

Peace and security in the Middle East.

*What should
Labour party policy be?*



Executive Committee of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East

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Edited by Mark McDonald

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About Labour Friends of Palestine

Achieving justice for the Palestinians remains one of the most pressing international issues of our time. LFPME supports a viable two state solution that delivers justice and freedom for the Palestinian people as called for by the overwhelming international consensus and enshrined under international law and in UN resolutions.

Our work supports and complements the humanitarian effort for Palestine by raising the key issues, detrimental to the realisation of peace in the Middle East, at the highest political levels in the UK and Europe. To help raise awareness of the situation in Palestine we participate in political conferences, undertake speaking engagements, produce briefings and promotional material, campaign on key issues, host cultural events, and encourage MPs to visit Palestine to witness the reality of the situation.

LFPME strives to be a proactive voluntary group in an environment long occupied and dominated by the pro-Israeli lobby.

To find out more, visit our web-site **www.lfpme.org**

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Key Messages

- The wall, the settlements, checkpoints and daily human rights violations are having a profound impact on Palestinians. Poverty levels are going up. Economic development is restricted. Arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement affect access to education, work, health, and many other aspects of daily life. Administrative rules on travel prevent thousands of Palestinian families from living together. Palestinian children are prosecuted in violation of International Human Rights Law. The current situation is deteriorating and the hope of a solution in future is being seriously undermined by the treatment of the next generation. Urgent action is needed now.
- The one-state proposal is not so much unfeasible as implausible. It is a solution maybe to a different problem, but not to this one. Or at least not now.
- Despite its shortcomings, to abandon the two-state idea in the absence of a realistic alternative could be to condemn the parties to perpetual conflict. However a two-state outcome today would necessarily have more of a hybrid quality to it, with both two-state and one-state features.
- Although both parties say they want a two state solution, deadlock continues chiefly due to distrust of the other government. What is needed now is leadership from both Governments that makes clear the commitment of both parties to an agreed two state solution. Support must be given to the existence of the other state as well as themselves.
- The solution must in the end be political, and the mechanism has to be dialogue and negotiations. However this must not be done intermittently as before but continuously, whatever breakdowns, crises and anger get in the way.
- In addition to Israeli and Palestinian action, there is a need to grip and micro-manage the conflict at a sufficiently high political level, over a sufficiently sustained period. Fly-in, fly-out diplomacy has been the norm. Efforts and initiatives have come and gone, and violence has returned to fill the vacuum. International forces have not been aligned and dialogue has been stunted. Continuous international support is needed.

- Above all, the world took 35 years following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to reach this critical point but it has effectively squandered the ten years since then, culminating in the precarious situation today whereby the West Bank is on the brink of erupting. What is urgently needed now is a resolute global initiative to bring swiftly into effect the only 'solution' that still makes any sense.

About the Authors

Peter Hain MP was born in Nairobi and brought up in South Africa. His parents were heavily involved in opposition to apartheid and both parents were jailed for their beliefs. His family left South Africa in April 1966 when it became almost impossible for his father to get any work.

Peter read Economics and Political Science at Queen Mary College, London and obtained a Masters in Philosophy at Sussex University. At University he became a leader of anti-apartheid activities. In 1969 he was part of a group, which disrupted the Springboks rugby tour – this led to the halting of the South African cricket tour of Britain and in 1977. Peter was also a founding member of the Anti-Nazi League.

In April 1991, he was elected as the Labour MP for Neath. In 2001, he was appointed Welsh Secretary of State and in 2003, he was also given the role of Leader of The House of Commons. In the 2005 he was made Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and in June 2007 he was appointed as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in addition to retaining responsibility for Wales.

Peter is the author of *Outside In*, published August, 2012.

Dr Tony Klug is a longstanding writer on the Middle East, whose contributions include successive Fabian Society pamphlets advocating a two-state solution (*A Tale of Two Peoples*, 1973) and a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank (*The Only Way Out*, 1977). In 2003, he proposed a transitional international protectorate for the occupied territories. For many years he worked at the international secretariat of Amnesty International as a campaign organiser and as head of international development; he has also served on the international boards of *New Outlook* and the *Palestine-Israel Journal* and as a trustee of the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East. He is a senior consultant at the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum and a special advisor on the Middle East to the Oxford Research Group.

Rt Hon Sadiq Khan MP, is the MP for Tooting, first elected in 2005. He is currently Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice (with responsibility for political and constitutional reform), having been elected to the Labour

Party's Shadow Cabinet in October 2010. He was Ed Miliband's campaign manager in his successful leadership bid in 2010.

In June 2009 Sadiq was appointed to the Privy Council and asked to attend Cabinet meetings. He was both the first Asian and first Muslim MP to attend Cabinet. Before becoming an MP Sadiq Khan was a leading Human Rights solicitor and a founding partner of Christian Khan, a leading human rights firm. He was formerly the Chair of Liberty and the Fabian Society, and Vice Chair of the Legal Action Group.

Chris Doyle, is the Director of Caabu – The Council for Arab-British Understanding and was made full-time Director of in 2002 having worked with the Council since 1993 after graduating in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Exeter University. Chris is a frequent commentator on TV and Radio, having given over 150 interviews on the Arab uprisings in the first six months of 2011. He also speaks on issues such as the Arab Spring, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Islamophobia and the Arabs in Britain. He has had numerous articles and letters published in the British and international media.

Chris was a Visiting Lecturer at St. Mary's College, University of Surrey, lecturing on religion in the Middle East. He also Chaired Friends of Birzeit University where he remains a Trustee and is a former trustee of Medical Aid for Palestinians.

Lisa Nandy MP, is the MP for Wigan, elected in 2010. In May 2012 Lisa was promoted to Shadow Children's Minister with responsibility for safeguarding, children in care and adoption. She previously served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Tessa Jowell MP, Shadow Olympics Minister and as a member of the Education Select Committee. Lisa also chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Corporate Responsibility.

Before entering Parliament Lisa worked for the Children's Society, helping to ensure that children who are abused, ill-treated or growing up in poverty get the help they need from Government and wider society. Lisa is a regular columnist for Tribune, Labour List and Children and Young People Now Magazine and contributes to the Guardian and other publications. She is a regular panellist on Radio 4's Westminster Hour and 5 Live's Pienaar's Politics.

Ian Lucas MP, is the MP for Wrexham, elected in 2001. Ian is currently the Shadow Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Africa and Middle East). Previously he was Minister for Business and Regulatory Reform in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and held that post until the Labour government left office in May 2010. Before his election in 2001, Ian ran his own business as a solicitor.

Margaret Curran MP, is the MP for Glasgow East, elected in 2010. Margaret became the Shadow Minister for Disabilities in the shadow Work and Pensions team and in October 2011 was appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. Margaret also served as a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Before taking up Parliamentary duties Margaret was a lecturer in community education at the University of Strathclyde and spent time as a community worker.

Mark McDonald, founded the Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East in 2007. As a criminal defence and human rights Barrister he has worked in courts in the UK and internationally. He is also the Director and principle founder of the London Innocence project and for many years was the Director of Amicus. Mark has lectured extensively on US death penalty litigation and constitutional law and has written for Tribune. Mark was a Labour Parliamentary candidate in 2005 and stood to be the Treasurer of the Labour Party in 2008. He has also a Labour candidate for the Corporation of London's common council elections in 2009.

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1. Prologue and Acknowledgements

When I first decided to set up Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East I had just returned from Ramallah where I had been working for the Bar Human Rights Committee. I went straight to Bournemouth for the Labour Party Conference where I attended a Palestinian fringe meeting (the only one at conference) with about 30 people there, including one MP and the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK. The following day I went to the Labour Friends of Israel Reception and was impressed to see over 300 people in attendance, along with most of the Cabinet the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. It was there, standing in the large grand reception room that I decided to set up an organisation that would give Palestinians an equal voice within the Labour movement.

And so, with the help of Martin Linton MP, Phyllis Starkey MP and Richard Burden MP that is what we did. We launched LFPME in Manchester and a year later at the 2009 conference, both the Prime Minister and the new Foreign Secretary, David Miliband MP, attended our reception.

Since then, LFPME has grown to be the leading voice on Palestine and the Middle East within the Labour movement. The organisation now has the support of over a hundred MPs. It holds debates and talks in Parliament and produces publications on a range of issues relating to Palestine. The purpose of this booklet is to build on this work, with the hope that at the next General election, a renewed commitment to the Middle East peace process, will be at the centre of the party's manifesto foreign policy commitments.

The organisation would not have got this far without the fantastic contribution and unstinting support of many MPs and volunteers from across the party, who are too many in number to name individually. But two of driving forces behind many of the initiatives are Komal Adris and Del Singh to whom we are all enormously grateful.

A special thanks also to Jemma Queenbrough for her invaluable help in putting this pamphlet together.

We are of course also enormously grateful for the excellent contributions to this report, which is our first such publication and we hope will make a real contribution to the development of a Labour Government's future Foreign Policy.



We would also like to thank TSSA, the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association who have sponsored this document. TSSA represents 30,000 administrative, managerial, professional and technical workers in the railway, London Underground, the travel trade, ports and ferries. Members range from highly skilled engineers and senior managers to booking office staff and call centre workers. TSSA is committed to expanding its membership and is currently running a major campaign to unionise travel agents.

2. Introduction

Mark McDonald

When I first entered the House of Commons there was a myth, a prevalent myth. It was to the effect that although the Labour Members of Parliament could reasonable be expected to know something about engineering, or about mining, there were two subjects on which they were completely ignorant: foreign affairs and how to make war. It was always understood that those were the special prerogatives of the Tories and their attitude has not changed very much.

*(Nye Bevan,
speaking at the 1958 Labour Party conference)*

The Labour party has come a long way since the 1950's and now more than ever our country needs us to start developing and standing up for the right ideals on foreign matters. The above quote is a favourite of mine from Nye Bevan at the Labour party conference in 1958 and I often think of it when I see what is happening in Palestine today.

The wall, the settlements, checkpoints and daily human rights violations are having a profound impact on Palestinians. There has been an increase in poverty across the West bank and Gaza, the primary cause of which is restrictions on economic development. This is directly linked to restrictions on freedom of movement, affecting access to education, work, health, and many other aspects of daily life.

Administrative rules on travel prevent thousands of Palestinian families from living together or even visiting each other. Palestinian children are prosecuted in violation of International Human Rights Law and the current situation is deteriorating. The hope of a political solution in the future is being seriously undermined by the treatment of the next generation.

This booklet looks at the one-state proposal concluding that it is not so much unfeasible as implausible. A one state solution would be a disaster to both Israel and Palestine. Despite its shortcomings and difficulties to abandon the two-state idea in the

absence of a realistic alternative will increase the conflict not help to solve it. It also looks how a two-state outcome today could have more of a hybrid quality to it, with both two-state and one-state features.

As the esteemed author and expert on the Middle East Tony Klug has argued;

“the world took 35 years following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to reach this critical point but it has effectively squandered the ten years since then, culminating in the precarious situation today whereby the West Bank is on the brink of erupting.”

There is a need (indeed a want) for a resolute global initiative to bring into effect the only ‘solution’ that still makes any sense.

Yet the risks and compromises involved in establishing dialogue often dominate, and frequently destroy, the chance of progress almost before it begins. Pre-conditions can (and do) strangle a process at birth.

Peter Hain explains how, from his own personal experience of being part of a successful peace process in both South Africa and Northern Ireland, history tells us that a just solution can always be found but what it takes is a real need on both sides and a united international effort. At a time

when the world’s eyes are looking at the Middle East welcoming the fall of dictators and the rise of democracy, the UK should give the same support for democracy and basic human rights aspirations in Palestine.

The Labour party has always been a friend of the Palestinian people and has consistently voiced support for self-determination. It is arguable that this message got lost for a number of years when our relations with the US and Israel began to dominate Labour’s Foreign policy. The difficulty has always been where to draw the line, the need to be seen as impartial. The problem with this approach is ultimately it can only harm Palestine. Palestine is a nation that has lived under occupation for over 40 years, with over 500,000 settlers who have now moved onto and (according to International Law) illegally taken over the Palestinian land, with a wall that blights the landscape and

combined with the numerous checkpoints causes daily misery to thousands of Palestinians. And of course Gaza a region under siege by Israel which has led, in the UN's words to a humanitarian crisis. To be impartial in this environment is to ignore the plight of thousands of Palestinians.

The appointment of David Miliband MP as Foreign Secretary saw a welcome sign of a change in Foreign Policy with the condemnation of Israel for the bombing of Lebanon. It was however the atrocities committed during Operation Cast Lead which led to the death of hundreds of women and children and a sea change in Labour's attitude to the Middle East one that I believe saw the Labour party begin to forge its own identity on foreign policy, one no longer unquestioningly aligned to the US and no longer blindly supportive of Israel.

In September last year Ed Miliband MP rightly supported statehood recognition for Palestine. In a letter to the Foreign Secretary setting out the Labour Party's support for the bid, Douglas Alexander wrote:

"The case made by the Palestinians for recognition as a state is strong. This week, at the United Nations, the British Government should be willing to support the recognition of Palestinian statehood as part of continuing steps to achieve a comprehensive two state solution."

This was not so much a shift in Labour's policy but consistent with the two state solution, which for so long has been the core of our foreign policy. It repeated the 1983 general election manifesto which said:

"The Labour Party is committed to the promotion of peace, democracy and socialism in the Middle East, and to the principle of national self-determination. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains a major element in the continuing conflict and tension in the region, through not the only one. The core of the conflict is the struggle between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples for the realisation of national self-determination."

We shall therefore:

- *Support the right of all Israelis to live in peace and security in the state of Israel, within secure internationally recognised borders.*
- *Support the right of Palestinians to self determination, including the establishment of a Palestinian state.”*

Ultimately, the failure of the US and the UK to support this vote meant that it was doomed to fail. It was argued by some that this vote was symbolic but it was not symbolic to the thousands of people, many of whom wept, as they stood in front of the screens in Ramallah and watched live as President Abbas made what many considered as one of the best speeches ever made before the UN General Assembly. Recognition by the UN offered a clear statement in support of the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and would have sent a timely message to the Palestinian people that the international community is prepared to take strong steps to bring about a two-state settlement.

As a party, we should condemn any act of violence by any side and strongly stand up for any breach of humanitarian law no matter the country and no matter the leader. But too often in the past we have been inconsistent instead choosing political expediency over ethics. But it is this strong sense of fairness and ethics that is the moral fabric which binds the Labour party together it is hoped that the key messages in this booklet will help pave the way for a greater commitment to Palestine in the next Labour Party Manifesto.

3. Lessons In Conflict Resolution

Peter Hain MP

In the Middle East, the conflict has not been gripped at a sufficiently high level, over a sufficiently sustained period. Fly-in, fly-out diplomacy has been the norm. Efforts and initiatives have come and gone, and violence has returned to fill the vacuum. International forces have not been aligned and dialogue has been stunted. Preconditions have been, and remain, a bulwark against progress.

The solution has in the end to be political, and the mechanism has to be dialogue and negotiations. This must not be done intermittently but continuously, whatever breakdowns, crises and anger get in the way.

