

✓ Pledge for Gaza

LABOUR
FRIENDS
of ISRAEL

*Working towards a
two state solution*

Executive Summary

LFI has launched a new campaign: The Pledge for Gaza - part of our long-standing work to encourage the economic revitalisation of the coastal enclave.

We will be inviting Labour parliamentarians to sign the five-point plan. It seeks to provide a multifaceted response to the challenges facing Gaza and thereby help bring about a more peaceful and prosperous future for the peoples of both Gaza and Israel.

The Pledge for Gaza

- ✓ We recognise the plight of the people of Gaza and the dire humanitarian situation they face;
- ✓ We condemn Hamas' ongoing rearmament, tunnel construction and attempts to launch rocket and terrorist attacks in Israel and urge respect for the Oslo Accords which stipulate the demilitarisation of the Palestinian territories;
- ✓ We deplore Hamas' repeated violation of the human rights of the citizens of Gaza, in particular its treatment of women and LGBT Palestinians;
- ✓ We call upon the international community to honour the reconstruction pledges made at the Cairo conference in 2014;
- ✓ We urge the Israeli government to assist with the economic revitalisation of Gaza including supporting Labor MK Omer Bar-Lev's plans for the construction of a seaport.

The Humanitarian Situation

✓ We recognise the plight of the people of Gaza and the dire humanitarian situation they face.

- The humanitarian situation in Gaza is desperate and deeply concerning. Electricity supplies are highly restricted; water and sewage facilities are under strain and rising unemployment has hit 40 per cent, with an estimated six in 10 young people out of work.
- Last year, the Palestinian Authority, in an attempt to put pressure on Hamas, requested that the power supply to Gaza be sharply reduced, significantly worsening the humanitarian situation for the people of Gaza. This situation was partially rectified in January, with an additional 50 megawatts of power to Gaza being restored.
- Since Hamas' 2007 coup, both Israel and Egypt have imposed strict controls on the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza in an attempt to contain the terror group and prevent it acquiring more weapons or the materials to construct additional terror tunnels.
- Egypt's Rafah border crossing with Gaza continues to be restricted heavily. During 2017, the terminal was open for a total of 35 days. The main border crossing between Israel and Gaza is at Erez, which is active every day of the year and where, on average, 1,000 Gazans pass through into Israel each day. Additionally, over half a million tons of food entered the Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing in 2017, along with 3.3m tons of construction equipment and 12,000 tons of agricultural equipment.

Hamas

Rearmament

✓ We condemn Hamas' ongoing rearmament, tunnel construction and attempts to launch rocket and terrorist attacks in Israel and urge respect for the Oslo Accords which stipulate the demilitarisation of the Palestinian territories.

- Hamas continues to rearm, build rockets, construct tunnels and launch terrorist attacks.
- The Oslo Accords stipulate the demilitarisation of the Palestinian territories; Hamas' repeated and blatant flouting of that stipulation is at the root of the problems Gaza faces.
- Bringing Gaza back under the jurisdiction of Palestinian Authority is key, and it is telling that last October's reconciliation agreement appears to be floundering primarily because of Hamas' refusal to meet President Abbas' demand that they disarm.
- Hamas is believed by Israeli and Palestinian sources to spend £79m per year – around 20 percent of its budget – on its military wing, with £32m alone spent on digging tunnels.
- It has been estimated that the cost of the 32 tunnels uncovered during "Operation Protective Edge" was £59m. The tunnels required, on average, 350 truckloads of construction supplies. The cement used on the tunnels could have built two hospitals, 20 clinics, 20 schools, or 100 nurseries.
- One recent Hamas tunnel discovered by Israel ran under the Kerem Shalom crossing. This crossing is the main entry point for hundreds of trucks that provide medicine, food and drink to the coastal enclave. The Hamas-built tunnel was designed to be blown up in an attempt to destroy the crossing. Thankfully, Israel discovered and contained the tunnel in January 2018, before Hamas were able to launch an attack.

Hamas Human Rights Violations

✓ We deplore Hamas' repeated violation of the human rights of the citizens of Gaza, in particular its treatment of women and LGBT Palestinians.

