

Labour & Palestine



Q and A to Accompany Peace & Justice for Palestine Model Motion

Palestine - What is behind Donald Trump's 'Deal of the Century'?

The leaked contents of Donald Trump's 'Deal of the Century' proposals – drawn up by a team led by his senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner – propose to 'resolve' the issue of Israel's illegal occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza by the creation of a 'New Palestine'.

The reality is there will be no Palestine under this plan. The land currently militarily occupied by Israel would be divided up. Israel could annex all the settlements and land it wants in the West Bank – including the Jordan valley - into a greater Israel. Palestinians living in this area would be accorded the second-class citizenship currently accorded to Palestinian citizens of Israel. Jordan would impose guardianship over the remaining parts of the West Bank, and Egypt would govern Gaza.

The launch of Trump's plan may be postponed due to the failure of Netanyahu to form a government, with a further Israeli general election due on September 17. However, the fundamental basis of the plan – to enshrine the denial of Palestinian rights and overturn international law – looks set to continue.

Why prioritise sending a motion on Palestine to Labour Conference?

We are conscious that under the new procedure for conference there will be lots of issues – domestic and international – competing to be submitted to conference by CLPs. It will undoubtedly be raised as to why Palestine should be an issue that is prioritised.

Last year, Palestine was discussed as a motion for the first time under the contemporary motion procedure as a response to events – particularly the killings in Gaza on the Right of Return March. Under the process this year, if Palestine is not submitted by at least one CLP, then it will not have the possibility of reaching the agenda for discussion. On the other hand, many of the other big issues important to members will be submitted by numerous CLPs and/or affiliates, and are therefore certain of discussion.

There is a particular reason why there needs to be a discussion this year, namely Donald Trump's proposed 'deal of the century'. On the back of recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and cutting of aid to UNRWA for Palestinian refugees, Trump is in the process of preparing to support Israel effectively kill off any prospects for peace. Palestine will literally be carved up and distributed in an imposed 'deal' above the heads of the Palestinians.

What is meant by the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip – the 'Occupied Palestinian Territories' - began in 1967. Multiple UN resolutions say there should be a Palestinian state, but Israel has never recognised a Palestinian state nor ever defined its own borders. Since 1967 Israeli authorities have denied that the Geneva Convention applies to its occupation and therefore it can annex territories under its military control. At other times the Conventions are used by Israel to justify treating Palestinians differently to Israeli citizens because they live outside of their sovereign territory.

What is happening to the land?

Territorial theft is transparent and what is happening isn't about occupying empty land but about destroying villages, houses, trees and farming land that have been Palestinian for generations. It is not just the land, but water and

resources are also being sequestered and pronounced to be under Israel's control. However, it is the settlements that represent a huge transgression of international law.

The Geneva Conventions state that an occupier should not move their own citizens to live in occupied areas as this breaks the law that the occupation of another territory should be temporary. Approaching a million Israeli citizens now live in settlements – not small encampments, but towns of thousands with their own roads and infrastructure.

Netanyahu has now said he would annex further West Bank settlements. Israeli political analyst Barak Ravid commented: "What Netanyahu saw is that after President Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights, he understood that he has the possibility now to do something similar in the West Bank."

The significance of Jerusalem

Jerusalem is important in three world faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Its holy sites are meant to be under the oversight of Jordan. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the US Embassy there tramples all over the historic compromise that would have seen East Jerusalem as capital of a Palestinian state. Traditionally the heart and soul of Palestine – its economy, religion and education – East Jerusalem is still predominantly Palestinian. Illegally annexed in 1980, Palestinians in Jerusalem are citizens of nowhere and are merely granted residents status.

In December 2017, Trump declared that the US would formally recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and move its embassy there, in opposition to the policies of the rest of the international community. At the time, Jeremy Corbyn tweeted (6 December 2017) that "Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, including occupied Palestinian territory, is a reckless threat to peace. The British Government must condemn this dangerous act and work for a just and viable settlement of the conflict."

What about Gaza?

Gaza is a 25-mile enclave that is home to nearly two million Palestinians and subject to a 12-year-long siege. 1.2 million people in Gaza are refugees – Palestinians who fled the 1948 war and their descendants. Ninety per cent of the water is undrinkable, electricity is only available for a few hours a day, and even the availability of basic foodstuffs are under threat. The UN Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWA) are warning that by June 2019, they may have had their budget cut so severely that they will not be able to provide enough food for the refugees living there.

