

**Evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee
Enquiry into the Israel/Palestine conflict
Written evidence from Peterborough Palestine Solidarity Campaign
(IPC0027)**

1 Who we are

This submission comes from the *Peterborough Palestine Solidarity Campaign*. Like the national body, our aim is to seek justice for the Palestinian people using peaceful means, acting under and within national and international law, recognising the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We have a membership and supporter base of over a thousand in the area of Peterborough itself.

2 Summary

- i. This submission calls for an equal and consistent application of international law, by the UK government, to both sides engaged in the ongoing catastrophe that is relations between Israel and the indigenous peoples of Palestine.
- ii. The UK, along with the whole international community, has a clear choice ahead, either address an injustice or allow it to continue.
- iii. To choose the latter would mean giving continued impunity to one side, allowing it to ignore humanitarian and international law without consequences.
- iv. To address the injustice would mean giving the people of Israel and Palestine an opportunity to grasp peace.
- v. To turn away from that responsibility would mean that the causes of instability and resistance, the causes of the injustice underlying the conflict, will remain.
- vii. Calls for ceasefire, for a two-state solution and for sustainable peace would remain mere words, not a realistic prospect.
- viii. There can be no justice for a people under occupation.
- ix. Put words into action and give equal rights and status to Palestine:

3. Introduction

i. We are concerned that the use of the title 'Israel-Palestine conflict' and the focus on the war in Gaza by this inquiry might suggest that the deeper and historical causes of the current tragedy are not being faced. We hope the longstanding injustices behind it will not be ignored. The catastrophe that we see being played out at the moment will continue until those underlying causes are addressed.

ii. We believe that this inquiry, and the UK government, has a special responsibility to recognise the need for a just settlement for all the people of the region. A responsibility that has not been effectively acted on since 1917, and certainly not fulfilled throughout the 76 years since 1948.

iii. There can be little doubt that war crimes, as defined by Geneva Conventions, have been committed by individuals, groups and organisations on both sides of this 'conflict'. Consequences for those committing these crimes must be applied equally to both sides.

iv. There can be little doubt that without the full and equal involvement of both sides in talks about peace and future development there can be no hope for lasting and sustainable peace.

v. It has to be acknowledged that the current situation did not begin on October 7th 2023 with the attack from groups breaking out of Gaza.

vi. That underlying injustice applies not just in Gaza, but within the West Bank and in Israel itself also.

vii. In order to unlock the cycle of violence and do what it can to ensure a peaceful future the UK government needs to join with allies to approach the reality, both current and historical, with an even hand and unbiased analysis.

viii. Where individuals or groups operating as Palestinian resistance have committed war crimes as defined by the Geneva conventions, these have never been responded to, by Israel or the international community, in a proportionate manner. In the case of Israel's response the disproportionate retaliation has led to even greater war crimes.

Bombs that have been dropped on Gaza, including on many occasions before October 7th 2023, cannot be justified under international law. It could never be claimed that they distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, they know that they cannot avoid destroying the lives of the innocent.

ix. Such a disproportionate response meets the definition of war crimes.

x. International humanitarian law if it is to have any value, must apply to all and must be applied without favour.

xi. The fundamentals being:

- Protection for non-combatants
- Civilians should never be targeted, every care must be taken to avoid harming them, or destroying things essential for their survival.
- Civilians have a right under international law to receive the help they need.
- The ill treatment and torture of detainees is prohibited
- Medical workers must always be allowed to do their job
- There are limits on weapons that can be used particularly when civilians are likely victims.

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

- i. The UK government needs to publicly acknowledge that war crimes have been committed, not just by groups operating out of Palestine but by Israel as well.
- ii. That breaches of internationally agreed conventions and United Nations resolutions and declarations have been committed by Israel since it was created in 1948.
- iii. That these breaches lie at the root of the current catastrophe for Palestinians.
- iv. It is clear, as declared by UN Human Rights office of the high commissioner that the international order is breaking down in Gaza (*appendix 1*)
- v. The UK should act immediately to
 - a) Halt all arms licences including parts for F-35 fighters
 - b) Stop the use of the Akrotiri base in Cyprus for reconnaissance spy flights for Israel.
 - c) Stop underplaying the role that companies operating in the UK play in the support of war crimes. Place sanctions on the export of all logistical support from the UK and UK companies.
 - d) Halt intelligence cooperation relating to Israel's attacks in Palestinian territory, including by GCHQ.
 - e) Place full diplomatic pressure on the Israeli embassy, including if necessary calling for the withdrawal of the Israeli ambassador.
 - f) Working alongside and in cooperation with European allies the UK government must apply a wider use of sanctions against Israel because of its ongoing treatment of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.
 - g) Recognise immediately the illegality of the occupation of the West Bank and the imprisonment and denial of human rights to the people of Gaza.
 - h) Call for the removal of all illegal settlements in the West Bank.
 - i) The UK should do all in its power to ensure the provision of initiatives to support hospitals and psychological services to the people of Gaza
 - j) The UK must ensure that oversight by independent observers is allowed in Gaza. Including representatives from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
 - k) The UK should follow its own guidance for the application of International Humanitarian Law. (*appendix 2*)
- vi. With such actions underpinning an immediate response, the UK should then play a part in convening an internationally supported peace congress, with Israel and Palestinian representatives holding equal status.

5. What can be learned from the record of UK Government policies to date?

- i. The failure to see agreements, declarations and international laws applied in full and equally to both sides has resulted in a fundamental failure of UK policy in relation to Palestine. In turn playing its part in the ongoing insecurity of all the people of both communities, as well as the instability of the whole middle eastern region.

ii. The UK has a unique responsibility to right those failures. This goes right back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its promise that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (*appendix 3*)

iii. The failure to consult and fully include the indigenous people throughout the following 107 years has led to an accumulation of injustices.

iv. The UK walked away from its historical responsibilities in May 1948, before the inauguration of Israel, leaving a non-combatant community to become victims of atrocities committed by Zionist terrorist groups (*appendix 4*).

v. Throughout the 76 years since 1948 the UK has shown an imbalance in its response to breaches of international law, allowing Israel to assume it had immunity from any consequences.

- Russia’s invasion of Ukrainian territory and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait were both met by an immediate and firm response by the UK.
- Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and continued military rule, its annexation of the Golan Heights, and now its destruction of Gaza have all been met with at best words of concern, but no meaningful action by the UK.

vi. Gaza has suffered numerous disproportionate military attacks from 2006 onwards. All have been allowed to pass without effective consequences imposed by countries that continue to protect Israel and supply the Israeli armed forces.

vii. The UK has, in its own words, a definition of illegal actions which mean that a group is proscribed for those actions: (*appendix 5*)

“The use or threat of action which: involves serious violence against a person; involves serious damage to property; endangers a person’s life (other than that of the person committing the act); creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or section of the public or is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.

The use or threat of such action must be designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and must be undertaken for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause.”

viii. If these definitions so easily bring proscription for Palestinian based groups and others, why are they not also applied to the actions of Israeli settlers operating under the protection of Israel’s Defence Force, itself under the direction of Israeli government ministers?

ix. We see evidence on a daily basis of this definition applying to actions supported by Israel’s government and by the IDF in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Such actions are the subject of many declarations by the United Nations and human rights organisations.

x. To give one example, which alone should be enough to trigger effective sanctions:

A report from the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital (22 December 2024).

“Our hospitals have been denied access to humanitarian aid, food, medicine and safety. Direct attacks on the hospitals began with no warnings and no civilian protection permitted by the occupation, in the way of normal procedures expected in a combat zone. ICRC and other UN bodies were consistently denied access to intervene. As a result, significant

harm and loss to civilian life and means of preserving life resulted in these attacks on hospitals. *(continued)*

At no point were there any military targets or activity in the hospitals. We have been constantly telling and showing the world that we are only providing our humanitarian medical mission to the remaining 75,000 people in north Gaza.

We currently have nearly 400 civilians inside the hospital, including babies in the neonatal unit, whose lives depend on Oxygen and incubators. We cannot evacuate these patients safely without assistance, equipment and time.”

This hospital has now been forcibly evacuated by the IDF and effectively destroyed by arson.

xi. Israel has a history of ignoring UN resolutions since its foundation in 1948. Since 1968 alone, it has breached 30 Security Council Resolutions. Two UN resolutions stand out as examples of the ineffectiveness of UN declarations without meaningful consequences for non-compliance.

- Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) *(appendix 6)*
- Security Council Resolution 478 (1980) *(appendix 7)*

xii. We must accept that international law is paramount and applied in equal measure to Israelis and Palestinians.

xiii. International law governs the relationship between states. It remains an absolute priority for Palestine to be given full recognition as a state. Only then can their full rights and protection under international law be realised.

xiv. Far too many of Israel's actions, under the pretext of self-defence, are illegal. Occupation, settlement and continued military law, to subjugate a population in their own land.

xv. Full statehood should have been given to the Palestinians at the time of the creation of the state of Israel. It is long overdue.

xvi. But this imbalance is not limited to Israel's responses to attacks from Palestinian groups, It goes much deeper and is embedded in what has become a fundamentally racist, apartheid system of government.

xvii. No people can be expected to endure this indefinitely, no peace agreements can be sustainable. But rather than seek to undo this imbalance, the international community, including the UK, has allowed the imbalance to continue while Israel has tightened its grip on the rights of Palestinians.

xviii. Bad actors do not stop acting badly on their own. They need to be stopped by peaceful means wherever possible.

xix. Israel's law making has embedded racist and oppressive practice. *(appendix 8)*

