



Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa

3 March 2020

Newsletter No 17

Kia ora PSNA Supporter

Victory at Wellington City Council

Last week PSNA had a significant victory when our involvement led to the withdrawal of a resolution on “anti-semitism” from the agenda of the Wellington City Council.

The problem with the resolution was that it was based on the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of anti-semitism which is being used in many US states and some European countries to condemn Palestine Human Rights Activists as anti-semitic if they call for BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel.

We had just five days’ notice of the resolution being on the agenda but were able to mobilise opinion inside and outside the council to generate enough pressure for the resolution to be withdrawn – less than 24 hours before it was due to be debated.

Congratulations to our Wellington Palestine members who activated personal links with several councillors, many of the Wellington City councillors themselves, Labour MP Duncan Webb (who wrote an excellent letter to the mayor and councillors) and special thanks to a new group called “Alternative Jewish Voices” whose opinion piece printed in the DomPost the day before the meeting was pivotal in the council decision.

It would be easy to fill this entire newsletter with just the events of those five days because it was an intense period of activism but it was well summed up in these four items:

- [A media report from Ali Abunimah of Electronic Intifada](#)
- [The opinion piece in the DomPost from “Alternative Jewish Voices”](#)
- The letter PSNA sent to Wellington councillors which outlined the issues and got the ball rolling – reprinted below.
- Duncan Webb’s letter to the mayor and councillors – reprinted below.

Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa

22 February 2019

Andy Foster

Mayor

Wellington City Council

Wellington

Email: mayor@wcc.govt.nz

cc Wellington City Councillors

Kia ora Mr Foster,

Re: Proposed resolution on antisemitism

I'm writing on behalf of the Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa which advocates for Palestinian human rights and which is also strongly opposed to racism in all its forms – including anti-semitism. Our members have protested against racist spray-painting attacks on Jewish graves and synagogues just as we have marched in support of the Islamic community after the horrific events of March 15 last year.

However, there are serious problems with the proposed resolution and we are asking that it be withdrawn from the council agenda and replaced by a resolution which condemns all racism such as islamophobia and white supremacy as well as anti-semitism.

The problem with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-semitism, which is the focus of the proposed resolution, is its use in many US states and some European countries to claim Palestinian human rights activists are anti-semitic when they call for action against Israel until it complies with international law and United Nations resolutions. It is being used as a weapon to deny free speech and freedom of political action to those standing up for the victims of Israel's brutal military occupation of Palestine and ongoing theft of Palestinian land.

The IHRA definition was always intended as a guideline for researchers, not as a prescription for a resolution or legislation. The main drafter of the resolution, Kenneth Stern, has cautioned against its use in resolutions or legislation and is quite emphatic that it must not be misused as is proposed in the Wellington City Council resolution.

Here is what he has to say on the IHRA Wikipedia page:

"The main drafter of the working definition and its examples, [Kenneth S. Stern](#), cautioned against the free speech implications of its use as a legal tool.^[26] He has opposed efforts to enshrine it in legislation^[98] and wrote a letter to members of the US Congress warning that giving the definition legal status would be "unconstitutional and unwise" in December 2016.^[99] In 2011, he co-authored an article about how the 'Working Definition' was being abused in Title VI cases, because it was being employed in an attempt to "restrict academic freedom and punish political speech." In November 2017, Stern explained to the [US House of Representatives](#) that the definition has been abused on various US university campuses. He warned that it could "restrict academic freedom and punish political speech" and

questioned whether definitions created by minority groups should be legislatively enshrined, giving as one of several examples.^[26]

"Imagine a definition designed for Palestinians. If "Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and denying Israel the right to exist" is antisemitism, then shouldn't "Denying the Palestinian people their right to self-determination, and denying Palestine the right to exist" be anti-Palestinianism? Would they then ask administrators to police and possibly punish campus events by pro-Israel groups who oppose the two state solution, or claim the Palestinian people are a myth?"^[26]

He states that the definition was created "as a tool for data collectors in European countries to identify what to include and exclude from their reports about antisemitism, and to have a common frame of reference so that data might be compared across borders."^[98] *He "encouraged the Department of State's first Special Envoy for Antisemitism to promote the definition as an important tool." He used it effectively as the framework for a report on global antisemitism. He added: "approaches to antisemitism that endorse and promote academic freedom are more likely to work, in part because they underscore the academy's goal of increasing knowledge and promoting critical thinking.... approaches that explain academic freedom away or harm it will not only fail, they make the problem worse."*^[26]

We do not want the council to "make the problem worse" and pass a resolution which will be used to attack and demonise those who stand up for international law and United Nations resolutions and work hard for Palestinian human rights.

