

Middle East **Solidarity**

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Occupation in a time of coronavirus

A monument to dictatorship

Al-Sisi's obsession with building Egypt's New Administrative Capital analysed by Fareid Atta

Sudanese healthworker speaks out

Sarah Abdelgalil on challenging injustice from the UK to Sudan

Syria protests rise again

A spirit of solidarity and resistance is growing across the country again says Abdulsalam Dallal

Raising the flag for liberation

Alice Finde remembers courageous Egyptian activist Sarah Hegazi

Annexation and apartheid

Israel's land grab in the West Bank has a long history, writes Miriam Scharf

OUT NOW

MENA Solidarity Research Report No.1



TRADE UNIONS AND THE ALGERIAN UPRISING

A Research Report by MENA Solidarity Network

By Hamza Hamouchene, Samir Larabi and Shelagh Smith

Contents include: A year of the Hirak - History of the Algerian workers' movement - The struggle in Kabylia - Teachers drive union change - Trade unions and the Hirak - Britain's role in Algeria - Political prisoners and repression - A guide to solidarity action

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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.

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ALGERIA**'The regime wants to put us in cages'**

Shelagh Smith

Seventeen months after the protest movement, or Hirak, exploded onto the streets of Algeria in February 2019, there has been no fundamental change to the system since independence in 1962.

The demand remains for a civil, not a military state. Protesters demonstrated peacefully every week until mid-March 2020, when the authorities banned marches due to the coronavirus outbreak - although the opposition had already suspended them.

Despite a few prisoner releases in July, opponents, journalists, independent media and internet users have been increasingly persecuted by Algerian authorities for expressing critical opinions in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, with more frequent arrests and jail sentences.

Recently, the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH) found that the majority of political detainees face vague charges such as "undermining national unity", "harming national security" and "harming the army's morale", often based on social media posts.

Three activists of the Hirak were released from prison on July 2. They had been arrested on June 12 in Bejaia, Kabylia, during a rally to support detainees.

The prosecution had demanded three years in prison for "inciting unarmed



Journalist Khaled Drareni remains in jail | Photo: Zoheir Aberkane

assembly", "publication which could harm the national interest" and "endangering the lives of others during the period of confinement".

The three are: former detainee, Merzoug Touati, a blogger and journalist for L'Avant-Garde Algérie, whose website is blocked in the country; Yanis Adjila, a human rights activist; Amar Beri, an activist of the Hirak.

Several other news sites like lematinaldgerie.com are blocked in Algeria.

On the same day, the Bejaia court released two other activists, Khaled Tazaghart (a resigned MP) and Zahir Moulaoui (a former policeman), with six months' suspended sentences.

The prosecution had demanded one year and two years respectively. They had been arrested on July 1 at a rally in support of Merzoug Touati, Yanis Adjila and Amar Berri.

On the same day, July 2, four well known figures of the protest movement were also released, although three of them provisionally:

Karim Tabbou, one of the most prominent figures of the movement and founder of the UDS (Democratic and social union), was provisionally released, having been sentenced to one year for "undermining

the integrity of the national territory".

He was first arrested in September 2019 and kept in prolonged solitary confinement. In March he was sentenced to one year for a speech on his party's Facebook page where he criticised the role of the army in politics. He still faces trial this September for "damaging army morale".

"The prison is a factory to transform anger into political energy" - Karim Tabbou

Amira Bouraoui, a gynaecologist and prominent activist, was also released provisionally, together with Samir Benlarbi and Slimane Hamitouche who had been detained since March for "harming national unity" and "illicit gathering".

Significantly, the journalist Khaled Drareni was not released at the same time. Drareni, a correspondent for Reporters Without Borders (RSF), is in pre-trial detention, having been arrested in March because of his reporting of demonstrations in Algiers.

The day before, six other activists had received a presidential pardon. But the

CNLD (National Committee for the Liberation of Detainees) estimates that nearly 60 Hirak detainees are still in prison, most of them for Facebook publications.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune hinted of other prisoner releases, judging that the country was moving towards a "much calmer" political climate.

But the only action that would show the regime has any intention of addressing the demands of the movement would be the immediate and unconditional release of all activists. Tebboune unveiled his constitutional reform project promising more rights and freedoms, at the same time as authorities are incarcerating and prosecuting anyone who speaks up and tells the truth.

Interviewed on Berbère Télévision after his release, Karim Tabbou said "The best way to make Spring is to release all the birds from their the cages," referring to the Hirak prisoners.

"The regime wants to put us in cages, this is the trap. As long as people sing inside the cages, it doesn't bother them". He added "The prison is a factory to transform anger into political energy".

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Top Left: Women join protests in Abu Jubaiha, a town of 20,000 people in South Kordofan. Top Right: Mobilising in Niyala. Bottom Left: Wadi Halfa's Resistance Committee takes to the streets. Bottom Right: Crowds mass for rally in El Obeid on 30 June. Independent station Radio Dabanga reported on mass marches in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Dongola, El Geneina, El Obeid, and all of the camps for the internally displaced in Darfur. | Photos: SPA via Facebook

SUDAN

Sit-ins spread on protest anniversary

Anne Alexander

Sudan's revolutionary movement has surged ahead with renewed confidence as marches to commemorate the one year anniversary of the 'March of Millions' on 30 June 2019 once again mobilised millions across the country to demand justice for those killed by the security forces during the uprising.

Protesters are frustrated at the lack of structural change, more than a year after the fall of dictator El Bashir. Independent radio station Radio Dabanga reported on mass marches in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Dongola, El Geneina, El Obeid, and all of the camps for the internally displaced in Darfur.

The Sudanese Professionals Association, one of the key coordinating groups in the mass mobilisations which toppled El Bashir last year, posted pictures of demonstrators taking to the streets across Sudan, from Abu Jubaiha in South Kordofan to Wadi Halfa on the northern border with Egypt.

In Darfur, demonstrators organised sit-ins calling for

action against militiamen who continue to terrorise agricultural communities with violent attacks.

In Darfur, demonstrators organised sit-ins calling for action against militiamen who continue to terrorise agricultural communities. Solidarity protests spread again across Sudan after militiamen riding camels, horses, and motorcycles killed at least 9 people at the sit-in in Fata Borno camp on 13 July.

Nierteti in Central Darfur has also been an important focus for protests and solidarity. Resistance committees in Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North organised a solidarity demonstration outside the Prime Minister's office. Radio Dabanga reported:

"participants in the vigil held banners saying 'We are all Nierteti!' and 'Security and peace are rightful demands'.

The question of justice for protesters killed in Khartoum at the violent dispersal of the sit-in outside the army headquarters on 3 June last year and the new wave of sit-ins in Darfur are deeply connected.

The head of the Rapid Support Forces, the militia formed out of the armed Janjaweed gangs which continue to terrorise Darfur and played a pivotal role in the genocide there, Mohamed Dagalo, is a member of the Transitional Government.

