



haringey justice for palestinians

HJFP Briefing 17

“Palestine is the barometer of Western integrity”

Don't call me a Palestinian of the Palestinian Territories because it is called Palestine.
Don't give me a fraction of my homeland and call it a solution.
Don't give me oppression and call it peace.
Don't give me a Bantustan and call it a home.
Don't give me a prison and call it freedom.
Don't draw the borders of my existence according to your whims and interests and call it a state.
My Palestine is the home that is mine since the dawn of history till the end of history.

UK Political Responses to events in Palestine/Israel

1. **Petition: To impose an immediate two-way arms embargo between the UK and Israel**

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/216561>

2. **IHRA news - a victory in Scotland that we can build on to turn the tide**

Lord Bracadale, tasked with a review of all hate crime legislation in Scotland, has effectively rejected the IHRA working definition on antisemitism and recommended that hate crime legislation should not extend to political entities as protected characteristics. This is a major defeat for those pushing the IHRA definition – the question posed in the consultation process provided the IHRA definition as background. Coming from such a high ranking judge, together with the responses to this question from various legal bodies, calls into serious question the Scottish Government's adoption of the definition. We are now calling on the Scottish Government to distance itself from the definition – what follows will be work also to approach city councils and various other bodies that have or are under pressure to adopt the IHRA definition.

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

[Press release](#)

Palestine campaigners welcome hate crime recommendation and calls on Scottish Government to reject the IHRA 'definition on antisemitism'

31st May 2018 – for immediate release

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) welcomes Lord Bracadale's rejection of the IHRA's 'working definition of antisemitism' and his opposition to the creation of "a statutory aggravation to cover hostility towards a political entity".

In the light of Lord Bracadale's analysis, commissioned by the Scottish Government, SPSC calls on the Scottish Government to reject the IHRA 'working definition on antisemitism' as publicly as it adopted it.

Lord Bracadale was appointed by the Scottish Government in January 2017 to undertake a review of hate crime legislation in Scotland; his final report and recommendations were published today. One of the questions for his consideration was whether an aggravation should apply "where an offence is motivated by malice and ill-will towards a political entity which the victim is perceived to be associated with by virtue of their racial or religious group?".

He concluded that:

"I accept the arguments advanced by those respondents who contended that hate crime legislation should not extend to political entities as protected characteristics. I consider that such an approach would extend the concept of hate crime too far and dilute its impact. The freedom of speech to engage in political protest is vitally important. For these reasons I do not recommend extending the range of protected characteristics to include political entities."

To illustrate his reasoning, Lord Bracadale refers to a case involving five SPSC members:

"In one case, members of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign shouted slogans during a concert at which the Jerusalem string quartet was performing. These included "they are Israeli army musicians"; "genocide in Gaza"; "end genocide in Gaza"; "boycott Israel". The accused were members of a political organisation which campaigns against Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and advocates boycott. The content of their remarks was political in nature, including a call for a boycott."

The evidence did not permit the inference that their comments were made because they presumed the musicians to be Israeli or Jewish.”

As well as SPSC, the Faculty of Advocates, the Glasgow Bar Association, Law Society of Scotland, Fife Centre for Equalities, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, and the Senators of the College of Justice also opposed an extension of hate crime legislation to include hostility to a state body.

Bracadale reported concerns that:

“A new aggravation in this area would be difficult to legislate for and potentially contentious, and would therefore introduce complexity and uncertainty into the law. In addition, a new aggravation would be open to interpretation and abuse for political ends, and open to change over time, depending on the political climate.”

“A further argument was based on freedom of speech. Freedom to hold differing political views, and to debate those views, was fundamental to a democratic society and should be protected. This included freedom to subject political entities and foreign states to legitimate criticism. A new aggravation of this type could, therefore, have unintended consequences regarding the curtailment of freedom of expression and freedom of political debate.”

He goes on to discuss:

“The right to engage in legitimate political protest is fundamental in a democratic society. There is a tension between, on the one hand, freedom of expression, which protects legitimate political protest, and, on the other hand, conduct which is racially aggravated. In the abstract, it can be difficult to distinguish political protest or criticism from racially/religiously aggravated conduct. In chapter 5 I examine the significance, in the context of stirring up of hatred offences, of article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). What emerges is that context and content of the conduct in any particular case is critical. Freedom of expression carries with it duties and responsibilities.”

“There is an obligation to avoid, as far as possible, expressions of opinion or belief that are gratuitously offensive to others and thus an infringement of their rights (for example freedom of religion), and which therefore do not contribute to any form of public debate capable of furthering progress in human affairs.”

Campaigners noted that the introduction to Question 7 in the consultation document referred almost exclusively to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) ‘working definition on antisemitism’ which was adopted by the Scottish Government in 2017.

Mick Napier of Scottish PSC said:

“Solidarity with the Palestinian people against the settler colonial project of Zionism is not going to be criminalised in Scotland anytime soon, despite the Scottish Government’s adoption of the definition that Bracadale has rejected. Bracadale has recognised the assault on free speech that adoption of the IHRA bogus definition of antisemitism would entail and has decisively rejected the claims of those who seek to criminalise Palestine solidarity, above all BDS campaigning. We must remain ever vigilant against those in and out of the Labour Party who seek to silence supporters of Palestinian freedom, who work to smear those who oppose an ethno-religious state in Israel/Palestine.”

“The Scottish Government should urgently review its 2017 adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in the light of Lord Bracadale’s findings.”

END

Notes to Editor

1. Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign
2. Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, Final Report - Recommendation 6 (page 25-26): <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00535892.pdf>
3. Scottish PSC response to Question 7: https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=176714920
4. Association of Palestinian Communities response to Question 7: https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=159865511
5. Mike Napier, Niel Forbes, Vanesa Fuertes, Sofiah MacLeod, Jim Watson response to Question 7: https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=644011820
6. Consultation responses to Question 7:

Faculty of Advocates:

“No. This is clearly a sensitive matter but, on balance, it is submitted that such a scenario is not readily equated with the other named “characteristics”. Freedom to hold differing political views and to express them is essential in a democracy, even in circumstances where expression of those views may be motivated by malice or ill will.”

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=400494187

The Glasgow Bar Association:

“An aggravation should not be relevant in such circumstances. Legitimate criticism of political entities is a fundamental democratic right and a person’s Article 10 rights should be protected insofar as legitimate freedom of expression is concerned. It is recognised that the expression of certain views may be controversial but these should not be unduly restricted. Any necessary restrictions to prevent disorder should be proportionate to legitimate aims within a democratic institution. There is a danger in conflating the two issues and racism or prejudice in a criminal context should be readily identifiable in the absence of any politically motivated factors. The offence should be capable of standing alone avoiding ambiguity about any legitimate politically motivated conduct.”

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/view_respondent?show_all_questions=0&sort=submitted&order=ascending&q_text=Glasgow+Bar+Association&uuld=645227619

Law Society of Scotland:

"We would not offer comment other than to indicate our concerns about the uncertainty on what might be deemed to be 'political'. Political entities change from time to time. Introduction of the political concept may well widen the scope of hate crime too far. Even in the examples provided in the consultation paper, the offending behaviour is likely to be included within the working definition of hate crime."

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=916900257

Fife Centre for Equalities:

"We feel applying aggravation to political entity will be contentious and could potentially undermine the protection being afforded to certain social groups. For example, there are individuals who dislike UKIP because of their potential racist rhetoric. If those individuals choose to protest peacefully against UKIP, under new legislation, UKIP could argue that they are being harassed because of their political beliefs."

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/view_respondent?show_all_questions=0&sort=submitted&order=ascending&q_text=fife+centre&uuld=792255884

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights:

"CRER understands that equality law (and the specific protected characteristics) pertains to immutable, intrinsic characteristics that an individual or group has that constitute part of an individual or collective identity. We believe that levels of condemnation levied against identity-based crimes will diminish if aggravations are brought forward that do not pertain to the listed, inherent protected characteristics. In addition, CRER share some of the concerns that have been highlighted by various stakeholders regarding the government's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism."