Just as I was privileged to help achieve democracy in South Africa in 1994, so I was privileged to serve as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for the two years that led to the historic 2007 political settlement.

But today, both these historic events in building democracy are taken for granted. In fact the struggle in South Africa took most of the hundred years of the African National Congress's life, its centenary celebrated this year. Whereas eight centuries of Anglo-Irish history, sharpened by violent conflict, created virulent and seemingly irreconcilable fault lines on the island of Ireland.

Beginning the process on the basis of politics alone is what really matters – that is the real triumph of the New South Africa and also the New Northern Ireland, and I hope an inspiration to Palestinians and Israelis who cannot yet even see as far as the starting point.

Observing Northern Ireland today, it's hard to recognize what was just a few decades ago the theatre for such horror and barbarity, hate and bigotry.

At the heart of the Northern Ireland process – and arguably as its ultimate objective – was the necessity for dialogue at every level.

Yet the risks and compromises involved in establishing dialogue often dominate, and frequently destroy, the chance of progress almost before it begins. Pre-conditions can (and do) strangle a process at birth.

That much is certainly a feature of the Middle East peace process, where, from time to time, both sides have imposed pre-conditions which effectively have blocked any dialogue from beginning. Today, Israel's Prime Minister will not countenance talking to Hamas (democratically elected by the Palestinian people) because Hamas will not recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel. Both also have launched violent attacks against each other.

It is true that entering into dialogue – especially secret dialogue – carries huge risks of serious political embarrassment.

And my view is, that in order to achieve results, it is worth erring on the side of being exposed for trying to talk – even to those seen as ‘the enemy’, and maybe still engaged in paramilitary or illegal activity, and therefore ‘outside’ a process.

That was attempted with Republicans from the early 1970s when they were bombing and shooting. And, despite public criticism, I engaged in 2006-7 with loyalists linked (and in the case of some individuals directly) to the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association whose brutal record of violence and criminality has been much more current. But the outcome was more positive than it would otherwise have been.

Dialogue brings in those elements of the ‘extremes’ in a conflict or process that are capable of delivering the most obdurate constituencies.

That cannot be achieved without dialogue, even dialogue through a third party – in the case of Northern Ireland with the British Government acting as a conduit between DUP and Sinn Fein. Or in South Africa through various ‘deniable’ intermediaries.

The key principles which guided our Labour Government's handling of Northern Ireland were:

- First, the need to create space and time, free from violence, in which political capacity can develop;
- Second, the need to identify key individuals and constructive forces;
- Third, the importance of inclusive dialogue at every level, wherever there is a negotiable objective;
- Fourth, the taking of risks to sustain that dialogue and to underpin political progress;
- Fifth, the alignment of national and international forces;
- Sixth, the need to avoid or resolve pre-conditions to dialogue;
- Seventh, and perhaps above all the need to grip and micro-manage a conflict at a high political level, refusing to accept the inevitability of it.
- And eighth, to do so, not intermittently but continuously, whatever breakdowns, crises and anger get in the way.

In the Middle East, the conflict has not been gripped at a sufficiently high level, over a sufficiently sustained period. Fly-in, fly-out diplomacy has been the norm – usually coinciding with US Presidential election cycles.

Efforts and initiatives have come and gone, and violence has returned to fill the vacuum. International forces have not been aligned and dialogue has been stunted. Periodic engagement has led to false starts and dashed hopes. Preconditions have been, and remain, a bulwark against progress.

The inescapable truth, however, is that, despite the depth and intensity of bitterness and hatred between Hamas and Israel, neither can militarily defeat the other; they will each have to be party to a negotiated solution which satisfies Palestinian aspirations for a viable state and Israel's need for security.

Just as legitimate grievances in Northern Ireland fuelled republican sympathies, Palestinian grievances provide fertile territory for extremists. Addressing people's grievances – from security to jobs and housing – as we did in Northern Ireland, can

undercut the extremists who seek to inflame and exploit them, so creating more fertile ground for a political process to complement engagement.

Yet recent Israeli governments have done the exact opposite by intensifying Palestinian grievances with ever-increasing settlements, blockades and violent attacks.

Palestinian resistance movements also need to dwell upon the courage and strength of leadership shown by Nelson Mandela.

In South Africa, there were some – including in the ANC – who opposed Mandela in his willingness to negotiate with the old enemy when the leaders of apartheid finally concluded that their own future could not be secured without treating with him.

Mandela's capacity for forgiveness is what made him the absolutely critical figure, first during secret negotiations with the Afrikaner Nationalist government in the late 1980s from prison, and then after his release. He was acutely concerned at how close South Africa had come to civil war. Even two years after the ANC victory, Mandela was still reminding the ANC in July 1996 at a private gathering of struggle veterans: *"You mustn't compromise your principles, but you mustn't humiliate the opposition. No one is more dangerous than one who is humiliated."*

And my view is, that in order to achieve results, it is worth erring on the side of being exposed for trying to talk – even to those seen as 'the enemy', and maybe still engaged in paramilitary or illegal activity, and therefore 'outside' a process.

Nobody else could have delivered such a healing presidency in such a bitterly divided country with so much vicious nastiness in its history, still lurking in the shadows of the transition and for many years afterwards.

Strong leadership was also needed from the British Government – and took too long in coming to fulfilment. In the early years of the IRA's bloody armed campaign over 30 years ago, nobody in the British Government could stomach talking with Republican Leaders, except in surrender terms, since they were regarded as completely beyond the pale after terrorist attacks on London and Birmingham, let alone within Northern

Ireland; yet in the middle of all this bloodshed and mayhem, contact was initiated which much later on came to fruition when Tony Blair's Labour government adopted a new strategy from 1997.

The inescapable lesson is that such conflicts will never be solved militarily. Either side may have temporary advances. But the solution has in the end to be political, and the mechanism has to be negotiation – especially today for Palestinians and the Israelis.

Peter Hain's memoirs 'Outside In' has just been published by Biteback Publishing.

4. The Palestinian state – an urgent call to get serious

Dr Tony Klug

Despite its shortcomings, to abandon the two-state idea in the absence of a realistic alternative could be to condemn the parties to perpetual conflict. However a two-state outcome today would necessarily have more of a hybrid quality to it, with both two-state and one-state features. The world took 35 years following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to reach this critical point but it has effectively squandered the ten years since then, culminating in the precarious situation today whereby the West Bank is on the brink of erupting. What is urgently needed now is a resolute global initiative to bring swiftly into effect the only 'solution' that still makes any sense.

Some 40 years have elapsed since the Fabian Society, in January 1973, published my pamphlet 'Middle East Conflict: a tale of two peoples', that called for the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside the state of Israel. The pamphlet held that no resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was feasible that failed to satisfy the common minimum aspirations of two vibrant national movements for self-determination in at least part of the land that each regarded as its own. This, it seemed to me, was axiomatic, no matter what the rights and wrongs or where our sympathies lay.

The argument was not that the two-state paradigm would, of itself, constitute – or guarantee – a 'solution' to the conflict but that it offered the indispensable framework for enabling the myriad outstanding issues to be negotiated and resolved. The non-statehood of the Palestinians was the vital missing parameter, distorting their relations both with Israel and neighbouring Arab states. For as long as they continued to be denied presumptive political parity with all other peoples of the region, they would be handicapped from participating effectively in the eventual settlement of their problems and vulnerable to the machinations of all state parties, including by governments that professed eternal allegiance to their cause.

