

Written evidence submitted by Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) to the Foreign Affairs Committee (IPC0033)

Contents:

- 1) Summary, paras 1-4**
- 2) Palestine Solidarity Campaign, paras 5-8**
- 3) A year of genocide, 76 years of ongoing Nakba, paras 9-11**
- 4) Britain's responsibility to prevent genocide, paras 12-17**
- 5) End all arms trade and military cooperation with Israel, paras 18-30**
- 6) Confronting the reality of unlawful occupation and apartheid, paras 31-34**
- 7) Ban trade with illegal Israeli settlements, paras 35-38**
- 8) Support international law and mechanisms for accountability, paras 39-41**
- 9) Conclusion and recommendations, paras 42**

Summary:

- 1) History did not begin on 7 October 2023. The violence that has unfolded since is rooted in the context of Israel's ongoing military occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land, and imposition of a system of oppression that is recognised internationally as meeting the legal definition of apartheid, a crime against humanity. There is now a growing international consensus that Israel has committed and is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip.
- 2) For more than forty years, and especially over the past fourteen months, PSC has been the leading voice calling on the British government to end its complicity with Israel's crimes. Today, Britain is in the grotesque position of continue to arm, treat as an ally, and otherwise support, a state which is currently on trial for genocide, which has already been judged guilty by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of violating the prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid, and which is led by a fugitive from the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- 3) This shameful situation is built upon the foundations of decades of British complicity with Israel's violations of Palestinian rights. In this way, Britain has contributed to the culture of impunity shielding Israel's most egregious crimes in the past fourteen months. This must change. Britain must urgently adopt a new foreign policy grounded in international law. This should begin with meaningful pressure applied on Israel to end its genocidal assault on Gaza, including through a complete end to arms sales and military cooperation. To secure a lasting peace, the decades-long denial of Palestinian rights must end. This includes the right of refugees to return to their homes, and the

rights of Palestinians who are citizens of Israel to equality under the law. As a starting point, Britain can contribute to this by banning all trade with illegal Israeli settlements, and all other trade which aids or assists Israel in maintaining its unlawful military occupation.

- 4) To this end, PSC recommends:
- An immediate end to all arms trade and military cooperation with Israel. This means a two-way arms embargo covering both imports and exports.
 - Ban all trade with illegal Israeli settlements, implement sanctions including travel bans and asset freezes against those involved in maintaining Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), and end all other trade which aids or assists Israel in maintaining its unlawful military occupation. This demands the abandonment of the 2030 Roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations.
 - Place the consistent application of international law at the heart of all British foreign policy, including full support for the international courts and accountability mechanisms.
 - Support calls to the UN General Assembly to suspend Israel's membership of the UN, as apartheid South Africa was once suspended.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign:

- 5) Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) is Europe's largest organisation dedicated to securing Palestinian rights, with 15,000 members, 300,000 subscribers, over 90 branches across Britain and 16 affiliated national trade unions.
- 6) PSC is a community of people working together for peace, equality, and justice and against racism, occupation, and colonisation. PSC has been active for over 40 years, in solidarity with all Palestinians who are subjected to Israel's system of apartheid. This includes the refugees in exile, Palestinians living under military occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and Palestinian citizens of the Israeli state.
- 7) As a campaigning organisation, PSC believes that our actions can effect change. To that end, we seek to build a mass campaign to realise our goals through non-violent pressure and democratic means.
- 8) Over the last fourteen months, PSC has been the leading voice calling on the British government to take action to end Israel's illegal occupation and genocidal assault against the Gaza Strip. It has mobilised hundreds of thousands of people in one of the largest and most sustained protest movements in British history, including 22 huge national demonstrations – one alone close to a million strong – national days of action, mass lobbies of parliament, and hundreds of local and regional protests.

