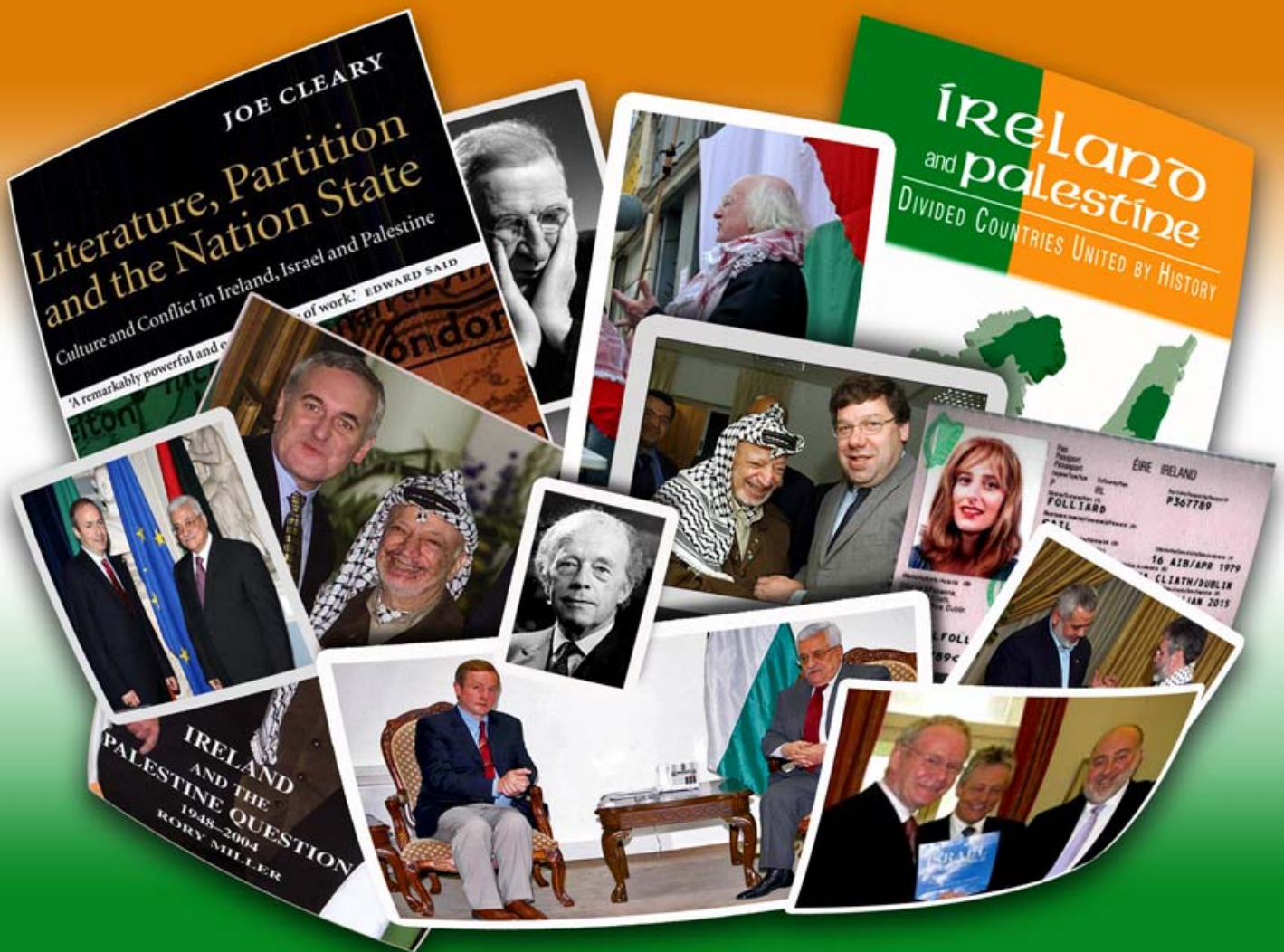


## Palestine in Irish Politics



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SADAKA PAPER 8



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## Introduction – A record that stands

Politics is about changing the world through action. As a small state, there are limits to Ireland's power to affect developments in the Middle East. However, it can influence the foreign policies of the great powers, primarily through the positions it adopts internationally through intelligent use of its influence at the EU and the UN.

In defence of the 'Bahrain Declaration', a major Irish government initiative in early 1980 which contributed to a fundamental shift in EEC policy towards Palestine, Brian Lenihan snr., the then Irish Foreign Minister, stated in an interview with *The Irish Times*:

*" I want to emphasise that this is Ireland's role, and the role that a small neutral country can take in matters of this kind, a positive role in trying to achieve peace in difficult areas. In times past Frank Aiken [former Minister for Foreign Affairs] took a similar role in regard to calling for debate on the admission of China to the UN. "*

Over the period from the 1930s and to the present, several initiatives by the Irish State – some mild and others more decisive - contributed importantly to shaping international and European attitudes and policy with regard to Palestine. These interventions have followed a consistent line of support for international law and, in that context, for the rights of the Palestinian people.

As in all politics, the key issue is translating words into action and policy into effective strategy. This Ireland has succeeded in doing at several crucial junctures in the history of the Middle East. There have also, of course, been clear limits to the positions Ireland has been prepared to take and pressures on Israel it has been prepared to espouse. Nevertheless, the history of the Irish position on Palestine and Israel is a proud inheritance that forms the basis for a continued engagement with the issue.



## Part 1:

### The Irish State and the 'Question of Palestine': history of a special relationship

#### Pre-independence Ireland

The Irish independence movement was traditionally opposed to racial prejudice and supported anti-imperialist movements throughout the world. The Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster regularly opposed British imperial wars in Africa and Asia, while the Fenian movement often lent direct support to liberation struggles around the world.

There were only very small numbers of Muslims and Jews in Ireland before 1900, in neither case much more than about 300. This changed around 1900 with an influx of several thousand largely Orthodox Jewish immigrants from the anti-Semitic Tsarist Russian Empire. Apart from disturbances in Limerick in 1904, provoked by the sermons of a Redemptorist missionary, and sustained by antipathy to Jews who had become involved in the money lending business in the city, political "anti-Semitism", in the sense of a philosophical rejection of the Jews, while it certainly had adherents, had little political support. The ideology of the rising Republican and labour movements of the time opposed racial prejudice and when Michael Davitt, Frederick Ryan and others took a firm stand against some anti-Jewish articles penned by Arthur Griffith, the editor of *The United Irishman*, he quickly abandoned those positions.

The movement that won the support of the Irish people at the general election of 1918 and fought the War of Independence was a movement that rejected racial prejudice and had a clear anti-imperialist understanding of itself.

#### The 'Irish Model'

The Irish achievement of independence inspired movements struggling for national freedom worldwide. Nehru and Bose in India and Aung San in Burma were among many who took the "Irish example" as their model. The Indian National Congress counted several Irish people among its leadership and closely followed the tactics of the Irish movement. On his tour of the US in 1919-20 de Valera addressed Indian rallies under banners declaring: "President De Valera's Message to India: Our cause is a common cause." Irish nationalists also had close connections with the independence movement in Egypt. Richard Crossman, a British statesman, wrote that he first realized the importance of the "Irish revolution model in modern history" in the early 1950s when he met Gamal Abd-al Nasser, who told him that writings from the Irish struggle provided the "textbook of our Egyptian revolution" (*A nation reborn*, 1960, p. 578).

Many members of the Irish Jewish community supported Irish independence and several participated actively at important levels in the War of Independence on the side of the Republic. Robert Briscoe, from a Dublin Jewish merchant family, became an officer in Collins' intelligence service, organised arms supplies from Germany and later served nearly forty years as a Fianna Fáil TD. Others who participated actively include the Dublin solicitor Michael Noyk who was a close aide of Griffith during the War. The Chief Rabbi of Ireland, Dr. Isaac Herzog, was a close friend of Éamon de Valera, provided a safe house for him when he was on the run, and remained a confidant of his throughout his life.



The Irish example was also a reference point for the Palestinian Revolution of the 1930s against the British occupation regime and its sponsoring of Jewish colonisation. Branded in Britain as the “Arab Revolt”, it was ruthlessly suppressed by a British police force consisting of ‘Black and Tans’ from the war in Ireland, working closely with Zionist auxiliaries. When the British military seized the headquarters of the Palestinian leaders, they discovered what a British intelligence report called “Sinn Féin manuals” from the War of Independence era in Arabic translation - probably the 1920-21 journal for IRA Volunteers, *An tÓglach*, which was also avidly studied in India.

## The Irish Free State in the World

The Free State government that won the Civil War against the Republican sought to maximise the scope of Irish “dominion status” within the British Empire/Commonwealth as set down in the Treaty. When Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932 under Éamon de Valera, it did so on a platform of resuming the republican agenda defeated in the Civil War. De Valera’s foreign policy set out to wind down Ireland’s involvement in the Empire and increasing instead its activity at the League of Nations.

De Valera’s election to President of the League Assembly in September 1932 caused an international sensation. In his inaugural address he championed the notion of international law in the interests of small nations. A front page editorial in the prestigious *Journal de Geneve* (25<sup>th</sup> September 1932), caught the flavour of the impact he made:

“... Eamon de Valera, the outlaw and hero, is now at the head of all the nations of the world... [His Presidency] may become a sort of guiding light, a star in the heavens for all those oppressed peoples which are struggling for their independence – de Valera presiding over the sessions of the Council at which the Japanese will have to explain their attitude to China. Here is an astonishing occurrence, of which Ghandi and millions of Indians, Arabs, of yellow people and, perhaps, of black, will at once grasp the full import.”

While the success of the Independence movement and the struggle of 1919-21 was the basis of Ireland’s prestige, it was what de Valera was building in the 1930s that most attracted leaders of movements in countries such as India, Iraq and Egypt. Close relations with India developed on this basis, with the Indian revolutionary Subhas Chandra Bose twice meeting with de Valera in the 1930s much to the chagrin of Britain.

The 1937 Constitution set down the principles of Ireland’s “International Relations” (Article 29), committing the state to “international justice”, the “peaceful settlement of international disputes”, and the overriding role of the “generally recognised principles of international law.” Article 28 stated that “the State shall not participate in any war save with the assent of Dáil Éireann”, i.e. the automatic commitment to support Britain at war inherent in the 1921 Treaty and 1922 Constitution was annulled.

At the League of Nations, de Valera was twice elected President of the Assembly, and addressed many of the key conflict issues of the day.