- Hamas' desire to kill Israeli civilians is mirrored by its callous disregard for the lives of the Palestinian people and their human rights.
- In June 2017, the Red Crescent revealed that, during the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas deliberately fired rockets from a position in front of a field hospital. The subsequent Israeli response prevented the Red Crescent from distributing vital humanitarian aid. As the Muslim charity's secretary-general, Mohamed Ateeq Al-Falahi, put it: "What hurts is that the betrayal came from our own people ... This shows [Hamas'] wicked intentions and how they sacrificed us. They always claim the enemy targets humanitarian envoys, but the betrayal came from them."
- Since Hamas took over Gaza, its courts have issued 90 death sentences and 25 people have been executed. Hamas has also summarily executed at least 31 others, 15 of whom had not been sentenced to death, according to B'Tselem.
- In October 2017, Defence for Children International – Palestine warned that children detained in Gaza were "at severe risk of rights violations and abuses during detention", detailing cases of torture, physical abuse and suicide attempts.
- In August 2017, Amnesty accused Hamas of "a repressive clampdown on dissent", deploying "police state tactics to silence critical media and arbitrarily block people's access to information". It reported: "Amnesty International also gathered evidence suggesting at least one of the activists was tortured and otherwise ill-treated in custody including by being beaten, blindfolded, and forced into stress positions for prolonged periods."
- Homosexuality is illegal in Gaza. The social taboo in the Hamas enclave subjects LGBT individuals to persecution by both their families and the authorities. Last year, a high-profile Hamas commander, Mahmoud Ishtiw, was tortured and shot dead after being accused, among other things, of being gay.
- Hamas imposes strict rules on women. They are required to wear veils, especially in offices and on college campuses. In 2013, the UN cancelled a proposed Gaza marathon over Hamas's ban on women. Abdessalam Siyyam, Hamas cabinet secretary said at the time "we don't want men and women running together." He added, "we don't want women and men mixing in the same place."

Reconstruction Pledges

✓ We call upon the international community to honour the reconstruction pledges made at the Cairo conference in 2014.

- All of the schools, hospitals and water and energy facilities which were damaged or destroyed during the 2014 war, along with two-thirds of homes, have now been repaired.
- However, much-needed further reconstruction, suggest international agencies such as UNESCO, is on hold due to a lack of international donor funds.
- In October 2014, Egypt, Norway and the Palestinian Authority held a conference in Cairo to raise aid for rebuilding Gaza following Operation Protective Edge. Total pledges secured at the conference amounted to \$5bn to the Palestinian territories, of which \$3.5bn was intended to support Gaza, over a period of three years.
- As of last year, only \$1.85bn of the support to Gaza announced at the Cairo Conference was disbursed, according to the World Bank.
- Breaking down the disbursement ratio by donor countries identifies where the shortfall arises from. The UK, USA, Japan, Netherlands, Denmark, France, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Ireland and many others have disbursed 100 percent of pledged support to Gaza, whilst Norway, Switzerland and Sweden actually exceeded their pledged support and have disbursement ratios above 100 percent. Meanwhile, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE have thus far failed to meet their obligations, with disbursement ratios of significantly less than 50 percent.

Economic Revitalisation

✓ We urge the Israeli government to assist with the economic revitalisation of Gaza including supporting Labor MK Omer Bar-Lev's plans for the construction of a seaport.

- In February 2018, Israel presented to an international conference a list of infrastructure projects in Gaza – including installing a new high-voltage line that would double the amount of electricity Israel supplies to Gaza, laying a natural gas pipeline from Israel to Gaza and building a sewage purification plant – which it would like to see donors fund, and offered to provide technical support and know-how.
- In the wake of the 2014 Gaza war, Labor MK Omar Bar-lev presented a comprehensive strategy to effectively end Gaza's international isolation. One of its key proposals was for a Gaza seaport. Since then a range of similar plans – including from Israeli government ministers – have been made. These include building a seaport on an artificial island off of the Gaza coast and building an autonomous Palestinian port in Sinai close to the Gazan border.
- Israeli security experts have proposed a number of options to significantly reduce the security risk for Israel, including the use of an external port, for example in Cyprus, for unloading large cargo ships for inspection and reloading onto smaller ships capable of docking at Gaza and the operation of a floating checkpoint away from the shore, or connected to the shore via a bridge.