For example the City Council in Munich, Germany, has used the IHRA definition of anti-semitism to condemn Palestinian activists calling for BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel and have denied the use of city council facilities to Palestinian human rights organisations.

Palestinian activists here in Wellington have already faced attempts by pro-Israeli groups to deny them access to facilities for meetings and events and last year a local school faced a determined attempt to stop me speaking after I had been invited to do so with students at a lunchtime meeting using baseless claims that I was anti-semitic.

These pressures will increase dramatically if this resolution is passed as it is.

Meanwhile Jewish groups in New Zealand and around the world have spoken out strongly against the misuse of the IHRA definition and in 2018 over 40 Jewish groups expressed their support for BDS and attacked attempts to equate calls for boycotts of Israel with anti-semitism.

An open letter from these Jewish groups said in part:

"As social justice organizations from around the world, we write this letter with growing alarm regarding the targeting of organizations that support Palestinian rights in general and the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, in particular. These attacks too often take the form of cynical and false accusations of antisemitism that dangerously conflate anti-Jewish racism with opposition to Israel's policies and system of occupation and apartheid"

Similar sentiments have come from Nobel Peace Prize winner and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu who says the world should call out Israeli policies towards Palestinians as "apartheid" and implement a boycott of Israel. New Zealand has a proud history of standing up in

support of the struggle against South African apartheid and we must do the same against Israeli apartheid.

It is surprising that none of this deep concern and controversy about the misuse of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism was included in the council's background paper on this resolution. It should have been.

It would be tragic if, on the back of the horrific events of March 15 last year, a resolution was passed by Wellington City Council which will be used to deny freedom of speech to members of the Islamic community in Wellington and New Zealand, some of whom are Palestinians, when they speak out against Israeli apartheid.

It would be a dark day for democracy, free speech and human rights if the resolution is passed as it currently stands. It would put the council on the wrong side of history.

We therefore respectfully request that the resolution be withdrawn.

We would be very happy to work with the Jewish Council, the Islamic community and other minority groups on a resolution which condemns the poison of racism in all its forms and calls for community solidarity as the best way to protect all of us.

In solidarity against racism.

Nga mihi mahana,

John Minto
National Chair
PSNA

Scroll down to Letter from Duncan Webb

Letter from Duncan Webb to the Mayor and Wellington City Councillors

Dr Duncan Webb
MP for Christchurch Central



Wellington City Council

February 25, 2020

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

May I congratulate the council on considering adopting a resolution condemning anti-Semitism. Such a move is timely given the recent anti-Semitic activities in Wellington.

First, I wonder if the council might consider broadening the scope of the resolution to extend to all religions including Islamophobia, as well as other racist behaviours. You will appreciate that as the Christchurch Central MP I am acutely aware of the dangers of focusing on only some racist activities.

Second, if a resolution in respect of anti-Semitism is adopted I would encourage the council to make it clear that such a stance is consistent with free speech, including criticism of the activities of the State of Israel. You will be aware that New Zealand supports a two-state solution for the Israel / Palestine conflict and considers the Israeli settlements on the West Bank to be illegal.

Some groups and individuals advocate boycotting goods which come from those settlements and encourage investors to divest any investments in respect of businesses who support the illegal settlements. It is also advocated by some that sanctions should be imposed on Israel in response to breaches of international law. This approach is commonly referred to as BDS.

Advocates of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition assert that this position is anti-Semitic on that basis that it amounts to "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination" and is "applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation". I strongly disagree with the assertion that BDS is anti-Semitic.

Consistent with such criticism of Israel is the fact that the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner has recently issued a list of businesses that are supporting the illegal West Bank Settlements, and that the International Criminal Court has recently launched an inquiry into possible war crimes by Israel in Palestine.

