2007 marked the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. This was an important, challenging and sometimes difficult year for the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and this document outlines some of the activities that we have been involved in during the past year, as well as our plans for the 2008 - the 60th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe) which saw the forcible expulsion of some 700,000 indigenous Palestinians from their homes in what would become the State of Israel in May 1948.

**Boycott Campaign**

The primary focus of the IPSC in 2007 was the Boycott Campaign. As it would be ineffective (and currently beyond our resources) to target all Israeli goods, or all companies who trade with Israel, we have chosen to target specific companies and goods. These have been chosen for a number of criteria; the possibility of success; the resonance with the general public; the effect on the Israeli economy, or in the case of companies - their level of involvement in the Israeli war machine.

We have targeted three companies operating in Ireland which trade with Israel - the Grafton Group, CRH, and Veolia. The Grafton Group is a DIY company which sells Israeli products in their chainstores Atlantic Homecare and Woodies DIY. There have been frequent pickets outside stores informing people of the presence of Israeli goods. CRH is an Irish-based multinational which is supplying materials to build the Apartheid Wall - we are looking at ways to highlight this issue in 2008.

Veolia is a French multinational which currently operates tramlines and water services in Ireland and is seeking to expand its role. It is also building a tramline linking illegal Israeli settlements in the East Jerusalem area. As well as lobbying local Councils to refuse to award contracts to Veolia, we hope to link in with other solidarity campaigns on this issue, as Veolia operate in many other European countries.

We also are concentrating on Israeli agricultural products, especially potatoes - more because of the resonance this has among the general public than their economic importance - and also herbs and fruits. This has involved picketing and leafleting shops, meeting with shopkeepers etc and has proved a good and easy way of creating a public presence for the campaign. We have had some successes, and intend to expand the campaign in 2008.

The other area we have worked on is Israeli diamonds - the success of the international Blood Diamonds campaign shows how vulnerable this product is to public campaigns, and the importance of diamonds to the Israeli economy cannot be overstated. We have asked Irish jewellers to stop stocking 'Israeli Blood Diamonds' and have circulated a petition to that effect. This campaign can only work as part of an international campaign and we will be contacting other international groups in this regard.

**Trade Unions**

On the trade union front, we have had notable successes with NIPSA, the largest trade union in the North, and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, passing robust resolutions in favour of boycott, divest-
ment and sanctions (BDS). For the text of the ICTU resolution please see [http://tinyurl.com/2o4hm6](http://tinyurl.com/2o4hm6), for NIPSA see [http://tinyurl.com/ysmstv](http://tinyurl.com/ysmstv). In November ICTU sent a delegation to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. In relation to this the IPSC have been consulting with ICTU about ways to take the campaign forward.

A separate group, Trade Union Friends of Palestine, has been established to forward and actualise trade union support for BDS and Palestinian rights in general. The IPSC intends to work closely with this group, assisting them where possible. If you want to get involved with TUFP please contact:

**Dublin/south:** Philip on 087 2768718  
E-mail: philipoconnor3051@gmail.com  
**Belfast/north:** Eamonn on 028 90593115  
E-mail: eamon.mcmahon@ntlworld.com

**ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL BOYCOTT**

Symbolic successes have been achieved in this field over the last year, which need to be built on. On the academic front we are mindful of the success of the British campaign (BRICUP), and have been in contact with people in this campaign.

On the cultural front - we wish to build on previous successes in this field, and continue to expose and oppose any cultural cooperation with official Israeli institutions. In March, IPSC activists in Aosdána succeeded in passing the following resolution: "Mindful of the 4th August 2006 call from Palestinian Filmmakers, Artists and Cultural workers to end all cooperation with state-sponsored Israeli cultural events and institutions, Aosdána wishes to encourage Irish artists and cultural institutions to reflect deeply before engaging in any such cooperation, always bearing in mind the undeniable courage of those Israeli artists, writers and intellectuals who oppose their own government's illegal policies towards the Palestinians."

**STREET ACTIVISM AND INFORMATION STALLS**

This is an area where the IPSC has had spectacular successes, most notably the National Demonstration in Dublin on June 9th to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Occupation. This loud, colourful and vibrant protest was attended by around 1000 people from all over Ireland, including many members of both the Arab and Muslim communities in Dublin. We have also organised several protests at the EU offices in Dublin and the Israeli Embassy. In June we briefly occupied the EU offices and most recently there was a very well attended lunchtime protest in December calling for the EU to lift the siege on Gaza. As usual held our annual Nakba commemoration in May.

