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## Grassroots Activism and Advocacy for Palestinian Rights in the UK: Navigating Social Change and Global Justice<sup>\*</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper explores the dynamics and influence of pro-Palestine movements in the UK, highlighting their role as critical agents of social change. Rooted in a rich history of social movements in the UK, these groups advocate for Palestinian rights and challenge the country's longstanding foreign policy alignment with Israel. By examining the diverse strategies and coalitions within pro-Palestine activism—from advocacy and media campaigns to legal challenges and grassroots mobilization—the study illustrates how these movements navigate complex political landscapes. Drawing on insights from 17 semi-structured interviews, it suggests the interrelatedness of local and global struggles for justice, underscoring the shared commitment to nonviolence, human rights, and international law. It emphasizes the unique position of the UK's pro-Palestine activism as both a reflection of domestic socio-political dynamics and a response to global geopolitical realities. It also reveals that many activists were previously engaged in various political causes related to justice before dedicating themselves to pro-Palestine advocacy. Ultimately, this paper seeks to illuminate the contributions of these movements to broader discourses of solidarity, resistance, and the pursuit of self-determination for the Palestinian people. This study also enhances the understanding of grassroots activism and its potential impact on international human rights advocacy.

**Keywords:** Advocacy, Human Rights, Pro-Palestine movements, Social Activism, United Kingdom

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## 1. Introduction: Contextual and Theoretical Framework

In the UK, social movements have a long history of addressing a wide range of concerns and pushing for change. Accordingly (Tarrow, 1994, p. 48, in Keck & Sikkink 1998, p. 37), structural changes that were associated with capitalism" such as "new forms of association, regular communication linking center and periphery, and the spread of print and literacy" led to the emergence of social movements in the eighteenth century. As in England (Bolin, 1951, p. 21), the middle classes were sympathetic to evangelicalism and the upper classes showed significant support for the movement, which suggests that evangelicalism appeals to a wide range of socioeconomic categories since it shows that the upper classes, or the wealthier and more powerful social groups, also supported it significantly. According to Weldon (2022, p. 12), social movements are a vital source of policy influence; they frequently have greater sway than political parties, interest groups, or the election of group members to public office. As per Howard Rheingold, interpersonal influence—the fundamental component of public opinion persuasion—is equivalent to political power since, in the contemporary day, the capacity to mold people's beliefs and attitudes has become the most powerful instrument in politics (Madhavan, 2016, p. 2). Mello (2013, p. 96) claims that the influence of social movements can be evaluated depending on the following factors:

First, changes in public policy can be used to understand the impact of a social movement. However, it is emphasized to look more broadly at how public policy changes are employed by state actors to react to, manage, pacify, and even preempt movement engagement, rather than concentrating on the achievement of policy changes that are advantageous to movements. Secondly, one

can comprehend the influence of a social movement by examining alterations in political party programs and the ensuing electoral outcomes. Furthermore, modifications to party platforms that react to or attempt to capitalize on movement involvement are indicative of the influence of a movement. Third, the policing of protest indicates how much state officials view the activism of a movement as a threat or a crucial challenge, and so provides insights into the movement's relative influence. Lastly, the degree to which other social actors view a movement's activism as a threat or a significant challenge depends on the existence, absence, and relative strength of counter-mobilization. Thus, the narrative shift about Israel's assault on Gaza and the subsequent demand for an immediate ceasefire by David Lammy, the new foreign secretary of the newly-selected British government, is a direct result of the influence of British pro-Palestine Movements, which have been fighting for Palestinian rights since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Times of Israel, 2024). According to "the direct-effect model" expounded by Gamson (1975), social movements' success or failure in influencing policy outcomes is largely determined by three factors: their strength, goals, and tactics, which demonstrate the fuzziness of borders of social movements. These social movements are networks of informal groups and formal organizations; as a result, the lines between their official and informal members, activists, and supporters are blurred, which contributes to their fuzziness (Kolb, 2007, pp. 38-39). As stated by Johnston (2014, p. 7) social movements contribute structurally to an overall cohesiveness that benefits from an interrelated complexity in terms of organization, ideology, and tactics. These networks, according to Diani (1992) facilitate the exchange of more comprehensive systems of meaning as well as the vital resources needed to take action, such as knowledge, skills, and tangible resources. As a result, movements

as networks have a role in both establishing the conditions for mobilization and offering the ideal environment for the development of particular worldviews and lifestyles.

Surprisingly, lived experiences of the well-researched peace and anti-war movements heavily revolve around the question of Palestine and the Palestinian people (Wills, 2016). Numerous academics have studied the social movements that sought to change national policies in their own cultures, and literature is abundant on these movements. Nevertheless, it has not focused much on the Palestinian activism that is being practiced by various countries, particularly in the UK. This study will draw from a variety of academic literature on the nature and diversity of pro-Palestine movements in the UK, which function as advocacy groups, solidarity organizations, media activism, awareness campaigns, action and boycotts campaigns, and legal activism, as well as goals and strategies of social movements for mass mobilization and the Palestinian cause, which unites British movements and individual thoughts around the issue of resistance for Palestinian rights and pro-Palestinianism.

In terms of goals and strategies of social movements for mass mobilization, the authors surveyed prior literature conducted by Weldon (2022), Awad (2020), Nish (2022), Diani (1992), Johnston (2014), Kolb (2007), Gamson (1975), Mello (2013), Abu-Ayyash (2015), Barghouti (2011), Babbitt and London (2014). In addition, most of the existing literature focused on the Palestinian cause insist on the universality of this question; Zalloua (2023), Moghadam (2009), Sayigh (2024), Said (1981), Wiktorowicz (2004), Hitchcock (2016) and Lim (2022).

