

International Development Committee

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# Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

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Second Report of Session 2024–25

HC 373

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# International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to scrutinise the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in respect of aid policy, and the expenditure of Official Development Assistance across UK government departments.

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# Contents

	<b>Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The humanitarian situation in Gaza</b>	<b>3</b>
	International humanitarian law and accusations of genocide	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Forcible transfer and settlements</b>	<b>7</b>
	Forcible transfer	7
	Settlements	9
<b>3</b>	<b>UNRWA</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Additional issues of concern</b>	<b>14</b>
	Recognition of the state of Palestine	15
	Correspondent banking relations	16
<b>5</b>	<b>Annex</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>Witnesses</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>Published written evidence</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>27</b>

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# Overview

1. The conclusions and recommendations in this Report are drawn from evidence taken publicly and privately by the Committee over several months. This includes evidence taken by our predecessor Committee in the previous Parliament, which held oral evidence sessions and visited the Al-Arish crossing in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> It also includes both public and private oral evidence sessions held by the Committee in this Parliament, publicly available statements and rulings of international courts. This evidence is also drawn from meetings held in East Jerusalem and the West Bank with a significant number of agencies engaged in humanitarian relief and support. Many of those organisations are listed at the end of the Report, although some asked not to be named.
2. In line with our standard practice when discussing matters relevant to the conflict, we invited the Israeli ambassador to provide public evidence before the Committee, which she rejected. However, she has written to the Committee addressing many of the points raised in our oral evidence sessions.<sup>2</sup> The ambassador was also invited to appear before the Committee during oral evidence sessions relating to the humanitarian situation in Gaza during the previous Parliament, which she also declined. She also wrote to the Committee on this occasion to address a number of points.<sup>3</sup> We will continue to extend an invitation to the ambassador to provide evidence to the Committee, and hope that she will one day agree to come and speak on the record. We also hold open the possibility of visiting Israel in the future, in order to hear from members of the Israeli Government and to hear more from Israeli NGOs.
3. The horrific terrorist attack perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023 saw Israeli civilians brutally assaulted, murdered or taken hostage from inside their own country. Most hostages are held by Hamas, although some are believed to be held by other militant groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front and the Popular Resistance Committees.<sup>4</sup> Israel has been engaged in an ongoing conflict with Hamas ever since, resulting in widespread Palestinian civilian casualties, the destruction of Palestinian

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1 International Development Committee, [Inquiry: the humanitarian situation in Gaza](#)

2 Letter from the Israeli ambassador regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, [6 December 2024](#)

3 Written evidence ([HSG0001](#))

4 The Times of Israel, [Preparing for deal, Hamas tells fellow Gazan terror groups to identify hostages they hold](#), 8 December 2024

infrastructure, the deaths of Israeli soldiers and only the partial return of Israeli hostages. The Committee urges a full return of all hostages. This would also help to restore faith in the ceasefire process.

4. The evidence we recently collected adds to evidence gathered by our predecessor Committee<sup>5</sup> and the deliberations of international courts and bodies suggesting that we should take seriously allegations that the Israeli Government, and senior figures within the Government, are at risk of having committed grave breaches of international law. At the same time, although we do not claim the authority ourselves to make a legal determination, in line with a growing list of experts, we believe that there is a plausible risk that Israel's military campaign in Gaza may have included grave violations of international humanitarian law, which has given rise to accusations of genocide.
5. In the light of cases before the International Court of Justice<sup>6</sup> and the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, the Committee felt compelled to add its voice to the conversation, given the insight we have gained, particularly during our visit to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where we met many people and organisations committed to protecting civilians and bringing the conflict to an end.
6. This Report also calls on the Government to set out further details and a timeline for the recognition of a Palestinian state—a statement of intent to match the rhetoric of this and previous Governments. This recognition, alongside safety and security for Israel, are necessary for a sustainable and long-lasting peace.
7. We further state that the Government must do all it can to ensure that Israel abides by its international humanitarian law obligations. Additionally, we call on the Government to treat the removal of Palestinian civilians from the West Bank, through co-ordinated destruction of property and settler violence, as forcible transfer, which is illegal under international law, rather than simply displacement. Finally, we restate our view that it is imperative that UNRWA—United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East—be permitted to carry on its UN-mandated role across the Occupied Palestinian Territory unimpeded, in the light of laws passed recently by the Israeli Knesset that will effectively ban UNRWA from the region.

