



Burnham's pathetic 'both sides' attitude to Gaza matches his equivocation on everything else

Description

default watermark

Burnham

[Tomorrow, 18 June](#), the Makerfield by-election could open a path for Andy Burnham's current mayor of Greater Manchester to make a bid for the leadership of the Labour Party.

However, given that [Labour has lost most of its voters](#) to left-wing, pro-Palestinian parties, it's worth taking another look at Burnham's stance on Gaza.

(Spoiler alert: it's not great)

Labour losing votes on Palestine

Labour's strategy whilst in government has lent heavily on tacking to the right in a vain attempt to appeal to Reform voters. However, the party [actually lost four times as many voters](#) to the Greens at the local elections. In fact, just 46% of Labour's previous backers remained loyal at the ballot box.

[Recent polling from Opinium](#) revealed that a great deal of that shift was down to Labour's political and material support for Israel, fuelling the genocide in Gaza.

Of the former Labour voters who switched to centrist or left-wing parties, 53% cited the PLP's stance on Palestine as a factor. Likewise, a massive 74% said that their:

opinion of Labour would improve if the next leader were to adopt a strong position on Palestine, such as imposing sanctions on Israel.

As such, Burnham could potentially win back a not-insignificant voting bloc if he were to steer the Labour Party toward an anti-genocide stance. This would also have the added bonus of bringing the UK [into compliance with its duty to prevent genocide](#) per the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Burnham â?? â??Not a gift but a rightâ??

Of course, it would be remiss of us not to mention the context of Burnhamâ??s abysmal record in West Asia. Back in 2003, as Labour MP for Leigh, he voted for [Blairâ??s illegal invasion of Iraq](#) â?? in spite of his [criticisms of the](#) â??War on Terrorâ??. In the aftermath, he also voted [consistently against](#) launching investigations into the Iraq war.

Regarding Palestine, Burnham [visited the occupied West Bank](#) back in 2012, in the company of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East. At the time, he called Palestinian statehood:

not a gift to be given but a right to be recognised.

In 2015, Burnham [voiced his support](#) for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. To this end, he also reiterated the call for recognition of the Palestinian state, telling the Palestine Solidarity Campaign that:

the appalling loss of life that occurred in Gaza last summer â?? with 2,131 Palestinians killed, the vast majority of them civilians, and seven Israeli civilians killed by rocket attacks from Gaza, makes the task of achieving a lasting and just peace all the more urgent.

Labour is clear that only a negotiated peace deal will bring the justice and security both sides deserve. That is why the international community must now take concrete steps to strengthen moderate Palestinian opinion. We are clear that Palestinian recognition at the UN would be such a step.

Gee, do we think maybe the lack of â??moderateâ?? Palestinian opinion might be related to the 2,000+ mostly-civilian deaths?

Burnham: Friend of Israel

However, Burnham has also been a member of the [Labour Friends of Israel](#) since 2015, and called boycott campaigns against the occupying state â??spitefulâ?*. *Al Jazeera* also reported that Israel was at the top of Burnhamâ??s list to visit, had he won his 2015 leadership bid. He [described Israel as a](#)

democracy that has a long history of protecting minorities and promoting civil rights.

When Israel [redoubled its war on Palestine](#) in 2023, Burnham â?? alongside Sadiq Khan and Anas Sarwar â?? was one of the earlier senior Labour figures to call for a ceasefire â??from all sidesâ?* (deeply equivocal language again there).

However, he also supported Israel's right to carry out targeted action within international law. This targeted action was, of course, very clearly far from the actual genocidal actions of the occupying forces.

In July 2025, [he issued a plea](#) for Mancunians to donate to UKMed, a charity supporting medical access in Gaza. In a video address, he described the suffering of Palestinians as "beyond words", adding:

We stand with people in times of need, it's who we are.

And the genocide?

However, standing with the Palestinians apparently doesn't extend to recognising the war crimes being carried out against them. In a 4 June [Guardian interview](#) Burnham specifically declined to describe Israel's actions as genocidal:

I can't judge things of that enormity where I am as mayor of Greater Manchester. But I do have concerns about the disproportionate nature of what has happened in terms of the destruction, and there has to be a full process of investigation and accountability.

default watermark

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory [had issued a report](#) stating that Israel was committing genocide 9 months prior to Burnham's statement.

In May 2026, Your Party's Jeremy Corbyn [wrote](#) to Burnham, urging him to state publicly that he would back an inquiry. The Manchester [mayor did not respond](#). Corbyn also later launched a petition to pressure Burnham into making a statement to that same effect.

Likewise, when the Palestine Solidarity Campaign [asked the Makerfield candidates](#) what they would do to "uphold the rights of Palestinian people", Burnham stayed silent. Meanwhile, his Green Party counterpart, Sarah Wakefield, was quick to respond:

I unequivocally accept the findings of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry and numerous other expert bodies that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. I additionally accept the 2024 ICJ ruling that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid against Palestinians.

I fully support a total ban on trade with Israel's illegal settlements and all other trade that aids or assists Israel's unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory. I also support comprehensive sanctions on Israel, including a full arms embargo. Without doubt, I support reversing the authoritarian use of public order and anti-terror legislation to suppress protest in support of Palestinian rights.

"Both sides" is the wrong side

As the *Canary* [has repeatedly reported](#), Burnham has consistently failed to voice a credible plan or any real opinions in his Makenfield candidacy. Instead, heâ??s echoed a distinctly centrist, Starmerite call for non-specific â??changeâ??.

However, as weâ??ve seen quite clearly through Burnhamâ??s pitiful equivocation on Palestine, paying lip-service to both sides too often boils down to tacit support for the wrong side.

If the Labour hopeful cannot learn that lesson, heâ??ll follow his predecessor into meaningless oblivion â?? and the UKâ??s complicity in Israelâ??s genocide will continue unabated.

Featured image via the Canary

By [Grace](#)

[Source link](#)

CATEGORY

1. News

POST TAG

1. attitude
2. both
3. burnhams
4. else
5. equivocation
6. everything
7. gaza
8. his
9. matches
10. news
11. pathetic
12. sides

Category

1. News

default watermark