

FQMS Fundraising Dinner In support of Al-Quds Medical School

The Foundation for Al-Quds University Medical School is a UK registered charity focussed entirely on the important task of promoting the work of the Faculty of Medicine at Al-Quds University at Abu Dies and which now organises medical training at a number of other different campuses as including Rafah and Gaza, Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah. This year the FQMS fundraising dinner was attended by over 320 people, taking place shortly after Ramadan on 26 November at the Carlton Tower Hotel in Cadogan Place with the Guest of Honour being Rt Hon Tony Benn. Following a short introductions by Lord Gilmour and HE Afif Safieh, Mr Benn spoke to everyone's heart on the world-wide struggle to re-assert the primacy of law and legitimacy and respect in international relations. He argued that those in the west who oppose the present ascendancy of lawless inhumanity must not despair, that in the US, critics of the US administration are organising to bring about changes in policy there. Tony Benn's speech brought a standing ovation. He was followed by Professor Colin Green who outlined the present problems facing the medical school and



Tony Benn Delivering a speech at Al-Quds Medical Foundation Fundraising Dinner

what the Foundation was doing to solve them, particularly in establishing links between institutions and providing facilities for distance learning on an international scale. During the dinner raffle tickets were sold by volunteers - the assembly of gifts and their preparation being done by Mireille Masri - raising nearly L8,000. Following Professor Green's speech the auction conducted by the well known fine art auctioneer Mr Nick Bonham raised over L78,000 while in addition

pledges in support of the FQMS medical education programme were made to the value of over L65,000.

Entertainment was provided by the well known US based humourist Ahmed Ahmed.

The dinner was sponsored by the generous participation of Mr & Mrs Fawzi and Tohfe Beidas, Mr Hani Kalooti, and Mr Ayman Asfari.

The organising sub committee comprised Sawsan Asfari, Said Shehadeh, David Wolton FQMS is a low overhead charity entirely run by volunteers in the UK who give of their time and expertise; no rent or wages are paid in the UK. FQMS not only provides teaching materials but supports training courses for students and faculty, external examiners and visiting professors.

Membership of the charity is open to all who support its objects on a subscription of L36 per year. More information from the website ■ www.FQMS.ORG

Closure of Palestine Solidarity Campaign bank account

Palestine Solidarity Campaign has been devastated by the decision of Alliance and Leicester to close our bank account of 12 years standing. As no explanation has been offered by the Alliance and Leicester for the manner in which we have been treated, the inevitable suspicion is that the Bank has succumbed to political pressure.

Having exhausted the limited and undocumented complaint procedures available through the Alliance and Leicester we wrote to the Financial Ombudsman.

Service who replied, ..your complaint does not appear to be one we could deal with because it is solely about the firms legitimate use of its commercial judgement. It is appalling that individuals and organisations have little defence against decisions which are tantamount to sabotage.

This action by the bank has been extremely disruptive and costly for PSC. What use is a regulatory body which offers no recourse to the general public but which provides a convenient cover for banks.

Surely we are entitled to be told the grounds on which decisions are made and the evidence for the decisions so that we can challenge any errors.

Alliance and Leicester claims to be the UKs most customer-focussed financial services organisation bar none and that Earning and retaining the trust and con-

fidence of our customers must be a high priority for us.

In its business relationships it says it seeks fair dealing and high standards of business integrity.

These claims ring hollow when set against the experience we have had.

The Alliance and Leicester decision and the recent decision of the Royal Bank of Scotland to close the account of the Friends of Al Aqsa should make everyone in Britain concerned about the implications of banks acting with impunity.

Please help us by:

1. Closing any bank account you have with the Alliance and Leicester and writing a letter of protest to the manager.

2. Join PSC to help us with our campaigning work for Palestine.

We do not intend to let this difficulty hold up our solidarity work in support of human and national rights for Palestinians. Our campaigns in support of a boycott of Israeli goods, cultural and academic sanctions and for the dismantling of the Apartheid Wall will continue alongside our lobbying of the British government. Tony Blair must stop colluding with the 'facts on the ground' by which Ariel Sharon continues to steal Palestinian land.

Please note:

1. On 8 Jan, the Financial Times published a letter from 3 of PSCs Patrons, headed A&L Owes Palestinian Campaign Group an Explanation for

Closing Bank Account .

this can be read on PSCs website www.palestinecampaign.org

2. Below is a copy of the last letter we wrote to Alliance and Leicester which gives a detailed chronology of events. Ms Donna Cunliffe

Head of Customer Services Alliance and Leicester plc Bridle Road Bootle Merseyside G1R 00A

Dear Ms Cunliffe Submission of complaint and urgent request for information! am writing on behalf of Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), to lodge a strong complaint, through your complaint procedure, about the banks treatment of this organisation. I am also asking for essential information please see the last section.

The complaint concerns the banks decision to close PSCs account, and the complaint relates both to the substance of this action and to the procedure the method by which it has been communicated and implemented.

Substance of the decision Our fundamental complaint about the action is that we have been given no explanation whatsoever for why it is being taken, other than that your wording as a result of a recent business review within Alliance and Leicester, we have decided that we are no longer able to provide banking facilities to certain Clubs and Societies (letter of 1 July).

will be continue...