Developments in the intervening years – during which time national sentiment among both peoples has, if anything, hardened – have underscored this thesis. In principle, the case for two independent states thus remains compelling. It is hard to see any other realistic basis for resolving this conflict. Many ideas abound, but in one way or another they all appear to require one side or the other – or in some cases both – to relinquish their national identity and national aspirations. But these sentiments are inexorable products of historical processes – forged and honed by catastrophe in both cases – that cannot be wished away to fit someone else’s idea of what this conflict should be about.

Take the unitary state proposal – the so-called ‘one-state solution’ – that appears to have been gaining ground recently in some circles. Its enthusiasts – conjuring up problematic analogies from different contexts – may be well-intentioned, but the proposal is deeply flawed as it is predicated on the notion that a territorial clash of two national movements can be reduced by fiat to a one-dimensional struggle for civil rights, even if there is a heavy-duty civil-rights dimension to the conflict. The one-state proposal is not so much unfeasible as implausible. It is a solution maybe to a different problem, but not to this one. Or at least not now.

The one-state idea would mean putting an end to the Palestinian dream of independence and self-determination and oblige the Palestinians instead to share common statehood with another people – with whom they have been bitter foes for the best part of a century – in a joint non-Arab, non-Muslim, state, simultaneously relinquishing the struggle for the end of occupation and gratuitously bestowing political legitimacy on the ongoing settlement enterprise.

At the same time, any attempt to eradicate the sovereign Israeli state and its predominantly Jewish character is liable to revive the Jewish fear of genocide, or minimally of discrimination and persecution, and meet with fierce resistance. In the light of their ill-fated history, it is hard to imagine Israeli Jews, of almost any stripe, voluntarily sacrificing their hard-won independence to become a minority again in someone else’s land.

The bottom line is that the Palestinian Arabs overwhelmingly want their own state. The same is true for Israeli Jews. They both have good reason. Who are we, as outsiders, to try and impose our preferred, western-type, model on them? We need to rein in our customary imperial instincts. The time to support a unitary secular state – which is neither Arab nor Jewish nor Muslim – is when and if both peoples signal their support for it.

One reason that the one-state proposal has apparently gained traction is of course that the projected two-state outcome has not yet materialized. Moreover, its prospects appear to be waning by the day in the face of Israel's relentless colonization programme, which threatens the contiguity and viability of a future Palestinian state anchored in the West Bank. Ultimately, it threatens the integrity of the Israeli state too but the logic of this argument seems incapable at present of penetrating the ideological fervour underpinning the settlement drive.

It has been clear for many years that what posed as a peace process had failed abysmally. But this does not mean that the two-state paradigm itself has failed, or indeed that it would be wise to permit it to fail. However unfeasible it might currently appear to be, it does not follow that there is an alternative – including, for much longer, the status quo – that is more feasible.

In principle, the case for two independent states thus remains compelling. It is hard to see any other realistic basis for resolving this conflict. Many ideas abound, but in one way or another they all appear to require one side or the other – or in some cases both – to relinquish their national identity and national aspirations.

None of the array of mooted alternatives – including those put forward by right-wing Israelis – bears scrutiny, which probably explains why their respective advocates have persistently shied away from moving beyond the clichés to fleshing out their models. Despite its shortcomings, to abandon the two-state idea in the absence of a realistic alternative could be to condemn the parties to perpetual conflict. It would turn a potential win-win situation into a certain lose-lose situation. There is no win-lose or lose-win scenario in this conflict.

This said, language in this area is often used carelessly and we need to distinguish between a unitary state and a binational confederated state that would retain the two national identities

and essential zones of sovereignty. To my mind, this formulation would be a possible – I would say a desirable – future peaceful outgrowth of a two-state model, possibly incorporating other neighbouring states, notably Jordan. However, to place them on an equal footing, the Palestinians first need to attain their sovereignty. Then, like their neighbours, they may agree to forgo some of it for the greater good.

In the meantime, the shape and nature of the two states will need to adapt to the evolving realities. When I was writing my first Fabian pamphlet in the early 1970s, there were fewer than 5,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The one-state proposal is not so much unfeasible as implausible. It is a solution maybe to a different problem, but not to this one. Or at least not now.

Today the number is in excess of 500,000. It is scandalous that the international community, despite its clear and reiterated policy, did almost nothing to stop this perilous state of affairs from developing.

Nonetheless, the two-state paradigm has to move with the times. Only the purists on either side of the debate envisage the two states as ethnically rigid or inflexibly structured. This need not be the case. In fact, it cannot be the case. A two-state outcome today would necessarily have more of a hybrid quality to it, with both two-state and one-state features. There is a need for innovative thinking and original solutions within the basic two-state framework.

For one thing, as with many neighbouring states around the world, there is no reason why both Israel and Palestine should not have sizeable minorities from the majority population of the other state. Indeed, even now, more than a fifth of Israel's population is Palestinian Arab, which happens to be roughly the same proportion of Israeli Jews currently living in the West Bank.

Many of the latter would doubtless be re-absorbed into the Israeli state in the event of a two-state deal, mainly through compensation or land swaps, but it could be conducive to healthy future Palestinian-Israeli relations and to making peace work if a good number of Israeli Jews were encouraged to remain, not as colonizers of course but as good citizens or residents and help build up the new state. While Israel currently has full control over

'Area C', comprising around 60 per cent of the West Bank and incorporating all the settlements, the total area covered by all settlement buildings accounts for no more than one per cent of West Bank territory.

The underlying principle could be that both Israel and Palestine would be states of all their citizens in which, respectively, the Israeli Jewish people and the Palestinian Arab people exercise their self-determination. A good start would be to develop mirror constitutions, guaranteeing parallel rights to ethnic and religious minorities, within a context of open borders and mutually beneficial trading, sporting, cultural and other relations. As indicated, it would be up to the two populations if they subsequently wished to achieve any form of unity.

Rather than meekly surrender to the territorial bullying of Israeli prime minister Netanyahu and his cohorts – which, in effect, is what the one-state proposal would entail – it is time to launch a serious, concerted international effort, at every level, to finally end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank – and the blockade of Gaza – and replace both with an independent Palestinian state. One possibility would be for the state to be preceded for a limited period by an international protectorate

(see http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/article_1207.jsp)

The nature of the relationship between the two parts of the new state would be up to their inhabitants to determine between them.

To be effective, the campaign would need to be astute, sharply focused and capable of appealing not just to pro-Palestinian circles but also to influential governments and, crucially, to mainstream Israeli public opinion, a largely neglected constituency thus far by pro-Palestinian activists. This may be achieved only if the campaign upholds a clear distinction between the international legitimacy of Israel in its pre-June 1967 borders – as enshrined in UN resolutions – and the illegitimacy of its continuing and apparently indefinite occupation of the West Bank – also enshrined in UN resolutions.

Should this distinction be blurred, the campaign would be doomed. To succeed, the goal would have to be clear and unambiguous, and threatening only to parties that would seek to obstruct the establishment of a Palestinian state next to Israel.

Such a campaign has never seriously been attempted before. As the basis of a solution, two states officially became international policy only in March 2002 under UN Security Council Resolution 1397, marking a huge advance on the terms of the earlier seminal Resolution 242 of November 1967 which had depicted the Palestinians as just homeless refugees, not a stateless nation. The Arab Peace Initiative, also launched in March 2002, was similarly predicated on two states, with the promise of full normalization of relations with Israel of the whole Arab world. This initiative stood in sharp contrast with the Arab League's three definitive 'noes' of September 1967 – no peace, no recognition and no negotiations with Israel. Finally the policy architecture was in place.

The world took 35 years following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to reach this critical point but it has effectively squandered the ten years since then, culminating in the precarious situation today whereby the West Bank is on the brink of erupting. The answer to this predicament is not limply to abandon the long-in-coming universal consensus in support of Palestinian independence and start all over again with a different and much more controversial policy. Rather, what is urgently needed now is a resolute global initiative to bring swiftly into effect the only 'solution' that still makes any sense.

