

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM, 25.11.13

**Vanesa Fuentes, Iain Macdonald, Albie O'Neill,
Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign**

see [http //www.scottish psc.org.uk](http://www.scottishpsc.org.uk)

Sheila asked the panel what would the policy of a Scottish government be on Palestine?

Allan argued that the retreat of the SNP away from their former more up-front support for the Palestinian struggle, to now welcoming Israeli ambassadors and government promoters, reflected their retreat into acceptance of the existing world order, marked by last year's conference decision to back NATO. Once the SNP leadership had opposed military intervention in Kosova, and later in Iraq. Now they praised the role of Scottish forces in Afghanistan and Libya. This highlighted why we needed an independent Radical Independence Campaign.

Donny raised the comparison of Israel with South Africa. The main difference was that Palestinian Arabs formed a minority within Israel, whilst Black South Africans formed a large majority in Apartheid South Africa. Palestinian Arabs were excluded from most areas of work, whereas Black South Africans formed the key element in South African workforce. This is why the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign was even more important.

Donny also talked about the now dashed prospects of support for the Palestinians which had originally been raised by the Arab Spring.

Margaret emphasised the need for protest action around G4S, which was sponsoring the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow next year.

Margaret also outlined the plight of the residents of Shahada Street in Hebron, who were even denied the use of their own front doors.

Pat argued that Edinburgh RIC should organise a joint public meeting with the SPSC in the Spring. She praised the hard work done by the SPSC. It was now much easier to campaign on the streets in support of the Palestinian struggle, than it had once been.

Talat emphasised the importance of trade union work. There had been a huge shift within her union, the ULU. Quite recently anybody raising the issue of support for Palestine had been accused of anti-semitism. Now the ULU had an official pro-Palestine position.

Talat also argued that the precedent for the BDS campaign lay in the anti-Apartheid South Africa boycott campaign, which had been a powerful adjunct to other forms of struggle, particularly amongst the workforce there.

Vanesa, Iain and Albie in reply said that the accusations of anti-semitism were the last and increasingly discredited response of the Zionists.

Vanesa had been one of the 5 defendants charged by the state with racially aggravated breach of the peace, when protesting against the Israeli government-backed Batsheva Dance Company. The judge had ruled that protesting against the actions of a state certainly did not constitute racist behaviour. Furthermore, there were Jewish people who were pro-Palestinian and gave their support to the SPSC.

However, Zionist organisations continued to exert strong pressure. The Israeli government was paying US students to try and rebut all anti-Israeli material found on-line.

In reply to the question about what an independent Scotland's policy should be on Palestine, it was quite clear. There should be recognition of Palestine as a nation and the ending of the Israeli apartheid state, However, what was needed to achieve this was a political will.

When taking on G&S you were up against a massive corporation. They were even there in the Marriot Hotel in Glasgow where the RIC conference was held on Saturday! However such action would be considered by the SPSC.

One of the early tasks of the SPSC was to set up a trade union solidarity group.

Already there are many people in Scotland who boycott Israeli goods. It was now necessary to get more support behind the other elements of the BDS campaign. Activists in Norway and Canada were ahead in this respect.

The SPSC in Edinburgh had regular meetings whilst there were also national weekends away, as well as conferences. The emphasis at the weekends away was mainly political to ensure that the SPSC continued to campaign on a principled basis.