

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT GLUAISEACHT AN PHOBAIL



Press statement

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People's Movement demands recall of Irish Ambassador to Israel.

Following a meeting of People's Movement in Dublin, Frank Keoghan, its secretary, today called for the recall of the Irish ambassador to Israel in protest against Israeli aggression and in order to disassociate ourselves from tacit EU support for Israel.

He pointed out that 'In the Irish media during the last weeks, the European Union has been portrayed as an honest broker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, even though almost all of the people killed have been Palestinians, some EU leaders tacitly offered their support for Israel's bombing and invasion of Gaza'.

'The Czech Presidency described Israel's actions as "more defensive than offensive", and while Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, made much of seeking to secure a truce, he too has been eager to develop closer political and economic ties with the Israeli government. EU member states authorised the export of €200 million worth of arms to Israel in 2007, with France far and away the biggest European weapons supplier, issuing export licences worth €126 million', Keoghan continued.

He claimed that 'in December last, the EU's foreign ministers including Micheál Martin decided to continue to develop a "privileged partnership" with Israel, allowing that country to take part in a wide range of the Union's programs with the eventual possibility that it would be integrated into the single market. This decision was taken despite pleas by the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority that the EU should not upgrade relations with Israel until the latter stopped building new settlements in the occupied territories'.

Furthermore, Keoghan added, 'this decision last month by the EU Council without any specific conditions on human rights has simply encouraged further Israeli aggression following its economic blockade of Gaza – in contravention of the 1949 Geneva Convention which forbids "collective punishment" of a civilian population and in defiance of numerous UN resolutions'.

He pointed out that 'accelerated negotiations were subsequently launched on: increased diplomatic co-operation; participation in European plans and agencies; and possible Israeli integration into the European single market. So, we can take it', Keoghan said, 'that the statement by Czech EU presidency spokesman Jan Sliva that "no activities that could be considered related to the upgrade are taking place due to the situation on the ground" was

only a temporary arrangement’.

‘The EU Parliament has been heavily lobbied by supporters of Israel in recent years’, Keoghan explained, ‘and a cross-party grouping allied to the European Friends of Israel has been set up.

He concluded that ‘we in Ireland are now accessories by association and it is time we make clear our disapproval of Israeli aggression, firstly against the defenceless people of Lebanon and latterly through the appalling slaughter in Gaza. In the process we are signalling our independent foreign policy and standing alone in the EU on the side of the suffering people of Gaza’.

‘As a first step in response, and irrespective of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the People’s Movement calls on the government to now recall the Irish ambassador to Israel and, as with apartheid South Africa, embark on a programme of boycott, divestment and sanctions’.

[ENDS]

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