5. Upholding the rights of Palestinian Children

Rt Hon Sadiq Khan MP

Israel is in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (and other Conventions) through its prosecution and general treatment of Palestinian children. Although Israeli Law makes their actions lawful domestically, Israel remains in violation of International Human Rights Law. International pressure should be applied to encourage Israel to comply with International Human Rights Law.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a piece of international law that has few critics, let alone opponents. It has been signed and ratified by most governments of the world including by Israel in 1991.

The UNCRC was designed to safeguard the world's children from abuse and exploitation, and to ensure that they have a childhood. Its supporters had long felt that children needed extra protection, in addition to the Human Rights afforded to all adults.

I believe that Human Rights, including those rights covered by the UNCRC, are absolute. There may be some right-wing politicians and commentators who complain about the interpretation and application of certain articles (Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is the right to private and family life, seems to be the one which attracts most criticism) however I feel most people – regardless of their political beliefs – agree that prohibiting torture and slavery whilst ensuring freedom of thought, speech and religion are worth protecting.

It should be remembered that the UNCRC outlines a minimum – and not a maximum – level of protection. These protections are universal: a child is entitled to good healthcare, primary education, an adequate standard of living, and protection from dangerous work whether they live in Tooting, Tokyo, Tel Aviv or Tulkarem.

Yet despite goodwill towards the enshrinement and application of these Rights, abuses do occur. Whilst many will find the wrongful treatment of adults objectionable, most will agree that the violation of the UNCRC is abhorrent and simply inexcusable. Sadly, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, hundreds of Palestinian children (on a conservative estimate) suffer abuse every year and have their rights violated.

A report from “*Defence for Children International*” into Palestinian child prisoners, entitled “Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children held in military detention”, was released earlier this year; it does not make for easy reading. It details how Palestinian children, living under Israeli military law in the West Bank, are regularly arrested during the night and taken – alone – to a unspecified location for questioning. Here, handcuffed and blindfolded, they are questioned without a parent or legal representative present. Through verbal abuse, and threats of physical violence, the children often agree to sign a ‘confession’ written in Hebrew - a language they do not understand. In most cases, their ‘confessed’ crime is throwing stones.

If we believe children should be entitled to a childhood, then we must act to stop the blurring of the lines between childhood and adulthood in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Pressure should be applied by all governments that believe in the UNCRC.

Whilst throwing stones is not something many of us would condone, even if at provocative settlers or soldiers demolishing your home or confiscating your family land, few of us would think this is something that warrants a custodial sentence, especially for a child. However, in the West Bank, Israeli Military Order 1651 states that “*Throwing an object,*

including a stone, at a person or property, with the intent to harm the person or property, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years’ imprisonment” and “Throwing an object, including a stone, at a moving vehicle, with the intent to harm it or the person travelling in it, carries a maximum penalty of 20 years’ imprisonment” – these laws apply to both adults and children.

The same Military Order issues the following sentencing guidelines for children: 12 and 13 year olds have their sentences capped at a maximum of six months’ imprisonment, for 14

and 15 year olds their sentences are a maximum 12 months' imprisonment unless the offence carries a maximum penalty of five years or more, and you are classified (and therefore tried, and can be convicted) as an adult from the age of 16 (this is in direct contravention to the UNCRC, which defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18). Whilst the sentencing of children found guilty of throwing stones is lighter than that of adults, it still appears to be wholly disproportionate to the crime.

The Israeli authorities might claim that this sentencing is a variation on the 'broken window' theory but I found, during a recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, that most local people believed this to be counter-productive. Some felt the illegal detention or sentencing of children to months or years in prison for throwing stones would act as a deterrent, but it was quite clear others saw such actions as being more likely to contribute to the radicalisation of the child and their family, friends and neighbours.

Whilst the report by the Defence for Children International stresses that "no child should be prosecuted in military courts which lack comprehensive fair trial and juvenile justice standards", it does provide a list of simple and practical recommendations which would give Palestinian children at least some semblance of protection. These recommendations include:

- the ending of night-time arrests (except in the most extreme of circumstances),
- the prohibiting of single plastic hand ties and blindfolds,
- the presence of a parent – and access to a lawyer – before and during all interrogation sessions,
- the recording of all interrogation,
- the exclusion of all evidence collected as a result of torture, and
- the full investigation into all credible reports of torture and ill-treatment perpetrated by Israeli military representatives.

The Defence for Children International report is not the only one to address this subject matter. Earlier this year, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office funded a delegation of nine lawyers from the fields of human rights, crime and child welfare (including the former Attorney General Rt Hon Baroness Scotland QC and

former Lord Justice the Rt Hon Sir Stephen Sedley) to visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to assess the treatment of Palestinian children under Israeli military law.

The final report, entitled “*Children in Military Custody* “ made for shocking reading. Looking at their findings on proportionality, the report explains that despite a request for evidence of the injuries or damage caused by stone throwing, they received very little: “*the evidence was limited to one stone-throwing incident in September 2011 which caused the death of an adult and a child, and sight of a photograph of a man with fairly severe facial injuries. The trial was pending and it was not clear if the accused was a child*”.

The report concluded that:

“Israel is in breach of articles 2 (discrimination), 3 (child’s best interests), 37(b) (premature resort to detention), (c) (non-separation from adults) and (d) (prompt access to lawyers) and 40 (use of shackles) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” in addition to a number of other articles, and conventions, which the Israeli government might have breached.

It further noted concerns that the military laws are only published in Hebrew, and that a military prosecutor viewed every Palestinian as a “*potential terrorist*” – both of which contribute to the gaps “*between deficient current practice and the best interests of Palestinian children*”.

Both reports are very troubling and should underscore the need for urgent action to be taken. By adopting the measures recommended in the reports by both the Defence for Children International and the Children in Military Custody, the Israeli government would not only be showing that they support the rights of children, but they would also be withdrawing a very powerful tool from those who look to radicalise people against them.

No one should underestimate the complexity of the issues facing the governments and peoples of the Middle East, but the international community cannot sit quietly by and allow the continued contravention of the UNCRC. If we believe children should be entitled to a childhood, then we must act to stop the blurring of the lines between childhood and adulthood in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Pressure should be applied by all governments that believe in the UNCRC. It does not matter whether one sees themselves as a friend of Palestine, a friend of Israel or a friend of both, we must move beyond rhetoric and repeated condemnations and take action.

7. Towards a new British Middle East policy

Chris Doyle

The Peace process has failed and Palestine has little if any influence with Israel. There needs to be a new approach to the British policy in the Middle East one that does not keep returning to the usual condemnation each time human rights are violated in Palestine. It time for the E3 of Britain, France and Germany to deliver a strong united message. This has worked before. Britain should lead the call for a regional solution if not the British support for the 'Arab Spring' can only look half genuine.

The first step for a new British Middle East policy is to realise certain key changes that have affected the region. The peace process has failed, no longer exists and the two-state solution, if not dead, is in a coma. Both US and EU influence has declined, whilst regional powers and Arab public opinion are increasingly powerful forces. Above all, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is just one of a whole series of simultaneous conflicts that blight the region so the stakes have never been higher.

With the Labour Party currently undertaking a major policy review, now is the time for the Party to renew its energy and commitment to a peaceful and sustainable solution across a number of policy areas.

To hear talk of a peace process seems like being in a parallel universe. There are no negotiations, and those that did occur in the last ten years were largely exercises in time wasting. Palestinians were expected to negotiate over a cake as the other side was eating it. The Israeli government, the most pro-settler in its history, has felt under no pressure to move forward.

