

Conservative Friends of Israel Questionnaire

Answers from David Davis

1. Why should Conservatives be friends of Israel?

Because Israel is a stable democratic state in one of the most unstable regions in the World. It is a force for good in the Middle East and wider world. Conservatives recognise this and share many of the same values and outlook as Israel. Quite naturally therefore we should work closely together.

There is also a significant Jewish population in the UK which makes a substantial contribution to the Country and the Conservative Party. Conservative Friends of Israel for example 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).

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

As I said we share many of the same values and outlook as to the type of world we want to see. As I said in my speech on Social Justice recently, "Judaism's teaching says that the highest form of charity is to help someone stand on their own two feet." This is a fundamentally Conservative philosophy. We also understand the problems that Israel faces. We have shown both in our actions in Government and in our policies in opposition that we are strong guarantors of Israel.

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

The best way forward is a two state solution.

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

I've not been to Israel but I would love to go in the future to learn more about the country and the problems it faces.

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

Anti Semitism is emerging as a serious problem in Britain. In 2004, there were 532 serious anti Semitic incidents in Britain, an unprecedented figure and the highest since recording of anti Semitism incidents since records began. Anti Semitic incidents were 42% higher in 2004 compared to 2003, with record number violent attacks against British Jewish citizens

There are two key things we can do.

First and foremost, we can educate our children to ensure they are brought up with the right values and understanding of others. Britain is rightly proud of its tradition of tolerance but we cannot take it for granted. A decent understanding of British history is necessary for young people to recognize where we have come from as a nation, why we have welcomed people from different backgrounds to our country over the years and the great benefit they have been to the development of our economy and our culture.

Second, we can lead by example. As politicians it is particularly incumbent on us to fight racism and hatred wherever we see it. That means that we must be prepared to deal with genuine grievances in a straight-forward, reasonable way so that we stop the forces of hatred ever taking root in Britain. Happily the BNP failed to make the inroads they hoped at the recent election, but we must continue to be on our guard. I would hope that all politicians of all mainstream parties would agree with this.

- 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?**

The greatest pressure we can apply is to ostracize those who preach such hate. The recent unanimous condemnation of the Iranian President showed that the World community can unite. Words however are not enough and we need to work harder to ensure there are clear punitive measures applied to those states that promote hate.

- 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?**

We need to step up our cooperation over security information. This applies not only to Palestine but worldwide. As the UK suicide bombers who went to Israel to kill innocent people shows, evil does not respect national boundaries and we need to ensure maximum cooperation between states.

There is also evidence that Palestinian terrorists are supported and financed through radical Islamist terrorism and that economic links have taken root in the UK to promote terrorism. We must step up vigilance on bank accounts and money-laundering to ensure the proceeds used to support terrorism are more effectively checked.

We also need to bring pressure to bear, together with the international community, on Palestine that with a new state goes responsibility to maintain order and take whatever measures are necessary to stop unacceptable attacks on the neighbouring Israeli state.

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

The threat of radical Islamist terrorism is the greatest danger the West has faced since the height of the Cold War. Unlike communism, this armed doctrine is not armed with the nuclear weapon. There is no higher priority than to prevent its gaining one. But there is another respect in which Islamic extremism is like Communism: it is fundamentally weak and it is fundamentally doomed. It offers nothing to those Muslims who want to improve their lives and their children’s future. Its challenge to the West is expressed through terror, because that is the timeless weapon employed by those who cannot build a majority for their view. Our task, in response, is threefold. We have to prevent the extremists seizing a failed or failing state. We must pursue and destroy Al-Qa’eda wherever they gather. And time and again we must remind the moderate Muslim world that this is their struggle, as well as ours.

We must also ensure that radical religious groups are not allowed to take advantage of British democracy and proud history of tolerance and multiculturalism to undermine good community relations. Islamic teaching for example should be within the bounds of acceptable behaviour in British society.

- 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?

I think there are two principles we should put forward to ensure that aid goes directly to the Palestinian people. Firstly more aid needs to be channelled through established non-governmental organisations which are independent of local political control. Secondly we should set up an independent committee to manage and approve grants from the UK and monitor their progress directly to the front line.

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?

CFI should continue to have a significant role in policy development both in foreign policy but also in domestic policies. As I said we share very similar values and outlook on life and we can learn off each other how best to put those ideals into practice.

CFI have also shown themselves to be particularly skilful in building up links with the business community and other professional networks and have held many successful events which have contributed substantially to Party funds. I look forward to a close working relationship in the future.