Palestine vigil held on Greg’s Place

By Jan de Boer, Comment Editor
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Image: Yara Ghoury

A vigil to commemorate the killing of 60 Palestinian protesters by Israeli forces on Monday has taken place on campus. The event, organised by the BAME Network in collaboration with the Palestinian Solidarity Society, included poetry and speeches by multiple members of the University community and a short march around Heslington West campus, as well as a collection for the Medical Aid for Palestine emergency appeal fund. The event was attended by around 20 – 30 people, which also included members of the non-University based York Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who came to support their opposite numbers at Greg’s Place.

Members of the York Palestine Solidarity Campaign stood together with their counterparts at University. They noted that the vigil was for victims “alive or dead” who were under Israeli occupation. Their own vigil will be held in collaboration with Stand Up to Racism on 18 May at 17:30 at York Station.

Substantial steps were taken in order for the event to remain peaceful. With full cooperation and invitation of all societies, and careful coordination with JSoc allowed the event to proceed without incident. The event was prefaced by the Palestinian Solidarity Society saying that “There will be zero tolerance of Anti-Semitism, racism, or Islamophobia at this event”. This sentiment was adhered to by all speakers on the day.

The event was in response to Israeli Defense Forces opening fire on protesters in Gaza on Monday before the 70th anniversary of the “Nakba” or “Disaster/Catastrophe”, in which 800 000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, which also coincided with the opening of the new US embassy in Jerusalem, deemed controversial due to status of East Jerusalem as the capital of any future Palestinian state. Recent reports from CNN put the death toll from the attacks at 60, with over 2700 injured in
clashes with the Israeli army on the border between Israel and Gaza.

YUSU President Alex Urquhart was in attendance, and encouraged the event as a format for bringing the campus together in remembrance, a sentiment echoed by event organiser and speaker Malaika Newsome-Magadza. “It was about mourning” noted Newsome-Magadza as the main reason behind the event, concluding that “it is not something to bring up tension, it’s meant to unite us.”

YUSU BAME Officer Hannah Joseph Asikhia told Nouse that “this was a collaborative [vigil] between BAME Network, Palestinian Solidarity Society and different individuals to bring us all together to mourn and remember the victims of the massacre.”

The Palestinian Solidarity Society continues to raise awareness of Palestinian issues of human rights and other issues on campus and beyond.

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