

Al Aqsa

Newsletter

www.aqsa.org.uk

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Victory to Friends of Al-Aqsa Supporters

The Royal Bank of Scotland Group (which includes NatWest Bank) sent a notice in mid December to Friends of Al-Aqsa, and its chairman Ismail Patel closing their bank accounts giving them one months notice to find alternative banking facilities.



This unilateral action by the bank had no legal basis and came as a shock. FoA has been a customer of RBS since its inception some ten years ago and has hitherto had excellent relations with the bank. RBS refused to enter into discussions and further stated it would not provide references for FoA or its Chairman.

The Friends of Al-Aqsa bank account and that of its Chairman has always been in credit and no accusations of unethical activity has ever been made by the bank or the police. After exhausting all normal channels of communications with the bank, FoA was forced to appeal to its members, supporters and the general public.

The response was astounding, with groups in Edinburgh calling for a mass demonstration outside the main head office of RBS and groups in Birmingham, London and Leicester following them.

The RBS reported they were inundated with complaints and 20 days later on 6 January they rang to apologise for their actions, inviting FoA and its chairman back to bank with RBS.

Several meetings have been held with the bank and they have assured us 'a human error' occurred for which they apologise and further look forward to funding a FoA project.

FoA is sincerely grateful to all those who supported them. The clear lesson from this victory is that when a united front is presented, even financial giants such as the RBS can be challenged. The show of unity in this episode is something to be adopted and developed for any future projects.

Yasser Arafat Dies Aged 75

Yasser Arafat who became the symbol of Palestinian resistance in the west passed away in Ramadhan. He was first elected as the head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1969 which became recognized as "the sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people.

Since 1993 when he returned to Palestine, he has represented the Palestinian cause to the world, helping to preserve the national Palestinian identity in an international community that does not recognise Palestine as a state.

In 1994, he was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his part in the Oslo accords, which appeared to be a breakthrough toward an independent Palestinian state and a permanent peace with Israel.

Most famously, in 2000, Yasser Arafat walked out of a summit at Camp David having turned down a U.S. brokered deal with Israel which gave Palestinians control of a small part of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. He refused to concede the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, East Jerusalem as their capital and control of the borders so that Palestine could be viable and independent. Israel sold the settlement to the world as 'a generous offer', when in reality it would have created a large open air prison for Palestinians, without Jerusalem and with no access to the outside world.

A decade after the promise of Oslo and the Nobel Peace Prize, Yasser Arafat died on Thursday 11th November 2004 without realizing the dream of a free Palestine, but this torch will be carried by the millions of Palestinians who still struggle for that freedom.

**End the Occupation of Iraq
End the Occupation of Palestine
DEMONSTRATE
Saturday 19th March 2005
Central London at 1.00 pm**

Palestinian Elections

The outcome of the Palestinian election seemed like a foregone conclusion, with Israel and the US backing the Fatah candidate Mahmud Abbas and paving the way for his election. While Abbas was allowed complete freedom to move around in the occupied territories to stage his election campaign, all other candidates faced severe restrictions on movement, were repeatedly held up at check points and in the case of Dr Mustafa Bargouthi – was beaten and detained for over one hour.

Dr Bargouthi enjoys VIP status, but was still subjected to this humiliating treatment at the hands of Israel, being made to lie face down at a check point for over one hour. Such violations of human rights and brutality made a mockery of the 'democratic' elections Israel claimed to promote. The clear message that exuded from the facts on the ground was that the Palestinians could have a show of 'democracy' as long as they elected the Israeli approved candidate; strangely reminiscent of recent US fostered elections in Afghanistan.

Many Palestinians were concerned about the election of Mahmud Abbas who had in the past shown himself ready to compromise and forgo fundamental final status issues such as the position of Jerusalem, the settlement of refugees, illegal Israeli settlements and the eventual character of a Palestinian state; thus washing away 55 years of struggle, for the sake of a peace on paper; with no real future for an independent Palestinian State free from Israeli interference.

The most disturbing record of Abbas was his readiness to accept the renaming of the Abu Dis village as 'Al-Quds' which would then become the capital of Palestine, thus abandoning Jerusalem to the Israeli's, to fulfil the mission of demolishing the sacred sanctuary of the Al-Aqsa in favour of the Third Temple. Only time will reveal his true colours.

Friends of Al-Aqsa Schools Competition 2005

For children between 4-16, to encourage the next generation to think more deeply about the issue of Palestine and how they can help to end the occupation.

Categories

Age 4 – 7 Drawing: To represent key aspects of Palestine such as Masjid Al-Aqsa, Palestine map, Dome of the Rock, etc.

Age 8 – 11 Poster Design / Story / Poem: To represent the occupation or any landscape of Palestine.

Age 12 – 16 Essay: To focus on any aspect of the Palestinian issue. This can be fictional or non-fictional. The winning essay will be printed by FoA [1,000 words minimum]

Prizes

	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C
1st Prize	£100	£150	£200
2nd Prize	£75	£100	£125
3rd Prize	£50	£50	£50

Send entries with [Name / Date of Birth / Full Address] by **30 April 2005** to:

Friends of Al-Aqsa, PO Box 5127,
Leicester LE2 0WU

For further details, email info@aqsa.org.uk or ring 0116 2125441 / 07974 705489

Nazi Treatment of Palestinians

The atrocities the Nazi's committed against the Jewish people included forcing Jewish musicians to play music in the background as the Nazi's committed mass murder at WWII extermination camps. In Palestine, the oppressed have become the oppressors and in early November, video footage was released showing Israeli soldiers at a check-point forcing a Palestinian man to play his violin.

