

Na'amod Submission to Foreign Affairs Committee Call for Evidence on the Israel / Palestine Conflict:

Written evidence submitted by Na'amod (IPC0019)

SUMMARY

1. Na'amod is a movement of British Jews focused on the struggle for dignity, freedom and democracy for all Palestinians and Israelis.
2. Na'amod calls for:
 - a. a full arms embargo on Israel
 - b. cessation of UK military and intelligence cooperation with Israel
 - c. enacting other targeted sanctions
 - d. public support of accountability processes under international law by the UK Government
 - e. the UK Government not to accept the conflation of legitimate criticism of the State of Israel with antisemitism
3. The UK government should consult and engage with the broad diversity of groups within the Jewish community, including those Jewish groups that oppose Israeli policies of occupation and apartheid.

1. Introduction:

[Na'amod](#) is a movement of British Jews - currently with an estimated five hundred members and growing every day - focused on the struggle for dignity, freedom and democracy for all Palestinians and Israelis. Na'amod was founded in 2018, working to unite Jews behind its message of opposition to Israeli occupation. Na'amod takes a non-Zionist stance – not taking a position on the existence of the State of Israel, but clearly opposed to Israeli occupation and apartheid. Our name, meaning 'We will stand' in Hebrew, references the word used to call Jews to read from the Torah in synagogue. It reflects our steadfast commitment to stand up for justice and to stand alongside Palestinians. Na'amod regularly collaborates with other Jewish movements in the UK and internationally which have similar strategic aims to ours.

2. Rationale for submitting to this call for evidence:

- a. We are concerned that the current UK Government policy in respect of the Israel/Palestine conflict is creating a clear risk of complicity in violations of international humanitarian law and is prolonging the conflict.
- b. UK-made arms and aircraft components have been used by the Israel Defence Force (IDF) as part of military action that breaches international humanitarian law and as part of an Israeli campaign of genocidal destruction in Gaza. Emboldened by this campaign, the IDF gives cover to illegal settlers acting as unofficial militia in the illegally-occupied West Bank and committing horrific human rights abuses.
- c. We have particular concerns about the ways in which the UK Government has cited alleged Jewish community interests in order to justify its policies in relation to the Israel/Palestine conflict, and we are submitting to this call for evidence in order to make specific recommendations on how the UK can change course in this regard. British Jews are made up of a wide range of groups with different beliefs, and the process of generational change is leading to even more diversity in its composition and opinions. For under-30 year olds, only 49% of British Jews identify as Zionist, with 51% identifying as non-Zionist, anti-Zionist or don't know.¹ Further, there is a diverse range of Jewish religious groups in the UK, including Haredi (Strictly Orthodox), Orthodox, Liberal/Progressive, and secular Jews, who have varying religious practices.

¹ [Institute for Jewish Policy Research | JPR](#)

It is very far from being a monolithic community with uniform beliefs, including beliefs on the Israel/Palestine conflict. We hope that in future direct consultations with the British Jewish community to discuss the Israel/Palestine conflict, the government will ensure that they engage with the broad diversity of groups within the community, including those Jewish groups that oppose Israeli policies of occupation and apartheid. UK governments have previously justified foreign policy decisions regarding Israel-Palestine in the context of the safety and protection of UK Jews.— We represent a voice within the UK Jewish community that argues this approach is disingenuous, does not enhance security for UK Jews, and is ultimately a detrimental approach in the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

What can – and should – the UK do, in cooperation with regional and international partners, to help bring about a ceasefire?

We will limit our submission to respond to this question.

a. Impose a Full Arms Embargo: The UK must implement a complete embargo on arms transfers to Israel. Arms transfers are a direct material enabler of violence in Gaza and elsewhere. In the High Court case on this issue the government has acknowledged that by its own assessment Israel is not committed to complying with international humanitarian law.² The UK's current partial suspension of licenses is insufficient and is in violation of its obligations under international law, including the Geneva Conventions, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Genocide Convention. We are particularly concerned by the exemption from this partial arms licence suspension of the supply of components for F-35 advanced stealth fighter aircraft. Israel has used F-35s in some of the most devastating attacks on Gaza, including in dropping 2000lb bombs on densely populated areas. The loophole created whereby the government continues to licence component F-35 parts which could ultimately be sold to Israel means that their use by the IDF in the commission of war crimes is not prevented.