While the United Kingdom's foreign policy has traditionally focused on its special relationship with Israel, the UK is an

important country whose pro-Palestine movements should be studied as a sample because it is home to a sizable population of Arabs and Muslims who, for the most part, seek solidarity with Palestine. Like other social groups, pro-Palestine movements exist in the UK and have similar traits. A dedication to nonviolence and justice for Palestinians, international law, and human rights define the being of pro-Palestine Movements in the UK, e.g., Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), which the Guardian described as “Europe’s largest Palestinian rights organization” (Boffey, 2023). Marcossi (Sayigh, 2024, p. 297) defines pro-Palestinianism as an anti-racist and anti-colonialist stance in both speech and action to topple the institutions that oppress and steal from the Palestinian people. Instead of only being a Jewish state, Israel has evolved into an occupying force (Said, 1981, p. 168). Therefore, the military occupation, settlements, and siege of Gaza are among policies of the Israeli government that British pro-Palestine Movements frequently confront. In addition, they support the implementation of international law, equality, and self-determination as the cornerstones of a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Btselem, 2017). Their techniques, which range from grassroots activity to parliamentary lobbying, and their capacity to rally support from a variety of British society groups, all demonstrate the diversity within these movements in the UK. Barghouti (2011, p. 33) argues that BDS aims are set by activists and solidarity groups, who select strategies based on the political and economic climate in which they operate. Therefore, context awareness is the primary guideline for organizing and carrying out fruitful BDS initiatives. They must also navigate the complexity of both internal UK policies and global geopolitics, as well as charges of anti-Semitism (especially regarding BDS initiatives).

Several important sub-theoretical frameworks can be applied to understand the pro-Palestine movement in the UK via the prism of social movement theory. A distinct viewpoint on the movement's beginnings, tactics, and effects is offered by each theory. Within the larger field of social movement theory, Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), Political Process Theory (PPT), Framing Theory, and New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) are regarded as significant approaches or frameworks. They aid in explaining several facets of the emergence, growth, and success or failure of social movements.

## 2. Methodology

This paper is drawn from a research based on seventeen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with British pro-Palestinian activists and individuals through Video calls. To find these people, numerous groups functioning as pro-Palestine movements in the UK were discovered through an internet search based on the Snowball method. This approach allows the sample to grow like a "snowball" by having present interviewees find potential new interviewees through their social networks (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Emails asking for interviews with members of the groups were first sent; some organizations and individuals responded, while others did not. Direct contacts with interviewees were organized as well. A few individuals also presented a few of their acquaintances from different groups. Interviewees were included because they were actively involved in the pro-Palestinian movement and because their unique experiences might provide insights into the study issues. This method was selected because semi-structured interviews enable the systematic and comprehensive order (Lune & Berg, 2016, p. 69) of data collection from a large number of

interviewees on a variety of core issues. It also allows interviewees considerable room to elaborate and provide context for their answers. Interview is a term used by Kahn and Cannell (1957, p. 6; Mishler & Mishler, 2009, p. 155) to describe a particular type of verbal encounter that is started with a definite goal in mind, focuses on a particular topic, and eliminates unnecessary information as a result. Furthermore, an interview is a type of interaction in which the interviewee and interviewer have a highly specialized role connection, with the particulars of this relationship varying based on the interview's objectives and nature. Therefore, seventeen in-depth, semi-structured interviews were performed to learn more about the activists' justifications for engaging in pro-Palestinian actions, within twelve effective British pro-Palestine Movements, as well as their goals and tactics. All interviewees gave their free and informed permission after receiving a details leaflet. Interviewees spoke as independents and as representatives of their organizations or individuals who saw raising awareness of the Palestinian predicament as an essential aspect of their work and agreed to participate in the interview as members of their group and were amenable to having their group identified<sup>1</sup>.

In the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees discussed a wide range of subjects, such as why they decided to become involved in this specific issue, how they use pro-Palestinian activism as a platform, how they handle accusations of anti-Semitism, terrorism, and whether or not they have personally experienced anti-Semitism while carrying out their activity. All interviews were recorded and the lengths of the interviews ranged from forty to fifty minutes. All interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were the primary source for the thematic analysis.

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1. A summary of interviewees' socio-economic detail is provided in the Appendix.



Writing the limitations for qualitative research that draws from interviews with pro-Palestine activists in Britain necessitates taking methodological, contextual, and practical issues into account that may have an impact on the study's findings, generalizability, and scope. Since this research is qualitative, there is an inherent limit to the sample number of interviews. The study's exclusive focus on pro-Palestinian movements in the UK limits its capacity to extrapolate findings across various geopolitical contexts. Although obtaining in-depth insights was the goal, the limited sample size implies that the results might not accurately reflect the range of viewpoints found within the larger British pro-Palestine movement. Furthermore, the individuals chosen for participation may originate from their specific areas, groups, or ideological perspectives, which could result in a lack of representation for activists from diverse backgrounds or places in the UK.

### **3. Pro-Palestine Movements in the UK**

British public opinion is becoming increasingly pro-Palestinian as a result of the explosion of large-scale pro-Palestinian activism and movements in the UK that directly question problems that impact the country's pro-Israeli foreign policies (YouGov, 2024). Pro-Palestinian movements and activism in the UK had a number of immediate effects. Macro-level: Following October 7, 2023, demonstrations against the unjust foreign policy guidelines and unquestioning backing for Israel swiftly expanded throughout Europe, especially in the UK. A concise summary of British pro-Palestine groups, which participated in the very research, are as below:

**The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)** is an independent



NGO that advocates for justice for all people, regardless of their background. It champions human rights, promotes a new social and international order based on truth, justice, righteousness, and generosity, and opposes wrongdoing in exercising power. Two members of this group (Latifa and Huseyin) were interviewed.

**The Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB)** aims to institutionalize solidarity with Gaza and has a political and social impact in Britain, particularly during election periods. One member of this group (Lujane) was interviewed.

**The Workers Party of Britain** is a democratic, accountable, anti-imperialism, and transparent party that involves its members in policy formation. Two members of this group (Chris and Aishah) were interviewed.

**CAGE International** is a reliable source of information on the status and whereabouts of prisoners seized under the war on terror. It reveals the core injustices of the UK's counter-extremism strategy prevent, which confronted broader harmful narratives, laws, and war on terror policies through reportage, media engagement, and legal action. One member of this group (Cerie) was interviewed.

**The Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPAC UK)** is a grassroots civil liberties pressure group that promotes civil engagement within the Muslim community and combats Islamophobia. One member of this group (Ahmed) was interviewed.

**Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA)** is a UK-based NGO advocating for political change for Palestine. It leads campaigns for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. FOA works with MPs, councilors, and policymakers to improve decisions for

Palestine. It hosts more than 1,000 events and distributes over 4 million educational materials to the British public. One member of this group (Dr. Patel) was interviewed.

**The Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC)** is a global movement for BDS against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. One member of this group (Mick Napier) was interviewed.