The violinist, Wissam Tayem, was on his way to a music lesson near Nablus when he said an Israeli officer ordered him to "play something sad" while soldiers made fun of him.

This form of dehumanisation is a routine part of Palestinian life. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has criticised the "culture of impunity" that exists within the Israeli army. The current Intifada has seen over 3,000 Palestinians killed including 529 children. To date, only one soldier has been convicted of causing the death of a Palestinian showing a complete disregard for Palestinian life.

Friends of Al-Aqsa at UN Headquarters

November 29th 2004 marked the 57th anniversary of the UN partition plan of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian. Since the 1980's, the UN has declared 29th November as International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.



The day was marked by solemn meetings at the UN Headquarters in New York and other UN Offices across the world. FoA was invited to attend the meetings in New York to observe the discussions and the General Assembly deliberations. This marked the first step by FoA to becoming a part of the UN network of NGO's on the question of Palestine. This will help FoA expand its work across many more borders and educate many more people on the reality of the occupation and the human rights catastrophe if the occupation has bred.

Prime Minister Blair Visits Palestine

For many years, British governments have promised to broker peace in the Middle East, but few have carried this plan out. Prime Minister Tony Blair has now promised an international conference on the Middle East to take place in London in 2005. Initially it appeared to be positive action at long last, but as a clearer picture emerged of the conference plan, it looks like another effort to lay the blame for Middle East instability at the door of the Palestinians. Thus, the Prime Minister is simply helping Sharon in his plan to demonise the Palestinians and change world public opinion against the Palestinian people.

The conference will focus on promoting the development of Palestinians political, security and economic institutions. These are aspects of Palestinian life that have been destroyed by Israel in the last few years, with the strangulation of the economy, the dissolution of security and the assassination of leaders. This initiative will no doubt fail without Israeli participation and a change in Israeli policy.

The Palestinians are engaged in legitimate self defence against a brutal occupying force and until the US and UK governments recognise that, the cycle of violence will not end.

Justice the American Way?

In a decision that has brought widespread disgust and derision, a US court has ordered three Islamic charities and an alleged fund-raiser for Palestinian resistance group Hamas to pay \$156 million to the parents of an American teenager killed outside an illegal Jewish Settlement in occupied Palestine.

The charities in question are the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, the Islamic Association for Palestine, as well as the Quranic Literacy Institute and alleged Hamas fund-raiser Muhammad Salah. All of the defendants denied any links to the death.

The family of the dead teenager had moved to Israel in 1985. They sued the defendants under a US law that allows victims of "terrorism" abroad to collect damages in American courts from organisations that furnish money to "terrorist" groups.

The US government froze the assets of a number of Palestinian charities following calls from the Israeli government. These charities were all involved in humanitarian work in the occupied territories and claims of links to terrorism came from Israel and were never substantiated. The US is simply pandering to Israeli whims, and has frozen large funds donated to the charities by individuals determined to do what little they can for the Palestinian people. There is a chance that some of this money will now go to the Boims family, whose very presence in the illegal settlements is the cause of so much oppression on the Palestinian people.

Not only does the America government fund and tacitly support Israeli terrorism against Palestinians, but the US judiciary seems to be following suit by denying Palestinians legitimate aid by funnelling aid money away from those desperately in need, to those who choose to place themselves in a war-zone by living in illegal settlements built on stolen land. If a Palestinian were to bring such a law suit against US organisation like the Friends of the Israeli Defence Force for the unlawful killings they perpetrate without fail on a daily basis, would the US courts find in their favour?

Mailing List

Friends of Al-Aqsa send out daily updates on the events occurring in Palestine. To join the mailing list, please visit www.aqsa.org.uk and subscribe your email to the mailing list.

FRIENDS OF AL AQSA

Defence of Al-Aqsa and Peace in Palestine

Presents a 6 week course on the History of Palestine

by Ismail Patel

**Covering: Ancient Civilisations; The era of Daud and Sulaiman (as);
The Islamic era; The Birth of Zionism; The Nakba; Intifada; Conflict Resolution.**

Starting 9 February 2005 [Every Wednesday]

8pm to 9pm [Isha Salah 7.30 at the venue]

Evington Valley Road, Leicester

To register please contact us: The course is FREE

email info@aqsa.org.uk or ring 0116 2125441 / 07974 705489

FRIENDS OF AL AQSA

Defence of Al-Aqsa and Peace in Palestine

PLEDGE 100

Help promote the work of Friends of Al-Aqsa by becoming a member or alternatively, join the 'Pledge 100' Campaign and donate £100 a year to the organisation.

Pledge 100 appeal will hopefully help Friends of Al-Aqsa raise funds to further our campaign and work to truly make a change. Israel is feeling international pressure now, help us to maintain this pressure through intense lobbying by becoming a Pledge 100 donor.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Postcode: _____

I would like to become a life member

Debit annually £10/£100 [delete as appropriate] or £_____ on _____ (day/month) from my bank account to: **Friends of Al Aqsa, Sort Code: 16-23-20, Acc No: 10036370, Royal Bank of Scotland, Leicester. LE1 3GR**

Name of Acc Holder: _____ Acc No: _____

Acc. Type: _____ Sort Code: _____ Bank Name: _____

Bank Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Make a Donation

I enclose a cheque for £_____ (Chq. Made payable to Friends of Al Aqsa)

Post to: Friends of Al-Aqsa. P.O. Box 5127, Leicester. LE2 0WU.

Tel/Fax: 0116 212 5441 — E: info@aqsa.org.uk — W: www.aqsa.org.uk

The information you have provided will be kept confidential.

For further copies, more information about its projects or contributions please contact:

Ismail Adam Patel – The Editor, Friends of Al Aqsa

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