



For Palestine  
Essays from the Tom Hurndall  
Memorial Lecture Group

Edited by Ian Parker



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Front cover image by Tom Hurndall, Figure in front of tank at Rafah, Gaza (April 2003).

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# Introduction

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This book comprises a series of scholarly lectures that remember and honour the life and death of a photography student in Manchester, Tom Hurndall. The lectures have usually taken place in the institution where Tom studied, Manchester Metropolitan University, though the process of setting up and continuing the series has not always been easy. The lectures have been organised under the auspices of the Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture Group. Many people have been involved in keeping the lecture series going over the years, and we acknowledge them here in a two-part introduction by two of the recent organisers. The first part is devoted to the history of the lecture series, drawing attention to the institutional and political issues that are raised by such a project; the second describes Tom's life and death. We conclude the introduction with a list of the internationally-respected lecturers, providing the dates and titles of their contributions from 2005 to 2021.

## I. The Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture

In 2005 an annual public lecture was established in Tom's name at Manchester Metropolitan University to remember his decision to bear witness through his photographs, his determination to tell the truth of what he saw, and his bravery and selflessness in doing so.

The Annual Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture was initiated by a small group in Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) under the leadership of Jules Townshend in the Department of History, Politics and Philosophy. Jules guided the lecture series; inviting speakers and arranging the first five lectures at MMU. The first lecture took place in November 2005, with Dr Salman Abu Sitta from the Palestine Land Society, and the second lecture was in November 2006 with Richard Kuper from Jews for Justice for Palestinians. The third lecture took place

in the University of Manchester in January 2008 with Ilan Pappé from the University of Exeter. We were back in MMU for the fourth lecture, with Kamel Hawwash, Chair of the Britain-Palestine Twinning Network, the Birmingham-Ramallah Twinning initiative and the Midlands Palestinian Community Association. Avi Shlaim from the University of Oxford gave the fifth lecture in November 2009, and this lecture included a contribution from Tom's mother, Jocelyn Hurndall.

When Jules Townshend retired, he passed the baton to Ian Parker, then based in the Department of Psychology at MMU, who organised the next four lectures with help from the team, and with continued support from Manchester Palestine Solidarity, represented by Linda Clair, who sold Palestinian goods at the event. Chris Roberts from the Institute for Population Health at the University of Manchester had worked with Jules on the first five lectures together with Paul Kelemen from the Department of Sociology, and continued on the organising team. The sixth lecture was in November 2010 with Karma Nabulsi from the University of Oxford, the seventh lecture was in October 2011 with Haneen Maikey, Director of alQaws Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, Jerusalem, the eighth lecture was in April 2013 with Eyal Weizman from Goldsmiths, University of London, and the ninth lecturer was in April 2014 with Daniel Machover of Hickman and Rose Solicitors in London.

Ian Parker left his post at MMU at the beginning of 2013, before the eighth lecture, and so much of the responsibility for the later lectures needed to be devolved to members of the group, now named the Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture Group. The tenth lecture was organised by Anandi Ramamurthy, then at the University of Central Lancashire in the Department of Media; this was in March 2015, with Rania Masri from the American University of Beirut. The eleventh lecture was in March 2016, arranged once again by Ian Parker, with Adam Hanieh from SOAS, University of London.

By this time, new members of staff from within MMU had been mobilised to support the lecture series, with a decision to obtain financial support from different departments, and Annapurna Waughray from the Manchester Law School in MMU arranged the twelfth lecture in March 2017 with Penny Green from Queen Mary, University of London. Then Christian Klesse, who had been on the team for some years,

working with Adi Kuntsman, both from the Sociology Department, arranged the thirteenth lecture in March 2018 with Miriyam Aouragh from the University of Westminster.

Meanwhile, Anandi Ramamurthy had been working with colleagues in the Department of Photography at MMU, Tom Hurndall's home department when he was a student, to set up a permanent marker of Tom's presence in the university. Over the course of several years a competition was arranged (with generous support for the prize and for installation from the Lipman-Miliband Trust). A design was chosen, and the long process of working with MMU to establish the piece of sculpture commemorating Tom's life took up much time and energy. MMU management stipulated that the reference to Tom's death in Gaza should be removed from the plaque next to the sculpture, and they then wanted the sculpture site moved from the central campus, the All Saints campus where Tom had studied and where most of the lectures had been given, to the new Brooks Building in the Birley Fields campus. These issues, to date, have not been resolved. We have continued, since 2018, to press MMU to install the sculpture. We arranged the fourteenth lecture in March 2019 with Salma Karmi-Ayyoub, a criminal barrister in London.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed additional challenges throughout 2020, though we were also very fortunate in gaining agreement from the Department of History, Politics and Philosophy to host the lecture. This was a step forward in gaining institutional recognition for the lecture and for acknowledging Tom Hurndall as a student at the university. We held the fifteenth lecture online, chaired by the Head of Department, Steve Hurst, in November 2020, with Tim Llewellyn, a former BBC Middle East correspondent as speaker, and the sixteenth lecture also took place online in 14 December 2021 with Lara Sheehi, secretary of the Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Society in the United States.

You can read these lectures, now gathered together in this book, not only as a series of reflections and interventions from different standpoints, but also as a record of an evolving analysis in solidarity with the Palestinian people that carry the traces of the years in which they were given.