The IPSC has held regular information stalls in areas where we have a base, highlighting issues such as the Boycott Campaign, the 40th Anniversary of the Occupation, the Siege of Gaza etc. As ever such stalls will be a regular feature of our future activities and we strongly encourage all members and supporters to take part.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION**

In 2007 we continued organising public meetings, monthly discussion evenings in Dublin and book launches - those who we gave a platform to include Lebanon-based human rights activist Caoimhe Butterfly, Joel Kovel the author of *Overcoming Zionism*, Israeli anti-Zionist Michel Warschawski of the Alternative Information Centre, Palestinian academic Dr. Azzam Tamimi, and in the near future we hope to bring over Palestinian academic and author Ghada Karmi to promote her new book *Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine*. We also had a well attended screening of Mohammad Bakri's film *Jenin Jenin*, and plan a further series of film screenings in the coming year.

Importantly, we hosted the very successful European Premier of the award winning film *Occupation 101: Voices of the Silenced Majority*. This event was attended by over 400 people and packed out the Liberty Hall Theatre (people actually had to be turned away due to lack of space), and we had smaller full houses in Cork, Limerick, Donegal and Belfast. All these showings included Q&A sessions with the directors Sufyan and Abdallah Omeish. In relation to this we initiated the '1 in 1000' campaign...
which saw 1000 copies of the Occupation 101 DVD distributed to prominent individuals in Irish society, and we have distributed countless copies of this and other films to the general public.

**TWINNING**

We see twinning between Irish and Palestinian places as part of public education, and are trying to encourage twinning in places in Ireland - north and south. However there have been some setbacks in this regard in Newbridge (Kildare) and Beleek (Fermanagh). If you are interested in twinning your town with a Palestinian counterpart, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will provide support and advice.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Here is a brief list of some of the other activities our members have been involved in: Participation in the ‘Anti-Racist World Cup' and the hosting of a ‘Palestine Day', along with semi-regular appearances on Feile Radio in Belfast. The Limerick and Galway branches have been involved in awareness raising at sporting events including the Munster hurling semi-final and Galway races, as well as protesting the visit of the US Ambassador to NUI Galway. The Dublin branch succeeded (with the help of Aengus Ó'Snodaigh TD) in having questions asked in the Dail regarding the purchase of Israeli military equipment by the Irish Army. In September the Dublin branch held a very successful sponsored walk in the Wicklow mountains. We also sent representatives to various international conferences.

**NEW BRANCHES**

On the back of the Occupation 101 screenings a new branch has been established in Donegal, and branches are in the process of being established in Mayo and Monaghan, while the Newbridge/Kildare branch is to be relaunched. If you are interested in joining or setting up a local branch please don't hesitate to contact the IPSC and we will provide support, speakers, literature, films, etc.

**THE IPSC IN 2008**

2008 marks the 60th Anniversary of the 1948 Nakba (‘Catastrophe’) which saw the ethnic cleansing of over 700,000 Palestinians from what would become the State of Israel. These refugees were never allowed to return to their homeland and now exist as a 4 million strong international diaspora community.

In addition to our regular activities, the IPSC will be staging various commemorative events around the country to mark this anniversary (see the IPSC website for more details). If you are willing to get involved and help us out then please contact us.

**YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED**

The IPSC is a volunteer-run and donation-funded organisation, and as such we are always thankful for new volunteers who join our ranks. We understand that not everybody is able to give time to activism but there are other ways in which you can support us such as donations, standing orders (see the form below), attending IPSC and other pro-Palestinian events in your community, supporting pro-Palestinian motions in your trade union etc. Any and all help is gratefully accepted.

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**Standing Order Form - Your Banking Details**

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The IPSC protest at EU headquarters in solidarity with Gaza, IPSC stalls in Dublin and Galway, IPSC fundraising walk.
2007 was a bleak year for Palestine - a year where once again Israel killed hundreds of innocent Palestinians (and also 6 Israeli civilians were killed), It was a year that will be remembered for the Gaza blockade, for the futile Annapolis summit, and for fighting among Palestinians themselves. Yet there were still some signs of hope..

Palestinians in Israel – Doing it For Themselves

The first sign of change came in January 2007, with 'The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel'. This document was the first time that the 1.3 million strong Palestinian community in Israel collectively lifted their heads above the parapet and demanded full equality. They called for a constitution which would put an end to the apartheid laws that have made them outcasts in their own land.

