**Cross Party Group on Palestine/Israel**

**Upholding International Law, advocating Equal Rights and Palestinian national self-determination in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

**2021 Action Plan**

**Goal**

Build broad, Cross-Party support in Parliament for British Government action to advance equal rights between Israelis and Palestinians, contributing to ending the Occupation of 1967. There is urgency: Israel’s political leadership is opposed to (and systematically undermining) the two-state paradigm, which remains U.K., EU and (once more) US policy.

**Why do BrItish policy and practice matter?**

As the former Mandate Power and a Security Council (UNSC) permanent member charged with upholding UN Resolutions, especially binding UNSC resolutions, the U.K. has a particular responsibility to advance the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. While President Trump was in office, U.K. policy was an uneasy mix of principle and expediency. A fair-to-generous interpretation would be that “the line was held”. The Biden era offers scope for the U.K. to work with France and Germany to help the US carry the weight of expectation of change towards equality. But our Government has other priorities, and anyway does not want to lead on Israel/Palestine. HMG will consult the US, France and Germany, and will not act alone.

**Israeli elections and Palestinian postponement**

On 23 March Israel voted for the 4th time in 2 years. The conflict was a low priority for electors, who were told it could be managed, and Israeli security maintained, without needing to improve Palestinian lives in the West Bank or blockaded Gaza. On 22 May Palestinians will not vote in Parliamentary elections for the first time in 15 years. Those elections still need to happen – though prospects now are very poor – and the results need to be accepted by HM Government.

**Recognition by HM Government of the state of Palestine**

Recognition is a core premise of the Cross-Party Group. It should remain so, but recognition is unlikely under this Government. It should remain an aim because it matters: cf the German Government’s failed argument to the ICC that Palestine is not a state, and our PM’s 9 April assertion to CFI that Palestine is not a state. Recognition is possible, but prospects for an end to the Israeli occupation and the exercise of the Palestinian right to national self-determination are remote. It is not for us, the British, to declare the two-state solution dead. The two-state solution will remain U.K. Government policy for the foreseeable future, so U.K. recognition will long be an option. Pressing for equal rights now between the two peoples is logical and right. As is challenging blatant discrimination.

**Joe Biden**

Is committed to two states and opposed to settlements. Trump was neither. But Biden will not prioritise this conflict, and needs encouragement to focus on it. Israel’s well-being is a US domestic political issue. Biden has Israel’s back, and opposed the ICC investigation before Mr Johnson did. Biden is restoring some limited US funding for UNRWA, and for the Palestinian Authority.

**European Parliamentarians for Israeli-Palestinian Equality (EPIPE)**

Network convened by Julie Elliott MP, co chair of the Britain/Palestine APPG**.** 14 countries and the European Parliament represented. Next meeting 28 May at 10.00. Please attend if possible! It is an opportunity to identify issues of mutual interest to raise in national Parliaments / the EP. Further down the line, contact with US influencers and politicians is possible.

**Outline CPG Action Plan in 2021**

1. Focus on the settlement project, house demolitions, settler violence: de facto annexation is just as bad as de jure... Argue for consequences, not just Government condemnation. Evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem a rallying point – biggest change there since 1967. Differentiation (UNSCR 2334) between Green Line Israel and the state-sponsored illegal settlement project.
2. Israeli elections on 23 March did not change conditions in which Palestinians live. Palestinian elections postponed – to our dismay. We should press for a new date, and for the right of Jerusalemite Palestinians to vote (as Mr Raab has advocated).
3. UNRWA U.K. funding – not to go the way of Yemen, and not to hide behind the US.
4. Rule of law: international law absent in OPT. Contrast HMG verbal support for International Humanitarian Law with lack of bite. Press HMG to voice unequivocal support for the ICC and (from June) the new Prosecutor General, Briton Karim Khan QC. Support the 25/26 May Balfour Project virtual conference- “Israel-Palestine: in search of the rule of law” and its 26 May Parliamentary panel.
5. Highlight plight of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, citing Save the Children and War on Want reports.
6. Continue to argue for HMG to recognise Palestine now, along 1967 lines. Our Government’s argument that recognition will not end the Occupation is illogical – nobody is saying that it will. Only Israel will end its Occupation, so HMG is effectively giving Israel a veto over U.K. recognition.
7. Seek common ground within EPIPE and – in due time – with Democrats in US Congress, with aim of concerted campaigns/lobbying. Strengthening connectivity in Europe the first priority.

12 May 2021