**The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)** campaigns for freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people. One member of this group (John) was interviewed.

**The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)** is a grassroots movement with policies determined by the annual national members' conference. One member of this group (John) was interviewed.

**Stop the War** supports Palestinian rights, opposes racism and Islamophobia, and defends civil liberties. One member of this group (Katie) was interviewed.

**Palestine Action** has cost Israel's largest arms firm tens of millions in losses and has shut down two of their ten sites in Britain. One member of this group (Michael; Pseudonym) was interviewed.

**National Education Union** As the largest education union in the UK, the NEU has a powerful voice when speaking to government and policymakers. There is the opportunity to shape education policy and make your voice heard by responding to surveys, attending meetings and conferences, and sharing your views and experiences with the union. One member of this group (Latifa) was interviewed.

## 4. Findings

Our data suggest that Pro-Palestinian activism in the UK is characterized by a variety of organizational structures, tactics, and participant demographics, as the study demonstrates. Many groups, including well-known NGOs and grassroots movements, encourage pro-Palestinian activism in the United Kingdom. These organizations and activists use a variety of tactics to promote Palestinian rights. These consist of social media activity, public protests, and lobbying initiatives. People drawn to the movement come from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic origins. The movement is confronted with some obstacles, such as charges of anti-Semitism, terrorism, internal conflicts, and outside pressure from pro-Israel organizations. These difficulties have given rise to a convoluted and occasionally acrimonious public conversation over pro-Palestinian activism. Pro-Palestinian activism in the UK has had a noteworthy influence on public opinion and policy despite these obstacles. A combination of polling data, massive demonstrations, political declarations, and media coverage demonstrates how pro-Palestinian activity in the UK has influenced public opinion and policy.

### 4. 1. Raising Awareness

One of the primary objectives of pro-Palestine groups in the UK is raising awareness to alter the perceptions of the British public and thus influence policy decisions in the future. Activism to raise awareness is carried out for diverse groups and uses a variety of techniques. For instance, trade unions in the UK, such as the National Education Union, have relations with like-minded organizations in Palestine and visit the region to observe conditions

firsthand, and then relay them to the British public and student body. As a result, discussing what representatives of British organizations saw in Palestine may raise awareness on the Palestinian cause, what Latifa, a member of the National Education Union in the UK, describes: "They used to send delegations twice a year to Palestine so that members of the union could not only form links and relationships with the teachers there but also become advocates to talk about what they saw and what they witnessed and to spread awareness on the Palestinian cause here in the UK".

To advance Palestinians' rights, and to result in a narrative change in the UK toward the Palestinian cause, activists must first influence public opinion by "making conflicts visible and framing political debates (Baumgarten et al., 2014, p. 243). The British public's perception of Palestine is altered by British activists witnessing the realities of Palestinian daily life, and they become more conscious of how truthfully their governments have presented the Palestinian cause. Teachers, being a reliable segment of the British society, can support the Palestinian cause under their affiliation with Palestinian educators. Members who participate in delegations gain firsthand knowledge of the conditions on the ground as well as genuine viewpoints that strengthen their capacity for persuasive advocacy. Personal accounts and delegate stories can be effective campaigning strategies since they humanize the struggle and highlight the urgency of the cause for UK audiences. Frequent travels foster the development and maintenance of linkages with Palestinian communities, organizations, and educators. Moreover, to Lujane, a member of the Palestinian Forum in Britain, awareness takes place as follows:

...to reach out to the public, by learning, by having discussions,  
by having conversations, by speaking to them on social media,

we need to know what they're thinking, how they're thinking this way, and what led them to think this way.

According to her, the only way to increase awareness is to build more personal ties with individuals and engage in conversations about their opinions and the widely accepted narratives around the Palestinian cause. According to Nish (2022, p. 43), social media allows people to negotiate physical space access restrictions and create "space" for discourse and conversation. As such, it is imperative to use all available tools to facilitate public discourse, including social media, which transcends borders and physical boundaries. Lujane and her team believe that awareness should be spread to change and inform real stories using whatever tool at hand to facilitate public discourse.

To combat the dehumanization of Palestinians in the British society, Dr. Patel, the founder of Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA), uses events and large-scale mobilizations to increase awareness of the Palestinian cause and unfold politics behind the conflict: "... The second event we have nationally is something called Palestine Awareness Week. And it coincides with the first week of November. And that, again, is culturally based, but it has to do wider with everything Palestinian".

Juris (Baumgarten et al., 2014, p. 244) claims that, through influencing public discourse, bringing attention to specific causes, and fostering the identities and emotions required for long-term mobilization, social movement performances have the potential to foster the conditions necessary for policy change. As was evident in the examples of Latifa, Lujane, and Dr. Patel, British pro-Palestine movements utilize a variety of tactics to increase awareness, including events, communication, protests, social

media, education, networking with like-minded groups both domestically and abroad, and most likely, actual action. Continuous and ongoing activism of British pro-Palestine groups caused regular rhetoric on the Palestinian cause. Routine rhetorics have the power to influence narratives that mold people's viewpoints and preferences, which are frequently essential to other types of transformation. As a result, a lot of consequences take time to manifest. Moreover, activist initiatives might seek to accomplish a wide range of goals, including increasing awareness, influencing opinions, altering laws, and modifying the physical environment (Nish, 2022, p. 10).

#### 4. 2. Legal Activism

Protests and direct actions resulting in overt confrontation with the authorities tend to happen when social movements, like pro-Palestine movements in the UK, are mobilizing against something that is primarily a question of official policy — unequivocal backing for Israel. Although British pro-Palestine activists refrain from actions leading to arrest, the British government seeks bills criminalizing pro-Palestinian Actions in the UK. In contrast, some groups utilize British law to oppose attempts by the UK government to limit pro-Palestinian activists' freedom of speech and to dispute the UK courts' interpretations of such activity to defend the legal and social rights of pro-Palestinians in the UK. Cerie Bullivant, Spokesman of CAGE International and activist, declares:

... we're also acting as a hub for if somebody does get harassed by the police, if somebody does get harassed by prevent legislation and schools and teachers are cracking down on them

for speaking out about Palestine, then they can come to us and we'll assist them with lawyers and legal advice and support in that manner.

