



19 October 2020

Newsletter No 33

We have a new government in the making without the Winston Peters handbrake...but a new progressive policy on Palestine won't happen without pressure so here is something you can do now – with just a few clicks...



Email the Prime Minister j.ardern@ministers.govt.nz, and the leader of the Green Party j.shaw@ministers.govt.nz with this message:

Kia ora Jacinda Ardern kōrua ko James Shaw,

Palestine deserves a fresh up-to-date government policy

Congratulations on the election victory for the Labour Party and the Green Party.

Amongst its many challenges, I hope the new government will quickly develop a fresh approach to support the Palestinian struggle for human rights based on international law and United Nations resolutions.

It is time for New Zealand to do its part to end one of the longest military occupations in modern history, insist on equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine and allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and land.

New Zealand government policy on Palestine has stalled since the National government co-sponsored UN Security Council resolution 2334 in 2016.

It's time for Labour and the Greens to get the policy moving forward again.

Ngā mihi mahana ki a kōrua.

Nā,

(your name)

Important issues we will be taking up with the new government once ministerial posts have been allocated include:

- Arguing for the government to make its relations with Israel dependent on Israel abiding by international law and United Nations resolutions
- Having the Superfund withdraw investments from the 112 companies identified by the UN Human Rights Council as complicit in building and supporting illegal settlement building on Palestinian land
- Requiring the Defence Force to end purchases of military equipment from Israel weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems. (The Defence Force is ignoring Superfund and ACC decisions to withdraw investments from Elbit because of its breaches of international law)
- Arguing for pressure on Israel to end its “administrative detention” (detention without trial) of Palestinians, including Palestinian children

New Plymouth does it again...

Well done to New Plymouth supporters who organised a stall on 10 October. Here is a drawing of the stall from a local supporter along with a real picture...





David Wakim Memorial Lecture

About 80 supporters attended this year's well-received lecture in Auckland on 8 October which was delivered by PSNA National Chairperson John Minto on the topic of "Telling Lies about Palestine"

The transcript of John's talk is [here](#) and the video of the event is [here](#).



David Wakim, peace advocate, pharmacist. Died aged 60

Obituary

It may have been his auspicious birth date August 6, 1945 (Hiroshima Day). Or perhaps it was his Lebanese origins that inspired David Wakim to become a passionate advocate for justice for the Palestinian people.

Nowadays many would agree that this issue holds the key to peace in the Middle East and beyond, but this awareness has come through the tireless work of people like David.

David was an early member of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign, which began in 1982 when Israel had just invaded Lebanon, directly threatening the survival of the Palestinian movement. David frequently faced vilification for putting the other side, the story of Palestinian dispossession of land and human dignity.

UK trade unions describe Israeli practices as apartheid



In a major new development, the United Kingdom Trade Union Congress has described Israeli practices as apartheid and called for action to oppose the proposed Israeli annexation of Palestinian land and the decades long brutal military occupation. More details of the historic resolution are [here](#).

We hope the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions will develop similar policy in the near future.

Election pledges for parliamentary candidates



As we reported in the last newsletter we had positive responses from many aspiring politicians to the three election pledges we sent to all candidates for all parties. The best responses came from the Green Party candidates where most supported all three pledges, including all the current Green Party MPs.

Most Labour Party candidates also got back to us in response with the majority referring us to current Labour Party policy which unfortunately is out of date and seriously inadequate. Here is Labour's policy:

“Labour recognises the right of both the state of Palestine and the state of Israel to exist in accordance with UN Resolutions.

Labour has consistently pursued a principled and balanced approach to the Middle East Peace Process and continues to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is critical for Israel and Palestine to work towards a negotiated, two-state solution. Both sides have legitimate issues and grievances and these have to be addressed through direct negotiations, with the aim of seeing Israel and a Palestinian state existing side by side, in peace and security.

We support Israel’s right to live in peace and security. However, Israeli settlements in occupied territories are in violation of international law and have negative implications for the peace process”

We will have more to say in future newsletters about this policy. Meanwhile here is a reminder of the three pledges we sent to all candidates:

Candidate pledges for Palestine

I support Palestinians’ rights to self-determination in an independent Palestinian state in historic Palestine and I support the application of international law and United Nations resolutions in achieving this goal.

In particular:

- 1. I oppose the illegal annexation by Israel of large areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories under the so called ‘Trump Plan’.***

The Trump Plan is strictly between the US and Israel to bypass well established international law principles and United Nations resolutions for resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. It has been condemned by governments throughout the world with the New Zealand government expressing serious concern. To achieve diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, the Israeli government has recently delayed its annexation plan, but has explicitly not cancelled it.