Anti-Semitism in all forms is to be condemned. However caution should be exercised to ensure that WCC does not unwittingly adopt a stance which limits free speech and is inconsistent with the strong and independent voice that New Zealanders have become known for in condemning humanitarian breaches.

Nāku, nā,

Dr Duncan Webb
MP for Christchurch Central



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📱 /DuncanWebbLabour

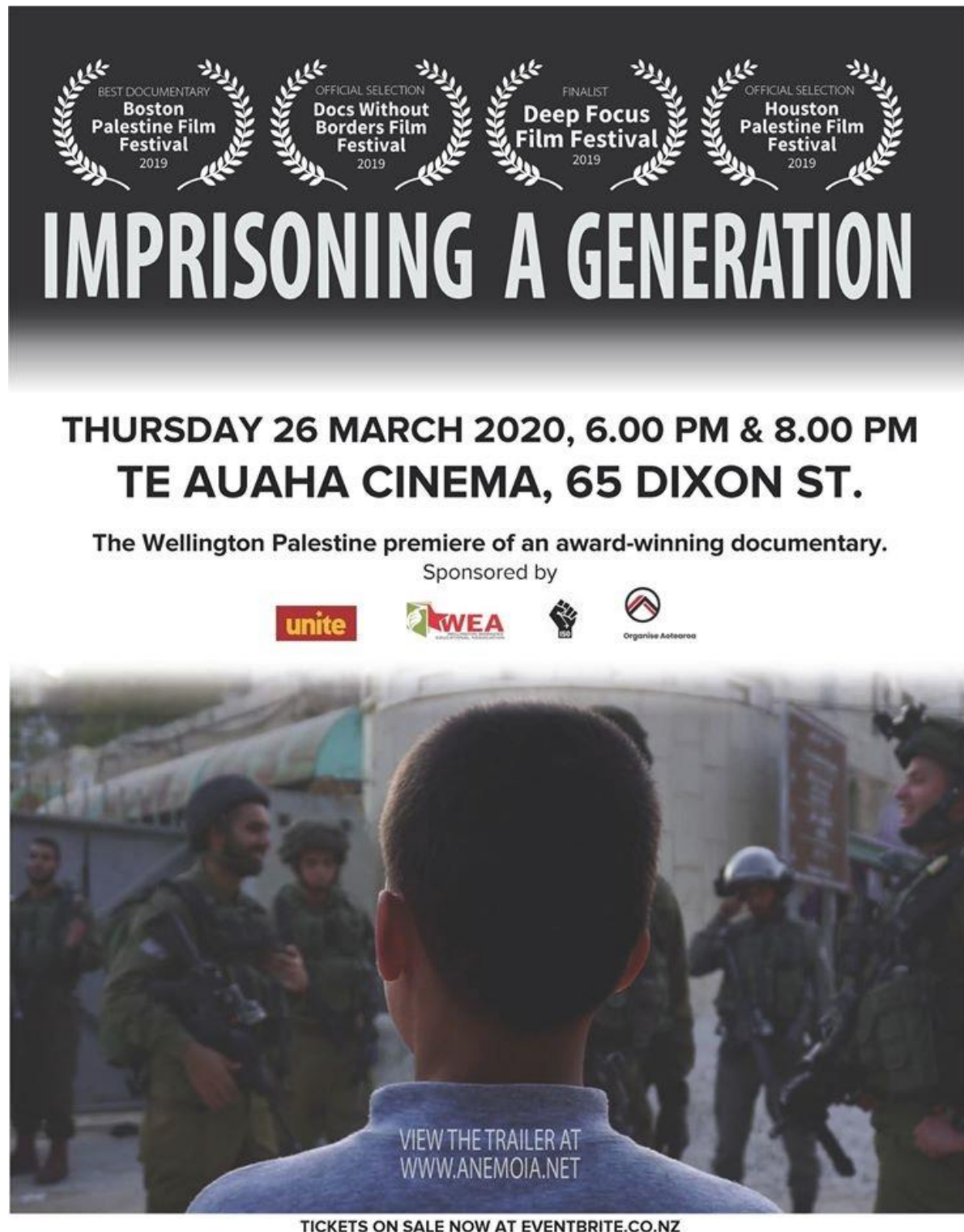
📱 @Duncan_Webb_

Authorised by Dr Duncan Webb, Parliament Buildings, Wellington



Imprisoning a generation – New Zealand premiere

This film will be showing around New Zealand over the next couple of months and we will include details in our next newsletter – here is the notice for the New Zealand premiere. Please send it on to family and friends in Wellington!