## Ireland and its Jewish population in the fascist era

The catastrophic conditions in continental Europe resulting from the ‘Great War’ and the Versailles Treaty of 1919 were the impulse for the rise of modern anti-Semitism and fascism. Fascist concepts gained some foothold in Ireland,



where an intellectual anti-Jewish movement arose in clerical-corporatist circles associated with the “Blueshirt” movement. This was most virulently expressed in Fr. Denis Fahey’s popular pamphlet, *The Mystical Body of Christ in the Modern World* (1936), which warned of the threats from “Jewish finance” and “Jewish Bolshevism” to European Christendom. But fascism was seen off by the republican ideology shared across all the main political parties. Unlike across much of Europe, the Irish democratic state was never seriously challenged by Irish fascism.

During this time the views of the Irish government were given very direct expression in the *Irish Press*, the pro-Fianna Fáil newspaper. The *Irish Press* kept up a relentless negative coverage of the suppression of democracy and the persecution of the Jews and the Christian Churches in Nazi Germany, much to the chagrin of Charles Bewley, the pro-Nazi Free State ambassador in Berlin, who was subsequently sacked by de Valera in 1939. De Valera regularly denounced racial persecution in Europe and, apart from a few individualist TDs such as Paddy Belton and Oliver J. Flanagan - seen at the time as what one diplomat called the “lunatic wing” of the Dáil - Nazi anti-Semitism had few takers in Irish parliamentary politics.

The new Constitution of Ireland adopted in 1937 (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*) recognised the Catholic Church as having a “special position” in the state, but it also recognised the main Protestant denominations as well as Judaism as official religions of the state. As Professor Joe Lee put it, this was “a gesture not without dignity in the Europe of 1937” (*Ireland 1922-1985*, p.203). A leading Jewish official, Rabbi M.L. Perlzweig, on a visit to Dublin during a break in negotiations in London over British plans for Palestine

“paid a high tribute to Ireland’s treatment of the Jews, which, he said, had created among Jews all over the world a feeling of help and encouragement, and a knowledge that there still were powerful forces in the world working for liberty and justice... It was a matter of interest to Jewry all over the world, he said, that Ireland in the magnanimity of her spirit chose to speak specifically in her Constitution of the Jewish community as an integral element in the Commonwealth, and as a body of persons entitled by law to their place in the country’s life.” (*The Irish Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1938)

The extent of the benevolence of the de Valera regime – and de Valera personally - towards the Jewish minority has been documented by Dermot Keogh (*Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland*).

### De Valera and Zionism

Benevolence towards the Jewish community and support for the Zionist project in Palestine were two very different things. Most Jews leaving Germany, Poland and Romania in the 1930s to escape increasing persecution were not Zionists and only a minority opted for Palestine. The international Zionist movement, on the other hand, had been fiercely pro-British since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the creation of the Jewish colony in Palestine under the League of Nations mandate of 1922 was regarded in Ireland as essentially a British imperial project. Indeed, the Governor of Palestine in the 1920s, Sir Andrew Storrs, himself promoted the idea of a “white” colony gradually built up in Palestine over time that would safeguard the Suez Canal and the route to India, evolving for Britain into “a loyal little Jewish Ulster in a sea of hostile Arabism” (Storr, *Orientalisms*, 1937, p. 358).

The Irish Jewish republican and Fianna Fáil TD, Robert Briscoe, on turning to Zionism in the 1930s became a supporter of its extreme “revisionist” wing led by Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Briscoe claimed that in Palestine the “Arabs and



Jews can reach agreement provided there is no outside interference or influence ” ( *The Irish Times*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1939 ). But Jabotinsky foresaw the “re-settlement ” of the Arab population of Palestine and Jordan to an Arab State of Iraq taking to make way for the Jewish nation. He defined the aim of Zionism in 1931 as “the conversion of the entire mandate territory in Eretz Israel on both sides of the Jordan into a Jewish State, in other words a commonwealth with a Jewish majority ” ( Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925-48*, 1988 ).

Given the conditions in Europe at the time, de Valera allowed Briscoe a free hand in trying to organise Jewish emigration. Briscoe travelled with de Valera’s blessing to the US and South Africa to raise money for the Jewish National Fund, which was funding Jewish migration to and settlement in Palestine. With de Valera’s support, Briscoe even visited Poland in January 1939, then in the grip of an anti-Semitic military government, to promote Jabotinsky’s plan to solve what Briscoe called the Poles’ “Jewish Problem ” by creating a Colony in Palestine with the transfer there of 1m of their “unwanted Jews. ”

But the revisionists were on a collision course with Britain, and started preparing for a guerrilla war against them. Jabotinsky founded the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and came to Ireland to meet Briscoe, a former IRA officer, to discuss military plans. The Irgun, led by Menachim Begin, would go on to launch a terrorist war against Britain and the Palestinians, and, during the foundation of the Israeli state, to play a leading role in the expulsion of the Palestinian population. Hannah Arendt, a leading philosopher of German Jewish background, described in various articles at the time the New Zionists ( as the revisionists called themselves ), and particularly the Irgun, as the “fascist ” wing of Zionism.

Through Briscoe, Jabotinsky met with de Valera, who questioned him at length, particularly about the future the Zionists saw for the Arab population. According to Shulamit Eliash, a senior academic at the Israeli Jakobinsky Institute, the Zionist leadership regarded de Valera’s stance at the meeting – and at other meetings with Zionist representatives - as sympathetic to the Jewish cause but non-supportive of Zionism. In particular he repeatedly referred to the rights of the indigenous population not to be overwhelmed by Jewish settlers. Eliash judges that de Valera as seeing the Middle East from the perspective of the history of divisions in Ireland, viewing “the Arabs in Palestine as the equivalent of the Irish Catholics” ( *The Harp and the Shield: Ireland, Zionism and the State of Israel*, 2007, pp. 39 ).

De Valera was to remain ambiguous on the question of Jewish settlement in Palestine, never opposing it publicly, but also never publicly endorsing it.

## De Valera and the Palestine question

De Valera distrusted British designs in Palestine and was a supporter of Arab independence movements in the British Empire.

In 1917, at the time of the Balfour Declaration committing Britain to providing a “Jewish Homeland ” in Palestine, there were no more than 35,000 Jews in Palestine, of whom 10,000 were Zionist settlers. But, under the League Mandate of 1922, Britain oversaw a massive increase in this population, reaching 300,000 by 1935, alongside an indigenous population of 665,000 Palestinians. In 1937 Britain’s “Peel Commission ” proposed the partition of Palestine as a “solution ” to the growing conflict fuelled by this process of colonisation. Arab opinion vociferously rejected the partition “solution ” proposed by Peel, and this was reported and commented upon with great sympathy in Ireland, including in the *Irish Press*, which was the voice of the de Valera government. The *Irish Independent* also



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opposed Britain's plans, drawing comparisons between the British suppression of the Arab resistance and the situation in Ireland in 1919-22, and naturally also expressing Catholic concerns for the fate of the Christian sacred sites in the area. An *Irish Press* editorial on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1937 stated that while both the Jews and the Arabs had defensible cases to make, the disastrous conditions of conflict in Palestine were a direct result of the duplicity of British policy since the Balfour Declaration, which, with its aim of maintaining a strategic stronghold in the Middle East under the guise of a League of Nations mandate, was now threatening the Arab population with being ruled by an immigrant Jewish majority. In an earlier article, the *Irish Press* commented that the partition proposals would see the Arabs "ousted from the coastal areas to the hills" while the proposed Jewish area would be too small to be defensible ( ' Partition and Palestine: Arabs and Jews opposed to Commission Proposals ' , *Irish Press*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1937 ).

This hostility to British imperial policies in the Middle East, and a view of the Zionist project as part and parcel of it, had general currency. In an officially sponsored journal of liberal views, Owen Sheehy Skeffington wrote: " The interesting fact which lurks behind this revolt is that the Arabs are fighting for their liberty against British Imperialism which is using the Zionist movement as a willing instrument. " ( ' A foreign commentary ' , *Ireland Today*, October 1936 ). *The Catholic Bulletin*, which despite its title promoted a rigorously republican view of world affairs and was close to the de Valera government, commented:

" What England has undertaken in the Holy Land may yet prove the destruction of her Eastern power. There seldom was a more flagrant piece of diplomatic hypocrisy than British tactics in Palestine display. During the Great War, the Arab nations were won over to the Allies by British pledges. England promised that, if the Arabs would cooperate in the overthrow of the Turkish Empire, she would establish and recognise a great free Arab State, raised on its ruin. When peace came, the promise was torn to shreds, the Arab world was split into a number of isolated kingdoms and protectorates, and a plantation of a quarter of a million Jews was made in Palestine... The promise [of an Arab State] was understood to include Palestine, but the English, seven years later, shuffled out of yielding Palestine ... In the interval the pledge to the Jews, which flatly contravened the pledge to the Arabs, had been fulfilled by the Jewish plantation, although the Jews, too, got a double deal, since their ' National Home ' was declared to mean no more than a settlement... " ( ' How Britain betrayed the Arabs ' , *Catholic Bulletin*, February 1938 )

And these were the essentials of de Valera's understanding, informing the position he put forward at the League of Nations in 1937, as he later told the Dáil:

" The General Assembly and its [Mandates] committee was largely taken up with two or three questions of very great importance to the maintenance of general peace in the world ... With regard to Palestine, our view that no solution involving the partition of that country should be sanctioned in any way by the League of Nations was duly put on record. " ( Dáil Éireann, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1938 )

De Valera's opposition to the partition of Palestine was not "anti-partitionist" in the Zionist sense articulated by Briscoe and Jabotinsky, i.e. the demand for an undivided Palestine/ Jordan as the territory of a majority Jewish state, but rather an undivided territory for the people then actually living there. De Valera argued in his statement to the League: "Partition was no solution. All the Christian world interested in the Holy places, the Jews and the Arabs had, so far as there had been any opinion expressed by them, opposed the solution of partition", and that "territorial division was the cruellest injustice that could be inflicted on a nation" ( *Irish Press*, 23.09.1938 ). At the League



Mandates Committee meeting in September 1937, de Valera had sided with – and spoken in favour of - a motion proposed by France and others that rejected both the Zionist position favouring a mass transplantation of European Jews to Palestine and the partition proposals of the Peel Commission. The Irish stance at Geneva was warmly welcomed by Arab delegates ( ‘ Partition Cruellest Wrong ’, *Irish Press*, 23.09.38 ). But it infuriated the British, who complained to the Irish High Commissioner in London, John Dulanty, that Britain ’s “ difficulties in this matter are increased by the line which the Irish Free State Government had taken. ” ( *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, vol. 5, p. 129 )

De Valera ’s position accorded with the Irish Constitution in terms of adherence to international law and, in this case, with the League Mandate for Palestine of 1922, which set down ( Article 2 ) that “ The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home ... and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion. ”

In 1950, five years after the end of World War Two, and of the Holocaust, and just a year after the violent conditions in which the State of Israel had come into being, de Valera travelled to Jerusalem in the company of Briscoe. He met Israeli leader Ben Gurion and some of his ministers in the home of Isaac Herzog, who had emigrated from Ireland in 1937 to take up the post of Chief Rabbi of Palestine. It was a courtesy call and, according to Briscoe, a discussion of politics was strenuously avoided. In Israel de Valera avoided making any public statements of policy, let alone publicly endorsing the Israeli state. This contrasts dramatically with the very public positions he took on his visit to India two years before in support of the new Indian State, where he spoke publicly of the common struggle for independence and the identity of interests between India and Ireland. After the meeting with Ben Gurion, and against the advice of his Israeli hosts, de Valera insisted also on crossing the armistice line to Rammalah, then under Jordanian rule as, according to Briscoe, he “ sympathised with the Arab people in their hope of independence and prosperity. ” Here, where he met with King Abdullah, he also witnessed the wretched conditions of the Palestinian refugee camps.

