



10 YEAR REPORT, REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

“ Since being established ten years ago, Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East (LFPME) has been a powerful voice for peace and justice for Palestine within the UK Parliament and wider society. LFPME plays a fundamental role in furthering the understanding and support for the question of Palestine and seeking to uphold British, International and Human Rights law. We are immensely grateful for LFPME’s achievements in influencing policies such as those relating to the recognition of the State of Palestine, support for renewed funding to UNRWA, and calling for the end to the illegal blockade of Gaza by the Israeli occupation. We also acknowledge the unwavering commitment of LFPME to the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders as stipulated by international resolutions.

We greatly value LFPME’s work in generating and maintaining cross-party support for Palestine within the UK Parliament, government and public. ”

H.E Ambassador Dr Husam S. Zomlot.



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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

We're proud of the role we've played to help Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East (LFPME) to become an important part of the Labour Party.

10 years ago LFPME was established by Sara Apps, Michelle Harris, Phyllis Starkey, Mark McDonald, Richard Burden and Martin Linton, who were all brought together by the formidable Sir Gerald Kaufman to advocate for Palestinian rights in the Labour Party. LFPME has been very lucky to have benefited from the talents of many members of the Labour Party during the last 10 years and has campaigned on a range of issues, notably securing the Party's support for the recognition of a Palestinian state.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment of so many MPs who have dedicated their time to the cause and raised these issues at every level across the Party.

And significantly, LFPME has relied on volunteers to ensure that the organisations work has been impactful and successful. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all those that have been involved over the last 10 years, with a particularly special thanks to Komal Adris, and we're looking forward to the coming years and all those who are continuing to support this journey with us.



We'd also like to honour Del Singh, Jo Cox and Sir Gerald Kaufman with a special mention here.

All 3 were instrumental to LFPME and we're so grateful for their time, commitment and friendship that they offered whilst they were with us.

LFPME continues to honour them as we strengthen our work. In the last 10 years, we've seen the Labour Party's support for Palestine grow significantly and we're proud to have been an important steering force in that. But as the situation in Palestine continues to be fraught with tension and difficulties, as Gaza remains under blockade, illegal settlements and house demolitions continue and thousands of Palestinian children continue to have their lives and their futures put at risk we know we still have much to do.

The Labour Party, and hopefully a Labour government, can and will do so much to support the Palestinian people and to call for justice, human rights and international law to be respected. We will strive to ensure that we are at the forefront of that work.

As we look forward to the important work we still have to do we thank everyone for their continued commitment to the organisation, the Party and the Palestinian people.

Lisa Nandy MP, Grahame Morris MP, Shazia Arshad, Richard Burden MP, Louise Haigh MP, Seema Malhotra MP, Peter Malynn, Mark McDonald, Amrina Rana, Andy Slaughter MP.

LFPME IN ACTION

WHAT WE DO

LFPME was established in 2009 as a voluntary group within the Labour movement. We advocate for the cause and rights of Palestinians and campaign for peace and justice in the Middle East.

We are led by an Executive Committee and powered by a team of hard-working and dedicated volunteers who give their own time to support LFPME's work and activities. Our main focus is to engage with and support the work of Labour MPs on Palestine.

This is done through regular briefings, events and preparations for debates and questions, we support Labour MPs in their work on Israel-Palestine and ensure our core campaign issues are raised regularly in Parliament.

We are fortunate that support for Palestine and their rights is widespread both among Labour MPs and in the wider Labour movement. To further encourage this support more broadly, we also work to raise public, Party and Parliamentary awareness of the situation in Palestine through: participation in political conferences (particularly annual events at Labour Party Conference), speaking engagements, events in Parliament, producing briefings and promotional material, campaigning on key issues, hosting cultural events, and helping to organise delegations for parliamentarians to witness the reality of the situation on the ground.



Achieving justice for the Palestinian people remains one of the most pressing international issues of our time and one that has waited too long for a resolution.



LFPME supports a two state solution that creates a viable and contiguous Palestinian state – one which delivers justice and freedom for the Palestinian people. In pursuit of that, one of our core campaigns over the years has been to support and work towards the recognition of a Palestinian state by the UK Government – as reflected in the motion passed by the House of Commons in October 2014, led by then LFPME Chair Grahame Morris MP.