Based on Cerie, Pro-Palestinian activists in the UK encounter harassment from official British groups despite the existence of British law. To ensure that these activists can exercise their rightful freedoms and rights, Cage International offers them legal assistance. Giving legal support gives people the power to advocate for themselves in the face of persecution or legal danger. It guarantees that they will have the means to uphold their rights and carry on with their advocacy activities. Giving legal counsel and assistance upholds the defense of civil liberties and free speech, which are essential for successful activism and political participation.

By providing useful assistance, a pro-Palestine group shows that it cares about the well-being of activists, which can increase credibility and trust in the community. Strong support networks have the power to draw in new members, especially individuals who might have been reluctant to get involved for fear of facing legal consequences. Furthermore, Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA) founder Dr. Patel asserts that legal resistance and activism against accusations from political and judiciary figures portrays us as non-radical activists who uphold the law and challenge the government based on the law, which is one way to change public opinion about what pro-Palestine groups in the UK do:

... the pro-Israeli lobby tries to malign us and sort of portray us as promoting terrorism or portray us as radical. And we do have a lot of confrontation with the establishment in that sense. ... An MP accused us of denying the Holocaust and then because



that's a great crime in Britain, we challenged him and he had to apologize. And as I mentioned, I think we are the only organization in Britain because he was an MP. It's very difficult to sue an MP in Britain because they have immunity, but we were successful.

According to pro-Palestine organizations in the UK, legal support equates to a form of activism because first, they fight for their rights and the rights of activists in the British society; second, they prevent the British government and pro-Israeli pressure groups in the country from spreading false narratives about pro-Palestine activism. David Miller as well as Mick Napier, Founder member of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC), explained attempts of the British government to criminalize pro-Palestinian activism:

There's an attempt to criminalize pro-Palestinian activism in this country. And indeed, of course, in other countries, in the US, for example, many states have passed laws that make it illegal to boycott Israel. ... The British government, like the American government, is trying to make what we do illegal. That's failing, but they're trying again with a new law to try to silence pro-Palestine voices across the whole of Europe.

Mick thinks that the British government and pro-Israeli politicians will fail because there are strong and effective efforts by British pro-Palestine organizations to sway public opinion about the Palestinians' rights and the Palestinian Cause as well as to expose the motivations of British politicians for their unwavering support of Israel.

The British government is attempting to propagate a narrative that characterizes all support for the Palestinian cause as radicalism

and characterizes all pro-Palestinian actions as such, putting them in legal conflict. Ash, a British freelance filmmaker, claims: "... the British legal and politicians want to interpret the law because that's how the politicians are saying like, they're building a new definition of extremism".

Ash claims that the British government is attempting to fabricate new discourses of radicalism and extremism to portray pro-Palestinian activists as hatemongers within the British society, and to pretend that they are the guilty party in the Israel-Palestine conflict. On the other hand, there exist pro-Palestine organizations in the United Kingdom that are legally mandated to protect the rights of pro-Palestinian individuals and groups from attempts to harm them at police stations and courts e.g., CAGE International, IHRC, and FOA. What makes social movements most appealing, while trying to accomplish their goals outside of the traditional political system is "the rejection of the existing order" (Byrne, 2013, p. 20). Byrne (2013, p. 19) distinguished tactical action channels of movements of two kinds, which are "institutional" and "legal". These channels are often overlooked as the primary means of setting movements apart from interest groups and major political parties. Therefore, pro-Palestine organizations in the UK need legal support. Although their actions are institutionally defined within British pro-Palestine organizations, they could be construed as illegal, thus they would need the legal assistance of people or groups that can uphold the proper definition and application of the law.

#### **4. 3. Advocacy for Palestinians' Rights and Solidarity Campaigning**

The Palestinian cause and people are supported by British activists and organizations because they believe that their rights have been

violated despite the norms and values that the West has consistently defined and upheld. These include the right to self-determination, freedom of speech, and respect for national sovereignty and equality.

Sakina thinks that the goals of pro-Palestine movements and activists in the country are determined by the degree of advocacy, which indicates the amount of pressure that can be applied to change public opinion and defeat the interests of the powerful in society and politics:

The overall aim of everyone who's in activism for Palestine is to ensure that Palestine is completely free, that the occupation of Palestine, ends completely. How that is achieved is different and different people are on different levels of advocacy.

To influence public opinion and decision-makers, movements in the UK portray varying degrees of solidarity with Palestine, and these levels of advocacy for the Palestinian cause choose which instruments to use to convey that solidarity, including events, communication, protests, social media, education, networking with like-minded groups both domestically and abroad, and most likely, actual action. In her capacity as a member of the International Human Rights Commission and the National Education Union in the UK, Latifa shows the schoolchildren her support for Palestine, a cause that the kids promote among their peers and family, leading to both solidarity and internet activity:

We'll demonstrate to the children that they are on the side of Palestine and that will give the children more courage to be able to take those conversations either back home or outside into the, you know, into the public space with their friends on social media, which we've seen them do.

Many people use social media as part of their routine internet networking activities; it is therefore simpler to spread support for Palestine and sway public opinion through these platforms (Johnston, 2014). Moreover, people may easily create groups and mobilize towards a common objective since they have access to a variety of platforms (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2013, p. 219). According to Abu-Ayyash (2015, p. 8), social media serve two primary purposes: First, giving supporters significantly more in-depth accounts of regular occurrences in Gaza within a pro-Palestinian framework that emphasizes humanizing the victims—mostly women and children—of the Palestinian struggle. Second, this would inspire activists and supporters to take part in planned protests in the UK at both the local and national levels. Social media provide photographs from Gaza that highlight the growing number of Palestinian civilian casualties from Israeli airstrikes and the destruction of residential neighborhoods in Gaza.

Aishah, a Workers Party activist, believes that social media play an important role in the ways in which we are informed about atrocities occurring in real-time in Gaza: "We are seeing firsthand the genocide in Palestine from live streams and social media, so the Palestinians are showing us how bad it is, which no one had anticipated".

Social media and live streaming give people immediate access to events as they happen, giving them a clear view of the Palestinian people's reality. This instantaneity may increase urgency and worldwide awareness. Firsthand reports and direct video circumvent the filters of traditional media, providing unfiltered and unvarnished descriptions of events. This may have a more profound emotional effect and improve comprehension of the circumstances. Social media posts have the potential to go viral and

swiftly reach a large audience. The capacity to exchange firsthand knowledge and testimonials can spur grassroots movement and foster international unity across many nations and people. Thus, social media are commonly used to promote Palestine and show support for Palestinians, which could afterwards become reality in the real world on the streets.

