

UK Parliament Foreign Affairs Inquiry on Committee the “Israeli Palestinian Conflict” - Call for Evidence from the Public

Written evidence submitted by Dr Andreas Wittel (IPC0036)

1. Introduction

My name is Dr Andreas Wittel. I am a German resident in the UK. I live in Nottingham with my wife and our two children.

My values and my political education were shaped by German fascism, the Shoah, and Germany's failure to seriously engage in a process of de-Nazification after the 2nd WW. The lesson I have learnt from the Shoah is simple: Never again means never again for everyone.

After more than a year of Israel's genocidal action against the Palestinian people, their land, culture, and history I am emotionally exhausted and traumatised by the daily acts of unspeakable violence against men, women, children, toddlers, and babies. I am outraged that the UK government (both under the current and the former PM) has done the exact opposite to contributing to a ceasefire in Gaza, that it continues to this day with its steadfast support of a government out of control and led by a war criminal.

I submit my statement in the hope that it will make a tiny difference and contribute to a rethinking of the UK's unconditional support of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

In the last nearly 15 months the world has seen a truth that cannot be deleted, manipulated, or unseen any more.

2. Opening Statement

Language matters and the framing of this committee matters. What the Committee calls 'Israeli Palestinian Conflict' is what Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani called 'a conversation between the sword and the neck' in 1970. Can I please ask Committee members to take a few seconds to reflect on Kanafani's language before you read on.

Does the government of the UK accept the ruling of the ICJ from July 2024 that Israel has been illegally occupying Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem for 57 years?

If it does, it needs to fundamentally reconsider its framing of the 'conflict'. Calling the illegal occupation a conflict is a form of propaganda that mystifies the reality and deliberately ignores the occupation, the apartheid, and the one-sided violence that has entered a level of brutality most citizens of this planet have not seen before. If it does, the Committee needs to accept that according to international law, the illegal occupier has no right to defend itself against the occupied. This acceptance of international law would mean, among other things, that the UK should immediately accept Palestinian statehood and the right of Palestinians to self-determination.

There is much to say about Zionist violence against Palestinians before 1967. This violent history of settler-colonialism began after the Balfour Declaration in 1917. But this is not the space for a history lesson. Let's move on to Israel's attempts to annihilate Palestinians and destroy Palestinian land and Palestinian history since 7 October 2023:

Does the UK government accept that what the committee calls a conflict, is a one-sided and criminal massacre committed by Israel? Does it accept the ICJ ruling on 26 January 2024 (from nearly a year ago!), that a plausible case can be made that Israel is committing genocide (the most severe crime in international law) in Gaza?

Does it accept the reports from internationally respected organisations such as the University Network for Human Rights (15 May 2024), Amnesty International (5 December 2024), the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor (17 December 2024), Mediciens Sans Frontieres (19 December 2024), Human Rights Watch (19 December 2024), and the ongoing and updated report from Forensic Architecture (A Cartography of Genocide), detailing Israel's genocide in Gaza?

Does the UK government accept the report from UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese, detailing the 'Anatomy of a Genocide' (24 March 2024)?

Is the UK government sufficiently concerned by the arrest warrants against PM Netanyahu and former Minister of Defense Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the ICC (21 November 2024)?

In short: Does the UK still abide by international law? This should be a rhetorical question. After all, the government and MPs are obliged to respect and honour international law. It is their duty! Sadly, this is not a rhetorical question as the UK continues to undermine and violate international law by militarily, politically, and economically supporting a government that commits genocide.

Despite the rulings and reports listed above the government continues to export components for F-35 fighters, facilitates arms deliveries via RAF Akrotiri and conducts daily surveillance flights over Gaza. Despite the genocide, the UK government stands with Israel. This makes the UK not just a silent bystander but an active supporter and enabler of the genocide.

Please forgive my bluntness: In the light of my opening statement, the hypocrisy of this Inquiry stinks to high heaven. The three questions I am supposed to respond to are disingenuous and a distraction from the real issues.

3. Response to Q1: What can – and should – the UK do, in cooperation with regional and international partners, to help bring about a ceasefire?

This question is either extremely naive or a deliberate attempt to mislead the public by pretending that the UK government suddenly cares about the Palestinian people.

The UK government is not in a position to act as a neutral broker for peace.

Let me say this loud and clear: Israel's government is led by a war criminal who has no intention whatsoever to stop the destruction of Gaza and bring about a ceasefire.

Based on the ruling of the ICJ from July 2024 it is clear beyond any doubt that diplomatic negotiations will not stop Israel's genocidal action against the Palestinian people and their land. The only action forward to stop Israel is by

political, military, and economic means, by an immediate and full arms embargo, by economic sanctions and by an increase of international pressure.

All the government would need to do to initiate meaningful action is to adhere to international law and to support the ICJ ruling of July 2024. Part 5 of this legal document outlines the Obligations for Third States. These obligations entail political and diplomatic relations, military-related actions, financial and economic relations, and cultural relations.

It is not my task to interpret these ICJ obligations for the UK government. Still, a full arms embargo (including the sharing of military intelligence) and severe economic sanctions would be a welcome start to demonstrating the UK's compliance with international law.

4. Response to Q2: What can be learned from the record of UK Government policies to date?

Two things can be learned from the record of government policies:

Firstly, this government and its predecessor have unconditionally supported Israel's genocide, its crimes against humanity, and its violations of human rights.

Secondly, because this government is facilitating genocide it is in no position to work towards a ceasefire. This is basic logic. Even my 10-year-old son would understand that it is impossible to do both simultaneously.

5. Response to Q3: 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?

The genocide against the Palestinian people is enabled by 'The West', especially by the US, the UK and Germany. History will not judge kindly the actions of these countries over the last 15 months. The 'global meaning of Gaza' (William Robinson, 16 August 2024) is still unfolding. However, it is

already clear that Gaza is a defining moment in that 'The Rest' or the 'Global South' has come to understand Western values in a new light.

Question three sounds both, desperate and preposterous. It sounds desperate as it reads as a cry for help from the public at a time when global power structures and especially the so-called special relationship between the US and the UK are shifting into the unknown. I'm afraid, we the public can't sort out the difficult journey ahead of a former Empire that still dreams of returning to the good old days.

The question is also preposterous as it implies that the UK can help to bring about peace when all the UK has done since the Balfour Declaration (1917), since the Nakba (1948), and since 7 October 2023 is to support the Zionist project, a settler-colonial project against the Palestinian Indigenous population unconditionally and by all means necessary. With all due respect, the UK has done enough damage.

The best thing the UK (I refer in particular to the political class, the media and academics) can do now is to take a step back, learn some humility and start educating itself on the so-called 'Israeli Palestinian conflict'. In particular, I recommend the work of Israeli historians Ilan Pappé and Avi Shlaim, US-Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi, and US-Palestinian anti-colonial theorist Edward Said.

30th December 2024