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/view_respondent?show_all_questions=0&sort=submitted&order=ascending&q_text=Coalition+for+Racial+Equality+and+Rights&uuld=595438291

Senators of the College of Justice:

"It should be appreciated that, if introduced, such a measure could open a potentially wide door. It would depart from the concept of hostility towards a protected group. It would be likely to add a significant layer of complexity and uncertainty to the existing law. In general it is thought that the common law will be able to deal with cases which fall outside the current legislation and where additional condemnation is plainly required."

https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/independent-review-of-hate-crime-legislation/consultation/download_public_attachment?sqld=pasted-question-1467894590.05-55511-1467894590.71-30316&uuld=771778449

3. EDM 1169: DEMOLITION PLANS IN KHAN AL-AHMAR VILLAGE IN THE WEST BANK

That this House notes with concern the upcoming Israeli High Court hearing on 25 April 2018 on the demolition of buildings in the village of Khan al-Ahmar in the West Bank; condemns those plans and the impact they will have on communities in the occupied Palestinian territories; believes that the demolition of these buildings would be a flagrant disregard by Israel of both the will of the international community and the international legal order; further notes that the coercive environment of threatened demolition, illegal settlement expansion and forcible displacement are a daily reality faced by communities in the occupied Palestinian territories; is concerned that such demolitions form part of Israel's E1 plan which will cut off Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, jeopardising the contiguity of any future Palestinian state and thus undermining an already fragile two-state solution; welcomes the actions taken by the EU in issuing a demarche to Israel; reminds the Government of its duties as a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Fourth Geneva Convention; and calls on the Government to exert meaningful and decisive political, diplomatic and economic pressure on the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions programme as a whole and, in particular, to abandon attempts to demolish the school and other buildings in Khan al-Ahmar.

To date signed by 86 MPs including Catherine West, but NOT David Lammy

4. Corbyn's statement at Right of Return Demo 5 June

[Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn tells Israel: "We cannot turn a blind eye to these repeated and dangerous breaches of international law."](#)

5. International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network UK - Open Letter to the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Dear friends,

Please see below for an open letter to the Board of Deputies from Jewish people in the UK. We want all to see and circulate it widely, and we hope other Jewish people will want to add their names. We'll update the signatories accordingly. Facebook, tweet, write to your local press and your MP. Don't let the BoD get away with defending mass murder.

Sign through the facebook page [here](#) or email UK@IJAN.org.

Yours for a free Palestine,

Selma James, Michael Kalmanovitz, Sam Weinstein

OPEN LETTER TO THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS FROM JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE UK

We are appalled that the Board of Deputies (BoD) which claims to be "[the voice of British Jews](#)," has once again attempted to justify the massacre of unarmed Palestinian people by the Israeli military. You issued a throw-away [tweet](#) on 31 March and a [full statement](#) on 15 May, followed by a [comment](#) opposing the World Health Organisation fact-finding mission into the health needs of the occupied territories on 24 May.

As you know, on 30 March, when Israel began its latest attack, Palestinians were commemorating Land Day. [1] It was the launch of their Great March of Return demanding the right to go back to their homeland and an end to the blockade of Gaza. The March continued until 15 May, the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, when three-quarters of a million Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their land: hundreds of towns and villages were depopulated and destroyed to make way for the state of Israel.

Since 30 March, [123](#) Palestinians have been killed, including children, women and medics, and journalists wearing vests marked PRESS, many shot in the back, and [13,600](#) have been maimed or injured by live ammunition, tear gas and firebombs. For six weeks the killings continued, day after day, and on 14 May, when the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, despite "[overwhelming global opposition](#)", another massacre: 60 people killed, and 2,771 maimed and wounded. The Israeli use of illegal "dumdum" bullets which expand after entering the body was clearly intended to cause not only greater pain but [permanent disabilities](#).

Your statement justifying this massacre prompted over 500 Jewish Zionists to write to outgoing president Arkush and president-elect Marie van der Zyl [2] protesting that BoD had "[deeply misrepresented](#)" their views by relieving Israel of all responsibility for the deaths caused by their snipers.

BoD is doing its best to hide that Jews are divided over Israel's ongoing repression and slaughter of the Palestinian people, which many of us, like most people everywhere in the world, including a number of Zionists, are outraged by. So much for BoD "speaking for all Jews"! You are so determined to defend Israel that you have even accused Jewish organisations and individuals of "antisemitism" because they support Palestinian rights, and campaigned for their expulsion from the Labour Party.