## Post-war Ireland and the State of Israel

Ireland, as with all other western countries, did not open its doors to a mass immigration of European refugees in the 1930s. This should be judged against a background of the Irish emigration problem and a total “ alien ” population in Ireland from all nations of little over 2,000 in 1939. While anti-Jewish measures, particularly legal disenfranchisement, expropriation and pressure to emigrate, were increasing in European countries in the 1930s – notably in Germany, Austria, Romania and Poland – there was at the time no intimation of the Nazi Holocaust that was to come when the war of 1939-40 between Germany and the Anglo-France alliance escalated into a continent-wide conflict from 1941. De Valera managed with great difficulty to uphold Irish neutrality throughout the conflict. As news first reached him in late 1942 of the implementation of the “ Final Solution ”, he mobilised the Irish diplomatic corps in Italy, Vichy France, the Vatican and even in the German Reich, to intervene repeatedly in any way possible to rescue threatened victims of the extermination programme. While this brought little success – like the efforts of other states - the effort was determined and noble ( Keogh, *Jews of Ireland in the Twentieth Century* ).

Despite persistent petitioning by the new Israeli state, and the publicly expressed admiration of Israel by Foreign Minister, Seán MacBride, Ireland ’s first post-war Inter-Party Government decided in June 1948 not to recognize Israel officially. In February 1949 it granted it instead mere “ de facto ” recognition. This meant the recognition of Israel as a



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fact, as the state established in war exceeded by far the territory allocated to it by the United Nations. In a similar way, Ireland had initially granted Franco's insurgent government only "de facto" recognition after it had finally captured Barcelona at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939.

While there was considerable public discussion in Ireland of Zionist achievements, and much praise in particular for the successful restoration of Hebrew as a national language, Ireland did not formally recognise the State of Israel until 1963.

The 'Vatican Factor' is often given as an overriding explanation for Irish attitudes to the "Palestine Question" and to the recognition of the Israeli State. The Vatican had also opposed the partition of the 'Holy Land', raised concerns about the treatment of the Arab population and, in particular, was vociferous in insisting on the "internationalisation" of Jerusalem. It also withheld *de jure* recognition of the Jewish state. But de Valera and his colleagues had defied the hierarchy in 1922 in refusing to accept the Treaty, and had faced excommunication during the Civil War. As was popularly said at the time, they took "their religion from Rome but their politics from home." De Valera, who had annoyed many Church leaders by facilitating the accession of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations and by including Judaism as a state religion in his 1937 Constitution, had a world view developed from the Sinn Féin perspective on the world, which was independent minded in its anti-imperialism while working in the context of a Catholic culture. The reporting in de Valera's *Irish Press* on Palestine in the 1930s was a model of objectivity, focusing on the political issues and rarely referring to the Catholic interest as a factor. His position on the partition of Palestine in the late 1930s was based on international law and concern for the legitimate interests of the indigenous population not to be "overwhelmed" by a colonising enterprise.

Following the establishment of the Israeli state and the expulsion of 700,000 of its Arab Palestinian population, Irish commentators challenged the Zionist version of events. Erskine Childers – himself a strong champion of action against European persecution of the Jews in the 1930s - exposed the Zionist myth of a voluntary Palestinian flight incited by Arab leaders ('The Other Exodus', *The Spectator*, May 1951). In *Studies*, the leading (Jesuit) intellectual journal of Catholic Ireland, J.J.W. Murphy reviewed the history of the Zionist colonialist project, concluding:

"Very few Arabs are left in Israel. Some 500,000, or about five-sixths of those Arabs who lived there, fled in terror of the Jewish extremists to the neighbouring Arab states or to the part of Palestine still held by Arab armies, where their condition is pitiable. A few have been allowed to return, but the Jews have taken their lands and homes for the new Jewish immigrants who are pouring into Israel; so there is little left for them to go back to." ('Background and Progress of Political Zionism,' *Studies*, September 1950, pp. 289-300).

The same writer, in another prominent Catholic journal, commented that the "The traditional picture of Cromwell's 'Hell or Connaught' policy in Ireland gives a fair idea of what happened in Palestine during 1948 to Arabs whose homes then were in what is now Jewish territory" ('Britain and Palestine', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, August 1950, pp. 116-126).

De Valera shared the outrage. When Edwin Samuel, son of the first British High Commissioner of Palestine, met de Valera, again Taoiseach, in April 1952, he found him implacably hostile to *de jure* recognition of Israel, blaming it for the Palestinian refugee problem and holding that the Catholics fared better under Arab regimes than under that of Israel, where they were subject, as Arabs, to ruthless military repression (Eliash, *Harp and the Shield of David*, pp. 118 ff.).



Eliahu Elath, the Israeli ambassador to Britain, also met with de Valera and other senior Irish politicians the following January, after which he reported that de Valera was the main opponent of upgrading the Irish diplomatic relationship with Israel, due to the issues of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees and the treatment of the Arab Catholic minority (*ibid.*, p. 128).

## The UN: Frank Aiken's "3-Point Plan for the Middle East"

Ireland was finally admitted to the UN in December 1955 at a time when, because of Cold War stalemate on the Security Council, the General assembly played a much more prominent role in world affairs than it does today.

One of the first items on the agenda was the Anglo-French attack on Egypt following Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956, and Israel's invasion of the Sinai. The Inter-Party Minister for External Affairs, Liam Cosgrave, denounced it immediately: "Whatever the provocation may have been, it is clearly Israel that is the aggressor; it is Israel, not Egypt, that ought to be restrained and it is the United Nations, not England and France, that ought to do the restraining" (*The Irish Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1956). He repeated this position in his address to the UN General Assembly at the end of November 1956, where he "deplored and condemned ... the Anglo-French attack" on a "traditionally friendly and anti-imperialist country." But, he added, while he could understand the opposition of the Arab world to the establishment of Israel, they "must be ready to accept as a fact the existence of Israel and must renounce their projects for the destruction of that country." (*The Irish Times*, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1956).

On returning to power in 1957, one of the first initiatives of the new de Valera government at the UN was also in relation to the Middle East. De Valera's foreign minister, Frank Aiken, as a former IRA Chief of Staff, enjoyed considerable prestige among the many newly independent states. Following agreement in Cabinet, Aiken held separate talks with Arab and Israeli delegations (including Golda Meir), to whom he suggested that Ireland might propose a solution whereby the Arab states would recognise Israel as a fact in return for Israel accepting its current borders as the final ones. But this was something Israel had no intention of doing, and the Irish diplomatic initiative was dropped.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 1958 Aiken, creating a considerable stir internationally, presented a "**3-Point Peace Plan for the Middle East**" to the UN General assembly:

That Arab nations should have the right of self-determination to maintain a separate existence or to unite or federate;

That the Assembly should declare that the whole region be developed as a neutral region;

That the General Secretary of the UN should arrange the repatriation of refugees from Israel and for full compensation for those left behind.

This position can be seen as a continuation in new circumstances of de Valera's own position at the League of Nations in 1938. Aiken stated that all peoples in the region should "determine their own futures freely, with no outside pressures of any kind." The Suez invasion of 1956, the 1958 revolution in Iraq and British and American troop landings in Jordan and Lebanon, he said, were all events "profoundly affected by decisions regarding Palestine more than ten years ago and by the fragmentation of the whole region 30 years ago" (*Irish Times*, 15.08.1958).

Aiken argued that the UN should take responsibility for the then already 1m Palestinian refugees, and advocated their



right of return – something Israel vociferously rejected. He called on the UN to “arrange for repatriation for the maximum possible number of those who would rather return than receive full compensation.”

The extension of Irish “de jure” recognition to Israel in December 1963 occurred – on strict Cabinet instructions – without publicity and in the context of it having already been extended to Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Indeed, on the day it was extended to Israel, it was also extended to forty other countries, mostly newly independent states, including Algeria and Libya. Aiken stated emphatically that in Israel’s case Irish recognition did not include Jerusalem and that he was not contemplating any exchange of diplomatic relations with Israel. Following Israeli incursions into Syria in March the previous year, the Irish UN ambassador, Frederick Boland, had rejected Israeli claims of “self-defence”. He denounced the Israeli action as a “major violation of the UN Charter” and voted for a draft UN Security Council resolution of 9<sup>th</sup> April 1962 that the Israeli attack “constitutes a flagrant violation of the General Armistice Agreement between the two states.”

### Aiken and the 1967 War

Following the Israeli “6-day war” of 1967 that led to the further expansion of Israel, its occupation of extensive additional territories, and a further wave of population expulsions, the Irish state again denounced Israeli actions, raised the right of return or compensation of Palestinian refugees and was among the most vocal supporters of Resolution 242 at the UN, which called for Israeli evacuation of the territories seized in 1967, and the creation of stable agreed frontiers.

Aiken protested at the UN when Israel extended its jurisdiction over the Old City of Jerusalem. He called for the “internationalisation” of the city and for Israel to return to its pre-1967 “positions”. Stating that while Israel had a right to defend itself, “it has no right whatsoever to annex the territory of [its] neighbours” and if UNSC did not insist on a restoration of the borders of 4<sup>th</sup> June, “the very basis of the Charter would be destroyed.” In December 1967 Aiken repeated his 1958 demands regarding the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and massively increased Ireland’s contribution to UNWRA, making it the country’s single largest foreign aid expenditure.