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5 International Development Committee, [Inquiry: the humanitarian situation in Gaza](#)

6 International Court of Justice, [Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem – Advisory Opinion](#), 19 July 2024; and [Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\)](#)

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# 1 The humanitarian situation in Gaza

8. On Tuesday 12 November 2024, we heard oral evidence on the state of healthcare in Gaza, which has deteriorated rapidly since the start of the latest Israel-Hamas conflict and shows no prospect of improvement. Witnesses described the minimal amount of medical aid and food permitted to enter Gaza by Israel: in the month prior to the session, the entire humanitarian sector in Gaza received an average of 42 trucks per day, while northern Gaza had received no aid for 40 days.<sup>7</sup> We heard earlier this year that a minimum of 500 aid trucks are required to enter Gaza every day in order to deliver the necessary supplies.<sup>8</sup> The United States recently called on Israel to allow 350 aid trucks to enter Gaza daily, which was ignored.<sup>9</sup> In her letter on 6 December 2024, the Israeli ambassador informed us that “close to 1,500 trucks of aid” had entered northern Gaza in the preceding 60 days.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear what was transported in these trucks, how this aid was distributed or why the humanitarian organisations operating in the region were unaware of it. In addition, 1,500 trucks over 60 days equates to an average of 25 trucks per day. The 500-per-day figure accounted for the whole of Gaza, and so we would not expect this amount to enter only northern Gaza, although clearly a significantly higher number than 25 trucks will be required in the region to meet the needs of the population there.
9. In recent months, for those aid deliveries that are permitted access to Gaza, looting has become a significant problem. In November, a 109-strong convoy of aid trucks passed through the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing before being held up by an armed gang, who eyewitnesses say threw grenades, with 97 of the trucks being stolen. Israel accuses Hamas of being behind the looting, which Hamas denies.<sup>11</sup>

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7 [Q52-54](#)

8 International Development Committee, Oral evidence: Humanitarian situation in Gaza, Tuesday 27 February 2024, [Q99](#)

9 BBC News, [Israel has missed US deadline to boost Gaza aid, UN agency says](#), 12 November 2024

10 Letter from the Israeli ambassador regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, [6 December 2024](#)

11 BBC News, [Almost 100 Gaza food aid lorries violently looted, UN agency says](#), 18 November 2024

10. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice indicated, as a provisional measure in the *South Africa v. Israel* case, that Israel should take immediate and effective steps to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.<sup>12</sup> The *Minister of State for Development (the Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP)* told us recently that:

This Government is profoundly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the issues around aid access.<sup>13</sup>

11. We also heard evidence in public and in private suggesting indiscriminate targeting of Gazan civilians, including children, by the Israeli army.<sup>14</sup> This is supported by the testimony of IDF soldiers.<sup>15</sup> We were shocked to hear accusations of Israel’s reported use of drones to locate and shoot civilians, often in the aftermath of explosions caused by Israeli bombs.<sup>16</sup> However, this is denied by the Israeli ambassador.<sup>17</sup>
12. Witnesses told us that some 14,000 Gazans are in critical need of medical evacuation, not including those who would routinely have travelled to East Jerusalem or other places for the treatment of long-term conditions, such as cancer.<sup>18</sup> Witnesses were also clear on the targeting of aid workers and aid convoys by the Israeli army. One witness recalled the killing by the Israeli army of her colleagues when attempting to rescue an injured child.<sup>19</sup>
13. These testimonies are supported by the findings of the latest report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.<sup>20</sup> The commission found that it is Israel’s deliberate policy to destroy the healthcare system of Gaza; and that Israeli security forces have deliberately killed, wounded, arrested, detained, mistreated and tortured medical personnel and targeted medical vehicles. The commission believes that this constitutes

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12 International Court of Justice, [Summary of the Order of 26 January 2024](#), 26 January 2024

13 Letter from the Minister of State for Development regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, [27 November 2024](#)

14 [Q9](#)

15 Haaretz, [‘No Civilians. Everyone’s a Terrorist’: IDF Soldiers Expose Arbitrary Killings and Rampant Lawlessness in Gaza’s Netzarim Corridor](#), 18 December 2024

16 [Q6](#)

17 Letter from the Israeli ambassador regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, [6 December 2024](#)

18 [Q49](#)

19 [Q56](#)

20 UN General Assembly, [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel](#), 11 September 2024



the war crimes of wilful killing and mistreatment and the crime against humanity of extermination. The commission adds that these actions were taken as collective punishment against the Palestinians in Gaza.<sup>21</sup>

