

Script of short 'speech' at vigil on 28th March

Speaking on behalf of NPSCG

NPSCG meets regularly and is active in a number of ways and people are welcome to join and to visit our stand today.

One way is by promoting support of the boycott of Israeli goods. In line with this there is an action today outside Tesco's in the city, to coincide with national action also, encouraging shoppers to avoid buying goods from Israel and illegal West Bank settlements.

Why is this important? For years the Israeli economy has depended on Palestinian labour, but Palestinians have received little reward for this. In addition they are almost unable to export in their own right or only if produce bears the Israeli stamp and is also heavily taxed. Internally the Palestinian economy can hardly function because of restrictions on movement, lack of money, heavy taxes and many other factors so acute poverty is widespread. Israel on the other hand has benefitted from a very favourable trade agreement with the EU.

For years, ever since its foundation in 1948, Israeli governments have been in breach of Human Rights and international law. This has never been more true than now with the war on Gaza, the siege of Gaza, the illegal settlements programme around Jerusalem and in the illegally occupied West Bank, the apartheid wall, torture of detainees and many others. The parallels with the cruel and illegal apartheid regime in South Africa are many and close and have been commented upon by many also including Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently.

One major action which many people joined here against the regime in South Africa was the boycott and this was pivotal in bringing it down. It sent a clear message that the regime was unacceptable and united people here and around the world with those struggling for human rights in South Africa itself.

The same can and should be done with Israel and Palestine. Israel must be told that it cannot go on behaving as it does if it wishes to be recognised as a legitimate state and Palestinians, who now support the boycott, need to have the support and solidarity of people here.

NPSCG invites people here to join the boycott and also to support Palestinians by buying Palestinian olive oil and olive oil products which are of excellent quality and which ensure the survival of precious olive groves, secures jobs for Palestinians and gives strength to Palestinian families and infrastructure.

It should be noted that Campaign Against the Arms Trade is also conducting a boycott campaign which we endorse and which highlights among others the need for a boycott of companies supplying arms to Israel and calls for an embargo on all arms to Israel until it complies with human rights and international law.

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