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'Covid 19 has exposed injustice globally'

Systematic failures in the NHS are risking the lives of Sudanese health workers in the UK, **Sarah Abdelgalil** explains. Meanwhile they also continue to mobilise in solidarity with the ongoing revolution and the battle against Covid 19 in Sudan.

Sudanese doctors and health professionals have been active members of the NHS for ages. There has always been a movement from Sudan, from health professionals to come to the UK for training and they have been active in delivering services in the NHS at different levels, from senior clinicians, to pharmacists, paramedics, nurses in different areas. They have been on the frontline working with other colleagues in fighting Covid 19.

The Sudanese Doctors' Union - UK carried out a survey which rang alarm bells as it exposed that a significant number did not have an appropriate risk assessment before being deployed to work at the frontline. It seems they were unable to raise their concerns about the risk assessment not being done, or about the suitability of their workplace, indicating that there is a systematic failure within the NHS to allow people to raise their voices.

The links between Sudanese health professionals and Britain go back to colonial times, with the establishment of the Gordon Medical School.

The system is the British system, the links are with the British academic institutes. Doctors used to come from Sudan from the University of Khartoum Medical College for training in the UK and then they would go back.

There are also thousands of Sudanese doctors who are not coming to the UK, instead going to the United



Portraits of Dr Amged El-Hawrani and Dr Adil El-Tayyar, two of the five Sudanese NHS workers who have died from Covid 19
Illustrations: Nick Prolix

States, Canada or Australia, or the Gulf. That is for a range of reasons, including difficulties in obtaining visas.

Another issue is the question of the 'Brain Drain'. Professionals from Africa, from Sudan are leaving their continent and going to work in Europe or in North America, Australia or the Gulf, because of political, economic and social injustice. What is the moral commitment from these countries when they are draining brains from Africa?

I think the main thing in 2020 is what has been happening in the USA with regards to Black American lives. We have to be careful about addressing the issue of racism and that we tackle the root causes of it appropriately with action and not just with words.

Covid 19 has exposed the significant

injustice not only in the health service, but globally, with regards to health, to medication, to getting PPE, to getting tests, to approving a vaccine.

The situation in Sudan is very challenging, as we are coming out of 30 years of systematic failure and corruption and lack of commitment and a fragile health service. We were then confronted by cholera, dengue and Rift Valley fever outbreaks, and now Covid 19.

The Ministry of Health and the government have been working hard with support internally and externally from the Sudanese diaspora to try to combat the Covid 19 pandemic, through training, through donations, by obtaining PPE, by supporting oxygenation, by increasing public awareness, so it brought people together. SDU-UK launched a project which has raised funding to supply hundreds of oxygen cylinders to El-Fashir hospital in Northern Darfur state. The hospital serves a population of 3 million, including 64,000 internally displaced people.

The revolution brought people together and united them, and Covid 19 did the same.

There have been challenges due to the international sanctions on Sudan imposed during the previous regime. These affect us getting funding, buying PPE, and this, along with other factors, caused shortages in PPE, and this has meant that in some areas health professionals were unable to work because of the huge risk to their lives.

We are very disappointed and frustrated that Sudanese people inside and outside Sudan peacefully stood up against a terrorist regime, but still we cannot lift the ban and get our rights, even to transfer money or to be able to get the basic equipment to fight such a deadly virus.

Dr Sara Abdelgalil is an NHS consultant and a member of the Sudanese Doctors Union - UK. Find out more on the SDU website www.sdu.org.uk



'We are with you until victory': a message from Idlib to al-Suwayda'a, January 2020 | Photo: Bilal Bayyoush

A SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY

Protesters reach out from south to north in Syria

Despite fierce repression and the devastating effects of war, regime-controlled areas in Syria have recently witnessed a wave of protests. **Abdulsalam Dallal** reports on how activists have found ways to keep the spirit of solidarity alive

Demonstrations against the regime of Bashar al-Assad resumed in the predominantly Druze province of Al-Suwayda'a in southern Syria on 7 June 2020. Revolutionaries in Syria and exile at first were split into two groups in response.

The first group linked these protests with the deteriorating economic

situation in the Assad-controlled areas, including skyrocketing inflation which has left 3000 Syria liras now equivalent to \$1. Others welcomed these protests, interpreting them through the lens of the Syrian revolution.

In Al-Suwayda'a itself, revolutionary activists have also had their say. Chants clearly showed that the recent protests are against the regime. Slogans such as: "Our revolution is not a hunger revolution, it is against bowing", "Syria belongs to us, not to the Assad family", "Leave O Bashar," and "Long live Syria ... down with Bashar al-Assad" were at the core of the demonstrations.

These trans-ethnic and trans-sectarian chants challenge interpretations which primarily explain the Syrian revolution with reference to sectarianism or geopolitics and regional and international competition for leverage over the country. The Syrian revolution is first and foremost an

internal struggle against the political regime whose neoliberal policies have impoverished a large segment of the Syrian people, marginalised others, and divided Syrians in order to remain in power.

Only those who were from the inner circle of the regime and close to the security intelligence apparatus have had the upper hand in Syria, enjoying good living standards compared to the rest of the population.

What these interpretations miss is understanding the essence of solidarity which pushed Syrians to take to the streets since day one of the protests in Dera'a province. Indeed, revolutionaries in Al-Suwayda'a, through their protests, set a great example of solidarity.

In addition to their anti-regime slogans, they raised banners and chanted slogans expressing their solidarity with people in Idlib who have suffered, like other revolutionary

places, from severe bombardments by the Assad regime and its allies, Russia and Iran.

It is also important to mention here that Al-Suwayda'a protests are taking place on the first anniversary of the death of the famous revolutionary fighter, goalkeeper, and singer, Abdalbasset al-Sarout who died on 8 June 2019.

Protesters did not miss the opportunity to remember him and exalt his soul. Activists in Al-Suwayda'a, who I spoke to, stated that June has become an important month for them. "We revived the Syrian revolution in our hearts and on the streets and remembered al-Sarout who sacrificed his soul defending the Syrian revolution and its goals this month last year."

In response, solidarity protests in Dera'a, northern Syria, and Idlib - during which protesters carried banners glorifying revolutionaries in Al-Suwayda'a - emphasised the unity of the Syrian struggle and dismissed sectarian narratives.

The timing of these protests is very important for several reasons. Firstly, although the regime has recaptured most of the territories that it lost since March 2011, its power, however, has been eroded. It is not able to rule as it did before the revolution.

Secondly, Russia is not happy with the Assad regime. Reports indicate that Moscow recently criticised the Assad regime and its cronies for not exerting real efforts to settle the conflict and start a concrete reconstruction process.

Therefore, Russia could be ready to start looking for an alternative to Bashar, someone who could undertake serious steps towards a peaceful resolution and reconstruction.

