

**NEW UNIONS**

# THE COST OF COMMUTING

*(in the West Bank)*

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Palestine  
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BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

# THE COST OF A COMMUTE: REMEMBERING MOHAMMAD KHALIL SHTEYEH



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

## **PNFTU Team**

From the Occupied West Bank

Behind the statistics of the West Bank lies the story of people like Mohammad Khalil Shteyeh, a 42-year-old father and construction worker from the village of Salem. On Sunday, a routine attempt to provide for his family ended in a tragedy that has shaken his local community.

**A Father's Journey:** Like thousands of others, Mohammad's day began before dawn. To reach his job in the construction sector, he had to navigate the treacherous paths near the Apartheid Wall. Because official permits are increasingly restricted, workers are often forced onto "irregular" mountain tracks steep, rocky, and unforgiving topography.



## THE COST OF A COMMUTE: REMEMBERING MOHAMMAD KHALIL SHTEYEH

**A Wall of Death:** While Mohammad and a group of labourers were trying to reach their work places, Israeli forces chased after them near the Apartheid Wall which ghettoises the villages they live in. Mohammad fell from a high, bumpy elevation and suffered severe head trauma and internal bleeding. He didn't survive these critical injuries.

**Why Many Take the Risk:** For Mohammad, this was part of an attempt to continue to work and provide a livelihood in the face of Israel's brutal occupation and apartheid. As the main provider for his family, the lack of employment opportunities in the West Bank left him with an impossible choice: stay home and face economic hardship, or risk the dangerous paths of the Apartheid Wall to find work.

**The Bigger Picture:** Israel's tightening of movement restrictions, including the wholesale cancellation of all permits that previously allowed Palestinian workers to cross the illegal checkpoints and Apartheid Wall, has turned these "commutes" into life-threatening gambles. Mohammad's story is a sombre reminder of the human cost of Israel's crimes and brutal exploitation and repression of Palestinian workers .

44 workers were killed and hundreds injured by live fire from Israeli forces in their workplaces, or while being pursued on their way to work, and near the Apartheid Wall, while more than 34,000 workers were arrested over the last two years.

**We call on trade unions and international solidarity  
across the world to stand together with our struggle  
for justice and liberation**



# “THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE WAS NOT DESTROYED”: A NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY WITH TULKAREM



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

**Gabi Nogueira**  
**Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
Edinburgh Branch

This February, the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) teamed up with the Young Communist League (YCL), hosting a discussion and mutual-aid fundraiser event to hear from Palestinian speakers at the Wassel Youth Development Centre, in Tulkarem – addressing simultaneous audiences in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The talk offered its attendees an opportunity to better understand what life looks like under intensifying Israeli military occupation.

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# THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

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## “THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE WAS NOT DESTROYED”: A NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY WITH TULKAREM

The urgency of this discussion was underpinned by the reality on the ground. Since October 2023, Tulkarem has been the target of violent military incursions, including bombings, drone attacks, mass arrests and armed conflicts. Launched in January 2025, and centered on the refugee camps of Tulkarem, Nur Shams and Jenin, the "Operation Iron Wall" continues to cause widespread destruction, with more than 40,000 Palestinians forcibly displaced--many for a second time.

Speaking on behalf of Wassel Centre, panelist Mohammed\* emphasised: “Tulkarem is not an imaginary case [...] As the world’s eyes turned to Gaza, refugee camps in the West bank were rarely the focus of international attention, and the situation is worse now. In the past three years, Tulkarem refugee camps were raided more than 100 times. Residents were forced to leave their homes and the camps were declared military zones. 520 people were killed in Tulkarem and nearby areas.”

The Tulkarem refugee camp was created in 1948 to accommodate thousands of refugees internally displaced by the Nakba. For Mohammed, life inside Palestinian refugee camps is a “unique human condition”. Those who refused to leave their homeland, stayed – turning the camps into beacons of resistance and identity rooted in the right to return. “The relationship between the people and the camp was like fire, [breeding] a space of resistance, survival, and steadfastness.”

To speak about Tulkarem is to speak about Palestinians living in some of the hardest conditions in the West Bank. To understand its role and why it has become a major target of the occupation, we need to take a closer look at its strong and powerful sense of community – in which the Wassel Centre plays a key role. Education has become a pillar of resilience in the camp.