On the ground, Israel is in full control. It has both the West Bank and Gaza Strip closed off by a mixture of walls, fences, permit systems, checkpoints and other obstacles as it expands its occupation. For most Israelis, as one senior British official admitted to the author, the issue of the Palestinians may not even rank in their top three concerns. Israelis go about their daily

lives with no interaction with Palestinians. Settlers travel to and from their ever-expanding illegal settlements on their own fast road network commuting to Tel Aviv and elsewhere in Israel oblivious of the Palestinian plight. There seems little concern or awareness that Palestinians live in overcrowded, disconnected resource-poor cities under Israeli military law.

Many Palestinians ask, 'how can we get the Israelis to take note of us? How can we stop this regional superpower, backed unequivocally by the US, from continuing the occupation but also effectively annexing 60 per cent of the West Bank?' Is there anything the Palestinians can offer as an incentive to an Israeli leader to make a deal?

Arabs argue that the Palestinians are just as much deserving of their freedom and rights as Egyptians, Tunisians and Libyans. Why should Palestinians have to ensure occupation, dispossession and human rights abuses? Did they not deserve a state?

The Palestinians have few cards to play. Nearly all know there is no military option even within Hamas. Some are trying non-violent protest but it has limitations. Legal routes are long and costly. In the case of the Wall, the Palestinians won the legal argument at the International Court of Justice but Israel just continued. The thinking had been

that the Americans would deliver Israel. Yet 21 years after the Madrid peace process began this has not materialised.

The US primacy is not challenged. Israeli violations of international law are met with pro-forma condemnations that the Israeli government knows it can ignore. In 2011 alone, British Foreign Office ministers condemned settlement construction 20 times all to no avail.

Britain should be concerned. A long-term absence of viable negotiations and the diminishing chances for a solution means that this might be the lull before the storm. There are numerous potential triggers for a conflict, which would damage British security, energy and trading interests. A leading Palestinian lamented, "We are sitting on top of a volcano. It is a question of when not if."

But if the peace process is non-existent and conflict imminent, which international actors might be able to address this? The US and Israel have ensured that the United Nations is sidelined. The US has lost influence and major regional powers such as Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are increasingly acting independently of Washington. The EU appears irrelevant politically. They are payers not players. EU impotence is self-inflicted. Although the EU is Israel's largest trading partner and the major funder of the Palestinian Authority, the EU is not prepared to use these levers when dealing with Israel. With 27 states of differing views and positions, one can no longer expect a robust EU Middle East policy.

Serious consideration must be given to using the so-called E3 of Britain, France and Germany to deliver a strong united message and a bold new approach. This actually made an impact in Netanyahu's first term as Israeli Prime Minister in the 1990s. Even here, Germany shies away from meaningful action.

Britain should push for disbanding the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia). It has a negative effect by handcuffing international actors to the lowest common denominator position, that of the United States. If the Quartet does have to be kept, it should be made clear that membership does not preclude individual states pursuing bold diplomatic moves to resolve the crisis, even if others disagreed.

This leaves the Arab world itself as a potential actor. Palestinians have no means to bring the Israelis into serious negotiations, but perhaps the prospect of a major regional deal might. The Israeli public yearns for regional acceptance, a day when there are no Hizbollah rockets parked on its northern borders, when they can start trading with the Gulf, visit Damascus and feel part of the region. The Arab peace plan of 2002 that envisioned a full withdrawal from occupied territory for full peace is the blueprint, but one that needs to be pushed. It may lead to a cold deal but one that could be built on. A genuine viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital would be part of this broad settlement.

An ambitious British government could make this a pillar of a new bold transformational approach to the entire region. Britain could lead the call for this regional solution as the central plank to resolving the wider regional challenges. It would highlight the desirability of the region having the leading role in facing its challenges, with support from international actors.

Britain would initiate a new relationship with the peoples of the region not just the governments, where it supports popular aspirations for freedom, dignity and human rights. Its position on Israel-Palestine would be based on this approach. Arabs argue that the Palestinians are just as much deserving of their freedom and rights as Egyptians, Tunisians and Libyans. Why should Palestinians have to ensure occupation, dispossession and human rights abuses? Did they not deserve a state? There was anger that the US and Britain both opposed the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations in September 2011.

In short, British support for the 'Arab Spring' can only look half genuine if it supports Palestinian rights as well as Egyptian, Tunisian and Libyan rights. Palestinians want an end to the regime of occupation that blights their lives. Such support would help limit the contradictions and double standards that has so weakened Britain's standing and had led to the US having less influence in the Middle East than ever before. It would support freedoms for all peoples of the region not just where it was convenient.

Can this work? Public opinion in the Arab World had become a major player and every regime will from now on have to pay careful attention. It will increasingly dictate Arab relationships with Israel. The elected government in Egypt is already reflecting its electorate's views on the Palestinian situation and cooling relations with Israel.

But also public opinion will define Arab relations with the West including the UK. Arabs are demanding that the West finally back their aspirations and defend their rights. They have seen foreign powers help bring Dictators to power, prop them up and also topple populist national leaders such as Mossadegh in Iran. This approach will not survive the changes in the region. Britain and other states have a choice – either start backing Arab rights or see their interests and influence decline accordingly.

It would mean that the Britain would open links parties with whom it disagrees – including Hamas and Hizbollah. Britain still talks to Iran, many countries that do not recognise Israel. It has relations with the Muslim Brotherhood governments in Egypt and Tunisia so why not the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas. Talking to Hamas would not need to be at Ministerial level but a lower official level until Hamas had addressed specific concerns primarily the use of violence against civilians.

Israel would not lose out in this. A regional deal should be a win-win scenario for all sides. A continued lack of peace imperils Israel's security as well as others. It further radicalises regional politics and gives opportunities for radical Islamists to prosper.

Courage is needed. At times it feels that too many on all sides are scared of peace. There are too few international statesman articulating the compelling case for a real peace, what it could mean for both peoples, their lives, their economies, their security and their futures. For Israel, a regional deal would isolate Iran and prevent Tehran from falsely promoting itself as the champion of the Palestinian cause.

Britain has a chance to take a leadership role based on our core values. This will give us strength and real influence. If we want to salvage chances for peace in the region, we need to act now and with real urgency.

8. A focus on the future

Lisa Nandy MP

The current situation is deteriorating and the hope of a solution in future is being seriously undermined by the treatment of the next generation. With the Labour Party currently undertaking a major policy review, now is the time for the Party to renew its energy and commitment to a peaceful and sustainable solution across a number of policy areas. Particular concerns are ensuring Israel complies with its International Human Rights Law obligations and addressing the harmful impact on local people that non-Palestinian businesses operating in the West Bank have, some of whom are based in the UK.

Last year, visiting the West Bank for the first time, I was forced to conclude that achieving a two-state solution, so vital for the future of both Israelis and Palestinians, is becoming increasingly unlikely. Not only was it clear that the settlements that are springing up in Palestinian territory make a two-state solution increasingly unviable, but the impact of the wall and demolition of Palestinian schools and homes are worsening relations still further.

What worried me most was the impact of the current situation on Palestinian children. As someone who had worked with migrant children in the UK, many of whom were destitute or seriously traumatised by immigration detention; I thought I had seen it all. But in the West Bank what was so striking was that the only time Palestinian children met Israelis was at checkpoints, in the Israeli military courts or other, similarly hostile situations. We saw children harassed, denied freedom, witnessing their parents being searched and humiliated and pushed through a military court system without any understanding of what was happening, and without any obvious attempt at justice being served.

It was clear that not only is the current situation deteriorating, but the hope of a solution in future is being seriously undermined by the treatment of the next generation.