Thirdly, it is important to highlight that Al-Suwayda'a protests take place amidst a split within the ruling family. The power struggle between the axis of Rami Makhoul, the president's maternal cousin and that of Asma, the president's wife has floated to the surface.

Makhoul appeared in three videos on his Facebook page, talking about the "unfair procedures" which the government is taking against his companies and projects.

He pleaded with the president to take action and stop the "farce" after the Treasury sent him a demand to pay his taxes, which Makhoul claims that he has already paid.



Idlib protesters again show solidarity with al-Suwayda'a, 20 June | Photo: Fadi al-Shami



Protesters in al-Suwayda'a 8 June | Photo: Facebook



Protesters in al-Suwayda'a 13 June | Photo: Facebook

Makhlouf also noted that such procedures only benefit those who are around the President, meaning Bashar's wife and her businessmen relatives.

This split encouraged people in the Assad-controlled areas to bravely point out the corruption of both the regime, the government and the officials' cronies. Even Alawites, who are drawn from the same religious sect as the President and are often considered core loyalists of the regime, have begun to voice dissent.

Ibrahim, an activist from the town of Lattakia referred to the economic hardships that people in the predominantly Alawite areas suffer from. "Unfortunately, we are suffering at both political and economic levels. From a political perspective, the regime turned our sect from a peaceful sect into a bloody one. Many of our youth are perceived as loyalists. This will affect our future integration with other Syrians when Bashar's regime leaves. At the economic level, we are enduring a lot. Now we are not able to afford to buy some basic goods."

The regime media, however, attempted to diminish the struggle of Al-Suwayda'a. They at first denied having any protests, but later some reports talked about people's frustration and anger at the high prices as well as the difficult living conditions, which the regime tried to attribute to the recent American sanctions following the activation of "Caesar Act."

These sanctions, which the White House approved, came after an officer in the military security intelligence, known as "Caesar", smuggled out around 11,000 pictures of detainees who were tortured to death in the prisons of the Assad regime.

The regime played an anti-imperialist narrative to defuse its supporters' anger. At the same time, it used traditional methods of cracking down on protesters in Al-Suwayda'a, including detaining some activists.

The regime also called its supporters, including state employees, students, members of Ba'ath Party, to take to the streets and express their loyalty to the regime. A voice message attributed to the head of the student union in the province, Wafa'a Aflaq, stated that if any student does not go to the pro-regime rally, he or she will be expelled from the University.

While these measures did not dissuade the demonstrations, protesters, however, became more



Demonstrators in Idlib | Photo: Abdulkader al-Bakri

cautious about their safety. They marched through the city centre and reached the governorate's buildings.

Messages from Syrian revolutionaries were circulated through social media warning against making their own earlier mistakes. "We do not want protesters in Al-Suwayda'a to commit any of our mistakes, their chats should be inclusive, the protests in Al-Suwayda'a should remain peaceful and stay away from militarisation", a Syrian activist in the northern countryside of Aleppo disclosed to me.

"We are enduring a lot. Now we are not able to afford to buy basic goods." Ibrahim, Lattakia

The spirit of solidarity with Al-Suwayda'a was remarkable. Syrian protesters in Germany on 21 June raised banners and chants in solidarity with protesters in Al-Suwayda'a. Lujain, one of the protesters, said that "it feels like we are back in 2011 when we protested in solidarity with Syrian cities and towns which suffered the regime's brutality at that time".

Finally, it is crucial to note that this is not the first time that the protests in Al-Suwayda'a take place. Throughout the past nine years, the province has witnessed many anti-regime protests. Additionally, people refused the deployment of their youth outside the province.

Fares, a Syrian refugee from Al-Suwayda'a in Europe, told me that "the best thing that the Sheikhs and leaders in the province did is that they objected to the deployment of soldiers from

Al-Suwayda'a to other parts, they did not want them to have blood on their hands.

Soldiers from the various areas in Al-Suwayda'a spend their mandatory military service in the province. Jamal, an activist from Aleppo and a previous lecturer in the Assad Academy for Military Engineering, said that "the anti-regime mobilisation in Al-Suwayda'a is to be expected.

The province always wants to be with the revolution." The regime's deployment of the "minority protection card", and its claims to be defending religious minorities from attack has had some effect, however, Jamal added. In addition the regime is capable of trying to bend reality to fit its vision.

"Whenever this does not work in Al-Suwayda'a, we notice pockets of ISIS fighters, who the regime allowed to evacuate from the suburbs of Damascus to areas near Al-Suwayda'a in August 2018 becoming active again, frightening the population there."

It is nine and a half years since Syrians demanded change. Their peaceful struggle evolved into a bloody war attracting regional and international powers.

Syria has become a chessboard for those players whose interests deepened the Syrian tragedy and crafted cleavages within its multi-ethnic and multi-sect communities.

However, the recent protests of Al-Suwayda'a prove once more that the Syrian revolution is a popular and nationwide revolution against the autocracy of the Assad regime and we should not ever forget this fact.

Raising the flag for liberation

Sarah Hegazi was a courageous fighter against injustice and oppression and an inspiration to the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights far beyond Egypt, says **Alice Finden**.

This summer, activists around the world shared memories and tributes to Sarah Hegazi who claimed her own life on 13 June this year. Sarah had been suffering post traumatic stress and depression after a harrowing imprisonment by the Egyptian state in 2017. She had claimed asylum in Canada and had been living with her trauma. A year later she wrote, “Even after my release, fear of everyone, family, friends, and the street continued to haunt me.”

Sarah was arrested along with Ahmed Alaa for raising the rainbow flag at a Mashrou’ Leila concert. The lead singer of Mashrou’ Leila, Hamed Sinno, is openly gay and advocates for LGBTQ+ rights in Lebanon where the band is from. On raising the flag, Alaa said:

“It was a great moment for feeling free, for helping people to practice their rights ... It makes me happy. It makes me feel human. I can speak. I can share my opinion in public. It was the best moment of my life.”

Sarah and Ahmed were both charged with “promoting sexual deviancy and debauchery” and jailed for three months. Sarah wrote that during that time, she was tortured with electrocution, sexually assaulted and humiliated. The authorities also arrested dozens of other people at the concert.

State violence and police brutality targeted at sexual minorities is rife



Mural of Sarah Hegazi in Amman | Photos: Flycatchr via Wikimedia Commons

in Egypt. In the first month after Sarah’s arrest, The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights estimated that 54 arrests had been made under the debauchery laws.

The Egyptian police use apps such as Grindr and Growlr as a means of entrapping LGBTQ+ people. In 2015 Middle East Solidarity Magazine interviewed LGBTQ+ people about their experiences of state violence in Egypt and Lebanon. At the time, Ramy told us: “I think the crackdown under al-Sisi is definitely the most violent of all time”.

State targeting of LGBTQ+ communities has been happening for a long time in Egypt. The “Queen Boat Panic” of 2001 highlighted the first instance of a systematic crackdown, through the use of repressive Public Order and Public Morals Codes to criminalise people engaged in “homosexual acts”. This case involved arrests of 52 gay men on a boat party on the Nile who were thereafter tried for “public depravity”.

