

# Interactions *Between* *Ireland* and Palestine

February 2025



## Introduction

The following monthly interactions report covering February 2025 provides an overview into the current situation for Palestinian rights campaigns and advocacy in Ireland over the course of February 2025. It is hoped, through reading the report, that the reader can gather an understanding as to where the Palestinian issue and advocacy movement finds itself in Ireland. This information can be seen as vital to NGOs, iNGOs, interest groups, private individuals working on issues pertaining to the Ireland and Palestine, and all other relevant stakeholders.

## Government

- On 4 February, the Irish Government urged Israel to suspend its ban on UNRWA, the largest humanitarian aid provider in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Tánaiste Simon Harris warned that the ban would have severe consequences for humanitarian efforts, as no other organisation can replace UNRWA's role in delivering health, education, and relief services. The EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas also condemned Israel's move, calling it an obstruction of international humanitarian work.
- On 6 February, Ireland firmly rejected Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz suggestion that countries critical of Israel's actions should accept displaced Palestinians. The Irish Foreign Ministry reiterated its stance that the priority must be the safe return of Palestinians to their homeland, not forced relocation. This follows Ireland's recognition of Palestine and ongoing criticism of Israel's War on Gaza.
- On 7 February, Ireland committed €20 million to UNRWA to support humanitarian aid in Gaza, the West Bank, and for Palestinian refugees across the region. The funding comes as Gaza faces a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with over 47,500 killed and 111,000 injured, most of whom are women and children. The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs emphasised that UNRWA is vital for delivering aid, health services, and education, reinforcing Ireland's commitment to humanitarian relief.

- On 23 February, Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris reaffirmed Ireland’s strong support for UNRWA in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. During a meeting in Brussels, he called for an immediate increase in aid and urged European governments to step up efforts to ensure swift financial support. Harris highlighted concerns over bureaucratic delays affecting essential services for Palestinian refugees. ‘Ireland remains committed to assisting Gaza and ensuring humanitarian aid reaches those in need— without delay’, he stated.



- On 25 February at the UN Human Rights Council, Irish Minister of State for International Development and the Irish Diaspora, Neale Richmond, called on the world to stay focused on Israel’s escalating actions in the West Bank, where residents of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams refugee camps have been forcibly expelled. Richmond said the following: ‘We must remain focused on the deteriorating situation in the West Bank’. In his remarks, Richmond also called for a full ceasefire in Gaza, unrestricted humanitarian aid, and reaffirmed that a two-state solution is the only path to lasting peace.

## Parliamentarians, political parties, and official/semi-official bodies

- On 5 February, Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald urged the Irish government to enact the Occupied Territories Bill, banning trade with illegal Israeli settlements. Introducing a Private Members' motion in the Dáil, she emphasized that Ireland has historically stood for human rights, comparing the bill to Ireland's anti-apartheid stance on South Africa. McDonald warned that any watered-down version would be a betrayal of the Palestinian people, calling Israel's actions in Gaza a genocide.



- On 5 February, Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr. Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, firmly rejected any plan to displace Palestinians from Gaza, stating, 'No one has the right to decide on behalf of the Palestinians'.

Speaking on RTÉ's Morning Ireland, she condemned Israel's destruction of Gaza, calling it a genocidal war aimed at erasing Palestinian existence. Despite 92% of Gaza being destroyed, she highlighted that over 400,000 Palestinians have returned, reaffirming their commitment to their homeland.

- On 10 February, Irish Senator Frances Black called on the Irish Government to enact a trade ban on goods and services from illegal Israeli settlements within the next 12 months. Black, who introduced the Occupied Territories Bill in 2018, stressed that any legislation must not be watered down. The push follows the UN's advisory opinion (July 2024), which reaffirmed that Israeli settlements on Palestinian land are illegal under international law.
- On 14 February, Galway West TD Catherine Connolly clashed with Tánaiste Simon Harris over Ireland's support for Palestine. Connolly criticised the government for delaying the Occupied Territories Bill, arguing that Ireland is not doing enough. Harris defended the stance, insisting that the Bill is stalled due to legal issues, not political avoidance. 'The Government is not avoiding the issue, but ensuring the legislation is legally sound' he stated.
- On 20 February, Sinn Féin's Mary Lou McDonald and Michelle O'Neill announced they will boycott the White House event for St. Patrick's Day, protesting US support for the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza. McDonald condemned President Trump's stance, calling it a catastrophic decision that demands firm opposition. However, she emphasised the importance of Taoiseach Micheál Martin attending to convey Ireland's strong support for Palestine in his discussions with the US administration.

- On 24 February, Irish Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Lynn Boylan and French-Palestinian MEP, Rima Hassan, were blocked from entering Israel while attempting to visit Palestine as part of an official European Parliament delegation. The delegation, on an official mission to Palestine, was detained upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, questioned, and subsequently deported. Their electronic devices were confiscated for over 90 minutes, leading Boylan to suspect possible interference with her work phone. In a letter to Ireland's EU Commissioner Michael McGrath, she questioned Israel's adequacy agreement under GDPR, arguing that if EU officials' data is not safe, EU citizens' data may also be at risk. Boylan stated, 'I would ask how can European citizens' data be deemed safe with Israel but not for officials of the European Parliament?' She urged McGrath to support rescheduling the mission. Israel defended its actions, stating that individuals supporting a boycott of Israel would not be granted entry.
- On 23 February, Ireland's Department of Enterprise has confirmed that Ireland has exported over €97 million worth of dual-use products to Israel since October 2023, requiring 42 special export licenses, according to Minister Niamh Smyth. These items, which have both civilian and military applications, include ICT hardware, software, networking, and cybersecurity products. Sinn Féin TD Cathy Bennett questioned the surge in exports, highlighting that the 2022 total was just €10.7 million. Minister Smyth assured that strict risk assessments are in place. Concerns were raised about Ireland's responsibility, given Israel's trial at the ICJ for genocide.

## NGOs – Solidarity groups

- On 6 February, Professor Mike Becker, Assistant Professor of Law at Trinity College Dublin, dismissed Israeli Minister Israel Katz's suggestion that Ireland should accept displaced Palestinians as 'grandstanding'. He emphasised that Ireland has no legal obligation to do so and warned that even so-called voluntary relocation does not absolve Israel of potential war crimes. Becker also argued that such agreements could enable unlawful forced transfer and pave the way for Gaza's annexation.
- On 9 February, crowds gathered at Shannon Airport on Sunday to protest US military planes using Irish airspace to transport weapons to Israel. Organised by Palestine solidarity groups, the demonstration condemned Ireland's inaction in blocking arms shipments, calling it complicity in genocide. Activists pointed to Spain's recent refusal to allow US warships to dock, questioning why Ireland has not taken similar action. Protesters emphasized the need for policy change despite temporary disruptions.



- At a London event for Gaza on 13 February, Irish comedian and activist Tadhg Hickey compared Ireland's colonial history to Palestine's ongoing oppression, citing land theft, ethnic cleansing, and racial superiority as shared elements. He criticized Western indifference and highlighted British colonial violence in Ireland as a historical parallel. Hickey, whose political satire has gained over 100 million views on social media, continues to use his platform to expose Western complicity and advocate for urgent action on Gaza.
- On 15 February 2025, the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) organized a march to the US Embassy in Dublin to protest President Trump's plan to expel over two million Palestinians from Gaza. Demonstrators gathered at St. Stephen's Green, demanding an end to US complicity in Israeli policies. The event highlighted Ireland's strong pro-Palestinian stance and growing public opposition to forced displacement in Gaza.



- On 16 February Hundreds gathered in Belfast for the "Love Palestine - Grá don Phalaistín" march, organized by Gaels Against Genocide, to oppose Donald Trump's displacement plans for Palestinians. The march, which featured music and speeches, moved from Writers' Square to Belfast City Hall, with speakers including Dr. Omar Alshaqqaqi, a Gazan living in Belfast, and representatives from GAA clubs across Ireland, highlighting strong Irish solidarity with Palestine.

## Conclusion

The developments in February 2025 highlight both the resilience of Ireland's pro-Palestinian stance and the persistent challenges facing advocacy efforts. The Irish government has taken significant steps in reaffirming its commitment to Palestinian rights, from publicly rejecting Israel's plans for forced displacement to maintaining its support for UNRWA. However, these actions exist alongside ongoing contradictions, particularly in Ireland's continued export of dual-use goods to Israel, raising concerns about the extent to which government policies align with Ireland's stated humanitarian and legal commitments.

Parliamentary discussions and legislative efforts reflect a growing momentum for stronger action. Sinn Féin and various independent voices continue to push for the full enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill and greater diplomatic pressure on Israel. However, the government's reluctance to accelerate these measures highlights the political and legal complexities of turning symbolic support into binding legislation. The refusal of entry to MEPs attempting to visit Palestine further underscores the increasing restrictions on international scrutiny of Israel's actions, reinforcing the need for sustained diplomatic and civil society pressure.

Beyond government and parliamentary initiatives, Ireland's civil society remains deeply engaged in Palestinian solidarity. Protests against US military involvement and the use of Irish airspace for arms shipments to Israel demonstrate strong public opposition to complicity in the war on Gaza. The intersection of Ireland's colonial history with contemporary Palestinian resistance continues to shape activism, with influential cultural figures like Tadhg Hickey using their platforms to mobilise awareness and large-scale demonstrations taking place in cities such as Dublin and Belfast.

These dynamics reinforce Ireland's position as a key European voice in Palestinian advocacy. However, the gap between political rhetoric and concrete action—particularly in areas of trade policy and diplomatic leverage—remains a significant issue. Whether Ireland's strong statements will translate into tangible policy shifts or remain constrained by diplomatic and legal barriers will become clearer in the coming months. The challenge now lies in sustaining pressure on the government to ensure that its moral stance is backed by decisive and impactful measures in support of Palestinian rights.

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