What is happening to Palestinian refugees?

International law recognises the rights of all refugees and their direct descendants to return to their country of origin. Contrary to this, Jared Kushner, was reported by Foreign *Policy* magazine to have tried to pressure Jordan to strip more than two million Palestinians of refugee status in a move that aims to end the work of UNRWA.

According to US and Palestinian officials, the Trump administration is working to end UNRWA's work in order to "remove the refugee issue from any possible negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians".

The US, once it's largest donor, reduced its funding to UNRWA and then entirely stopped funding in September 2018. By now proposing that it should be wound up, Trump is trying to redefine the refugee issue.

According to UNRWA the number of Palestinian refugees including their descendants around the world has reached 5.2 million. The US is working to reduce this number to just 40,000 made up of those who were forced out of their homes as a result of the Nakba ("Catastrophe") that took place in 1947/8 when 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes and villages. The proposition that it is only those refugees left from 1947/8 or 1967 that are still alive that should qualify – not their children – is an attempt to remove an established right from millions.

How is the right to self-determination applied?

Essentially, the right to self-determination is the right of a people to determine its own destiny.

The right of a people to self-determination is a major principle of modern international law which was listed in the founding charter of the UN as a people's fundamental right. It does not dictate what form self-determination should

take. However, it makes clear, that people, based on respect for the principles of equal rights and fair equality of opportunity, should have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no interference.

It is clear that the Palestinian people have consistently been denied this opportunity – in breach of many promises made to them by the international community.

What would be an ethical foreign policy for Labour?

Using international law and UN resolutions as a framework - freedom, justice and equality would be good principles for a Labour ethical foreign policy to use as criteria. On this basis the Trump deal or anything like it should be resoundingly rejected. It fails at every hurdle.

On equality – Palestinians are discriminated against in and out of Israel in almost every conceivable way. This includes the law, their right to travel, and owning property to give just a few examples; all whilst their history and heritage is literally being wiped out on the ground and in books and language.

As regards international law, Israel is in breach in terms of the occupation, the right of return, and the siege of Gaza. The right of a people to self-determination is a cardinal principle in modern international law. UN resolutions are flouted just as regularly – over Jerusalem, the Wall or the ever-growing settlements.

It is the very real risk of Palestine being forcibly carved up and atomised before our eyes that underpins Labour & Palestine's decision to make the Trump/Netanyahu plan the subject of its model motion for this year's Labour Party conference. The motion goes further than simply rejecting the Trump proposals – it argues that there must also be consequences for Israel's continuing breaches of international law.

Our trade – be it finance, arms or goods and services – should all comply with international law. If the occupation is illegal, then the arms and technology used to enforce it should not be bought from and sold to Israel when we know they are going to be used to violate Palestinian human rights.

Model motion: Peace and Justice for Palestine

Conference notes:

Recent actions by US and Israeli administrations are destroying prospects for peace in Palestine - by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, stopping funding UNRWA for Palestinian refugees, the continuing siege of Gaza, expanding illegal settlements and announcing plans to annex illegally large areas of land occupied in 1967.

The proposals in Trump's "deal of the century" are a one-sided attempt to impose an unjust outcome destroying core Palestinian rights.

Conference believes:

Labour's ethical foreign policy must prioritise Palestinians' rights to freedom, justice and equality, including by applying these principles based on international law to all UK trade with Israel.

An internationalist Labour Party has a special responsibility to redress the ongoing injustices against the Palestinian people, denied their right to self-determination during the British Mandate, because of the role Britain played as a colonial power during the 1948 Nakba when Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes.

Conference resolves:

To oppose any proposed solution for Palestinians, including Trump's 'deal', not based on international law and UN resolutions recognising their collective rights to self-determination and to return to their homes.

To adhere to an ethical policy on all UK's trade with Israel, in particular by applying international law on settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and stopping any arms trade with Israel that is used in violation of the human rights of Palestinians.

To work globally for an alliance with progressive sister parties rejecting trade agreements with Israel that fail to recognise the rights of the Palestinians.