

TWINNING AND FRIENDSHIP UNDER AN APARTHEID STATE



REPORT FROM THE BRITAIN
PALESTINE FRIENDSHIP AND
TWINNING NETWORK ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
18 MARCH 2023

[TWINNINGWITHPALESTINE.NET](https://twinningwithpalestine.net)



WE ARE NOT ALONE: KEEPING FAITH WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE



Sir Vincent Fean, Co Patron of the Network

Sir Vincent said that he was honoured to be at the conference and thanked the Derby and Derbyshire group for hosting and organising it, the tireless committee of the network and Madeleine McGivern who animates us. He developed three points:

1. The Palestinian people are not alone, and they have right on their side.
2. We in the Network are not alone – we have many friends and allies.
3. He gave some examples of where we can make a difference and are actually doing so. There is hope, despite the current bloodshed and pain.

Palestinians are not alone. Palestinians are loved in the Arab and Islamic world, as we saw at the World Cup. People on the street know their story and support their search for justice. They are loved by the people in this room, and by many thousands across the UK – people of all faiths and none – people who sense that the Palestinian cause is morally right.

The Palestinians have the law on their side, though the law only has teeth if states give it teeth. Next year we shall learn what the International Court of Justice makes of an occupation, said to be temporary, which has lasted 56 years. Our government should heed that opinion and act on it, with others. There are Israelis of good will – Breaking the Silence, Ir Amim, Machsom Watch, Mchael Sfard (taking Palestinian appeals cases to the Israeli Supreme Court), Peace Now. They too need support as the Israeli government bears down on them in the same way it attacked six Palestinian NGOs in 2021.

We in the Network are not alone – and we are growing in numbers as a Network thanks to the hard work of Madeleine and the committee. Our allies are too numerous to mention, but here are some of them: young people, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the unions – including UNITE, the NEU and the Fire Brigades Union. MPs across the political spectrum, including Pauline Latham who will join us this afternoon. Human Rights NGOs – Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the faith groups: Muslim, Christian, liberal Jewish and those of no faith with a moral compass. Strong charities like Oxfam, Medical Aid for Palestinians, St John's eye hospital, Save the Children, Amos Trust. The charity I volunteer with – The Balfour Project – aims to raise awareness here of Britain's responsibility historically for this mess, this injustice, and to urge the British – civil society, parliament, government – to act to advance equality. The next Balfour Conference Project, on the afternoon of 17th May, is about Palestinian rights, entitled Human Rights in Palestine: Responsibility and Accountability.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

It's hybrid – live in Church House, Westminster and on Zoom with Baroness Warsi, human rights rapporteur Francesca Albanese, Shadow Middle East Minister Bambos Charalambous MP and Omar Shakir, who was expelled from Jerusalem by the Israeli government after writing the Human Rights watch report on apartheid, which came shortly before the Amnesty International report we will hear about from Gary Eitle. Since the Balfour Declaration centenary in 2017, the Balfour Project has got bigger, louder and better at giving voice to Palestinians and highlighting the injustices they endure with such resilience.

Where are we in the Network making a difference? In our different ways we are all giving Palestinians a platform, a voice, and helping to create friendships. The Network does what it says on the tin: Friendship and Twinning. A prime example is the Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association with Nandita Dowson, here today, enabling Palestinian women to tell us their own stories in their own words. Exemplary. There are other examples: Visits to Palestine have resumed: important for the economy and, as we know, 'Seeing is Believing'. Pilgrimages, Olive Harvesting, home rebuilding – they all matter greatly. Food festivals (Hastings al-Mawasi in Gaza), with local PSC school contacts and links. It's so important to reach the next generation both here and there. Tree planting. Football kits for children in Aida camp (Kennington Bethlehem), computers to children in Tubas from Bradford on Avon Friends of Palestine, gas masks to Sabastiya from Hanwell – because they were needed. Advocacy initiatives – letters to MPs eg to stop the Tel Aviv embassy move, El Masfer Yatta home demolitions, Sheffield Labour Friends of Palestine contributing to make Sheffield an apartheid free zone. These are just a few examples. Each of you here has something to add to them. You ARE making a difference.