Pro-Palestinianism is a value-based social movement in the UK that aims to alter UK government policies about Israeli injustices and the rights of the Palestinian people. According to Lim (2022, p. 24), pro-Palestine movements accept organizations or individuals that support Palestinian rights and self-determination, and operate as a network of independent groups that make their own organizational decisions. To change political strategies and public opinion, they therefore look for methods to sway lawmakers and decision-makers in Britain. Social movements are described by Keck and Sikkink (1998, in Meyer & Tarrow 1998, p. 217) as "seeking to make the demands, claims, or rights of the less powerful win out over the purported interests of the more powerful".

#### 4. 4. Campaigns for Action and Boycotts

The campaigning levels of pro-Palestine groups in the UK vary according to the goals and current state of support provided by the UK government to the Israeli government's violations of Palestinian rights. As a result, while some define action as the physical occupation of Israeli arms factories in the UK, others interpret it as boycott, divestment, and peaceful protests to raise awareness, as Lujane, a member of the Palestinian Forum in Britain, describes:

Since things have escalated, we've done a little bit more direct action. Direct action meaning that, you know, we'll do vigils So we'll light up candles and we'll sit somewhere that where there's a lot of people so that they go ask questions and we can discuss it together.

To demonstrate their sympathy with Palestine while still abiding by British laws and values, pro-Palestinian activists and groups interpret direct action following their institutionally established goals and objectives. Consequently, inconsistencies in certain direct actions indicate a unity in purpose. To advance their Palestinians' rights to equality and the humanization of their lives, as well as the importance of solidarity with Palestine, they employ a variety of action strategies. Vigils can draw attention and have a moving visual impact, particularly when they use visual elements like candle lighting. This may aid in attracting onlookers and the media to the cause. Lighting candles and congregating in a public area have deep symbolic meanings that frequently arouse feelings and promote thought on the topics at hand. Vigils offer an opportunity for direct public engagement. These kinds of gatherings can help supporters feel more connected to one another and provide a forum for solidarity and group expression. Mick Napier, founder member of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) and activist, depicts a higher level of action:

We employ non-violent direct action. We camp against arms companies and the GNF<sup>1</sup> by disrupting their events against what used to be musical events in Scotland, where performers came here on behalf of the Israeli state and performed their music or their art. We disrupted them. During Operation Protective Edge,

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1. Edinburgh International Festival

the massacre of 2014. We were able to get the Scottish government to call for an arms embargo, that is to call for no weapons to be sent to Israel.

Comparing Mick's remarks to Lujane's, there are contrasts in the behaviors. Both of them stand for solidarity with Palestine, but SPSC is more courageous in taking direct action to protect Palestinian rights because of the strong popular support they receive. Furthermore, SPSC can exert pressure on Scottish officials to uphold Israeli interests; in 2014, for example, they made the Scottish government call for a weapons embargo against Israel.

Furthermore, boycott campaigns, such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) have gained global traction. They are a nonviolent means of undermining Israeli interests and holding Israel accountable for its treatment of Palestinian rights. The BDS movement functions as transformational emancipatory resistance practice that keeps up with the changing socio-spatial oppressive apparatus (Svirsky, 2015, p. 64), which is described by Hallward (2013, pp. 1-2) as "groundbreaking in several regards". First of all, it confirmed the nonviolent tactics employed by Palestinians in the first Intifada and by village committees opposing Israeli annexation and destruction of their lands for the building of the separation barrier, and it marked a distinct break from the widespread use of violence in the second Intifada by elements within the Palestinian national movement. Second, the call united Palestinians who had previously distrusted one another or worked toward opposing goals, including Palestinian refugees and those with Israeli citizenship in addition to those from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to Awad (2020, p. 2, in Qutami & Qutami, 2020, p. 67) more significant than BDS's economic effects are its cultural and social effects in changing public opinion and



increasing political awareness of the Palestinian plight. Therefore, John, a Stop the War interviewee, highlights the need for BDS to grow as a powerful tool to fend off pressure from the British government: "... The short-term goal, as best I can tell, is to stop arming Israel to strengthen the BDS movement and get more British support for that. The Pro-Palestine movement in the UK suffers government repression and a media blackout".

A specific, high-impact goal that has the potential to spark a significant amount of political and public attention is targeting arms transfers. It is an obvious problem that has the power to galvanize campaigners and garner media interest. If arms supplies are successfully stopped, Israel's military might be immediately impacted and the international community's position on the matter may be strongly conveyed.

In addition, as one of the BDS acts, Latifa, an Activist in the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and National Education Union member in the UK, talks about the demonstrations that her group members and other pro-Palestine organizations in the UK staged outside UK banks that support Israel: "We'll protest outside banks to stop people from opening accounts with that bank or closing their accounts with that bank. And I think all of this put together has been quite successful because the organizations promote it really well".

This demonstrates that the activities of pro-Palestine organizations in the UK are not limited to a single topic; rather, any topic that has the potential to advance Palestinian rights and jeopardize Israeli interests is a cause for demonstrations and raising concerns about their origins among the British public. Directly attacking banks can put financial institutions under noticeable

pressure to reevaluate their affiliations or practices. British pro-Palestine groups can affect the bank's financial operations and public image by exerting influence over account openings and closures. Banks are important participants in the financial industry and frequently wield considerable power. Protesting against them can enhance the movement's message and receive attention from broader audiences. Since banks are frequently found in busy places, protests may more visibly receive media attention, and cause more public influence.

