

PSC BRIEFING
GENERAL ELECTIONS 2010



General Election: Lobby your future MP – sign the pledge to support Justice for the Palestinians

Who wants to be an MP in your area?: With less than nine weeks until the expected date of the general election, the PSC urges you to get in touch with all the Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPC) in your constituency and find out where they stand on the issue of Palestinian self-determination and ending Israel's occupation.

Six questions to ask: See below the questions to put to your PPC about Israel's violation of international law; opposing attacks on universal jurisdiction; ending the illegal siege on Gaza; banning imports of settlement goods; suspending the EU-Israel trade agreement and not selling arms to Israel.

Let us know: Keep us informed of the answers you receive from all the candidates – this will help inform our future lobbying work. Please send it back by post or email to the PSC office. You may also want to press release your findings to your local media so voters can make an informed choice on where they stand on this issue.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign

PSC, Box BM PSA
WC1N 3XX
London

Tel: 02077006192

Email: info@palestinecampaign.org

www.palestinecampaign.org

Dear

Re: Sign the pledge for peace and justice

As my parliamentary candidate in the general election, I am writing to ask your views on an issue very important to me. I want my MP to pledge their support for peace and justice for Palestinians.

Will you:

1. Call on Israel to end its violations of international law, including ending its illegal occupation.
2. Oppose any attacks on universal jurisdiction and support bringing Israeli war criminals to justice
3. Work to end the siege on Gaza
4. Call on the government to ban the import of settlement goods
5. Call on the government to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement
6. Call for an end to the arms trade with Israel

All responses will be made public.

1. Israel's violations of international law

- The Israeli government is in constant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which protects people living under occupation, and forbids an occupying power from making its presence a permanent one.
- A whole swathe of UN resolutions call on Israel to end its occupation, stop its settlement construction, respect the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, and end Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. The Israeli government have flouted all these resolutions with impunity, as it has the UN's demand for Israel's nuclear facilities to be inspected.
- Even the International Court of Justice's ruling against Israel's building of a Wall inside Occupied Palestinian Territory has been ignored.

The British government must act to force Israel to abide by international law. Why should Israel be able to violate humanitarian law with impunity?

2. Bringing Israeli war criminals to justice

- Following the seeking of an arrest warrant against Tzipi Livni in December 2009, David Miliband said that "The Government is looking urgently at ways in which the UK system might be changed in order to avoid this sort of situation arising again."
- The Israeli government, in which Tzipi Livni served in as Foreign Affairs minister, planned and executed the war on Gaza during December 2008 and January 2009.

- The United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict was led by Justice Richard Goldstone. His report pointed out that, 'several of the violations referred to in this report amount to grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Goldstone noted that there is a duty imposed by the Geneva Conventions on all High Contracting Parties to **search for and bring before their courts** those responsible for the alleged violations. The UK is a High Contracting Party – and has a responsibility to uphold international law, regardless of whether someone accused of war crimes is considered a friend of the current government or not, and regardless of their status, rank or influence.
- Britain must not change its laws in order to avoid any future attempts to prosecute suspected war criminals, Israeli or otherwise.
- The power to arrest individuals reasonably suspected of war crimes anywhere in the world should they set foot on UK soil is necessary, as victims of war crimes are often unable to seek justice in their own country. The government should not succumb to pressure from any foreign power to alter this crucial aspect of the judicial process.

Bringing those responsible for war crimes to justice is essential to end the culture of impunity that referred to in the Goldstone report, and end Israel's continued military assaults.