LFPME's other activities cover a range of priority issues, including: Gaza, the rights of children, military detention, settlements and demolitions. LFPME continues to build on our policy recommendations published in 2015 and, in coordination with other like-minded organisations, push for a more positive and proactive UK policy on Palestine.

KEY MILESTONES

When LFPME was first established in 2009, there was some trepidation about the level of support the organisation would receive within the Labour Party.

At our first reception launching the organisation, over 100 MPs were in attendance and at our first formal events at Labour Party Conference that year the then Prime Minister Rt Hon Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary David Miliband both spoke at the reception.



Since then our party conference events have grown in both strength of numbers and policy asks and become a fixture in the Leader of the Labour Party's conference calendar. We now have more than half of the Parliamentary Labour Party signed up as supporters to LFPME and the supporters list continues to grow.



During Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP's tenure as leader of the Labour Party, he helped to move the Party's policy on Palestine towards a more progressive stance and in his first speech at Labour Party Conference as Leader set out his commitment to justice when he called for an end to the blockade of Gaza.

We were pleased that we were also able to take Ed to the Occupied Palestinian Territories whilst he was Leader.

A few months after this visit we campaigned for the Labour Party to support recognition of Palestinian statehood as Party policy. Our then Chair, Grahame Morris MP, secured a debate in the House of Commons on Palestinian statehood, and with official Labour Party support, the vote was won.

Although the motion was non-binding and the Conservative coalition government did not enact the policy, the Labour Party remains fully committed to the policy and will recognise a Palestinian state once in Government.



We have worked on a number of campaigns through the years and in 2015 we laid out the Progressive Case for Peace in Palestine and Israel, outlining a range of policies and campaigns that we have lobbied the Labour Party to support.

Another one of our flagship calls was outlined by Stephen Kinnock MP, in his chapter "Trading for Peace". Stephen asked,

"The UK and EU's public position on settlements is clear and unambiguous; they are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. How can we support trade sanctions on Crimea, but allow continued trade with illegal Israeli settlements?"

We have made it clear that trading with illegal settlements does significant damage to the prospects of any peace in the region. The Labour Party has unequivocally condemned the illegal settlements in the oPt's and made clear in the last manifesto that the Party is committed to "an end to the blockade (of Gaza), occupation and settlements".



During our work we have campaigned for a number of policies and we are pleased that the Labour Party policy reflects so many of our key asks. Under Jeremy Corbyn MP's leadership of the Labour Party we have been pleased that there has been growing support for Palestinian advocacy within the Party.

In the 2017 manifesto a number of our key asks were reflected and in speeches and statements we have also heard the Party confirm its commitment to support an international review of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), opposition to President Trump's declaration of Jerusalem's capital city status and commitment to review arms sales to Israel.

- 1 Recognition of a Palestinian state is now an official Labour Party Policy**
- 2 Review of trade policy in relation to illegal settlements**
- 3 International review of sustainable funding options for UNRWA**
- 4 The Labour Party is committed to calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza**
- 5 The Labour Party has unequivocally opposed the US recognition of Jerusalem's capital city status**
- 6 Commitment to the opposition to illegal settlements and house demolitions**

The strength of LFPME's work these last 10 years has been the support from members across the Labour Party, from Labour councillors, to Constituency Labour Parties and from the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Trade Union movement. The significant shift in policy would not have been possible without this support and the work that we do continues to rely on the support of all our colleagues and friends.



The situation for Palestinians is as dire as ever, demonstrating that now is the time, perhaps more than ever, when we must continue to push for an even more progressive solution for peace in Palestine and Israel.



LOOKING BACK AT 2018

The last year has been a particularly difficult one for Palestine.

We have seen, amongst other things, an escalation of violence on the Gaza border, with the killing of many Palestinian protesters, medics and others. We've seen a worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with the strip still under closure from Israeli authorities. We've seen the continued demolition of Palestinian homes and the accompanying forcible transfer and expansion of Israeli settlements, all of which are illegal under international law.



All this is at the same time as the US Administration has ended support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), called into question the very definition of 'refugee' as it pertains to Palestinians, closed the Palestinian embassy in Washington, moved their own embassy to Jerusalem and declared Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Continuing to wait and see how things develop, as the UK Government has done, is having too devastating an impact on the ground and Palestinians are fast running out of time to wait. It is clear that the Israeli Government feels emboldened to act with impunity and with the Trump Administration on its side.