With the Labour Party currently undertaking a major policy review, now is the time for the Party to renew its energy and commitment to a peaceful and sustainable solution across a number of policy areas.

Firstly, it was clear that progress, where it exists, is largely coming from the people of Israel and Palestine themselves. Yet opportunities for them to meet are rare. On a visit to the military courts we met Israeli befriending groups who give up their time voluntarily to support Palestinian children and their families. That contact is invaluable and must be encouraged, supported and upheld internationally. Similarly, the British Ambassador to Israel is working hard to build links between scientists, musicians and others and the Labour Party must both support and promote these programmes. Solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians seeking a solution is the natural approach for the Party.

Secondly, and almost without saying, pressure on the American Government is critical. We must not shy away from ensuring that Israel is held to the standards it, itself, has signed up to. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is one such example. Israel is a signatory to the UNCRC, a flagship set of standards for the treatment of children, yet on our visit to the West Bank we saw it routinely undermined or ignored, including the right to education, provisions prohibiting detention, separation from parents, and protection from all forms of violence. A new report called; Children in Military Custody (which was coauthored by Baroness Patricia Scotland of Asthal QC) found that Israel was in regular breach of the UNCRC on at least six counts and of the Fourth Geneva Convention on at least two and calls on the UK government and EU to apply pressure on Israel to comply with international law on issues such as shackling children. This will, of course, rely on Palestine also holding itself to those standards. In a meeting with NGOs in the West Bank I was concerned to hear that suspected teenage Hamas supporters were also subjected to treatment that falls well short of the UNCRC, something the Palestinian Prime Minister rightly assured us he was keen to take seriously.

Thirdly, while we were in the West Bank we saw businesses operating, some of them based in the UK, where their actions were having a harmful impact on the local population. For example, in the Jordan valley Israeli produce is exported with no regard for the fact that water had been siphoned away from Palestinian villages to produce it. Other examples include Veolia, which holds a number of UK procurement contracts and manages a tram that runs through the Occupied territories without stops for Palestinians to get on and Eden Springs, a water company that siphons water from the illegally occupied Golan Heights yet is on the list of approved suppliers for the Scottish and Westminster Governments.

As part of a commitment to responsible capitalism the Party should press for better labeling of goods from occupied territories in the West Bank so that consumers can make informed choices. At present, many retailers choose to simply label products with 'West Bank', meaning that many consumers believe they are buying from Palestinian-owned farms when they have been produced by Israeli-owned farms in Palestine. And, consistent with the business and human rights principles, drawn up by Professor John Ruggie and unanimously endorsed by the UN, we should also ensure that public contracts are awarded to firms who are driving up standards of ethical behaviour, not to companies that are tacitly or explicitly complicit in harm either in the UK or overseas. Without this action, there is no level playing field for companies who are trying to do the right thing. A future Labour Government should tilt the playing field back in their favour.

pressure on the American Government is critical. We must not shy away from ensuring that Israel is held to the standards it, itself, has signed up to.

9. Is Time Running Out for the Two State Solution?

Ian Lucas MP

Although both parties say they want a two state solution, deadlock continues chiefly due to deep distrust. What is needed now is leadership from both the Israeli and Palestinian Governments that makes clear the commitment of both parties to an agreed two state solution. For the Palestinian Authority, this means, for example, an open commitment to Israel's existence and right to exist. For Israel, this means an open commitment to allow the West Bank to function, of itself, as a self-contained nation. This means difficult steps by both Governments that will be unpopular within some parts of their own constituencies however is crucial to the realisation of the two state solution.

"A one state solution would be a disaster for Israel." The words cut through the conversation. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official was quite clear. His argument was straightforward: the figures in the population meant that, sometime soon, the Israeli population would be outnumbered by the Arab and Palestinian occupants of Israel and the West Bank. Then, Israel would lose political control of the area.

The Palestinian Authority is clear too. It wants an independent, viable Palestinian state alongside Israel and does not press for a one state solution.

The central puzzle in the Middle East Peace Process is, therefore, why, when both parties say they want a two state solution, does deadlock continue?

I have met many times over the last year with representatives of the Israeli Government and of the Palestinian Authority. Many of them have been striving for a solution to conflict in Israel and the Middle East for decades. We should not forget that progress has been made. Most fundamentally, Israel and Fatah, the dominant political force in the West Bank, accept that the heart of a solution lies in two states existing next to each other, in peace

and security. The task that has frustrated has been the inability to translate that central point of agreement into a workable settlement.

The common perception is that prospects of agreement between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority are lessening, day-by-day. On the West Bank, Israeli settlements continue to expand and demolition of Palestinian homes continues. Each case changes the starting point for negotiations between the parties on land swaps and makes the ultimate negotiations more difficult.

At the heart of that failure is, I believe, a profound distrust between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This distrust continues despite a recent improvement in many day-to-day relationships between administrative authorities

in Israel and the West Bank.

On the West Bank, Israeli settlements continue to expand and demolition of Palestinian homes continues. Each case changes the starting point for negotiations between the parties on land swaps and makes the ultimate negotiations more difficult.

Economic growth has taken place in the West Bank; security has improved with perceptions of threats to Israel from the West Bank reduced. But the incremental development of working relationships between the two Governments, side by side, though necessary, is not sufficient.

What I believe is needed now is leadership from the two Governments which, against a backcloth of profound change in the Middle East, makes clear the commitment of both to an agreed two state solution: one which recognizes Israel's right to exist and to develop and which also allows the West Bank to function, of itself, as a self-contained nation.

This means difficult steps by both Governments that will be unpopular within some parts of their own constituencies. For the Palestinian Authority, this means, for example, an open commitment to Israel's existence and, not just acceptance, but defence of Israel's position as a nation. This is of profound importance to the people of Israel, who continue to feel isolated and threatened in a tense Middle East. The violent chaos in Syria is taking place on Israel's border and Iran is making clear

its interest in the eventual outcome of Syria's civil war. Progress on Iranian non-proliferation is difficult to see and Iran continues to make spoken threats against Israel. When holocaust deniers speak out, they should be condemned. Ban Ki Moon did so, on behalf of the United Nations, to the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran. There is no reason why the Palestinian Authority cannot do the same.

For Israel, it means, for example, addressing the crucial issue of expansion of settlements in the West Bank. This issue not only makes development more difficult. It is also a daily reminder to the Palestinian Authority of its inequality in its relationship with Israel, one that is deeply resented. Israeli security forces activity in the West Bank occurs in a way that would never be countenanced if carried out by the Palestinian Authority within the borders of Israel. Israel cannot ignore the centrality of this issue if a real peace process is to be established.

Statements and actions in these areas, would not, of themselves, transform relationships between Israel and the Palestinian Authority but they would be signals of a mutual respect which is a precondition of effective negotiations.

The broader Middle East is, of course, changing profoundly. New democratic Governments in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco have transformed their governmental approaches to, not just the Middle East Peace Process, but wider diplomatic relations in the Middle East. President Morsi's speech in Tehran indicates a willingness to speak out on issues of democratic principle, which changes the dynamics of diplomatic discourse in the Middle East.

At present, Israel is disturbed, not invigorated, by the pace of change in the Middle East. It remains deeply and justifiably worried by the nuclear ambitions of Iran coupled, as they are, with continued, unacceptable rhetoric against Israel by Iran's leaders.

There is an opportunity here. Israel's right to exist and security must be accepted, not just by the Palestinian Authority, but across a changed Middle East. The Palestinian Authority can use its relationships with the new governments in countries like Egypt to stress the importance of acceptance of Israel. Such steps would go some way to allaying Israel's current concerns

at changes in the Middle East and help persuade Israel of the need for change in its approach to issues like settlements and detention of suspects in the West Bank.

