

Middle East **Solidarity**

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RESISTING THE KINGDOM OF FEAR

Saudi Arabia's crackdown exposed

Ameen Nemer reports
on resistance to the
monarchy

Cambridge University's complicity in war

Demilitarise Cambridge
investigates

Basra's summer of discontent

Electricity cuts spark a
wave of protests in the
Iraqi port city

Academics slam Egypt 'partnerships'

How Sisi's real estate
salesmen are luring UK
universities to invest

Defending free speech on Palestine

Trade unionists
back letter against
antisemitism definition



Ammar Haj Ahmad by Marc Brenner

The Jungle tells the story of the lives of people who lived in the Jungle camp in Calais from January 2015 to October 2016, when it was destroyed by French officials. Turn to pages 2-3 for a review of the play and an interview with lead actor Ammar Haj Ahmad, who plays Safi, the narrator.

The Jungle is showing at the Playhouse Theatre until 3 November 2018.

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About us

Events in the Middle East often dominate the news, but it is war, sectarian violence and western military intervention which grab the headlines.

Middle East Solidarity shows a different side to the region.

We report on resistance to repression and imperialism from Morocco to Yemen, covering the strikes and protests which are missed by the mainstream media.

We carry the voices and stories of the women and men who are still fighting for bread, freedom and social justice to new audiences.

Our practical guides to campaigning and resources for activists aim to build a stronger solidarity movement.

Middle East Solidarity is a joint project of MENA Solidarity Network, Egypt Solidarity Initiative and Bahrain Watch, and is supported by funding from UCU, PCS, NEU - NUT section and a number of Trades Union Councils and local trade union branches.

Find out more here:

www.menasolidaritynetwork.com
www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org
www.bahrainwatch.org

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'WE JUST BRING OUT WHAT IS HUMAN'

Ammar Haj Ahmad, the Syrian actor who leads the cast of 'The Jungle' spoke to *Middle East Solidarity* about his journey to take up the role and how the play was developed.

MES: Ammar you were an actor in Syria before the conflict. Can you tell us something about the theatre or your roles in theatre in Syria?

Ammar: In Syria only a very small number of actors graduate from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus, 12 each year for a population of 23 million. TV is the main medium much more than theatre. In the two years after graduating in 2008 I did many TV series. Now, after the conflict there are a few classes and courses run by different actors.

MES: When did you come to the UK and how did you find it at first?

Ammar: I was invited to the UK in 2011 to play in a production of *One Thousand and One Nights*. It went to Morocco, Toronto and to the Edinburgh festival. As the conflict developed in Syria I couldn't go back. My life started to unfold here in London. It was not easy compared with life for an actor in Syria. Suddenly there are thousands of actors and my English wasn't so good back then. I was offered parts but they were mainly terrorists and baddies which I didn't want to do.

MES: I felt the refugee characters in 'Jungle' were completely authentic. Did you or any of the other actors contribute any of your own ideas or experiences to the play?

Ammar: Some of the company were actually in the Calais Jungle; they are not really actors. One of them

does acrobatics, there are two singers and a musician. All the characters are based on real people. I was part of the company building this show from its beginnings in May 2016. So from the early drafts we could question and develop characters. There is some of Ammar in my character Safi and lots of things about Safi in Ammar.

MES: The volunteers' characters seemed to be perhaps less well-developed than those of the refugee characters. Do you agree?

Ammar: The world of the Jungle was more richly developed than that of the volunteers. When volunteers come to the Jungle, they are all different and individual, but the volunteers portrayed here become part of the community.

We developed the play during workshops. The actors as well as the writers wanted the play to be about the refugees so to give more space to the development of these characters. The actors who played volunteers had to step aside for this reason. That was the intention and focus of the writers and directors.

I was part of all eight workshops. Many refugees were invited from different parts of the UK, people who had been in Calais. The writers worked over eight months to get a deeper understanding of different cultures and motivations. We looked at the backgrounds to different refugees stories and different questions. Sunni and Shi'a praying together, which happened, what does this mean?

MES: In what ways does the play resonate with you personally or in terms of contemporary events?

Ammar: People are in the room for three hours. We invite them to strip themselves of the materialistic stuff, then 'The Jungle' can do something to their hearts. It's not about refugees it's about what is human in all of us. Artists need to bring a sense of community, to dissolve the political filters and just bring out what is human.

Ammar Haj Ahmad spoke to Alice Finden and Miriam Scharf. *The Jungle* is on at Playhouse Theatre until 3 November

'This play achieves extraordinary things'

Alice Finden

I tasted delicious hot freshly made naan at the Afghan cafe in the Jungle on my first visit to support refugees in Calais. Some of my colleagues spent their summer holiday helping out with Care4Calais, sending pictures of the children, other helpers, and so as not to be identified, simply the hands or backs of refugees. So I went to 'Jungle' the play with some knowledge and low expectations. After all, what could a play say about the raw and painful reality?

But the play achieves some extraordinary things. It weaves together many of the stories we know from the news of the deaths of young men 'trying' to have a 'good chance' of getting to the UK, what such 'a good chance' can involve, and how people go missing.

Through Okot's character we get the searing experience of Darfur, of leaving family behind, of Libyan 'transit' camps, and the Mediterranean passage. We hear the inside story of the Jungle, of its sparring ethnic groups, its tensions, and the solidarity.

The play also shows how outside events affect the refugees' plight, reflected in the wave of sympathy which followed the pictures of the small washed up body of Alan Al Kurdi and the knee-jerk emnity towards all refugees and migrants after the Bataclan attack.

The English helpers are the only characters which come across as a bit stilted. Perhaps this is hard to avoid where the writers want to ensure the audience know some facts about the UK and French governments, the law and the process of the destruction of the Jungle.

Both governments and the media have made hostility to refugees part of the political landscape. This play brings us closer to the young men, women and children who are trying to overcome overwhelming odds in their struggle to reach the UK.



The cast of 'The Jungle' | Photo: Marc Brenner



Rachel Redford and Ammar Haj Ahmad | Photo: Mark Brenner

MOROCCO

Hirak activists sentenced to 230 years in “judicial massacre”

Mehdi Rafiq

Over a year after the start of the largest political trial of Mohammed VI's reign, and after a marathon of over 80 hearings, the criminal court in Casablanca handed out its ruthless verdict on 26 June.

The activists of the popular movement in the Rif region of Morocco were sentenced to a total of 230 years in jail. The leaders of the Hirak (movement) are accused of “plotting against the state” and taking part in unauthorised demonstrations.

Nasser al-Zefzafi, Nabil Ahemjik, Samir Aghid and Wassim al Boustani were all sentenced to 20 years in jail while 51 others got between 15 and 3 years in jail.

Prominent human rights activists Khadija al Riyadi described the sentences against the Rif activists as “a judicial massacre, a cruel and crude revenge against the activists, their families and the entire region.”

Dozens of activists were arrested last year after the mass demonstrations that shook al-Hoceima and other towns, provoked by the crushing of fish-seller Mohsen Fakhri in a garbage truck by the police in October 2016.

A wave of struggle swept through the Rif region in northern Morocco, before reaching other parts of the country and sparking



Solidarity protests hit the streets of Rabat after the sentences | Photo: Al-Mounadila

solidarity demonstrations by Moroccan workers in western European countries.

