

Interactions *Between* *Ireland* and Palestine

April 2026



Introduction

The following monthly interactions report for April 2026 provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of Palestinian rights campaigns and advocacy in Ireland. This report aims to offer readers a clear understanding of the status of the Palestinian issue and the advocacy movement in Ireland as of April 2026. The information presented is crucial for NGOs, iNGOs, interest groups, private individuals, and all other relevant stakeholders engaged with matters concerning Palestine and the UK, providing essential insights.

Government

- In April, it was revealed that the Department of Sport has faced significant public pressure to boycott the Republic of Ireland's October fixtures against Israel, with citizens drawing sharp comparisons to the sporting ban imposed on Russia. Correspondents accused the government of hypocrisy and argued that participating provides a 'veneer of normalcy' to a state accused of killing hundreds of Palestinian athletes and building stadiums on occupied land. Despite these moral objections and criticisms of Minister Patrick O'Donovan, the FAI maintains the games must proceed to avoid 'bureaucratic' UEFA sanctions, a stance they claim is supported by legal experts.
- On 2 April, Ireland joined seventeen other European nations in demanding an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah to prevent further regional destabilisation. The group condemned 'unjustified' attacks on civilians and healthcare workers, while expressing grave concern over Israeli plans for a long-term occupation of southern Lebanon. Calling for an end to the month-long war of aggression by Israel - which has displaced over a million people - the ministers urged a return to diplomacy and full respect for Lebanese sovereignty.

- On 5 April, it was reported that six shipments of military cargo from Elbit Systems were transported through Irish sovereign airspace on an El Al flight from Newark to Tel Aviv. Freight records indicate the 268kg cargo was labelled as 'Foreign Military Financing' - a US programme used to fund Israeli weaponry - and passed over several Irish counties before exiting via Wicklow. As the carriage of munitions of war through Irish territory without permission is a criminal offence, the revelation has sparked renewed scrutiny of the transport ministry. This incident follows previous reports of the Israeli carrier illegally transporting weapons, further challenging the government's oversight of Irish air navigation laws.
- On 21 April, Irish Foreign Minister Helen McEntee urged the European Union to suspend its agreement with Israel - or at least its trade provisions - citing clear violations of international law and human rights. Speaking in Luxembourg alongside allies from Spain and Slovenia, McEntee argued that the bloc must uphold its 'fundamental values' in response to an 'unprecedented and unacceptable' escalation of violence in the West Bank and the introduction of a controversial death penalty bill against Palestinian hostages. She noted a growing 'dissatisfaction and annoyance' among EU leaders regarding Israeli policy, suggesting that the current situation requires a collective European response to ensure that trade partners remain compliant with global human rights obligations.

The Bill was ultimately defeated by Government Senators, a move the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) condemned as 'cowardly' and a continuation of Irish complicity in international law violations. Those who voted against the Bill's passage included Garret Ahearn, Lorraine Clifford-Lee, and Fiona O'Loughlin, among others. While supporters like Senator Tom Clonan highlighted the moral and physical risk to Irish peacekeepers in Lebanon from US-made weapons transiting Irish skies, the Government maintained that the Bill lacked sufficient detail for primary legislation. This failure to pass the Bill marks a significant setback for activists who have long campaigned for a comprehensive embargo to protect Irish neutrality and uphold human rights obligations amidst the ongoing genocide and wars of aggression in the Middle East.



- On 25 April, the Irish government initiated formal proceedings to demand compensation from Israel for the demolition of a primary school in the occupied West Bank. Foreign Minister Helen McEntee condemned the destruction of the facility - which served 60 children in the Bedouin hamlet of Hamamat al-Maleh - as a 'grave violation' of international humanitarian law and an assault on human dignity. The school was funded by a multinational partnership including Ireland, the UK, and the European Commission, prompting Dublin to seek reimbursement for the razed infrastructure. This claim joins an outstanding €1.7 million request for damages accumulated since 2015, highlighting a pattern of destruction that Irish officials argue systematically targets civilian projects and vulnerable communities.