- 2. I support New Zealand relations with Israel being conditional on Israel’s compliance with its international law responsibilities, in particular the issues of occupation, human rights and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.***

Until Israel complies, I will support the New Zealand government;

- suspending its range of bilateral agreements with Israel*
- prohibiting the importation of products of illegal settlements made in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*
- instructing the Superannuation Fund to disinvest in any Israeli company complicit in settlement activities or land confiscation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*
- ending arms and military equipment purchases from Israeli companies*

Against the background of this monumental injustice (referred to as the “Nakba” - catastrophe - by Palestinians) the Middle East conflict has raged, smouldered and raged ever since.

Parts of the book read like a James Bond thriller – the bullet that went through the back windscreen, past Tuma and a colleague, and out through the front windscreen as the car they were in careered away....

Air attacks from Israeli Skyhawks in Jordan are vividly described and the terror Tuma and others felt as they scrambled for their lives time and time again.

Throughout the book Tuma recalls his encounters with ordinary people who were the victims of Israeli brutality as well as with many higher profile players in the drama. These include his meeting with Jordan’s King Hussein atop a captured Israeli tank in 1968 and his encounters with the courageous and feisty British Labour MP Margaret McKay who fought to have the truth about the Nakba reported around the world.

Several addendums to the book add to the understanding of the conflict – in particular the 1978 US position on the legality of Israeli settlements and a piece from Robert Fisk.

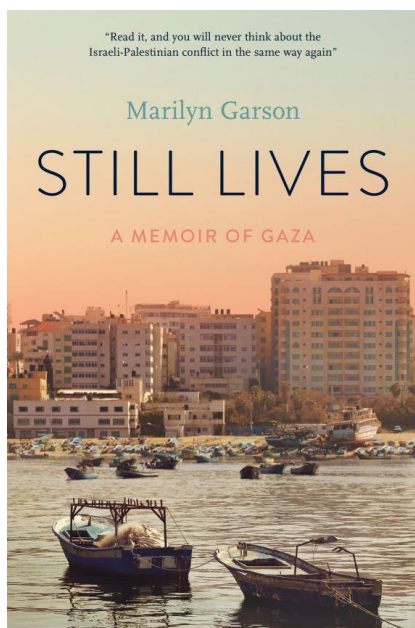
Dances with Death is a unique, lively, first-hand account of the Middle East conflict told with warmth, compassion and a deep humanity.

Tuma and his family live in Auckland. Books can be ordered directly from the author at gandthazou@gmail.com

Book Review – Still Lives – Marilyn Garson

Reviewed by Brandon Johnstone

From New Zealand, the plight of Palestine often becomes an academic discussion of conflicting forces in the region, vying for power or for liberation. Such analyses are important, but often leave out the fundamental reason that we call for freedom for Palestine: the humanity of real people.



Garson’s *Still Lives* recounts her acceptance of a position as economic director of an NGO programme in Gaza, an extremely densely populated territory blockaded and separated from the rest of Palestine by Israeli occupation. So often the stories of Gaza that reach us focus only on the suffering and misery of Palestinians, of their desperate need for aid in the face of an advanced

military threat next door and militarised radicals at home. Garson swats these paint-by-numbers stereotypes aside, walking us through the development of her relationships with Gazans who rely on their neighbours for work, friendship and survival. Readers can see that Gaza is so much more than “aid”, it is community and labour and art and love. Many of the Gazans that Garson comes to know well are computer science students or graduates, whose lack of livelihood is due to the monolithic border wall that towers on the horizon, that separates *us* from *them*.

But *us* and *them* are not so simple for Marilyn Garson. She is a Jew, born in Canada to a Zionist family, her sister a prominent figure in international Zionist circles. She gives us a window into her family life, into the arguments around the dinner table that her politics were forged in, and the way that her family’s Zionism had all but left religion behind, replacing God with ritual and the grand promise of Israel. Her time spent in Cambodia and Afghanistan further strengthened her passion for justice and humanitarianism, but an invitation to work in the Gaza Strip ignited her curiosity: in a neoliberal world where walls were naught but a barrier to the imperative of profit through trade, why did this one still stand, trapping a community and separating families?

So to find out first hand, she moved to Gaza with the mission of creating new avenues for economic activity in a shackled territory. Garson asserts that Gaza is not exactly an “open air prison” as it is so often called. No, in any standard criminal justice system *individuals* are convicted and then placed in prison. Society debates over how its prisons should be run, people are imprisoned as punishment or for rehabilitation. This is not Gaza: as Garson says, “Gaza is a ghetto, an ethnic enclosure where babies are born into open-ended confinement. Whole communities are condemned to carve out their family and collective lives in a ghetto. In essence, a ghetto deems a people to be less than human, deserving of less than the rights of humans.” Foreigners stuck out enough in Gaza as it was, so to protect herself and those around her, she kept her Jewish identity hidden. As Garson explores, the leading party in Gaza, Hamas, does not reflect the neighbourly culture of the Gazan people. If she was suspected of being a Zionist spy, anyone close to her would be in danger of being tarred with the same brush, and summarily arrested - or worse.