The participants in the Rif movement did not only condemn the state's policies of repression and austerity, they also formulated their own economic, social and democratic demands – ones that would improve the whole population's livelihood.

The Rif region is particularly plagued by unemployment (60 percent of graduates are unemployed against 'only' 26 percent nationally), the degradation of public and social services like healthcare and education

as well as decrepit public infrastructure.

The popular movement created its own structures (notably through local elected committees), and organized its media presence in order to counter the regime's propaganda which accused it of promoting secession and of acting as the agent of foreign powers.

Hundreds rallied outside the parliament chanting “take us all to jail.”

The detained activists rejected all those

accusations outright before the judge, stating that the Hirak was a peaceful movement against corruption and for the development of their region to ensure a dignified life for all its inhabitants.

The regime has tried without success to contain the popular movement in al-Hoceima by sacking ministers and senior civil servants.

Despite the repression, the announcement of the sentences triggered protests of thousands in al-Hoceima and other towns in the Rif, while hundreds rallied outside the parliament in the capital Rabat, chanting “take us all to jail.”

PALESTINE

What lies behind Trump's attack on UNRWA?

Miriam Scharf

At the schools run by UN Agency UNRWA in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and the West Bank you can find busy smiling children, welcoming teachers with perfect English accents, and huge murals of Al Quds, Jerusalem.

These 677 schools, educating a fourth generation of Palestinian refugees, provide not just education, but hope and dignity, to over 500,000 children. This lifeline is being cut.

Jared Kushner, leading on the Middle East in Trump's administration, has described UNRWA services as "a barrier to peace".

The Oslo Accords of 1993 surrendered so much to Israel, but left seven 'final status' issues to be resolved at the end of a proposed 5-year interim period. The first, the status of Jerusalem/Al Quds, as Mahmoud Abbas stated, was 'taken off the table' when the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem concurring with the Israeli definition that the city was the unified capital of the Jewish State.

The second, the refugees' right of return, is now being challenged. The White House wants to change the mandate of UNRWA and to strip refugee status from 5 million Palestinians.

UNRWA was set up in 1949, mandated by the UN General Assembly to deliver services until there is a just and lasting solution to the



Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk, Syria | Photo: Jordi Bernabeu

Israel/Palestine conflict. The right of return for Palestinian refugees has been backed by the UN General Assembly since 1950.

This international recognition of their status and thereby the ongoing need for a just solution to the conflict is what the US government is out to dismantle.

The weapon Trump is using is money. The US was donating \$350 million per year to UNRWA. It is the largest donor. In January it cut this by 80 percent. Kushner reportedly offered £2million to the Jordanian government to strip the 2m Palestinians living there of their refugee status.

UNRWA officials have described these cuts from their largest donor as creating an 'existential crisis' for the agency, threatening the rights and dignity of the Palestinian refugees

themselves.

Chris Gunness, UNRWA spokesperson, told *Middle East Solidarity*

"UNRWA's position is that the General Assembly has mandated us to continue delivering services until there is a just and lasting solution to the conflict and we are determined to do that to the best of our ability. Our mandate cannot be unilaterally changed by either one UN Member State."

"The reduction of \$300m by the US represented an unprecedented threat to our ability to deliver essential services to Palestine refugees, notably education for 526,000 girls and boys, health-care and emergency services."

UNRWA spends more than half of its budget on education. Most children in UNRWA schools perform as well as, or better than, those in host country schools in

Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank. UNRWA also provides TVET (vocational training) for 7,000 Palestinian refugees in all fields and for 2,100 students in two educational science faculties and teacher training institutes (one in the West Bank and one in Jordan).

UNRWA students' literacy and levels of educational attainment are among the highest in the Middle East. Palestinian refugees are famous for having a suitcase ready and a good education to take with them if they should have to leave.

Kiri Tunks, NUT President of the UK's largest teachers union the National Education Union told *Middle East Solidarity*,

"Through our regular visits to the West Bank with delegations of teachers, we have seen first hand the amazing job these schools do in ensuring young Palestinian children get the best chance of a high quality education in the face of huge obstacles.

"We know how vital education is for the well-being and future of children in Palestine and we are very concerned at the impact that cuts to funding will mean for these young people. It is a very short-sighted and dangerous act and one that we sincerely hope will be reversed."

Many of the Palestinian refugees UNRWA supports have faced the misery of war and the loss of their homes and livelihoods multiple times. Gunness says that the impact of the loss of UNRWA support on the Palestinian refugee community in Syria is likely to be "catastrophic".

"In Syria the vast majority of Palestine refugees are deeply dependent on UNRWA assistance and without this, an already fragile community will face deepening vulnerability."

Jared Kushner said

his 'Deal of the Century' was going to 'disrupt' the agency. But clearly, as usual, the US will be taking no responsibility for the catastrophic fallout.

What is at stake is political as well as humanitarian. In international law, if the Palestinians lost refugee status they would become the responsibility of their host states.

So in law Israel would then have to provide services to 80,000 West Bank refugees and over one million in Gaza. But Israel's hope is that by eliminating UNRWA it will get rid of an international institution that supports Palestinian refugees and their right to return.

If UNRWA were dissolved while the refugees remained stateless, their status would not be tied to some future citizenship in Israel/Palestine. The Israeli government hopes that by encouraging the US to shut down UNRWA it can make Palestinian refugees disappear.

The UNWRA mandate, based on UN Resolution 194, is next due to be extended in 2020. Its existence is under threat. The US can use cuts in aid to bully countries to vote in the UN General Assembly for a US 'solution'. UNRWA was never ideal. It was meant to provide interim support. But it is a vital protection against extreme vulnerability in an increasingly terrifying world of cruelty and chaos where refugees are the hardest hit.

UNRWA Director Pierre Krahenbuhl told a conference called to raise funds from other sources: "At stake are the rights and dignity of an entire community."

Seventy years on from the Nakba, the refugees are not going to give up their rights as Palestinians. They are not going to disappear.



Freedom Flotilla Al-Awda before the attack | Photo: Freedom Flotilla Coalition

'We have to speak up against this brutality'

Swee Ang

On 29 July, Swee Ang was one of the crew members on board the Freedom Flotilla al-Awda, which was attempting to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza when it was stormed by the Israeli Navy

We, the six women on board al-Awda, had learnt that the Israeli soldiers would try and completely humiliate and dehumanise us in every way possible.

If we were Palestinians it would be much worse with physical assaults and probably loss of lives. As to international waters, it looks as though there is no such

thing for the Israeli Navy. It can hijack and abduct boats and persons in international water and get away with it. They acted as though they own the Mediterranean Sea. They can abduct any boat and kidnap any passengers, put them in prison and criminalise them.

We cannot accept this. We have to speak up, stand up against this lawlessness, oppression and brutality. We were completely unarmed. Our only crime according to them is we are friends of the Palestinians and wanted to bring medical aid to them.

This is not a crime. In the week we were sailing to Gaza, the Israeli army had shot dead 7 Palestinians and wounded more than 90 with live bullets in Gaza.

They had further shut down fuel and food to Gaza. Two million Palestinians in Gaza live without clean water, with only 2-4 hours of electricity, in homes

destroyed by Israeli bombs, in a prison blockaded by land, air and sea for 12 years.

The hospitals of Gaza since the 30 March had treated more than 9,071 wounded persons, 4,348 shot by machine guns from a hundred Israeli snipers while they were mounting peaceful demonstrations inside the borders of Gaza on their own land.

