

Embassy of the State of Palestine

The General Delegation of Palestine
to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand
and the Pacific



INTERN POLICY REPORT

Engaging with Youth Politics:
Understanding the Positions of ACT Young
Labor and ACT Young Liberals on the
Situation in Israel and Palestine

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Executive Summary

The influence of the youth wings of Australia's major political parties cannot be underestimated. As the Israel-Palestine conflict continues as one of the world's most protracted and bitter disputes, and as a two-state solution appears increasingly less viable, Palestinians are progressively seeking international recognition of Palestinian statehood. As such, ascertaining the positions of Young Labor and Young Liberals on the Israel-Palestine conflict is important to informing youth political engagement strategies for the Delegation in order to promote increased awareness and understanding of Palestinian issues.

This report seeks to examine the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Drawing on primary qualitative data from group interviews conducted with representatives of the respective youth political wings, and complemented by secondary literature reviews, this report delivers an analysis of the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals on three key themes; narratives, foreign policy, and the future of the peace process.

This report finds that the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals tend to reflect the positions of the ALP and the Coalition, with some caveats. In examining their perceptions of narratives, Young Labor tends to be more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, whereas Young Liberals tend to favour the Zionist/Israeli narrative. Moreover, both Young Labor and Young Liberals expressed slightly more progressive views than the official foreign policies of their respective parties, and Young Labor tended to favour a one-state solution while Young Liberals tended to favour a two-state solution.

Three key recommendations are provided to the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific on engaging with youth political parties:

1. Appeal to emotions and tell the Palestinian narrative. In examining the transcripts from the group interviews, it is evident that conservative-leaning youth tended to express both a lack of awareness and a lack of engagement with the story of the Palestinian struggle. In pursuing further engagement, consider utilising young Palestinian-Australians to tell their stories and relate to young politically-engaged youth, in order to win over hearts and minds.
2. Actively organise educational events. Many members, from both Young Labor and Liberals, expressed interest in attending events centred around Palestine and raising awareness of key issues. Potential future events could include Q&A panels, guest-speaker seminars at universities, and robust academic debates.
3. Engage in further research on the positions of youth political wings on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Whilst this report serves to present a preliminary analysis of Canberra-based youth political wings, there is value in investing in further research on the topic in order to ascertain a more comprehensive understanding of Australian youth politics and their respective positions on key issues.

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Section One: Introduction, Methodology and Background Context

1.1 Introduction

The influence of the youth wings of Australia's major political parties cannot be underestimated. As the Israel-Palestine conflict continues as one of the world's most protracted and bitter disputes, and as a two-state solution appears increasingly less viable, Palestinians are progressively seeking international recognition of Palestinian statehood. As such, ascertaining the positions of Young Labor and Young Liberals on the Israel-Palestine conflict is important to informing youth political engagement strategies for the Delegation in order to promote increased awareness and understanding of Palestinian issues, and advocate for the recognition of Palestinian statehood.

This report focuses on the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals as they relate to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Opening with an exploration of the contextual background of the conflict, this report will then in turn examine the positions of the respective youth political wings on three key themes; narratives, foreign policy, and the peace process. Finally, this report will conclude by providing recommendations to the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific to develop youth political engagement strategies in relation to ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals.

1.2 Methodology

The goal of this report is to examine the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals on the Israel-Palestine conflict, in order to inform the development of youth political engagement strategies for the Delegation. Primarily drawing upon semi-structured group interviews conducted with members of the respective youth political wings, this report will analyse the qualitative data as it relates to three key themes; narratives, foreign policy, and the peace process. Supporting these interviews, secondary literature, including journal and newspaper articles as well as political policy documents and statements, will be utilised to provide contextual depth and further inform the analysis.