Opinion poll evidence suggests that the British public shares PSC's position on these issues.¹

A year of genocide, 76 years of ongoing Nakba:

- 9) Palestinians continue to experience the ongoing Nakba, or "catastrophe" in Arabic, which began in 1948 with the initial ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homes and the erasure of entire villages. Today, most Palestinians remain refugees. This already included some 70% of the population of Gaza prior to October 2023.
- 10) Since October 2023, Israel's brutal military offensive against the Gaza Strip has brought the population to the brink of collapse. Over 45,000 Palestinians have been massacred, with over two-thirds of the casualties being women and children. According to Save the Children, 40% of those killed are children, with the majority aged between five and nine². Following seventeen years of illegal blockade, Gaza's already fragile infrastructure has been decimated to the extent that there are currently no fully functioning hospitals at all. 90% of the population in Gaza has been displaced, often multiple times, and two million people are struggling to survive with inadequate food, water, shelter and health services. Between September and October 2024, 133,000 people were facing Phase 5 catastrophic food insecurity, where 2 in 10,000 people die from starvation every day, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). This figure is expected to treble in the period up to April 2025³.
- 11) Israel's direct, or deliberately indiscriminate, attacks have wiped out entire multigenerational families and rendered large areas of Gaza uninhabitable. The situation in northern Gaza is especially dire, with Israel persisting with assaults while blocking access to food, fuel, and medicine, seemingly with the intent of permanently displacing the remaining Palestinian population.

Britain's responsibility to prevent genocide:

- 12) Britain carries a unique historic responsibility to the Palestinian people. As the former colonial power during the British Mandate in Palestine, and originator of the Balfour Declaration, Britain played a key role in shaping the political landscape that has contributed to the ongoing denial of rights to Palestinians enduring to this day.
- 13) In addition, as a key ally of Israel heretofore and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Britain is well placed to have a significant impact.

¹ [UK public attitudes toward the conflict between Israel and Iran | Ipsos](#)

² [War in Gaza: One-year impact report](#), Save the Children, November 2024

³ [Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September - October 2024 and Projection for November 2024 - April 2025](#), IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

- 14) Israel's military occupation and wider system of oppression and discrimination can only be maintained for as long as the international community fails in its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the rights of the Palestinian people.
- 15) In January, the ICJ issued an interim ruling affirming there is plausible evidence that Israel is committing genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.⁴ It also found evidence of the risk of further acts of genocide sufficient to obligate the court to order interim measures to prevent such acts. These measures included an order for the protection of the Palestinian population, to ensure sufficient life-saving goods and services are reaching those at risk in Gaza, and for Israel to refrain from any conduct that could be interpreted as genocidal. None of these have been implemented.
- 16) There is now overwhelming evidence of that genocide, including in Amnesty International's comprehensive report *'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*⁵, and Human Rights Watch's report *Extermination and Acts of Genocide*⁶.
- 17) As a party to the Genocide Convention, Britain is required to take active steps to prevent and punish genocide:
1. States are required "to employ all means reasonably available to them" to prevent genocide, and responsibility is incurred if "the State manifestly failed to take all measures to prevent genocide which were within its power". This duty to act "applies regardless of whether any one state's actions alone are sufficient to prevent genocide."⁷
 2. The "obligation to prevent, and the corresponding duty to act, arise at the instant that the State learns of the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed. From that moment onwards, if the State has available to it means likely to have a deterrent effect on those suspected of preparing genocide, or reasonably suspected of harbouring specific intent (*dolus specialis*), it is under a duty to make such use of these means as the circumstances permit".⁸

End all arms trade (two-way arms embargo) and military cooperation with Israel:

⁴ [Application of the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\)](#), ICJ report 2024

⁵ *'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*, Amnesty International report December 2024

⁶ *Extermination and Acts of Genocide, Israel Deliberately Depriving Palestinians in Gaza of Water*, Human Rights Watch report December 2024

⁷ [Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide \(Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro\)](#), Judgment of 26 February 2007, I.C.J. Reports 2007 ("Bosnia v Serbia"), para 430