## International humanitarian law and accusations of genocide

14. The Committee notes with concern the multiple and growing number of accusations of genocide against the Israeli Government.
15. The United Nations General Assembly's Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reports that Israeli policies across Gaza are "consistent with the characteristics of genocide".<sup>22</sup> This was echoed by Martin Griffiths, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, in a radio interview on BBC Radio 4.<sup>23</sup>
16. Amnesty International said in December 2024 that it had sufficient basis to conclude that Israel had committed prohibited acts under the Genocide Convention, including:

Deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part.<sup>24</sup>
17. At the time of writing, there is a case before the International Court of Justice brought by South Africa alleging violations by Israel in Gaza of its obligations under the Genocide Convention.<sup>25</sup>
18. In November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, relating to alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes. In issuing the warrants, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber included

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21 UN General Assembly, [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel](#), 11 September 2024

22 Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, [Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories](#), 20 September 2024

23 Martin Griffiths, BBC Radio 4 - The World at One, 5 December 2024

24 Amnesty International, ["You feel like you are subhuman": Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza](#), 5 December 2024

25 International Court of Justice, [Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\)](#)

the charge of the pair using the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare.<sup>26</sup> In applying for arrest warrants, the Office of the ICC Prosecutor submitted to the Pre-Trial Chamber that acts were committed as part of a common plan to use starvation as a method of war as a means, among other things, to collectively punish the civilian population of Gaza.<sup>27</sup>

19. Of course, rulings made against Israel in this case would not undo the killing of tens of thousands of civilians, the blocking of access for food and medical supplies or the attacks on healthcare facilities and aid workers, but it might give victims and survivors a sense of justice.

20. **CONCLUSION**

Israel has killed many thousands of civilians across Gaza, while arrest warrants, including the charge of using starvation as a method of warfare against Gazan civilians, have been issued in respect of prominent Israeli politicians. The Committee awaits judicial resolutions on these matters. There is a danger that delays in applying full diplomatic pressure until the International Court of Justice has adjudicated on whether Israel's actions in Gaza are genocidal or not may mean that many more civilians will die in the interim.

21. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must detail how it intends to take immediate action to halt the attacks on Palestinian civilians and lands, notwithstanding its respect for judicial rulings on the matter. The Committee expects the Government to detail how it intends to do so in its response to this Report.

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26 International Criminal Court, [Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel's challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant](#), 21 November 2024

27 International Criminal Court, [Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for arrest warrants in the situation in the State of Palestine](#), 20 May 2024

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## 2 Forcible transfer and settlements

### Forcible transfer

- 22.** When Members of the Committee visited East Jerusalem and the West Bank in November 2024, the level of destruction in the region was immediately apparent. We were told again and again by people who live there, or organisations that work closely with them, that the scale and intensity of destruction of Palestinian property across the West Bank had accelerated: between 7 October 2023 and 31 October 2024, more than 1,800 Palestinian structures were abolished, of which 44% were inhabited residences, forcing Palestinians to leave their homes.<sup>28</sup> This wanton destruction of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities has led to accusations of the forcible transfer of Palestinians across the West Bank.<sup>29 30</sup>
- 23.** Destruction of property has occurred simultaneously with military assaults on cities and towns across the West Bank, with an escalation in killings by Israeli forces and violent state-backed settler attacks. Between 7 October 2023 and 28 October 2024, 736 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with 719 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces.<sup>31</sup> It was also reported in August that, since 7 October 2023, at least 115 children have been killed in the West Bank by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces, with a total of 166 killed in the West Bank overall.<sup>32 33</sup> Since 7 October 2023, settler violence, intimidation and harassment have displaced 1,722 Palestinians, including 835 children, in Bedouin and other herding communities.<sup>34</sup> People we met across the West Bank and East

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28 UNOCHA, [West Bank | Monthly Snapshot: Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement as of 31 October 2024](#), 31 October 2024

29 Norwegian Refugee Council, [West Bank: Israeli settler violence triggers largest forcible transfer since October 2023](#), 21 August 2024

30 United Nations, [OHCHR urges Israel to stop forcible transfer of Palestinian herding communities and ongoing annexation of parts of the West Bank](#), 17 September 2024

31 UNRWA, [Situation Report #149 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#), 27 November 2024

32 UN News, [Humanitarians report rise in children killed and injured in the West Bank](#), 14 August 2024

33 UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Situation Update #240 | West Bank](#), 21 November 2024

34 UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Situation Update #240 | West Bank](#), 21 November 2024

Jerusalem also told us of repeated air strikes across the West Bank, with UNOCHA noting that there had been 55 airstrikes on the West Bank between 7 October 2023 and 2 September 2024.<sup>35</sup> This raises the question: why are air strikes taking place at all on an area in which there is no live conflict?

