

No place for organised supporters of apartheid on a demonstration against apartheid and racism

Today's Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) march and rally is one small part of a UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination established to commemorate the massacre on 21st March 1960 of 69 peaceful demonstrators protesting against apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa. The UN states the commemoration is to demonstrate "solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination".



Why COFIS should not be welcome on this march

- The Confederation of Friends of Israel Scotland (COFIS) was established in order to counter the success of the Palestinian-led campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the state of Israel.
- It is funded and is affiliated to StandWithUs, a right-wing pro-Israel organisation based in the US. Their work, in partnership with the Israeli government, include attempts to stop student pro-Palestine activism and legal action to intimidate academics and civil society bodies from supporting BDS.
- COFIS works in partnership with Christians United for Israel (CUFI). CUFI leader, Rev. John Hagee, asserts that Hitler was chosen by God to carry out the Nazi Holocaust to drive Jews to the only place they should live, Palestine.
- COFIS is a group that considers extreme racist Tommy Robinson to be "a colourful character", refers to Palestinians as 'Pallys' and 'Fakestinians' and posts about Palestinians being "euthanised".
- To consider COFIS a 'Jewish group' is not only incorrect but racist in that it conflates the interest of a group that represents the state of Israel with the interest of the Jewish community in Scotland.

What this call to unwelcome COFIS in NOT about

- We are not asking SUTR to take a position on BDS, one/two state or even the occupation!
- This is about COFIS – not the political position of individuals on the march.

What this IS about

- Palestinians have situated their struggle, the BDS movement, as part of a wider struggle against racism. Week after week Israel's crimes escalate, fuelled by racism and genocidal discourse so malevolent that even Israeli generals, prominent journalists and Holocaust survivors have spoken out about how Israeli society develop ever more marked features resembling 1930s European fascism and Nazism.

- According to serious academic study looking at the what constitutes the crime of apartheid as legally defined in instruments of international law, Palestinian people as a whole are living under an Israeli apartheid regime.
- In defending the state of Israel, COFIS promotes smears and false accusations of antisemitism, with the hope of intimidating elected representatives, campaigners, public bodies and institutions so they do not actively support Palestinian equality, justice and freedom.
- COFIS actively lobbies the Crown Office, government and Police Scotland to encourage them to use and abuse hate crime legislation against human rights campaigners and to prevent peaceful non-violent BDS actions and decisions.
- Our anti-racism work is harmed when COFIS and Israeli government attempts to conflate antisemitism with anti-Zionism and BDS succeed.

Our call to SUTR to ensure that COFIS is not welcomed on this demonstration goes to the core of what this day of unity and “solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination” is all about.

For the reasons outlined above it is with deep regret that we will not be marching with you today. It is also a great disappointment that SUTR did not respond to our communications over this past year so that we could have engaged in discussion and debate on these issues, in good time, and with the seriousness and respect that these issues, the Palestinian people and our communities deserve.

Next steps

Scottish PSC will be working with partners around Scotland, the UK and internationally to counter the dangerous work of COFIS and the Israeli government. Their work not only affect the Palestinian people but also our rights to protest, assemble, to free speech, and not least our work to stand up to all forms of racism.

- We invite you to join us in these conversations and work over the coming period. Please contact campaign@scottishpsc.org.uk / 07931 200 361 or write to us: Scottish PSC, 180 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RW

