

#GE16: Will YOU pledge to support Palestine in the Dail?

Dear Candidate,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) to ask you to **support the rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people by pledging to take and support concrete, meaningful and positive action if you are elected to the next Dáil.**

Israel is a serial human rights and international law violator that has been oppressing the indigenous people of Palestine for seven decades. In that time it has faced no concrete action from the international community as punishment for these crimes and violations. Despite widespread Irish public support for the Palestinian people's plight, including tens of thousands taking to the streets in IPSC-led protests against Israeli attacks, consecutive Irish governments have regrettably failed to act in a truly meaningful manner to help secure justice for the Palestinian people.

A decade ago, a broad coalition of over 200 Palestinian civil society, trade union, artistic, faith, refugee rights and political organisations issued a call for international support in the form of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). As with Apartheid South Africa in the past, people all over the world are answering this call and supporting this Palestinian-led BDS campaign.

It is clear that as long as Israel enjoys international impunity for its actions, it will continue to occupy and oppress the Palestinians, denying them basic liberties - the time to take action is now.

We ask you to listen to the Palestinian call for freedom, justice and equality and pledge to support the people of Palestine by publicly committing to the following two promises (background on each can be found below). **Will you pledge yourself to be part of the tide of change?**

[Make the #PalestinePledges](#)

1 - The Arms Trade Pledge: "I believe that no one should profit from the deaths and occupation of Palestinians, and if elected to Dáil Éireann I pledge to actively work to end the bilateral arms trade between Ireland and Israel."

2 - The Euromed Pledge: "If elected to Dáil Éireann I pledge to actively work to suspend Israel from the EU-Israel Association Agreement (Euromed), due to its failure to abide by the Human Rights clause in Article 2"

We are asking all candidates in the General Election to make these two pledges, and will be publishing your answers on our website for all voters concerned with Palestine to see. We ask you to respond to this email (palestinepledges@ipsc.ie) so voters can have an informed opinion about where you stand on the issue of justice for the Palestinian people.



[Background: End the Irish Arms Trade With Israel](#)

Ireland has bought €14.7m worth of arms and military components from Israel over the last decade, while Irish-based companies have exported €6.42m worth of military and 'dual use' hardware to

Israel since 2011. Military items exported from Israel will have used Palestinians as ‘human test subjects’ so such weapons can be marketed as ‘battle proven’. Any military components exported to Israel will be used to kill and maim yet more Palestinians and to entrench the decades-long military occupation.

Neither Israel nor arms manufacturers in Ireland should be allowed to profit from the killing of Palestinians; this trade in death must cease. It should be unconscionable for a state like Ireland that claims ‘respect for and the promotion of human rights has always been and will continue to be a cornerstone of foreign policy’ to allow such a trade to continue. Therefore the Irish government must end the Irish arms trade with Israel until it ends the occupation of Palestinian land and complies fully with its obligations under international law.

You can read more information about the Irish-Israeli arms trade, and see list of national and international supporters if the campaign to end it, [by clicking here](#).

Background: Suspend Israel from the Euromed Agreement

In our view, the most effective action that can be taken at EU level to help secure justice for Palestinians is to suspend the EU Israel Association Agreement (aka, the Euro-Med Agreement) – this is the main treaty between the EU and Israel and grants Israel trading privileges with the EU. Article 2 of the Agreement states that:

“Relations between the Parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement.”

If “respect for human rights” form an “essential element” of the agreement, then Israel – a serial human rights violator - simply should not be a party to the agreement.

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini has stated that “the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel ... can be terminated by either Party,” but continued to say that the “EU is currently not considering a review of the Association Agreement with Israel.”

That the EU currently refuses to even consider the issue of suspension reflects negatively on its proclaimed commitment to “democratic and human rights values”. We believe that the Irish government should take the brave step to become the first EU member state to openly make this call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Even the very fact of it being discussed at all could have a dramatic impact on Israel’s behaviour and policies. In doing so, the Irish government would be listening to the demands of the Palestinian people, and joining the 63 MEPs who, in a unique cross-party initiative in January 2015, called for the Agreement’s suspension.

You can read more information about the EU-Israel Association Agreement [by clicking here](#).

Background: Israel's unending occupation and system of permanent violence

The State of Israel was formed in 1948 on the back of the deliberate ethnic cleansing and dispossession of some 800,000 Palestinians forced into exile. Since 1967 this rogue state has been militarily occupying and colonising Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians living under Israeli occupation are subject to a system of military Apartheid similar to that experienced by black South Africans, with different laws for Arabs and Jews. Those in Gaza are subject to a cruel and illegal blockade by air, land and sea. Palestinian citizens of Israel too live under a system of legal discrimination, systemic racism and societal exclusion. Meanwhile millions of refugees live in

overcrowded, dangerous and marginalised refugee camps in neighbouring countries, denied their UN mandated Right of Return to their homes for almost 70 years.

In the past two years alone, Israel has killed over 2,460 Palestinian women, men and children, including during the brutal and widely condemned assault on Gaza in summer 2014, when human rights organisation accused Israel of committing war crimes. Similar attacks took place in 2012, 2008/9 and 2006. In fifteen years, over 9,270 Palestinians have been killed and 90,000 injured by Israeli occupation forces. Over the past half century, some 800,000 Palestinians have been political prisoners in Israel's prisons (1 in 4 of the male population), and more than 48,000 homes, businesses and other structures have been destroyed by occupation forces. Over half a million colonial settlers have moved into more than 200 illegal Israeli settlements built on stolen Palestinian land, actions deemed war crimes under the Geneva Conventions.

Children, in particular, are disproportionate (and often unseen) victims of Israel's occupation; more than 2,000 have been killed in the past fifteen years, while 90,000 have been wounded. 700 are detained and imprisoned every year, often taken from their homes in terrifying night raids or on their way to school. Mental and physical, including sexual, abuse of children by their captors is frequent according to human rights organisations. Decades of occupation and conflict is scarring children's lives forever; for example UNICEF says that over 400,000 children in Gaza alone are suffering from trauma. Generations of Palestinians are growing up in hopelessness and despair, their dreams and hopes crushed underfoot by the unrelenting brutality of the occupation.

It is time to end this intolerable situation once and for all. We sincerely hope you will pledge yourself to becoming part of the solution. Please contact us at palestinepledges@ipsc.ie or by responding to this email and let us know if you will take the #PalestinePledges.

Yours sincerely,

Martin O'Quigley
Chairperson
Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign