

UK Labour Party: Two-fifths of Keir Starmer's Cabinet Have Been Funded by Pro-Israel Lobbyists

As Labour refuses to join calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, Declassified reveals the extent to which the shadow cabinet, including Starmer himself, has been financed by a pro-Israel lobby group and an individual funder.

By [John McEvoy](#)

Global Research, November 02, 2023

[Declassified UK](#)

Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name.

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Click the share button above to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Some 13 of the 31 members of Labour's [shadow cabinet](#) have received donations from a prominent pro-Israel lobby group or individual funder, it can be revealed.

The list of recipients includes party leader **Keir Starmer**, his deputy **Angela Rayner**, shadow foreign secretary **David Lammy**, and even the former vice-chair of Labour Friends of Palestine, **Lisa Nandy**, who is now shadow international development minister.

These donations were provided by [Labour Friends of Israel](#) (LFI), a pro-Israel lobby group which takes MPs on "fact-finding" missions to the region, and [Sir Trevor Chinn](#), a multi-millionaire business tycoon and long-time pro-Israel lobbyist.

More than half of Starmer's shadow cabinet are [listed](#) as parliamentary supporters or officers of LFI.

The group was [established](#) in 1957 to "act as a bridge linking [Israeli prime minister David Ben Gurion's party] Mapai... with the Labour Movement in Great Britain".

It has since [described](#) itself as "a Westminster based lobby group working within the British Labour Party to promote the State of Israel".

Labour Friends of Israel

LFI does not disclose its funders, but was [revealed](#) during an undercover Al Jazeera documentary in 2017 to have close relations with the Israeli embassy in London.



The organisation's parliamentary officer, for instance, [admitted](#) on camera that LFI and the Israeli embassy "work really closely together, but a lot of it is behind the scenes".

One of LFI's main activities is to fund Labour MPs to go on "fact-finding" missions to Israel.

Declassified has found that since 2002, LFI has [contributed](#) over £150,000 towards such activities. Between 2001 and 2009, LFI [took](#) more Labour MPs on trips abroad than any other lobby group.

Eight members of Starmer's shadow cabinet have received money from LFI to travel to Israel since being elected MPs. This includes **David Lammy**, shadow health secretary **Wes Streeting**, shadow business, energy, and industrial strategy secretary **Jonathan Reynolds**, and shadow attorney general **Emily Thornberry**.

A further recipient of travel funds is shadow chancellor **Rachel Reeves**, who is currently a parliamentary vice-chair of LFI.

The value of the trips for the members of the shadow cabinet amounts to over £17,000, with additional expenses in Israel frequently [covered](#) by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

LFI has also [donated](#) to **Wayne David**, the shadow foreign minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

'Essential Strategic Partner'

"We are proud of Labour's record in government to strengthen the ties between Britain and Israel", LFI's website [states](#). "We view Israel as an essential strategic partner in the Middle East".

In July 2022, David Lammy [made](#) an unpublicised three-day trip to Israel which was [organised](#) by LFI. It is unclear who funded the visit; it does not appear in Lammy's register of interests.

Lammy's visit came after a number of human rights organisations, including [Amnesty](#)

[International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#) and [B'tselem](#), had criticised Israel's practice of apartheid against Palestinians.

Michael Rubin, LFI's director, [noted](#) that Lammy's "first visit to Israel as Shadow Foreign Secretary is an important moment in the restoration of Labour's deep and historic ties of friendship with the Jewish state".

Keir Starmer has addressed a number of LFI events. In a keynote speech to its annual lunch in November 2021, he [repeated](#) the racist and colonial adage that Israel was founded by "social democrats who made the desert flower".

Last month, Starmer [addressed](#) the LFI reception at the Labour party conference in Liverpool, describing the lobby group as "an invaluable source of energy and ideas for me and my team".

As of 31 October, just four of the 79 MPs and MSPs listed as LFI supporters or officers have [signed](#) a parliamentary Early Day Motion which calls for "an immediate de-escalation and cessation of hostilities".

It also calls for "the end of the total siege of Gaza" in order "to guarantee international humanitarian law is upheld and that civilians are protected". No members of the shadow cabinet have signed the motion.

Pro-Israel Lobbying

Sir Trevor Chinn is a British multi-millionaire who has [spent](#) decades working in the motor industry, chairing such organisations as the AA, the RAC, and Kwikfit.