⁸ Bosnia v Serbia, para 431

- 18) The ICJ's conclusion that there exists a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza places the British government on notice that weapons might be used in its commission, and that the suspension of their provision is required as a means likely to deter, or a measure to prevent, genocide.
- 19) In April 2024, over 1,100 UK lawyers, legal academics, and former members of the judiciary – including former President of the Supreme Court, Baroness Hale of Richmond – sent a legal opinion to the government indicating that Britain is in breach of its obligations to prevent genocide by continuing to allow arms trade with Israel, for which it can be held legally responsible.⁹
- 20) Israel's violent repression of Palestinians extends far beyond the Gaza Strip. The actions of Israel's armed forces in Gaza sits within a broader framework of sustaining Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine, and enforcing a brutal system of apartheid that impacts all Palestinians. By permitting any arms trade with Israel, Britain is failing in its obligation to ensure it does not support or facilitate what the ICJ has determined to be an illegal situation.
- 21) The Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria set out clear guidelines for the government to assess arms export licence applications, and stipulates that licenses should not be issued if:
1. **There is a clear risk that the goods proposed for export might be used for internal repression.** An example of this would be the excessive force used by Israeli police against Palestinian citizens of Israel;
 2. **There is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law.** An example of this would be the targeting of civilians and/or civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip;
 3. **The exports would provoke or prolong armed conflicts, or aggravate existing tensions or conflicts in the country of final destination;**
 4. **There is a risk that the intended recipient would use the proposed export aggressively against another country, or to assert by force a territorial claim.** An example of this would be the seizing of Palestinian property in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- 22) If the Consolidated Criteria were properly applied, they would effectively mandate a de facto arms embargo on Israel due to its illegal occupation and excessive use of force against civilians.
- 23) In addition, Israel's end-use guarantees are heavily relied upon by the government when granting export licenses, but these have been repeatedly proven as unreliable. In 2002, it emerged that military equipment exported to Israel was used in the occupied

⁹ [Letter to the Prime Minister from UK lawyers, legal academics, and former members of the judiciary](#), April 2024

Palestinian territory despite previous assurances to the contrary, leading the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the time to comment that it could not accept all of Israel's end use guarantees. Similarly, in 2014 the government found that several previously approved export licences covered items that were probably used in attacks on the Gaza Strip amounting to war crimes.

- 24) The unreliability of end-use guarantees, coupled with a lack of traceability for specific goods, means only a comprehensive ban on all arms trade with Israel can ensure Britain is not contributing to violations of international law.
- 25) Since 2015, Britain has approved the export of over £490 million worth of arms to Israeli forces.¹⁰ This includes licenses covering components for military aircraft, helicopters, drones, bombs, missiles, military technology, armoured vehicles, tanks, ammunition and small arms. However, the true figure is much higher as the data published by the government doesn't include open licenses, whereby the transfer of unlimited quantities of listed military items are authorised with no requirement to report what is transferred.
- 26) One example of this is Britain's contribution to the F-35 combat aircraft, which is currently being used by Israel to drop 2000lb bombs on Gaza. Approximately 15% of each F-35 is produced in Britain, with roughly £360 million worth of parts being sent to Israel since 2016. This doesn't include spare parts, which likely amount to a further £120 million, and over £60 million since October 2023.¹¹
- 27) In September 2024, the government suspended 30 arms export licenses to Israel, conceding that there is a 'clear risk' that arms exported to Israel could be used for serious violations of international law. While this is a welcome first step, it falls far short of what is needed. It includes only a fraction of the roughly 350 export licenses for military and dual use goods to Israel, and crucially the government has made a specific exception for components for F-35 fighter jets.
- 28) While F-35 parts can no longer be exported directly to Israel, components can still be exported freely to Israel provided they go via another country involved in the F-35 programme. This includes both components that go to the US to be put into new aircraft for Israel, and spare parts going into the global stockpiles that may then go to Israel.
- 29) The government has suggested suspending these licenses would disrupt the global supply chain for the F-35, which would impact on Britain and other countries. A desire to maintain supply chains is no excuse for the government to fail to stand by its

¹⁰ [Arming genocide: UK arms sales to Israel, the partial export licence suspension, and the F-35 exemption](#), p3, Campaign Against Arms Trade, December 2024

¹¹ [Arming genocide: UK arms sales to Israel, the partial export licence suspension, and the F-35 exemption](#), p2, Campaign Against Arms Trade, December 2024

international obligations to prevent genocide and uphold international law. Even so, it is perfectly possible for the government to amend the Open General licence to prevent the indirect supply of these parts to Israel.