To conclude:

Palestinians give us hope by their dignity and resilience under systematic oppression. They are not alone: more people are becoming aware of the injustice and seek an end to it. Governments are often the last to change, but we have to believe that change is coming. We in the Network are not alone. There is a ground movement here in the UK, aware of our past responsibility for injustice today and determined to do better. The movement needs to grow in influence, but it has right on its side. We in the Network are part of that wider movement. The work we do, the time we spend, the effort is worth it. You are all, each and every one, doing the right thing. Making a difference. Keep Going!



twinningwithpalestine.net

KEYNOTE SPEECH - 'ISRAEL – AN APARTHEID STATE' GARRY ETTLE, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty published a deeply researched report about Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians in February 2022 – [Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Report & Resources | Amnesty International UK](#) and cited many examples of Israeli apartheid including events recorded for over 18 years by country co-ordinators of international volunteers, including home demolitions and attacks during the olive harvest. This was the fourth report published on this theme, following others by B'tselem, Human Rights Watch and the UN and it was vetted by international apartheid lawyers. Some of this experience of apartheid was illustrated in a video from Umm al-Khair demonstrating what this means for Palestinians living in the South Hebron Hills – A Boy, a Shepherd and Bulldozers in the Holy Land. (If you would like the link to the video please email BPFTN).

The report covers Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank, Jordan and the diaspora without the right of return. Its forensic research describes a systematic publicly avowed system of domination of the Palestinian people. The means by which this is carried out can be considered in four main categories: Fragmentation, Dispossession (including by the use of military control), Denial of nationality, residence and family life and restrictions on the right of political participation – all of which are explored in depth in the 300 page report.

There has been a six-year campaign to get nations to acknowledge apartheid from Israel. The next phase is to act on the knowledge that has been gathered about this crime. The UK government don't agree and dislike the word apartheid. Labour and the Liberal Democrats prefer the term Systematic Discrimination. It is likely that there will be a general election next year, so it will be important to work with MPs who are supportive or slightly open to considering this issue and engaging with them in our local groups.

Garry's other suggestions for the Network members were:

- To read the report, which has a brief summary – and use it
- There is an online course of 90 minutes re apartheid (see earlier link)
- There is an online activist briefing re working with MPs
- Members can act on cases eg with individual Palestinians

People often ask what difference this will make to bring about change? But you never know what might cause the change – it could be anything – eg government inside Israel, people becoming more politicized, climate change or many other things. If the left wing in Israel wish to progress, they will have to engage with the Palestinian 20% of the population.

Comments from members:

- Some had been part of an international group planting 180 trees in Umm al-Khair the previous week
- Palestinian women with us reported repeated demolitions and rebuilding by the villagers
- The US position is still of strong support for Israel but there is still healthy support for Palestine in the US also, including from some politicians. Supporters take a lot of flack.
- The intense situation in Israel at present may just be the crack that allows change
- Israel has been seen as the only democracy in the Middle East – but if that changes??

PALESTINIAN VOICES



We were delighted to be joined by four of the ten women currently travelling around Britain as part of the Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association's (CADFA's) Project Hope. Enabling Palestinian women to share their own voices directly with British folk. Hadeel from Silwan, Sarah from Issa wiyeh, Mays from Hebron and Suheir from Beit Leid in Tulkarem took it in turns to tell us of their life experiences

The women had been welcomed in many places and welcomed the opportunity to speak to us clearly. *Hadeel* – when she was 9 years old, she saw her friend of the same age shot and began to read more about Palestine, learn about her own identity and help. At school in Deir Yassin a lot was taught about their origins. But Palestinian teachers were not allowed to teach in Israel and the students became activists in support of their teachers. She became a social worker in SW Jerusalem – not the same way as you in Britain have social workers – it was mostly about work with young women, increasing their empowerment and relationship with the land. They didn't choose this life – it was forced upon Palestinian children who don't live the same life as other children. Who may be killed by soldiers as they play games. They played different stories – at summer camps the children would play wedding where the groom was killed by the Israelis. Of the thirteen neighbourhoods in Silwan, six are under demolition orders.