Israel's reaction was predictable - the head of Shin Bet, the Israeli secret police described Israel's non-Jewish citizens as a 'strategic threat', and vowed to thwart their activities whether they were legal or not. He kept his promise with the persecution of Azmi Bishara, the figurehead for the awakened Palestinian minority in Israel. Although Bishara was an elected member of parliament, the Israeli secret police accused Bishara of treason and threatened him with life imprisonment. Bishara was forced to flee the country, and is still living in exile. The Palestinian community in Israel however, has refused to be silenced.

Tragedy in Gaza

January 2007 found Gaza facing a serious Israeli blockade, and violence between factions in Hamas and Fatah. However in February a 'national unity' government was formed after Saudi Arabian intervention, and the subsequent Mecca agreement was hailed as an example of Arab leaderships sorting out their problems. Norway was one of the first countries to normalise relations with the government. Shamefully, Ireland, along with the rest of the EU refused to, and we maintained our boycott of the Palestinians.

Hope in Palestine was shortlived, with the US and Israel providing backing to factions in Gaza trying to overthrow the government. Israel itself attacked Gaza in May, killing many. In June that year, full scale fighting broke out between Hamas and Fatah, splitting the unity government. After the fighting Hamas retained control of Gaza, and Fatah of the West Bank. Or more accurately, with the fragmentation of Palestinian unity, Israel retained even tighter control of both

Complete Control – The Relentless Occupation

Israel vowed to turn Gaza into 'Hamastan' - a blockaded sliver of land which it would relentlessly attack so long as the democratically elected Hamas government stayed in power. It also promised that the West Bank would become 'Fatahland', a place where its military occupation would gradually be eased. It kept the first promise, not the second.

The split made little difference to everyday life in the West Bank. It still suffers from ever-encroaching illegal Israeli settlements and a checkpoints regime designed to strangile civilian life for the 2 million inhabitants. However in Gaza, life did indeed become even harder with Israel blockading all but the most basic necessities of life. In September, thousands of Palestinian schoolchildren began the new school year with no textbooks; Israel having banned the importation of paper, since paper could be used 'for propaganda purposes'.

The US and Annapolis

2007 saw the publication of Jimmy Carter's 'Palestine, Peace not Apartheid', and Walt and Mearsheimer's 'The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy'. However while US elite consensus about blind support of Israel began to crack, the Bush government pledged itself to blindness with the Annapolis summit in late November 2007. Israel proved its commitment to peace on the eve of the summit by stealing hundreds of acres of land in the West Bank, in order to build 3,500 new settlement houses.

Annapolis was the largest summit on the Israel/Palestine issue since talks began in 2000, with all the major powers and delegations from as far afield as Slovenia and Mauritania attending. However someone forgot to invite all the Palestinians - although Fatah were invited, the democratically elected Hamas government was excluded, and the 5 million Palestinian refugees were not represented. The summit achieved nothing, except to grant Israel a license to attack Gaza with increased ferocity.

Gazans – Jailed, Starved, and Bombed...

After Annapolis, Israel was free to pile more misery on the people of Gaza, which it declared "a hostile entity" while enforcing a blockade of food, fuel and water. Meanwhile Israel renewed its attacks on the near-defenceless population, killing over a hundred Gazans in January 2008.

The international community stood by while Israel attacked Gaza and starved 1.5 million people. Indeed on 22nd January 2008 Franco Frattini, a vice president of the EU commission, declared his full support for Israel's brutal policies.

...And Resisting

Even in this grimmest of times there was hope. The year ended with the Palestinian people showing their will to freedom and breaking out of their Gazan prison. In late January 2008, Hamas managed to topple sections of the prison wall around Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians poured through to Egypt to get desperately needed supplies. Though the respite was brief, it shows what the Palestinian people can do when they act collectively. As Osamah Khalil wrote, it gives hope that this is but the first wall of many to fall in Palestine.

Visiting Palestine

2007 has seen more success in bringing Irish people to Palestine to see the reality of the situation for themselves. Some 80 people traveled to the West Bank from Ireland this year on these trips which include meetings with community, activist, human rights and peace groups from both Palestine and Israel.

These trips are not organised by the IPSC, but we highly recommend them to all our members and supporters. There really is nothing like seeing the unfiltered truth with your own eyes.

Further trips have been organised for 2008, if you are interested in finding out more please contact:
Elaine: 086 1568234
Or Email: westbanktrip@eircom.net.

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L-R: Family whose home was wrecked by the IDF in Nablus, Gazans at the Egyptian border, funeral in Nablus.