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

- In April 2026, it was revealed that among the 21 Irish participants joining the Global Sumud Flotilla - the largest civilian maritime effort to date to break the siege of Gaza - were People Before Profit TD Paul Murphy and Dublin author Naoise Dolan. Setting sail from Sicily as part of a mission involving over 70 vessels and 1,000 international volunteers, Dolan and Murphy joined the convoy to challenge the ongoing naval blockade and deliver humanitarian aid, including building materials for the reconstruction of hospitals and schools. Their participation follows a pattern of heightened Irish activism in the region, coming shortly after the election of President Catherine Connolly.



- At their annual conference in Killarney in early April, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) adopted a robust stance on ethical procurement, specifically targeting corporate ties to Israel's genocide in Gaza. The motion, passed with significant consensus, urges a systemic shift towards a 'rights-based' purchasing policy across the Irish educational sector to ensure school tenders align with United Nations ethical standards.

A focal point of the debate was the partnership between the GAA and the insurance provider Allianz. Educators expressed a profound moral objection to Allianz's sponsorship of the *Cumann na mBunscol* youth competitions, citing the insurer's investment links to Elbit Systems, an Israeli defence contractor. While acknowledging the GAA's autonomy, union delegates argued that the presence of such corporate interests within school-led activities is incompatible with the sector's commitment to child welfare and human rights. Furthermore, the union intensified its political advocacy, calling for the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill to formalise Ireland's opposition to international law violations.

- On 8 April, it was revealed that Irish politician and former Member of the European Parliament, Mick Wallace, condemned the continued trade relations between EU member states and Israel, questioning why such cooperation persists despite ongoing human rights violations. In social media posts, Wallace criticised European nations for failing to halt trade with the 'terrorist state' of Israel, arguing that their silence and economic ties make them complicit in the destruction of Palestine.

- On 16 April, Solidarity TD Ruth Coppinger condemned the government as 'pathetic' for failing to cancel Ireland's upcoming UEFA Nations League fixtures against Israel. Coppinger dismissed the Taoiseach's call to decouple sport from politics as 'facetious', arguing that the state's 'lack of moral backbone' stands in poor contrast to past interventions against apartheid-era South Africa and Yugoslavia. Supported by Sinn Féin's Paul Donnelly - who cited the 2014 killing of four boys playing football on a Gaza beach by Israeli forces - Coppinger called for a grassroots campaign among trade unions and football clubs to prevent the Dublin match from proceeding.
- On 27 April, it was revealed that Dr. Margaret Connolly, a Sligo-based GP and sister of President Catherine Connolly, has joined the Global Sumud Flotilla in a mission to deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to Gaza. A long-time activist in the Palestine solidarity movement, Dr. Connolly set sail on Sunday to challenge the ongoing Israeli naval blockade, emphasising that the group is fully prepared for the risk of arrest in their pursuit of providing relief to the region.



NGOs – Solidarity groups

- On 2 April, it was announced that University of Galway graduates Dylan and Shane O'Halloran returned their inaugural Nelson Mandela Anti- Racism Awards in protest of the university's ongoing research partnership with Israel's Technion Institute. The brothers, joined by several other honourees who have previously rejected accolades, cited the institute's ties to the Israeli military and argued that maintaining the contract makes the university complicit in human rights violations.



- On 9 April, a panel hosted by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement - and supported by the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Trade Union Friends of Palestine - gathered in Dublin to address the 'immense' disconnect between Irish public sentiment and government policy. Alongside author Sally Rooney and BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti, the event featured Sinn Féin TD Joanna Byrne, trade unionist Paul Gavan, and experts Niamh Ní Bhriain, Éamonn Meehan, and Dr John Reynolds. Barghouti argued that the Irish government remains 'totally beholden' to American interests, suggesting that the state is neglecting domestic social systems to 'feed the US army' through the continued military use of Shannon airport.

The discussion framed the preservation of Irish neutrality and the 'triple lock' mechanism as essential barriers against a global 'might makes right' order. Rooney emphasised the power of the cultural boycott, noting that the word 'no' is where 'speech meets action', while Byrne discussed the personal cost of political dissent following her recent removal from a football directorship. By linking the cost-of-living crisis to the broader machinery of international conflict, the speakers argued that academic, sporting, and state-level sanctions are necessary tools to prevent Ireland from being pulled further into a 'dystopian abyss' of militarisation and complicity.