2017 saw a number of anniversaries in relation to Palestine - **100 years since the Balfour Declaration, 50 years since the 1967 war, 10 years since the closure of Gaza.** In 2018, we had the **70th anniversary of the Nakba.**

LFPME has marked and responded to all of those, taking action to press the case for recognition of Palestine and an adherence to international law to protect Palestinian rights. For example, at the end of 2017 and on the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, our Chair Grahame Morris and Vice-Chair Andy Slaughter handed in a letter signed by 37 Parliamentary LFPME supporters to reiterate those rights and the case for recognition.

It has been a challenging year, but LFPME has risen to that challenge and continued to work with Parliamentarians to ensure that Palestine does not slip down the agenda, that these issues are regularly raised in Parliament and that the UK Government is held to account for its own policies and actions (or sometimes lack thereof) in relation to Palestine.



PALESTINE AT PARLIAMENT

With our main focus of advancing the Palestinian cause in Parliament, LFPME remains very active in engaging with MPs. In the last year, we have further built up our supporter base, activity and presence by organising seven debates and contributing to briefings and planning for others.



We have also helped to raise awareness and support for issues by regularly preparing Early Day Motions, two of which are amongst the most supported EDMs by MPs in this Parliament. Beyond that, we have hosted events which led or contributed to delegations to the region.

Debates

LFPME organised and secured the following debates, which were led by our Chair, Vice-Chairs or LFPME supporters:

Dec 2017 – Demolitions debate (Stephen Kinnock MP)

Feb 2018 – Military Detention debate (Sarah Champion MP)

May 2018 – Urgent Question on Gaza border violence (Emily Thornberry MP)

May 2018 – Urgent Question on UNHRC Inquiry (Richard Burden MP)

May 2018 – Gaza Humanitarian situation debate (Louise Haigh MP)

Jun 2018 – Gaza debate (Grahame Morris MP)

Jul 2018 – Urgent Question on Khan al-Ahmar (Richard Burden MP)

In addition, LFPME regularly provides briefings and support for oral questions as well as debates arranged by other MPs and organisations. Leading up to key debates, we have also hosted drop-in briefing events for MPs in Parliament.

Early Day Motions:

We regularly draft and secure signatures for Early Day Motions in Parliament. We use these to increase awareness of issues affecting Palestinians and the region, while also encouraging support for the cause among MPs. We often work with partner organisations to coordinate these to work towards specific campaigns, events or debates. These are in addition to statements that LFPME puts out in response to events taking place on the ground.

Two of our EDMs are amongst the most signed EDMs in this Parliament. The following are a selection of the EDMs we have drafted, submitted and obtained signatures for (MP signature numbers in brackets):

563: Military Detention of Palestinian Children by Israeli Authorities (143) – with PSC

1169: Demolition Plans in Khan al-Ahmar Village in the West Bank (108)

1566: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (87)

1163: Violence Against Protestors in Gaza (86)

1305: UK Arms Exports to Israel (68)

817: Funding for the Work of UNRWA in Support of Palestinian Refugees (57)

Events in Parliament

We have hosted a range of other events in Parliament throughout the year, including:

Jan 2018 – a visit to Parliament by Palestinian Firefighters from Hebron, who met with MPs and talked about the challenges of their work as well as the support being given to them by the fire service in the UK (with Fire Brigades Union).

March 2018 – Our annual LFPME Parliamentary Reception in celebration of Palestine, with guests including Leader of the Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn MP, Shadow Minister Fabian Hamilton MP, Palestinian poet Leanne Mohammad, Mark McDonald, as well as our Chair and Vice-Chairs.

May 2018 – LFPME Parliamentary photo in solidarity with Palestinians to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Nakba as well as standing against killings in Gaza (with Palestine Solidarity Campaign).

Dec 2018 – LFPME's Winter Reception and 10-year anniversary.



LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE – SEPTEMBER 2018

LFPME has been at conference every year since 2009 and this year was no different. On the Monday of conference, we hosted our regular evening reception as well as a fringe event in the afternoon, both of which saw fantastic guest speakers and hundreds of attendees.

