East: The View From Israel". Security at the university was tight, with private security and police officers keeping a close watch on protesters. The Minister began and ended his lecture amid boos and chants of "Free, Free, Palestine" whilst his speech was interrupted relentlessly throughout with audience members questioning Israel's atrocities.

The action was organized by the LSE Students' Union Palestine Society and the Palestine Solidarity Initiative. The London School of Eco-

nomics Students' Union is officially twinned with Al-Najah University and has previously voted to divest funds from those companies profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The motion also called on LSE to respect human rights and follow suit in embracing a divestment agenda with regards to such companies.

Mira Hammad who attended the lecture and is the Chair of the LSE SU Palestine Society said after the protest, "The Palestine Society at LSE has grown in support since the atrocities committed in Gaza which explains the huge turnout tonight. We will continue to support the growing international resistance against the occupation of Palestine until a just peace is achieved."

Merna Al Azzeh, a Palestinian Masters student who was in the audience added, "As an LSE student, I find it disgusting that LSE could invite a Minister to speak from a racist government that has been committing war crimes for the last 60 years."

"The recent Goldstone Report overwhelmingly condemns the genocide waged against Gazan civilians last winter and as a Palestinian I am reassured by the growing international resistance to Israeli

Ni'lin's struggle against the wall

By John McSweeney

The village of Ni'lin continues to stand as an inconvenient fact for the Israel strategy in the West Bank. In their constant pursuit and annexation of Palestinian lands, the Israelis have, yet again, underestimated the resolve and determination characteristically exhibited by the ordinary people who endure the daily travails of occupation, siege and violence; a people whose name is associated with a refusal to give up what others would consider to be hopeless. To be Palestinian is to resist, is the common theme which runs through Palestinian culture and this idiom becomes all the more poignant when the struggle of Ni'lin's 5,000 inhabitants is highlighted.

Upon the original announcement by the Israelis that the Israeli bulldozers would be crawling their way through what remained of their Village following years of constant annexations by nearby illegal settlements, the people of Ni'lin decided enough is enough. Rather than leave their fate be decided by their representatives in nearby Ralmallah, they took to the streets in a resistance against an attempt to further deprive their futures. In spite of the peace-

ful nature of the weekly demonstrations, the Israeli army killed five Palestinians. If anything this gives context to the lie that if only Palestinians restrained themselves to peaceful protest then the Israelis would not have to resort to lethal responses. The truth is that Israel's policies of de facto annexation, political apartheid and severe oppression illustrate the real dynamics underpinning the 'conflict'.

However, it has not been easy for the Israelis as they have had to battle for every inch of stolen land. Every week, under the barrage of stinging tear gas and high pressured sewage, the villagers would demolish a segment of the wall. If the Israelis had thought that the eventual construction of the wall would put a stop to the demonstrations and weaken the resolve of the people, they were mistaken. Despite the wall being constructed by concrete panels, in a characteristically innovative method of demolition, the villagers managed to breach the so-called security wall last month, to the powerlessness of the Israeli war machine.



Ni'lin protestors tear down the Apartheid Wall, Sept.'09

OXFAM INTERNATIONAL SUSPENDED "SEX AND THE CITY" STAR KRISTIN DAVIS AS THE SPOKESWOMAN FOR THE ORGANIZATION DUE TO HER TIES WITH ISRAEL-SETTLEMENT COMPANY AHAVA

UPDATES ON THE BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS MOVEMENT, as called for by the Palestinian people in 2005

AHAVA

Oxfam international suspended "Sex and the City" star Kristin Davis as the spokeswoman for the organization due to her ties with Israel-settlement company Ahava. Davis worked as a brand representative for Ahava's Dead Sea cosmetics. It later emerged that Davis followed suit in severing ties with the company. In a statement, Oxfam said that "Kristin Davis has done great work for Oxfam" but "Oxfam remains opposed to settlement trade, in which Ahava is engaged." Ahava is based in the illegal settlement of Mitzpe Shalem in the West Bank. Oxfam's decision came after pressure from US-based women anti-war group CodePink. The campaign against Ahava has picked up in the UK with protests outside Ahava's branches in London organized by PSC. The aims of the campaign are to put Ahava out of business and raise awareness about settlement trade.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SHUNS LEONARD COHEN AFTER TEL AVIV SHOW.