“These refugees did not come here by choice, they arrived carrying the keys to their homes, believing their stay would be short. In the early days, the camp had no infrastructure or basic needs, such as water distribution and sewage systems,” explained Mohammed. Its residents maintained a strong connection to their villages, weaving their shared grief into collective identity. “Sharing pain and responsibility, solidarity and mechanisms of survival, neighbours became a source of support and a safety net [to one another].”

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“Repression breeds resistance” is a common saying amongst us comrades, yes. But Palestinians in Tulkarem embody its meaning. With the occupation creating a deep sense of political awareness, the camp became central in the struggle for Palestinian resistance and liberation, where the concept of “extended family” plays a fundamental role in daily life—becoming a necessity.

The camp historically suffered from high rates of unemployment, with people forced to look for work elsewhere, building a culture of reliance on shared spaces, and women becoming the very backbone of the community.

“Social life in the camp became a key factor – playing a role in information and awareness, sharing of stories. Awareness that doesn't come from theory, but lived experience. Social life was not merely an attempt to adapt to displacement, but a form of resistance. In times of hardship, we were able to count on each other more than any official body,” commented Mohammed.

Since October 7, raids in Tulkarem are no longer rare or limited—and collective punishment became a policy. The camp is now a controlled military zone, schools and shops have been closed, and residents are living in constant fear, with the aim of pushing people out, emptying the camp completely.

What's left of the camp? “The human beings remaining in the camp are broken, their houses destroyed, but the will of the people was not destroyed. The [humanity] in the camp is what remains. The dreams of the children. The youth who did not lose their beliefs and will to live. These are the things that cannot be broken.”

**In times of widespread warmongering and political horrors across the globe, may we look at Palestinian resistance as a beacon of hope and take note. We need community more than ever.**

Please, [donate](#) to bring much needed support to first-aid and rehabilitation centres in Tulkarem.

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## **ESPECIAL REPORT: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES**



Photo: Hussein Ezzedine/Scottish PSC Archive

**Hussein Ezzedine**  
**Scottish PSC TU Officer**  
Edinburgh Branch

In 1936, as fascism tightened its grip across Europe, tens of thousands of volunteers from around the world travelled to Spain to defend the Republic against the forces of Francisco Franco. They continued to arrive over the next 2 years from more than 50 countries, united under the banner of the International Brigades, believing that the fight in Spain was the front line in a global struggle against fascism. Among them were volunteers from Palestine.

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They were members of the Palestinian Communist Party; Arabs and Jews. Despite the relatively small size of the Jewish community in Palestine at the time, and opposition from the Zionist movement, most were Jewish. Strongly anti-Zionist, committed instead to socialist internationalism and to equality and coexistence with their Arab comrades, they did not go to Spain as Jews or Arabs alone; they went as anti-fascists. They believed another world was possible, a world free of fascism, exploitation and ethnic division, where all could live as equals.

On 20 and 21 February 2026, the annual International Brigades commemorations took place in Spain. I joined a large Scottish contingent making the pilgrimage to pay our respects to volunteers of all nations.

For me, it was a first visit, but many others including Mike Arnott, Scottish Secretary of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, have been attending and helping with arrangements for many years. Mike is also Secretary of Dundee Trades Union Council and a member of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The commemorations began at Tarancón cemetery, near Madrid. There we remembered not only the 39 Scots who fell during the Battle of Jarama, but also Tarancón's civilian victims of the Franco dictatorship, the local men and women who died serving the Republic, and the Spanish and international volunteers who succumbed to their wounds in the town's hospitals.

The Jarama march is the centrepiece of the weekend. It recalls the crucial battle of February 1937, when Franco's forces attempted to cut the Madrid-Valencia road and isolate the capital. Setting off through the olive groves beneath a bright blue sky, flags fluttering, we walked in the footsteps of those who had fought there nearly ninety years ago. Anti-fascists from across Europe and beyond marched together, our voices and banners echoing the internationalism of the Brigades themselves.

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One of the most symbolic stops was the Puente de Arganda. This crossing was a key objective in the Francoist attempt to encircle Madrid. It remains an enduring symbol of resistance.

Throughout the weekend, the bonds between nationalities were palpable. Old friendships were renewed; new ones formed. Conversations moved easily between history and the present. Solidarity with Palestine was visible and unequivocal, expressed in conversation, speeches, flags, t-shirts and keffiyehs.

