

## **Sam Macartney Award for International Solidarity**

Sam Macartney was the long-standing chair, then co-chair, of UNISON Scotland's International Committee. He was known throughout the union for his promotion of international solidarity. Tragically Sam died in 2020, far too early.

The International Committee decided that they wanted to honour Sam's contribution to UNISON's international agenda and carry on his work in promoting internationalism within the union and beyond. They therefore established the Sam Macartney Award for International Solidarity to be awarded to an individual, branch, or Self-Organised Group in Scotland who has worked to promote international solidarity.

They also agreed to organise the Sam Macartney Annual Lecture on International Solidarity. It was agreed that this would have a focus on the Award winner's project or cause and on Palestine. Sam was passionate about the Palestinian cause. He visited Palestine and was a member and supporter of Scottish Friends of Palestine and Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The annual Sam Macartney Commemoration Lecture was held on Friday 23 February 2024 in the offices of Sam's UNISON Glasgow City branch. It was a well-attended event with many of Sam's comrades from UNISON and the Palestine Solidarity movement, along with many of the local Kurdish community. Kurdish food and music were provided.



Everyone at the event held up signs calling for a ceasefire in Gaza

The guest speaker was Mohammed Alazraq who lives in Glasgow but who is from the Aida Refugee Camp in Palestine where he worked at the Lajee Centre as a Programmes and Activities Co-ordinator. He has worked with UNISON Northern Ireland to raise funds for the Centre and to organise UNISON delegations to the Centre and for young people to visit Northern Ireland.

As part of the annual lecture programme, the International Committee donated £300 to Medical Aid for Palestine which matched the amount raised by

International Committee co-chair Tony Caleary, by selling Palestine solidarity table mats, giving a total donation to MAP of £600.

The winner of the Sam Macartney Award for International Solidarity this year is Stephen Smellie, from UNISON South Lanarkshire. The Award includes a financial donation towards a project nominated by the award winner. Stephen nominated the Kurdish Community Centre in Edinburgh who will receive £600.

Also speaking at the Lecture were Ugur and Emine from the Kurdish Community Centre who spoke about the history and struggle of the Kurdish people in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.



From left, Kaila McCulloch, Int Cttee Co-Chair, with Ugur, Emine, Stephen and Mohammed.

Stephen, in accepting the award, spoke of his thanks to his branch for nominating him and the International Committee for the work that they do and for organising the event. He paid tribute to Sam Macartney for the contribution that he had made. Stephen went on to speak about trade union internationalism and his commitment to the Kurdish Freedom Movement.



Sam, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left in front, on delegation meeting the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, Ramallah, 2016. Report [here](#). Report of the [Award launch event](#) in Nov 2022. UNISON [calls for a ceasefire](#) in Gaza and Israel. UNISON joins call for [UK to suspend Israel trade agreements](#) & military exports following ICJ provisional measures to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people.