Renewal 2030

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Dear Conservative Friends of Israel,

I am proud to be a Conservative Friend of Israel and I am proud to have helped the Conservative Government build the closest ties to Israel that the UK has ever had. Our relationship is built on decades of cooperation and steeped in historical ties.

But we stand on the edge of this Labour Government not just reversing that progress, but turning the UK against our free, democratic ally: making ourselves, Israel, and Jewish people around the world less safe. We need a leader who can stand up to them.

Our defence of Israel has never mattered more

Since the 7th of October, we have seen Israeli grief and trauma, but also Israeli resilience and unity. I met mothers whose children were stolen from them and taken to Gaza. As a mother of three young children, it was harrowing to hear their stories. I have spoken to first responders and witnesses of the sexual violence that the UN was too slow to acknowledge.

Nobody who has experienced this, and heard these stories, could not see in them ordinary people undergoing extraordinary hardships for no reason other than the fact that they choose to live in freedom in the one and only Jewish state.

Despite this, Labour has suspended arms export licences to Israel. Labour has restored funding to UNRWA, and they've cowed to the mob at the ICC.

When I was Trade Secretary, I took the decision to maintain arms exports to Israel. Union-backed civil servants threatened to stop work and go on strike. We had protests outside the department. Staff and security were shoved around and threatened. That did not stop us from doing the right thing. Sadly, we now have a government that bows to the mob. This is moral cowardice, but it's also against British interests.

As Israel fights terrorism on multiple fronts, facing Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, the UK must stand strong with its ally.

Our values need championing

Our support for Israel isn't dependent on the atrocities of its enemies but on the values it shares with the UK.

The UK and Israel are two of the most entrepreneurial services-based economies in the world. A Business and Trade Secretary, I worked hard with my Israeli counterpart, Nir Barkat, to negotiate an

ambitious UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement for the 21st century. British expertise and Israeli dynamism is a winning formula.

When I visited Tel Aviv, I saw a thriving start-up nation that enriches and improves lives across the world, powering our own tech sector and providing drugs to the NHS. Keir Starmer says he wants growth - but if we want economic dynamism, we must look to Israel.

These are not universal values. But they are British values and Israeli values, and it's the job of the Conservative Party to fight for them.

We must fight antisemitism

When I was a Minister at DLUHC, I had the privilege of working closely with the Jewish community on the development of the National Holocaust Memorial and I continue to support the construction of the Memorial. It is now increasingly important.

We have seen a deeply worrying rise in antisemitism in the UK since the 7th of October last year. We have seen people in this country use their views on Israel as an excuse to display antisemitism. We have seen this at protests on our streets and we see this in our universities. Those who glorify terrorism and celebrate the massacre of Jews have no place on our streets.

I believe in equality under the law and when I was Minister, I wrote to public authority leaders reminding them of their statutory duty under the Equality Act and that there is no 'hierarchy of rights'. In light of the David Miller case at Bristol University, I was clear that academics cannot behave in a way which amounts to harassment of Jewish students. Disguising this as discourse about Israel should be not more lawful than any other form of antisemitism.

If I am leader of the Conservative Party, we will continue to strengthen our ties with Israel and root out the tragic resurgence of antisemitism in the UK. We will be true to our values.

Kemi Badenoch