**24.** According to Amnesty International:

It is likely that these operations will result in an increase in forced displacement, destruction of critical infrastructure and measures of collective punishment [...].<sup>36</sup>

**25.** In an opinion issued in July, the International Court of Justice found that Israel’s actions, including “forcible evictions, extensive house demolitions and restrictions on residence and movement” leave Palestinians in parts of the West Bank with little choice but to leave their residence.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the ICJ found that Israeli confiscation of land following the demolition of Palestinian property, to reallocate for Israeli settlements, suggests that Israel’s policy in this regard is not temporary, and evacuations are therefore not permissible under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Court concluded:

Israel’s policies and practices are contrary to the prohibition of forcible transfer of the protected population under the first paragraph of Article 49, of the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>38</sup>

**26.** The continued forced transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank is having devastating consequences for regional stability and the long-term viability of a Palestinian state. Jordan already hosts around 1.3 million displaced Syrians, including almost 700,000 refugees, as well as 2 million registered Palestinian refugees.<sup>39 40</sup> During a recent visit to the country, we were informed that Jordan would not be able to withstand the additional pressure of accommodating hundreds of thousands of Palestinians if they were to be forced out of the West Bank. In addition, recent changes in the governance of Syria offer few guarantees that Syrian refugees can yet return home.

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35 UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Situation Update #213 | West Bank](#), 4 September 2024

36 Amnesty International, [Israel/OPT: Palestinians face drastic escalation in unlawful killings, displacement as Israel launches West Bank military operation](#), 28 August 2024

37 International Court of Justice, [Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, paragraph 147](#), 19 July 2024

38 International Court of Justice, [Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, paragraph 147](#), 19 July 2024

39 Brookings, [Syrian refugees in Jordan: A decade and counting](#), 27 January 2022

40 UNRWA, [Where we work: Jordan](#)

## Settlements

27. Israel further risks breaching its international obligations and the Oslo Accords through its tacit support for illegal settlements across the West Bank. The Committee welcomes the fact that the UK Government has taken some steps in pushing back against Israel's expansion of settlements, with sanctions imposed under its global human rights sanctions regime. As the UK's permanent representative to the UN noted:

Expansion of settlements, in clear violation of international law, must cease immediately.<sup>41</sup>

28. However, the Israeli Government continues to fund settlements.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, senior figures within the Israeli Government, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, have expressed hope that settlements can be annexed in 2025, bringing the territory directly under Israeli control.<sup>43</sup>

29. Laudably, the UK Government directly rejected calls from Minister Smotrich, with *the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (Hamish Falconer MP)* tweeting:

Annexation only undermines the prospects for peace, would lead to greater instability and would be illegal under international law. The Israeli government must reject this.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, in December 2024, ambassador James Kariuki, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, told a UN Security Council meeting on the Occupied Palestinian Territory that:

The UK calls on Israel to stop settlement expansion on Palestinian land, which is illegal under international law, and to hold violent settlers to account. Continued instability and settler violence in the West Bank should not be tolerated by Israel and the culture of impunity must end. This does nothing to bring about peace and security for Palestinians or Israelis.<sup>45</sup>

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41 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, [The UK's explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), 18 September 2024

42 Associated Press, [Israeli government quietly sends millions to unauthorized West Bank settler outposts](#), 23 July 2024

43 Times of Israel, [Smotrich said to tell Civil Administration of 'great opportunity' to annex West Bank](#), 6 December 2024

44 Hamish Falconer MP (@HFalconerMP), [X \(Twitter\)](#), November 14 2024, accessed 10/12/2024

45 James Kariuki, [The UK calls on Israel to stop illegal settlement expansion on Palestinian land: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#), 18 December 2024

30. In recent months, the Canadian Government has implemented several rounds of sanctions on various individuals and entities it deems responsible for perpetrating or facilitating settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These sanctions prohibit dealing in property held or controlled by those sanctioned; providing any financial or other related service to or for the benefit of a sanctioned individual or entity; entering into or facilitating any transaction related to a dealing prohibited by the sanction regulations; along with other measures.<sup>46</sup>

31. **CONCLUSION**

Israel's policies and practices, including forcible evictions, considered by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion to be contrary to the prohibition of forcible transfer under the Fourth Geneva Convention, weaken the likelihood of a viable Palestinian state.

32. **RECOMMENDATION**

Following the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the Government must use the correct term of "forcible transfer" and not describe the removal of Palestinians from their land in the West Bank as "displacement".

33. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must work with international allies to demand an end to Israel's forcible transfer policy and to seek legal redress for Israel's actions at the relevant international courts. This must include accountability for those settlers who illegally encroach on Palestinian lands, the bodies running the settlements and the politicians and figures in authority who support, encourage and authorise those settlers to do so, in line with the sanctions introduced by the Government of Canada.

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46 Government of Canada, [Canadian Sanctions Related to Extremist Settler Violence in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem \(occupied Palestinian territories/oPt\)](#)

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## 3 UNRWA

34. On 28 October 2024, the Israeli Knesset passed the Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities in the State of Israel, and the Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities, which are due to take effect on 28 January 2025. The laws specify that:
- UNRWA “shall not operate any representation, provide any services, or carry out any activities, directly or indirectly, within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel”
  - “No state authority, including bodies and individuals performing public duties according to law, shall have any contact with UNRWA or any of its representatives.”<sup>47</sup>
35. The Committee understands that the four principal effects of the laws are a prohibition on “contact” between any Israeli state authority and UNRWA or anyone acting on UNRWA’s behalf; a prohibition on UNRWA activities in East Jerusalem; a reservation of the right to bring criminal proceedings against UNRWA staff; and the termination of the Exchange of letters between Israel and UNRWA from 14 June 1967 (the “Comay-Michelmore Exchange of Letters”).<sup>48</sup>
36. UNRWA provides education, healthcare, social services and humanitarian aid to 6 million Palestinian refugees and other persons registered with UNRWA in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. It also operates sewerage, water purification, water supply and drainage facilities. At present, UNRWA provides food aid to 1.9 million people.<sup>49</sup> According to witnesses who appeared before the Committee, no organisation has the resources to fill the same role as UNRWA.<sup>50</sup> UNRWA’s delivery of aid and services and the running of its facilities across the Occupied Palestinian Territory requires close co-ordination with Israeli authorities. Should the legislation come into effect, it appears likely that Israel will no longer issue UNRWA staff with work or entry permits, while co-ordination with the Israeli military—including on deconfliction work in Gaza to enable aid access—will no longer be possible. This will effectively ban UNRWA from delivering its UN-mandated obligations across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

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47 Unofficial translations provided by UNRWA

48 Private analysis provided to the Committee

49 [Q34-35](#)

50 [Q44](#)

37. As the occupying power of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, article 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires Israel to ensure the food and medical supplies of the population to the fullest extent of the means available to it. However, the Israeli Government has not yet announced plans to perform this crucial role.
38. As a UN member state, Israel is bound by its obligations under the UN Charter and has accepted, in accordance with article 2(5), to provide the United Nations with every assistance in any action taken in accordance with the Charter, including the implementation of decisions of the UN General Assembly. Article 105 provides that the UN shall enjoy in the territory of each of its members such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the fulfilment of its purposes; and that representatives of the members of the United Nations and officials of the UN shall similarly enjoy such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions in connection with the UN. It is unclear how the new laws are consistent with these obligations. National legislation cannot override these obligations.
39. The new laws also appear to be inconsistent with United Nations General Assembly resolutions on UNRWA's mandate. Requiring UNRWA to effectively cease operations in East Jerusalem and prohibiting Israeli officials' contact with UNRWA constitutes direct obstruction by Israel of UNRWA in the performance of the mandate established under General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949<sup>51</sup> and subsequent relevant resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 77/123 of 12 December 2022, by which the General Assembly extended the mandate of UNRWA until 30 June 2026.<sup>52</sup> A ban would also lead to an immediate, potentially irreparable, degradation in the living conditions of Palestinians.
40. We welcome the UK Prime Minister's meeting with UNRWA Commissioner General Phillippe Lazzarini in December 2024 and the joint underlining of the importance of upholding international humanitarian law, alongside the additional £13 million in funding committed to UNRWA.

41. **CONCLUSION**

If UNRWA is prevented from undertaking its crucial functions and no replacement is arranged, the humanitarian situation across Gaza and the West Bank will deteriorate rapidly, possibly irreparably, and will almost certainly lead to further conflict and increased displacement.

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51 UNRWA, [General Assembly Resolution 302](#), 8 December 1949

52 United Nations General Assembly, [Resolution 77/123](#), 12 December 2022



**42.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must do it all it can to ensure that UNRWA is permitted to continue to deliver its mandate. Should Israel press ahead with the ban, the UK Government must work with international allies to pressure Israel to lay out immediately its plans to deliver all services currently supplied by UNRWA.

