**Why Sussex Defend the NHS supports the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign**

Internationally, there is a growing concern for the oppression of the Palestinian people and a commitment to upholding human rights, international law and democratic values.

This concern is informed by non-racist and anti-discriminatory principles, there being no other basis for a restructuring of the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestine is in crises. Today, Palestinians are subjected to daily abuse of their human rights and live in crushing poverty in refugee camps and under Israeli occupation. The United Nations estimates that 60% of the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories lives in poverty, due to the destruction of the Palestinian economy by the illegal Israeli occupation.

Israel’s ambition for an exclusive Jewish state and the policies by which this objective is being implemented, have had and continue to have, dire consequences for every aspect of Palestinian life, not least in their physical and psychological well-being. Military Court Watch, for example, is documenting Israel’s systematic traumatisation of Palestinian children: for example, the military send a company of soldiers into a Palestinian village, usually one that is located near a settlement. This provocation results in young Palestinians throwing stones. The military returns some weeks later, always in the early hours of the morning. One or two children are arrested, being dragged from their home while their parents scream their distress. Their wrists are ‘zip-tied’ and they are often hooded. They are transported on the floor of a military vehicle, the soldiers often kicking, spiting and urinating upon the child. The child is taken to an interrogation centre, often located on a settlement. The child’s parents are not allowed to be present and there is no legal representation. The child is bullied and threatened: for example, a child will be told that his or her father’s travel permit (it is impossible for a Palestinian to negotiate the checkpoints on the West Bank and attend his place of work or study without a permit – there are 650 checkpoints) will be withdrawn unless he ‘confesses’. The child will sometimes name political activists in the village in order to gain release. When the child returns to his village (often having served a prison sentence) he or she is given a hero’s welcome. It is not difficult to appreciate the conflict experienced, in such circumstances, by the child who has ‘betrayed’ someone. The behaviour of the military as described by Military Court Watch is confirmed by a group of former Israeli soldiers who have formed an organisation ‘Breaking the Silence’ in which they testify to the brutality committed by the military on the West Bank.

Such policies are implemented with the intention of inducing despair and desperation, of undermining the Palestinian’s resistance and their determination to remain in their land – it is a part of the policy of ‘ethnic cleansing’.

Corporate Watch has collated evidence that the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip prevents the proper functioning of Palestinian health services and the effective treatment of patients: health services, health workers and their patients are subject to direct military attacks; there is a shortage of medicines, fuel, medical equipment and spare parts as a result of the siege.

1384 Palestinian children have been killed by the Israeli military since 2000, one child being killed every 3 to 4 days.

We should not ignore the enormous difference in power between Israel and Palestinians or assert that it is simply a ‘cycle of violence’ with not root cause or context. We should be mindful of Britain’s historical and continuing responsibility for the Nakba (the continuing catastrophe that befell Palestinian people in 1948). We have a responsibility to broaden awareness of the consequences of British policy. We have a responsibility to debunk the mythologies invented by Israel such as ‘Palestine being a land without a people for a people without a land’.

In 2005 over 170 organisations, being fully representative of Palestinian civil society, called upon international organisations and people of conscious all over the world to “impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era”, until Israel complies with international law.

Recently, the Royal Institute of British Architects agreed the boycott of Israeli architect organisations that are complicit in the building of settlements on the Occupied Territories.

Mental Health Workers comprising psychiatric nurses, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists have formed the group ‘UK - Palestine Mental Health Network’ in order to broaden awareness of the dire consequences of the Israeli Occupation for Palestinian’s health, both physical and psychological, and to lend support to their Palestinian colleagues.

Similarly, social workers have formed a support group ‘Palestine-UK Social Work both to broaden awareness and to lend support to their colleagues in Gaza and the West Bank.

 **Violations of International Law committed by the State of Israel**

**Israel Occupation is Illegal**

Israeli Occupation is illegal: laws violated: UN Charter, Article 2(40 &51 (1945)

It is illegal under international law to acquire land by force: Israel annexed land occupied by force during the 1948 and 1967 (lands other than those given by the UN 1947-48 partition plan).

**Illegal Israeli Settlements on Occupied Land**

Laws violated: Geneva Conventions 1V, Article 49(6) (1949)

Immediately following the 1967 war, Israel began building Israeli civilian settlements on Palestinian lands, eventually building over 200 settlements throughout the occupied territories, and settling over 450,000 Israeli civilians in them, displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people from their lands.

**Illegal to take land by force and claim sovereignty**

Laws violated: UN Charter, Article 2(4); Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations…, Principle 1 (1970)

**Illegal Israeli Practice of Ethnic Cleansing**

Laws Violated: Forbidding civilian populations the right to return to their homes following the end of armed conflict is in direct violation of international law and UN resolutions. Geneva Convention 1v, Articles 45, 46 & 49 (1949), UN resolutions 194 (111) (General Assembly: 1948) & 237 (Security Council; 1967).

Since 1910, the Zionists and then Israel have taken Palestinian lands, forced the indigenous populations from their land, and then refused the Palestinian landowners residency or employment on them. Palestinian civilians who wished to return to their homes in Israel and the Occupied Territories were forbidden re-entry (“right of return”) confining them to increasingly smaller areas of Israel and Occupied Territories. Approximately 750,000 Palestinian civilians are being prevented from returning to their homes following the end of fighting in 1948 and 1967.

**Israel Apartheid System is Illegal**

Laws violated: International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1976).

The state of Israel has a formal system of legalised discrimination against Palestinians Arabs which technically fits the official UN definition of Apartheid.

**Massive Violations of Human Rights**

Laws Violated: UN Charter, Article 1 (1945); Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations…, Principles 5 (1970)

Studies by UN, I.C.J., and International H.R. organisations have found that Israel violates the human rights of Palestinian people on a massive scale, including torture, imprisonment without charge or trial, land confiscation, harassment at checkpoints, unwarranted civilian shootings, not punishing Israeli settlers’ crimes against Palestinians, unwarranted disruption of medical care, commerce, employment, free movement, destruction of public and private property, family separation, etc.

**Collective Punishment is Illegal**

Laws Violated: Geneva Conventions 1V, Article 33 (1949); Geneva Conventions (Protocol 1), Article 75(2d) (1977)

In response to Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, Israeli military takes massive action against entire Palestinian communities, for example, destroying entire neighbourhoods of homes, or confiscating communal farmlands, bulldozing homes, blocking off certain areas, or not allowing civilian populations to leave their houses for extended periods of time.

**Violations of U.N. Security Council Resolutions**

Laws Violated: Israel had violated 28 resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (which are legally binding on member-nations U.N. Charter, Article 25 (1945).

**Separation Barrier Ruled Illegal**

Laws Violated: International Court of Justice of 2004, in an advisory capacity, ruled the Israeli separation barriers illegal