

## **IPSC Presentation to Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach**

***Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024***

Before I start, I wish to thank the Committee for inviting the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign here today.

I am not here today to give you any great legal insight - though guided by international law, the IPSC is not a legalistic organisation.

Nor am I here to speak to the intricacies of state investment policies - we are not policy wonks.

What I am here to do is to represent the view of the street. Of the tens of thousands of people that march every week, that take actions big and small, that display their love and solidarity with the Palestinian people in countless creative ways.

I am here to represent the 80% of people in Ireland who understand that they are seeing a live-streamed genocide unfold, the 70% who understand that Israel is an apartheid regime, and the 70% of Irish people who want to see sanctions imposed on Israel.

There is a mass movement for Palestine in Ireland right now.

The last two national demonstrations we in the IPSC organised have each brought around 100,000 people onto Dublin's streets.

But if people marching in the nation's capital won't make the government sit up and take notice, then I am sure that every TD up for re-election is acutely aware that there is scarcely a town in Ireland that hasn't had protests in solidarity with the Palestinian people over the last five months.

And the target of people's anger has not only been the genocidal apartheid regime in Israel.

People's anger has been directed at the Irish government, for what we see as a lack of real, tangible, action to end the genocide, and help achieve justice for the Palestinian people.

And it is not hard to see why...

Over the past few years various constituent parts of the Oireachtas have supported bills, motions and reports calling for a much stronger line from the government.

There was majority support in both Houses for the now-frozen Occupied Territories Bill.

In May 2021 a motion recognising Israel's de facto annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank passed the Dáil unanimously. This motion called on the state not to render aid or assistance in maintaining this situation.

In July 2021 a Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence report called for concrete diplomatic and economic measures to be applied where Israel violates international law, and again called on the state to not render aid or assistance to Israel which would facilitate the maintenance of annexation.

Last month, the Seanad unanimously passed a comprehensive motion calling on the government to impose sanctions on Israel; to enact the Occupied Territories Bill and the Illegal Israeli Settlements Divestment Bill; and to actively ensure no weapons are being sent to Israel through Irish airspace.

Minister Simon Coveney has compared Israel to a 'rogue state', and An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar himself has said that we 'can no longer treat Israel as though it were a normal, liberal, western democracy.'

And yet, to date, nothing has been done. No action has been taken. No sanction imposed. Nothing.

And as a result of inaction like this all over the world, Israel has been emboldened to keep on committing the most heinous of crimes – now culminating in genocide.

Now today this Committee has called witnesses on the Illegal Israeli Settlements Divestment Bill.

This is a Bill we obviously support, for Ireland should not be investing taxpayers money in any entity that aids the construction or maintenance of illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine.

Ending this blatant complicity should be a no-brainer - indeed, it is the very least that common sense and human decency, not to mention international law, demands.

We have heard that there are perhaps trade or other laws that will prevent the type of action the people of Ireland wish to see with regards to Israel.

Well, we say, if the law becomes an obstacle to justice, then it's time to challenge the law.

For in the end, it is actions, not words, which will help the Palestinian people achieve their freedom.

Ireland has just exited the so-called Decade of Centenaries marking Ireland's partially successful defeat of British Imperialism in Ireland, a process that resonated around the globe and precipitated the ultimate defeat of most of the British Empire.

100 years later, we believe it is time for Ireland to take the first steps in defeating a new hegemon, the hegemon of silence, inaction, and complicity, with regard to Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people.

We can be a beacon for the world, and in particular a ray of hope for the Palestinian people.

If not now, at a time of genocide, then when?

Over a decade ago, in the wake of Israel's Cast Lead assault, we in the IPSC submitted a Parliamentary Question, asking 'what crime does Israel have to commit in order for Ireland to impose sanctions'. The Question was ruled out of order for being rhetorical.

We now take the opportunity to pose, in an entirely non-rhetorical manner, the following question:

'We have seen Israel engage in illegal occupation, annexation, mass incarceration, extrajudicial executions, collective punishment, apartheid, and now genocide and the weaponisation of starvation. Is there, in fact, any crime for which our government will punish Israel?'

ENDS