



# The New Labour Government's Ties with Israel

July 2024



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**“Keir Starmer is a completely uncritical supporter of Israel. He has described himself as an unconditional Zionist. He denies that Israel is an apartheid state and he’s in favour of continuing the British supply of arms to Israel despite the war crimes it is committing daily in Gaza.”**

**Avi Shlaim**

Israeli-British historian<sup>1</sup>



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# Overview of Labour's Stance on Israel's Genocide



## 01

# Overview of Labour's Stance on Israel's Genocide

Since the beginning of Israel's genocide, the Labour Party branches have been banned from discussing what is happening in Gaza.<sup>2</sup>

At the Labour Party's annual conference in October 2023, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign was banned from calling Israel an apartheid state in its leaflets.<sup>3</sup>

Labour has systematically purged and clamped down upon members speaking out in support of Palestine since the genocide began, causing over 30 Labour councillors to resign as a result of this "draconian, immoral ban on solidarity" with the Palestinian people.<sup>4</sup>

In January 2024, during the International Court of Justice (ICJ) case over Israel's genocide in Gaza, several Labour MPs visited Israel in a 'show of solidarity'.<sup>5</sup>

The delegation met Israeli president Isaac Herzog, who has been named in the ICJ's genocide case against Israel for his statements about Palestinians, which included suggesting that: "it's an entire nation out there that is responsible [for 7 October]. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware [or] not involved. It's absolutely not true... and we will fight until we break their backbone". Herzog also stated: "we will uproot evil so that there will be good for the entire region and the world" and handwrote messages on Israeli bombs being dropped on Gaza.<sup>6</sup>

In the same month, Labour suspended MP Kate Osamor for stating that Israel's bombardment of Gaza should be remembered as a genocide in a social media post about Holocaust Memorial Day.<sup>7</sup>

Labour's 2024 manifesto failed to immediately recognise Palestinian statehood, which had been pledged by former Labour leaders Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn.<sup>8</sup>

Although Labour's manifesto calls for an "immediate ceasefire" in Gaza, Starmer's calls for a ceasefire are contingent on the release of Israeli hostages, with no mention of Palestinian prisoners.<sup>9</sup>

Labour's manifesto also does not make any pledges to suspend arms sales to Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Labour appointed Luke Akehurst, head of the pro-Israel lobby group *We Believe in Israel* to run as an MP in a Labour safe seat, North Durham.<sup>11</sup>

Despite Labour's manifesto calling for upholding "international law" in Gaza,<sup>12</sup> new Foreign Secretary David Lammy met with Benjamin Netanyahu in July 2024, who is the subject of an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant and directly responsible for Israel's ongoing genocide.<sup>13</sup> The image of the two politicians shaking hands could not be a clearer indication of Labour's ongoing complicity in Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people.

**“There has been no discernible difference between Conservative and Labour positions on Palestine, which have been characterised by a disregard for Palestinian life, the undermining of international law, and indifference to the sentiment of the British voting public. Both share responsibility for the unfolding genocide in Palestine. Palestine will be a litmus test, for the values of the next British government, and for humanity as a whole.”**

**Dr. Sara Husseini**  
Director of the British  
Palestinian Committee<sup>14</sup>



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# Keir Starmer's Complicity in Israel's Genocide





## 02

# Keir Starmer's Complicity in Israel's Genocide

After becoming leader of the Labour Party, Starmer stated: "I support Zionism without qualification".<sup>15</sup> He has since gone to great lengths to purge pro-Palestinian MPs and candidates from the party, most notably Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn, and prospective MP Faiza Shaheen.<sup>16</sup>

In November 2021, Starmer gave the keynote speech at Labour Friends of Israel's annual lunch, where he erased the history of the Nakba, by claiming that Israel's founders were "social democrats who made the desert flower".<sup>17</sup>

In the same speech, Starmer also said: "we oppose those who seek to undermine Israel's rumbustious democracy, independent judiciary, commitment to the rule of law, vibrant media, free trade unions and lively tradition of debate, dissent and disagreement".<sup>18</sup>