- On 12 April, news broke that Dublin's National Concert Hall had cancelled a fundraising event for Magen David Adom, an Israeli emergency medical service, for the second time. The event was set to feature 'OCTOBER 7', a play based on eyewitness accounts of the 2023 events, leading MDA Ireland head Alan Shatter to label the move an act of 'antisemitic censorship'. While the venue provided no specific reasoning for the cancellation, the decision has drawn international condemnation from figures like Gilad Erdan, who argued it compromises the hall's integrity. Amidst claims from Shatter that Ireland is increasingly perceived as 'one of the most antisemitic countries in Europe', the controversy highlights the intensifying friction between Irish cultural institutions and pro-Israel advocacy groups.
- On 15 April, 91-year-old activist Lelia Doolan concluded a 220km trek from County Clare to Dublin, demanding an end to US military transit through Shannon airport. Doolan - who maintains that the unchecked refuelling of American aircraft compromises Irish neutrality - challenged the government's assertion that the civilian hub remains uninvolved in combat operations in the Middle East. While the Taoiseach acknowledged Doolan's long-standing dedication to peace, he cautioned that mischaracterising the airport's logistical role could jeopardise its viability, highlighting the persistent tension between Ireland's non-aligned identity and its strategic international agreements.

- On 18 April, hundreds of protesters at Dublin's Garden of Remembrance campaigned to preserve Ireland's neutrality and the 'triple lock' mechanism - a unique legal safeguard requiring the joint approval of the UN, the Government, and the Dáil before Irish troops can be deployed abroad. Activists argued that dismantling this policy would facilitate further collusion in international conflicts, specifically regarding US military transit through Shannon airport. By framing the 'triple lock' as a vital democratic barrier against unilateral military involvement, the demonstration highlighted a growing tension between the public's demand for a neutrality referendum and the State's pursuit of greater flexibility in its foreign and security policy.



- Several high-profile figures, including Fontaines D.C., Kneecap, and Annie Mac, have backed the 'Stop The Game' campaign calling for a boycott of the Ireland vs Israel football match scheduled for October. This news, revealed on 20 April, features protesters who argue that 'playing Israel is supporting genocide' and dismiss the idea that sports can be separated from politics. While the FAI and Taoiseach Micheál Martin maintain the game should proceed to avoid UEFA sanctions and to distinguish between the Israeli government and its people, activists and former manager Brian Kerr insist the fixture offers a vital opportunity to take a moral stand against ongoing military actions in Gaza.

Conclusion

The developments in April 2026 illustrate a deepening divide between a militant grassroots movement and a government tethered to institutional pragmatism. This month saw a transition from symbolic solidarity to 'rights-based' economic pressure, notably through the INTO's demand for ethical school procurement and the targeted boycott of Allianz over its Elbit Systems ties. While the State has adopted a more confrontational diplomatic posture - demanding compensation for razed West Bank schools and urging the EU to suspend trade provisions - its domestic policy remains cautious. The defeat of the Air Navigation (Arms Embargo) Bill and the refusal to cancel UEFA fixtures against Israel highlight a persistent 'credibility gap' where Irish sovereignty is often sidelined to maintain 'bureaucratic' compliance and strategic relations with the US and European bodies.

Looking ahead, the scope for Irish advocacy is shifting towards legal and structural accountability. The recent revelation of Elbit Systems munitions transiting Irish airspace serves as a catalyst for a more rigorous interpretation of Irish neutrality, moving beyond rhetoric into a demand for functional enforcement. As figures like Paul Murphy TD and Dr Margaret Connolly engage in direct action via the Global Sumud Flotilla, and cultural icons like Sally Rooney normalise the boycott as a mainstream civic tool, the government faces an increasingly untenable position. Future developments will likely be defined by whether the State chooses to formalise this public sentiment through the Occupied Territories Bill or continues to rely on a 'triple lock' mechanism that activists now argue is being bypassed by logistical complicity.

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