Methodological Constraints

A notable constraint to this report's methodology is the relatively small sample size of each group interview. Whilst every effort was made to reflect a broad scope of opinions and beliefs within each group, logistical constraints only allowed for four or five interviewees per group. Moreover, the interview with Young Labor members was made up of 75% Labor Left, and 25% Labor Right representatives. Therefore, this report does not intend to suggest that the data collected is entirely representative of the positions held by each youth political party, but rather, reflective of the positions of the individuals interviewed in May 2021. Moreover, it is also important to note that the group interview with members from ACT Young Liberals was conducted three days prior to the May 2021 outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas, whereas the ACT Young Labor interview was held during ongoing violence but prior to the eventual ceasefire.

1.3 Background and Context

Historical Context of the Situation in Israel and Palestine

For Palestinians, the birth of the State of Israel in 1948 represents the ‘Nakba’ (in English: ‘the catastrophe’), a series of colonial-settler events which led to the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians.¹ By the end of the war, known in Israel as the ‘War of Independence’, 78% of original Palestinian land was occupied, and by 1967, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, were also under Israeli occupation.² Despite numerous negotiations attempting to settle the dispute peacefully, including the signing of the 1993/1995 Oslo Accords, peace deals continued to deteriorate and lead to increased violence in the region.

Contemporary Context of the Situation in Israel and Palestine

The contemporary situation in Israel and Palestine remains one of asymmetrical power and an enduring military occupation over Palestine’s fragmented territory in Gaza and the West Bank. In 2005, Israel official withdrew its ground troops from the Gaza Strip, and from 2007, Hamas seized control of the territory following months of clashes with rival political party Fatah.³ However, Israel continues to exert influence over Gaza through its exercise of an economically crippling blockade. Moreover, despite directly contravening its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel has continued its expansion of settlements in the

¹ Oxford University Press, *Max Planck Encyclopedias of International Law* (online at 15 May 2021) ‘Arab-Israeli Conflict’ [109].

² Ibid.

³ ‘A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution’ *Human Rights Watch* (online, 27 April 2021) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

occupied West Bank, whilst temporarily suspending its plan to unilaterally annex further areas of the West Bank.⁴

⁴ 'A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution' *Human Rights Watch* (online, 27 April 2021) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

Section Two: The Role of Narratives

2.1 Do Narratives Matter?

The importance of narrative, both one's own narrative and the perceived narrative of the 'other', cannot be overstated in the Israel-Palestine conflict.⁵ Reflecting the lens through which historical and national events are framed and retold, narratives are an intrinsically human strategy for making sense of conflict, pain, memory, change and time.⁶ Therefore, acknowledging the individual and collective stories of the 'other' can be central to fostering a greater sense of understanding, and assist in humanising the perceived 'enemy'.

The historical context of the Israel-Palestine conflict gives rise to two conflicting collective narratives. For the Israelis, their national tale is one of returning to the ancient homeland, where after millennia in exile and the horrors of the Holocaust, Israel reflects a protected sanctuary for the Jewish people.⁷ However, the Palestinians tell a radically-divergent history; one of forced displacement at the hands of a settler-colonial power, forced to deal with the stark consequences of a European genocide for which they bore no responsibility.⁸ As such, there remains a distinct tension between the Israeli narrative of national self-determination in the face of the unspeakable tragedy of the Holocaust, and the Palestinian narrative of imposed imperialism and colonialism upon an indigenous group of people. In recognising that narratives shape social knowledge through embedding collective memories and emphasising the correctness and legitimacy of one's own claims, it is therefore important to examine the role Israeli and Palestinian narratives play within Australian youth political discourse.⁹

⁵ Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat 'Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives' [2013] (18) *Israel Studies* 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Oxford University Press, *Max Planck Encyclopedias of International Law* (online at 15 May 2021) 'Arab-Israeli Conflict' [109].

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrund and As'ad Ghanem 'Introduction to Shared Narratives – A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue' [2013] (18) *Israel Studies* 2.