He also promised that "the Labour party does not and will not support BDS [boycott, divestment and sanctions]", which Starmer denounced as "counterproductive" and "wrong".<sup>19</sup>

In April 2022, when Starmer was asked whether he agrees with Amnesty International's report that concluded Israel is an apartheid state, he responded by categorically rejecting it.<sup>20</sup>

In October 2023, Labour Friends of Israel thanked Starmer for making Labour "free of the stain of antisemitism and anti-Zionism".<sup>21</sup> Starmer stated that Labour Friends of Israel continues to be "an invaluable source of energy and ideas for me and my team".<sup>22</sup>

On 11 October 2023, Starmer stated during an LBC interview that Israel "had the right" to besiege Gaza and cut off water and power to its 2 million civilians, and falsely claimed that Israel has the "right to defend herself" in occupied Palestinian territory.<sup>23</sup> This justified collective punishment, a war crime under Article 33 of the Geneva Convention and gave a green light for Israel's ongoing genocide.<sup>24</sup>

In November 2023, Starmer rejected calls for a ceasefire, instead advocating for a temporary 'humanitarian pause' in Israel's attacks.<sup>25</sup> Seemingly unconcerned about the Palestinian death toll, Starmer argued that a ceasefire would strengthen Hamas.<sup>26</sup>

Starmer has also been silent regarding the UK's obligation under international law to arrest Israeli officials.<sup>27</sup>



“The Labour party does not and will not support BDS.”

**Kier Starmer**

2021 Labour Friends of Israel Annual Lunch<sup>28</sup>



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# The Labour Cabinet's Complicity in Israel's Genocide



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# The Labour Cabinet’s Complicity in Israel’s Genocide

Pro-Israel lobbyists have donated over £300,000 to Labour’s cabinet, funding 13 out of Labour’s 25 cabinet members:<sup>29</sup>



**Angela Rayner**

Deputy Prime Minister

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £25,000<sup>30</sup>



**Bridget Phillipson**

Education Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £60,000<sup>37</sup>



**David Lammy**

Foreign Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £32,640<sup>31</sup>

- Accepted money from Labour Friends of Israel to visit Israel in July 2022<sup>32</sup>



**Lisa Nandy**

Culture Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £52,000<sup>38</sup>



**Rachel Reeves**

Chancellor

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £37,710<sup>33</sup>

- Accepted money from Labour Friends of Israel to visit Israel<sup>34</sup>
- Vice-chair of Labour Friends of Israel<sup>35</sup>



**Jonathan Reynolds**

Trade Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £2,950<sup>39</sup>

- Vice-chair of Labour Friends of Israel<sup>40</sup>
- Accepted money from Labour Friends of Israel to visit Israel<sup>42</sup>



**Yvette Cooper**

Home Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £5,000<sup>36</sup>



**Wes Streeting**

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £29,160<sup>43</sup>

- Accepted money from Labour Friends of Israel to visit Israel<sup>44</sup>
- Regularly meets with Labour Friends of Israel inside Parliament<sup>45</sup>

## The Labour Cabinet’s Complicity in Israel’s Genocide continued...



### Peter Kyle

Technology Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £1,400<sup>46</sup>



### Pat McFadden

Cabinet Office

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £1,575<sup>47</sup>

- Vice-chair of Labour Friends of Israel<sup>48</sup>



### Liz Kendall

Pensions Secretary

Total funds received from pro-Israel lobbyists: £2,500<sup>49</sup>



### Steve Reed

Environment Secretary

- In December 2020, Reed met with pro-Israel lobbyists to discuss Labour policy on the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement.<sup>51</sup>
- In the same meeting, Reed also pledged to promote the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s “working definition” of anti-Semitism, which is routinely weaponised against pro-Palestine supporters.<sup>52</sup>
- Reed also led “a campaign with Labour council leaders to oppose any attempts to boycott” Israel when he was leader of Lambeth council.<sup>53</sup>

