

Conservative Friends of Israel Questionnaire

Answers from David Cameron

1. Why should Conservatives be friends of Israel?

Conservatives should be friends of Israel because Conservatives believe in supporting democracy, defending freedom and standing up against terrorism. Israel is in the front line in the international struggle against terrorist violence and we should show solidarity with all involved in that fight. Conservatives also recognise Israel's unique position as a lone democracy in a region that currently boasts no Others. I am a strong admirer of what Israelis have achieved in the fields of science, the arts, business and philanthropy, and of the immeasurable contribution of Jewish culture to our own society.

2. Why should supporters of Israel support the Conservative Party?

I am glad that there are supporters of Israel in all Britain's major political parties. An understanding of, and sympathy towards, Israel's position should be natural for most democrats. But there are special reasons why the Conservative Party is a logical home for friends of Israel.

Conservatives instinctively know that when any society is faced with a profound threat that the only answer is to be resolute in the face of that threat.. Conservatives have shown, both during the Cold War, and since 9/11, that we have the toughness to hold the course when faced with global challenges. Conservatives appreciate in their hearts what makes Israel strong – the durability of the Israeli people's values, the freedoms the nation has defended under considerable pressure as well as the vigor and creativity of modern Israeli society.

3. In your view, what is the most viable option for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict?

A long-term resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict depends on the creation of a fully democratic Palestinian state, which respects its own people's rights, living in harmony alongside an Israeli state secure in its borders, free from the threat of terrorism and respected by all its neighbors. The ultimate objective is clear: two states, two democracies, living side by side, in peace.

I welcome the recognition of the current Israeli government that steps need to be taken to help create a functioning Palestinian state, and I welcome Israel's bold decision to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. This creates new opportunities, and new responsibilities for the Palestinian people. But I am also clear that the Palestinian leadership now needs to live

up to its responsibility to end the corruption, violence, prejudice and terrorism which has blighted their people's prospects, and hope that under the leadership of President Abbas the Palestinian Authority will now do that.

4. Have you been to Israel or have any plans to go?

No – I look forward to visiting.

5. What action does the Government need to take to curtail the rise of anti-Semitism?

The Government needs to send a clear signal that it will not tolerate extremism or prejudice of any kind. Anti-semitism is the oldest hatred and, as the Chief Rabbi has pointed out, it has now mutated to take new forms. We need to be vigilant about campus anti-semitism and challenge those critics of Israel who allow their attacks to descend into denunciations dangerously close to anti-Jewish rhetoric. We also need a much closer watch kept on those extremists, whether self-styled preachers or political activists, who spread anti-semitism as part of their campaign of hate.

I have proposed actions to help the Moslem community police extremist activity in mosques and elsewhere which serves no-one's interests. Government, individuals and all community leaders have a shared responsibility to tackle prejudice which, if unchallenged, can lead to hatred and violence.

6. Across the Arab world, incitement against Jews and Israel has reached horrific proportions. In the Arab media, Jews are regularly described as 'bloodsuckers'. In Palestinian schools, children are taught that Jews are 'descendants of apes and pigs' and evil. What pressure should you bear on Arab governments and the Palestinian Authority to stop this pernicious and vicious anti-Semitism?

There should be a clear linkage in British foreign policy between a nation's respect for human rights and the support we give it. Countries which oppress their own people, or provide a launch pad for campaigns of hate against others, should face not just diplomatic consequences but the loss of commercial and development support.

7. Since the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank, terrorist organisations Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have been given a new lease of life and are carrying out large numbers of terrorist attacks against innocent civilians. What action should the British Government take in conjunction with the international

community to curtail activities of terrorist organisations in the Palestinian territories?

I agree with Michael Howard's view that Britain should work with the international community to help, if required, to keep the borders between Israel and Palestinian territories as secure as possible. We should be ready to help ensure that the Palestinian Authority has properly-trained personnel able to maintain security in Gaza and to fight terrorism, not turn a blind eye to it. I also think we need to bring pressure to bear, with the US and the EU, on the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Syria and Iran to ensure they provide neither support nor safe haven for terrorist-related activity.

8. How should Britain deal with Islamic fundamentalism at home and abroad?

This is a vast issue, which I discussed in some length over the summer, in a speech I gave on the roots of fundamentalist violence (available at cameroncampaign.org).

In brief, we need to understand that Islamic fundamentalist violence, like Nazi-ism in the past, cannot be accommodated through political concessions or negotiation. We need tough security measures to limit the danger of fundamentalist terrorism. But we also need a long term political strategy to strengthen national cohesion at home and extend democracy as well as human rights abroad. Islamic fundamentalists exploit the marginalisation which exists with some British communities and flourish in those states abroad which lack effective political freedom. Both need to be tackled.

9. There is increasing evidence that EU aid to the Palestinian Authority is being misappropriated either by corrupt Palestinian officials and is possibly ending up in the hands of terrorist organisations. (*“Year after year, the donor countries gave money to the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and what happened to it? It was used to pay off Arafat's cronies, and a lot of it ended up in bank accounts in Zurich and in property. It is a disgrace” Minister for the Middle East, Dr Kim Howells, 26/10/05*) How should Britain ensure that international development aid, either from Britain or the EU, goes directly to genuinely help the Palestinian people?

By demanding a clear audit trail for every pound, euro or dollar spent and denying funding to those individuals or organizations who cannot account for how aid money is spent or who have clearly diverted it for the wrong purposes.

10. Conservative Friends of Israel is one of the biggest affiliated groups to the Conservative Party with over 80% of MPs as members and over 2000 registered supporters (most of whom are Party members). How do you see CFI's role in promoting Conservatism and helping the Conservative Party to win the next election?

I want all the groups within the Conservative Party to have one common purpose. Working to convince our fellow Britons that we need a modern compassionate Conservative Government which will create new opportunities, empower those neglected by Labor, fight for freedom abroad and defend liberty at home.