**43.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Because of the UK's historic ties to the region, the Government must lead on a co-ordinated motion at the United Nations that sets out clear and enforceable consequences should Israel undermine the UNRWA mandate.

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## 4 Additional issues of concern

44. During our visit to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, we heard case studies that only added to our fears that Israel may remain unaccountable for its breaches of international law.
45. In July 2024, the International Court of Justice opined that Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful and that Israel is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible.<sup>53</sup> In September 2024, the UK abstained on a UN General Assembly motion in support of the ICJ’s opinion. However, at that time, the UK stated its
- clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible.<sup>54</sup>
46. The Geneva Conventions protect access to detainees for the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, since the outset of hostilities, Israel refused to comply with its obligations in this regard, banning such visits.<sup>55</sup> As such, it is near impossible for the international community to investigate allegations that Palestinian detainees are in some instances held in poor conditions and are mistreated; or whether they have access to appropriate legal representation. Similarly, access to Israeli hostages held by Hamas for the International Committee of the Red Cross has not been facilitated by their captors.<sup>56</sup>
47. All this comes at a time when the very framework of international law is under threat. Any country being seen not to comply with international law potentially threatens the credibility of this framework. Failing to ensure

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53 International Court of Justice, [Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024](#), 19 July 2024

54 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, [The UK’s explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on the ICJ’s Advisory Opinion on Israel’s presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), 18 September 2024

55 The Times of Israel, [High Court orders gov’t to justify ban on Red Cross visits for Palestinian prisoners](#), 27 August 2024

56 British Red Cross, [Explainer: What is the Red Cross doing to help hostages taken from Israel?](#), 2 October 2024

that Israel complies with its obligations under international law may have unpredictable, catastrophic and cascading effects in the coming months and years.

**48. CONCLUSION**

Israel continues to decry in public any potential investigation or ruling by international courts, giving the impression that it does not pay due regard to international law.

**49. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must set out immediately the steps it will take, in line with global allies, to ensure that Israel is held accountable for any ongoing breaches of international humanitarian law.

**50. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must set out how it intends to work with the international community to bring an end to Israel's illegal occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

**51. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government, in partnership with its allies, must demand that Israel abides by its obligations under the Geneva Conventions and customary international law and facilitates access to detainees for officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

## Recognition of the state of Palestine

- 52.** One option available to the Government, in order to establish and normalise diplomatic relations with the Palestinian people, is to formally recognise a Palestinian state, alongside a safe and secure state of Israel. Former *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (the Rt Hon Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton)* suggested in January 2024 that this could form part of any peace deal that aims to end the current conflict.<sup>57</sup> Prior to the 2024 general election, *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (the Rt Hon David Lammy MP)* suggested that a Labour Government may unilaterally recognise a Palestinian state.<sup>58</sup>

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57 BBC News, [UK considering recognising Palestine state, Lord Cameron says](#), 30 January 2024

58 Financial Times, [Labour could unilaterally recognise Palestinian state, says David Lammy](#), 8 February 2024

53. On entering office, the Government has committed to following a similar path as previous Governments, offering support in relation to offering full recognition of a Palestinian state:

We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to a peace process, at a time that is most conducive to that process.<sup>59</sup>

This Committee seeks clarity on what conditions the Government is using to make this decision.

54. **CONCLUSION**

UK Governments of all colours have postponed the recognition of a Palestinian state. We are concerned, because of Israel's ever-expanding settlements in the West Bank, that this recognition is becoming impossible to achieve.

55. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must set out the steps it will take to recognise the state of Palestine, including conditions that need to be met and a timeline of planned actions.

## Correspondent banking relations

56. During our recent visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, we heard concerns relating to the system of correspondent banking relations between financial institutions in Israel and companies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Under the Paris Protocol 1994, part of the Oslo Accords, Israel agreed to maintain correspondent banking relations with the Occupied Palestinian Territory—essential for the Palestinian economy to conduct financial transactions with Israel and the international community.<sup>60</sup> Terminating this agreement could have severe consequences for Palestinians given the importance of the Israeli shekel to the West Bank economy.
57. Israel's stated concerns regarding anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing resulted in financing relations between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory being facilitated by only two Israeli banks, under temporary financial and judicial assurances, which take the form of an annually renewed waiver indemnifying the banks from litigation.

