

No to Pinkwashing

No to Israeli apartheid

Dear Colleague

We are writing to ask you to support the work of our group **No to Pinkwashing: No to Israeli Apartheid**.

What is pinkwashing?

Pinkwashing is a PR strategy used by Israel, which attempts to use the claim that Israel has a good record on LGBT issues to divert attention from its human rights abuses against the Palestinians and its violations of international law.

Last year, for example, the Israeli army circulated a photo on Facebook which showed two soldiers holding hands, claiming this showed that the Israeli military values LGBT equality. In fact, the soldiers were not a couple, one is straight, and they both work in the Israeli army's PR department (*Guardian* report at <http://bit.ly/1ivkfig>).

Tel Aviv, in particular, has spent large sums promoting the city as a beach resort for gay men, promoting an image of Israel as relaxed and gay-friendly. Yet the experience of LGBT people in Jerusalem is very different. The city has a large ultra-orthodox population, and Pride marches have frequently been attacked (for a BBC report of a plan to bomb Jerusalem Pride in 2007, see <http://bbc.in/1aGPHGd>).

Pinkwashing trades on Islamophobic stereotypes – that Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians are all violently homophobic. We work with alQaws, a Palestine-based organisation that campaigns and organises LGBTQ events in Palestine as part of the struggle for Palestinian freedom. Just as simplistic accounts of tolerant Israel are a distortion of the truth, so are stories of anti-gay Palestine.

What does No to Pinkwashing do?

We've existed for the last eighteen months, and have:

- Distributed over 2000 postcards against gay tourism to Israel at Pride London 2013
- Distributed postcards and mounted a high-profile protest against Israeli performers at Pride London 2012 (see photos at <http://bit.ly/1fW39YB>)
- Produced two short campaign videos, one in collaboration with delegates at UNISON conference (see <http://bit.ly/1bDxLtz>)
- Hosted a reception for Haneen Maikay, director of alQaws, attended by PSC activists and members of Safra Project, a group for lesbian, bi and trans Muslim women
- Signed up over 360 members to an active Facebook group
- Developed strong working relationships with Palestine Solidarity Campaign and trade unions

What next?

We want to produce more campaign materials, including a banner; have a presence on more Prides next year; and travel to speak at more union meetings and those in universities. All this costs money. Please pass the enclosed motion and make a donation.

Yours sincerely

Colin Wilson
Treasurer, No to Pinkwashing

Motion on pinkwashing

This branch/committee etc notes:

- the continuing denial by Israel of the Palestinian people's right to determine their own future. That denial includes the construction of settlements illegal in international law; the creation of the "apartheid wall"; restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement and the detention of Palestinian children. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, among many others, believes that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians amounts to a system of state-endorsed racism which is comparable with South African apartheid.
- the recent Israeli strategy of attempting to divert attention from Israel's human rights crimes against Palestinians by reference to Israel's track record on LGBT issues – a strategy known as "pinkwashing".
- that this strategy, part of an attempt to portray Israel as modern and tolerant, has for example involved Tel Aviv spending \$100,000 – a third of its international marketing budget – to promote the city as a resort for gay men.
- that attitudes to LGBT people in Israel in fact vary enormously, and that Jerusalem Pride has faced repeated homophobic attacks by large numbers of people.
- the existence within Palestinian society of groups campaigning for sexual liberation, such as al-Qaws.

This branch/committee etc believes:

- that pinkwashing is a cynical PR strategy, which does nothing to promote sexual liberation in Israel/Palestine.

This branch/committee etc resolves:

- to support the work of **No to Pinkwashing – No to Israeli Apartheid**, and to make a donation of £_____ to the group.

No to Pinkwashing – No to Israeli Apartheid

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