Sarah, from Jerusalem: The new government is making life even worse. There is collective punishment, arrestment of children who then suffer in prison and have ongoing mental health problems. Her brother was arrested twice – when he was aged 11 and 13. After prison his life was a different kind of prison as it transferred to house arrest then village arrest. Major legal blocks if a woman from the Jerusalem marries a man from the West Bank. Separate ID cards, so they cannot be together. She knew a man from Jerusalem going to meet his wife on the West Bank who was killed at the check point. This is also an issue for medical care – if a Palestinian needs chemotherapy, they need to get it in Jerusalem. But, because of the wall and the separate roads, a journey that would have taken minutes now takes hours. Thanks to CADFA – Palestinian people need support and international voices. And more activism.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

Mais from Hebron, who is studying international law, works for Defence for Children International, which was last year called a 'terrorist organisation by the Israeli state – along with five others. Focus on human rights. She also volunteers as a tour guide in Hebron eg Shuhada Street, (previously the main street of Hebron, which Palestinians are not allowed access to), which only Israelis and internationals are allowed to walk through (see Tadhamon choir video later in report). She lives an apartheid life where the Israeli settlements are in the centre of the city. And where Palestinians are able to walk, settlers throw rubbish on them and harass them. However well the soldiers know that they are local people about their daily business, they are not allowed to cross. She told us of a wedding where the bride had to cross the checkpoint as her fiancé was not allowed to her home because it was in Hebron. She lives in fear of her younger brothers being killed – a regular happening – and spoke of boys killed at random in Jenin recently – twelve year old Omar while playing and a five year old boy shot from a civilian car, from which the occupants transferred to a military car once out of town.



Suheir from Beit Leid, Tulkarem near Nablus thanked us for their welcome. She told us that no Palestinian family had not lost a member – to prison or death or a family home. She had grown up in Jordan and their family had only just returned to Palestine when he was killed. She works at the hospital in Nablus where there are now daily lockdowns and attacks. Two weeks ago, while working in the hospital they had a midday 'code blue' because of an IDF shooting in the city. It was a 72 year old man – and the emergency doctor who tried to save him was his son. But he was dead. He had been shopping in the market. Eleven Palestinians were killed that day in Nablus. It is a daily expectation. She lives in Beit Leid and travels daily to the hospital for work. The journey normally takes 15 – 20 minutes but now only three cars per hour are allowed through the checkpoint.

Though she finishes work at 4.00pm, the alternative route (for Palestinians) takes 3 – 5 hours to get home. She is now beginning to work remotely on some days. She is also continuing her studies at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah, but it is difficult to get to lectures and exams. Her friend, who is a doctor at the hospital, has to leave so early and returns home so late that she is unable to spend much time with her children. Palestinian education is valued and encouraged. 60% of university students are women, but may have to cease because of the obstructions – harassment, checkpoints etc. Palestinians are entitled to live the same lives as everyone else in the world.



NETWORK DEVELOPMENT - MADELEINE MCGIVERN

Madeleine has been of tremendous support to the Network and lifted our presence and membership in the three years that she has been working with us. For which we are very grateful to her and also to the generous funding by Munib Masri which supported her contract with us. [Please listen to Madeleine's presentation here.](#)



Last chance before she leaves us (hopefully temporarily) on maternity leave. We are seeking funding possibilities to retain her services – and will welcome any suggestions from Network members.



BREAK OUT GROUP FEEDBACK

Group 1 - Highlights:

- visits to Palestine, delegation visit here now, delegation visit planned for Sept 2023.
- FB group attracting a lot of members from all over the world.
- Serious interest and support from Unite the Union (Shu'fat)
- Very successful fundraiser – Brent, with high profile performers
- Using zoom a lot to connect regularly with group in Palestine.
- Getting back to live events
- Pendle Mayor and Council very supportive of the link with Beit Leid
- Selling embroidery at various events (made in Shu'fat)

Difficulties:

- Keeping group UK members engaged during Covid, (things improving now)
- Sometimes hit and miss connecting to Palestine, esp Gaza
- Pressure on the main link in Palestine – often it is one or two people Can be stressful – are we expecting too much of them?
- Palestinians have reported missing having as many international visits as in the past.

Involving Palestinians in the running of your group:

- Some partnership planning in terms of aims/activities of the group so we respond to needs

Campaigning etc.:

- Public educational events – live and on zoom.
- Linking with local Trade Union Council
- Writing to and meeting MPs
- Local church

Links with Pro Palestine groups in your area:

- Yes: PSC, mosques
- No educational links – but many are keen.

BPFTN: maybe host a zoom mtg every 3 months?