This is not the first time the BoD has condoned murder, claiming to speak on behalf of Jewish people in the UK. The BoD publicly supported pro-Israel [rallies](#) during the bombing of Gaza in 2008/9 and 2014 that killed thousands of Palestinian women, children and men. It has consistently supported a regime that is widely considered guilty of [war crimes](#) and the racist crime of [apartheid](#). You are now saying that opposition to Israel's actions is antisemitic, thus demanding that Israel should be the only government in the world exempt from criticism.

The BoD in recent years has been uncritical of Israel and pro-Tory, contrary to the great Jewish working-class tradition of struggling for social justice in every situation. Arkush declared his political allegiance when (on 9 June 2017) he mourned the Tory prime minister's failure to win an outright majority at the general election as a "[loss](#)" for the Jewish community, and [described](#) the Tory alliance with the extreme right-wing, [homophobic](#), [anti-abortion](#) Democratic Unionist Party in the North of Ireland as "[positive news](#)" and the DUP as "exceptionally warm and friendly". The Tories that Arkush supports are aligned in Europe with [right-wing political parties](#) that honour Nazi collaborators and Islamophobes. Arkush also celebrated the election of Trump undeterred by his [racist](#), [Islamophobic](#), and [antisemitic campaign](#).

Your identification with the Israeli government could prove even more [frightening](#). Governments and people around the world fear that the wrecking of the agreement with Iran by Netanyahu and Trump (the heads of two nuclear powers) may start yet another war, repeating the horrors of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. You may find yourself not only supporting the destruction of Iran, but urging the risk of nuclear war.

As Jewish people we are distraught that the Nazi holocaust has been, and continues to be, used to justify the brutal occupation of another people who played no part in our historic persecution, and to indulge in warmongering.

We reclaim our tradition of struggling for social justice for all by echoing the call by Jamal Juma, coordinator of the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign and the Land Defence Coalition:

"It is time for the world to stop standing in implicit or explicit complicity with Israeli apartheid and to join us in nonviolent action by taking up the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions until Israel respects international law and human rights."

Footnotes

1. Land Day is the annual remembrance of the 1976 general strike protesting Israeli land theft from Palestinian citizens of Israel, when six unarmed Palestinians were killed, a hundred were wounded, and hundreds arrested.
2. We note that van der Zyl's suitability to be president of BoD has been questioned by victims/survivors of child sexual abuse who accuse her of "[abandoning](#)" them in their efforts to eradicate this crime from Jewish institutions.

First issued on 10 June 2018

Craig Berman
Sarah Glynn
Abe Hayeem

Rosamine Hayeem
Yael Kahn
Michael Kalmanovitz
Roisin Kalmanovitz
Agnes Kory
Selma James
Les Levidow
Moshe Machover
Helen Marks
Sam Weinstein
Karl Weiss

Source: International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network UK, 12.06.2018

6. Fiery debate on Gaza at #SNP18 sees standing ovation for call to suspend UK arms sales to Israel

SNP CONFERENCE backed a motion on opposing the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli military forces in recent months, in what turned into a fiery debate between the majority of delegates and John Mason MSP. The motion called on the conference to condemn Israel's attack, which has killed over 120 people since protests began in Gaza on 30 March, oppose "Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land", support the implementation of UN resolutions and "lead international efforts to end the siege of Gaza". Phillipa Whitford MP, who has worked as a doctor in Gaza previously, spoke in favour of the resolution stating that Israel's actions in Gaza were "utterly indefensible".

Whitford explained how Gaza had been "under blockade for 11 years" with no proper sewage and water system, with over 40 per cent of women being denied access to emergency healthcare including breast cancer treatment. Tommy Sheppard, Edinburgh East MP, began his speech by referring to the Nakba 70 years ago, where "Palestinians were made refugees in their own land", stating in Gaza they now live in what is "effectively an open air prison". He described the UK Government's failure to condemn Israel's latest "slaughter of innocents" as "deplorable", and refuted the Israeli state's narrative of the killings as necessary actions to thwart terrorists, saying: "All the video and photo evidence suggests they were not 'under invasion from terrorists' – the Israeli's were shooting children from over 300 metres away." [Read More](#)

Source: EuroPal Forum, 12.06.2018

7. 300 prominent global figures accuse Israel of committing 'war crimes'

Israel's forcible transfer of thousands of Palestinians has been denounced as a war crime by over 300 elected officials, legal scholars, academics, artists, faith leaders and activists from around the world. The universal show of solidarity to the Palestinians was published in an open letter which voiced strong opposition to Israel's plans to forcibly transfer thousands of Palestinians living in farming-shepherding communities in the occupied West Bank.