For our reception, we were very pleased to be joined by Labour Party Leader, Jeremy Corbyn MP, as well as Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry MP and Dan Carden MP from the Shadow DFID team.



Jeremy Corbyn reiterated the Labour Party's commitment to a two-state solution and pledged to immediately recognise the State of Palestine as soon as a Labour Government is elected.

We also heard from Tan Dhesi MP and Bambos Charalambous MP, who had recently been on delegations to the region and talked about their impressions and experiences there, as well as Neil Sammonds from Medical Aid for Palestinians.

Our fringe event was heavily attended as people joined us for an informative discussion about the everyday lives of young Palestinians living in the oPt, their rights to education and what we can do to better support the next generation. We were delighted to be joined by:

- Chris Gunness, Spokesperson for UNRWA
- Professor Karma Nabulsi, Oxford University, Chair of Trustees at the Hoping Foundation
- Mezna Qato, Palestinian Academic and Trustee of the Friends of Birzeit University.
- Fikr Shaloot, Gaza Director, Medical Aid for Palestinians.

This year's conference was a great one for Palestine and LFPME, with a huge amount of interest in the issue among MPs, party members and attendees. This was illustrated most clearly by the packed rooms for our events, but also by conference backing an immediate suspension of arms sales to Israel following the events on the Gaza border this year.

A special thanks to Medical Aid for Palestinians, ASLEF, Unite the Union and Friends of Birzeit University for their support.



DELEGATIONS

In November 2017 we organised a visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories for Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry MP, Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament Fabian Hamilton MP and LFPME Vice Chair Andy Slaughter MP. The visit was an important opportunity for the Emily and Fabian to meet a number of Palestinian organisations, institutions and individuals to hear firsthand how the occupation is impacting lives on a daily basis.

During that visit the MPs met their Palestinian counterparts in Ramallah who talked through their hopes for peace that are met by continued fears. At the Qalandia checkpoint in Ramallah they witnessed how medical emergencies are handled for those living under occupation and at a refugee camp met one young girl whose story made it back to the Houses of Parliament.



The young girl that the delegation met told of her despair when she was arrested and imprisoned after posting on Facebook about her sadness at her brother's arrest. She was only released from detention when her brother falsely confessed, but now as a former detainee she could no longer visit her brother. The story was a stark reminder of the unjust situation facing the next generation of Palestine and a reminder of why speaking up on their behalf is so important if any kind of viable future is to be secured for these young people.

"I agreed with my hosts: this cycle must be broken; and we need to be both united of purpose and resolute of principle to achieve that goal. That was the message I took back from Ramallah, and that will be the commitment of the Labour Party in government."

In 2018 Emily Thornberry MP returned to Ramallah to take part in the first conference of the Palestine National Council in over 10 years. Emily said "we cannot have another ten or twenty years of on-going division, continuing terror attacks, escalating violence, and increasing settlement-building, because if we do, a two-state solution will become not just difficult to negotiate, but impossible to achieve, and future generations of children born in Israel and Palestine will never know a world of peace.

Next year will likely be just as challenging as the last, with the closing window of a viable two-state solution, a long-awaited 'deal' from a US President who can no longer be considered an honest broker for peace, and the continued violation of Palestinian human rights. LFPME will continue to work hard to ensure that Palestine remains at the forefront of debate and to ensure that the fantastic levels of awareness and engagement from MPs is translated into positive action.



LOOKING FORWARD – WHAT'S NEXT?

We know that now more than ever before, the Labour Party's policy positions and support for international law and human rights is so important. As the US abdicates its role in the region, the UK has an important role to play to ensure that the global commitment to international law is upheld.

Growing support for the commitment to international law and human rights within the Labour Party must be matched by equally progressive policies for peace. We will continue our work across the Party to ensure that Labour remains ready and able to hold the current government to account and to bring in policies that will advance peace and justice when in Government.

LFPME is a voluntary organisation and we rely on our volunteers to undertake all our work. Although we have had unwavering support from them, our work and reach is limited due to the shortage of funds and we hope that looking forward we can find a way to increase our revenue so that we can expand our scope of work to reach further into the Labour Party.

As we continue to develop and strengthen our resources, our advocacy and campaigning work will continue to go from strength to strength and we will be doing this through a range of activities (see overleaf).