El-Sisi’s regime has become infamous for its mass arrests, arbitrary detention and unfair trials. Many who are kept in Egypt’s overfilled jails are political prisoners and have been

tortured, and some are ‘disappeared’. There are also major concerns over infection rates of prisoners given the current Covid 19 pandemic.

Shady Habash, one of the regime’s latest victims, was imprisoned for making a music video that criticised el-Sisi. He died in Cairo’s Tora prison in May this year after being detained for two years without trial. As Sarah said: ‘Whoever differs, whoever is not a male Sunni Muslim heterosexual who supports the ruling regime is considered persecuted, untouchable, or dead.’

But as Sarah told us in an article she wrote in 2018, it is not only the state who should be held accountable, but also various forms of religious extremism. She wrote:

“Islamists and the state compete in extremism, ignorance and hate, just as they do in violence and harm. Islamists punish those who differ from them with death, and the ruling regime punishes those who differ from it with prison.”

There has been an outpouring of support and commemoration of Sarah by her fellow activists online. Tributes were made on social media with the hashtag #RaiseTheFlagForSarah.



CAPITAL FOLLY

The grandiose plans to create a new capital city for Egypt are testament to Al-Sisi's determination to prevent a repeat of the mass protests which led to revolution in 2011, argues **Fareid Atta**. Far from creating a sustainable new city to relieve the pressure of overcrowding in Cairo, housing in the New Administrative Capital will be only available to the rich.

On 13 March 2015 at an economic conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt's government set out its vision to the international community. Perhaps what shocked the audience most was the announcement of a New Administrative Capital (NAC). According to the plans, the NAC would be located 45km East of historic Cairo. At 700 square kilometres it would exceed the size of Singapore and accommodate 6.5 million people.

It was set to feature nearly 2000 schools and colleges; over 1000 mosques and churches; 600 hospitals; over 40,000 hotel rooms; an amusement park that dwarfs Disneyland, a public park double the size of New York's Central Park, an airport as big as Heathrow, a green

river over an area of 6,200 acres, solar energy farms totalling 17,000 football fields, at least six foreign universities and a finance centre with the tallest building in Africa.

The staggering superlatives, and vague and somewhat contradictory government reports on the finer details of the NAC have led some Egyptian commentators and foreign observers to speculate that the 65-year-old al-Sisi views the capital relocation as a means to establish his personal legacy.

The former general has been widely criticised for his pharaonic lifestyle including palatial residences at a military camp in Cairo and a new summer residence in New al-Alamein City on the North Coast.

He may not have yet taken the

ultimate step of wearing a Neme around his head, but Al-Sisi's concept of power is clearly authoritarian in the style of old Egyptian dynasties: unitary, personal, and unpredictable.

In order to gain public funds and support for his fortress, he has relied on the support of private and the public sectors within Egypt as well as substantial foreign investment from China.

Initially, the Gulf states were eager to fund the project. However, since 2015 confidence in the commercial feasibility of the scheme amongst international investors has massively deteriorated. The Gulf developers who pledged funding fought over terms and following this, abandoned the project.

Since 2016, the project has provided considerable opportunities for the regime and its collaborators, particularly in construction projects. Much has been supervised by the Armed Forces Engineering Authority and the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA).

In October 2015 the minister of housing (and chairman of the board of NUCA) declared that NUCA, which has its own finances independent of the government, would provide initial investments in the new capital and that there would be "no pressure on the general budget."

Fast forward to June 2020, and over thirty storeys of the "iconic tower", have been erected, with swift progress made on the remaining towers, "Phase 1" is due to be finished by 2022, and the Government Quarter is already completed. As of June 2020, only two university campuses appear to have opened their doors to students in the NAC:

The University of Prince Edward Island, an umbrella organisation created to host degree programmes from select Canadian universities, and the University of Coventry. Coventry opened its doors to students in the NAC as of September 2019 to great fanfare.

Even Covid 19 has not significantly slowed progress on the project, with the Egyptian government claiming to have secured "the continuity of work on the sites while preserving the safety of the workers". China State Engineering and Construction Company (CSCEC) has deployed its "epidemic prevention and control

team," as well as an on-site medical aid package worth 12 million EGP.

Despite action to control the virus on site, on 4 April, the Presidential Office postponed the opening of "major national projects", including the transfer of government officials to the new Government Quarter to 2021.

The official reason given by the government for the capital shift is the oft-repeated refrain that Cairo, with its twenty-two million inhabitants, is overcrowded and the population needs to be redistributed.

The minister of housing claimed that there is "no other solution to dealing with population growth, and to eliminate ashwa'iyat (informal housing areas)." It may be proposed that the decision to relocate from Cairo is driven by a desire to escape the long history of popular unrest in the old capital, and the seismic uprisings across Egypt in the winter of 2011.

This utopia will be nothing more than a dream to the majority of Egyptians.

Of course, congestion and overcrowding are serious issues in Cairo, and it is easy to imagine why its residents would dream of escaping the dust and the dirt of the capital and escape to a world of wide-open streets, orderly rows of housing and palm trees tickling azure skies. This utopia, however, will be nothing more than a dream to the majority of Egyptians.

Thus far the vast majority of the NAC housing has been undertaken by private developers, with a seeming bias towards middle and high-end compounds. Unit prices for a 1-bedroom studio flat start at over 1 million EGP, when we consider the average wage of an Egyptian government employee is around 4000 EGP a month, it is difficult to fathom how ordinary Egyptians will afford it.

When asked about the prices of private housing, the spokesman for the project, Khaled al-Husseiny, dodged questions about the provision for lower earners in the NAC and the average price of real estate: "Forget the numbers, they're not important and not fixed, we have a dream, and we're building our dreams now." The practical infeasibility of the city as

a viable alternative for the informal housing dwellers of Cairo begs the question, why is it being built in the first place?

The answer might lie in the work of Ali al-Rigal, a researcher in political sociology, who suggests the decision to move government offices away from protests has a political and sociocultural underpinning. He suggests the government wants key state institutions to exist amongst the rich, upper classes, who tend to be more in support of the government.

"The regime seeks to isolate itself from the old city and its residential areas. It believes they're a burden and a danger to it, due to this class' political leanings, which tend to cut against the regime," Rigal's argument has merit when we consider the average prices of the units in the NAC.

The funding for the NAC, and dreams of self-sufficiency has, as has repeatedly been the case in Egypt's development, been purchased at the price of dependence on foreign countries and/or the private sector. The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) has pledged \$3 billion over five years to establish a central business area in the NAC.

The Minister of Housing Assem al-Gazzar declared the first instalment of the loan will cover the expenses of designing and building seven tall towers on a total area of 600,000 square meters. The rest of the loan is expected to finance the remaining thirteen skyscrapers in the financial centre, including the "iconic tower."

