

As a Liberal Democrat, I am committed to seeing a negotiated peace settlement with a two-state solution. This will involve difficult, but necessary compromises on both sides of the conflict in order to respect the rights of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

For over two years now, peace talks between Israel and Palestine have stalled, and during this period it has been deeply troubling to see a number of new issues and conflicts arise in the region. This has included rocket attacks and the targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas, as well as the continuation of Israel's illegal policy of settlement expansion, both of which have the effect of undermining the possibility of a two state solution.

I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues have continued to condemn disproportionate force used by all sides and have always stood firmly in support of the indivisibility of human rights and the rule of law. Because of this, I have continued to advocate strongly for a peaceful solution to the conflict and more broadly a stable and prosperous Middle East.

The Liberal Democrats believe any peace settlement should include an agreement based on 1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps and a just settlement for refugees. These compromises will be difficult, but they are necessary in order to break the cycle of violence and guarantee the long-term security of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Liberal Democrats are of the firm opinion that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) are illegal under international law and present an obstacle to peace that take us further away from a two-state solution. Stopping the building of settlements will play a fundamental role in securing the lasting peace and prosperity that is so desperately needed by both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

When in Coalition Government the Liberal Democrats regularly urged the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law as an occupying power in the West Bank and to lift restrictions on Gaza. The Liberal Democrats also encouraged the Israeli and Egyptian Government to reopen crossings to and from Gaza, as well as committing the UK to £20 million for early recovery assistance for Gaza following the conflict in the summer of 2014.

I do not support trade sanctions on Israeli goods, as I think this makes achieving a peaceful solution harder. I am supportive of the voluntary guidelines which enable customers to identify whether goods come from the OPTs and decide for themselves if they want to buy them.

My priority now is to see a return to talks that bring a lasting end to the violence, improve the lives of ordinary Palestinians and address Israel's legitimate need for security. It is vital that the international community boosts its efforts at bringing both Israeli and Palestinian delegations back to the negotiating table.

It would be deeply worrying if the region entered into another period of sustained conflict as has been endured previously and therefore both sides must work for sustainable peace.

Yours sincerely,

Simone Reynolds