This massive attack on an unarmed Freedom Flotilla bringing friends and some medical relief is an attempt to crush all hope for Gaza.

But we will not stop. We must continue to be strong in order to bring hope and justice to the Palestinians and be prepared to pay the price, and to be worthy of the Palestinians. As long as I survive I will exist to resist. To do less will be a crime.

This is an extract from Swee Ang's eyewitness account.



RESISTING THE KINGDOM OF FEAR

The brutal rulers of Arabia have treated the country as their personal property for generations. **Ameen Nemer** assesses the state of resistance to Saudi rule.

In 2011, during the Arab Spring, Prince Talal bin Abd-al-Aziz predicted a dark future for Saudi Arabia after the death of his brother, King Abdullah. Across the Arab world, the courage to topple tyrants had become contagious.

"The people want the downfall of the regime" became the slogan of the day. Faced with a rising wave of protest, Saudi Arabia's rulers used every means they could to try and kill any movement within the Kingdom, even before it was born.

Externally, Saudi Arabia was the leader of the counter-revolution. It sent troops to crush the popular uprising in Bahrain in March 2011. It supported the military coup against a democratically-elected government in Egypt in 2013.

Meanwhile, this absolute monarchy claimed to support democracy in Syria by sending weapons there to topple the Assad regime. In all of these cases, the goal was to preserve the status quo in Saudi Arabia, by intervening in the wider region.

In January 2015, King Abdullah died and the crown prince became King Salman. The new king continued much of King Abdullah's domestic and foreign

policies, however he also launched a war against Yemen, codenamed "Decisive Storm". The king's admirers liked to refer to him as the "Decisive King", making a war criminal look like a hero. King Abdullah had been known as "King of Humanity" despite his authorisation of hundreds of beheadings.

The bloody war on Yemen was a small piece of a bigger picture of a new era of ruthlessness in Saudi Arabia. The war created opportunities for King Salman and his son, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) to crush both potential rivals among their relatives and stamp out political dissent in a reign of fear.

At the same time, thousands of innocent Yemenis have been killed on the decisive King's orders. The Saudi-led air coalition targeted schools, hospitals, factories, universities, markets, funerals and even weddings during its first year.

Among the many victims of repression since the war began was the prominent rights activist and Shi'a Islamic scholar Sheikh Nimr, who was executed in January 2016 along with other activists.

Two months later, in April 2016, Mohamed Bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan was announced. This was a PR

firm's white-wash of Saudi regime atrocities, which promoted a plan to transform the Kingdom socially and economically but not politically.

Meanwhile, Mohamed bin Salman was fighting another battle, this time with his rivals inside the royal family. Mohamed bin Nayef (MBN), the former minister of the Interior was arrested in June 2017.

Five months later, in November 2017, the regime carried out a wave of arrests against individuals accused of corruption, who were detained at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh. Those

arrested included the Minister of the National Guards, the billionaire Prince Waleed bin Talal and Waleed bin Ibrahim, the owner of the giant Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC). Many of them were released later after giving up some of their assets.

This assault on important figures within the ruling family has changed the balance of power, which before King Salman's accession to the throne was divided between the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of the National Guards and the Ministry of Defence.

As Minister of defence, MBS

successfully got rid of the powerful Minister of the Interior, Mohamed bin Nayef and the Minister of the National Guards, Mutaib bin Abdullah.

MBS has marginalised his uncles and cousins to smooth his path to becoming the next King, the first grandson of Abd-al-Aziz, founder of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Yet for all his ruthlessness, MBS fears even his shadow. He has not been able to crush all opposition.



RESISTANCE AND REPRESSION

Brutal repression and vicious infighting among the royal family have never been enough to stamp out dissent and resistance.

Women activists have challenged the laws which deny them equal rights. In 1990, 47 women drove their cars through the capital Riyadh in a public protest against laws against the driving ban. They were imprisoned and then obliged to sign a pledge not to challenge the authorities in order to be released. Their passports were confiscated and some of them lost their jobs.

Other campaigners for women's rights would face similar repression over the following decades. The most recent crackdown was the arrest of more than 15 women's rights activists only a month before the lifting of the driving ban in June 2018.

This crackdown once again was designed to send a message to the people of Arabia that these activists are not a model to follow: "If you keep fighting to take your rights, you might end up in prison."

Peaceful movements calling for political reforms have also been met with repression. The Islamic Awakening (al-Sahwa) movement in the early 1990s mobilised wide support with its calls for change. However, leading movement members were quickly imprisoned, including Sunni Islamic scholar Salman al-Ouda, who spent over a year in detention.

In Sept 2017, Al-Ouda was arrested again as part of a campaign of arrests against critics of the regime. On the 4th of Sept 2018, the Saudi public prosecutor sought the death penalty for Al-Ouda on the basis of 37 charges

against him, such as working for foreign parties against the Saudi regime and its interests. Seventeen members of Al-Ouda's family are also banned from travelling.

The Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) members faced the same fate as they were arrested. Mohammad Al Qahtani and Abdullah al-Hamid, co-founders of ACPRA, were sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2013 after an unfair trial in the politicised

2018, the Saudi regime's prosecutor called for the death penalty for Al-Ghomgham on charges related to activities on social media and demonstrations during the Arab Spring. In solidarity, activists launched a Twitter account @IsraaAlGhomgham to publicise her case.

Although the Saudi regime has executed peaceful demonstrators in the last two years, the call to execute a female political activist is unprecedented. Israa al-Ghomgham's next court hearing will be on 28 October 2018.

If the death sentence is confirmed, the case has to be ratified by the King before beheading. Al-Ghomgham's case is a flashback to the case of women activists arrested in May 2018 who the government-backed Saudi press accused of treason, which means a death penalty.

The House of Saud believes it has inherited the land and its people as properties. When angry protesters gathered recently outside the home of Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz in London, blaming the ruling family for repression and war from Bahrain to Yemen, and chanting "Down with the House of Saud", the prince asked: "What does the Al Saud family have to do with your chants?"

The answer is very simple: no other country on earth is named after its ruling family. The first step towards a democratic transition not only in Arabia, but across the whole region, will come when we can talk once again about Arabians, not Saudis.

Ameen Nemer is an Arabian activist. Follow him on Twitter @nimramen



Activists branded traitors on social media | Photo: via Twitter

Special Criminal Court.

Activists from the country's Eastern Province have also been singled out for harsh treatment by the regime. Human rights activists Israa Al-Ghomgham and her husband Mosa Al-Hashim participated in demonstrations in Qatif on the Gulf coast during the Arab Spring in 2011.

In December 2015 she was arrested with her husband from their home in Qatif after a raid. In late 2017, Al-Ghomgham's family indicated a deterioration in her health. In August



Sheikh Nimr | Photo: Twitter

'CAPITAL OF THE REVOLUTION' UNDER SIEGE

In May 2017, a military operation lasted 4 months in Al-Awamiyah town. The regime claimed to be fighting terrorists and that it was developing a historical neighbourhood in Al-Awamiyah, Mosawara.

Despite the U.N calls to stop demolishing the historic buildings, the Saudi regime proceeded using heavy weapons killing dozens, injuring hundreds and displacing thousands.