#### 4. 5. Tactics and Strategies of British pro-Palestine Movements

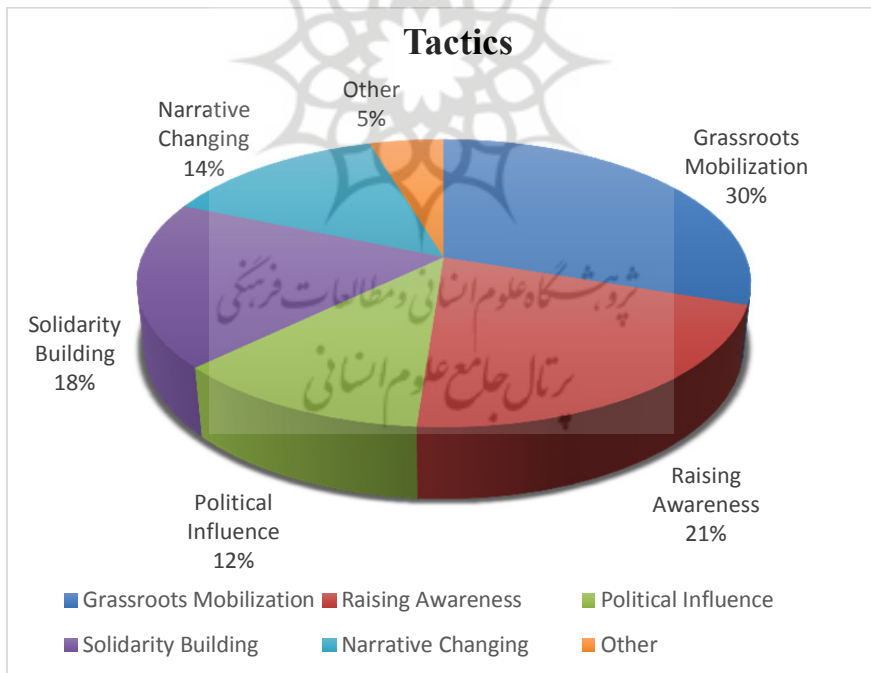
Every British pro-Palestine movement has developed unique tactics to sway public opinion to advance institutional goals and show solidarity with the Palestinian people, novel strategies to change public perception to further institutional objectives and demonstrate support for the Palestinian people. These objectives are outlined as follows:

- a) Opposing Narratives:** Highlighting topics that they believe are underreported and refuting narratives in the mainstream media that they believe are biased or one-sided.
- b) Raising Awareness:** Bringing attention to the Palestinian cause and the circumstances in Gaza and the West Bank through the planning of demonstrations, BDS initiatives, and social media campaigns.
- c) Solidarity Building:** By forging a link between the Palestinian Cause and more general human rights and social justice concerns, they attempt to forge a stronger and more cohesive network of advocates.

**d) Political Influence:** These organizations frequently work to change laws and policies, especially in the United Kingdom which has close economic and political ties to Israel. They hope to influence public opinion in order to put pressure on legislators to reevaluate their support for Israel and become advocates for Palestinian rights.

**e) Mobilization:** To plan and coordinate actions, the movement frequently turns to social media and local initiatives for grassroots mobilization. This decentralized strategy makes a more adaptable and responsive movement possible.

**Figure 1.** Chart of Core Tactics Applied by British pro-Palestine Organizations



Source: Authors

Through an awareness of the frequency and context of each approach, tactics can be adjusted to maximize the overall effect and scope of the projects being carried out within British pro-Palestine Movements. This chart mirrors various tactics used by British pro-Palestine organizations to practice their influence and to give relevance to the Palestinian dilemma. Among the 17 interviewees that were interviewed, 13 members of British pro-Palestine organizations (30%) stated that grassroots mobilization is the most often used tactic. This suggests that community-based initiatives are heavily relied upon to bring about change. Then, the top priority for these kinds of initiatives, according to the twelve pro-Palestine organization members and independent activists interviewed, is mass mobilization, a tactic to highlight the Palestinian cause as a tangible reality and the British government's biased actions for the sake of Israelis, which have dehumanized Palestinians. For instance, Katie, activist and member of Stop the War, in Manchester, describes that: "... It's kind of focusing on getting more people to the protests, and also, like, circulating petitions, signing petitions, demonstrating, outside different companies, and obviously of the BDS movement as well".

"Repetition with a difference" makes a story visible, audible, and widely disseminated (Nish, 2022, p. 127), which contributes to the reconsideration of the Palestinian cause. According to Katie's description of her pro-Palestinian organization, they employ a variety of informative strategies to garner attention, sway public opinion, and spark widespread advocacy for Palestinian rights. The public is united and brought together by petitions over particular words, which can be perceived as collective demands and influence more people to follow and reconsider the government's early narratives. She intends to say that more individuals can be

mobilized by interacting with local authorities and grassroots groups. It might also be inspiring to provide people with simple, doable methods to participate.

To gather support from the grassroots up, such mobilization frequently entails planning community events, protests, or local organizations. Simultaneously, 9 out of the 17 interviewees (21%) reported that the other important strategy is to raise awareness, which denotes a major effort to enlighten and educate the general public or target audiences about particular concerns. Public service announcements, campaigns, informational meetings, and social media interaction could all be instrumental parts of this. The frequency with which grassroots mobilization and awareness-building occur demonstrates a robust community-centric strategy. It appears that educating and interacting with the community on a personal level is important. Thus, raising awareness occurs on two main platforms: in person, as a traditional method, and on social media. In this regard, Dr. Ismail Patel, founder and activist of the Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA), believes that organizing events in person helps communities develop strong bonds and trust. They offer chances for face-to-face interaction, networking, and direct connection. Additionally, campaigns can target regional issues and customize their messaging to the unique requirements and preferences of diverse populations by holding events in multiple locations. While Dr. Patel emphasizes in-person interactions and their capacity to disseminate information about FOA events around the United Kingdom, Dr. David Miller, as a political analyst for the TV show Palestine Declassified, and Aishah feel that social media can promote awareness of Palestine's reality on a larger scale: "... the aim of Palestine Declassified is to bring Palestine solidarity to a wider audience".

Social media constitute a vital source of information used by a wide variety of people for keeping up with current events and posting stories throughout the globe. In particular, there are organized social media groups, such as WhatsApp or X (Twitter) devoted to particular issues that bring like-minded individuals together, enable them to spread their narratives through their posts or Hashtags against official narratives, and influence public opinion. According to Abu-Ayyash (2015, p. 16), X (Twitter) is a tool that is being utilized in the UK to plan regional and national pro-Palestine events. This social network was used extensively for publicizing various solidarity events held in major Irish and British cities, such as Glasgow, London, and Dublin. X (Twitter) was used to announce events and update followers on their success, although activists from solidarity groups and their allies also communicated about protests and activities through other, more covert channels like emails and phone calls.