Amnesty International removed their endorsement from a "peace fund" established by Canadian singer Leonard Cohen after appeals by BDS activists worldwide. Cohen established the fund with proceeds from his concert in Israel. Palestinian civil society organizations appealed him not to play in Israel for it whitewashed Israel's crimes against the Palestinians, specially in the aftermath of the massacre in Gaza. Activists stated that playing in Tel Aviv was tantamount to playing in Sun City during South African apartheid. Protests took place outside Leonard Cohen's concerts in cities around the world, including London. The singer did not concede. BDS efforts were successful in delegitimizing his apartheid-fund, Palestinian organizations also removed their support.

NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT DIVESTS FROM ELBIT SYSTEMS LTD.,

an Israeli company involved in the construction of the apartheid wall. It is the first time that a western government divested from a settlement company establishing an important precedent

FILM WORLD DENOUNCES TORONTO FESTIVAL.

Hundreds of artists and filmmakers around the world signed the Toronto Declaration in protest of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) city-to-city spotlight on Tel Aviv. The signatories denounced TIFF's participation in the "Rebrand Israel" campaign, with the aim of whitewashing Israel's human rights violations.

ISRAELI ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY protested its exclusion from an international archaeological conference of the World Archaeological Congress last August. This decision came after condemnation by the world body of Israel's use of archaeology to lay claim to Palestinian land. Israel announced last year the demolition of 88 Palestinian houses in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan to make space for the creation of an "archaeological park". More houses are slated for demolition.



Ahava's Dead Sea cosmetics are not so "magical" and "revitalising" when you know the firm is based in an illegal settlement.



Action Palestine, fighting for Palestine
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Actions and Events coming up...

Various Universities

- Supermarket Boycott Actions, November 7-15, for more information please visit: www.actionpalestine.org/campaigns/

London Palestine Student groups

- NOAM CHOMSKY: Palestine and the region in the Obama era, Thursday, 29 October 2009 14:00 at Derwent, 1st floor, D/104

Eyes in Gaza : Dr. Mads Gilbert

SOAS and UCL

- Presentation Dr. Mads Gilbert. One of the few foreign doctors in Gaza during the Israeli war on Gaza in January. Thursday, 05 November, 7pm. Darwin Lecture Theatre, Darwin Building, UCL

Manchester Universities

- Meeting chaired by Avi Shlaim

University of York

- 6th November, 5.30 pm. "Exile, conflict and recovery: Dilemmas and prospects in the occupied Palestinian territory and beyond", Prince Hassan lecture given by Ms Karen Koning AbuZayd, Commissioner-General of UNRWA. Room P/X001, Physics.

University of Leeds

- The Palestine Monologues - http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events_details.asp?ID=1277
- February – Israeli Apartheid Week.

University of Huddersfield

- 29th October, 5.15 pm. "Zionism and the Palestinian Struggle for Justice", Technology building, T5/09

University of Edinburgh

- Supermarket Sweep (for information on a similar event, see <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=125935714540>)

University of Nottingham

- 22nd / 28th October, 4pm/7pm. As part of Black History Month, "A History of Racism" - a 3-part documentary. Hallward Screening Room.
- 30th October. All day. Food sale fundraiser for Ni'lin. The Portland Building.
- 4th November, 6.30pm. As part of the Palestine Society Film Series, "The Lemon Tree". Hallward Screening Room.

Newcastle University

- Friends of Palestine Society Public Meeting, Tuesday, 27 October 2009

University of Sussex

- Why Boycott Israeli Goods?, Tuesday, 27 October 2009, Arts A2

About Action Palestine...

Action Palestine is, a UK wide student organisation dedicated to building a strong Palestine movement on campuses by facilitating communication and cooperation between Palestine student groups and individual supporters. Action Palestine works closely with over twenty Palestine societies and numerous individuals to defend the rights of Palestinians. We have facilitated national campaigns, including the Anti-Apartheid Week, The Right to Education Week, Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Campaign, as well as playing an important role in the wave of Student Occupations for Palestine,

Action Palestine is a student organization and therefore seeks to raise awareness of the plight of students in Palestine. The brutal Israeli Occupation has consistently denied the Right to Education for Palestinians a right that is enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its attacks on schools and Universities, the restrictions on movement and the general economic and social oppression of Palestinians are part of a frontal assault on basic rights in Palestine, especially the Right to Education.