

**Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign and Palestine Solidarity Campaign Press
Release**

Thursday 23rd August 2007

British Embassy Supports Apartheid in Football

This weekend the British embassy refused to grant visas for the Palestinian Under 19 Youth Football team to travel to Britain for a prearranged tour. The original reason given was that the Israeli authorities would not allow the players to return to Palestine. The embassy later stated that due to the poor economic situation in Gaza the authorities were afraid that the players would abscond.

As Rod Cox, the main organiser of the tour stated: "it seems to be designed either to provide a fig leaf for the expected refusal of the Israelis to grant either exit or re-entry permits, which is what [the embassy] told me the first time, or just a part of Government policy to keep Gaza under siege"

The PSC and the BIG Campaign are saddened by the UK Government's decision not to grant visas to the Palestinian under 19 youth football team.

This was a unique chance for the members of the Palestinian Youth team to improve both the necessary skills to take part in international football, but also to boost their morale and allow them to see that many people in the UK are supportive of their basic rights to travel freely and to take part in sporting activities and contests.

Boycott Israel Goods Campaign spokesman, Sam Hayward, said "the Israeli occupation makes normal life impossible for Palestinians. The decision not to grant visas to the Palestinian team shows that the apartheid system extends to international sport. If we are interested in stamping racism out of football we should suspend the Israeli national team until the occupation ends".

The Israeli national football team is scheduled to play against England Wembley as part of the Euro 2008 qualifiers on September 8th. The Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jews For Boycotting Israeli Goods and Friends of Al Aqsa are holding a vigil to protest against the match and call for the suspension of apartheid Israel from international football until she abides by international humanitarian law.

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For more information please contact us 02077006192 or by email:
info@palestinecampaign.org and visit: <<http://www.palestinecampaign.org/>>
www.palestinecampaign.org and www.bigcampaign.org
<<http://www.bigcampaign.org/>>

Notes for Journalists:

The Palestinian Under 19's team had planned to tour the UK playing against teams from Cheshire County FA, Chester City FC, Tranmere Rovers FC, and Blackburn Rovers FAC. More information here:

<http://www.palestinefootball.myzen.co.uk/index.html>

The campaign to suspend Israel from international football was launched in March in response to the Israel-England qualifier held in Tel Aviv. Protests were held outside the FA on the day of the match.

An open letter has been drafted to the FA, FIFA, UEFA and Kick Racism Out of Football calling for Israel to be suspended. And a petition calling for the suspension of Israel has gathered thousands of signatures.

The Palestinian people are experiencing their fortieth year of military occupation. The siege by the Israeli army and the economic blockade have devastated their daily lives so that 'normal' life is impossible.

Israel operates an entrenched system of racial Apartheid against its own non-Jewish inhabitants and has been illegally occupying Palestinian land in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights since 1967.

It has sought to further annex these lands and has systematically transferred its own civilian population into these occupied territories in contravention of international law. Israel continues to build the illegal Apartheid wall, annexing vast swathes of Palestinian land in the West Bank and creating Palestinian ghettos, despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice that it is illegal

180 Palestinian organisations and unions, in response to Israeli onslaught, have called for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Apartheid Israel.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) aims to raise public awareness about the occupation of Palestine and the struggle of the Palestinian people. PSC seek to bring pressure on both the British and Israeli government to bring

their policies in line with international law. PSC is an independent, non-governmental and non-party political organisation with members from communities across the UK.