Chinn is also a longstanding pro-Israel lobbyist. Since the 1980s, he has [funded](#) LFI and Conservative Friends of Israel and [played](#) a leading role in groups such as Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre ([BICOM](#)) and the Jewish Leadership Council.

The *Guardian* [described](#) BICOM in 2009 as "Britain's most active pro-Israeli lobbying organisation - which flies journalists to Israel on fact-finding trips and organises access to senior government figures".

It added that the organisation had "received nearly £1.4m in two years from a billionaire donor whose father made a fortune manufacturing arms in Israel", referring to **Poju Zabudowicz**, a London-based business tycoon.

Starmer [received](#) a £50,000 donation from Chinn during his campaign for the Labour leadership in 2020 - and failed to declare this until after he'd won the election.

Declassified has found that Chinn has donated to eight other members of the shadow cabinet, including Rayner, Lammy, Reeves, Streeting, shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson, shadow work and pensions secretary Liz Kendall, and shadow environment secretary Steve Reed.

Remarkably, [Lisa Nandy](#), a former vice-chair of Labour Friends of Palestine, has also [accepted](#) money from Chinn.

The value of Chinn's donations to Starmer and members of his shadow cabinet amounts to

almost £200,000. In a speech to LFI's annual lunch in 2022, Reeves [thanked](#) Chinn for "your friendship and your invaluable support to Keir and our party".

Chinn is also one of the key bankrollers of Labour Together, recently [described](#) in *Politico* as a "highly influential think tank quietly shaping the direction of the party". Chinn has [furnished](#) the group with over £360,000 over recent years.

Annexation

While Chinn supports a number of pro-Israel initiatives in Britain, he is not reflexively supportive of Israeli government policy. In 2020, he [signed](#) an open letter warning that Israel's annexation of the West Bank "poses an existential threat to the traditions of Zionism in Britain, and to Israel as we know it".

The letter continued that:

"Annexation would be a shot in the arm for the BDS [Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment] movement and the delegitimation of Israel. It will take calls for sanctions against Israel away from the fringes of the far-left and catapult them into the mainstream of the political discourse".

Other forms of lobbying don't make it onto the register of interests. As Electronic Intifada [revealed](#), Steve Reed recently met with Chinn and others to discuss Labour policy on the BDS movement.

"Steve will never accept attempts to exceptionalize and delegitimize Israel", leaked minutes from the meeting [noted](#). "Steve committed to discuss with the Whips and the Leader's Office about legislation on BDS".

Luke Akehurst, a member of Labour's governing body, the National Executive Committee, is the director of We Believe in Israel, a pro-Zionist lobby group which has [confirmed](#) that it works "with a range of stakeholders including the Israeli embassy".

Keir Starmer: Friend of Israel

It is difficult to measure the overall impact of these lobbying efforts on Labour's current policy on Israel.

LFI [supports](#) calls for a "humanitarian pause" in the bombing rather than a ceasefire, and frequently shares posts from the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Twitter.

The Labour party's current support for Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza and opposition to a ceasefire is also clearly guided by a reluctance to step out of line with US policy.

As *Declassified* recently [reported](#), the Labour party is seeking to foster the Atlantic relationship, and has been signalling to Washington that the "brief period when Jeremy Corbyn's party challenged the establishment consensus on foreign policy" is well and truly over.

However, the pro-Israel campaign remains one of the [largest](#) lobbying [forces](#) within British politics, and this clearly buys a certain degree of influence.

Since becoming leader of the Labour party, Starmer has been a loyal friend of Israel, [refusing](#) to join leading human rights organisations in naming Israel as an apartheid state and [abstaining](#) on the BDS bill which prevents public bodies from boycotting Israel.

He even [suggested](#) Israel “has the right” to withhold power and water from Gaza, before [attempting](#) to backtrack on this. In recent days, Starmer has [reemphasised](#) that he does “not believe” that a ceasefire in the Middle East is the “correct position”.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share button above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

***John McEvoy** is an independent journalist who has written for International History Review, The Canary, Tribune Magazine, Jacobin and Brasil Wire.*

Featured image: UK Labour Party Logo [File photo]

The original source of this article is [Declassified UK](#)
Copyright © [John McEvoy](#), [Declassified UK](#), 2023

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [John McEvoy](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long as the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca