

## **ADD BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF**

Written evidence submitted by Mr Omar (IPC0043)

The Author is a British Citizen of Palestinian descent and a co-founder of the British Palestinian Families Network, each member of our networks has lost loved ones in Gaza, we work to advocate for the end of war, safety, peace and justice to our loved ones.

Few members of my family have lost their lives in Gaza since the Israeli aggression started on the 7th of October 2023 due to the deliberate destruction and dismantling of the medical infrastructure by Israeli forces, other family members were executed deliberately (evidence can be provided upon request).

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

**Answer:**

According to Oxfam, The Red Cross, and Amnesty International humanitarian law is not being upheld by Israel, clearly violating the “Principles of Distinction”, the “Principle of Precaution” and the “Principle of Proportionality”, causing significant human losses and destruction never witnessed since the second world war.

Since January 2024, in a case brought by South Africa, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued three binding rulings listing urgent measures that Israeli authorities should take to prevent the risk of genocide in their military operations in Gaza. Israeli authorities have largely flouted those rulings and continue to use starvation as a weapon of war, and to impose arbitrary and onerous restrictions on entry and distribution of desperately needed humanitarian aid throughout Gaza.

Israel has indiscriminately destroyed (and continue to do so) Gazan residential buildings, universities, hospitals, and civilian infrastructure. This cannot be justified and serves only as a collective punishment. There is no evidence that these structures are used as militant bases, the Israeli army has failed continuously to demonstrate such evidence.

The UK government has called for a ceasefire, along with the wider international community and the UN, these calls are unfortunately, as not combined with any diplomatic or economic tools have failed to establish pressure on Israel to respond to this call.

Israeli Government continue to ignore ceasefire calls and continue its conduct in this aggression on the Palestinian people and causing the death of several Israeli captives during the IDF indiscriminate bombarding.

This will require a shift in how the complete crisis is addressed, leveraging wider diplomatic tools to pressure the Israeli government to alter its conduct, as follows:

1. We urge the United Kingdom to end arms sales towards Israel and urge other international partners (such as the USA) to do so as well; this would incentivize Israel to push harder for a ceasefire deal, as it showcases the disapproval of their key allies.

The partial arms sales suspension following the UK government review on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 ( 30 arms exports licenses out of a total of around 350) on the grounds that there was a ‘clear risk’ such equipment might be used to commit serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Since this suspension, Israel continues to violate IHL, which requires a further review and assessment to the arms sales to Israel, including the UK role in F-35 programme.

It worth mentioning that “Five” previous British Governments imposed more stringent arms sales suspensions on Israel, including Ex-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who placed an arms embargo on Israel until 1994.

2. We would strongly recommend that the UK encourages international partners to end financial aid to Israel, and instead redirect the funds to helping rebuild Gaza and regions of Lebanon that have been most affected by the humanitarian crisis. This would lessen the impact of war on innocent civilians and begin the rebuilding of societies, as needed by a ceasefire.
3. We advise that the UK and key regional and international partners incentivise the Israeli Government to allow aid trucks into Gaza; this is key in paving the way for a ceasefire deal as it alleviates the damages of war on Palestinian civilians. This would initially require written affirmation that Israel would not attack or bombard the aid trucks, or else face a punishment as seen fit by each member state. The regional partners to agree and monitor the implementation of a clear mechanism to allow aid and medical relief efforts into Gaza with clear performance indicators and governance, such mechanism could include:
  - 3.1. Protected Humanitarian corridor, allowing the movement of aid and patients along North and South Gaza, we suggest British personnel presence at border crossing to ensure agile inspection process and monitor aid unrestricted flow to Gaza.
  - 3.2. Agree number/content of aid truck to enter Gaza.
  - 3.3. Medical relief - The destruction of health infrastructure and targeting of hospitals, meant that critically injured Palestinian and those with chronic diseases (such as cancer and kidney failure) are facing a slow death, UK-Med (born of the NHS) is making a big difference, but only operates in single location in Gaza. UK-Med services can be extended to existing hospitals under British management with extended services.
4. In order to allow a free and candid documentation of the events occurring in Gaza, the UK and her allies must urge Israel that the Palestinian Press and journalists must be protected and there must be written and recorded assurance from Israel that they shall not be targeted. This is fundamental in the creation of a ceasefire deal as it highlights the importance of Palestinian lives and perspective, which has previously been undermined.

We ask that the UK government collaborate with key countries in the region to gain a balanced view of the current crisis and understand how to achieve a ceasefire deal beneficial and fair for all members involved.

5. we implore the need for the recognition of a Palestinian state; a ceasefire deal would be more feasible if the Palestinians were truly treated as equals with the Israelis.

These are all actions the United Kingdom can undertake, in order to reach a sufficient and long-lasting ceasefire deal that will lead to long term peace within the region. The UK government has a moral duty to encourage regional and international partners to take these same actions, to end the pain and suffering of innocent civilians, that Israel's indiscriminate bombardment has led to.

### **Question Two: What can be learned from the record of UK Government policies to date?**

#### **Answer:**

The record of UK government policies to date have been insufficient in providing a viable solution to the end of the suffering through a plethora of ways;

1. though the UK has called for a ceasefire, there has not been any measures taken to enforce this.
- 2.
3. in the Labour Manifesto, it was written that there would be consideration of the recognition of a Palestinian State, yet that has yet to occur, despite Labour's many months in power. Labour has stated it will recognise a Palestinian state alongside a "safe and secure Israel" when it judges this will best support the peace process. However, a ceasefire is integral to the peace process, and the lack of recognition of the Palestinian State's right to exist proves how little the UK values Palestinian lives, in Palestine and in Britain.
4. The Foreign Secretary David Lammy has suggested "trusted" Arab states may take a security role in Gaza, instead of Hamas or the IDF, yet this negates the Palestinians' rights to vote for who shall lead and protect in Gaza and allows other countries to involve themselves, such as Israel and the UK if they are the deciders of which states may take a role in Gaza. The Palestinians must be given resources and support to rebuild financially, yet the political involvement of the selection of leadership in Gaza by the UK must end.
5. The government's previous guidelines on teaching the Israel-Palestine conflict have been criticized for bias, resulting in the exclusion of Palestinian viewpoints. Which calls for a revision of these guidelines to ensure that schools in the UK present a more balanced, inclusive approach to the issue. Children have also been treated in unfair

ways, dependent of which international, humanitarian causes they have chosen to support.

6. Many of the British Palestinian feel that anti-Palestinian bias has increased in the UK's media and educational settings, creating a hostile environment for Palestinians and pro-Palestinian voices. Addressing this involves promoting balanced media coverage, protecting free speech in schools and universities, and ensuring that Palestinian perspectives are fairly represented.
7. A rising number of British citizens are joining the Israeli Défense Forces, raising ethical, legal, and security concerns, specially as they serve in Occupied Palestinian Territories (particularly in Gaza). There are calls for stricter regulation and monitoring of foreign combatants, as well as addressing the impact this may have on social cohesion in the UK.
8. Many Palestinian families in the UK, have been separated due to the conflict, with loved ones stranded in Gaza. The UK government has not yet supported the call for a family reunification scheme to advocates for legal pathways and travel visas to reunite British Palestinian families with loved ones estranged in Gaza and neighbouring countries, by overcoming travel restrictions. Something akin to the scheme offered to Ukrainians.
9. The UK government has also declined to support a Medical Evacuation of Critically Injured Children from Gaza to the UK, which seeks to provide life-saving medical treatment for critically injured children from Gaza, where local healthcare has become mor an more difficult to access. The plan involves coordinating travel permits, medical visas, and safe transport to the UK, where the children can receive specialised care unavailable to them in Gaza.

**Question Three: 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?**

**Answer:**

At a time of uncertainty caused by conflicts elsewhere and changes in leadership in the international community, the UK can assure the resilience of efforts to bring about a lasting peace by:

1. Protection of civilians on all sides of the conflict – directing funds towards rebuilding communities and providing aid to those in need.

2. Holding countries to account that may have violated international law, for instance, the UK government should cooperate with the International Court of Justice in conducting a detailed review of whether Israel has violated international humanitarian law. This is integral in ensuring long lasting peace in the region as justice will have been imparted.
3. Ensuring freedom of speech and accurate media broadcasting: the UK government must hold an investigation towards the news broadcasted by the BBC (supposedly the impartial news service of our country) and other news stations and ascertain the accuracy of their sources and bias in their portrayal of the ongoing crisis. In addition to this, the coverage done by Palestinian journalists in this time of war must be recognised and images such as those photographed by Palestinian individuals in Gaza must be acknowledged and presented in British Media.
4. Recognising a Palestinian state and the right of Palestinians to be safe, secure and have a peaceful place to live – these factors have only been applied to Israel by the UK and her international allies such as the USA.
5. The war on Gaza has made Gaza uninhabitable, ceasefire delays meant an absence of a vision for a future for Gaza as humanitarian crisis deepens, we are calling the UK to call for an international urgent reconstruction programme for Gaza to make Gaza habitable again.

These actions must begin, pre-ceasefire and must continue post-ceasefire. The UK must remain neutral and impartial in their support for humanity and representation of all parties involved.

*30<sup>th</sup> December 2024*