BEST DOCUMENTARY
Boston
Palestine Film
Festival
2019

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Docs Without
Borders Film
Festival
2019

FINALIST
Deep Focus
Film Festival
2019





OFFICIAL SELECTION
Houston
Palestine Film
Festival
2019

IMPRISONING A GENERATION

THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2020, 6.00 PM & 8.00 PM
TE AUAHA CINEMA, 65 DIXON ST.

The Wellington Palestine premiere of an award-winning documentary.

Sponsored by

VIEW THE TRAILER AT
WWW.ANEMOIA.NET

TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT EVENTBRITE.CO.NZ

Dances with Death - A new book by Palestinian New Zealander – Tuma Hazou

“Written without rancour, Tuma Hazou’s account of his wartime reporting experiences is an engaging, authentic and rare Palestinian account of recent Middle-East events and of nerve-wracking personal trauma” - Janfrie Wakim - Auckland

Tuma will be travelling to various centres for the launch of his book but in the meantime the book can be purchased from Tuma at gandthazou@gmail.com

NEW TITLE INFORMATION

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Format: Paperback

150 pp, 148mm by 210mm

ISBN: 978-0-473-50605-6

\$25 SOR, trade discounts
available

RELEASE: March 2020

TUMA HAZOU, AUTHOR



When he joined the BBC Arabic Service in London in 1957, at 22, Tuma was the youngest announcer at the BBC.

Dances with Death

Perilous Encounters Reporting on Hostilities in the Turbulent Middle East

A remarkable insight into Middle East affairs and events through the eyes of an accomplished journalist with 40 years experience in the media.

Author Tuma Hazou attributes the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East to the 1917 Balfour Declaration committing Britain to create a 'national home' for Jews in Palestine, at the expense of the Muslim and Christian indigenous majority. The subsequent shambolic Jewish-Arab conflict culminated in establishing Israel in 1948 and the defeat by young Israel of six Arab armies.

Tuma Hazou highlights also the events leading to the 1967 June war, with pre-emptive strikes by Israel against Syria, Egypt and Jordan.

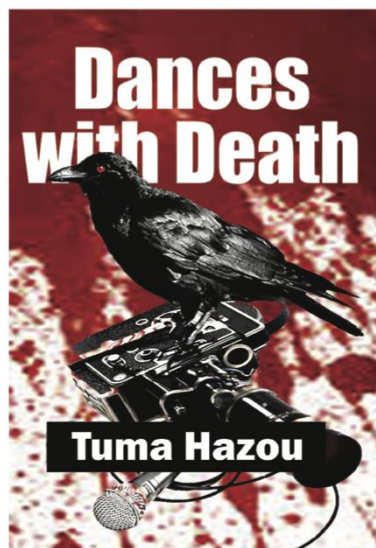
He relates the agonising loss of a colleague when fighting flares up in Jerusalem between the Israelis and the Jordanians.

On yet another fateful day, he goes through 3 'dances with death' during repeated Israeli air raids on Jordan in August 1968. His chilling eye-witness account of the harrowing raids is included in a United Nations Security Council record of the raids, cited in Addendum 2.

The book's addendums add intriguing substance to Tuma Hazou's narrative, such as his wife's role in circumventing a Jordanian law preventing her Kiwi friend Christine from marrying a high-ranking officer who ends up, for only 10 days, as Jordan's Prime Minister at the start of Jordan's 1970 September civil war.

The author reviews what led to the civil war between King Hussein's Jordanian army and the Palestinian guerrillas after a 'leftist' guerrilla faction hijacked a number of civilian planes, forcing them to land in the Jordanian desert before blowing them up. While covering that gruesome 8-day civil war, Tuma was incredibly spared being blown up when he drove over 4 anti-tank mines.

