Why does Ireland stand with Palestine?

Ireland can reasonably be considered the most pro Palestinian country in Europe. A poll conducted by the Irish times last February, showed that 63 percent of the Irish public agreed with the statement "I believe Israel's attacks on Gaza are not justified" with 21 percent of responders neutral, only 17 percent disagreed.

Our political leaders are in line with this public sentiment, politicians in Ireland espousing popular views shouldn't shock those with even a passing interest in Ireland's politics. The leader of Sinn Féin, Ireland's largest opposition party, Mary Lou has come out strongly in support of Palestine; she currently has a Palestinian flag as her background photo on X (formerly twitter).

The Irish government shares the view of the opposition party and has recently intervened in support of the genocide case brought by South Africa against Israel in the International Court of Justice.

Palestine: The Irish View

The Irish perceive the Palestinian people as oppressed by colonial power. We empathize with the famine, genocide and stories of oppression inflicted by a nation with far superior economic and military capabilities.

We empathize because we remember our own history of famine and oppression. That is at least what we tell ourselves, and the global community when asked.

Irish and Palestinian history

So what do we have we have in common and what did Irish oppression look like?

After the Jacobite's were defeated in the late 17th century, up until the Free State was established in 1921, it was difficult to be Irish and at times catholic. From direct and brutal persecution under Oliver Cromwell, to the struggle for catholic emancipation, to the Malthusian fueled assisted famine of the 19th century, oppression was rarely far away.

Ireland after It's conversation to Christianity remained a place of stable identity.

Throughout occupation and persecution the Irish remained one race, one religion and one people.

Palestine was among the first places in the world to see human civilization flourish. Over one thousand years BC there were the twin Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, with the philistines occupying a little territory towards the south, the region was conquered many times in the centuries that followed. The Assyrians took control in the 8th century BC, then the Babylonians in 601BC, the Persians in 539, and Alexander the great in approximately 335 BC.

The Kingdom of Judah, took control temporarily before the Romans came. The Romans held the region from 63BC until approximately 636AD. In the 4th century after Christ, Palestine became a center for Christianity with monks, scholars and pilgrims coming to the land. The Islamic world then took over with power changing hands between different caliphates until in 1099 AD when the crusades established the kingdom of Jerusalem. Following this, the Muslims took over again until in 1516 AD when the Ottoman Empire conquered the region. They kept control of Palestine until world war one. Following the war, the United nations gave the British a mandate for Palestine.

The Jewish people and the founding of Israel

The British in 1917 wrote the balfour declaration, which promised to give the Jewish people a national home. The declaration also declared nothing could be done to discriminate against the non Jews in Palestine. Following world war one, open Jewish immigration to the area was encouraged as was freedom of religion, speech and assembly. These rights had not been guaranteed under ottoman rule.

The Arabs immediately refused to have Jews immigrate to Palestine. They threatened to make the land a "river of blood" if immigration did not stop. This did indeed start with a jihad in 1920, when thousands of Arabs raided the Jewish quarter, burning, pillaging, and beating Jews in what became known as the "Nebi Musa riots."

The allied forces attempted to assuage the fears of the Arab world by dividing the land into Palestine (from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean sea) and the land to the right,

which became the emirate of transjordan. In the decades that followed, the Jews were attacked in Europe and in Palestine. In Palestine, the British sent a royal commission to solve the problem. The Israeli leader asked for a 2 state solution "even if the Jewish land was as small as a tablecloth." The commission's report published in 1937 proposed just this, a 2 state solution.

The Jewish people agreed to take just 20 percent of the remaining land, with the Arabs being offered 80 percent. They rejected this and pressed on with a revolt against the mandate. The revolt would fail and the Arab leader Al Husseini would spent a good part of the next decade as a personal guest of Adolf Hitler. After World war two, Britain handed the mandate over to the UN, who again offered a 2 state solution. The Jewish leaders made public their acceptance but again the Arab officials said any partition would be met with rivers of blood. After the UN voted to go with the 2 state solution, the 20 member Arab league sent their Arab liberation army against the newly organized state of Israel. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded Israel saying "this will be a war of extermination, and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongol massacre's and the crusades." However one year later, it was the Jewish state that claimed victory, and based on the armistice line of 1949, Israel had increased their territory by about 40 percent. The Palestinian Arabs were the biggest losers, with 650 thousand Palestinians becoming refugees. Jordan took the west bank from the Palestinian Arabs and annexed it into their kingdom. Egypt took the Gaza strip and did not recognize any Palestinian rights. Neither Jordan nor Egypt tried to create a Palestinian state.

Israel did offer a Palestine state to the Palestinians 3 times, with Clinton attempting to help during his presidency, spending 14 days in talks with Israeli and Palestinian leadership. However, every time they were offered a state, the Arabs in Palestine refused to sign.

In 2005, the Jewish people decided it was not in the interests of their own security to govern the Palestinians and so they pulled their settlements and people back into Israel. They left the locals a thriving flower export industry as a way to build their economy.

The Palestinians destroyed the greenhouses and launched rockets into Israel.

In 2008, the Israel PM offered the Palestinians a deal, giving them almost 100 percent of the land they had prior to the 1967 war. They attended one day of discussions but never returned for the second day or subsequently.

Ireland and Palestine How they compare?

The Irish Struggle for self determination was grounded in clear historic precedent of having an undisputed claim to our land. Despite being invaded and persecuted, we never left or renounced our right to practice our religion and take our place among the nations. When we negotiated The Irish State with Britain in 1921, following the war of independence, we understood that we could not remove the unionist protestants who had settled in the north of Ireland. We agreed to a two state solution and have honored that solution ever since.

The Palestinian leaders have rejected a two state solution 5 times. They attack Israel and play the victim to the watching global community, but refuse to take a fair deal offering them a state and peace when it has been offered to them.

Albeit it with American aid, the State of Israel has build a thriving economy in recent decades. In Palestine, Hamas refused to recognize Israel and negotiate a peace that might give their people a chance at flourishing.

After Ireland stood up and fought against oppression, they made a deal that honored the unionists and their right to exist. Palestine again and again, refuses to make the deal that gives them a state and recognizes the right of the Jewish people to exist. Ireland should think a little more clearly about Palestine and instead of putting pressure on Israel to recognize the state of Palestine, we should put pressure on Palestine to accept a fair two state solution deal with Israel. The Jewish people, like the unionists in the north, have a right to exist and are not going anywhere.

Right wing trolls and the progressive left

The far right and far left are actually a lot closer to each other than either is to the center, at least so goes the horseshoe theory. When we look at Antisemitism this seems

to ring true. If the position of the center is something like, "let the Jews live in peace," then the far right and left are certainly the furthest thing from that.

The far right internet troll might talk about "the Nazis having a point," or "the international Jewish conspiracy needing to be ended by deporting all Jews." The far left is a little less nuanced but the position is essentially the same. Their position as chanted on college campus's is "from the river to the sea Palestine will be free" or "from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean sea we will make sure we are free of the Jews by wiping them off the face of the planet." Essentially the far right denies the holocaust happened and the far left are willing to bring it about again.

Conclusion

Ireland should wake up, read some history, and help a nation defend it's right to exist.

At the moment we are standing in the way of the legitamate attempts of a state to defend themselves.

We should continue sending humanitarian aid to women and children being put in harms way by Hamas but we also need to speak out against Hamas and in doing so help the suffering Palestinians they are abusing. We need to apply strong pressure on Palestine to sign a deal agreeing to a two state solution. The Palestinian people deserve a shot at a state and at peace, but it is not Israel who stand in their way.