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

Group 2

Things that members of the group had found effective included:

- Booking a slot at Speakers Corner in Lichfield to inform local people of the situation in Palestine. Nottingham PSC does the same.
- Local activism
- Oxfam sales of Palestinian oils and other foodstuffs
- Stafford had a successful fundraiser when 50 people were sponsored to walk on Cannock Chase. The money funded planting many olive trees in Beit Leid and they plan to bring two visitors over in September
- Visits were thought to be very positive experiences by all – though visa problems persist
- West Wales has a tiny geographically spread-out group – the committee members and supporters pay small monthly contributions to fund our support for a rehabilitation centre in Jenin. Developing a twinning relationship based on tree planting and learning about each other between the UNRWA school in the Jenin refugee camp and a local high school, with UNRWA approval. Also some financial support to the Jenin cultural centre to support basic costs to continue something positive in the camp.
- Retaining personal friendships with Palestinian friends we have met and or stayed with there
- Volunteering with CADFA, who have amazingly delivered 40 visits/tours of Palestinians to Britain – including those who spoke to us this morning.
- Home rebuilding – massive impact on the volunteers as well as those whose homes are rebuilt. Strong relationships evolve over the two week working group time, local people are employed and use their skills
- Fundraising for playgrounds in Al Walaja - £18,500 needed.
- Challenge by son to provide £5k for getting fit enough to run 5k has been met – except that he wants her to run faster! Fastest time ever in Bethlehem marathon last week!
- Exchange visits
- Maintaining personal contact with friends in Palestine via Facetime, WhatsApp etc. Also provided instant news to share with others
- Engaging with those who are not informed – some have done by approaching groups who seek speakers eg U3A, Soroptimists, Rotary, WI, schools etc offering illustrated talks.

Group 3

Question: Do you involve your Palestinian Partners in the running of your group?

- Until recently, we only had one person as our main link, a local headmaster. Recognition of Friendship Link by Council has extended contacts to Tubas councillors, but still quite narrow.
- Haven't got one, our link is primarily with a family.
- Our link is with the Palestine Trauma Centre - We now have Zoom meetings with them including meetings with children since Covid, whereas previously we only had one connection via Mohammed, so in fact, this has improved our connections and the experiences we hear are real eye-openers.
- Oxford (twinned with Ramallah) had found that their main contacts were with middle-classes. They have expanded their contacts to refugee camp and the women's centre which is supported by UNRWA. They interact with people who have suffered and also connect to Trade Unions. Oxford has the support of their councillors, and connect them to women in the refugee camp. Creating links and arranging visits with the Oxford botanical garden is useful. Also contacts with Bethlehem botanical garden.
- Quaker group who have a project with Zaytoun. They have raised money which goes to a women's cooperative as well as supporting school of 5-12 year olds.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

- Organised musical pilgrimage, including to Daish camp.
- It has been difficult to set up educational links. Focusing on the fact that both Derby and Hebron have well reputed Nursing schools.
- Have found Zoom important for improving links, though arranging trips to Palestine, or for Palestinians to UK is important.

Does your group do any campaigning / lobbying?

- Yes, most of our activity is campaigning (rather than twinning)
- We are part of PSC in Nottingham
- Balfour Project - advocacy gives an opportunity to change things. While recognition of borders is not supported by some, it would mean that UK would treat Palestine as a country. Need to press Labour party on their policy which is to recognise Palestine

Group 4

- Encountering difficulties with establishing links with local schools. various ideas put forward but the main theme being it's important to show Palestinians and their families as just wanting a normal life and being able to go to school, work and live 'normal' lives.
- The value of sports events such as the recent Marathon, 10km, and 5km, held in Bethlehem, and football and encouraging as well as supporting the active participation and advertising of these type of events just as every other country and town have the freedom to do.



'75 YEARS OF AL NAKBA: WHY WE RIDE IN 2023' – THE BIG RIDE FOR PALESTINE



Thank you to Ellen Logan for this inspiring and informative talk about the origins of The Big Ride for Palestine, the reasons why it is so effective in engaging people, as they cycle different routes in the UK every year, wearing Palestinian colours and flags and speaking to local people wherever they are. This presentation is one of the three this afternoon that demonstrate the amazing creativity that different people and groups have brought to their support for the Palestinian people. Hopefully giving us all ideas for our own groups.

In 2023 they will cycle from Swansea – Newport – Cardiff on 3rd – 6th of June. Everyone is welcome to join at any stage – just contact them. And engage locally if anywhere near these places!