We have organised these lectures over the years against opposition from fervent supporters of the Israeli State, and in the face of repeated attempts to have the lecture series excluded from MMU premises. The ethos of the series, and now this book, is that the process of building international solidarity with Palestinians takes many forms, and that scholarly debate is one important aspect of that solidarity. A commemoration and discussion inside the university is, both supporters and critics of the Israeli State well know, a way of legitimising the existence of the Palestinian people and the organisations that represent them. Speakers in the lecture series who are also involved in active solidarity with Palestinians, as Tom Hurndall was, have been clear that open debate is part of a wider struggle for justice. The problems we have faced are, however, nothing to the years of exploitation and oppression suffered by the Palestinians.

What should be clear from this brief account of the history of the lecture series is that the Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture Group has been a rather *ad hoc* affair with changing personnel, and that the institutional circumstances have always been difficult. The memorial sculpture may yet enable Tom Hurndall's life to be permanently marked in the collective historical memory of MMU, and the team is committed to keeping Tom's memory alive in the annual lectures. If at all possible, this should be with active institutional support from MMU. This book is part of the process of making Tom Hurndall visible in MMU, in Manchester, and in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people, a struggle for which Tom gave his life.

## II. 'I am not afraid to look'

These are the words of Tom Hurndall, a twenty-one-year-old Manchester Metropolitan University photography student, in Gaza, Palestine in April 2003.

In February 2003, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, Tom travelled from Manchester to the Middle East to bear witness to what he saw in Iraq and then Palestine.

On 11 April 2003 he was shot in the head in Rafah, Gaza by an Israeli army sniper while attempting to rescue two children trapped by

Israeli sniper fire. He was left in a coma and died aged twenty-two on 13 January 2004 in a London hospital without regaining consciousness.

Tom was born in London, the eldest of four children. In September 2002, following a gap year in Jordan and Egypt, Tom started a degree in photographic journalism at Manchester Metropolitan University.

In February 2003, shortly after the huge protest in London against the invasion of Iraq, he travelled via Jordan to Iraq with the 'Human Shields', an organisation of civilians whose opposition to the proposed war and belief in the principle of non-violent direct action led them to volunteer to be an unarmed presence in Iraq itself, as human shields.

Tom's stated purpose was to document and provide coverage of what he saw and found. He sent photographs and articles back to Manchester for publication in MMU's award-winning student magazine *PULP* (which was closed in 2010).

'I am here to photograph', he wrote in an article for *PULP*, but 'too modest to describe myself as a photo-journalist' (although his photographs are astonishingly beautiful). 'I am a twenty-one year old student of Manchester Metropolitan University and I am studying [for] a photography course.' He was someone who looked, asked questions, wanted to understand: what type of people are human shields, what was inner Iraq really like, what was the real consensus among the Iraqi people about regime change, weapons of mass destruction, oppression, and war; and what was the British government proposing to do with hard-earned taxes.

In an article for *PULP* in February 2003, Tom wrote of the Human Shields: 'It occurred to me that I had never been part of a group of people that I respected so much. Few if any conformed to their tree-hugging image, none were political extremists, and only a couple had ever before been any form of activist. It struck me that these were absolute representatives of those who attended the march the week before in London, except that they had the courage to take the protest one step further and still keep it peaceful. In that way and through that courage I felt proud to be associated with them and guilty for my differing motives for being there,' adding, 'When I return to Manchester, any suggestion of their "stupidity" would result in a probably violent rebuttal from myself. These people were heroes in my eyes.'

Tom sent two more articles to *PULP* from Iraq before travelling to Jordan at the beginning of March 2003, where he photographed conditions in the Al Ruwaished refugee camp and made efforts to send his material back to the UK. At the end of March 2003 he decided to go to Hebron to cover the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in the Palestinian Territories, not least because 'I want to see what is going on with my own eyes.' He planned to be back within two to three weeks and to publish a photo-essay called 'In the Middle', adding 'if I don't get shot by Iraqis, Israelis, Palestinians or Americans.'

By early April 2003 he was in Israel and had made contact with the ISM—civilian volunteer peace activists engaged in non-violent unarmed resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine—with whom he travelled on 6 April 2003 to Rafah in the Gaza Strip. Within twenty-three hours of arriving in Rafah he had been 'shot at, shelled, tear-gassed, hit by falling brick/plaster, "sound-bombed", almost run over by the moving house called a D10 bulldozer, chased by soldiers and a lot else besides...'

Between 7 and 11 April 2003 he worked alongside ISM in Rafah, bearing witness to what he saw there, taking photographs of what was happening in Rafah, while wearing the uniform of bright-orange fluorescent jacket and trousers, known by everyone to signify that he was an unarmed peace volunteer: 'I am not afraid to look; that is what I am doing over here now'.

On 11 April 2003 the jacket and trousers were ignored by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). Around 4pm, while trying to rescue two Palestinian children trapped by IDF sniper fire coming from nearby Israeli watchtowers, Tom was shot in the head by an Israeli sniper.

Tom was left in a coma and died in hospital in London nine months later, on 13 January 2004, at the age of twenty-two, without ever regaining consciousness.

The sniper who killed Tom was roughly the same age as him: It was Wahid Taysir Hayb, a decorated Bedouin Arab Israeli army sniper in an IDF reconnaissance unit.

In October 2003 after months of struggle by Tom's parents to establish the truth of what happened that day, Israel ordered an IDF investigation into Tom's killing to be opened. As a result, Taysir Hayb was convicted of manslaughter, obstruction of justice, and false testimony, and in August 2005 was sentenced to eleven and a half years in prison.



Facts about Tom's time in the Middle East between 21 February and 11 April 2003, accounts of his experiences and all quotes here are taken from *The Only House Left Standing: The Middle East Journals of Tom Hurndall*, which was published by Trolley Books Ltd in 2012, with a foreword by renowned journalist and war reporter Robert Fisk.