2.2 Perceptions and Characterisations: ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals

In order to most effectively develop youth political engagement strategies, it is important to ascertain how members of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals perceive and distinguish the competing narratives of the Israel-Palestine conflict. When asked in interviews how they would characterise their understanding of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, members of Young Labor tended to emphasise Palestinian stories of settler-colonialism, dispossession and genocide, whereas members of Young Liberals were more likely to place emphasis on Israeli notions of Zionism and countering anti-Semitism.¹⁰ While both groups recognised the horrors of the Holocaust and legitimate desires of the Jewish people to find a safe land, one member of Young Labor Left likened the situation of Zionism to ‘letting someone into your house as a guest, and then they decide it is their house now, and then you find yourself pushed out of your own home’.¹¹

Members of Young Labor and Young Liberals tended also to differ on their perception of the Palestinian narrative. One representative of Young Liberals noted that while ‘both sides are claiming the land as historically theirs’...’[historically] it was the Jewish homeland’.¹² Another member of the Young Liberals further noted the Palestinian narrative ‘as one of victimhood’, stressing that claims of stolen lands and dispossessions are mere allegations rather than facts.¹³ Relevantly, literature on the role of narratives in defining the situation in Israel and Palestine emphasises the importance of terminology and how discourse and

¹⁰ Members of ACT Young Labor, Group Interview by Gabriella Morgan, May 20, 2021 *and* Members of ACT Young Liberals, Group Interview by Gabriella Morgan, May 6, 2021.

¹¹ Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

¹² Members of ACT Young Liberals, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

¹³ *Ibid.*

particular word choices shape cognition and patterns of thinking.¹⁴ Notably, during the group interview with Young Labor, one member took particular issue with the phrase ‘Israel-Palestine conflict’. In his explanation, he stressed that ‘a conflict implies that there are two equal sides, but in this situation, they are not equal – one is literally a nuclear power whilst the other is having genocide...and dispossession acted upon it’.¹⁵

Themes surrounding the historical re-telling of fact also tended to differ between the Young Labor and Young Liberals groups. Concepts of ‘colonial maladministration’, and the effects of the Balfour Declaration and McMahon-Hussein agreements tended to centre discourse amongst the Young Liberals, whereas Young Labor spoke more to ‘settler-colonial violence’ perpetrated by Israeli authorities and the role of ‘Zionist rhetoric’ in dispossessing Palestinians of their homes in the 1940s and 1950s.

2.3 Conclusions

Narratives matter. Recognising how history may be perceived and retold by different groups of people is important to acknowledging what shapes the different lenses and frames through which the world is understood. Through conducting group interviews with members of Young Labor and Young Liberals, it is clear that their frames of references differ. Tending to be more sympathetic to the narrative of the Palestinians, both factions of Young Labor spoke to the violence of settler-colonialism and its impacts on the Palestinians. In contrast, representatives of Young Liberal tended to take a more historical approach, noting factors such as Sykes-Picot and the growing Zionist movement after the Holocaust, and were more

¹⁴ Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat ‘Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives’ [2013] (18) *Israel Studies* 2.

¹⁵ Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

likely to be sympathetic towards the Israeli narrative of Israel as a sanctuary of safety for the Jewish people.

Section Three: Australian Foreign Policy

3.1 Australian Foreign Policy toward Israel and Palestine: Outlining the Shifting Policies under Coalition and Labor Governments

The situation in Israel and Palestine presents as an Australian foreign policy issue of unusual disagreement between the Coalition and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). While both parties remain firmly in support of a two-state solution, their approaches to voting at the UN as well as recognition of Palestinian statehood differ drastically.¹⁶ In December 2018, Prime Minister Scott Morrison drew domestic and international condemnation upon announcing the Coalition's plan to formally recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and move Australia's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem upon a finalised agreement between Israel and Palestine.¹⁷ Such a move also reflected contemporary American foreign policy at the time, as President Donald Trump announced the US' intention in 2017 to unilaterally move its embassy to Jerusalem.¹⁸ However, there were also relevant domestic influences upon Morrison's announcement – namely an upcoming byelection in Wentworth with a powerful and influential 12.5% Jewish population.¹⁹

Reflecting the influence of youth political wings in Australia, the Coalition's Israeli embassy policy originated as a Young Liberals motion.²⁰ However somewhat curiously, when asked in

¹⁶ Jade Gailberger, 'Scott Morrison Weighs in on Israel-Palestine Conflict' *The Australian* (online, 14 May 2021) <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/scott-morrison-weighs-in-on-israelipalestinian-conflict/news-story/d7c28c580746548e910e8c934c0a4564>>.

