

Thank you for contacting me about the important matter of Palestine and Israel.

The Labour Party manifesto includes the following statement:

*Labour is committed to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on a two-state solution – a secure Israel alongside a secure and viable state of Palestine. There can be no military solution to this conflict and all sides must avoid taking action that would make peace harder to achieve. That means both an end to the blockade, occupation and settlements, and an end to rocket and terror attacks. Labour will continue to press for an immediate return to meaningful negotiations leading to a diplomatic resolution. A Labour government will immediately recognise the state of Palestine.*

This gives an unequivocal answer of **yes to your second question** on whether the Gaza blockade should be lifted. I find it very easy to **immediately answer yes to question 4 - that child prisoners should be treated in accordance with international law**. This applies in all countries, including Israel.

On settlement goods in a House of Commons debate the following statements were made by Grahame Morris (Lab):

**Settlement products are the proceeds of crime. They are illicit goods, the product of a brutal occupation and the exploitation of the occupied and their resources. By trading with those who produce them, we financially encourage them.** Those settlements are built on the foundations of immense suffering—that of the Palestinians who have seen their homes destroyed, have been expelled from their own land and are living under brutal oppression—yet we make the illegal settlement enterprise profitable for the occupying power. That seems to me a gross injustice. **Personally, I do not think that we should have to boycott settlement goods; we should not be allowed to buy them in the first place.** The UK Government should work at EU level to ensure that such products of suffering and exploitation are banned.

and by David Ward (LD):

*I was privileged to listen to Rebecca Vilkomerson two weeks ago when she spoke to a small group here in Westminster. Rebecca is the executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace, the fastest-growing Jewish organisation in the United States. It grew rapidly during the attack on Gaza. She suggested some changes as ways to bring about something different. **The first was using boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. The cost to Israel of not negotiating seriously must be greater.** I have an online petition with 80,000 names on it calling for the use of BDS as a peaceful means of applying economic pressure. **At the very least that should apply to settlement goods,** but I argue that it should go beyond that.*

I agree with the sentiments expressed here so **my answer to question 1 is yes.**

Arms have been exported from the UK to Israel on the understanding that "we do not believe there is a clear risk that the Joint Strike Fighter would be used for internal repression, would aggravate existing internal tensions or conflict, or be used aggressively against another state." and these criteria should be continually kept under review."

However, the 2014 bombardment of Gaza put such a belief under severe strain. Grahame Morris again made a statement about this at the time:

*In such circumstances, I believe that all arms export licences should be suspended. Moreover, given Israel's record of violating international law, the arms trade with Israel should be completely banned in both directions.*

However, I think any such ban should be kept constantly under review. Israel (like other countries) lives under the threat of aggressive military action by other countries. The end of the unwanted Netanyahu regime would be a key factor in this.

On question 5

"As part of the EU the UK is currently party to trade deals with human rights clauses written into them ... Withdrawal from the EU would mean that the UK no longer has to comply with the human rights obligations contained in the EU Treaties and other sources of EU law, unless Parliament chooses to continue them in force"

My view is that such human rights clauses should be kept as part of the Brexit process.

I apologize for not replying earlier. It has been a busy few weeks.

Best wishes,  
Keith White  
Labour candidate for Cheltenham