Relocating in 1967 to Amman, in Jordan, the author worked as a radio programmes producer and freelance journalist contributing Middle East coverage to UPI, BBC, NBC TV & Radio News and later as both cameraman and radio reporter with ABC TV & Radio News of New York. He also acted as media advisor to Prince Hassan of Jordan. In 1990 Tuma joined UNICEF as Director of Information for the Middle East and North Africa, working there until 1997 when he took early retirement and settled with his Kiwi wife in New Zealand.



“Written without rancour, Tuma Hazou's account of his war-time reporting experiences is an engaging, authentic and rare Palestinian account of recent Middle East events, and of nerve-racking personal trauma”.

—Janfrie Wakim, NZ Human Rights Activist



King Hussein and Tuma Hazou in 1968, meeting on top of a captured Israeli tank. This is just one of several illustrations that adorn the book.

BDS Conference – and international visitors



Haneen Zoabi

The [Australian-based international BDS conference](#) on 24-26 July this year has three international speakers coming including outspoken Palestinian-Israeli Haneen Zoabi who is a member of the Israeli Knesset. We are excited at the possibility of having her visit New Zealand while she is in this part of the world – we will keep you posted...

New website – we are almost there

Hopefully in the next newsletter we can introduce our new website...

New Merchandise

T shirt Free Palestine End Israeli Occupation medium size only \$22



Kaffiyeh 110 x 110 \$44 + postage



For any of these email bronwensummers@gmail.com or phone 03 55 00 132 txt 0220850161
Alternatively, you can buy merchandise including T-shirts from our website

<http://www.palestinesolidaritynz.net/shop.html>

Are you able to donate a cup of coffee a month to the campaign?

We will need some serious money to make our campaign as effective as possible. For example, we will need somewhere in the vicinity of \$25,000 to bring speakers to New Zealand over the next year and organise large public meetings to help spread the message.

You can help. Are you able to donate a cup of coffee a month to the campaign? In other words, **can you afford to make an automatic payment of \$5 per month to support the Palestinian struggle?** (If you can afford more that would be great!)

Our account details are:

Account name: Palestine Solidarity Network

Account number: 38-9015-0849542-00

Or Pay Pal account: admin@palestinesolidaritynz.net

We are happy to provide a receipt upon request (however, we are not a registered charity so this is not tax-deductible)

More ways you can get involved

- Forward this Newsletter – If you know people who may be interested in this movement, please forward this Newsletter to them.
- Join in local activities in your area monthly Rallies - In Auckland, we hold a monthly Protest at 2.00 pm on the first Saturday of every month. Please consider doing the same in your community. Contact <mailto:admin@palestinesolidaritynz.net?subject=Flags> and Banners if you would like to know where and how to get Flags and Banners

- Help set up a Students for Justice in Palestine groups on your campus
- Tell Your MP your opinions on Divestment and Sanctions of Israel.
- Write Letters to Newspapers – Call Talkback Radio
- Keep in touch with the campaign on social media
 - NZ Palestine Solidarity Network website: <http://PalestineSolidarityNZ.net/index.html>
 - NZ Palestine Solidarity Network Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/671376706283605/
 - NZ Palestine Solidarity Network email: admin@PalestineSolidarityNZ.net
- Keep Updated on our Facebook pages and websites (listed below)

Regional	
Bay of Islands	PSNA Bay of Islands
Whangarei	PSNA Whangarei
Auckland	PSNA Auckland – Tamaki Makaurau
Hamilton	Palestine Human Rights Campaign Waikato
Tauranga	Tauranga Moana 4 Palestine
Napier/Hastings	Aotearoa Standing with Palestine
Palmerston North	PSNA Palmerston North
Wellington	Wellington Palestine
Nelson	Te Tau Ihu (Nelson) Palestine
Christchurch	PSNA Christchurch
Dunedin	Dunedin for Justice in Palestine
Invercargill	PSNA Invercargill

New Zealand Affiliates	
	Boycott Divestment and Sanctions NZ
	Kia Ora Gaza
	Letters for Palestine
	Auckland Peace Action
	Global Peace and Justice Auckland
	Preserved Identity (Palestinian Goods)
	Auckland – Students for Justice in Palestine
	Massey University- Students for Justice in Palestine

John Minto

Spokesperson

Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa