

Israel / USA Out of Gaza!
STARVATION
= GENOCIDE



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Starmer dithers while Gaza burns

As Israel's genocide in Gaza continues and intensifies, spreading to the occupied West Bank, as Israel unashamedly sets up a concentration camp in Gaza, and as mass starvation seems imminent, Keir Starmer continues his heroic dithering over whether and when to recognise a Palestinian state.

Although we should denounce Starmer for this lack of action, we should be under no illusions about the reality of this hollow step. In truth, such recognition would make little difference. The so-called "Palestinian state" is little more than an archipelago of isolated enclaves, ruled over by the collaborationist Holocaust denier Mahmud Abbas, whose four-year term of office ended in 2009 but who has acted as president ever since. The Palestine Authority, since its establishment in 1994, has acted as Israel's surrogate in policing and maintaining the occupation. And it is no accident that one of Israel's terms for its establishment was that it be run by the antisemitic reactionary Abbas rather than by the more equivocal Yasser Arafat.

But we can be sure that these are not Starmer's reasons for denying recognition – or, worse still, for using this, rather than sanctions and isolation, as a threatened punishment for Israel. While growing numbers of Western leaders and politicians realise that this would not be the radical step that it might have seemed thirty-five years ago, but rather a necessary part in the futile attempt to bring about a capitalist stabilisation of the Middle East, Starmer appears to believe that recognition would be a reward for his enemies and an injury to his allies – which is why he wields this recognition as a threat.

Meanwhile, Starmer, and all those who bleat about a hypothetical and delusory "two state solution", would appear to dangerously misunderstand the nature of Israel's current leadership. While earlier governments

– particularly those of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, and to an extent those of other prime ministers of various parties – may have genuinely sought accommodation with a corrupt and compliant Palestinian leadership, Netanyahu and his gang of fanatics make no secret of their rejection of this pipe dream, and of their intention to drive out all Palestinians from their homeland. And in this they are supported by a huge majority of Israeli Jews. A recent poll conducted by the University of Pennsylvania found that 82% of Israeli Jews supported expelling all Palestinians from Gaza, while 56% supported the expulsion of even Palestinian citizens of Israel. While it is true that unprecedentedly large numbers of Israelis are taking to the streets to denounce their government and to call for an end to the slaughter, these are vastly outweighed by the overwhelming support for the genocide.

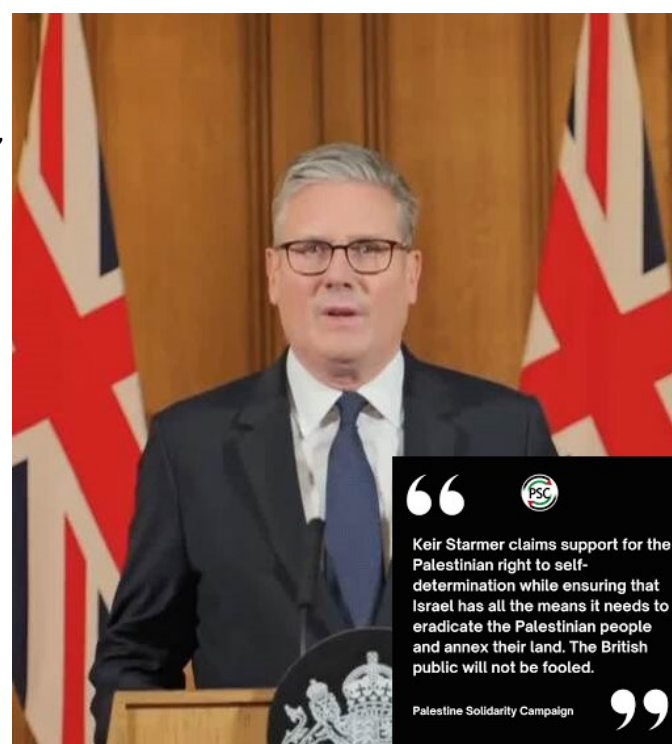
If Starmer genuinely wanted to put pressure on Israel to end its genocidal war crimes, he would be threatening to introduce biting sanctions, to eliminate all economic, military and diplomatic support for Israel, to expropriate all Israeli assets and to derecognise the Israeli state, rather than suggesting that he might recognise the quisling Ramallah "State of Palestine".

Over the past twenty-two months, Israel has made Gaza uninhabitable for several decades. Despite all the talk, by Trump and others, of a new Riviera, the destruction of over 80% of the buildings and roads, the tons of unexploded bombs and missiles, the poisoning of the water and the incalculable toxic waste mean that the region will not be suitable for human life for a very long time. Israel cynically plans to use this as a pretext for expelling the majority of Gaza's two million people far from their homeland. Our response to this must be a demand that the people of Gaza, the

majority of whom are descendants of those expelled from their towns and villages during the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state on the ruins of Palestine, be allowed to return to Palestine and to rebuild their homes and lives there.

Now more than ever we must emphasise the demands of the Palestine BDS Movement, which is by far the most representative expression of Palestinian opinion: an end to the occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and establishing the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194. Anything less can not lead to peace and justice, but only to further oppression, bloodshed and war crimes.

Roland Rance



Disproportionate, unnecessary and illegal bans



Huda Ammori

Palestine Action founder Huda Ammori has been granted leave to bring a judicial review against the banning of PA under anti-terrorism laws. In his ruling, the judge noted that the ban could cause considerable harm to the public interest and have a chilling effect on legitimate political speech. He also agreed that Home Secretary Yvette Cooper's action in consulting Israeli arms manufacturer about the ban, but not even contacting PA beforehand, was also potentially illegal.

Before the ruling, UN human rights commissioner Volker Türk had warned that the "disproportionate and unnecessary" ban was illegal under international law. There seems a good chance that this particular overreach will be overturned – if not by a UK court, then by the European Court of Human Rights. But nevertheless, it has already served to further tighten the restrictions on free speech.

Hundreds of people have been arrested for alleged support for PA, and are awaiting trial – with a possible 14-year prison sentence. Some have been arrested for displaying posters calling for "Action on Palestine" and for displaying a Private Eye cartoon, while others have been threatened with arrest for wearing a "Free Palestine" t-shirt, or displaying a Palestinian flag. Homes have been raided, computers and books seized and property damaged. Many – particularly those with uncertain residency status, or from otherwise oppressed communities – have been intimidated into not attending protests.

It is not only the police who are attempting to halt all protest. A senior nurse at Whipps Cross Hospital has been disciplined for using a Zoom backdrop showing a

still-life including melons, while Cambridge University has obtained an injunction banning all Palestine protests on campus for the next year. Many of these bans are the result of bad-faith complaints that wearing a keffiyeh, displaying a watermelon or calling for an end to the genocide are antisemitic acts designed to intimidate Jews.

However, these bans may prove to have an opposite effect to that intended. Many of those arrested do not actually support Palestine Action, but object to the gag on free speech and criminalisation of non-violent direct action. And some overreactions have been so extreme that they have led to widespread ridicule. Even if the ban on PA is upheld, this will not necessarily lead to convictions. It is a longstanding principle of English law that juries have the right to acquit people even if they believe that they did indeed carry out the actions with which they were charged. It has also long been established that an accused may argue that they committed a lesser crime in order to prevent a greater one – a position argued by Starmer himself when he represented a defendant in the 2003 "Fairford Five" case. And few crimes can be greater than genocide.

As the law now stands, ACR cannot safely say that we support Palestine Action. What we can still say is that damaging war planes, or pouring red paint over premises supplying military material used in Israel's war crimes, are legitimate acts of resistance to the crimes against humanity currently being perpetrated in Gaza.

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