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**Sent:** 15 March 2022 12:26  
**To:** 'ben.jamal@palestinecampaign.org' <ben.jamal@palestinecampaign.org>  
**Cc:** 'info@palestinecampaign.org' <info@palestinecampaign.org>; 'matthewwillgress@hotmail.co.uk' <matthewwillgress@hotmail.co.uk>; 'info@labourandpalestine.org.uk' <info@labourandpalestine.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Twin Edinburgh with Gaza?

Dear Mr Jamal,

You may recall that you expelled me from PSC back on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019, as you were under the impression that I was antisemitic. At the time, you refused to engage in correspondence on the matter.

However, I continue to engage in activities in support of Palestine.

For four years now, I have been working to get my home city, Edinburgh, twinned with Gaza City in Palestine. The Edinburgh Council Policy Committee will meet on the 29<sup>th</sup> March to come to a decision on this matter. We are holding a rally the week before in support of the bid, which will take place at the City Chambers at the High Street in Edinburgh. There will be dibke.. I note that our event falls slap bang in the middle of Israel Apartheid Week of 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March. Perhaps you might care to publicise our event through one of your PSC mailings?

I contacted EA4P, your Edinburgh chapter of PSC, seeking support for the bid I am making to the Council, but Evelyn has not responded to my email.

Might PSC Head Office, even so, be persuaded to come out in support of our bid? This project, that I and others have been working on for 4 years, is at an advanced stage; in under 3 weeks' time, Edinburgh Council will make their decision. It is a one-off- due to the Council's petitions process, this mechanism can never be used again to put the matter before our elected members.

Why Edinburgh? Arthur Balfour, the architect of Palestine's misfortunes is from my city; he was born just 25 miles away; he studied here. It is fitting that Edinburgh makes some recompense to Palestine. Also, the other major Scottish cities are twinned with Palestinian towns- but not Edinburgh. And we have the nation's banks and the IT demands that go with being the capital- Standard Life, Scottish Widows, RBS, Bank of Scotland, Tesco Bank, etc, etc These corporations presently outsource their IT work to India- if but a fraction were diverted to Gaza- what a difference that could make!

The people of Gaza, living (as you know) in an open prison, as ex-PM David Cameron put it, have turned to the internet in a bid to break their isolation. There are coding schools springing up across Gaza, the best known being [Gaza Sky Geeks](#), sponsored by Mercy Corps, here in Edinburgh. This project trains hundreds of Gazans to help build coding skills and software development. This is just one of the opportunities seized by Gazans, who are young, highly educated, fluent in English, where they can earn money unrestricted by Israel. Thanks to cloud computing, we can work with Gazans to deliver any internet service e.g. website building, book-keeping, translation, data processing and analytics, online surveys, graphic art production. Zoom and Teams will allow people living in each city to work together and learn about one another. (COVID has made every one of us familiar with such technology.) Our businesses can benefit from accessing the quality IT workers who are trapped in Gaza. Gaza Sky Geeks support our bid for twinning.

In 2012, Cllr Pdraig McShane of Moyle Council in Northern Ireland organised the twinning of his city with Gaza and helped with tourism, sport, football, health care, women's issues, library management, parks improvement and maintenance, sewage processing and education. Due to reorganisation, Moyle Council no longer exists. But if this is what Moyle can do with a population of 17,000, what could Edinburgh offer, with a population of half a million? And a revenue budget of £1 Bn? But what I seek, should cost the Council nothing; it is but an agreement between Gaza's Mayor and Edinburgh's Lord Provost to sign off on an agreement to become sister cities.

And it gives the green light to our city's businesses to start seriously considering bringing their IT costs down by trading with Gaza. As I'm sure you know, the Arabs virtually invented algebra (it's even an Arabic word!); we can

capitalise on those language and numeracy skills. We can help the Gazan economy, presently 90% dependent on foreign aid, to become more self-sufficient. And we can stand together with them, giving them something greater than our pity; giving them the respect and friendship they deserve.

Note we're proposing twinning with Gaza Municipal Council, who've said they'd welcome a relationship; the mayor of Gaza, Dr. Yahya Sarraj, has written to us declaring this. Many in Gaza have signed our sister petition, from Gazan people to Edinburgh City Leader Cllr Adam McVey and Lord Provost Cllr Frank Ross, seeking a twinning. You can see the petition (half of it in Arabic) at <https://chng.it/Pgrwn7qM> And the Gaza Municipal Councillors have nothing to do with Hamas. Jewish-American political scientist Norman Finkelstein explains in this excellent 4-minute video (that we made with him) what he would say to those Councillors bringing up Hamas as an objection – "Why Twinning with Gaza has Nothing to do with Hamas" at <https://youtu.be/UmeraZ3SGh0>

Our proposal is supported by Norman in New York, by Tommy Sheppard MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Ilan Pappé (Israeli historian), the [Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh](#), Cllr Pádraig Pearse McShane (Causeway Coast & Glens Council), Interfaith for Palestine UK, Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC), Gaza Sky Geeks, Husam Zomlot (Palestinian Ambassador to the UK) and of course Dr. Yahya Sarraj, Mayor of Gaza City.

Might you, too, add your voice to our call to help the Gazans who have suffered for 15 years now under an illegal blockade? You can find out more about our project at our twinning website [www.twingaza.com](http://www.twingaza.com)

Time is short; the Councillors are even now beginning to formulate their party lines; we must muster as much support as possible as soon as possible. The 362 people in Edinburgh that signed the Council petition (our petitions process is one of the few UK cities to have it built into their committee structures) are writing to Edinburgh's 62 Councillors trying to persuade them to back the project.

The Greens are 100% behind us; the SNP very warm; the Labour Party split 50/50, the Lib Dems warmly disposed- and the Conservatives rather silent (they are not like English Tories- they do not like Boris much). I think there is a chance we might blow the winds of change.

The Zionists are weak in Scotland- there are some in Glasgow- virtually none in Edinburgh. Of course, we anticipate a fury from Westminster when they hear of the twinning scheme, but by that stage I hope we are so far down the road that they can make little protest. We will not launch our campaign to the public until the 23<sup>rd</sup> March; we'll kick it off with a rally and Dabke dancing at the City Chambers here in Edinburgh. I am familiar with TV and Newspaper editors in Edinburgh; I think we could pull in the BBC, ITV, the Scotsman and the National. The Gaza mayor's office, for their part will brief Al Jazeera.

What would really help would be the backing of you and PSC for this project. We'd need to know if you are, by 21<sup>st</sup> March, the deadline for passing supporting documentation to Edinburgh Councillors. To help you decide, if you have 8 minutes to spare, watch this illustrated speech of myself explaining why we should twin with Gaza- at [www.tinyurl.com/whytwin](http://www.tinyurl.com/whytwin)

I attach a flyer that you may wish to view; we are distributing 13,000 of these around Edinburgh, with adverts in the local paper.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes

Pete Gregson (Petitioner)

Twinning Edinburgh with Gaza Petition

[www.twingaza.com](http://www.twingaza.com)

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