The Egyptians have evidently renegotiated a new loan deal, after the first fell through, but it is suspected there are strings attached, with the ICBC likely to have demanded a sizeable share of revenues from the financial district. As usual, information on the revenue expected to be generated from the towers is scarce, though it is highly unlikely the area will be a cash cow in the short term.

The handing over of a portion of the city's revenue also raises serious questions over the ethics of such loans from China, and whether Egypt is in fact, just the latest victim of China's ignominious debt-trap diplomacy.

Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies, has described Beijing's policies as a kind of "creditor imperialism." The handing over of Sri

Lanka's Hambantota port to China, is a chilling reminder of the dangers for emerging economies in defaulting on their debts to the superpower.

Egypt's repayment on these new Chinese loans will begin as early as mid-2020, based on the 36-42-month downtime in the initial agreement in 2017. With the end of the three-years deferral period coming up Beijing is already applying upwards pressure.

Egypt's economy has shown encouraging signs of recovery since its November 2016 IMF bailout, but Covid 19 is a significant threat to this fragile recovery. National GDP is thought to be decreasing at a rate of between 0.7 and 0.8 percent (EGP 36 to 41 billion) for each month that the global crisis continues.

Abdel Khalek Farouk, an economist and director of the Nile Centre for Economic and Strategic Studies, criticised Egypt's economic handling of the project in new loans: "How can such an indebted country as Egypt seek to obtain new debt in light of the massive internal and external debt it already has?" He also highlights the high interest rates attached to existing debts.

Chinese involvement was a *fait accompli* for the project, with a price tag of over \$40 billion dollars, the country has the deep pockets Egypt desperately needs. The urban planner David Sims has claimed the whole programme may be too big to fail. There are "too many cheerleaders for desert development, and too many client groups to satisfy."

China's support is also of critical importance for al Sisi's political base at home. The strengthening of Egypt's economic, political and security ties with China -- or at least the image of them, combined with much jet setting and hand-shaking with world leaders, allows him to present himself to an increasingly restless Egyptian public, as the vanguard of the country's development.

Public support for such projects is one reason for the regime's decision to relocate, but another is regime security. Since the ousting of the Brotherhood there seems to have been a concerted effort made to de-populate and remove government ministries from the iconic downtown area.

On 27 April 2016, Al-Sisi opened a new office of Egypt's Interior Ministry in New Cairo, east of the capital; the



original in Tahrir, was a lightning rod for the protests in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Historic Cairo, much like other capitals such as Paris or Beijing contains the legacies of protest. Cairo's Tahrir square features some of the most significant symbols of Egypt: The Egyptian Museum, The Arab League building, and the Egyptian Parliament. In the 20th century it has been the de-facto centre of resistance to the state, during the colonial period and of course, most recently in the 25 January Revolution.

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In fact, Tahrir became globally the largely uncontested centre of media attention, the symbol of a transformative spatial politics in the Arab world: as Ahdaf Soueif explains.

"The people know that Tahrir was simply spectacle. They know that the revolution was won in the streets and the factories. But they also know that the spectacle is important in the battle

of ideas, and if Tahrir falls, the dream falls. Tahrir is a myth that creates a reality in which we've long believed."

The emotional power of spaces such as this pose an extraordinary risk for the regime. Their prerogative to turn downtown into "a heritage area" speaks volumes about the intent of Al-Sisi's to erase the memory of the Revolution.

Relocation to the desert, forty-five kilometres to the East of Cairo, negates the possibility of mass demonstration by decreasing the connectivity and proximity of informal neighbourhoods to key sites. Should Cairo be brought to a standstill by public protests and demonstrations, Egypt's military government in the NAC would remain unaffected.

The fact that the NAC is the brainchild of al-Sisi is significant. Al-Sisi's radical project uses his country's scarce resources, not only to assert the self-efficacy of the state and catapult Egypt back into the geopolitical chessboard-- but to protect his regime by creating a totally new urban space that expresses the values that he envisions as constituting the "New Egyptian", an identity that is both conservative and modern, globalised but isolated from complex historical legacies of Cairo.

[Read more on solidarity with Egyptian political prisoners on page](#)

Annexation and apartheid

The planned annexation of large parts of the West Bank by Israel are part of a longer history of strategic colonisation and settlement building reports **Miriam Scharf**.

Annexation, illegal under international law, is the forcible and unilateral acquisition of territory over which the perpetrator has no recognised sovereignty and to make that territory an integral part of the state.

The taking of another people's land by force should spark international outrage and action. But not when it is Israel taking the land. And not when it is Palestinian land they are taking. After all that's how Israel was created, by dispossessing Palestinians, how Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, annexed East Jerusalem in 1980, and the Golan Heights in 1981. This military occupation has continued in all but pockets of the West Bank designated in the 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords as Area 'A', where the Palestinian Authority (PA) provides a fig-leaf for Israeli control.

Israel's relentless building of illegal settlements in Areas 'B', nominally joint PA and Israel controlled, and Israeli-controlled Area 'C' means 600,000 Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank. Netanyahu's plans for annexation would extend Israeli sovereignty to more than 230 settlements, 15 Area A and B communities including 44,175 Palestinians, and 48 shepherding communities comprising 8,775 Palestinians in Area C. This would be almost 30 percent of the West Bank. A key difference with previous proposals is that Palestinians will have no access



to the border with Jordan.

As Israeli activist Jeff Halper argued more than 20 years ago, this process of settlement construction has always been strategic. Built over the main aquifers to deny water to Palestinian settlements, extending across to within 20kms of Jordan cleaving the West Bank in two, cutting off East Jerusalem the former heart of Palestinian social and economic life from other Palestinians, with road-building and security measures making contiguity between Gaza and the West Bank impossible.

Annexation will unleash a further flood of settler violence backed by the state, intensify human rights violations and land confiscation,

Decades of sucking life out of the Palestinian economy by constructing physical barriers plus legal and bureaucratic measures backed up by brutal violence has forced many Palestinians into being a cheap manual

labour force in Israeli-owned industrial parks. This adds to Israeli dominance and control.

So what future would annexation mean for not just the 2 million Palestinians in the West Bank, but for any future Palestinian state? Annexation means abandoning the two-state solution. The Israeli government envisages entrenching dispossession and poverty, making life unbearable so the steadfastness (sumud in Arabic) is broken, and ending for good any Palestinian national aspirations.

Moreover, granting annexed Palestinians citizenship rights within Israel is not on the agenda, as that could endanger the Jewish majority which gives the democratic face to the Jewish state.

This 'democracy' has nearly 60 laws which discriminate heavily against non-Jewish citizens, or 'Arab Israelis' as they are legally designated. The 2018 Nationality Law enshrined the rights of Jews over non-Jews. This systematic institutional racism is defined in international law as Apartheid. If two million Palestinians were to be incorporated into the State of Israel,

apartheid would be extended and would be permanent.

The US has been Israel's staunch ally in the dispossession, occupation, violence and war on the Palestinians. Netanyahu and Gantz may be using the opportunity presented while Trump is in the White House but Obama re-armed Israel during its last war on Gaza. Annexation of occupied territory is a serious violation of the UN Charter and the Geneva Convention. But the UN will do nothing to enforce these laws, allowing the US to decide how annexation proceeds.

Understanding the strategic importance of Israel to the US is paramount to understanding Israel's impunity to international law, and its resistance to criticism. This key US alliance allows Israel to ignore all UN resolutions.

The EU may make critical noises but their response to annexation is typical. Congratulating Netanyahu on forming a new government, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the EU, "look forward to continuing working together in the spirit of the longstanding friendship that binds us."

He added, "We strongly urge Israel to refrain from any unilateral decision

that would lead to the annexation of any occupied Palestinian territory and would be, as such, contrary to international law." There is no mention of any consequences and the EU continues to reward Israeli contravention of international law with billions of euros in trade, aid and weapons.

The Arab states, though Jordan will not be happy, will come up with a formula that pretends they have not abandoned the Palestinians, when they did that long ago, following Anwar Sadat's 1979 visit to Jerusalem.

Annexation will unleash a further flood of settler violence backed by the state, intensify human rights violations, land confiscation, and excessive use of force and torture. The burning of orchards, demolition of homes, stoning children on their way to school, or olive-pickers are already regular events. It will consolidate the already unjust reality: two peoples living in the same space, ruled by the same state, but with profoundly unequal rights.

Palestinian civil society has made a global call for 'effective measures' to be taken to stop this annexation happening.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign amongst others are demanding the UK should adhere to an ethical policy on all the UK's trade with Israel, in particular by applying international law on settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and stopping any arms trade with Israel that is used in violation of the human rights of Palestinians.

Peoples around the world recognise annexation as an escalation from decades of discrimination and occupation to complete apartheid.

Whenever forces oppose their governments, especially for countries in the region, solidarity with Palestine is high on the agenda.

History has shown it is only when the Palestinians themselves have fought that they have made gains.

The extraordinary democratic struggle of the first intifada, the heroic second intifada, the daily steadfastness, where 'existence is resistance', the continued battles against evictions and to rebuild, to keep hope after years of oppression means progressive forces throughout the world identify with their struggle.

[Turn to page to read more on protests against annexation in Britain](#)

A world leader in 'homeland security'

The sacking of Rebecca Long-Bailey from the Labour shadow cabinet by Keir Starmer for re-tweeting a Maxine Peake interview containing a reference to the connection between the US police and Israel is the Labour leader's signal to the UK establishment, and to the US, that in his hands the Labour Party will not tolerate anything other than total support for Israel. Safeguarding Western interests is the issue, not antisemitism.

Yet Peake is quite right to make the connection between Israel's position today as pre-eminent in violent suppression techniques as a result of decades of practice on subjugating Palestinians. Israel has long sold weapons 'battle-proven in Gaza'. But it is its methods and expertise as an occupying power that has made it a global leader in the homeland security industry.

Israel uses military force on a daily

basis to maintain its oppression of Palestinians. It targets civilians with tear gas grenades, rubber-coated bullets and live ammunition, carries out mass arrests, house demolitions, torture and extrajudicial executions, all amounting to breaches of international law and war crimes. The inhumanity and brutalisation of the oppressor in their determination to humiliate and injure the oppressed is deeply ingrained in racism integral to the system. Israel shares with American police delegations briefings and live demonstrations of suppressing an occupied population.

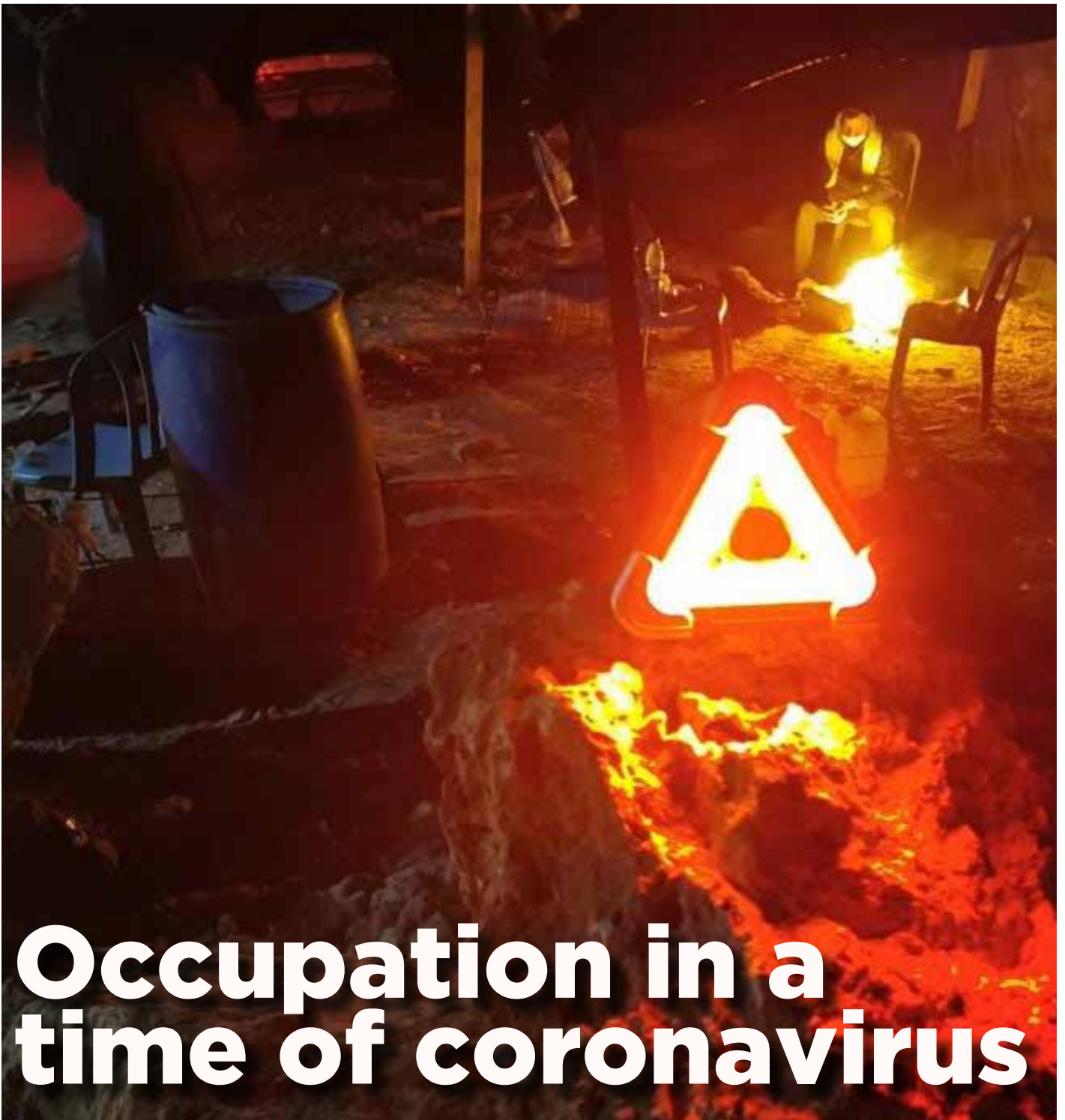
This also facilitates the sales and transfer of crowd-control technologies between the two governments. Developed by the Israeli Police and manufactured by Israeli company Odortec, "Skunk," is a foul-smelling liquid designed to cause nausea that is sprayed at high pressure onto

protesters.

Used by the IDF as a tool of collective punishment, it is sprayed into Palestinian shops, schools and houses of communities whose members participate in demonstrations. Based on its proven effectiveness against Palestinian protests – Israel markets Skunk to police units worldwide, including departments in the United States.

The American company Mistral Security reportedly began selling Skunk to US police departments following the 2014 protests in Ferguson. Mistral Security advertises the product as applicable to "border crossings, correctional facilities, demonstrations, and sit-ins."

[Find out more about the relationship between US police forces and Israel from the Deadly Exchange campaign organised by Jewish Voice for Peace at \[www.deadlyexchange.org\]\(http://www.deadlyexchange.org\)](#)



Occupation in a time of coronavirus

Palestinians are facing the trauma of lockdown in a context of intensifying Israeli occupation. **Dave Clinch** and **Oisin Challen Flynn** spoke to Palestinian activists from Hebron and Bethlehem about how they are continuing to resist.

The city of Hebron went into lockdown on Saturday 20 June with only grocery stores and pharmacies allowed to open. Ahmed, an activist with Hebron International Resources Network, told us that weddings and prayers in mosques have been banned following the reporting of just over 1800 cases of coronavirus in Hebron governorate.

Social life and communal celebrations had been identified as spreading the virus, including a

wedding in Taffuh, near Hebron and a large gathering in the village of Idnaa to celebrate the end of a blood feud.

Testing facilities in the city itself have been overwhelmed by the demand, and people are having to go as far as Jenin in the north for the procedure, Ahmed explained. The province goes into this crisis with very limited health care resources. There are 170 hospital beds in Hebron city, serving a population of 220,000, a further 50 beds in Halhoul and 120

more in Doura while in the West Bank as a whole there are only 120 ventilators.

In the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, the situation is - if anything - more traumatic, according to Mohammed Abu Srour, a member of the camp's Popular Committee. Seventy years after its foundation, more than 5,000 people are crammed into a space which is only 0.7 km square. As Mohammed explained, solidarity and cooperation have been essential to their survival for decades, so the advice on social distancing was psychologically hard to implement, as well as being almost physically impossible in such confined quarters.

"People cooperated with each other for the last 70 years and this is one of the reasons they were able to survive ... we have a small area, which is very crowded and there is no privacy ... so how could we tell the people to keep distant and stay away from each other?"

The Popular Committee took the lead, Mohammed said. "We were always the ones wearing a mask, trying to talk to people in lots of ways, telling them this is not a game or lie, that we need to be careful or there are people we love who are going to die and get hurt."

Aida's Popular Committee quickly found out that they were going to have to rely on themselves to protect the camp's residents. "We first heard about the virus on 5 March, when the Ministry of Health announced there were 7 or 8 cases, causing a panic in the whole city of Bethlehem," Mohammed told us.

In the refugee camp itself, the UNRWA, the United Nations body tasked with supporting Palestinian refugees was meant to be in charge. Yet it took 70 days before any support materialised, when 200 food packs arrived at the camp - a drop in the ocean compared to the scale of the crisis.

"We tried to reach them in different ways, tried to get in touch with them and nobody responded to us. And all that we heard from them was that they are also on lockdown in Jerusalem," Mohammed said.

In response the Popular Committee drew up an emergency plan, distributing sanitiser and PPE around the camp. "We tried to work through social media, through the mosque, in the streets, using DJs to deliver the information and news. We even did



Facing page and top: Checkpoint, Susiya village. Centre left: Tackling Covid 19 near Hebron. Centre right: Home visiting, Aida youth project, Bethlehem. Bottom: Preparing food parcels, Aida youth project | Photos: HIRN and Aida youth project

home visits, each two volunteers going to visit 10 or 12 houses, providing reassurance to people, telling them about symptoms of the virus and what they can do to protect themselves from it."

By the second and third week, camp residents started reporting losing their jobs. In a context where few people have any savings - and support from the Palestinian Authority was almost non-existent - the Popular Committee realised they would need to mount a major food relief

campaign. During Ramadan they started a kitchen which delivered 400-600 meals a day to people around the city, thanks to donations from wealthy residents. Finding funding for supplies of medication was much more challenging, Mohammed told us. "We have almost 30 diabetes patients and we need to pay around \$100 every 3 weeks to cover their insulin and you need a high budget to cover that."

Meanwhile in Hebron, movement is very difficult because of the lockdown. "HIRN has the ability to negotiate

permits for emergency rescue vehicles, thus managing to provide food baskets for extremely vulnerable families”, Ahmed explained. But it is not just the coronavirus restrictions which are impeding the efforts to support people through the virus.

As HIRN has documented, the 16 families who live in the community of Al Qanoob face multiple restrictions: “They are surrounded by areas declared as Military Zones, face a large number of settler attacks and violence that has prevented them from accessing their water resources and grazing fields.”

In addition they have experienced a large number of Stop Work orders and the Israeli authorities have confiscated cars and mobile latrines in addition to about 300 dunums of land for further settlement expansion.

Attacks from settlers in the South Hebron Hills villages of At-Tuwani and Susya have continued unabated. The settlers of the Havat Ma’on ‘outpost’ are armed, extremely violent and have for example posed a daily threat to children going to school for many years. Usually international volunteers would be accompanying the students but most have had to leave Palestine at the start of the pandemic.

In At-Tuwani recently a sheep barn was destroyed. Residents were prevented from leaving the village for work or to go to school, by the erection of a tent on the track.

According to Israeli activists from the Villages Group, who have been visiting Susya and At-Tuwani for years to offer solidarity, settlers “very often enter the village itself, go wild breaking things, destroying property and farm equipment, and make the lives of the inhabitants insufferable.

They do this while the men are away at work, and only the women and children are present, and they simply sow terror. Whoever comes close to their tent would risk his life – at gunpoint. Later we shall read in the paper that “another terrorist who was trying to murder Jewish colonists was shot and neutralised.”

Since early March HIRN has helped to purchase 500 Coronavirus fighting kits, and sent food baskets to ten families isolated from shopping in Bethlehem because of Palestine Authority travel restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus. Further food assistance has been given to families in the old city of Hebron. Funds were also raised to provide



Aida refugee camp entrance
Archive photo: Numerosept, via Flickr

disinfectant tanks for spraying in the village of Susya.

In Aida refugee camp, political and health campaigns began to mesh together through mobilisations in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners. “We wrote graffiti, we made two songs for them and we launched a campaign called “Mazyouna wants to see her child”, named after one of the mothers of the Palestinian prisoners, because we didn’t want the people to forget about the prisoners inside”, explained Mohammed.

“Settlers go wild breaking things, destroying property and farm equipment, and make the lives of the inhabitants insufferable”

“Mazyouna told me, “people are complaining about being under lockdown for one week, but my son was in prison for 30 years. See how we couldn’t be in prison for 7 days and they have been there for 30 years” so now you can imagine how much those people are suffering.”

Meanwhile the relentless drive of Israel’s right-wing government to grab more land at the Palestinians’ expense powers on, early abetted by their allies in the USA. “They used the time when Palestinians have been busy with Covid to continue with their “Deal of the Century,”” Mohammed told us. “They are not going to annex the Palestinians ... they want the land without the population.”

International solidarity matters more than ever in these times, Mohammed and Ahmed stressed. And even when volunteers cannot visit, solidarity organisations are mobilising to raise vital funding and to keep the pressure on their own governments for their support of Israel.

Ahmed works with the Hebron International Resources Network (HIRN) which raises funds worldwide to support schools and also vulnerable individuals, families and communities in the occupied West Bank. To donate to Hebron International Resources Network projects please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/hirndonations> For Aida Refugee Camp Covid 19 projects donate online at: <https://tinyurl.com/aidacampcovid19>



Hundreds of protesters brought a strong message to the BBC and the government | Photos: Steve Eason

Protests grow as British arms sales to Saudi Arabia restart

Campaigners have vowed to keep up the fight to stop British weapons fuelling Saudi Arabia's devastating war on Yemen, after the government said it would resume granting licenses for arms sales to the Saudi-led coalition on 7 July.

A landmark judgement by the Court of Appeal in June 2019 ruled that it was unlawful for the British government to have not

considered whether selling arms to the Saudis might lead to violations of international humanitarian law.

Just days after saying they had reviewed arms sales and concluded that breaches were "isolated incidents", government ministers told MPs that they were aware of over 500 possible violations of international law by Saudi-led forces. Campaign Against Arms Trade spokesman Andrew Smith said:

"These are not statistics, they are people's lives. Saudi forces have bombed schools, hospitals and homes. They have turned gatherings into massacres and inflicted a humanitarian crisis on Yemen."

Saudi bombs have made Yemen

into "living hell" for the country's population, including 12 million children, according to Unicef. Around 80 percent of the population - 24 million people - are in need of humanitarian assistance in the face of famine and disease. Covid 19 is also now spreading rapidly in a context where the Saudi-led coalition has targeted hospitals and schools.

Meanwhile protests have begun to gather momentum: hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the BBC on 5 July before marching to Parliament Square where they joined Black Lives Matter protests.

[Search #MarchforYemen for details of further protests](#)



Family attacked waiting outside prison for news after visits stop

Tens of thousands of prisoners remain at risk of Covid 19 in Egypt's overcrowded and insanitary jails, while their families have been denied visiting rights and information about their condition.

Political prisoners such as Alaa Abdelfattah, Patrick Zaki, Hisham Fouad, Mahienour el-Masry and Haitham Mohamedain are among those still detained.

Family members asking for information from inside the prison system have been assaulted and beaten, Egyptian activists report.

Laila Soueif, mother of Alaa Abdelfattah and his sisters Mona and Sanaa were attacked while spending the night outside Tora prison on 22 June. When they went to report the assault to General Prosecutor the next day, Sanaa was seized by plain clothes police and herself detained.

Bologna University graduate student Patrick Zaki, who was arrested on 7 February had his detention renewed on 2 July for a further 45 days. Like Alaa Abdelfattah his family have not heard from him since the middle of March.

Meanwhile doctors and pharmacists who have questioned the Egyptian government's handling of the Covid 19 pandemic are the latest group to face a crackdown - at least 9 were arrested between March and June.

[Go to Egypt Solidarity Initiative on Facebook for more information](#)



Annexation bid sparks protests in solidarity with Palestine

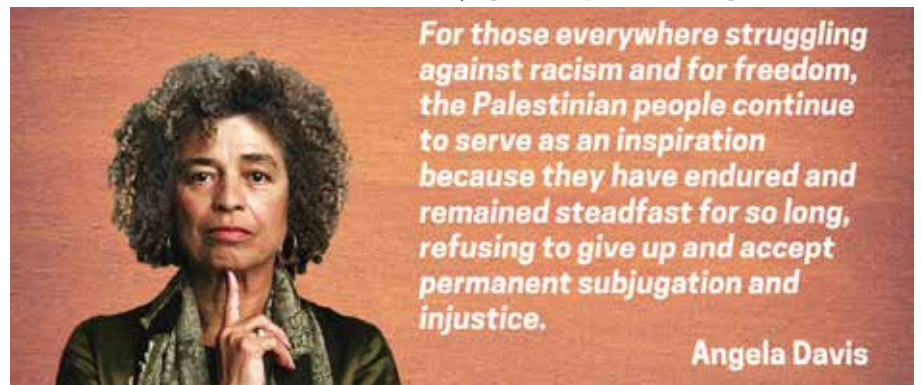
Israel's bid to grab even more Palestinian land by annexing swathes of the West Bank sparked demonstrations around the world at the beginning of July.

In Britain, activists organised socially-distanced protests in over 100 locations including Manchester, Durham, Brighton, London and Sheffield for a day of action on 4 July, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign said. There were also demonstrations in the USA, Denmark and Czech Republic.

The annexation plans also drew criticism from within the UK Jewish community, with forty Rabbis signing a letter to the Israeli embassy in London, calling the unilateral seizure of further Palestinian land an "abuse of power."

Palestinian civil society organisations are calling for targeted sanctions against Israel, including an arms sale ban and the suspension of free-trade agreements and supporting efforts by the UN to reconvene the UN Special Committee on Apartheid to investigate Israel's apartheid regime.

[Go to www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org) to find out more about local protests and campaigns in Britain and www.bdsmovement.net for updates on the global boycott campaign.



'We stand with Palestine' say BLM activists

The protests over annexation coincided with the fifteenth anniversary of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, marked by a strong statement on Twitter from the BLM UK account supporting Palestinian

liberation and BDS.

Angela Davis, who has played a key role in the fight against racism in the US said: "Palestinian activists have long supported the Black people's struggle against racism. When I was in jail, solidarity coming from Palestine was a major source of courage for me. In Ferguson, Palestinians were the first to express international solidarity. ... We have a profound responsibility to support Palestinian struggles."

[Go to www.bdsmovement.net](http://www.bdsmovement.net)



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

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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 NEU 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.