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59 *Commons Chamber, HC Deb, 20 July 2024, col. 1150*

60 Private briefing by various organisations to Committee members during their visit to the West Bank

However, a recent UK-US examination of the Palestinian banking system found it to meet, and sometimes exceed, international standards of counter-terrorism financing measures.<sup>61</sup>

58. In June 2024, Israeli Finance Minister Smotrich threatened not to renew the waiver, which would end financial transfers and cause a severe economic shock.<sup>62</sup> Trade with Israel accounts for 80% of the West Bank's imports, including food, fuel, electricity and water. Ultimately, Minister Smotrich applied a four-months extension, authorising five new illegal settlements in exchange.<sup>63</sup> On 31 October, Minister Smotrich issued a 30-day extension of the indemnification, far shorter than the one-year extension for which the UK, US and other G7 partners had lobbied. However, following significant international pressure, Israel has now extended the waiver for one year, until November 2025.<sup>64</sup>

59. **CONCLUSION**

Israel's threats of terminating correspondent banking relations are unacceptable and significantly reduce the confidence and stability of the West Bank economy.

60. **RECOMMENDATION**

The UK Government must work with allies to exert further pressure on Israel to put correspondent banking relations on a more stable footing.

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61 Private briefing by various organisations to Committee members during their visit to the West Bank

62 The New York Times, [Israeli Minister Will Release Palestinian Funds if Settlements Are Legalized, Officials Say](#), 28 June 2024

63 The Times of Israel, [Security cabinet okays legalizing 5 outposts, sanctioning PA officials](#), 28 June 2024

64 The Times of Israel, [Under US pressure, security cabinet extends Israel-PA bank ties deal by a year](#), 28 November 2024

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## 5 Annex

Over recent months, in addition to the public oral evidence session held on 12 November 2024, the Committee has met and heard from a wide range of organisations and individuals with insight into the ongoing conflict and/or life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. These meetings have helped to inform this Report. Below is a partial list of those organisations and individuals; several organisations and individuals asked not be named.

- United Nations Population Fund
- Ir Amim
- World Health Organisation
- Mr Hani Alami
- Mr Samer Nuseibeh
- B'Tselem
- Gisha
- Physicians for Human Rights Israel
- Joel Carmel, Breaking the Silence

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# Conclusions and recommendations

1. Israel has killed many thousands of civilians across Gaza, while arrest warrants, including the charge of using starvation as a method of warfare against Gazan civilians, have been issued in respect of prominent Israeli politicians. The Committee awaits judicial resolutions on these matters. There is a danger that delays in applying full diplomatic pressure until the International Court of Justice has adjudicated on whether Israel's actions in Gaza are genocidal or not may mean that many more civilians will die in the interim. (Conclusion, Paragraph 20)
2. The Government must detail how it intends to take immediate action to halt the attacks on Palestinian civilians and lands, notwithstanding its respect for judicial rulings on the matter. The Committee expects the Government to detail how it intends to do so in its response to this Report. (Recommendation, Paragraph 21)
3. Israel's policies and practices, including forcible evictions, considered by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion to be contrary to the prohibition of forcible transfer under the Fourth Geneva Convention, weaken the likelihood of a viable Palestinian state. (Conclusion, Paragraph 31)
4. Following the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the Government must use the correct term of "forcible transfer" and not describe the removal of Palestinians from their land in the West Bank as "displacement". (Recommendation, Paragraph 32)
5. The Government must work with international allies to demand an end to Israel's forcible transfer policy and to seek legal redress for Israel's actions at the relevant international courts. This must include accountability for those settlers who illegally encroach on Palestinian lands, the bodies running the settlements and the politicians and figures in authority who support, encourage and authorise those settlers to do so, in line with the sanctions introduced by the Government of Canada. (Recommendation, Paragraph 33)

6. If UNRWA is prevented from undertaking its crucial functions and no replacement is arranged, the humanitarian situation across Gaza and the West Bank will deteriorate rapidly, possibly irreparably, and will almost certainly lead to further conflict and increased displacement. (Conclusion, Paragraph 41)
7. The Government must do it all it can to ensure that UNRWA is permitted to continue to deliver its mandate. Should Israel press ahead with the ban, the UK Government must work with international allies to pressure Israel to lay out immediately its plans to deliver all services currently supplied by UNRWA. (Recommendation, Paragraph 42)
8. Because of the UK's historic ties to the region, the Government must lead on a co-ordinated motion at the United Nations that sets out clear and enforceable consequences should Israel undermine the UNRWA mandate. (Recommendation, Paragraph 43)
9. Israel continues to decry in public any potential investigation or ruling by international courts, giving the impression that it does not pay due regard to international law. (Conclusion, Paragraph 48)
10. The Government must set out immediately the steps it will take, in line with global allies, to ensure that Israel is held accountable for any ongoing breaches of international humanitarian law. (Recommendation, Paragraph 49)
11. The Government must set out how it intends to work with the international community to bring an end to Israel's illegal occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (Recommendation, Paragraph 50)
12. The Government, in partnership with its allies, must demand that Israel abides by its obligations under the Geneva Conventions and customary international law and facilitates access to detainees for officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross. (Recommendation, Paragraph 51)
13. UK Governments of all colours have postponed the recognition of a Palestinian state. We are concerned, because of Israel's ever-expanding settlements in the West Bank, that this recognition is becoming impossible to achieve. (Conclusion, Paragraph 54)
14. The Government must set out the steps it will take to recognise the state of Palestine, including conditions that need to be met and a timeline of planned actions. (Recommendation, Paragraph 55)
15. Israel's threats of terminating correspondent banking relations are unacceptable and significantly reduce the confidence and stability of the West Bank economy. (Conclusion, Paragraph 59)