One noteworthy strategy is solidarity building, which focuses on forming partnerships and alliances amongst various communities or groups. People's power emerges through decentralized efforts, where individuals and organizations take action independently. Building solidarity networks enables people to see themselves as equals (Della Porta, 2014, p. 327). These solidarity networks are political forums for discussing and articulating ideologies and meanings (Downing, 2011, p. 231). Therefore, bringing people and groups together around shared objectives can increase the movement's overall influence. 8 out of the 17 interviewees (18%) described that they demonstrated their unity to exert pressure on the British administration to acknowledge Palestinian rights and Palestine as a sovereign state.

Ahmed, an Activist in The Muslim Public Affairs Committee

UK (MPAC UK), stated: "... We try to engage with other institutions as much as possible, whether mosques or other organizations collaborating on projects, whether it's coalitions where one common issue draws all of us together in actions and so on".

Ahmed intends to say that effective resource sharing, including the sharing of financial, human, and informational resources, is made possible through collaborating with a variety of institutions and organizations. This can improve everyone's ability to deal with problems more skillfully. Interacting with diverse groups facilitates the convergence of diverse viewpoints and proficiencies, culminating in increasingly inventive and all-encompassing methods for addressing problems. Power in Cooperation: Creating coalitions and alliances can give people a sense of strength and unity, which makes it simpler to push for change and accomplish shared objectives. Combined efforts frequently have greater impact and persuasiveness. By leveraging the networks and constituencies of each partner organization, collaborations can increase outreach and influence. More people may become aware of and supportive of this. The Palestinian cause has evolved into an integrating factor for pro-Palestine groups and individuals in Britain who share similar views. According to Saunders (2013, p. 151), it links activists who are deeply committed to a shared idea and a comprehensive collective identity and is likely to create bonds between them, with Palestinians as a common discourse among British pro-Palestine groups.

Narrative changing is another crucial tactic that affects the ways in which the public perceives and discusses an issue. Changing the dominant narratives may require media engagement, narrative development, strategic communication, and the balanced



application of some tactics, with a clear focus on transforming perceptions and fostering a sense of solidarity that supports grassroots and awareness-raising initiatives. 6 out of the 17 interviewees (14%) explained that pro-Palestinian narratives dominated and surmounted official media mainstreams. Suppressing Palestinian rights becomes more difficult as pro-Palestine narratives proliferate. In this regard, John, an Activist in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and Campaign for Disarmament (CND) believes:

Israel has become less popular with the UK public. This might be the result of Pro-Palestine campaigners or the footage made available by iPhone and the ability of the internet to share stories... It is harder to suppress the Pro-Palestine narrative.

Stories and narratives can change the way prospective pro-Palestine activists see activism and encourage participation (Jasper, 1997; Mazzei, 2017, p. 241; Meyer & Gamson, 1996; Polletta & Chen, 2017). Therefore, in opposition to the official narratives, pro-Palestine organizations must also provide a shared understanding of their efforts to ensure the narrative's continuity across time and space (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2013, p. 153). Pro-Palestine movements use both contemporary means, such as social media and more conventional ones like marches and leaflets to raise awareness of the concerns and rally support. When these strategies are combined, they can successfully refute popular perceptions and inspire support for the Palestinian cause. The way that modern public discourse is shaped is significantly influenced by technology. Real-time video recording and sharing capabilities offer a potent weapon for activism and campaigning.

The revolutionary potential of social media is in the service of society's best democratic interests to defend the rights of

Palestinians. The pro-Palestine movements in the UK initially used social media to a significant extent as both an “information source and a mobilizing tool” to challenge the actions of the state (Alden & Aran, 2016, p. 75). Sakina, an activist and independent television producer, explains this dual potentiality: “... All these protests and, you know, the announcements are done on the social media sites. And, you can see the engagement of people, how many people are engaging with that”.

For shifting narratives to have the greatest possible influence on the British public opinion, both conventional and contemporary techniques must be employed to prepare the public for the internalization of new narratives. This provides practice opportunities. People from different social backgrounds can collaborate on pro-Palestine movements in the UK by combining classic and modern narrative change techniques. Social media's dual potential allows new narratives to be internalized through more in-depth contacts and experiences. These connections frequently intersect with the regular community engagements in which many civil society organizations engage. This degree of involvement is necessary to modify narratives stably and create the public will necessary to effectively impact national and foreign policies, as demonstrated by the British pro-Palestine movements. Conventional techniques like picketing and leafletting work well for direct involvement and grassroots mobilization. They facilitate in-person communication and can strengthen community ties. These techniques, however, frequently have a narrow scope and necessitate extensive logistical planning. Through increased reach and speedy communication, social media amplify the efficacy of traditional techniques.

It seems that political influence is employed less often than

other strategies, 5 members of British pro-Palestine organizations (12%) out of the 17 interviewees that were interviewed, believe that face-to-face time spent interacting with decision-makers can mean less or less focus on advocacy and lobbying at the governmental level. The comparatively low use of political influence points to either 1) difficulty in interacting with political processes or; 2) an intentional decision to concentrate on community and media initiatives.

Holsti (1970, p. 240) highlights that the decisions and actions governments take to carry out their national and foreign policies are influenced by external factors. Consequently, when analyzing the impact of British pro-Palestine Organizations on British foreign policy, two important variables are identified: 1) the national role perceptions of pro-Palestine organizations in the UK as a key variable; and 2) the UK foreign policy norms. The pro-Palestine organizations in Britain recognize that they are challengers to the status quo and dishonest politicians who support Israeli interests and even the apolitical British Muslims.

The lack of strength in foreign political influence by British pro-Palestine groups was caused due to difficulties in engaging with political processes. The United Kingdom's foreign policy prioritizes close security and political ties with Israel because of the enormous financial interests that both governments provide to one another, as well as the financial benefits that Zionist organizations and lobbyists provide to British politicians. Consequently, pro-Palestine organizations in the UK would rather draw attention to the financial benefits offered by Zionists to influence lawmakers in the UK to enact social demands and shift public opinion away from Zionist narratives. In this regard, Aishah, Latifa, Sakina, Asjad, Lujane, Dr. Miller, Dr. Patel, Mick, Chris, Katie, Huseyin,

Ahmed, and John emphasized Israeli funds for British MPs and the significance of financial interests for both governments in their ties. For example, Lujane, an Activist in the Palestinian Forum in Britain, declared: "... Financial gain is huge. The Jewish National Fund directly funds, MPs, both conservative and labor, conservative friends of Israel, and labor friends of Israel". She argues that there is a concern about the relationship between money and politics when she claims that financial gain has a significant influence on political support for Israel. Political dynamics may be influenced by monetary contributions from groups such as the Jewish National Fund, but it is crucial to take this into account in the larger context of the ideological, historical, and strategic elements that also shape political opinions.