**“British foreign policy is in hock to Israeli influence at the heart of our politics, and those in authority have ignored what is going on. For years the CFI [Conservative Friends of Israel] and LFI [Labour Friends of Israel] have worked with – even for – the Israeli embassy to promote Israeli policy and thwart UK government policy and the actions of ministers who try to defend Palestinian rights. This opaque funding and underhand conduct is a national disgrace and humiliation and must be stamped out.”**

**A former British minister in David Cameron’s cabinet, who wished to remain anonymous<sup>54</sup>**



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# Labour Friends of Israel



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# Labour Friends of Israel

LFI is one of Britain’s largest lobbying groups, yet it refuses to disclose its sources of income.<sup>55</sup> It’s believed that one funder includes pro-Israel British businessman Trevor Chinn, who has also funded Keir Starmer and dozens of other Labour MPs.<sup>56</sup>

The current Foreign Secretary, and all seven prior shadow foreign secretaries were members of LFI or financially supported by the pro-Israel lobby.<sup>57</sup>

Many of these funds are used to take Labour MPs on “fact-finding” missions to Israel, which LFI has spent over £150,000 on since 2002.<sup>58</sup> LFI has taken more Labour MPs on trips abroad than any other lobby group.<sup>59</sup>

LFI maintains close ties to the Israeli embassy in London, who they work with extensively behind closed doors.<sup>60</sup>

LFI led the Parliamentary campaign to persuade the UK government to fully proscribe Hezbollah and Hamas.<sup>61</sup>

LFI members fabricated incidents of antisemitism at the Labour Party Annual Conference in 2016, published these incidents in the press as evidence of antisemitism in Labour, and used these incidents to try to silence Labour Party members criticism of illegal Israeli settlements.<sup>62</sup>

The Chair of LFI, Steve McCabe, stated at the 2021 LFI Annual Lunch that: “anti-Zionist antisemitism, [is] an ideology formed in Stalin’s Russia [...] which mixes medieval tropes with perverse left-wing fantasies and results in no more than support for, and freedom to voice, the world’s oldest hatred”.<sup>63</sup>

Since the beginning of Israel’s genocide, LFI has opposed an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, remarking that “Israel is fighting Hamas, not the Palestinian people”.<sup>64</sup>



**“What you might say actually delegitimises that right of Israel, that basic right of Israel as a country to exist. That is not appropriate. Zionism, Zio, is not a term you should use, and that is in any Labour Party conversation.”**

**Mike Katz**

Vice Chairman of the Jewish Labour Movement, when leading a training session on ‘antisemitism’ at the 2016 annual Labour Party Conference<sup>65</sup>



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# Silencing of Pro-Palestinian Labour Candidates



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# Silencing of Pro-Palestinian Labour Candidates

Pro-Israel lobbyists conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism in order to silence pro-Palestinian Labour candidates.<sup>66</sup>

In particular, the so-called ‘antisemitism crisis’ under former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was intended to put an end to pro-Palestinian leadership within the party, and to purge pro-Palestinian Labour members and parliamentary candidates.<sup>67</sup>

Pro-Israel lobbyists within the Labour Party also secretly record any discussions or workshops of antisemitism and Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East sessions.<sup>68</sup>

The purpose of these recordings is to gain soundbites that can be taken out of context and publicised as incidents of antisemitism, in particular criticism and debate of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.<sup>69</sup>

One incident of covert recording took place during the 2016 Labour Annual Conference, when Jackie Walker, a pro-Palestinian member of Jewish Voice for Labour, and a Labour MP, was smeared as antisemitic (despite being Jewish herself) for criticising the IHRA definition of antisemitism in an antisemitism training session.<sup>70</sup>

Walker was expelled from the Labour Party due to this incident, and for suggesting that Holocaust Memorial Day should be “open to all peoples who’ve experienced holocaust”, because “in practice, it’s not actually circulated and advertised as such”.<sup>71</sup> In particular, Walker was referring to the African holocaust caused by the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>72</sup>

# Footnotes

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