Al-Awamiyah was vocal against the regime during the Arab Spring in 2011. The town was known as the 'capital of the revolution' as protests involving thousands spread across the Qatif region. Sheikh Nimr emerged as a spiritual and political leader of the popular uprising, arguing for non-violent resistance to repression. "We will use words against bullets", he said in a video at the time.

Since that wave of demonstrations, the regime has set up security checkpoints cutting the town off from other parts of the country. Sheikh Nimr and other political activists were executed on trumped-up terrorism charges. Raids, arbitrary arrests, the killing of unarmed protestors and assassinations of men wanted on charges of taking part in the protests have all been used to silence Al-Awamiyah.

The collective punishment of Al-Awamiyah aimed to send a message to other towns in Arabia of the dire consequences of challenging the regime.



Protest in Al-Awamiyah in 2011 | Photo: Youtube



Hundreds often took to the streets in defiance of repression | Photo: Youtube



Demonstrations continued across the Qatif region in 2014 | Photo: Youtube



The aftermath of the regime assault in 2017 | Photo: Al-Manar

Inside the military-academic complex



How the University of Cambridge is complicit in war and repression

Mapping the 'impact' of academic research has become something of an obsession for higher education managers. But what should activists do if the 'impact' of their university's research and partnerships can be seen in the craters from missile strikes and on the shattered lives left in their wake?

In this special investigation, *Middle East Solidarity* explores how the drive by the Tory government to deepen links with industry and business across the higher education sector, combined with cuts to public funding for research and teaching, is making academic institutions complicit in war and human rights abuses across the Middle East through partnership with arms companies and repressive regimes.

Through funding research projects and taking physical and intellectual space on university campuses, large arms companies have an alarming influence on sections of higher education in the UK.

While these companies take advantage of academic freedoms and the public-funded research infrastructure in the UK, their products are frequently used to repress those freedoms and destroy public infrastructure in the wider world.

They profit from wars which have led to the murder of millions of people and arm governments which arrest, torture and imprison opposition activists.

We can see this complicity in British universities' continuing links to

BAE Systems, despite the UK's recent arms deal made with Turkey, a country where academics are being silenced and imprisoned for speaking out against the Turkish regime's treatment of Kurdish communities.

We can see continuing complicity in the fact that many of the armaments and technology that university research projects help develop are used specifically for the suppression of anti-regime and pro-democracy protests and to curtail freedoms of speech.

Our first case study, written in collaboration with the *Demilitarise Cambridge* student group, highlights the University of Cambridge's links with major arms manufacturers such as BAE Systems and how collaborative research with Israeli technology companies has helped equip armoured vehicles used by Israeli forces engaged in the brutal occupation of Palestinian land. We also report on how students and staff are beginning to organise and agitate against the military-academic complex at the heart of the neoliberal university.

Future issues of the magazine will examine how the Israeli war machine is embedded in UK universities.

The University of Cambridge holds a special relationship with many private and state-run weapons research and manufacturing centres including BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, Roke Manor Research (part of the Chemring Group) and the Ministry of Defense (MoD).

Research by student activists, journalists and arms trade campaigners such as Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) has uncovered how networks of funding, influence and expertise flow in many directions between the university and its partners.

This case study exposes how the

university's web of connections with arms companies is sustained through research funding for joint projects with arms companies and the Ministry of Defence, spin-off companies jointly created by academics and military manufacturers, and finally the intellectual investment by arms companies in recruiting students and academics to work with them directly through funding studentships, bursaries and offering university staff opportunities for consultancy.

Neoliberal reforms to the higher education system, forcing institutions

to compete with each for students and decreasing amounts of public funding may make the arms companies seem even more enticing as partners and funders.

But when military projects take up students' and academics' time, energy and skills this helps to perpetuate war and violence, while boosting the profits of corporations which benefit from all this suffering.

Turn to page 15 to read more about how student-led campaigns are beginning to challenge the corporate war machine on campus.



Missiles hit a building in Sana'a | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

BAE Systems: a trail of destruction

BAE Systems directly funded research projects at the University of Cambridge worth £1.82m between 2009 and 2017.

According to a Freedom of Information request seen by *Middle East Solidarity*, most of these projects were based in the Departments of Engineering, Physics, Materials Science and Metallurgy, the Institute for Manufacturing and Cambridge University Technical Services Ltd. The company also provides funding to the Centre for Doctoral Training in Graphene Technology.

BAE Systems and government spy centre GCHQ were project partners on a grant of £11.5m awarded by EPSRC to the Isaac Newton Institute (of Maths and Science) in 2018.

The company is a world-leading

arms dealer with UK export licenses to 77 countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE.

One of the most notorious of its roles was acting as the prime contractor in the al-Yamamah deal signed between Britain and Saudi Arabia in 1988. Britain provided Saudi Arabia with 72 Tornado planes, 30 Hawk trainer jets and 30 other trainer planes.

Since March 2015 at least 10,000 Yemenis have died as a result of Saudi air strikes and 22 million people have been left in need of aid.

The deal was renewed again in 1993, and again in the al-Salah deal signed in 2007 which agreed the sale of 72 Eurofighter Typhoons. These aircraft have played a central role in the Saudi-led assault on Yemen.

The Yemen Data Project has recorded 17,000 airstrikes since March 2015, as a result of which at least 10,000 people have died, and 22 million people have been left in need of aid.

BAE Systems also supplied Saudi Arabia with 200 Tactical armoured vehicles which used to crush pro-democracy protests in Bahrain in 2011. The company was central to a £100m fighter jet deal between Britain and Turkey, signed in 2017 between Theresa May and Recep Tayyip Erdogan despite ongoing human rights abuses.

Rolls Royce: driving the Saudi war on Yemen

Rolls Royce is ranked the world's 16th largest arms producer, and the UK's 2nd. The company produces engines for military aircraft, naval ships and nuclear submarines and sold \$4.5bn worth of arms-related equipment in 2016.

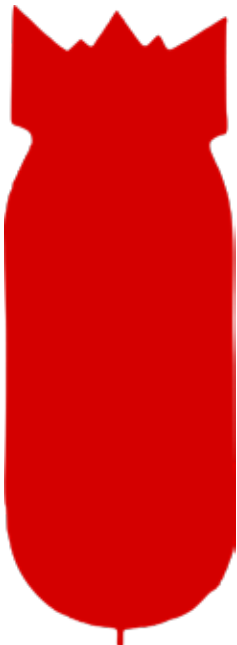
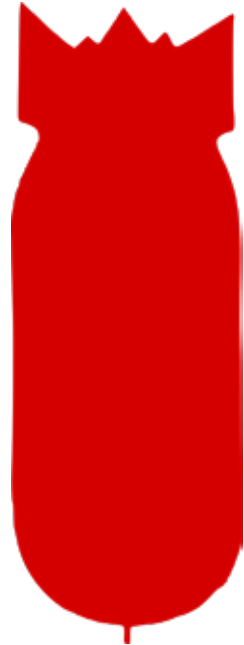
Rolls Royce directly

funded projects at the University of Cambridge worth £14.8m between 2009-2017.

In 2014, EPSRC funded a £7.9m "strategic partnership in structural metallic systems for gas turbines" between Rolls Royce and the Department of Materials

Science focussing on the areas of aerospace, defence and marine.

Rolls Royce has applied for UK export licences for 99 countries and its engines are used in the Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft used by Saudi Arabia in its war on Yemen.