To maintain the fairness and representativeness of democratic processes and policy outcomes, political financing must be transparent and accountable. The intricate relationship between public opinion and elite support for Israel in Britain highlights the intricacies of both home and foreign politics. Corporate and political elites frequently interact with Israel for strategic, economic, or political reasons, whereas the broader public may have critical opinions based on ethical and humanitarian concerns. Huseyin, an Activist in the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), said: "... The Conservative Party mostly uses the excuse that they are allies and it's in Britain's interests to support them, and therefore they are not interested the human rights. The Labour Party claims that they are neutral, but that criticism of Israel and particularly of Zionism is antisemitic".

Since October 2023 pro-Palestine organizations have been the UK's most active movements in the country and have national role perceptions of their own for role performances and affecting British

foreign policy, which are therefore founded on domestic discussions and influenced by Middle Eastern and global issues. He also draws attention to the difficulties and dangers associated with the way that the main political parties in the UK handle their stances on Israel. The Conservative Party's strategy highlights the importance of strategic goals over human rights, and Labor's position highlights the difficulties in remaining impartial without unintentionally equating criticism with bigotry. In international relations, both stances highlight larger conflicts between political tactics and moral issues.

## 5. Conclusion

By examining how grassroots pro-Palestinian activity in the UK operates as a potent force in international human rights advocacy, this study has successfully achieved its research goals. Through an analysis of these movements' tactics, obstacles, and successes, the study sheds light on the ways in which pro-Palestinian organizations negotiate intricate political environments to promote Palestinian rights and sway public opinion. According to the paper's findings, grassroots activism has made a substantial contribution to changing public attitudes and increasing knowledge of the Palestinian cause in the United Kingdom. These organizations have been able to raise awareness of Palestinian causes in the public sphere by using strategies like social media campaigns, media engagement, mass demonstrations, and legal activism. Pro-Palestinian organizations use resources and public support to sustain long-term mobilization by planning grassroots actions. This shows a high degree of resource adaptability, which New Social Movement Theory emphasizes as crucial for contemporary social movements. Additionally, these movements

connect with a wider audience by focusing their activity on universal values of justice and human rights, forging connections and networks that increase their influence. Moreover, this study highlights the connections between local and global fights for justice by demonstrating how grassroots movements in one nation can impact worldwide viewpoints on human rights concerns. The knowledge acquired here advances a more comprehensive comprehension of how grassroots activity challenges prevailing narratives and governmental policies, ultimately influencing the global conversation on human rights.

This research has provided an understanding of the driving forces behind various pro-Palestinian organizations and individuals in the United Kingdom. They had all been interested in a variety of political causes, regarding Palestine or universal norms of justice, prior to being involved in pro-Palestine advocacy, as evidenced by 17 semi-structured interviews. By placing the movements' objectives within the context of UK politics, Political Process Theory enhances this understanding. These movements exert pressure on political parties and institutions through direct action, lobbying, and legal tactics, influencing the political landscape and occasionally even challenging prevailing pro-Israel narratives. This illustrates how pro-Palestinian movements take advantage of political situations that permit public dissent and discourse shift, which is consistent with the political opportunity structure that Political Process Theory highlights. The main focus of this study was how activists responded to their involvement and organizational actions to shape public opinion in support of Palestinian rights and to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause in the UK, to exert influence over changes to British Israeli policy. These movements, in general, originated from bottom-up civil society campaigns against laws that effectively punished

Palestinians for their opposition to Israel's unjustifiable attacks on Gaza, genocidal acts, settlements in the West Bank, and restrictions on Palestinians' human rights. Framing Theory emphasizes that by redefining the Palestinian cause in terms that resonate with broader human rights concerns, UK-based movements turn Palestinian solidarity into a significant cultural and moral issue within the British society. Pro-Palestine movements, therefore, are active in the UK in a variety of capacities, including advocacy groups, solidarity organizations, media activism, awareness campaigns, campaigns for action and boycotts, and legal activism. They have different objectives and approaches for organizing large-scale protests and swaying public opinion in favor of the Palestinian cause. The main goal of pro-Palestine organizations' tactics and strategies in the UK is to sway public opinion to eventually influence the British foreign policy toward the Palestinian cause. Their deliberate use of social media and neighborhood-based initiatives emphasizes their dedication to educating the public and influencing legislation, and their political activism shows that they are constantly working to bring about systemic change. Activists questioned for the present paper, all agreed that the purpose of their activism was to increase public awareness and exert pressure on the Israeli government to change its treatment of the Palestinian people, illustrating how they navigate political, social, and legal structures to promote change.

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### Appendix: A Summary of 17 Interviewees Information

- Latifa: Female; Activist in Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and National Education Union member in the UK; Palestinian in Exile in the UK
- Asjad: Male; Activist and Independent filmmaker, Kashmiri; Born in the UK
- Sakina: Female: Activist and Independent TV producer; originally Tanzanian; residing in the UK
- Lujane: Female: Activist in Palestinian Forum in Britain; Palestinian in Exile in the UK
- Aishah: Female: Activist in Workers Party; Born in the UK
- Cerie Bullivant: Male; CAGE International Spokesman and Activist; British
- Ahmmed: Male: Activist in The Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPAC UK); residing in the UK
- Dr. David Miller: Male: Activist, Independent and Expert; British
- Dr. Ismail Patel: Male: Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA) founder and activist; originally Turkish; residing in the UK

Mick Napier: Male: Founder member of Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) and activist; Scottish

John: Male: Activist in Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and Campaign for Disarmament (CND); British

Chris Williamson: Male: Activist, Independent, Deputy of Workers Party of Britain and former MP; British

Harry (Pseudonym): Male: Independent and University Professor; British

Narjes: Female: Activist, Independent, and Journalist; originally Tunisian; residing in the UK

Katie: Female: Activist in Stop the War; British

Huseyin: Male: Activist in Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC); Greek/ Turkish; Born in the UK

Michael (Pseudonym): Male: Activist in Palestine Action; British