**A reminder that resistance is not confined to remembrance; It is active, contemporary and ongoing.**

The struggle against fascism in 1936 is not merely history; it is part of a living tradition of resistance. The fight against dictatorship, and contemporary struggles for justice, are understood as threads of the same fabric.

It is impossible not to feel the weight of history. The volunteers who came to Spain were not naïve adventurers; they understood the risks. Many never returned home. Yet they believed the fight was necessary, that fascism had to be confronted before it consumed Europe. They were, in the words often used to describe them, “the bravest of their generation.”

To march today is not only to honour the dead. It is to reaffirm the ideals for which they fought: international solidarity, equality across divisions of nationality and faith, and an unwavering resistance to fascism and oppression in all its forms. It is also to recognise the exceptional bravery of those who answered the call in 1936-38 and to remind ourselves that the call to people of conscience today requires no such bravery to answer.

We are merely asked to end our complicity, and to do no harm. It is a modest request from those in the most desperate of circumstances.

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## **PALESTINE SOLIDARITY AT THE GREENS CONFERENCE**

The Scottish Greens spring conference took place on the 21st of February in Glasgow and SPSC were amongst its exhibitors



**Kevin Robertson**  
**Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
Lanarkshire Branch

Our stall had a great response from members at the conference keen to discuss our many campaigns and to express their support for Palestine and the Scottish PSC.

Amongst the visitors were Co-Leaders Gillian Mackay and Ross Greer, both of whom committed themselves and the Scottish Greens to continue efforts towards a just and peaceful end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and confirmed supporting BDS campaigning against the state of Israel and companies complicit in the apartheid regime – including continuing to pressure the Scottish Government on implementing the BDS package endorsed by the Scottish Parliament six months ago.

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## UPDATE

We are pleased that **Unite Edinburgh Community Branch has become the latest union branch to sign up as an Apartheid Free Zone (AFZ).**

Peter Olech, a member of the branch, explained the decision: "The genocide in Gaza is one of the gravest crimes against humanity in our century and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions has called for global solidarity with the Palestinian people. Campaigns like Apartheid Free Zones Scotland, as part of the wider BDS movement, are an effective, peaceful way for Unite Community members to demonstrate our solidarity."

ASLEF Edinburgh No1 Branch was the first branch to take the step, the Branch Secretary at the time stating: "It was the easiest of decisions, it aligns with union policy and though there are different views in the branch on many issues, we know right from wrong. In practical terms, it just means doing what we already do, and serves as a reminder to be aware whenever we spend funds."

In January, the AFZ Scotland interactive map was launched, marking a significant step forward for the movement. The map highlights organisations and small businesses across the country that have answered the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) call.

We have since written to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and every Trades Council asking for consideration to be given to becoming an AFZ. The STUC has of course long supported BDS, and endorsed the AFZ initiative at the 2025 Congress.

We have also started contacting all organisations affiliated to the Scottish PSC asking them to join those who have already signed up.

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**apartheid**  
**free zones**  
SCOTLAND

## UPDATE

Obviously the lack of response from some to date is disappointing, but no conclusions have been drawn from this and we will follow up in every case, to provide reassurance and/or further information as appropriate and decide on the next steps from there.

**We call on unions, branches and trades councils across Scotland to take this opportunity to translate long-standing policy commitments into action**

Signing up is simple: fill out a form on the AFZ Scotland [website](#) and pledge to support the principles and tactics of the Palestinian-led BDS movement. Avoiding products and services from Israel and/or from companies that are complicit in human rights violations and illegal occupation of Palestine.

**Scottish PSC TU Network**

**SAY YES TO BDS!**



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# SCOTTISH WORKERS

**DAY SCHOOL FOR PALESTINE**

**SATURDAY APRIL 11  
AUGUSTINE CHURCH EDINBURGH**

Over two years into the genocide, workers across Scotland remain committed to taking action for Palestine, but are unsure how to do so – and that's ok! On April 11th, join us for a day-long workshop and let's find out together what workers and unions can do to go from policy statements to workplace action and tangible wins for Palestine.

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## DAY SCHOOL FOR PALESTINE

The #DAYSCHOOL is for workers and activists who want to:

- Develop skills and knowledge to support rank-and-file organising and workplace campaigns;
- Learn from experienced organisers in different sectors in Scotland and from organisers of successful worker-led actions on Palestine in different countries;
- Create a forum to share experiences and connect workers from across Scotland who are committed to grassroots workplace organising on Palestine.