30) Arms exports are just one way in which British military cooperation with Israel has helped to sustain the assault on Gaza and perpetuate Israel's illegal occupation. An Al Jazeera investigation found the UK conducted more surveillance flights over Gaza than any other country. The RAF's Shadow R-1 fleet has been conducting nearly daily surveillance missions taking off from its base in Cyprus.¹² Britain also supports Israel's weapons industry through the import of products marketed by Israeli manufacturers as 'battle tested' against Palestinians. Only a two-way arms embargo can end this complicity.

Confronting the reality of unlawful occupation and apartheid:

31) On 19 July 2024, the ICJ published a historic advisory opinion confirming that Israel's occupation is unlawful and finding Israel guilty of violating the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid¹³.

32) On 18 September 2014, the UN General Assembly's voted overwhelmingly to adopt a resolution to implement the ICJ ruling, demanding that Israel "brings to an end without delay its unlawful presence" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and calling on all states to take concrete steps to address Israel's ongoing presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including by ceasing the import of products originating from Israeli settlements.

33) The ICJ opinion that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid conforms to the long-held view of Palestinian civil society, United Nations bodies,¹⁴ and human rights organisations including Amnesty International¹⁵, Human Rights Watch¹⁶, and Israel's own leading human rights organisation B'Tselem¹⁷.

34) As a signatory to key international treaties, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, Britain has a duty to ensure that it does not support or facilitate illegal situations through its policies, including trade relations.

¹² [How US and UK military airlifts have supported Israel's war on Gaza](#), Al Jazeera report October 2024

¹³ [Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem](#), International Court of Justice, July 2024

¹⁴ [UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia's report 'Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid'](#), March 2017

¹⁵ ['Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity'](#), Amnesty International, February 2022

¹⁶ ['A Threshold Crossed, Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution'](#), Human Rights Watch, April 2021

¹⁷ ['A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid'](#), B'Tselem, January 2021

Ban all trade with illegal Israeli settlements:

- 35) The United Nations reports that over 700,000 Israeli settlers are now living illegally on occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank,¹⁸ and Israel continues to expand illegal settlements at an alarming rate in what constitutes as de facto annexation of territory. International condemnation alone has failed to prevent this.
- 36) Britain considers settlements to be unlawful and a hindrance to international peace and stability. Despite this, and even though the settlements constitute as a war crime, Britain inexplicably continues to allow trade with them. Allowing settlement products access to British markets is an implicit recognition of their legitimacy. Similarly, any business activity in or with settlements unavoidably contributes to sustaining an illegal situation and the systemic human rights violations against Palestinians.
- 37) As it stands, three British companies - JCB, Opodo, and Greenkote - are all listed in the UN database of companies directly involved in illegal settlements and complicit in crimes against Palestinians.¹⁹ The government must address this by banning businesses and banks from trading and profiting from Israel's illegal settlements.
- 38) The government should also scrap the 2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations, which risks perpetuating complicity in ongoing violations of international law.

Support international law and mechanisms for accountability

- 39) The failure of the international community over decades to hold Israel accountable has significantly undermined the principles of international law and emboldened further gross violations of Palestinian rights. This failure not only erodes the credibility of international institutions, but also deepens the suffering and dispossession faced by Palestinians.
- 40) Britain has a moral and legal responsibility to support the work of the ICJ and ICC including through a clear commitment to execute the ICC arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and former Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, should they enter this country.

¹⁸ [Human Rights Council Hears that 700,000 Israeli Settlers are Living Illegally in the Occupied West Bank, United Nations](#)

¹⁹ [Database of all business enterprises involved in the activities detailed in paragraph 96 of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem](#). Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

41) It is imperative to also strengthen international institutions like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that are facing political attack, as well as civil society organisations working to hold Israel accountable.

Conclusion and recommendations:

42) The principles of human rights and international law are under unprecedented attack. If they are to be defended, they must be applied universally. If the British government wishes to play a meaningful role in the creation of peace in this region, then it must stop placing Israel above international law, prioritise supporting global accountability mechanisms, and ensure its policies no longer contribute to the ongoing denial of rights to the Palestinian people.

30th December 2024