



Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Democratic Labour Movement

Statement

Expectations of the Nordic labour movement of a new government in Israel

The Nordic labour movement convened for its annual meeting on 10 February 2009. On the same day, the election to the Israeli parliament was held. The election decides which government will be steering Israel in the years to come. After the war in Gaza, Israel is standing at a crossroads. The votes of the Israeli voters have rarely been this significant. Will Israel take the road of peace and understanding or the road of isolation and confrontation?

The three-week war in Gaza had terrible consequences. 1,440 Palestinians were killed, 431 of them being children. Nearly 2,000 of the more than 5,000 injured people were children. Much of the Gaza infrastructure has been destroyed, and it will take a long time to re-establish a functional society again.

Israel claims that the war was a response to Gaza's missile attacks having been launched into southern Israel for many years. While condemning the missile attacks and recognising Israel's right to defend its people, we are of the firm belief that the Israeli response was completely out of proportion. The missile attacks have even continued after the end of the war, thus proving that massive violence was not the right response to stop them. Instead, many Palestinians have become bitter and vindictive. The Nordic labour movement is of the opinion that any war crimes committed in connection with the war in Gaza must be punished. We are prepared to act through the UN's Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court to investigate, try and bring any war criminals found to justice. Action needs to be taken against war crimes. This applies to Israelis having exerted excessive violence and used white phosphorous against people and to Palestinians having used civilians as shields or launched missiles against civilians.

The Nordic labour movement is convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In spite of all inherent problems, a peaceful solution needs to be negotiated which entails two states, Israel and Palestine, within safe and recognised borders with Jerusalem as the capital of both countries. Israelis and Palestinians share the right to live in peace and safety with possibilities of fulfilling their life dreams.

Both sides have to make concessions to make this possible. Missile and terrorist attacks against Israel must stop at once. The new Israeli government needs to initiate a policy for peace and safety. Peace and safety can be combined in our belief.

The new Israeli government needs to recognise that Israel is the stronger party and thus holds greater responsibility for achieving peace. An absolute condition will be an end to the occupation of Palestine. Furthermore, Palestinians' freedom of movement must be improved by dismantling roadblocks and opening border crossings. The settlements established on occupied land in contravention of international law must be removed as must the part of the wall built on occupied

land. The new Israeli government needs to show the rest of the world that it is prepared to make a renewed attempt to solve the conflict by accepting to participate in a regional peace conference and welcome an international monitoring mission.

The Nordic labour movement has a fundamental belief in dialogue, cooperation and trade. However, these factors cannot be realised in a vacuum, but must respect human rights and allow everyone to participate.

We hope and believe that the new Israeli government will take the road of peace and understanding. Nordic history abounds with long wars and conflicts. But wise political decisions little by little made our region peaceful and successful. War is not a state of nature. War or peace is made by political decision. The Nordic labour movement is prepared to contribute as much as it can to avoid a future region characterised by hatred and conflict and instead have a peaceful Middle East.