

Some basic things to think about on match days

While Israeli kids play their football on lush parks with multiple amenities, kids in Gaza and the West Bank have to improvise on broken pieces of waste-ground, much of it razor-wired and cratered by Israeli bombs.

Young Palestinian footballers remain imprisoned inside Gaza and the West Bank, subject to punitive travel restrictions which prohibit their individual development and the Palestinian game.

While the Israeli national side were welcomed and feted during a recent fixture against England at Wembley, the Home Office refused visas for a proposed team tour of young Palestinian footballers.

Meanwhile, Israel is threatening to stop construction of a FIFA-backed, internationally-supported football stadium in the occupied West Bank because it will sit near one of their illegal settlements.

These are just some instances of how Israel's oppressive and violent state prevents even the most basic forms of human activity for Palestinian people.

Do we just play along with apartheid and mass murder?

Some say politics and sport don't mix. They're mistaken. One of the most productive ways in which conscientious people took on South African apartheid was to challenge that regime's moral right to participate in sporting events.

Veteran peace sponsor Desmond Tutu, ex-US President Jimmy Carter, United Nations Special Rapporteur Richard Falk and numerous other humanitarian campaigners have all likened Israel to an "apartheid state" - Carter has even called Israel's system of occupation and discrimination "worse" than apartheid South Africa.

Despite a series of long-standing UN resolutions condemning its land-grabs and aggressions, Israel continues with its military attacks and containment of Gaza, its expansion of the settler-dominated West Bank and East Jerusalem, the building of its illegal apartheid wall and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians inside Israel itself.

Last December/January, Israel unleashed a pre-planned assault on the people of Gaza, slaughtering over 1400 and leaving a scene of utter devastation. No effort was made to spare hospitals, mosques, schools or UN facilities. All Palestinians were targeted.

As the UN-appointed, South African Judge Richard Goldstone's recent report on the Gaza assault concluded, Israeli operations:

"were carefully planned in all their phases as a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population".

Goldstone's key recommendation is that Israel be referred to the International Criminal Court to face war crimes charges.

What can we do to help?

The Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign - recently endorsed by the STUC and TUC - is overwhelmingly supported by Palestinians and Palestinian civil rights groups.

In the face of merciless Israeli bombing, arbitrary imprisonment, daily humiliation at checkpoints, ruthless evictions, home demolitions, settlement expansion and political resistance to any just peace agenda, Palestinians and their international supporters see BDS as a peacefully-effective means of highlighting Palestinian suffering and exerting pressure on Israel to end its illegal occupation.

Israel's ambassador to the UK, Ron Prosor, has been busy trying to disguise the mass murder, broken infrastructure and collective Palestinian trauma by promoting Israel's cultural, artistic and sporting image. It's a sham. Encouragingly, growing world awareness of the Palestinians' plight is helping to expose such hypocrisy and Israel's crimes.

By boycotting Israeli goods, services and cultural/sporting engagements, we express our practical support for an oppressed and occupied people. That's where small individual actions can help make a real difference.

Please show your solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Visit:

Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS)

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/>

Boycott Israeli Goods (BIG)

<http://www.bigcampaign.org/>

Easy Piesi

<http://www.easi-piesi.org>

Goldstone Report

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC_Report.pdf

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