Tortech Nano: arming the Israeli occupation

Tortech Nano Fibres Ltd is a collaborative venture between Q-Flo, a spin-off of the University of Cambridge and innovator of nanotechnologies, and Plasan, the Israeli owned manufacturer of vehicle protection and armoured vehicles.

Tortech was

established in 2010 to "produce carbon nanotube fibre for the enhancement of body armor and composite armour systems for vehicles".

Q-Flo also funded another project worth £59,000 at the university between 2014-15.

Israeli armoured vehicles play a crucial role in the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, and in violations of the rights of Israel's minority Arab population who are subject to frequent demolition of their homes and villages and forced relocation.

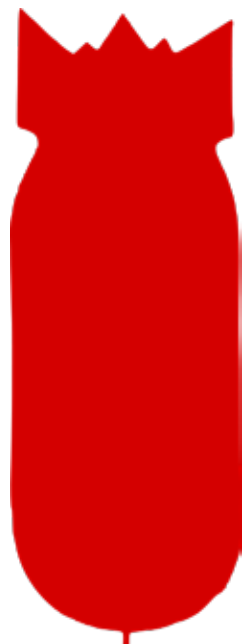
Roke Manor: choking off protest

Roke Manor Research is part of the Chemring Group which ranks as the world's 68th largest arms trader, with 90 percent of its total sales coming from military-related technology. Roke has been linked to the University of Cambridge through the International

Technology Alliance, which was set up in 2006 by the U.S. Army Research Laboratory (ARL) and the UK Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) (part of the UK's Ministry of Defence). It was funded from May 2006-May 2016 with a value of \$135.8m. Roke also provided £65,000

of direct funding for research at the University of Cambridge in the financial year 2014/15.

Roke develops "crowd control" products including CS gas grenades which were used by Egyptian security forces during the Egyptian revolution of 2011.



Student campaign targets complicity in war crimes



Not only is the University of Cambridge investing financially in war and assaults on freedom of speech; it is also investing intellectually. Arms companies fund bursary schemes students and are integrated into partnerships for networking and 'knowledge exchange' between academia and industry.

The department of Materials Science and Metallurgy has an entire research theme focussed on servicing the needs of the arms and security sector.

According to the department's website, applications for research in this area include "steels for gun barrels and armour plating, fibrous materials for personnel and light armoured vehicle protection, and composite panel structures for vehicle and aeronautical use."

Arms dealers are also regularly invited onto campus for careers fairs, freshers fairs and conferences. The Engineering, Science and Technology Event 2017 hosted BAE Systems, Defence Engineering and Science Group (part of the MoD), Roke Manor Research, and Rolls Royce plc.

A recent campaign against the university's partnership with arms dealers and companies complicit in Israel's occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian lands shows how it is possible to organise a fightback.

In May 2018, 40 student groups and dozens of members of staff launched an open letter calling on the university to end its partnership with BAE Systems and Caterpillar Inc. through the Cambridge Service Alliance. This network was founded by the university

in 2010 and includes BAE Systems and Caterpillar among its members.

BAE Systems provides the targetting displays in F-16 fighter jets used by Israel in its 2014 attack on Gaza. Caterpillar's bulldozers have been weaponized by the Israeli army, which regularly uses them to carry out illegal demolitions of Palestinian villages and homes.

The letter also highlighted BAE's complicity in war crimes against the Kurdish people, and in Saudi Arabia's brutal war on Yemen.

Alice Finden, Anne Alexander and members of the Demilitarise Cambridge group contributed to writing and researching this article.

Introducing *Demilitarise Cambridge*

Students from the newly-launched Demilitarise Cambridge campaign explain why they are getting organised against the arms industry.

Cambridge University specifically is historically complicit in the industry of war. We invest in those companies. Our staff produce research for them. Our alumni have founded and worked for them. We host them in conferences and we invite them to our freshers' and careers fairs.

Cambridge University works with arms companies, enabling acts of war and oppression. But this isn't just something happening "out there". Many

of us students in Cambridge come from parts of the world that suffer the brunt of the global arms industry.

We are this university. We need to be defended from the "defence" industry.

Kurdish people have been bombarded by Turkey's BAE fighter jets; Kashmiris live under occupation of the Indian military supplied with British military hardware; Palestinians in Occupied Territories are attacked by British-supplied Israeli armed forces; Yemeni and Bahraini civilians are attacked by

Rolls Royce aircraft; Egyptian dissidents are suppressed by munitions and tear-gas provided by Chemring Group.

"We" are this university. We need to be defended from the "defence" industry.

If this is something you care about, get involved with us. We need to speak, act, and exhaust the power and privilege we have here in Cambridge: we will not enable this industry and its global destruction.

To find out more go to facebook.com/demilitarisecambridge

BASRA'S SUMMER OF DISCONTENT

The Iraqi port city of Basra has seen a major round of protests against corruption and lack of basic services, reports **Jad Bouharoun**

Thousands of people demonstrated in the southern Iraqi city of Basra in the first week of September. Several were shot dead and dozens were injured by the security forces in what is the latest and most significant round in a popular protest movement that kicked off back in July.

The movement's grievances initially focused on the lack of basic public services. Power cuts occur with daily frequency in Basra and their effect is particularly severe in the summer months, putting refrigerators and air conditioners out of order as outside temperatures reach 50 degrees celsius. Water supply does not fare any better: disorganisation and a decrepit, crumbling public infrastructure means tap water in Basra is unsanitary and has

poisoned thousands of Basrans over the past few months.

Toxic water and power-less homes are only some of the hardships that ordinary Iraqis have had to endure since the US-led invasion of 2003. Having easily defeated Saddam Hussein, the US and their allies found themselves confronted by nationalist armed insurgency.

They could only stabilise their rule through successive - and destructive - military "surges" and by transforming the insurgency into a sectarian civil war. At the same time, they set up a corrupt, neoliberal sectarian political system favouring Shi'a elites - but also bolstering US rival Iran's influence in the country.

After fifteen years of wars, sectarianism and neoliberal shock therapies, ordinary people in Iraq are near breaking point. Much-needed public services like electricity, water and healthcare are scarce, while unemployment and poverty levels are near all-time highs. Underpinning it all is corruption on a scale that is difficult to imagine as well as the successive governments' ongoing commitment to neoliberal IMF "reforms".

The southern province of Basra is home to oilfields that produce the immense majority of Iraqi oil exports, the state's principal source of income. But far from seeing any of that wealth trickle down to them, the four million inhabitants of Basra are among the poorest in Iraq.

They suffer from unemployment levels double the official (probably underestimated) national average of

10.8 percent and higher still youth unemployment. Moreover, the oil fields and leftovers from successive wars have generated toxic levels of air, water and soil pollution, impacting the health of the inhabitants.

It is therefore hardly surprising that ordinary Basran youth are at the forefront of the latest protest movement. Their demands go beyond jobs, decent public services and the fight against corruption, and are taking an explicitly political character.

Protesters are rejecting the post-invasion sectarian political system and questioning the legitimacy of the official political parties, even as the latter are engaged in sabre rattling at the top to bargain for positions in the future government.

Protesters attacked and burned the provincial governor's office

Initially focusing on the city's central square, the protests later spread to popular residential neighbourhoods. Protesters also attacked and burned the provincial governor's office, prime minister Haydar al-Abadi's Da'wa Party headquarters (a Shi'a Islamist party that has dominated the post-2003 political landscape), as well as a dozen or so offices belonging to the Shi'a militias that had been mobilised to fight against ISIS in the past years.

Even the Iranian consulate was burned, while Muqtada al-Sadr's Saraya al-Salam's office narrowly escaped a similar fate thanks to the mobilisation

of hundreds of his supporters.

It is worth noting that the attacks against Shi'a sectarian parties and the Iranian consulate are happening in a predominantly Shi'a city. This is another indicator that sectarianism in Iraq has mainly benefited the Shi'a elites, not ordinary Shi'as as a whole, many of whom are now rebelling against that sectarian system and its perceived patron, Iran.

Moreover, ordinary Shi'as have provided the bulk of the recruits of the paramilitary groups that helped the standing army in its fight against ISIS. Many now feel their sacrifices have been in vain as the militia chiefs exploited the military victory to bargain for political positions and their share of the corruption booty.

The Iraqi ruling class reacted to the turmoil from below with sabre rattling at the top. Politicians, senior civil servants and security chiefs are blaming each other for the problems in Basra as well as for the failure of the security forces to quell the dissent.

Sectarianism in Iraq has mainly benefited the Shi'a elites, not ordinary Shi'as as a whole

The protests come at a tricky moment for the rulers, as they are engaged in endless tractations to form a government after the low-turnout parliamentary elections of May yielded no single majority.

An unlikely alliance between Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and the Iraqi Communist Party came out on top, promising to fight against sectarianism and corruption. Al-Sadr had emerged in 2003 as a nationalist fighter against US occupation, basing himself on a predominantly Shi'a working-class constituency in Baghdad before taking part in the sectarian civil war against various Sunni armed groups.

He is generally seen as less corrupt than other Iraqi politicians, but has a history of attempting to contain and channel protest movements towards the institutional labyrinth of mainstream sectarian Iraqi politics.

The second most successful candidates came from a coalition of the former paramilitary groups that fought ISIS alongside the Iraqi army, while incumbent prime minister Haydar al-Abadi's list came third.



Demonstrators march through Basra | Photos: Basrahapp via Facebook

The Iraqi rulers, with Haydar al-Abadi at their head, probably expected to enjoy a period of political respite and popular approval after the victory against ISIS.

However, it appears that significant sections of the Iraqi people have high expectations of their government after the military threat posed by ISIS has receded.

The endemic corruption and the government's commitment to IMF recipes of neoliberalism, privatisation and austerity mean that the Iraqi rulers are unlikely properly to address the problems in Basra, which are problems faced to varying extents by the vast majority of Iraqis.

Instead, we can expect the state to quell the protests by means of fierce

repression, while certain sections of the ruling class may attempt to use the movement and channel it towards their own ends, diluting its radicality in the process.

To avoid both pitfalls, political organisation from below and solidarity across the whole country are needed.

The organised working class has remained silent for now. But if the dissent spreads from the streets and squares to the oil fields and the port of Basra, it would open a new phase in the struggle and create an even bigger riddle for the Iraqi rulers. The stakes are very high.



Promise of a dream?

How Sisi's real estate salesmen are luring UK universities to Egypt



Promotional video for the new capital | Photo: Cube Consultants via Vimeo

Egypt's military dictatorship is hoping to entice UK universities to invest in its grandiose building projects, reports **Anne Alexander**

Under the banner of promoting 'transnational education', Egypt's brutal and corrupt military regime is hoping to lure UK universities into costly investments in 'new cities' in the desert.

A delegation of senior managers from eleven UK universities organised by the international arm of employers' association Universities UK enjoyed a whirlwind tour of several of these building projects in June this year as part of a trip to promote "international branch campuses, partnerships, collaborative research, student and staff exchange programmes, joint funding applications, and capacity building".

Institutions taking part in the delegation included Coventry University, Queen Margaret University,

Edinburgh, University of East Anglia, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, Manchester Metropolitan University and several others.

Behind the rhetoric of collaboration and advancing education lies the calculation that Egypt could be a lucrative market for some UK institutions, with a rising number of Egyptian students prepared to pay for a degree validated by a British university or study in an international branch campus.

These projects will do little to improve education for ordinary Egyptians

There will also be vast opportunities for the regime and its partners in the private sector to enrich themselves in the huge construction projects now underway in the 'New Administrative Capital' east of Cairo, 'New Alamein City' and other mega building projects.

Reports in the media suggest that Sisi's real estate salesmen are desperate to lure in prospective investors by any means necessary.

An investigation by Middle East Eye earlier this year found that a presentation by the Egyptian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific

Research had falsely claimed that a raft of prestigious international universities were already committed to opening branch campuses in the new administrative capital.

Yet universities from Canada and Sweden named as future residents of an academic quarter in the new city said they had no plans to build a campus there.

Whether or not they provide a good return for investors, these projects will do little to improve education for millions of ordinary Egyptians whose living standards have plummeted in recent years thanks to cuts to subsidised food and fuel and cannot ever hope of living or studying there.

Egypt's government data service CAPMAS recently reported that nearly 30 percent of Egyptians nationwide were living below the poverty line of 482 Egyptian pounds per month (just over £20). Meanwhile luxury flats in New Alamein City, one of the locations visited by the UUK delegation, are on the market for 7.7 million Egyptian pounds (£298,000).

The presence of international universities also has another purpose: whitewashing the regime's horrendous track record of abuses of academic freedoms and human rights. Less than three years ago, Cambridge University student Giulio Regeni was abducted,

tortured and brutally murdered in Cairo while carrying out research for his PhD.

Human rights organisations and academic experts say that the most likely culprits are to be found in Egypt's labyrinthine network of security services, which have been leading a campaign of forced disappearances directed at opposition activists following the military's seizure of power in the July 2013 coup.

These same security services are routinely involved in violating the rights of Egyptian students and academics. They are an insidious part of university life: 'vetting' academic appointments, intervening violently to suppress protests, 'reminding' academics not to cross 'red lines' in the content of their lectures, and even on their private social media pages. The consequences of failing to self-censor are harsh: hundreds of students and academics have been arrested in recent years, with many facing trials before military courts.

Vivienne Stern, director of UUK's international arm, which organised the Egypt delegation told the Guardian that academic freedom was "an essential ingredient in excellent teaching and research", and that "Universities UK regularly reviews its partnerships with overseas entities and seeks advice from its board in the light of changing political and social circumstances."

Giulio Regeni's "troubling and unresolved" murder was discussed during the UUK delegation, Stern said. She was less forthcoming about what was the response from her Egyptian hosts, and whether any concrete steps were proposed to ensure respect for academic freedoms and basic human rights in any new partnerships with UK universities.

Academics are furious that their senior managers and the British government are prepared to work hand-in-glove with the Sisi regime. In a protest letter published in The Guardian on 22 August, hundreds of academics challenged UUK over its links with the Egyptian government.

The academics' letter hit back at the UUK delegation, questioning "the wisdom and legitimacy of this move to do business as usual with an authoritarian regime that systematically attacks research, education and academic freedom."

'We won't do 'business-as-usual' with this authoritarian regime'

Leon Rocha

University of Liverpool UCU first discovered, on 26 June 2018, that University of Liverpool's vice-chancellor, Professor Dame Janet Beer, signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Khaled Abdel-Ghaffar (Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research), through the official Twitter accounts of Universities UK and University of Liverpool.

The memorandum outlined "a range of options for collaboration including joint research activities, academic staff and student mobility and the potential to develop an International Branch Campus (IBC) in Egypt in the future". University of Liverpool UCU's committee therefore contacted their friends and colleagues at University of Cambridge UCU, and collaboratively penned the letter of protest to The Guardian.

UK universities, instead of challenging global injustices, act as handmaidens to the Conservative government's questionable agendas.

This incident is indicative of at least three problems in UK Higher Education. First, senior management feel little need to consult the university staff and student body over key policy changes and important decisions, which are then presented as a *fait accompli* via the university's marketing and communications department.

University of Liverpool's deal with Egypt coincided with Liverpool senior management tried to push through 220 redundancies.

Second, senior management at UK Higher Education, jetting around the world on their expenses accounts to sign lucrative deals with volatile and authoritarian regimes, demonstrate

the complete emptiness of their regular pronouncements on how they are absolutely committed to human rights.

The Egyptian Government under Sisi has presided over the worst human rights crisis in the country, including the violent crackdown on LGBT people and feminist activists who risked their lives by speaking out against sexual harassment and assault in Egypt.

It is profoundly troubling to University of Liverpool UCU that Professor Dame Beer, who was awarded her Damehood for her "services to equality and diversity" within one week of signing the Memorandum, had seemingly little hesitation to commit her university's staff and students to Egypt.

That the announcement of the Memorandum of Understanding took place on 26 June 2018, the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, was even more egregious and reprehensible.

Thirdly, in our view, this episode reflects the cosy relationship between the Conservative government and Universities UK, the self-appointed "voice of UK universities" and the organisation that Professor Dame Beer leads as President. In November 2015, during Sisi's visit to the UK, the two governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding around cooperation in Higher Education.

In January 2018, the UK Minister for Higher Education and Industrial Strategy, Sam Gyimah, has signed another Memorandum with Khaled Abdel-Ghaffar on UK universities establishing branch campuses in Egypt--this was proudly publicised by Universities UK.

By June 2018, Professor Dame Beer signed her deal between University of Liverpool and Egypt. This shows how senior management at UK universities, instead of challenging global injustices and speaking truth to power, happily act as handmaidens to the Conservative government's questionable agendas.

University of Liverpool UCU and the Liverpool Guild of Students, together with UCU branches at University of Cambridge and other institutions, will continue to debate these serious issues and raise awareness among the staff and student body.

Leon Rocha is an Ordinary member of the University of Liverpool UCU branch committee



Hundreds of trade unionists back campaign against IHRA definition

Anne Alexander

An intervention by the leaders of some of the UK's biggest trade unions into the debate over antisemitism in the Labour has sparked a critical response from rank-and-file activists.

Following a wave of criticism in the media and from the leaders of some Jewish organisations, Labour's National Executive agreed to 'adopt' a controversial definition of antisemitism promoted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which includes examples of statements and beliefs critical of Zionism and the state of Israel.

Union leaders from Unite, Unison and the GMB were among those calling on the NEC to accept the definition 'in full', including the examples.

Now hundreds of trade unionists have issued a public statement opposing the IHRA definition for opening the door to attacks on freedom of speech and stifling



Solidarity with the Palestinians risks being stifled by the IHRA definition | Photo: Alisdare Hickson

solidarity with the Palestinians.

Nita Sanghera, vice-president of the university and colleges union UCU told Middle East Solidarity, "I am opposed to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the continued attacks on the Palestinian people's right to a life free from danger.

"Racism is wrong in whatever guise it manifests itself but this continued conflation between, Zionism and antisemitism must end."

"As an educationalist, I champion the right to free speech. The examples given in the IHRA definition of

antisemitism are a serious threat to academic freedoms as they suggest that anyone arguing that the foundation of the state of Israel was a "racist endeavour" is antisemitic.

"I believe that racism is wrong in whatever guise it manifests itself but this continued conflation between, Zionism and antisemitism must end."

Alongside dozens of signatories from leading figures in UCU other supporters of the statement include Janice Godrich and Zita Holbourne PCS national president and vice-president, Ian Hodson, national president of the food workers' BFAWU union, and hundreds of activists from Unite, Unison and the NEU teachers' union.

[Read the letter in full on the back page. menasolidaritynetwork.com/ihraletter](https://www.menasolidaritynetwork.com/ihraletter)

Hunger strike exposes Bahrain prison brutality

Alice Finden

For more than forty days this summer Ali Mushaima camped outside the Bahraini embassy in London demanding an end to the inhuman treatment of his father.

Hassan Mushaima is a leader of Al-Wefaq opposition party in Bahrain, who has been named a 'prisoner of conscience' by Amnesty International. He has been subject to physical and psychological torture by the Bahraini authorities. Hassan is also suffering other health complications for which



Ali Mushaima endured a hunger strike for 44 days outside the Bahraini embassy | Photo: Alisdare Hickson

he is not receiving medical help.

Ali is demanding that the Bahraini authorities provide his father with immediate access to medical care

without forcing him to wear shackles and permit family visits.

[Go to www.birdbh.org](https://www.birdbh.org) for updates on Ali's campaign for prisoner rights

Detained labour lawyer's detention extended again

Egypt Solidarity

A well-known activist and labour lawyer saw his detention renewed for another fifteen days on 10 September. Haitham Mohamedain was arrested in May and accused of agitating against public transport price rises. He regularly defends arrested workers and activists in court and is an outspoken critic of the regime.

Trade unionists, MPs, writers and academics have launched a protest statement calling for the immediate release, which has gathered over 1000 signatures from leading activists.

Add your signature and find out more about the campaign online at www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org



Haitham Mohamedain is one of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt | Photo: Hossam el-Hamalawy

Farcical mass trial hands down more death sentences

Egypt Solidarity

A mass trial in which 739 defendants had endured five years of detention ended in September with a slew of sentences of death and life imprisonment against leading figures in the Muslim Brotherhood and the conviction of hundreds of others on flimsy or non-existent evidence.

The case related to the violent break-up of the Raba'a sit-in during August 2013. Hundreds of people were murdered by the Egyptian security forces and army during the operation, yet no-one has faced any charges over the massacre, the worst in Egypt's modern history.

One of those convicted was photojournalist Shawkan (left), who was sentenced to five years in jail and a further five years under police supervision. He was expected to walk free soon having served five years in pre-trial detention.



Shawkan has already spent five years in jail | Photo: FreedomforShawkan via Facebook



BACK THESE CAMPAIGNS

Solidarity with Israa al-Ghomgham

Israa al-Ghomgham is on trial in Saudi Arabia in a terrorism court, facing protest-related charges for peaceful demonstrations she took part in in 2011, and for sharing information about the protests on social media.

She spent three years in pre-trial detention, and is now on trial alongside her husband and four other activists. The Public Prosecution of Saudi Arabia is pressing for Israa to be executed.

Israa's persecution is taking place against the backdrop of a crackdown on human rights and freedoms by the Saudi Arabian authorities, including



Israa al-Ghomgham as a child | Photo: via Twitter

recently directed at women's rights activists who had led campaigns against the driving ban.

The demonstrations Israa and others were involved in called attention to the systematic discrimination that the Shi'a minority of Saudi Arabia face.