¹⁷ Prime Minister of Australia, *Address to the Sydney Institute Speech* (15 December 2018) <<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/address-sydney-institute>>.

¹⁸ 'Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital and Orders U.S. Embassy to Move' *The New York Times* (online, 6 December 2017) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/world/middleeast/trump-jerusalem-israel-capital.html>>.

¹⁹ Melissa Davey, 'Australia Recognises West Jerusalem as Israel's Capital but Holds Back on Embassy Move' *The Guardian* (online, 15 December 2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/14/australian-government-to-recognise-jerusalem-as-israels-capital>>.

²⁰ Katharine Murphy, Michael McGowan and Anne Davies, 'Jerusalem Embassy Move a 'Sensible' Proposal, Says Scott Morrison' *The Guardian* (online, 16 October 2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/16/australia-may-move-embassy-in-israel-to-jerusalem>>.

the group interview about the controversial decision to move the embassy, all participants in the Young Liberal focus group conceded that they now disagree with the Coalition's position.²¹ One member explained that maintaining the Australian embassy's location in Tel Aviv enabled Australia to 'effectively stay neutral and stay supportive of a two-state solution and broader peace processes' whilst another Young Liberal noted that the announcement served only to 'inflare tensions needlessly' and another commented that it was merely 'jumping on the back of the US bandwagon'.²² This sentiment was also shared amongst those interviewed in Young Labor, with one representative saying that it reflected 'Australia actively siding with Israel as the oppressor in this dynamic'.

Pursuing a distinctly different foreign policy path, the ALP announced in March 2021 its decision to unilaterally recognise Palestinian statehood during the next federal Labor government.²³ Historically, federal Labor governments have been more openly supportive of Palestinian causes than the Coalition. This is further reflected in Australia's changing voting record on key UN resolutions as they relate to Israel and Palestine. In September 2013, the new Coalition government under Abbot shifted Australia's vote on two key resolutions from Labor's 'in favour' to the Howard era's 'abstain' – namely on a resolution to demand Israel comply with its obligations under the 1949 Geneva Conventions in the occupied West Bank, and a resolution demanding Israel cease its settlement expansion activities.²⁴ Moreover, in 2016, Coalition Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull openly criticised a UN resolution, which

²¹ Members of ACT Young Liberals, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

²² Ibid.

²³ Sarah Martin, 'ALP Focuses on China Human Rights Violations and Palestinian Statehood at National Conference' *The Guardian* (online, 30 March 2021) <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/30/alp-focuses-on-china-human-rights-violations-and-palestinian-statehood-at-national-conference>>.

²⁴ Parliament of Australia, *The Coalition, Labor and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict since 2013* <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2017/February/The_Coalition_Labor_and_the_Israeli_Palestinian_conflict_since_2013>.

denounced Israel's settlement activity as a 'flagrant violation under international law',²⁵ calling the resolution unfairly 'one-sided' against Israel.²⁶ In contrast, Labor's Shadow Foreign Minister Penny Wong affirmed in 2017 that Labor would continue to speak out against policies that were harmful to the two-state solution, particularly settlement activity.²⁷

It appears that foreign policy disagreement in federal politics is also reflected amongst youth political wings. When asked how satisfied they were with Australia's foreign policy towards Israel and Palestine, members of Young Labor and Young Liberal had vastly different views. One member of Young Labor Left stressed that she was 'completely dissatisfied, disappointed, and embarrassed' by Australia's current foreign policy (including, inter alia, non-recognition of Palestinian statehood, supporting Israel and its right to defend itself, and unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital).²⁸ A member of Young Labor Right noted that while he understood the influence of Australia's alliance with the US, he would still disagree with the current foreign policy trajectory.²⁹ In contrast, there was consensus amongst the Young Liberals in agreement with the Coalition's foreign policy. Reflecting the need for Australia to be viewed as an 'important ally to the US', members agreed that 'Australia is doing enough and our policies are sound', and many openly self-identified as being 'pro-Israel'. In examining the positions of ACT Young Labor and ACT Young Liberals on Australia's foreign policy towards the region, it is also necessary to examine why relevant issues have different salience amongst the youth political wings.