Signatories include 90 members of parliament, many of whom are from the EU and UK parliaments. Other notable signatories include ten Israel Prize laureates, film director Ken Loach, artists Ai Weiwei, author Alice Walker, academic Noam Chomsky and several musicians. Dozens of Rabbis have also signed the letter denouncing Israel for what many would describe as ethnic cleansing. Forcible transfer – by direct physical force or by creating a coercive environment that makes residents leave their homes – is a war crime the letter states. [Read More](#)

Source: EuroPal Forum, 12.06.2018

8. Galway City Council adopts motion to boycott Israel

Galway City Council has today adopted a motion to fully support the the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in solidarity with the people of Palestine. The motion was brought forward by Labour councillor Billy Cameron and received the support of the majority of councillors. The Galway Palestine Solidarity Committee held a rally outside City Hall earlier today to show support for the BDS movement and the Palestinian people. Galway City Council joins city councils across Europe in supporting the BDS movement – last week Valencia was declared an "Israeli apartheid-free zone" after its City Council adopted a motion to boycott the "illegal country".

In recent weeks, the Israeli Defence Forces killed over 100 people at the Gaza border.

21-year old medic Razzan Najjar (who was wearing a white medic's coat) was shot and killed while attending to injured Palestinians. The Galway Palestine Solidarity Committee said on social media: "Thanks to everyone who showed up at City Hall to express solidarity with the people of Palestine today, especially those who travelled from Kinvara, Mayo, and Connemara."

The motion that was put forward read: "1. Since its violent establishment in 1948 through the ethnic cleansing of more than half of the indigenous people of Palestine, the state of Israel has denied Palestinians their fundamental rights and has refused to comply with international law; noting also that Israel continues to illegally occupy and colonise Palestinian land, discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel, imposes an inhumane blockade and siege of Gaza and denies Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes, Galway City Council fully supports and endorses the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for freedom, equality and justice and commits itself to discontinue all business contracts it has with Hewlett-Packard, both HP Inc. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise for business and government services, as well as the HP spin-off DXC Technology as HP and DXC provide and operate much of the technology infrastructure that Israel uses to maintain its system of apartheid and settler colonialism over the Palestinian people."

Source: EuroPal Forum, 12.06.2018

And responses elsewhere in the world:

US recognition of Jerusalem backfires on Israel

Argentina's cancellation of a soccer match over the match's relocation to Jerusalem is a clear sign that most of the world considers large parts of Jerusalem to be occupied land.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/israel-argentina-palestinians-lionel-messi-jibril-rajoub.html#ixzz5JKULI25h>

10 big wins for Palestine at the (US) Presbyterian Assembly

Late last night, the Presbyterian Church (USA), which represents nearly 1.5 million Americans, voted *overwhelmingly* in support of justice for Palestinians through resolutions on everything from opposing legislation challenging boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns to defending the right to call Israel a colonial state!

A slate of [pro-justice resolutions](#), put forth by US CPR member group [Israel Palestine Mission Network](#) (IPMN), passed with overwhelming majorities. PC(USA) rejected resolutions whitewashing Israel's treatment of Palestinians and instead cast votes:

- Condemning Israel's attacks on protesters participating in the Great March for Return and calling for an end to Israel's illegal siege of the Gaza Strip;
- Opposing Israel's illegal annexation of Jerusalem, and its discriminatory practices targeting Palestinians in access to employment, representation, infrastructure, services, and education;
- Voting down legislation that scapegoated Palestinians for the deaths of Palestinian children killed by Israel, and presented false symmetry between the violence inflicted on Palestinian and Israeli children;
- Affirming our right to boycott by condemning anti-BDS legislation being pushed at the state and federal level, including [opposing the Israel Anti-Boycott Act](#);
- Standing firmly in solidarity with Palestinian churches and receiving their [call to recognize Israel as an apartheid state and intensify BDS campaigns](#);
- Challenging the US president and State Department regarding Israel's discrimination against Palestinians and other citizens of Israel, and calling for US diplomatic action toward equality;
- Challenging boycott target RE/MAX's profiting from sales in Israeli settlements;
- Ensuring that interfaith relationships in the US are oriented toward justice rather than used as a fig leaf for Israel's violence against Palestinians;
- Rejecting normalization efforts that ignore the power imbalance between Palestinians and Israelis;
- Voting down a resolution seeking to end the classification of Israel as a "colonial project."

The resolutions won by a mile following powerful testimonies from local and visiting Palestinians, Black Lives Matter leaders, Presbyterians, and others. Most of the resolutions passed by 80 or 90 percent or unanimously in committee and through the General Assembly.

Four years ago this week, I witnessed with tears in my eyes the PCUSA voting *by a hair* – 310-303 – to [divest holdings from three US companies profiting from Israel's occupation](#). At the time, PC(USA) was the first mainline church in the US to do so.

In just a few years, we have gone from near parity to a church standing boldly and unequivocally for Palestinian rights. In just a few years, we have gone from focusing on Israel's 1967 occupation to a broad platform challenging all aspects of Israeli colonialism, and advocating the rights of all Palestinians throughout historic Palestine, including those fighting for their right to return home.

Massive, mainstream institutions like PC(USA) show how the political orientation and analysis at the grassroots level is shifting quickly, and that those claiming to be progressive without standing with Palestine are increasingly out of touch.

US CPR was proud to be on the ground working to support IPMN alongside Friends of Sabeel - North America, American Muslims for Palestine, St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee, and St. Louis Jewish Voice for Peace.

Even as we are outraged by Trump's decision to remove the US from the UN Commission on Human Rights to shield Israel from accountability, join us in taking a moment to savour these sweet victories as we recommit ourselves to the fight ahead for full freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people.

Source: Anna Baltzer, Director of Organizing & Advocacy, US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, 23.06.2018

Joburg Mayor suspends official over attendance at anti-BDS Israel event

Earlier this morning Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba, [suspended](#) senior city official, MMC of Health, Mpho Phalatse, over her participation at a pro-Israeli anti-BDS event on Sunday 10 June 2018.

The event, organised by the local Israeli lobby (which includes the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and SA Zionist Federation), was sponsored by Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy (the Israeli government department mandated with countering the international BDS boycott of Israel movement).

Speaking about the event, Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs Gilad Erdan [said](#): "The reality in South Africa is deeply disturbing given the increasing prominence of the BDS movement within the country and the solidarity shown by the ANC towards terrorist

organizations. I decided to focus my ministry's efforts on activities in South Africa in order to strengthen the local pro-Israel community and their fight against BDS and terrorism."

The human rights and Palestine solidarity organization, BDS South Africa, welcomes the move to suspend Phalatse and calls on the Department of International Relations and Cooperation to immediately implement the ruling party's resolution for the "unconditional downgrade of the SA Embassy in Israel to a Liaison Office" as well as to begin an investigation into Israeli agencies operating in South Africa sowing discord and interfering with local civil society and domestic affairs.

Reverend Mike Oliphant of the Anglican Church in Johannesburg welcomed the news and added that: "As someone who has witnessed the suffering of Palestinians, of both Muslim and Christian Palestinians, it is absurd that MMC Phalatse would have even tried to suggest that South Africa stands with Israel. South Africans, our ruling party, several of our opposition parties, our government, our civil society, churches, unions and others all firmly stand with the Palestinian struggle against Israeli Apartheid. On this issue we are united in our diversity! I invite Phalatse to engage with Palestinian Christians and to rid herself of the notion that the Land of Israel that we read about in our Bible is the same as the Modern Apartheid State of Israel that was only created in 1948 (at the expense of the indigenous Palestinians - including Christians!). She will soon realise that some of the first followers of Christ were actually the Palestinians! Jerusalem and Bethlehem are Palestinian towns!"

The suspension of Phalatse, which has been welcomed by South African civil society, human rights organisations, churches and unions, came following calls by the ruling ANC ([click here](#)) and opposition party EFF ([click here](#)).

Source: **BDS SOUTH AFRICA, 12.06.2018**

Media Group, Haringey Justice for Palestinians 24.006.2018

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