[Watch her presentation here](#); [watch a video about The Big Ride here](#) and [find out more here](#). You can sign up to follow them for news from the website.

twinningwithpalestine.net

TADHAMON SINGERS ON TOUR IN PALESTINE' – CAROLYN LEARY & JANET WOOD



In the West Bank. Being seen out of Hebron at gunpoint, they didn't miss a note. Set up after their Sheffield MP visited Nablus, they go on tour, sharing their experiences and singing with Palestinian people. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Jordan Valley, Sabastiya, Hebron. [Watch the link here](#) to see Carolyn and Janet tell and show their remarkable journey. Singing 'This is Home' in English and Arabic, using the power of song as an expression of solidarity, making connections. They are also supporting Dahlia, a music and psychology student, a rapper who features in their video!

HEBRON INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE NETWORK

Hamed Qawasmeh, the director of the Hebron International Resource Network (HIRN), a fifteen year old grass roots organisation was prevented from joining us as he was on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, but Amara, another volunteer in this community engagement and delivery organisation in Bethlehem and Hebron, described how they work. A true co-operative, solidly grounded in working with and for the human rights of the most 'at risk' Palestinian people. Hamid Qawasmeh has been a human rights supporter all his life, so he began going into communities to work with their most 'at risk' people including in the old city of Hebron. His approach was to initiate mutual aid grass roots work – community led, no bureaucracy, the mission being to keep people on their own land.

They have shared many projects with the local populations eg:

- Education is very important and they have supported 45 students to West Bank and other universities, a few abroad
- Water and electricity – they have many programmes including solar PV, wind turbines, connecting small rural farms to the grid in area.
- Water – critical for agriculture, animals etc especially in the summer and often disrupted by drought and settlers
- Agriculture, as above plus planting and harvesting, especially olives and strawberries
- Building schools in rural communities where the children walk 6-7 km to school
- Transportation of children to school – which the Derby network group has supported them with

The main aim is to help people to remain self-sufficient where they are. Specific projects:

1. Protection of a Bethlehem municipality school with 40 students built in 2017 faced with demolition. The army demolished it, the community rebuilt it. It is still under threat, though they own the land, and they have taken it as far as the first supreme court. As it is now under a 60 day demolition threat, the only thing they have left is international support – please write to your representatives to ask them to support.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

2. Almost none of what they have built has been demolished, despite being illegal under Israeli law as built in area C. This includes a school in the South Hebron hills, built in response to a letter asking for support to build an all-girls school as this conservative community would not allow girls to attend school with boys as they approached maturity. Built in 2014, it has been a great success and increased the girls high school attendance by 340%. Of the first graduates in 2019, five out of nine went to college. It now has a science lab and microscopes are being bought by a donor.

HIRN continue to work in support of Palestinians to live in dignity on the land they have lived on for generation. They are an all—volunteer group with many international donors and supporters. They have a volunteer house – please visit! You can visit the [website here](#) and email Samara, the speaker here: samara787@gmail.com



KEYNOTE SPEAKER MRS PAULINE LATHAM OBE MP FOR MID DERBYSHIRE

Mrs Latham welcomed us to her constituency and valued the importance of a network of 40+ friendship groups doing very important work. She wanted to focus on how to be effective as a parliamentarian regarding Palestine. All the time she has been in Parliament she has been a member of the Overseas Select Committee, which decides how overseas aid is disbursed and allows MPs to see for themselves what is going on all over the world. She had been to Palestine three times and believes that nothing is better than seeing it for yourself. The takeover from the Foreign Office by DFID had brought changes and funding is reduced – was 1.2% of Gross National Income but now only 0.7%. Too little. Much of this is spent in the UK, supporting refugees, but this leaves major gaps for others such as UNRWA.

Last year she visited Shu'fat and Sheikh Jala and explored education and primary care. She saw how Palestinians had to fight through the courts, risking losing all they had to prevent their home from being demolished. And then they had to pay for the demolition themselves – which at least enabled them to remove their property first. She imagined how awful it would be to live with that hanging over your head – in Jerusalem and the West Bank also. This is a fragrant breach of international law, recognised as such by the UK government and an obstacle to peace and the possibility of a two-state solution. She had met the PM and ministers to discuss the situation of ordinary Palestinians. It is inconceivable unless you see for yourself the impact on these people, the need for basic human rights including health care.

She also met with Breaking the Silence, which was a shocking eye-opener. The new government is a major cause for concern.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

She had also met with Dr Hussam Zomlot, Palestine Ambassador to the United Kingdom, hoping for a more active parliamentary group engaged with Palestinian human rights. She had been disappointed in the new Israeli Government – 2022 had been the deadliest year for Palestinians since the 2015 tipping point. UK parliamentarians are not well informed. She is meeting Flick Drummond MP to explore options. The Israelis have spent a lot of money taking people to see what they choose to show them in Israel/Palestine.