No pre-existing experience in labour organising is necessary but having a workplace or campaign where you can put what you are learning into action will help!

Please share this invite with those in your union, workplace, and networks who you think should be there on the day.

The Workers Day School for Palestine is hosted by Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and partners.

**SIGN UP**

**HELP COVER THE COSTS**

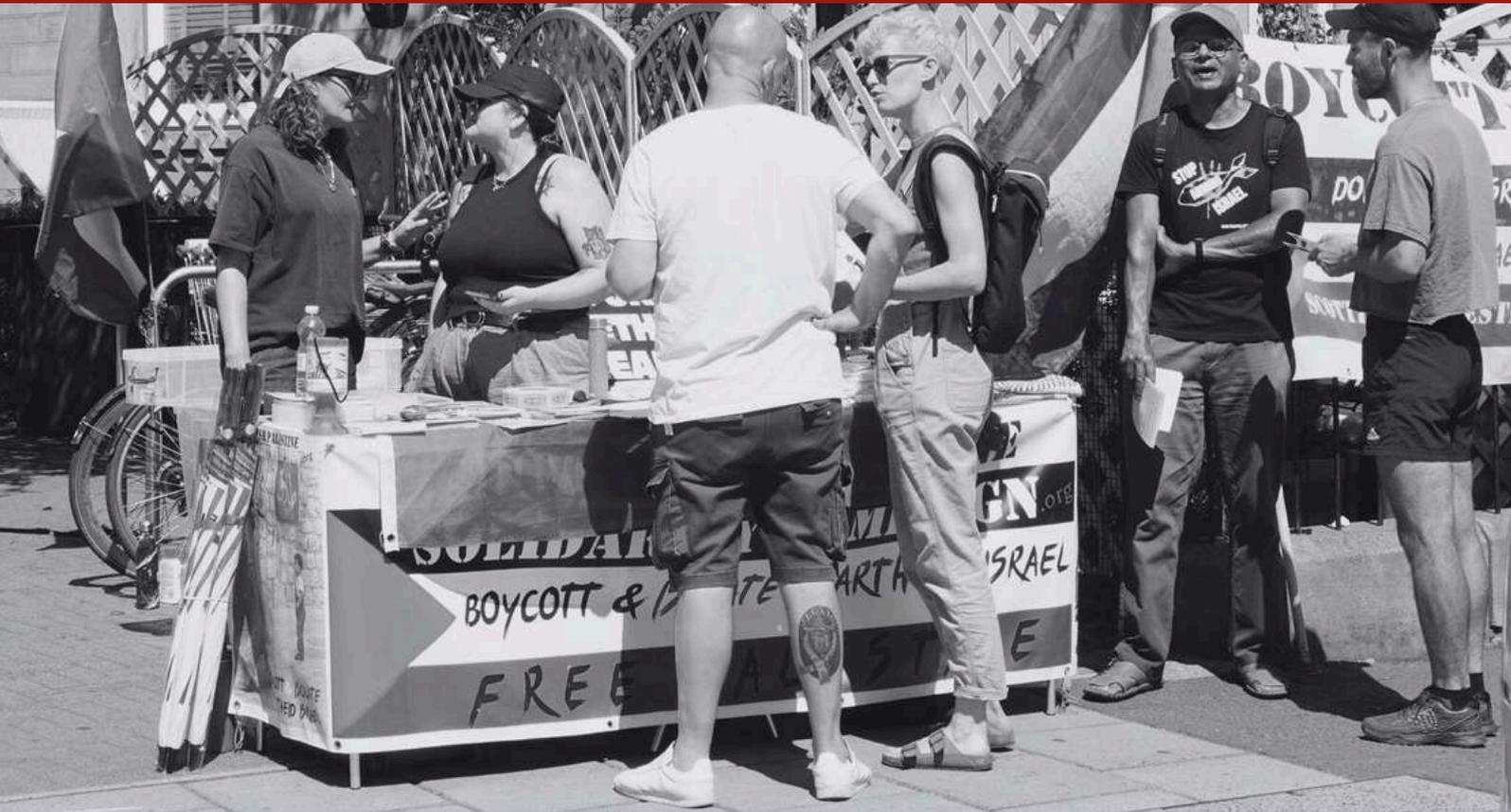
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## GET IN TOUCH

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