

Balfour Project

PEACE, JUSTICE AND EQUAL RIGHTS
IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of a new quarterly newsletter from the Balfour Project. We want to keep you informed about our activities, past and planned, and give you an opportunity to let us know your thoughts.

The aim of the Balfour Project is equality: equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis. Our focus is on Britain's historic responsibility for the dire situation in Israel/Palestine, especially its failure to enable Palestinians to fulfil their basic rights – as individuals and as a people. That failure began even before the Balfour Declaration of 1917, went on through the Mandate period up to 1948, and has continued to this day.

Britain is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, charged with upholding its many unmet resolutions on the situation in Palestine. We shall continue to call upon the Government to live up to Britain's legal and moral obligations. Since Brexit, when our Government declared that "Global Britain" would chart its own independent path in the world, flying the flag of British values, past excuses for inaction have only grown thinner.

Our work has three strands: historical, to serve as an authoritative source of material on the past for researchers and the public; educational, raising awareness among new generations of British students; and advocacy, to persuade Parliament and our Government to change course. As a first step we urge the Government to recognise Palestine as a state, as over 130 other countries have done.

I hope you find the contents of this newsletter useful and interesting. If you have comments or suggestions, do let me know at chair@balfourproject.org. I look forward to hearing from you.

Andrew Whitley



A word
from
our
Chair

A Tribute to our Vice Chair



Sir Vincent Fean stepped down as Chair on 1 July after four years in which he led the Balfour Project to new heights. But, instead of relaxing as would have been richly deserved after a busy term in office, he generously agreed to support our incoming Chair, Andrew Whitley, in a newly created post of Vice Chair.

Given his long diplomatic experience and keen political nose, we are fortunate that Sir Vincent will continue to lead our advocacy work at Westminster and Whitehall.

All of us involved with the Project are deeply grateful to him for his strong sense of service coupled with a gentle good humour and ability to bridge differences, qualities that will be sorely needed in the coming years.

Evictions from Masafer Yatta



**Becca
Strober,
Director of
Education
at Breaking
the Silence**

On 4 May, Israel's Supreme Court issued a decision permitting the Israeli army to evict more than 1,000 Palestinians from Masafer Yatta, a region in the South Hebron Hills, at the southern tip of the West Bank. On 22 August, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal from the residents of Masafer Yatta. The Israeli army has been trying to evict residents of Masafer Yatta for decades, claiming that the area where they live is an active firing zone. However, as Becca Strober showed, during an [online talk delivered on 23 May](#), the Israeli army routinely uses the claim of 'active firing zones' to harass and evict local communities. Only a small percentage of the vast areas of the West Bank that are designated as military areas are actually used by the Israeli army for military activities. Becca Strober served as a soldier in the Israeli army and is now Director of Education at Breaking the Silence, an Israeli organisation of former soldiers who are committed to exposing the realities of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. Becca's talk, with links to other resources on the Israeli army's abuse of 'firing zones', is available on our website under [Events/Recorded Talks](#) and on the link above.

Abandoning Palestine: the end of the British Mandate and our continuing responsibility



This two-day conference was held over Zoom on May 17 and 18 2022 and focused on how laws introduced by the British Mandate authorities in Palestine continue to shape events in Israel and Palestine today. The conference presented personal accounts of the last days of the British mandate, including a moving description by Ghada Karmi of how she and her family were forced from their home in West Jerusalem by Jewish gunmen in April 1948, before the British forces left; analysis by Michael Lynk (former Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories) of the emergency laws written by the British in 1937 and how they remain current in Israeli law today; and a presentation by Roger Hardy of his new Illustrated History of Palestine from 1850 to 1948. Avi Shlaim gave an account of diplomatic intrigues leading up to the creation of Israel, and there were statements by Members of Parliament and former Ministers. The presentations can be seen on the Events section of our website, under Past Conferences and Lectures, and [via this link](#).

Teachers' Workshop

On 25 June we organised an on-line workshop for secondary school teachers who either have taught the history of Israel-Palestine in schools or are interested in doing so in future. Teachers were able to share their experiences of addressing complex, and sometimes highly charged, material with young audiences. One teacher noted that the history of Israel-Palestine resonates with many contemporary issues, such as migration, refugees, human rights and the rule of law. We have set up a Facebook Group to enable teachers to share resources and exchange ideas on how to enrich the teaching of Israel-Palestine in schools. A recording of the workshop is on the [Events/Recorded Talks](#) section of our website and can also be [seen here](#).



Palestinian Children in Israeli military detention

More highlights from our website

DEFENCELESS



The impact of the Israeli military detention system on Palestinian children



Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children. Every year 500–700 Palestinian children come into contact with the Israeli military courts (the court system used to prosecute and try Palestinians in the West Bank) and there are currently about 160 Palestinian children (defined as under 18) in detention. Most are charged with throwing stones, which carries a

On 18 August, Israeli forces raided and closed down the offices of seven Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank. Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz began moves to close six of the seven some months ago, designating them terrorist organisations with links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The UN Human Rights Office in the West Bank described Gantz's reasons for the closures as "vague or irrelevant". The EU has previously commented that, "Past allegations of the misuse of EU funds in relation to certain Palestinian CSOs [civil society organisations] have not been substantiated. The EU will continue to stand by international law...". The Balfour Project is disappointed that the British government has issued only a weak expression of "concern" about the closures, and we are urging the government to taking a firmer stance.

Tim Llewellyn, a former BBC Middle East Correspondent and a member of the Balfour Project's Executive Committee, has reviewed the new book, We Could Have Been Friends, by Raja Shehadeh, the Palestinian lawyer and founder of the Ramallah-based human rights organisation, Al-Haq. The book charts Raja Shehadeh's efforts to connect with his father, famed Palestinian lawyer, Aziz, who was assassinated in 1985. The book is both a poignant personal memoir, and a historical record.

Professor Avi Shlaim wrote a special article for the Balfour Project showing how Britain negotiated with Jordan to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state. The article shows how Britain played a crucial, but still unacknowledged, role in the Palestinian tragedy.

On 18 August, Israeli forces raided St Andrew's Anglican/Episcopal Church in Ramallah. The raid began at 3am and entailed a forced entry that wrecked the church's entrance by smashing a lock and security glass. The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem issued a statement condemning the raid, which can be read in News on our website, and also through this link.

For more news, visit our website, www.balfourproject.org



Reception at the House of Commons

We joined with the Council for the Advancement of Arab British Understanding (CAABU) to host a reception at the House of Commons for current and past Members of Parliament and supporters. Palestinian Ambassador to the UK Husam Zomlot addressed the room, and Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of UNWRA, provided an update on his recent work in the West Bank and Gaza. Anna McMorris MP (Labour, Cardiff North) gave a moving account of a recent visit to Israel-Palestine, during which she had witnessed, among other things, conditions in a paediatric hospital, and parents' desperate (and usually fruitless) efforts to get travel permits from the Israeli authorities which would enable them to visit their children in the hospital.



Benefits

- FREE tickets for our film screenings – next will be Boycott by Julia Bacha. An email with the link for free entry will be sent to Friends a few days before the screening.
- Free conference highlights booklets from our Abandoning Palestine conference in May.
- Have your say: regular dialogue with the trustees – tell us what you want the charity to do. We will set up virtual meetings with trustees and, when life permits, face to face meetings.

Become our Friend

If you already donate by standing order or direct debit, you are our automatically a Friend. We need many more such Friends. Personal circumstances differ widely, so a pledge of any amount, given regularly, makes you a Friend. For those who can afford it, we recommend £5 or £10 a month. That will make a world of difference to us. Any amount you give will be put to good use – there is no minimum figure, nor is there a ceiling!

Donations made by our Friends are eligible for Gift Aid, entitling us to claim a further 25% on your donation, at no extra cost to you. If you elect to give by standing order, please tick the Gift Aid box (if you are eligible). If you prefer to give by direct debit, please download, complete and return our Gift Aid form.

To take the next step, [click here](#).

Events

FILM SCREENING: On Tuesday 18 October 6 pm UK time we will be screening Boycott, followed by a Q&A with director Julia Bacha. Boycott traces the impact of US state legislation designed to penalise individuals and companies that choose to boycott Israel due to its human rights record. [Click here](#) to sign up.

If you are a [Friend of the Balfour Project](#), meaning you are a regular giver, or if you sign up here before the film screenings, you will receive a free link to the screening a couple of days before the event.

WEBINAR: On Wednesday 12 October, 6 pm UK time, two Balfour Project Fellows, Anne-Marie Clements & Rebecca Argall will host Opportunities for Encounter on Christian tourism to the Holy Land, with Brendan Metcalfe of Friends of The Holy Land, Laila Asfoura of Laila Tours and Travel, and Michael & Georgette, a Palestinian Christian couple. [Click here](#) to register.

WEBINAR: In November 2022, the exact date TBC, US-Palestinian author and journalist Ramzy Baroud will be speaking on Impunity and Exceptionalism: Will Israel Be Held Accountable to International Law? Please keep an eye out in your inbox for the confirmation of the date and registration information.

Write to or email your MP

Israel's West Bank Planning Committee has again postponed a decision on whether to permit the construction of a new settlement ('E1') which will complete the encirclement of East Jerusalem and separate Palestinians living there from those in the West Bank. It will also split major cities in the north of the West Bank from those in the south. The construction of 'E1' appears to be a deliberate attempt to undermine the Two State Solution for Palestine by making a Palestinian state unviable. Yet, the Two State Solution is British policy on Israel/Palestine. On the Advocacy section of our website, you can find more details and also a letter that you can send to your MP, urging them to oppose the construction of E1, which contradicts long-standing British policy.



Thank you for your support!