There are lavish dinners, powerful lobbies in the Commons and the Lords and nobody dares speak out against them as they will be shouted down and there are many Jewish MPs. It is very hard to work out how supportive MPs can be effective. The Conservative Friends of Israel and the Labour Friends of Israel both work very hard and have big resources.

Mrs Latham and another MP are trying, with Dr Zomlot, to organise visits to Palestine for newer MPs so that they can see the Palestinian situation for themselves. It is important for network members to engage with our parliamentarians.

Layla Moran's Bill (Private Members Bill Palestine Statehood (Recognition)) before parliament the previous day, will not be supported. It is low on the list and parties do not support opposition bills. Pauline Latham did succeed with a PMB which has resulted in child marriage prevention. Much more communication is needed from us and others to our parliamentarians – talk to them, invite them to meet you or to join a meeting – personal communication works best – not mass emails. Personal relationships are more likely to work. Get the local Palestinian diaspora to talk to our MPs at our meetings as part of a plan to begin the redress the balance re informing our politicians accurately. We need to turn the tables so that they see the hardship of the lives of Palestinians. Talk reasonably to MPs, engage with them. We need to make a balanced debate. She will do her bit with MPs.



FINAL KEYNOTE SPEECH: MR AHMED ALNA FOR DR HUSAM ZOMLOT



Unfortunately, Dr Zomlot was still engaged in Gaza but had arranged for an excellent deputy, Mr Ahmed Alna, to speak on his behalf. Ahmed Alna apologised on behalf of Dr Zomlot, who appreciates what the BPBTN does, but is dealing with pressing matters in Palestine. He thanked the network for their work, which the ambassador values and gave us much to think about in terms of the current situation in Palestine & Israel, the rules-based world order, what we can do in support of Palestinian human rights and more. [You can watch him speak here.](#)

GROUP DISCUSSIONS OPEN FORUM

Some key themes experienced by the groups were fed back:

Visas for visitors – this is a continuing difficulty and any help and support groups can give others will be values. Vincent Fean advised us of the current process and the chairman suggested making maximum use of our private Facebook page. It would be good to have some successful template letters.

Penny and Nandita (CADFA) were interested in getting a group to share skills etc.

Many people still don't recognise our role in causing this situation.

It is essential that we maintain hope as we work and share with individuals and communities.

IN CONCLUSION

The chairman, Tony Pearce, thanked Ahmed for his presentation, along with all the speakers and the Derby and Derbyshire Hebron group for their wonderful hospitality.

The Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network is very grateful to all of these wonderful and inspirational speakers who gave their time, energy, creativity, commitment and sustained effort and care for human rights for all people, including those of Palestine from whom they are so desperately denied.

Thank you for being with us today. We will maintain our commitment and work for all human rights and especially for those in Palestine for whom our own nation bears such a responsibility and who appear to be excluded from the global rules-based order.

Many of us have been welcomed in Palestine by people who have become friends over the years. We have seen for ourselves the human rights abuses and apartheid which have been the central issue addressed at this conference. We are humbled by the ongoing sumud, hard work and hope for the future of the people of Palestine. And their welcome to us. We will continue to work with and to fight for Palestinian human rights and against apartheid in any form.

MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

Our first in-person conference since the pandemic began clashed with the implications of a rail strike and a co-incident national March Against Racism. We decided to proceed with the conference date and that this was our specific contribution against racism.

Groups represented were as follows:

- Bradford on Avon Friends of Palestine
- Brent Friends of Palestine
- Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association
- Derby and Derbyshire Friends of Hebron
- Edina Gaza Twinning Association
- Hanwell Friends of Sebastiya
- Lichfield Concern for Palestine
- Lydd London Solidarity Group
- Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association
- Shu'fat Unite
- Stafford and Beit Leqya
- Stourbridge and Seir
- Walsall Kobar Friendship Association
- West Wales Friends of Palestine

Our thanks to:

Thanks to our Patron, Sir Vincent Fean, all our speakers and particularly to the Very Revd Geoffrey Marshall, Convenor of the Derby Hebron Group and all their members who planned this event on the ground and provided us with such wonderful hospitality and lunch. Thanks also to Dr Mike Marshal for generously facilitating the day with his technical expertise.

