

Funding the Future

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The Co-op has banned Israeli goods. The UK government remains silent. This silence is complicity. Real leadership in the face of genocide would require that the UK sanction Israel.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLhkjLy2hzo?si=UknKuW_ztPcavnEb

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=t2mag-18ed039-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Is it time for economic sanctions to be imposed on Israel?

We've reached a point where there is an apparent ceasefire in the conflict between Israel and Iran, although how long it will last is anybody's guess, and attention is returning to what is happening in Gaza, where day in, day out, we are seeing signs of the consequence of Netanyahu's genocide.

And let's not beat around the bush here. That is what is happening. The Israeli government - not the people of Israel - the Israeli government is pursuing genocide in Gaza, and people are dying as a result.

People's homes are being deliberately destroyed.

Hospitals are being bombed.

Entire communities are being wiped out.

It's been admitted that this is a policy of eradicating the people of Palestine from Gaza, and that is absolutely contrary to international law.

There is nothing that permits this behaviour, and there hasn't been since Israel went into Gaza in October 2023. And yet, UK policy remains unchanged despite well over 50,000 people in Gaza dying directly or indirectly as a consequence of what is happening.

The time has therefore come to look at alternative courses of action that might tackle the Israeli government and bring pressure to bear on it to change its policy.

Sanctions are one of those things, but they're not being properly discussed.

Sanctions are a peaceful tool to demand accountability from a government.

They are something that says you are ignoring international law, and that we are not, and we are going to take consequent action.

This is not about war. This is not about violence. It's just about bringing economic pressure to bear on a government which is doing something that is profoundly unacceptable, unethical, and, in the case of Israel, at this point in time, illegal.

That's why economic sanctions exist. And remember, they have worked. The economic sanctions on South Africa radically changed the whole perception of that country during the apartheid era, to the point where, of course, Nelson Mandela walked out of prison, and reform happened.

Right now in the UK, the Co-op food stores are taking a stand on this issue. The Co-op movement has voted to actually impose sanctions on Israel. And not just on Israel. They have also looked at imposing sanctions on other countries, Russia, Iran, and Syria. They are imposing bans on the products that are coming from those countries because they're saying their actions are ethically unacceptable.

But this has triggered political outrage.

Priti Patel, on behalf of the Conservative Party, has called this student politics. Labour MPs, some of them, have called it divisive, and why? They're saying we shouldn't disrupt the status quo. We shouldn't challenge business as usual. We should therefore, in their opinion, very obviously, be complicit with genocide. But when homes are being bombed and children are dying, and we see that on our television, my suggestion is that inaction is not a choice.

And as a member of the Co-op movement, and I am, I support what it's doing. We should not be neutral because being neutral, as Priti Patel and some Labour MPs are demanding, is, in itself, of course, adopting a political position. It is one that protects and condones the aggressor, and it abandons the victims.

So, we know that we need to take action. And let's be honest, the UK as a whole has taken many actions with regard to sanctions in the past.

Russia is currently sanctioned, massively and appropriately, with regard to its actions in Ukraine.

Iran and Syria have been sanctioned, and appropriately and without hesitation.

But apparently, we cannot sanction Israel despite its decades of occupation of territory which is not its own, and now, during the catastrophe in Gaza, nothing is happening there.

We shouldn't be selective in our approach. Sanctions must not depend on who your allies are. If wrongdoing is seen, and there is wrongdoing by Israel in Gaza, then Israel must be subject to sanctions, even if they harm the ordinary people of Israel, because that's the precise point that they bring. They are meant to harm life inside Israel because the intention is to bring pressure to bear upon the people of Israel to change their government, which is undertaking illegal action in their name.

Now, there's nothing antisemitic in what I'm saying. I would say the same with regard to Iran, and I will. I will say the same with regard to Russia. This is not an issue that has anything to do with Israel being a state which has got a Jewish government. It's to do with the fact that human beings are imposing misery and genocide on other human beings, and there's nothing more to it than that. So stop all the nonsense about this being an attack on Israel and its Jewishness. This is an attack on human beings, and I oppose the abuse of human rights, which is what is happening.

So we need to sanction Israel and remove its legitimacy in world trade, as a consequence.

A supermarket in the UK, the Co-op, is now acting with more moral courage than our government. It has listened to its members, applying their principles and the principles of the Co-op movement consistently, and yet we have politicians attacking them, and that really does make those politicians look cowardly.

But it also calls out the rest of the UK's supermarkets. Why aren't they intending to take action as well?

No one pretends that sanctions are a magic cure for anything. They're not, but they send a signal. They say that crimes against humanity will not be ignored, and they deny support to regimes that abuse power. When bombs are still falling, and there are no red

lines that are being enforced with regard to the abuse of human rights, we have to say that lives matter. We have to say that selling carrots grown in Israel is less important than it is to defend the lives of those who are currently unable to defend themselves.

We must take action.

Sanctions are not extreme.

Silence is what is extreme in the face of these forms of abuse.

The Co-op has acted, and I applaud them.

Our government has not acted, and I condemn them.

Gaza demands justice. Sanctions are a start.