Cumulatively, these steps could begin to build trust between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, the trust which is necessary to create the atmosphere for successful negotiations to achieve what both parties say they want: two states, living side-by-side, in peace and security.

10. Palestinian children have a right to an Education

Margaret Curran MP

Perhaps lesser known in the conflict, are the day to day struggles that ordinary Palestinian families endure as they attempt to go about their lives while jostling with arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement. These restrictions affect work, health and education. Now is the time for the international community to seek a real and lasting peace in the Middle East. Rallying around the 'right to education' agenda provides a means of raising global awareness of broader Palestinian issues.

Last year I joined a Parliamentary delegation on a visit to the West Bank, to see for myself the lives of those living in Palestine.

Like many of us, prior to my visit I had watched from a distance the violence, upheaval and political positioning aired across our TV screens from the comfort of home, but nothing had quite prepared me for when I stepped off the plane and witnessed at first hand the day-to-day grind of life for ordinary Palestinians.

Within just hours of my trip, it became abundantly clear that Palestinians existed in increasingly unbearable living conditions.

The statistics speak for themselves; the number of settlers inside the West Bank has now surpassed 500,000, spread out across 149 settlements and 100 so-called unauthorised outposts. As of October 2010, there were 99 fixed checkpoints in the West Bank. According to the UN, there are almost five million registered refugees in Gaza and the West Bank, while the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that in 2010 there was an average of 35 incidents of settler violence a month.

The wall, the settlements, checkpoints and daily human rights violations are having a profound impact on Palestinians. Poverty levels are going up, restricting economic development and putting an abrupt halt to Palestinians eager to lead normal lives.

But what is perhaps less well known, are the day to day struggles that ordinary Palestinian families endure as they attempt to go about their normal lives while jostling with the arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement.

The enforced permit system in place for Palestinians is a prime example of a barrier erected by the Israeli state adding restrictions on freedom of movement, serving to undermine any normality to family life. For example, one woman I met was married to a Palestinian man with a Jerusalem ID but she was unable to go back to the West Bank and visit her family as she would not be allowed to return without a Jerusalem ID of her own.

Her predicament is not an anomaly; many Palestinian women have been unable to visit their family and extended family for years due to not having the correct permit. Administrative rules on travel prevent thousands of Palestinian families from living together, resulting in many children growing up without a father figure and the economic burden falling entirely on to the shoulders of the mother.

Palestine has a growing population, with over 50 percent of its people aged below 18. It is a place of young, vibrant teenagers, proud of their heritage but eager to secure a peaceful and prosperous future. Access to a good education is paramount to achieving this goal.

As article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spells out, everyone has a right to education that is free and accessible on the basis of merit.

However, in certain parts of Palestine, education is only *accessible* on the basis of luck and good fortune.

On my visit I spoke to students from Gaza that could not attend university in the West Bank due to physical restrictions blocking the roads that prevented them reaching their classrooms and lecture theatres. Similarly, I heard from students in Jerusalem and the West Bank that they were routinely late for class or simply unable to get to university in the first place due to being held up for long periods of time at checkpoints.

On certain days it may take 30 minutes to pass through a checkpoint, while at other times it can take three to four hours if the guards should decide to hold you back to check over your papers in detail.

Some days you may not get across at all.

Sadly, it is all too common for people in Palestine to lose their jobs after failing to show up for work, to regularly miss hospital appointments and of course, to miss classes at school and university.

As the wall expands, this situation is destined to get worse.

For example, in a small town called al-Walajeh in western Bethlehem, the wall encircles the entire village and when it has been completed, it is feared that all 2,300 villagers will only be able to enter and leave their homes through just one operational checkpoint.

The wall, the settlements, checkpoints and daily human rights violations are having a profound impact on Palestinians. Poverty levels are going up, restricting economic development and putting an abrupt halt to Palestinians eager to lead normal lives.

It is hard to escape the fact that this part of the wall – as in others – has been built with scant consideration given to the livelihoods of those it encases. It seems impossible to imagine how the young people of al-Walajeh will juggle school, university and family life by living in a small village completely closed off from the surrounding neighbourhoods by stone.

However, restrictions on freedom of movements have not stopped Palestinians from seeking out an education. The Palestinians I met all shared a passion for learning, many viewing it as a means to break out of the cycle of poverty and make a better life for themselves and their families.

For Palestinian girls in particular, a good education can enable them to go on to get a decent job in order to bolster their family income and serve as an insurance policy in case of the loss of a male breadwinner in the household – a situation all too common in violent clashes at checkpoints.

Encouragingly, a record number of Palestinian children are enrolling in secondary and post-secondary education. Interestingly, almost 60 percent of pupils at schools in the West Bank are female and over 50 percent of students at Birzeit University are women.

But again, the reality is more complex than these initial encouraging statistics suggest. In the case of Birzeit, the University has had to provide special dormitories for students that have no choice but to stay on campus otherwise forfeit their place if they are unable to travel to and from the University due to the checkpoints in the West Bank.

Moreover, many Palestinian women are actively discouraged by family members from travelling to school and University altogether for fear of daughters being harassed or detained at checkpoints while it is often the case that many young Palestinians are simply unable to afford the multiple taxi journeys they have to undertake in order to get from checkpoint to checkpoint en route to class.

At the end of January 2012, exploratory talks between the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli PM on resuming full peace negotiations ended in failure. Indeed talks between the two sides have repeatedly stalled since late 2010.

I believe it is now time for the international community to seek a real and lasting peace in the Middle East to rally around the '*right to education*' agenda as a means of raising awareness of the broader Palestinian issue amongst the public and politicians both in the Middle East and around the world.

Placing the hopes and aspirations of young Palestinians at the forefront of the minds of politicians provides us with the opportunity to work towards a peace settlement that has access to education, economic success and social wellbeing at its heart.

As article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights reminds us all, education is a means by which we can promote "*understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.*" Nowhere is this principle more important than when securing peace and a prosperous future for the people of Palestine.

Synopsis

The wall, the settlements, checkpoints and daily human rights violations are having a profound impact on Palestinians. Poverty levels are going up. Economic development is restricted. Arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement affect access to education, work, health, and many other aspects of daily life. Administrative rules on travel prevent thousands of Palestinian families from living together. Palestinian children are prosecuted in violation of International Human Rights Law. The current situation is deteriorating and the hope of a solution in future is being seriously undermined by the treatment of the next generation. Urgent action is needed now.

Although both parties say they want a two state solution, deadlock continues chiefly due to distrust of the other government. What is needed now is leadership from both Governments and the international community as the solution must in the end be political, and the mechanism has to be dialogue and negotiations. Efforts and initiatives have come and gone, and violence has returned to fill the vacuum.

As a party, we should condemn any act of violence by any side and strongly stand up for any breach of humanitarian law no matter the country and no matter the leader. But too often in the past we have been inconsistent instead choosing political expediency over ethics. But it is this strong sense of fairness and ethics that is the moral fabric which binds the Labour party together it is hoped that the key messages in this booklet will help pave the way for a greater commitment to Palestine in the next Labour Party Manifesto.

About Labour Friends of Palestine

Achieving justice for the Palestinians remains one of the most pressing international issues of our time. LFPME supports a viable two state solution that delivers justice and freedom for the Palestinian people as called for by the overwhelming international consensus and enshrined under international law and in UN resolutions.

Our work supports and complements the humanitarian effort for Palestine by raising the key issues, detrimental to realisation of peace in the Middle East, at the highest political levels in the UK and Europe.

LFPME strives to be a proactive voluntary group in an environment long occupied and dominated by the pro-Israeli lobby.

Labour Friends of Palestine & The Middle East
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