Aiken’s stance was attacked by the opposition media. *The Irish Times* published an extraordinary editorial attacking Aiken’s views as “idealistic” and “unrealistic” and stating that Israel had engaged not in a “war of conquest” but one for “survival” (Editorial, *Irish Times*, 29.06.67). Nevertheless, contrary to the claim by Rory Miller – a Dublin born professor at the Royal College of London and co-editor of *Israel Affairs* – in his book (*Ireland and the Palestine Question 1948-2004*, 2005, p. 39), that “all the major national and local newspapers ... with surprising unity” opposed Aiken’s stance, the government position was vigorously supported by the *Irish Press*, the popular pro-Fianna Fáil newspaper of the time with a far greater readership than *The Irish Times*.

In fact the Irish government position was never unconditionally hostile to Israel. Aiken in press interviews and before the Dáil stated that Israeli withdrawal should be “accompanied by other measures,” in particular a comprehensive peace agreement guaranteed by the UN Security Council that would ensure Israel’s security. In private, according to Miller (*Ireland and the Palestine Question*, p. 72-3), Aiken urged Israel to be pragmatic, telling its Foreign Minister, Eban, that demanding Arab recognition was “too much to expect of the Arabs” who were “terrified of Israeli expansionism” and that instead Israel should be seeking a treaty, which “would achieve the same result.” He also stressed to the Israelis that they must retreat as final borders to the pre-1967 lines. Miller also points out that the Irish



position pioneered at the UN after the 1967 war was the start of the 'Land for Peace' approach to a negotiated settlement in the Middle East ( Miller, p. 50) .

Aiken publicly rejected the argument common in justifying European inactivity at the time that Ireland should support Israel because of the sufferings of European Jews. In a speech on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1967 he stated:

“ it would ... be altogether unacceptable that a restitution for European injustice and barbarous persecution should be at the expense of under-privileged Arab families who have been deprived of their homes and lands, and are living in miserable refugee camps. ”

In an echo of de Valera 's misgivings about the Zionist project in the 1930s, Irish official Con Cremin wrote: “the Arab grievance ... is not only, nor perhaps mainly, that the State of Israel has been established in Palestine, but that its establishment has involved the expulsion of the native inhabitants who are now refugees” ( Miller, p. 63 )

## Ireland promotes Palestinian rights in the EEC

The European Economic Community (EEC) did not initially adopt a common position on the Middle East, and European responses to events there were generally mooted. This began to change during the 1960s, as France sought to rebuild relations with its former Arab colonies after losing its Algerian war. Miller ( p. 75 ) recounts that in 1967, at the instigation of Maurice Schumann, the 6-member EEC adopted an internal “working paper” proposing that the EEC publicly support UNSC Resolution 242, i.e. withdrawal to the positions of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1967, the internationalisation of Jerusalem, and the right of return of refugees to their former homes or compensation for their losses. But this was never adopted as an official position.

After Israel 's latest expansionist war in 1973, the EEC issued what it called its “first contribution” to the “search for a comprehensive solution”. This advocated negotiations on the basis of Resolutions 242 and 338 ( of 22.10.73 ) , Israel to “end territorial occupation” of land gained in 1967, and affirming the right of each state in the area to live in peace within secure and recognised borders. A lasting peace would only be achieved if “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” were taken into account, though it did not clarify what it meant by this.

In October 1974 the UN General Assembly voted on a Syrian motion that the PLO participate in the Assembly. Three EEC states – Ireland, France and Italy – voted in favour, leading Israel to condemn the Irish position as lending support “to an organisation of murderers”. Ireland had joined the EEC the same year and, in 1975, chaired the EEC Council. In this context, the Fine Gael-Labour coalition led by Garret Fitzgerald greatly expanded the country 's foreign service, including opening diplomatic relations with several Arab states, the USSR, and, in 1975, with Israel, through the Israeli embassy in London (a resident Israeli embassy was not opened in Dublin until 1993, with the PLO being offered a residential office in Dublin on the same day). Ireland thus became the last EEC member state to open diplomatic relations with Israel.

While chaired by Fitzgerald, and to much protest from the Arab League, the EEC signed a far reaching trade agreement with Israel in 1975 (forerunner of the current Association Agreement under EUROMED) while stalling on similar arrangements with the Maghreb states. In his memoirs, *All in a Life* (1991), Fitzgerald recounts that he undertook a tour of Arab states to allay their anger, and issued a written clarification – hotly contested by Britain 's



Roy Hattersley - that it was his conviction that the new agreement with Israel did not apply to the territories occupied since 1967.

At the UN General Assembly the same year Fitzgerald insisted that any resolution of the conflict must take account of the “legitimate rights of the Palestinians ... [who] have the right to be established within secure boundaries, and the right to give effective expression in appropriate political form to their sense of their national identity ... this means they should have the right to decide for themselves whether to establish an independent entity on the territory vacated by Israel.”

## The Irish “Bahrain Declaration,” February 1980

In 1978 the new Fianna Fáil government contributed a battalion of Irish troops to the UN peace-keeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL. Charles Haughey, who became Taoiseach in 1979, pursued an active foreign policy and, with regard to the Middle East, took a strong stance in support of the Palestinian cause. Labelled by hostile media as an “*Arabist*”, he had toured Iraq in 1976 with the head of the Irish Arab Society, Rev. Dr. John Chisolm, and as Minister for Health had arranged for the training of medical students from several Arab countries in Ireland and negotiated extensive Irish involvement in the provision of healthcare in Iraq. He also oversaw the development of an extensive Irish export trade in beef to the Arab world.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1979 Minister Brian Lenihan told the Dáil – to a visible stir among diplomats present, according to *The Irish Times* - that the Government “maintained contact with the PLO and other Palestinian organisations in connection with the provision of a permanent homeland for the Palestinian people” and intended to move to recognise the PLO as their “legitimate representative”. As reported by *The Irish Times*, Foreign Minister O’Kennedy, as part of the EEC “troika”, stated that Ireland, working with France and Italy, had brought the Council of Ministers to recognise the PLO as “one of the parties to the conflict” and finally to support the Palestinian “right of self-determination”, adding “though Ireland’s commitment goes further.”

These statements culminated in a major initiative by the Government on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1980 when Minister Brian Lenihan issued a joint statement while on a visit to Bahrain (“Bahrain Declaration”) stating explicitly that the Palestinian people “had a right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in Palestine.” He called for the inclusion of the PLO in any negotiations and stated: “Ireland recognises the role of the PLO in representing the Palestinian people.” Ireland’s official recognition of the PLO – and of a “state” for the Palestinians - was the first such stance by any European state, and was followed by high level contacts with the PLO. When a story in *The Sunday Press* reported that the word “state” had been “quietly inserted by Bahraini officials”, Lenihan quickly issued an official response stating that “the word ‘State’ was in fact put forward as a considered proposal by the Irish side” (*Sunday Press*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1980). The Arab world hailed the Declaration as “Ireland’s definitive official commitment to an independent Palestine” (Eurabia, *The Bahrain Declaration*, Dublin, 1980).

In the Dáil, some opposition leaders attacked the Government, objecting to the recognition of the PLO because of its armed struggle and questioning the wisdom of supporting statehood. Haughey was accused relentlessly of being motivated solely by “private commercial interests close to Fianna Fáil.” The Bahrain Declaration was denounced as serving only to “heighten tensions in Lebanon”, endangering the lives of Irish soldiers. This had followed quoted comments – which some saw as veiled threats - from Ireland’s Chief Rabbi, that the *Declaration* would lead to



increased shelling of Irish UNIFIL positions by Christian militias, which were supported by Israel. In an interview on RTÉ radio on 27<sup>th</sup> February, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin upped the ante, declaring the Declaration “a hostile act” by Ireland against Israel and tantamount to acceptance of the PLO's "right to destroy the Jewish state." ( *The Irish Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1980 )

The threat to Irish soldiers serving with UNIFIL in Lebanon became a self-fulfilling prophecy when on 7<sup>th</sup> April eight soldiers were kidnapped by the “South Lebanon Army”, an Israeli-backed Lebanese “Christian militia”, and one of them – Private Stephen Griffen from Galway – was shot and later died of his wounds. A week later, on 17<sup>th</sup> April, three soldiers were ambushed and two of them - Privates Thomas Barrett and Derek Smallhorne – were executed ( “shot at close range” ). In response, the Haughey government summoned an emergency conference of UNIFIL contributing states and successfully pressed for a resolution by the European Council condemning Israeli attacks on UNIFIL forces. Over 40,000 Irish soldiers served with UNIFIL over the years of Irish participation ( 1978-2000 ). In his vivid and thorough book, *Pity the Nation. Lebanon at War* ( 1990 ), Robert Fisk recorded the experiences of Irish soldiers facing the daily arrogance of the Israeli Army, and also their affinity with the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. A recent echo of this can be seen in the outspoken criticisms of Israeli behaviour by UN officials such as Denis Halliday and John Ging, men whose first experience of the region had been as officers serving their country with Irish Battalion, UNIFIL. Of the 47 Irish soldiers killed on service in the Lebanon, the Irish government officially held Israel directly or indirectly responsible for at least 15.

In an interview in July 1980, Lenihan, responding to questions why the Bahrain Declaration did not include a “denunciation of terrorism”, nor mention Israel’s “right to exist”, responded:

Paragraph 5 says the two sides agreed that the Palestinian people had the right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state in Palestine within the framework of a negotiated peace settlement which would include the principles of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and these resolutions contain the condemnation of terrorism or any violent means, and also emphatically recognise the right of the State of Israel to exist, in peace and security... [Any talks] would have as an essential prerequisite a recognition of the State of Israel, pre-1967... In effect, the purpose of the whole conference should be to bring back Israel to its pre-1967 frontiers and at the same time to guarantee that state its permanence... I am certain that in 10 years’ time I will be proved right when Palestine takes her place among the nations at the UN. ( *The Irish Times*, 29.07.1980 )

The pro-Israeli Irish historian Rory Miller stated: “In February 1980, Ireland became the first EEC member to call publicly for the inclusion of the PLO in the political process at a time when Yasser Arafat's group not only refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, but was engaged in a relentless campaign of terror against Israeli and Jewish targets across the globe” ( *Jerusalem Post*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2006 ).

### The EEC “Venice Declaration” 1980

Following from the Bahrain Declaration, throughout 1980 the Irish Government lobbied the US Carter Administration ( unsuccessfully ) to recognise the PLO. At the EEC Council of Ministers, Haughey urged recognition of the PLO and Palestinian statehood, to be negotiated in a deal that would also ensure the integrity of Israel’s pre-1967 borders, something which the Israeli state has never accepted.