The real value of this book, which no news article or academic investigation can offer, is the palpable humanity of real people whose lives intertwine with Garson’s own. The sweeping accusations and generalisations of the Israeli lobby are brushed aside, and we are shown the reality of the lives of innocent people who stubbornly exist, despite the Israeli state’s wish that they did not. This makes it all the more devastating when Garson’s narration shifts pace as the chaos begins. She breaks down the 2014 assault on Gaza into a day-by-day retelling of her team’s desperation to resource citizens displaced by Israel’s air strikes. Hundreds of thousands of people, forced to flee through the streets and find safety in UN shelters as Israel invades by land and air. She shows us her frantic efforts to send up to date notifications to Israel on shelter locations legally protected by international law. And then shows hope slipping away as those protected shelters are bombed anyway, killing innocent non-combatants.

Garson does not show us much of Israel, preferring to explore Palestine’s often unheard character, though she minces no words asserting that “Israel is a country with ethnically determined rights and life prospects.” Since Garson left Gaza, Israel’s government has become more comfortable openly showing itself as right-wing ultranationalist in nature. It has allied itself with the politics of Trump’s administration, itself teetering on the edge of far-right and neo-fascism. Closer to today, after the book was published, we have witnessed the farcical normalisation of relations between UAE, Bahrain and Israel: three nations, not at war, pretending they are forging peace while dealing in economic gain and military weaponry at Palestine’s expense. Palestine’s prospects are not improving, though the tide of public opinion shows signs of seeing through Israel’s imperialist facade.

Still Lives teaches us that Gaza and broader Palestine will stand up for each other, and stand up for justice, even when the world turns its back. Marilyn Garson stands with Palestine. So should we all.

You can purchase this from your local bookshop or order your eBook [here](#) or order a physical copy at www.marilyngarson.com

Important on-line stories

Pro-Israeli blacklists [here](#)

The ties that bind in Britain [here](#)

An Environmental Nakba [here](#)

Attacks on Olive harvesters [here](#)

More illegal settlement housing [here](#) and [here](#)

2021 Palestine calendars for sale [here](#)

School is the latest Israeli demolition target [here](#)

Boycott AXA – Insuring Israeli apartheid [here](#)

Merchandise for Sale

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 at 2.00 pm on the first Saturday of every month. Please consider doing the same in your community. Contact Secretary@PSNA.nz 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
 - ❖ Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa (PSNA) website: www.PSNA.nz
 - ❖ PSNA Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/671376706283605/
 - ❖ PSNA email: Secretary@PSNA.nz
- The Palestine Human Rights Campaign produces the *In Occupied Palestine* newsletter. It is a regular daily newsletter on the daily situation in Palestine, compiled by Leslie Bravery and emailed to subscribers. If you would also like to become a subscriber, please contact Leslie at “sumud1 @ outlook. com” (remove the spaces to use as an email address) for further information.
- Keep Updated on our Facebook pages and websites (listed below)

Regional and Affiliates

Regional

Bay of Islands	PSNA Bay of Islands	email
Whangarei	PSNA Whangarei	Facebook
Auckland	PSNA Auckland – Tamaki Makaurau	Website
Hamilton	Palestine Human Rights Campaign Waikato	Facebook
Tauranga	Tauranga Moana 4 Palestine	Facebook
Napier/Hastings	Aotearoa Standing with Palestine	Facebook
Palmerston North	PSNA Palmerston North	email
New Plymouth	PSNA New Plymouth	email
Wellington	PSNA Wellington	email
Nelson	Te Tau Ihu (Nelson) Palestine	Facebook
Christchurch	PSNA Christchurch	Facebook

Dunedin	Dunedin for Justice in Palestine	Facebook
Invercargill	PSNA Invercargill	email

Affiliates

- [Boycott Divestment and Sanctions NZ](#)
- [Kia Ora Gaza](#)
- [Letters for Palestine](#)
- [Auckland Peace Action](#)
- [Global Peace and Justice Auckland](#)
- [Preserved Identity \(Palestinian products\)](#)
- [Auckland Uni– Students for Justice in Palestine](#)
- [Massey Uni- Students for Justice in Palestine](#)
- [Wellington Palestine](#)