Outreach

Parliamentarian relationships:

Support and develop new relationships across Parliament with MPs, peers and researchers

Parliamentary briefings, questions and debates:

Support Parliamentarians with briefings and Parliamentary questions

Table debates to highlight issues on the ground in Gaza, the oPt and the wider region

CLP talks:

Send LFPME speakers to CLPs to develop education and support

Support CLPs with policy motions and asks

Labour councillors Networks:

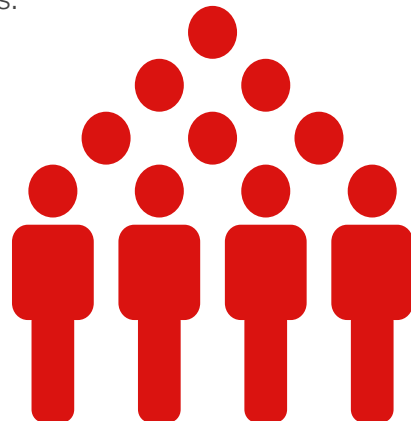
LFPME councillors network to encourage joined up activity across local government

Regional and Labour Party conferences:

Organise and facilitate events at conferences to encourage support for the Palestinian cause

Trade Union movement:

Build and develop relationships with trade union partners to advocate stronger policies within unions.



Research and Parliament

Campaigns:

Palestine's Next Generation

Responding to Gaza's crisis

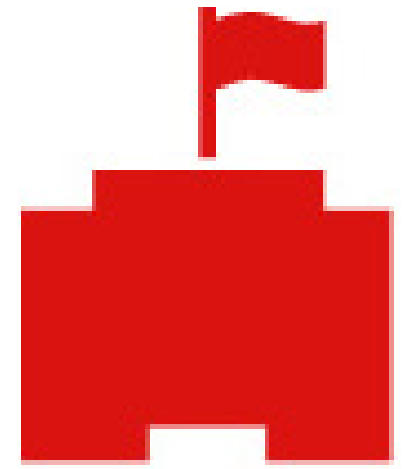
Factsheets on key topics:

Including settlements, UN resolutions and education

Support Parliamentary debates (FCO, DFID) and events (in Westminster Hall etc)

Parliamentary events:

Roundtable discussion event reviewing events on the ground with keynote speakers and international guests



Communications

Monthly newsletter:

Round up of news
LFPME activities

Parliamentary round up:

Current events email to update MPs

Website and social media:

Inform the Party of events in the region
Inform the wider public of LFPME and Labour Party policies

MP drop-in sessions:

Termly drop-in sessions for MPs in Parliament

CLP talks:

Events at CLPs reporting on issues from the region.



TO OUR SUPPORTERS, THANK YOU

LFPME's current budget does not currently allow us to employ paid staff. Everything we do is only made possible by the fantastic efforts of our voluntary Director, Shazia Arshad, and her team of hardworking volunteers who put in their own time and efforts to make sure LFPME can continue our work.

We would also like to thank those who have given money in support of LFPME's work, enabling us to have better representation in events in Parliament and at Party Conference. Once again, with an expanded resource base, LFPME can be still more effective in the years to come

LFPME works collaboratively on projects with a number of organisations and charities who advocate for Palestine and Palestinians. In working together towards the shared aims and ambitions that we hold, we are able to drive progress for the Palestinian cause in Parliament and the UK more broadly.

In doing so, we can achieve real change on the ground where we can – whether that be defending Palestinian villages like Khan al-Ahmar against demolition or encouraging the UK government to do or say more by putting up money to address the crisis in Gaza. That collaborative work makes a real difference to advocacy for Palestine in the UK.



LFPME would like to express our sincere thanks to the following organisations and groups with whom we have worked in recent years:

Notes



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OF YOUR FIREFIGHTERS



LAWYERS FOR PALESTINIAN
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HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT US?

We know that there is so much more work to be done and we hope to have an even greater impact in the years to come. To support LFPME please donate to us.

You can set up a bank transfer:

HSBC Bank PLC
Labour Friends of Palestine & the Middle East
Account number: 217 829 16
Sort code: 40-46- 09

Or send your cheques to:

Unit 14096 PO Box 6945
London
W1A 6US

All financial contributions go directly towards LFPME campaigning activities.

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