The Bahrain Declaration led to a number of far reaching statements by other EEC member states, notably France and Austria, supporting the Palestinian position. French President Valerie Giscard d'Estaing, in his own "Kuwait Declaration" of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1980, a month after the Irish statement, expressed France's first official endorsement of Palestinian self-determination and promoting the inclusion of the PLO in negotiations.

In the event, the EEC adopted the Venice Declaration on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1980, which has remained the basis of EU policy to this day. The Declaration included the following statements of principle:

4. ... the time has come to promote the recognition and implementation of the two principles universally accepted by the international community: the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

...

6. A just solution must finally be found to the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.

7. ... These principles apply to all the parties concerned, and thus to the Palestinian people, and to the PLO, which will have to be associated with the negotiations.

8. The nine recognize the special importance of the role played by the question of Jerusalem for all the parties concerned. The nine stress that they will not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem and that any agreement on the city's status should guarantee freedom of access for everyone to the holy places.

9. The nine stress the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967, as it has done for part of Sinai. They are deeply convinced that the Israeli settlements constitute a serious obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East. The nine consider that these settlements, as well as modifications in population and property in the occupied Arab territories, are illegal under international law.

The Israeli government of Menachim Begin reacted with unprecedented ferocity. In a statement on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1980, his Cabinet accused the EEC of demanding the inclusion in the peace process of that "organization of murderers", "the Arab SS known as 'The Palestine Liberation Organization'" whose constitution sought the liquidation of Israel in words not heard since Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*. It continued: "The initiators of the Venice Document and its authors even tried to interfere with the status of Jerusalem, our eternal capital, which is not to be divided again, and with our right to settle and live in Eretz Israel, a right which is also an inseparable part of our defence system in the face of enemies and attackers."

But despite this invective from the former commander of the Irgun, the EEC position established in 1980 with courageous input by the Irish state has endured as the basis of European policy since. As Garret Fitzgerald told the



Dáil in 1987, the Venice Declaration represented a “major shift in European foreign policy,” with the countries of the EEC “shift[ing] towards the position we then held.”

Sixteen years after the *Venice Declaration*, Foreign Minister Dick Spring described it as “a cornerstone of the [European] Union’s policy” (*White Paper on Foreign Policy*, 1996, p. 262). More recently, on the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration, the *New York Times* published an opinion editorial by two Israeli academics, Yonatan Touval and Sharon Pardo, stating that the Declaration established the principles that “continue to define the contours of the only plausible agreement possible between Israel and the Palestinians... [T]hree decades later the Venice declaration continues to stand out as the boldest Mideast peace initiative to come out of Europe.” ( ‘When Europe Spoke Out on the Mideast’ , *International Herald Tribune*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010 )

## The evolution of Irish policy since Venice

The Irish policy on Palestine has retained a consistency from De Valera’s intervention in the League Mandates Committee in 1938, through Frank Aiken’s “3-Point Plan” of 1958, to the Haughey Government’s “*Bahrain Declaration*” of 1980 and the upholding of that position by the Fitzgerald coalition government of the 1980s. The only major change since has been the development of “shared sovereignty” with the European Union and the alignment of Irish foreign policy with that of the Union through a series of treaties incorporated into the Constitution.

The Fine Gael-Labour Coalition of 1983-7, though it did not formally recognise the PLO, maintained the position established. Foreign Minister Peter Barry set it out forcefully as follows:

“Ireland’s position on the Middle East conflict had been closely coordinated with our EEC partners and was based on the principles of: ( 1 ) recognition of the right of all peoples in the area to justice and security, including that of the Palestinian people to self-determination with all that this implied, including, in Ireland’s view, their right to a state if that was what they wished; and ( 2 ) recognition of the right of all states in the region to a secure and peaceful existence.” (*Irish Times*, 18.0.1983 )

The phenomenon of Israeli settlement building in the colonised territories further drew the wrath of the Irish Government, Barry telling the Dáil on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1983 that while it had the “right [to a ] secure and peaceful existence ... Israel’s rights do not extend to the implantation of settler colonies in the West Bank and Gaza.” In an address to the UN General Assembly on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1983, he further warned that “a process is in train” in the occupied territories

“which may very soon create a situation that cannot be reversed ... the West Bank and Gaza have not been annexed by Israel – at least not yet. But the infra-structural and demographic alterations being planned and rapidly put into effect there by the Israeli authorities cannot but lead to a de facto absorption by Israel of the territories ... the process is gradual and invidious. It may lack the dramatic impact of an invasion ... but is no less real for that ... [A]cquisition by Israel of the West Bank would make a mockery of the international commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people.”

[Dept. of Foreign Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, no. 5, 1983]

In 1988, the leader of the new Fianna Fáil government, Charles Haughey, reiterated the Irish position in a statement, that the Palestinians “had been injured, were the victims of a great wrong and had the right to justice.” Ireland had



## Palestine in Irish Politics

been “the first [EC] member state to recognise the right to self-determination of the Palestinians and their right to an independent state... “ It was the Irish “conviction that it was for the Palestinian people to decide, within the framework of Security Council resolutions, the way in which they wished to exercise their right to self-determination and whether to do so by means of an independent state” ( *The Irish Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1988)

Since the 1990s Irish governments have lent considerable support to the Palestinian cause through the various “peace processes”. While the coalition Foreign Minister, Labour’s Dick Spring, was described by Simon Peres as a “Friend of Israel”, in 1995 he nevertheless visited Orient House, the unofficial PLO headquarters in East Jerusalem, much to the chagrin of the Likud Government. Spring, who opened the Israeli Embassy in Dublin in 1993, was described by *The Irish Times* at the time as “balance[ing] firm criticisms of Israeli failures to live up to their obligations, with a clear statement of understanding of their problems.” Throughout this period, the Irish Ambassador to the UN, Noel Dorr, spoke repeatedly and memorably on the issue, urging strong measures by the UN to enforce the democratic rights of Palestinians.

The Workers Party, which had emerged from the Official IRA and entered the Dáil with three deputies in 1983, was particularly close to the PLO. Following the outbreak of the First Intifada, Proinsias de Rossa demanded in the Dáil the introduction of “diplomatic or economic sanctions to protest Israeli activity”, while the following day his colleagues Joe Sherlock and Tomás MacGiolla drew comparisons between Israel and South Africa and pointed to the government support for sanctions against the latter. Haughey however rejected sanctions, saying they were likely only “to heighten tensions in the region and harm the goal of Palestinian self-determination” (Dáil Éireann, 15.11.88).

The Irish government’s unwillingness ever since to advocate sanctions to pressurise Israel to comply with international law is the major weakness in the Irish position, while Proinsias de Rossa for his part has remained equally consistent in demanding that their use be contemplated. The position was reiterated by Foreign Minister Micheál Martin at the recent historic ICTU Conference, organised to promote a policy of sanctions, on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010:

“Minister Martin told the conference that the Government does not agree with or support any form of boycott of Israel as such an approach would be counterproductive to efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He did, however, note that he has consistently argued against any move to upgrade EU-Israel relations ‘until such time as the level of political progress on the ground warrants it.’” ( *The Irish Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010 )

This contrasts with Ireland’s readiness to go along with economic sanctions, however reluctantly, when directed at other states in the Middle East which have incurred the displeasure of the West. In the case of Iraq, Brian Cowen when Foreign Minister endorsed the role of sanctions in forcing that country to comply with UN arms inspectors, telling the Dáil in January 2003 – just two months before the Anglo-American invasion that utterly destroyed that country:

“Membership of the [UN Security] council has also afforded us the opportunity to improve UN sanctions regimes. While there is no doubt that specifically targeted sanctions play an important role where flagrant breaches of international law occur or there is a threat to international peace, there is a strong balancing objective to ensure that the civilian population of the country against whose government the sanctions are imposed does not suffer.” ( Johnny Fallon, *Brian Cowen in his own words*, Mercier, 2009, p. 213 )

Nevertheless, Ireland’s support for the Palestinian cause has remained notably forceful for a western state. Brian



Cowen, as Ireland's foreign minister, was meeting Yasser Arafat in Ramallah when Al Quida attacked New York (9/11). At this time Israel refused to meet with foreign dignitaries who met the Palestinian leader. With the world pointing the finger at the Palestinians as "terrorist sympathizers", Cowen held a joint press conference with the PLO leader on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001, stressing Arafat's condemnation of the New York attack and describing him as "the symbol of the hope of self-determination of the Palestinian people" and praised him for his "outstanding work ... tenacity, and persistence." The basic consensus across the Irish political spectrum was reflected in a comment by former Fine Gael Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald, on television the following week when he condemned further Israeli killings of Palestinians and the occupation of the West Bank as "a crime against humanity." (*The Irish Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2001)

Since 2006 the state has condemned the siege of Gaza, with Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern, in the first such statement by a European government, describing it in the Dáil on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 as "*collective punishment illegal under International Law.*" Following the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in December 2008-January 2009, Foreign Minister Martin sought its condemnation at European Council level and opposed the upgrading of EU trade relations with Israel. Ireland has also urged the inclusion of Hamas in talks and – within EU councils at least – sought an end to the EU-US boycott of them. A Dáil motion condemning the Israeli attack on the Free Gaza Flotilla in June 2010 was adopted unanimously by TDs.

## Back to Jabotinsky? – Ireland's official apology

But the substance of Irish foreign policy is being eroded by a growing acceptance by official Ireland of revisionist history writing. This process was reflected in comments by Ireland's Ambassador in Tel Aviv at a recent event.

Jabotinsky's radical views on *Eretz Israel* have long become mainstream in Israel, and there is now an institute dedicated to his memory and his philosophy. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010 the Irish Ambassador, Breifni O'Reilly, addressed an event at the Jabotinsky Institute attended by its luminaries, including historian Shulamit Eliash, to apologise for various aspects of Irish history:

"... the Institute Director, Yossi Ahimeir, and archive director, Amira Stern, ... briefed their guest on ... the ties between Ze'ev Jabotinsky and his movement and the former prime minister of Ireland Eamon De Valera and his movement. While De Valera greatly esteemed the leadership of Jabotinsky, fighters in the Israeli underground also drew inspiration in their struggle to free Eretz Yisrael from the yoke of the British mandate from De Valera's struggle for Irish independence from British sovereignty. Jabotinsky and De Valera met at the beginning of 1938. Jabotinsky convinced the Irish leader to oppose the partition of Eretz Yisrael ..."

