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Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine

A Party Affiliated Organisation

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**A VOTE FOR THE LIB DEMS IS A VOTE FOR THE CHILDREN OF GAZA – AND
FOR ALL THE CHILDREN OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

Attached is a three page fact-sheet from the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine on the contrasts between our party, Labour and the Tories on issues concerning Israel and the Palestinians. We are the only one of the three parties to call for substantive action in response to Israel's 'Operation Cast Lead'. Our calls for a war crimes tribunal, an arms embargo and measures in respect of the EU-Israel Association Agreement have not been matched by the other parties. Instead, Labour and the Tories have called for the Geneva Conventions Act to be amended so as to make it easier for individuals against whom there are credible war crime allegations to visit Britain with impunity.

We also provide a link to our website to enable you to find out about the extreme views expressed by Michael Gove MP on Israel and the Palestinians, as well as details about how he cheer-led for Blair in calling for the invasion of Iraq.

Fact sheet on Israel/Palestine and the political parties March 2010

The Liberal Democrats were the only party to oppose the Iraq war.

We are also the only party to speak up for international humanitarian law (IHL) in the Occupied Territories.

Neither Labour nor Conservatives have condemned the siege of Gaza or Operation Cast Lead – the Israeli military assault on Gaza in December/January 2008–9, in which civilians and civilian infrastructure were deliberately targeted.

Lib Dem Policy on Gaza

Following our policy motion passed on 8 March 2009 in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead, it is Lib Dem Policy that –

- * the UN Security Council should establish an international tribunal with power to prosecute and compel the appearance of witnesses to investigate war crimes arising out of Israel's attack on Gaza, whether by Israel, Hamas or any other party;
- * the existing EU Israel Association Agreement should be suspended since Israel has continued its illegal blockade of Gaza;
- * the update for Israel's Association Agreement with the EU should also continue to be suspended;
- * the EU should review whether Israel is in enduring breach of Article 2 of the Association Agreement; and
- * there should an arms embargo on Israel by Britain and the EU.

The entire policy motion can be found on the official Lib Dem website. Go to www.libdems.org.uk and search under GAZA.

By contrast, the official Labour and Conservative websites are silent on the Gaza crisis.

David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary has even been forced to admit that British armaments sold to Israel were likely to have been used in the conflict.

Ed Davey, our Lib Dem shadow foreign secretary, following his visit to Gaza after Cast Lead, commented that it would be an understatement to say 'it was one of the most harrowing visits I have ever made'. Neither David Miliband nor William Hague, the Conservative shadow foreign secretary, made a visit. Why not?

The Lib Dems and the Goldstone Report

The Goldstone Report found strong prima facie evidence that Israel deliberately used disproportionate force in its assault on Gaza, that civilians and civilian infrastructure (even methods of food production) were deliberately targeted, and that this strategy was sanctioned at the highest level.

We think all war crime allegations should be properly investigated and there should be no impunity for anyone found responsible.

Ed Davey called for the UN, Israel and Hamas to act on the Goldstone Report at the Britain-Palestine All Party Group Annual Reception last November. Both Labour and Conservatives were silent.

Instead, when the Goldstone Report was endorsed at the UN General Assembly, David Miliband sent instructions to the British representative to abstain. For the Conservatives, William Hague actually said that Britain should have voted against the resolution unless it was amended 'to reflect the role that Hamas played in starting the conflict'.

Universal Jurisdiction

51 Lib Dem MPs – an overwhelming majority of our parliamentary party - have signed Early Day Motion 502 which states *'that this House believes that universal jurisdiction for human rights abuses is essential as part of the cause of bringing to justice those who commit crimes against humanity and will oppose any legislation to restrict this power of UK courts.'*

This is a brave and principled stand by our MPs which reflects our belief in the rule of international law.

We agree with Judge Goldstone that only accountability can bring justice and peace to Israel and Palestine.

And what of Labour and the Tories?

Labour and the Tories have refused to call for any of the measures which the Liberal Democrats urge should be taken by Britain and the EU in respect of Gaza.

Instead, Brown, Miliband, Cameron and Hague vie in their efforts to reassure the Israeli government that they support a change to the law that would make it easier for Israeli politicians and military figures who may have committed war crimes – as well as other alleged war criminals all over the world – to visit these shores without fear of prosecution under the Geneva Conventions Act.

If the Conservatives win the election, the influence of the Greater Israel lobby – those extremists who believe Israel has a right to add to its territory by swallowing up land it conquered in 1967, rather than by negotiating fair boundaries with the Palestinians on an arms-length basis - will increase. Extreme Conservative views are exemplified by those of Michael Gove MP. Find out about them at <http://www.ldfp.eu/gove.html>.

According to Channel 4's Dispatches programme, over half the members of David Cameron's shadow cabinet are members of the Conservative Friends of Israel. Should our foreign policy be vulnerable to the influence of lobbyists in this way?

To find out more about Palestine, including the history and background to the conflict, visit www.ldfp.eu. If you would like a speaker from the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine or have any queries, please contact us at info@ldfp.eu.

IF YOU CARE ABOUT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST BASED ON THE RIGHTS OF ALL PARTIES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, THEN VOTE LIB DEM!