We welcome the UK government's decision to resume funding to UNRWA to assist Palestinians suffering during the crisis. However, the UK government's policy towards the Israel/Palestine conflict is incoherent - providing aid to victims of the crisis while facilitating the supply of arms that enable the continuation of the crisis and ongoing killing and maiming of these same victims to whom we are trying to facilitate assistance. The UK should go beyond partial suspension to a full arms embargo, including halting transfer of all F-35 components, and pressure the US and other partners into following suit.

b. Cease Military and Intelligence Cooperation: The UK should stop allowing its military assets to be used to provide passage and utility to other countries arming Israel via military bases in the UK and other countries such as Cyprus. It should also cease the agreement to use its own military and weapons in response to attacks

² [UK admits in court that Israel is not committed to complying with international humanitarian law](#)

resulting from Israel's illegal incursions into neighbouring countries and airspaces and should cease intelligence cooperation with Israel.

c. Enact Other Targeted Sanctions: Beyond arms, the UK should consider economic sanctions along with sanctions targeting political and military leaders, and individuals and organisations involved in the settler movements, responsible for violations of international law, to increase pressure for a ceasefire and to end Israel's post-1967 occupation. Given the violations of international law by the Government of Israel, we are concerned that free trade negotiations between the UK and Israel have continued. In the absence of a change by the Government of Israel in its respect of international law, these free trade negotiations should be immediately suspended.

d. Publicly support accountability processes under international law: The UK should lead by example, encouraging other countries to adopt similar measures, increasing the effectiveness of international pressure. The UK Government should publicly support the International Criminal Court arrest warrants and accountability processes under international law, including at the International Court of Justice.

The UK Government should fulfil its obligations under Article I of the Genocide Convention to act to prevent and punish genocide. The Government should make and publish regular assessments as to whether Israel is committing a genocide. The UK should also support the Government of Switzerland in its efforts to convene a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions on the protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and work to end destruction of Gaza and its people.

e. Do not accept the conflation of legitimate criticism of the State of Israel with antisemitism: Criticism of abuses committed by the Government of Israel does not amount to antisemitism. Instead, spurious accusations of anti-semitism are often used to suppress legitimate speech criticising the Israeli government. We therefore urge the government to use the [Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism](#) rather than the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's "Working Definition of Antisemitism" (IHRA WDA). The "contemporary examples of antisemitism" attached to the IHRA WDA effectively redefine antisemitism by wrongly conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism. This has been used to silence those advocating for Palestinian rights and for solutions to the conflict: for example, see [The-Practice-of-Suppressing-Palestinian-Rights-Advocacy-FINAL-PP.pdf](#).

We are concerned that the policing of those supporting Palestinian rights and calling for a ceasefire has been cast in the light of "policing antisemitism", and that this hinders and detracts from the central importance of the UK's foreign policy focus on the need to secure an immediate ceasefire and to work towards a peace process. For example, the statement by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism in March 2024 that London has become a "no-go zone for Jews" during weekend pro-

Palestinian marches was very confusing for Na'amod's Jewish membership, who regularly join these marches without experiencing difficulties.

In May 2024 Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for Leveling Up, Housing and Communities, stated that the government was “legislating to prevent universities from enabling antisemitism by endorsing the antisemitic BDS campaign” through its Economic Activity of Public Bodies Bill and appealed to members of the House of Lords to “listen to the Jewish community, send a message to the antisemites on our campus, and back the bill now.”³ We disagree profoundly with the idea that Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns against Israel are inherently antisemitic, and we call on the UK Government to be unequivocal in its rejection of weaponising the British Jewish community in this way.

The UK Government should work more closely with Jewish groups such as Na'amod in the UK, as well as aligned Israeli human rights and civil society organisations, such as [B'Tselem](#). This would support the efforts for a ceasefire and longer-term work towards a peace agreement.

We call on the UK Government to reject the previous government's [2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations](#), which includes many commitments on areas such as defence and security, and trade and investment, that are inappropriate given Israel's violations of international law, and which includes a commitment to “tackle the singling out of Israel in the Human Rights Council as well as in other international bodies.” We must be clear that criticisms of Israel by the UN Human Rights Council have been in response to Israel's violations of international law.

The UK government should take a clear public stance against the Government of Israel's repeated and unfounded accusations that those who have criticised its violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including international bodies such as the United Nations, International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice, are systematically “antisemitic”.

23rd December 2024

³ [Michael Gove: When Jews are under threat, all of our freedoms are threatened - The Jewish Chronicle](#)