Rather than challenge this distortion of history, Ambassador O'Reilly spoke meekly to the theme he was asked to address, which, as is the tradition for visiting European dignitaries, seemed to consist largely of an apology: "*Why Did Ireland Only Recognize the State of Israel in 1963?*":

"Among the main topics raised with Ambassador O'Reilly was the disturbing rise of anti-Semitism throughout the world. Director Ahimeir informed the Irish ambassador of the creation of the Jabotinsky International Center, which is actively engaged in combating outbursts of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment. Ambassador O'Reilly stressed that in Ireland, whose Jewish community numbers around 1,500 people, anti-Semitism is almost non-existent. 'Our prime minister has initiated a project in cooperation with Germany to fight anti-Semitism, and during the coming year the two countries are planning to host a joint convention



devoted to the issue. ’

“ Ambassador O ’Reilly noted that Ireland apologized for not accepting Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. He agreed with Dr. Eliash that the delay in convening diplomatic relations could be attributed to Vatican pressure, to the fact that Ireland had no special economic interests with Israel, and that at the time Ireland had only a relatively small number of diplomatic representations... Today the relations between Ireland and Israel are good ones: we do not believe in boycotts, and we draw the line between anti-Semitism and legitimate criticism. ”

[<http://www.jabotinsky.org/Site/modules/newsItem.asp?sid=16&pid=146&newsID=111>]

It would appear that the fate of the indigenous population and the issue of Palestinian “ self determination ”, which have been central to Irish policy since the 1930s, did not even warrant a mention from him.

### **“Ireland still views Israel as an occupier and a colonialist entity”**

With the Celtic Tiger, Irish trade with Israel, especially in the area of computer electronics, has expanded exponentially and is now greater in value than the total of Irish trade with the Arab world. This represents a reversal of the trade relationships of the 1980s, with the Allied wars against the Muslim world since 1990 wiping out the substantial Irish medical, educational and agricultural trade with the region. A notable caution has entered the Irish political stance on its relations with Israel. There has also been the emergence since 2009 of a new group in the Dáil, the Oireachtas Friends of Israel, convened by Alan Shatter of Fine Gael and Joanna Tuffy of Labour, and involving about a dozen members, including Leo Varadkar, Charlie Flanagan and Lucinda Creighton of Fine Gael, Ruairi Quinn of Labour, and others.

Attempts to pin a history of anti-Semitism on Ireland are unsustainable, and despite the Irish Ambassador’ s apologies, popular Irish attitudes to the conflict in Palestine remain stubbornly hostile to the Israeli case. This state of affairs causes some bewilderment in Israel. But Rory Miller, a pro-Israeli Irish born historian, neatly summarised the answer: “ Ireland still views Israel as an occupier and a colonialist entity. ” ( *Jerusalem Post*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2006 )



## Part 2:

### Position of current Dáil parties on Palestine

The views of the majority of Irish politicians on the Palestine-Israel conflict reflect the widespread public support in Ireland for the Palestinian cause. This is notable in meetings of the [Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) and the [Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs](#), which regularly review the situation, and also in Members' questions to the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Twenty-one parliamentarians are involved in the *Oireachtas Friends of Palestine*, convened by Terry Leyden of Fianna Fáil and Michael D. Higgins of Labour which initially could count nearly fifty Oireachtas members among its supporters. Other leading members include Chris Andrews, Michael Mulcahy, Darragh O'Brien, and Sen. Mark Daly (Fianna Fáil), Pat Breen and Billy Timmons (Fine Gael), Sen. Alex White and Joe Costello (Labour), Aengus Ó Snódaigh and Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin (Sinn Féin) and John Gormley, Trevor Sergeant and Ciarán Cuffe (Green Party).

There has also been the a new group established in 2009, *Oireachtas Friends of Israel*, convened by Alan Shatter of Fine Gael and Joanna Tuffy of Labour, and including Leo Varadkar, Charlie Flanagan and Lucinda Creighton (Fine Gael), Ruairi Quinn (Labour) and others.

#### Fianna Fáil:

Fianna Fáil has traditionally supported the cause of the Palestinians on the basis of the rights of nations to self-determination. Since the "Bahrain Declaration" of February 1980, Fianna Fáil has championed the cause of Palestinian statehood. A Fianna Fáil led government was the first in Europe to recognise the PLO and to allow the opening of a PLO representation in its capital. In the current Dáil Fianna Fáil politicians have opposed Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem, and Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip and have led on the Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs in seeking to have Israel sanctioned for breach of Article 2 of the EU Association Agreement. The Government led at EU level in seeking action to raise the siege of Gaza through pressure on Israel, including suspension of any upgrade in Israel's privileged trading relations with the EU.

Nevertheless, despite these actions, and the forward position of the Government at EU level, official policy echoes the consensus achieved at EU level. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2008, Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, set out government policy on the Middle East to the Dáil as follows:

Ireland, together with its EU partners, is committed to a negotiated and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, with a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core... Ireland strongly supports the Annapolis process, launched under US auspices in November 2007, aimed at reaching agreement between Israel and the Palestinians by the end of this year. ... I am encouraged by comments made by Prime Minister Olmert in an interview with an Israeli newspaper on 29 September. He acknowledged that, in order to make peace with the Palestinians, Israel would have to withdraw from "almost all the territories" seized during the Six-Day War in 1967, and clarified that his comments also applied to Jerusalem, "with special solutions" for sacred and historical sites. He also made clear that any part of the pre-1967 Palestinian territory which was not returned would have to be compensated by the granting of a similar percentage of Israeli territory. The question of borders is one of the key 'final status' issues for negotiation between the two sides. I firmly hope that Prime Minister Olmert's successor will continue to adopt a realistic approach.



Similarly, it is clear that there will be no overall settlement without agreement on the question of refugees. While it is, of course, primarily a question for resolution between the parties – and I don't believe that it would be helpful to the process for others to seek to impose conditions on one side or the other – Ireland and its EU partners will do all within our means to support any just, viable and agreed solution.

... I have consistently called for an end to the isolation of the people of Gaza, in particular through the re-opening of crossing points for people and goods. The continued construction of Israeli settlements also remains of serious concern... An end to settlement construction would be a strong and welcome signal of good faith.

... I support and commend efforts being made by Egypt, on behalf of the Arab League, to advance reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. Success in these discussions is greatly in the interests of the Palestinian people, and can only help to underpin efforts to secure a lasting peace.

On the blockade of Gaza, he told the Dáil on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010:

... I have stressed the humanitarian needs of the population and urgent necessity to end the blockade and open the border crossings not only to unrestricted humanitarian aid, but also to reconstruction materials and ordinary commercial traffic... While the blockade of Gaza is unacceptable in itself, it is also politically counter-productive ... [and represents] the **collective punishment** of a population of 1.5 million ... As Deputies know, the Israeli authorities refused to allow me permission to cross into Gaza. Israel contends that a visit to Gaza would serve to legitimise Hamas, irrespective of whether meetings with Hamas representatives took place. I continue to find this explanation unconvincing... Supposed security considerations have also been cited. This is a matter of deep disappointment and concern to me... The main issue for me remains the unacceptable restrictions placed on the people of Gaza.

The current Fianna Fáil led Government has rejected economic sanctions against Israel and opposes a boycott. Many Fianna Fáil TDs, MEPs and Senators have advocated these, however, and in general have raised the issue of Palestine, the occupation and the need for EU action against Israel. The most vocal have been:

[Chris Andrews TD](#)

[Darragh O'Brien TD](#)

[Michael Mulcahy TD](#)

[Senator Mark Daly](#)

[Senator Terry Leyden](#)

[Brian Crowley MEP](#)

## Fine Gael

While Fine Gael was traditionally less “forward” on Palestinian rights, in government (1983-7, 1994-7) it continued the position of previous administrations in supporting Palestinian rights to statehood and the “two states” solution. Under its current leader, Enda Kenny, Fine Gael has adopted a very forceful position on Palestine.

In a [statement](#) on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010, Enda Kenny set out Fine Gael policy as follows:

... Fine Gael has consistently called for the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and for the free movement of Palestinians in the West Bank. In the interim, aid must be allowed into Gaza and the EU should oversee the transporting and safe delivery of humanitarian aid.

... We want an immediate end to the Israeli blockage of Gaza, to the construction of the Wall on the West Bank and to the extension of settlements and the Hamas rocket attacks and we want facilitation of humanitarian assistance through border crossings. We want both sides to comply with UN resolution 1860.



Our policy on the Israel/Palestine conflict is based on four pillars:

A two state solution;

A return to the 1967 borders, unless amended by agreement between the parties;

An agreed solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees who fled or left their homes in 1948 and 1967;

An end to Israeli settlement activities and a dismantling of all outposts erected since March 2001.

In order to achieve this all Palestinians must cease all acts of violence and commit to peace. Fine Gael also recognises Israel 's right to protect its citizens from attacks, but in doing so should act within international law...

In a Dáil debate on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 following the murderous Israeli attack on the Free Gaza Flotilla, Billy Timmons set out further the Fine Gael position, in particular regarding how economic pressure might be brought to bear on Israel:

... The difficulty is with what we can do about it [Israel 's illegal behaviour]. America is hamstrung due to its historical ties to Israel, so we cannot take our moral leadership from that country. Germany is one of the main drivers of European policy in the EU but its " hands off " approach to Israel creates a difficulty for the EU.

What measures can we take as a small country? If we are relying on Europe or America to make our decisions for us, then we will not succeed because the US and the EU wash their hands and move on from what they see as an intractable problem. The new President of the US has sought to do something about this but he has received very little support from his colleagues in Congress. I do not know if he will be able to do anything. We are dealing with an Israeli Government that is more conservative and hard line than any in recent Israeli history.

We can do three things. We can consider withdrawing the Irish ambassador from Tel Aviv and expelling the Israeli ambassador. We can also seek to restrict trade agreements. We have condemned time and again, but the time may be slowly approaching where we have got to look at taking one of these actions if Israel does not change its approach. We cannot be present in this Chamber next year or in 20 years ' time talking about the plight of the Palestinians. If the approach of Israel does not change, we have to examine the idea of carrying out some action. What is morally right might then supersede economic self-interest because it is very difficult to stand by and do nothing when we see the plight of Palestinian children...