²⁵ *United Nations Security Council*, SC Res 2334, UN Doc S/RES/2334 (2016).

²⁶ Parliament of Australia, *The Coalition, Labor and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict since 2013* <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2017/February/The_Coalition_Labor_and_the_Israeli_Palestinian_conflict_since_2013>.

²⁷ Katharine Murphy, 'Israel-Palestine: Turnbull Government Reiterates Support for Two-State Solution' *The Guardian* (online, 16 February 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/16/israel-palestine-turnbull-government-reiterates-support-for-two-state-solution>>.

²⁸ Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

²⁹ *Ibid*

3.2 Factors Shaping Foreign Policy

3.2.1 *The Influence of Australia's Alliance with the US*

During discussions with members of the ACT's youth political wings, Australia's close relationship with the US emerged as a salient factor shaping Australian foreign policy perceptions. Whilst the necessity to mirror American foreign policy developments towards Israel and Palestine appeared more important amongst the Young Liberals, members of Young Labor also noted the alliance's relevance. However, Young Labor members tended to reference the dangers of 'blindly toeing the line with whatever stance the US is taking' in terms of enabling 'human rights violations'. When asked about whether the recent change in US leadership would be likely to shift Liberal policies, Young Liberal members agreed that it would be unlikely, as 'it isn't just a Trump thing to be pro-Israel'.³⁰ This is indeed supported by US President Joe Biden's most recent statements, following the May 2021 violence between Israel and Hamas, affirming that his party 'still supports Israel'.³¹

3.2.2 *Public Perception*

Public perceptions and opinions on the Israel-Palestine situation are shifting.³² In 2020, a Lowy Institute public poll required participants to rate their feelings towards particular countries, with one being the least favourable and one hundred being the most favourable. The outcome of this poll suggested the average Australian rated their feelings towards Palestine at 39, whilst feelings towards Israel were more favourable at 47.³³ However, perceptions in Australia, and the US, have dramatically shifted since the May 2021 outbreak

³⁰ Members of ACT Young Liberals, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

³¹ 'The Latest: Biden Says His Party 'Still Supports Israel' *Associated Press* (online, 22 May 2021) < <https://apnews.com/article/africa-middle-east-europe-israel-palestinian-conflict-business-9ae5b10886c06e70f0255b188ac1e0cc>>.

³² Sarah Aziz, 'Racial Reckoning is Shifting US Public Opinion on Palestine' *Aljazeera* (online, 20 May 2021) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/5/20/racial-reckoning-is-shifting-us-public-opinion-on-palestine>>.

³³ The Lowy Institute, *Lowy Institute Poll 2020* (24 June 2020) <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/report/>.

of violence between Israel and Hamas. Notably, thousands of Australians have participated in protests across Australia in solidarity with Palestinians, and more than 22,000 people have signed a petition urging the ABC to be more vocal in reporting Israeli atrocities against Palestinians.³⁴ In contrast, a relatively small handful of Israeli solidarity events were organised and attended in Australia.³⁵ Sentiment is also shifting in the US. In a March 2021 Pew Research Centre poll, 34% of all respondents and 53% of Democrat respondents expressed desires for the US to place pressure on Israel to make concessions with Palestine – up from 25% and 30% respectively in 2018.³⁶ Moreover, Democratic House Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez openly criticised Joe Biden in Congress on May 13th 2021 for his resolute and continued support of Israel – rhetoric unprecedented in US Congress.³⁷ Despite this, it must be noted that whilst analysts acknowledge the shift in public perceptions, most affirm that it is not currently particularly influential on foreign policy decisions within the Biden administration.³⁸

3.2.3 Human Rights

Woven into Young Labor’s discourse on foreign policy was a distinct reference to, and concern for, the human rights situation in Palestine.³⁹ One member of Young Labor expressed that ‘there is simply not enough focus on Israel’s illegal occupation...and human rights atrocities that they’ve perpetrated’, whilst another labelled Israel as a ‘human rights