16. The UK Government must work with allies to exert further pressure on Israel to put correspondent banking relations on a more stable footing. (Recommendation, Paragraph 60)

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# Formal minutes

**Tuesday 14 January 2025**

## Members present:

Sarah Champion, in the Chair

Monica Harding

Laura Kyrke-Smith

Noah Law

Alice Macdonald

Brian Mathew

James Naish

Sam Rushworth

David Taylor

## Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft Report (*Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 3 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 4 read.

Amendment proposed, in lines 12–13, to leave out, “which has given rise to accusations of genocide.”—(David Taylor.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes 3</b>	<b>Noes 4</b>
Noah Law	Monica Harding
James Naish	Laura Kyrke-Smith
David Taylor	Alice Macdonald
	Brian Mathew

Question accordingly negated.

Paragraph 4 agreed to.

Paragraph 5 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 6 read.

Motion made, to leave out paragraph 6 and insert the following new paragraph:

“Palestinian statehood is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people. The Committee supports the Government’s commitment to recognising a Palestinian state as part of a renewed peace process. The Government should set out in further detail how it intends to do this.”—(David Taylor.)

Question put, That the new paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes 1</b>	<b>Noes 7</b>
David Taylor	Monica Harding
	Laura Kyrke-Smith
	Noah Law
	Alice Macdonald
	Brian Mathew
	James Naish
	Sam Rushworth

Question accordingly negated.

Paragraph 6 agreed to.

Paragraphs 7 to 13 read and agreed to.

Paragraphs 14 to 20 read.

With the leave of the Committee, a single Question was put on paragraphs 14 to 20.

Question put, That paragraphs 14 to 20 stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes 7</b>	<b>Noes 1</b>
Monica Harding	David Taylor
Laura Kyrke-Smith	
Noah Law	
Alice Macdonald	
Brian Mathew	
James Naish	
Sam Rushworth	

Paragraphs 14 to 20 accordingly agreed to.

Paragraphs 21 to 54 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 55 read.

Motion made, to leave out paragraph 55 and insert the following new paragraph:

“Palestinian statehood is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people. The Committee supports the Government’s commitment to recognising a Palestinian state as part of a renewed peace process. The Government should set out in further detail how it intends to do this.”—(David Taylor.)

Question put, That the new paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes 2</b>	<b>Noes 6</b>
Noah Law	Monica Harding
David Taylor	Laura Kyrke-Smith
	Alice Macdonald
	Brian Mathew
	James Naish
	Sam Rushworth

Question accordingly negated.

Paragraph 55 agreed to.

Paragraphs 56 to 60 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Question put, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes 7</b>	<b>Noes 1</b>
Monica Harding	David Taylor
Laura Kyrke-Smith	
Noah Law	
Alice Macdonald	
Brian Mathew	
James Naish	
Sam Rushworth	

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Tuesday 28 January at 1.30 p.m

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# Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee’s website.

## Tuesday 12 November 2024

**Nebal Farsakh**, Spokesperson, Palestinian Red Crescent Society; **Emina Ćerimović**, Associate Director, Disability Rights Division, Human Rights Watch; **Rohan Talbot**, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns, Medical Aid for Palestinians; **Sam Rose**, Senior Deputy Director for UNRWA Affairs, Gaza, UNRWA

[Q1-64](#)

**Professor Nizam Mamode**, Professor of transplant surgery

[Q1-64](#)

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee’s website.

GAZ numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1 Breaking the Silence

[GAZ0001](#)

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2024–25

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 448
2nd Special	The UK Small Island Developing States Strategy: Government Response	HC 597
1st Special	FCDO and disability-inclusive development: Government Response	HC 568