There have been further [strong Fine Gael policy statements](#) on Palestine and a video ( since removed from YouTube but available on [elections.ie](#) ) following Enda Kenny 's visit to Gaza in which he expresses his position on the issues. Fine Gael TDs, MEPs and Senators who have been particularly vocal in support of the rights of the Palestinian people include:

[Pat Breen TD](#)

[Billy Timmins TD](#)

[Jim Higgins MEP](#)

[Gay Mitchell MEP](#)

## Labour Party

Since the amalgamation of the Labour Party and Democratic Left ( the former Workers Party ) in 1999, Labour has developed the most forceful and comprehensive position of the three major parties on Palestine, with its spokespersons



## Palestine in Irish Politics

in the Dáil – Michael D. Higgins and Joe Costello – among the most vocal of all politicians on the issue. In addition, at European level, Proinsias de Rossa MEP, who chairs the European Parliament Delegation to the Palestinian Assembly, is extremely active, regularly meeting with leading Palestinian political and civil society leaders and heading initiatives at the national and European level.

Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore set out Labour 's basic position in February 2010 as follows:

... Labour remain firmly in support of a two-state solution and to the work which is to be done by the international community and the Quartet in that regard although noting that circumstances are deteriorating to such an extent as to put that option in danger. As to the current situation, the Labour Party believes that the siege of Gaza is totally unjustified, constitutes collective punishment, and should be ended. Indeed, it should not be acceptable to any member of the international community that the 1.5 million people living in Gaza should be condemned to live in appalling conditions, or indeed that 850,000 of them are being fed by UNRWA ... On the issue of the settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Labour Party is opposed to them being considered as part of Israel. It is now more than ten years since the Palestine National Council accepted a two-state proposal ... Finally, if elected to Government the Labour Party will insist that the human rights elements within the EU-Israel trading agreements be complied with.

Labour Party TDs have consistently raised the issue of Palestine in the Dáil. Joe Costello secured the agreement of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs to hold formal hearings into whether Israel is in violation of the terms of the EUROMED agreement.

The 2010 Labour Party Conference adopted a comprehensive position proposed by the Central Council. This included:

... Life for Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem continues to be a daily grind of casual abuse by Israeli soldiers and colonisers, systematic obstruction of daily life by an extensive network of roadblocks, travel restrictions, intrusive and aggressive security operations and the now infamous separation wall, as well as the illegal and often violent evictions of people from their homes. All of this amounts to the systematic humiliation of an entire people. We further note that the colonisation by Israel of the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues unabated in clear breach of International Law and United Nations resolutions. The Central Council considers this appalling situation to be unjust, unacceptable and unsustainable...

While accepting that *“the Israeli people have legitimate concerns for their own security”*, it insisted that these *“are best addressed by a mutual agreement with the Palestinians for two States living in peace side by side based on the pre-1967 borders.”* The motion commits Labour in government to *“work strenuously for a just and multilateral peace agreement which respects international law, secures the legitimate interests of Israel to live in peace, security and prosperity with its neighbours, and delivers for the Palestinian people a secure, viable, contiguous, internationally-recognised state of their own which includes the West bank, Gaza and with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.”*

The motion *“encourages the Irish government to ensure that the European Union does not upgrade any of its diplomatic, trade, agricultural, cultural, and academic or other relations with Israel while that State is acting in a manner inconsistent with International Law and humanitarian principles.”* It also calls for the Irish Government to ensure that the EU *“effectively implements the provisions of the EC-Israel Association Agreement”* linked to the observance of human rights. It insists that settlement products be excluded from the privileges of the Euromed Agreement, seeks EU action to *“reinforce the official and legal status of Palestinians in East Jerusalem which was occupied and illegally annexed by Israel following the 1967 war”*, seeks reconciliation between the Hamas and Fatah movements in the Occupied Territories, calls on the Irish Government to seek means for the inclusion of Hamas in negotiations given its *“significant electoral*



support”, calls for “the implementation of the findings of the Goldstone Report” and for the Irish authorities under the Geneva Conventions Act to “examine the possibility of prosecutions in Ireland of those responsible for alleged war crimes”, condemns the Mossad assassination of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh and the criminal use of stolen Irish passports and calls the Government to account for failing to “properly account for this crime and the abuse of Irish sovereignty”, and finally called on the incoming Labour Party Council to examine “how best to campaign at national and European level for the rights of the Palestinian and Israeli people, including the question of boycott disinvestment and sanctions on Israel and political pressure on the Palestinian authorities to respect universal human rights.”

Detailed and specific positions proposed by Labour include:

[Peaceful negotiated solution urgently needed for Middle East](#) - Statement by Joe Costello TD, Spokesperson on Europe and Human Rights

[De Rossa calls for European deal with Hamas](#) - Statement, 20 January, 2010

[EU and Ireland should show courage and talk to Hamas](#) - Statement by Nessa Childers MEP, 20 January, 2010

[Israel must respect human rights including freedom of the press](#) - Statement by Proinsias De Rossa MEP, 18 January, 2010

[http://www.labour.ie/press/listing/12633886302281587.Gaza anniversary opportune time to review EU-Israel relationship](http://www.labour.ie/press/listing/12633886302281587.Gaza%20anniversary%20opportune%20time%20to%20review%20EU-Israel%20relationship) - Statement by Joe Costello TD Spokesperson on Europe and Human Rights, 13 January, 2010

[Defending hope in Gaza](#) - Statement by Proinsias De Rossa MEP, 11 January, 2010

[Safety of all those involved in ‘Viva Palestina’ a major concern](#) - Statement by Michael D Higgins TD Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, 7 January, 2010

[Israeli siege of Gaza must end](#) - Statement by Proinsias De Rossa MEP, 6 January, 2010

[Govts must act on Gaza report nd force Israel to end blockade](#) - Statement by Michael D Higgins TD, Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, 23 December, 2009

[EU must act decisively to help resolve mid-east conflict](#) - Statement by Proinsias De Rossa MEP, 21 December, 2009

Labour public representatives who have been particularly vocal in support of the Palestinian people include:

[Proinsias de Rossa MEP](#)

[Michael D. Higgins TD](#)

[Joe Costello TD](#)

[Senator Alex White](#)

[Nessa Childers MEP](#)

## Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin has a long history of engagement with the cause of Palestine and has been active at national and international level through its leader, Gerry Adams, on the issue. MEP Diardre de Brún and former MEP Mary Lou McDonald constantly raised the rights of the Palestinian people at European level and, in the Dáil, its spokespersons, particularly foreign affairs and justice spokesman Aengus Ó Snódaigh TD, regularly raise the issue through parliamentary questions.

In June 2010, following the Israeli assault on the Free Gaza Flotilla, and in addition to calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Sinn Féin set out its basic position on Palestine/Israel in a statement as follows:



### Break the siege of Gaza

... Sinn Féin has repeatedly demanded an end to the illegal blockade of Gaza since it intensified after Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections. The party has called on the UN, and EU and US governments to force Israel to open the borders, and several representatives including Gerry Adams and MEP Bairbre de Brún have visited Gaza since the 2008/09 Israeli war on the territory to raise awareness of the people's suffering and build pressure for an end to the siege. The party has also since 2006 demanded that the EU respect the democratic mandate of the Hamas-run PA in the Gaza Strip and restore full and direct aid to the government.

### Isolate Israeli regime

Sinn Féin Dáil leader Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD has called on the Taoiseach to initiate a trade boycott of Israel at national and EU level. On June 1 Deputy Ó Caoláin said: *"It is the failure of EU governments, including the Irish government, to match words with deeds that has helped Israel to act with impunity. The Taoiseach should now match his words with deeds and initiate an Irish trade boycott of Israel. He should push for a trade boycott at EU level also as a matter of urgency."* Sinn Féin TDs have also challenged the Irish government on its support for Israeli membership of the OECD. On May 31, Bairbre de Brún MEP ... called for the EU to *"suspend its preferential trade agreement with Israel and ensure that it can only be re-instated if Israel ends its blatant disregard for international law and basic human rights."*

Sinn Féin has published a range of literature on Palestine, including a comprehensive report: [Israel, Gaza and the West Bank – A Report \(2010\)](#) and also a video of Gerry Adams's visit to Gaza in May 2010, [Gerry Adams in Gaza](#). Sinn Féin public representatives who have been particularly to the fore in championing the cause of Palestine include:

[Aengus Ó Snódaigh TD](#)

[Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD](#)

[Arthur Morgan TD](#)

[Martin Ferris TD](#)

Sen. Pearse Doherty ([pearsedoherty.blogspot.com](http://pearsedoherty.blogspot.com))

## Green Party

The Green Party, in government in coalition with Fianna Fáil, has a position in support of the right of Palestinians to national self-determination and many of its members have been active in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The party has stopped short of supporting boycott or sanctions in pressurising Israel to abide by international law, until the June 2010 attack on the Free Gaza Flotilla. The basic position of the Green party was reflected in an address by its leader, Minister John Gormley TD, to the Dáil on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 as follows:

Truly, pondering the terrible fate of the Palestinian people is profoundly depressing and dispiriting. Like so many Irish people I have followed events in the Middle East for many years and one cannot but be moved by what is happening to the Palestinian people... I am utterly appalled by Monday's dastardly actions by the Israeli defence forces [in attacking the Free Gaza Flotilla]. What we are dealing with here is a blatant act of international piracy... Israel's behaviour is nothing short of outrageous. Up to this week, that country was already seriously at odds with international law. But these killings; these kidnappings; these blockades of humanitarian aid have sent the Israelis hurtling into total lawlessness as they show total contempt for our international laws...



... I am always heartened by genuine support and empathy for the Palestinian people among the vast bulk of Irish citizens. I am proud of this Irish empathy with Palestine. And I'm proud to be part of a Government and parliament which is prepared to give the strongest and most unequivocal condemnation of Israel's behaviour ...

... I believe the Irish people's empathy with Palestine is based on our own sense of fair play and decency. But it also draws on our own historical experiences. Monday's actions by Israel were utterly outrageous. But they are a subset of the ongoing outrage which is the blockade of Gaza ... Many of you here in this chamber will have visited Palestine down the years and seen the baffling and capricious behaviour of Israel's border guards as they insult and humiliate the Palestinian people they police... We understand it is Israel's aim to crush Hamas, which runs Gaza. But their action is a collective punishment of all ... The practical and inevitable outcome is that the ordinary population is becoming even more dependent on Hamas and their smuggling networks ... This dependence compounds the anger and frustration which drives young Palestinian people to make common cause with fanatics hell-bent on violence. This Israeli-driven counter-productive vicious circle is reminiscent of the ham-fisted attempts by the British authorities to crack down on terrorism in this island in decades past. Israel's outrageous acts risk being a recruiting sergeant for Al-Qaeda just as Maggie Thatcher's wrong-headed policies drove young people to join the Provos in the 1980s.