'The Mission was struck by the repeated comment of Palestinian victims, human rights defenders, civil society interlocutors and officials that they hoped that this would be the last investigative mission of its kind, because action for justice would follow from it. It was struck, as well, by the comment that every time a report is published and no action follows, this emboldens Israel and her conviction of being untouchable'. (Goldstone, para 1754)

3. Ending the siege on Gaza

- Since June 2007, Israel has imposed a brutal and illegal siege on 1.5 million people living in the Gaza strip. The UN and EU have repeatedly stated that the blockade of Gaza, including restricting supply of electricity and fuel, constitutes collective punishment of a civilian population, is prohibited in international humanitarian law under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009 killed 1,417 Palestinians, including 313 children, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. 14 Israelis were killed, of whom 11 were soldiers. Despite massive destruction of infrastructure, Israel prevents the entry of cement and building materials, forcing people to live in makeshift shelters and tents among the ruins of their former homes.
- According to the report "Failing Gaza", published by 16 organizations including Amnesty International, "In the first two years of the blockade, an average of just 112 truckloads per day - one fifth of the previous levels - were allowed into Gaza. Exports have been entirely banned with the exception of several small shipments. The report states that "currently Israel only regularly allows about 35 categories of items entry into Gaza. In contrast, some 4,000 items were imported before the blockade began".
- The Goldstone Report 'found that the following grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention were committed by Israeli forces in Gaza: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and extensive destruction of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly. As grave breaches these acts give rise to individual criminal responsibility. The Mission notes that the use of human shields also constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.' (para 1732)
- The report also found that 'the series of acts that deprive Palestinians in the Gaza Strip of their means of subsistence, employment, housing and water, that deny their freedom of movement and their right to leave and enter their own country, that limit their rights to access a court of law and an effective remedy, could lead a competent court to find that the crime of persecution, a crime against humanity, has been committed.' (para 1733)]

Palestinians in Gaza have experienced a horrific and illegal collective punishment – for daring to exercise their right to democratically elect MPs to represent them.

4. Ban the import of settlement goods

- Almost 500,000 Israeli settlers live illegally in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The UN reported that 'more than 38% of the Occupied West Bank is taken up by Israeli settlements, outposts, military bases and closed military areas, Israeli declared nature reserves or other related infrastructure that are off limits or tightly controlled to Palestinians.'
- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office website states that "The government has been clear that settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank are illegal." UN Security Council resolutions 446 and 465 "deplore" the building of settlements on Palestinian land and instruct member states not to assist the building of settlements. The Geneva Convention states that the transfer of a civilian population into occupied territory is a war crime; to be ancillary to this crime is also a crime in English law.
- Yet despite this, goods grown in Israeli settlements, on stolen Palestinian land, are exported and sold in Britain.

As settlements are illegal under international law, the export of settlement products must be banned. We have a duty not to economically aid those carrying out illegal acts.

5. Suspending the EU-Israel trade agreement

- Our government should push for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement until Israel meets its obligations under international law. Article 2 of the Agreement requires Israel to comply with human rights provisions – something it has clearly not complied with.
- Since 2000, the EU Israel Association Agreement (EUIAA) has promoted strong trade, business and cultural ties between Israel and the EU. Today, 30% of Israel's exports go to the EU under a preferential trade tariff, paid for by the EU taxpayer. There are even current negotiations in progress to upgrade this agreement despite Israel's gross breaches of Article 2 of the EUIAA that requires it to 'respect human rights and democratic principles'.

Why should Israel be allowed to violate the terms of the EU-Israel trade agreement and continue to financially benefit from preferential trade terms?

6. Ending the arms trade with Israel

Equipment used on Gazans contained UK-supplied components. In a [Ministerial Statement](#) on 21 April 2009, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary David Miliband admitted that Israeli equipment used in Gaza "almost certainly" contained UK-supplied components. He cited F16 combat aircraft, Apache attack helicopters, Saar-Class corvettes and armoured personnel carriers. Then Foreign Minister Bill Rammell told the Commons' [Committees on Arms Export Controls](#) that no licences for components for the F16s, helicopters or armoured personnel carriers had been approved since the war on the Lebanon in 2006. On 13 July 2009 the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that Britain cancelled five out of 182 licensed British arms exports to Israel, all involving equipment for the Saar 4.5 class Corvette, a naval vessel used in Israel's war on Gaza.