- The Jewish Nation-State Law
- The Law of “Return”
- The Admissions Committee Law
- Absentee Property Law and Land Acquisition Law
- Israel Lands Law

- The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law
- The Nakba Law

xx. Universal human rights declaration (1948): *(appendix 9)*

Breaches by Palestinian groups against Israeli citizens stand dwarfed by Israel's breaches in its treatment of the indigenous Palestinian community.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

- The right to life, liberty and security
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence
- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

xxi. These being the clearest violations of rights denied, but by no means the only violations. The evidence for such violations clearly recorded through investigations undertaken by human rights observers, including

- Report from B'Tselem the Israeli human rights watchdog *(appendix 10)*
- Amnesty International *(appendix 11)*
- UN Special Rapporteurs Richard Goldstone and Francesca Albanese *(appendix 12)*

6. How can the UK assure the resilience of efforts to bring about a lasting peace at a time of uncertainty caused by conflicts elsewhere and changes in leadership in the international community?

- i. The UK must recognise Palestine as a state with full and equal status in the international community at the United Nations
- ii. The UK should play its part in establishing a conference convened and chaired by the United Nations, with its conclusions protected if necessary by an international force.

iii. Both Israel's and Palestine's security must be protected by the whole international community with the particular involvement of all the countries in the region. The priority has to be their protection, separated from the political priorities of any of the major international forces that have influenced events up to now.

iv. No single outside country should be allowed to prejudice the rights of either the Israeli or Palestinian people. Both need the support of the international community, not any unwanted interference.

7. Conclusion

i. How can the world accept an indigenous population being forced to live, exiled, in refugee camps for 76 years?

How can a people within their own land – the West Bank and Gaza – live in refugee camps?

Or, where they manage to hang on to their own homes be forced to live under a regime of military occupation and total control of their movement. Suffering the stealing of their land and destruction of their livelihoods?

ii. The UK government, with allies, must be outspoken about this injustice and recognise there will be no lasting peace, no genuine peace process even, until these imbalances of power are changed.

iii. Give the Palestinians full statehood now. International law governs the relationship between states. It remains an absolute priority for Palestine to be given full recognition as a state. Only then can their full rights and protection under international law be realised.

iv. We call on the UK government to **apply international law equally to both sides**.

v. Stop arming illegal actions, stop facilitating those actions.

vi. Call for an end to the building of illegal settlements, remove the settlements that already exist.

vii. Join with others in the European community to apply trade sanctions until Israel respects the territorial integrity of other countries in the region, including Palestinian land.

viii. Allow Palestinians the right of return to a state that gives them full and equal rights, an obligation included in the Balfour Declaration but denied to them ever since.

We must place ourselves on the right side of history.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

UN Human Rights office of the high commissioner

Oct 2024

The international order is breaking down in Gaza

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/10/international-order-breaking-down-gaza-un-experts-mark-one-year-genocidal>

Appendix 2

UK guidance for the application of International Humanitarian Law

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-humanitarian-law-and-the-uk-government/uk-and-international-humanitarian-law-2018>

Appendix 3

Balfour declaration

full text of the letter see page 4 of this document.

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7766/CBP-7766.pdf>

Appendix 4

Zionist terror groups

<https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1654849>

“At a meeting of Haganah leaders in Tel Aviv in March, 1948, and with Ben-Gurion present, it was decided to draw up a comprehensive plan for ethnic cleansing, known as “Plan Dalet”, according to which numerous massacres were carried out to terrorize the Palestinian civilian population and to drive them out of their homeland. Some massacres were carried out before the creation of the Israeli army, as in the Tantura massacre, a village south of Haifa, on 22 and 23 May, 1948, which resulted in the killing of more than 200 Palestinian men and women. Others were committed after that army was formed, as in the village of al-Dawaymah in the al-Khalil (Hebron) district, on October 29, 1948, where hundreds of Palestinian men and women were killed”

Appendix 5

definition of terrorism leading to proscription

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version>

Appendix 6

UN Security Council Resolution 242, November 1967

Adopted unanimously.

<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/scres24228196729.pdf>

Appendix 7

UN Security Council Resolution 478, August 1980

Adopted with 1 abstention

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/478>

Appendix 8

Israeli laws establishing a racist state

Institute for Middle East Understanding

<https://imeu.org/article/the-7-most-racist-israeli-laws>

Appendix 9

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to *promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.*

Appendix 10

B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

State Business: Israel's misappropriation of land in the West Bank through settler violence

https://www.btselem.org/publications/202111_state_business

Appendix 11

Amnesty International, December 2024

Amnesty International investigation concludes Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

also

Amnesty: Israel's Apartheid

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/>

Appendix 12

A/HRC/55/73: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5573-report-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-palestinian>

also

press statements

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/media-centre/news-situation-occupied-palestinian-territory-israel-and-lebanon>

(Submission: 2863 words Appendices: 405 words)

30th December 2024