It is hard not to suspect that Israel's blockade of Gaza is also a deliberate attempt to sabotage viable government in Gaza. Sometimes I fear it is a cynical attempt by Israel to stop any meaningful peace negotiations ever before they get off the ground – a sort of “we're ready to talk – but there's nobody on the other side because they're too busy fighting.” ...

In January 2009, following the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, Green Party foreign affairs spokesman Ciarán Cuffe issued a statement calling for “UN sanctions” against Israel:

... Israel has committed outrageous actions in recent days. They have fired on the UN Headquarters in Gaza where hundreds of civilians are sheltering, and have fired tanks shells into residential areas where citizens are sheltering ... Of course Palestinian rockets and mortars have also killed and injured innocent people, but Israel's actions are of a scale that requires urgent international sanctions.

At a meeting of Green Party Oireachtas members and Councillors this week, the following statement on Gaza was agreed, in recognition of the:

- the huge loss of life in recent days due to the Gaza conflict;
- the economic and social conditions endured by the Palestinian people and
- the right of sovereign states to protect agreed borders

The Green Party calls for



## Palestine in Irish Politics

- Appropriate UN Sanctions against Israel
- A more coherent and consistent message to be articulated by the European Union insisting at all times on the upholding of international law.
- The removal of the West Bank wall erected by Israel in breach of the rulings of the International Court of Justice.
- Action by Israel to comply with relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including the removal of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.
- The establishment of an independent Palestinian State, in accordance with the wishes of the Palestinian people.

Green Party representatives vocal in supporting the cause of Palestine include:

[John Gormley TD](#)

[Senator Mark Dearey](#)

[Trevor Sargent TD](#)

[Ciaran Cuffe TD](#)

[Senator Deirdre de Burca](#) (*resigned*)



## Oireachtas Friends of Palestine

<a href="#">Senator Terry Leyden</a>	FF	( Convenor )
<a href="#">Michael D. Higgins TD</a>	Lab.	( Deputy Convenor )
<a href="#">Chris Andrews TD</a>	FF	
<a href="#">Darragh O ' Brien TD</a>	FF	
<a href="#">Michael Mulcahy TD</a>	FF	
<a href="#">Senator Mark Daly</a>	FF	
<a href="#">Pat Breen TD</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Billy Timmins TD</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Jim Higgins MEP</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Joe Costello TD</a>	Lab.	
<a href="#">Senator Alex White</a>	Lab.	
<a href="#">Senator Brendan Ryan</a>	Lab.	
<a href="#">Aengus Ó Snódaigh TD</a>	SF	
<a href="#">Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD</a>	SF	
<a href="#">Arthur Morgan TD</a>	SF	
<a href="#">Martin Ferris TD</a>	SF	
<a href="#">Senator Pearse Doherty</a>	SF	
<a href="#">Senator Mark_Dearey</a>	Greens	
<a href="#">Trevor Sargent TD</a>	Greens	
<a href="#">Ciaran Cuffe TD</a>	Greens	
<a href="#">Senator David Norris</a>	Ind.	
<a href="#">Senator Ivana Bacik</a>	Ind.	

## Irish MEPs supporting the cause of Palestine

<a href="#">Brian Crowley MEP</a>	FF
<a href="#">Jim Higgins MEP</a>	FG
<a href="#">Gay Mitchell MEP</a>	FG
<a href="#">Proinsias de Rossa MEP</a>	Labour
<a href="#">Nessa Childers MEP</a>	Labour
<a href="#">Arthur Morgan TD</a>	SF
<a href="#">Martin Ferris TD</a>	SF
<a href="#">Joe Higgins MEP</a>	Socialist
<a href="#">Bairbre de Brún</a>	Sinn Féin
<a href="#">Marian Harkin MEP</a>	Ind.

## Oireachtas Friends of Israel

<a href="#">Alan Shatter TD</a>	FG	( Chair )
<a href="#">Joanna Tuffy TD</a>	Lab.	( Vice Chair )
<a href="#">Ruairi Quinn TD</a>	Lab.	
<a href="#">Leo Varadkar TD</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Charles Flanagan TD</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Seymour Crawford TD</a>	FG	
<a href="#">Senator Feargal Quinn</a>	Ind.	



## Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs

This [Oireachtas Committee](#) has regularly discussed the position of Palestine and taken strong stances in relation to it. It is currently gathering evidence in relation to the Goldstone Report and its [website](#) carries reports of debates, motions and reports.

## Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs

The [European Affairs Committee](#) has regularly discussed the position of Palestine and taken strong stances in relation to it. Ireland's MEPs also regularly attend its meetings and it is currently gathering evidence in relation to the case for a suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement under EUROMED. Its [website](#) carries reports of debates, motions and reports.



## Appendix I

### The Irish Government's "Bahrain Declaration", 1980

Joint communiqué of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland, Mr. Brian Lenihan, and the Foreign Minister of the State of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Muhammad Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, issued on February 10, 1980, during the State Visit of the President of Ireland, Mr. Patrick Hillery to Bahrain

#### 1-3. General Relations

His Excellency Mr. Brian Lenihan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland and His Excellency Shaikh Muhammad Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Foreign Minister of Bahrain, exchanged views during their meeting at Manama on 10 February 1980. They reviewed a wide range of topics covering bilateral, regional and international affairs. The discussion was held in a most constructive atmosphere. The two sides expressed their desire to strengthen further the good relationships that exist between Ireland and Bahrain and especially to promote increased practical co-operation.

As regards their bi-lateral co-operation, it was agreed that scope for further such co-operation exists in the economic and technical fields. The areas of electricity generation, aviation, transport and export promotion were identified, as also the medical and educational areas, as those offering most immediate prospects. The two sides agreed to form a joint Technical Committee to study ways of promoting cooperation between the two States.

The two sides welcomed the ever closer links between Europe and the Arab world, which they believe to be of the greatest importance for the stability and prosperity of both regions.

#### 4-7. Palestine

As regards the Middle East, it was agreed that a solution to the Palestinian problem was central to any peace settlement. The two sides stressed the urgent need to reach a negotiated solution which would be comprehensive, just and lasting.

The two sides agreed that the Palestinian people had the right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in Palestine within the framework of a negotiated peace settlement which would include the principles of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The two sides stressed that all parties including the PLO should play a full role in the negotiation of a comprehensive peace settlement. In this regard, Ireland recognises the role of the PLO in representing the Palestinian people.

Both parties agreed that an essential aspect of a solution to the Palestinian problem was the withdrawal of Israel from all territory occupied since the 1967 conflict, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.



## 8-12. Other Issues

It was agreed that the Euro-Arab dialogue has the potential for substantial mutual benefit and that the dialogue should be resumed as soon as possible. The question of closer cooperation between the countries of the Gulf and the European Communities was discussed.

The two sides reviewed the situation in the Arabian Gulf and its strategic importance and affirmed that this region must remain a zone of peace and stability and should not be involved in the rivalry of the great powers.

Both parties condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which they considered as a blatant interference in the affairs of a state that belongs to the Islamic world. They stated that the invasion was contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and constituted a threat to world peace and security.

Both sides expressed their faith in the principles of the United Nations. They affirmed their adherence to the principles of peaceful co-existence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan briefed his colleague in detail on the present situation in Northern Ireland.



## Appendix II

### The Venice Declaration of the EEC, 1980

#### Resolution of the heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs of the European Council (Venice Declaration), 13 June 1980

##### VENICE RESOLUTION

1. The heads of state and government and the ministers of foreign affairs held a comprehensive exchange of views on all aspects of the present situation in the Middle East, including the state of negotiations resulting from the agreements signed between Egypt and Israel in March 1979. They agreed that growing tensions affecting this region constitute a serious danger and render a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict more necessary and pressing than ever.
2. The nine member states of the European Community consider that the traditional ties and common interests which link Europe to the Middle East oblige them to play a special role and now require them to work in a more concrete way towards peace.
3. In this regard, the nine countries of the community base themselves on ( UN ) Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the positions which they have expressed on several occasions, notably in their declarations of 29 June 1977, 10 September 1970, 26 March and 18 June 1979, as well as in the speech made on their behalf on 25 September 1979 by the Irish minister of foreign affairs at the 34th UN General Assembly.
4. On the bases thus set out, the time has come to promote the recognition and implementation of the two principles universally accepted by the international community: the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.
5. All of the countries in the area are entitled to live in peace within secure, recognized and guaranteed borders. The necessary guarantees for a peace settlement should be provided by the UN by a decision of the Security Council and, if necessary, on the basis of other mutually agreed procedures. The nine declare that they are prepared to participate within the framework of a comprehensive settlement in a system of concrete and binding international guarantees, including ( guarantees ) on the ground.
6. A just solution must finally be found to the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.
7. The achievement of these objectives requires the involvement and support of all the parties concerned in the peace settlement which the nine are endeavouring to promote in keeping with the principles formulated in the declaration referred to above. These principles apply to all the parties concerned, and thus to the Palestinian people, and to the



PLO, which will have to be associated with the negotiations.

8. The nine recognize the special importance of the role played by the question of Jerusalem for all the parties concerned. The nine stress that they will not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem and that any agreement on the city's status should guarantee freedom of access for everyone to the holy places.

9. The nine stress the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967, as it has done for part of Sinai. They are deeply convinced that the Israeli settlements constitute a serious obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East. The nine consider that these settlements, as well as modifications in population and property in the occupied Arab territories, are illegal under international law.

10. Concerned as they are to put an end to violence, the nine consider that only the renunciation of force or the threatened use of force by all the parties can create a climate of confidence in the area, and constitute a basic element for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

11. The nine have decided to make the necessary contacts with all the parties concerned. The objective of these contacts would be to ascertain the position of the various parties with respect to the principles set out in this declaration and in the light of the results of this consultation process to determine the form which such an initiative on their part could take.





**SADAKA** صدقة  
The Ireland Palestine Alliance ♦ [www.sadaka.ie](http://www.sadaka.ie)

Sadaka - an Arabic term meaning “friendship” - is an Association established in Ireland in 2009 to promote the cause of Palestine throughout Ireland,, raising public awareness and engaging in political dialogue. It aims to persuade those in Government to champion the cause of justice for the Palestinian people.

The board of Sadaka consists of: Marie Crawley (Chair), Noreen Byrne (Secretary), Adnan Shabab (Treasurer), Dr. David Morrison, Philip O'Connor, Des McGuinness, Alan Lonergan, Elaine Murtagh and Hilary Minch.

**If you would like to join Sadaka or to donate to its campaign, contact us at:**

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