³⁴ See SBS News, ‘Thousands Rally Across Australia in Solidarity with Palestinians Amid Renewed Gaza Violence’ *SBS News* (online, 15 May 2021) <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/thousands-rally-across-australia-in-solidarity-with-palestinians-amid-renewed-gaza-violence>>. and Change.Org, *An Open Letter to the ABC re: Silence on Israeli Atrocities Against Palestine* <<https://www.change.org/p/an-open-letter-to-the-abc-re-silence-on-israeli-atrocities-against-palestinians>>.

³⁵ Jerusalem Post Staff, ‘Pro-Israel Solidarity Protests Held Around Australia after Gaza Ceasefire’ *The Jerusalem Post* (online, 24 May 2021) <<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/pro-israel-solidarity-protests-held-around-australia-after-gaza-ceasefire-668949>>.

³⁶ Sarah Aziz, ‘Racial Reckoning is Shifting US Public Opinion on Palestine’ *Aljazeera* (online, 20 May 2021) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/5/20/racial-reckoning-is-shifting-us-public-opinion-on-palestine>>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

abuser'.⁴⁰ These comments pertaining to human rights concerns tend to echo growing international condemnation of Israel's consistent violations of international human rights law. Most notably, in April 2021, US-based Human Rights Watch published an unprecedented report on human rights abuses perpetrated by Israeli authorities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, concluding that Israel has now crossed the threshold into acts constituting crimes against humanity – specifically apartheid and persecution.⁴¹ This is further supported by the International Criminal Court's findings in February 2021 that it does have jurisdiction to investigate Israel's actions in occupied Palestinian territory, and its subsequent March 2021 decision to open a formal investigation into the situation in Palestine.⁴²

⁴⁰ Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

⁴¹ 'A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution' *Human Rights Watch* (online, 27 April 2021) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Section Four: The Peace Process

4.1 Historical Failures in the Peace Process between Israel and Palestine

Efforts to seek a final and peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestine have consistently failed.⁴³ In 1993, when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat stood on the lawns of the White House and historically shook Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's hand following the signing of the Oslo Accords, many believed that peace would ensue.⁴⁴ However, Rabin's subsequent assassination by an ultranationalist Israeli Jew set off a course of events that would lead to more negotiation failures at Camp David in 2000 and at Taba, Annapolis and Sharm el-Sheikh, and lead to the outbreak of the bloody Second Intifada.⁴⁵ Such events served only to push Israeli society farther right, and pave the way for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's return to power in 2009, with a government working assiduously to undermine a peaceful two-state solution.⁴⁶ Netanyahu's policies, including his paused plan to annex further land in the West Bank for Israeli settlements, have widely been regarded as insurmountable roadblocks towards a peaceful resolution on the situation in Israel and Palestine.⁴⁷ As such, public debate in Australia and internationally has now shifted to whether a two-state solution should be abandoned in favour of other potential solutions.

⁴³ 'How the Israel-Palestinian Peace Process is Failing' *The Economist* (online, 27 May 2021) <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/05/27/how-the-israeli-palestinian-peace-process-is-failing>>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 'Israel is Falling Apart, Because the Conflict Controls Us' *The New York Times* (online, 20 May 2021) < <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/20/opinion/Israel-palestine-netanyahu-gaza.html>>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 'How the Israel-Palestinian Peace Process is Failing' *The Economist* (online, 27 May 2021) <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/05/27/how-the-israeli-palestinian-peace-process-is-failing>>.