Many participants in these demonstrations were persecuted. In 2014 and 2016 the Saudi authorities

carried out mass executions on activists who participated in the protests.

Israa's supporters have set up a Twitter account to share news about her case in the run-up to her next court hearing on 28 October.

What you can do:

- Sign the petition online here: <https://www.change.org/p/save-israa-saudi-shia-female-activist-israa-al-ghomgham-may-face-execution-for-activism>
- Follow @IsraaAlGhomgham on Twitter for updates on her case
- Send a message of protest to the Saudi authorities, demanding the immediate release of Israa and all other political prisoners
- Call on the British government to stop selling arms to the Saudi regime

Speak out against controversial antisemitism 'definition'

Join hundreds of trade unionists in backing a statement opposing the adoption of a controversial definition which conflates antisemitism with anti-Zionism.

There is a proud tradition in the UK trade unions of both fighting for Palestinian rights and standing firm against racism.

In the current context where the far right is now becoming a real threat once again, this letter appeals for unity and solidarity rather than the division and confusion which will result if the IHRA definition is widely adopted.

What you can do:

- Read the full text on the back page and read the full list of signatories here: <https://tinyurl.com/IHRAtradeunionletterfullsigs>
- Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com/ihraletter to add your name and get updates from this campaign.

Demilitarise Cambridge

Universities like Cambridge are key "stakeholders" in producing the knowledge and skills for the "defence industry" to function. Unfortunately, what this means - behind the corporate doublespeak - is that British companies will be exporting violence across the world, assisted by the government, and abetted by our universities. The murky world of the "defence" sector is the corrupt and violent world of the international arms trade.

Manufacturing and exporting weapons simply won't produce the conditions for peace. The conflict in Syria, armed by a host of external powers including Britain, has produced one of the most painful tragedies of mass exodus in recent memory.

This is an imperial conflict, and this is a European crisis. This is how the war comes back home.

Do we want a university that helps these companies profit off the death and destruction that their products are intended to cause? Do we want students trained to find more efficient ways of killing people, recruited from a careers fair down the road? Do we want our academics spending time and contributing their knowledge to



solving problems for arms companies?

If this is something you care about, get involved with us. We need to speak, act, and exhaust the power and privilege we have here in Cambridge: we will not enable this industry and its global destruction.

What you can do:

- If you are a student, member of staff or local resident in Cambridge get in touch via demilitarisecambridge@gmail.com and facebook.com/demilitarisecambridge
- Not in Cambridge? Why not contact Campaign Against Arms Trade Universities' Network for info about activism on your campus? Go to www.caatunis.net



Disabled activists join a protest in Tunisia in 2011 | Photo: Nasser Nouri

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Want to write for us? Get in touch.

Contact us online if you have an idea for a story, want to contribute a translation or to share a photograph or illustration you have created. Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com/MEScontributors



Strike
إضراب
Solidarity
تضامن

MENA Solidarity

menasolidaritynetwork.com

MENA Solidarity is a network of activists from different unions in the UK engaged in building solidarity for struggle to win social justice and workers' rights in the Middle East. We are supported by the UCU, PCS and NUT unions and a number of other trade union regions and branches.

BAHRAIN WATCH

Bahrain Watch

bahrainwatch.org

Bahrain Watch is an independent research and advocacy organisation formed in February 2012 that seeks to promote effective, transparent and accountable governance in Bahrain.

Egypt
مصر
SOLIDARITY

Egypt Solidarity

egyptsolidarityinitiative.org

Egypt Solidarity launched on 11 February 2014, the third anniversary of the fall of Mubarak, in order to campaign in defence of democratic rights in Egypt.

'We will speak out against Israel's history of racism'

Trade unionists launch campaign in opposition to adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism

We are deeply concerned by the accelerating pressure on the labour movement to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and the associated examples and urge our fellow trade unionists to stand firm in opposition to this divisive move.

Trade unions and the Labour Party must be at the heart of building a movement against racism and fascism, and there is no place for antisemitism, Islamophobia or any other kind of racism in our ranks.

In an era when the far-right is growing in confidence it is more important than ever to stand against Holocaust denial, anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and any other forms of antisemitic prejudice and hatred.

However, the examples which accompany the IHRA definition systematically conflate opposition to Israel with antisemitism, threatening to undermine many years of practical solidarity with the Palestinian people in the face of decades of dispossession and occupation.

The examples which accompany the IHRA definition systematically conflate opposition to Israel with antisemitism

We believe it is vitally important that trade unionists can speak out to challenge Israel's history of racism towards the Palestinians without being labelled as antisemitic.

The IHRA definition and its examples pose a serious threat to academic freedom. Specifically, there is a wide body of scholarly research and teaching

that locates the origins of the state of Israel within the framework of a European colonial settler project.

The IHRA definition and its examples pose a serious threat to academic freedom.

This draws on historical evidence of widely-held racist ideas about the 'indigenous population' among Israel's founders and acts of ethnic cleansing and exclusion in building the new state.

Historical interpretations are of course subject to challenge, but the very principles of scholarly research will be under threat if legitimate interpretations of Israel's founding as "a racist endeavour" are falsely conflated with antisemitism.

We note that the general secretaries of several major trade unions urged Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party to adopt the IHRA definition in full. We do not share their view that compromising over this issue is necessary in order to boost Labour's chances at the polls.

We pledge to continue the campaign against the adoption of the IHRA definition and examples within our own trade unions, and urge others to do the same in their institutions.

What we need is to build unity across the labour movement in the face of the growing threat from the far-right, while remaining uncompromising in our opposition to all forms of racism, and steadfast in our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Signatories include:

Mary Adossides President Brent Trades Council **Ian Allinson** Former EC member, Branch chair and NISC member Unite, **Andy Bain**, ex-

President, TSSA, **Professor Harriet Bradley** Chair, South West Region UCU UWE, **Mike Calvert** Unison - Deputy Branch Secretary Islington (PC)* Unison, **Nicholas Cimini** EIS-ULA President EIS Edinburgh Napier University, **Jane Doolan** NEC member (PC) Unison, **Jon Gamble** BEC DFT London & South East Branch PCS. **Janice Godrich**, National President, PCS, **Elane Heffernan** NEC member UCU, **Ian Hodson** National President, Bakers', Food & Allied Workers Union BFAWU, **Zita Holbourne**, Vice-President, PCS, **Diana James** Assistant Branch Secretary - Islington (Unison) (PC) Unison, **Chris Jones** NEC member UCU, **Jennifer Kidman** Vice Chair East London branch Unite Community, **Councillor Mike Langley** South west political committee Unite Bristol city council, **Rhiannon Lockley** UCU NEC -Dudley South CLP UCU, **Dorothy Macedo** Deputy chair South Coast Unite Community, **Lisa Mahoney-Pearce**, Joint Division Secretary, Dudley NEU, **Toby Mallinson**, Joint Division Secretary, NEU Sheffield Division, **Richard McEwan** UCU National Negotiator UCU, **Merilyn Moos** Chair, UCU London Retired branch (in personal capacity) UCU Retired, **Eric Parker** Branch Financial Officer CWU Royal Mail, **Nita Sanghera** UCU Vice president UCU, **John Sullivan** NEC member UCU, **Dr Andy Thompson** West Mids Regional Cttee, F&GP, PC Unite

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