4.2 Contemporary Debate Surrounding the Peace Process

While both the Coalition and the ALP affirm their support for a two-state solution, there is ongoing debate as to whether a two-state solution is actually viable or desirable.⁴⁸ Owing to consistent failures in negotiating a two-state solution, younger generations of Palestinians appear to be moving towards the idea of a ‘one-state reality’ or confederation, with a greater emphasis on the realisation of civil and political rights for Palestinians.⁴⁹ When asked about their views on the viability of a two-state solution, Young Liberals tended to support a two-state solution whilst acknowledging the inherent challenges, whereas several members of Young Labor spoke to the benefits of a one-state solution. Representatives of the Young Liberals expressed views that as long as ‘concessions could be made’ and Palestinians could be ‘empowered’ by international support and the removal of Hamas, a two-state solution may be viable.⁵⁰ However, many did note the seemingly intractable nature of the situation, with one member commenting that ‘the dispute will probably keep going on into the foreseeable future’.⁵¹

In contrast, Young Labor members argued that barriers, such as ‘Israel’s land-grabbing settlement program and the current distribution of land between Israel and Palestine’, meant that a two-state solution would no longer be viable. Instead, they noted that issues such as Palestinians’ right to return and the contested status of Jerusalem necessitated a genuine

⁴⁸ Jade Gailberger, ‘Scott Morrison Weighs in on Israel-Palestine Conflict’ *The Australian* (online, 14 May 2021) <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/scott-morrison-weighs-in-on-israelipalestinian-conflict/news-story/d7c28c580746548e910e8c934c0a4564>>.

⁴⁹ ‘Two States or One?’ *The Economist* (online, 27th May 2021) <<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/05/27/two-states-or-one>>.

⁵⁰ Members of ACT Young Liberals, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

⁵¹ Ibid.

consideration of the viability of combining Israel and Palestine into either a singular and democratic state, or a 'binational confederation'.⁵²

As public debate continues as to the ideal approach to peace in Israel and Palestine, it appears that youth situated on the political left, as well as younger generations of Palestinians, favour the abandonment of a two-state solution.

⁵² Members of ACT Young Labor, interview by Gabriella Morgan.

Section Five: Recommendations for the Delegation

This report provides the following recommendations to the Delegation on engaging with youth political wings:

1. Appeal to emotions and tell the Palestinian narrative. In examining the transcripts from the group interviews, it is evident that conservative-leaning youth tended to express both a lack of awareness and a lack of engagement with the story of the Palestinian struggle. In pursuing further engagement, consider utilising young Palestinian-Australians to tell their stories and relate to young politically-engaged youth, in order to win over hearts and minds.
2. Actively organise educational events. Many members, from both Young Labor and Liberals, expressed interest in attending events centred around Palestine and raising awareness of key issues. Potential future events could include Q&A panels, guest-speaker seminars at universities, and robust academic debates.
3. Engage in further research on the positions of youth political wings on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Whilst this report serves to present a preliminary analysis of Canberra-based youth political wings, there is value in investing in further research on the topic in order to ascertain a more comprehensive understanding of Australian youth politics and their respective positions on key issues.

Appendix – List of Questions Asked in Group Interviews

Theme One: Perceptions

1. How would you characterise the Israel/Palestine conflict and why? What do you understand as the primary factors historically for the conflict?

(Prompts: Do you perceive it as a more political issue, religious, cultural etc.? How would you summarise the crux of each side's narrative of the conflict?)

2. What shapes your own position on the conflict? (Prompts: Is it from what you've read? Is it from subjects you've taken at uni? Previous travel experiences? Official party lines?)

Theme Two: Party Priorities

3. When thinking more generally about the Young Liberal/Labor movement policy priorities, to what extent are policies pertaining to the Israel/Palestine conflict a priority and why? What factors shape how much of a priority this is?

4. How satisfied are you with Australia's foreign policy towards the region and would you change anything – why or why not?

5. What do you think would be Australia's ideal role in the Israel-Palestine conflict and why?

6. Do you think the change of leadership in the US will have an influence on Liberal/Labor policies towards Israel/Palestine and why?

Theme Three: International Responses

7. What do you perceive to be the greatest barriers in achieving peace in the Israel/Palestine region and why?

8. In terms of international responses, there are a variety of proposed solutions to the conflict, including a two-state solution, a one-state solution etc. – as a member of the Young Liberals/Labor, how do you think peace can best be achieved in the region and why?

Theme Four: Ongoing Engagement

9. Do you think the Young Liberals/Labor have an interest in engaging to any degree with the Palestinian delegation?

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