

Written evidence submitted anonymously (IPC0045)

(1) Introduction

My name is [REDACTED], I am a British born constituent, British university educated, with a degree in Software Engineer, Masters qualified in secondary school teaching, a past Vice Chair of a foundation charity, past parliamentary candidate and a concerned humanitarian and citizen raised and living in an affluent area of England.

I am advocating for a just and transparent UK policy in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Over recent months, the intensification of hostilities in Gaza and the West Bank—territories widely recognized as illegally occupied under international law (ICJ Advisory Opinion, 2004; UN Security Council Resolution 2334, 2016)—has raised urgent questions about the UK's role. The Government's continued arms exports, inconsistent recognition stance, and reluctance to classify potential atrocities as genocide underscore serious ethical failures (Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, 2020; The Guardian, 23 December 2024).

Numerous petitions (House of Commons Petitions, 2024; Petition 649343; Petition 648225 and more) and commentators (BBC, and more) have demanded stricter oversight. Yet decisions often rest with a Trade Minister who naturally prioritizes commercial interests—creating a conflict of interest, as humanitarian considerations risk being sidelined (Department for International Trade, 2022; HMRC, 2023). Meanwhile, official statements that “Israel has the right to defend itself” often ignore the context of illegal occupation as ruled by international court (ICJ July 2024). Furthermore, there is mounting international concern demonstrating the situation imposed on Gaza by Israel Gaza far exceeds the threshold of genocide—a dire possibility highlighted by The Guardian (23 December 2024), yet unaddressed by UK government.

I propose establishing a **UK Government Council of Ethics**, operating for the Government and the King's Council, to unify at least minimal ethical standards across policymaking, journalism, trade, and legal oversight (ref Norwegian Council on Ethics, 2023). This body would provide frameworks for adherence for all UK departments, recommending appropriate penalties when breaches occur, in consultation with legal and appropriate experts. By anchoring British policy to international humanitarian law, robust oversight, and transparent processes, the Council would safeguard Britain's global credibility and ensure that genuine humanitarian concerns—particularly the protection of civilians and journalists—take precedence (UNESCO, 2023; House of Commons Library, 2022).

(1A) Observations on the UK's Reputation-al and Economic Stakes

A consistent, ethical foreign policy is critical not only to protect human lives but also to preserve the UK's long-term economic stability and international reputation (Chatham House, 2022; ONS, 2023). If Britain is perceived as complicit in potential war crimes or as dismissive of international treaties, it risks a loss of credibility among allies and investors, potentially harming trade opportunities (House of Lords International Agreements Committee, 2023; Transparency International, 2022). Maintaining a principled stance strengthens the UK's position in global markets, fosters trust with foreign governments, and ensures the welfare of British citizens who rely on stable economic conditions (Department for Business & Trade, 2023).

(2) UK Government Policy

(2.1) Clear Claims on the Issues

Failure to Recognize Palestine

Despite pledges from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) that the UK “will recognize Palestine at a time of our choosing” (FCDO, 2021; House of Commons Library, 2022), no concrete action has followed. This inaction starkly contrasts with 146 UN member states that already recognize Palestinian statehood (UNGA Resolution 67/19, 2012; House of Commons Library, 2021). The lack of recognition denies Palestinians legal protections otherwise afforded by recognized statehood, sustaining an imbalance in negotiations and de facto validating Israel's claims over illegally occupied lands (ICJ Advisory Opinion, 2004; UN Security Council Resolution 2334, 2016).

Arms Exports to an Occupying Power

The UK, while boasting a “robust” export control regime (Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, 2020), continues to license arms to Israel, despite allegations of violations of international humanitarian law (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Amnesty International, 2023). In contrast, the Netherlands revoked arms licenses under analogous concerns (Dutch Parliament Records, 2023; The Guardian, 23 December 2024). The UK's ongoing sales suggest a condonation of illegal occupation and military aggression that often results in extensive civilian harm (UNHRC, 2021; UNICEF, 2023).

Alleged Genocide in Gaza

A growing body of analysis—cited in The Guardian (23 December 2024)—contends that Israel's actions in Gaza may fulfill genocidal criteria, particularly given the systematic targeting of civilians (UN Genocide Convention, 1948; ICC Rome Statute, 1998). Although

the UK is a signatory to the Genocide Convention and repeatedly pledged “never again” (Hansard, 2022; House of Lords International Agreements Committee, 2023), there is no formal UK mechanism to investigate or acknowledge such evidence.

Double Standards in Conflict Response

The Government’s forthright condemnation of aggression elsewhere (e.g., in Ukraine) contrasts sharply with its support for Israel—highlighting a double standard in how the UK applies humanitarian principles (House of Commons Debates, 2023). Multiple polls (YouGov, 2023; BBC, 2023) reveal that such inconsistencies erode public trust and global confidence in Britain’s leadership.

(2.2) Proposed Solutions & Council Role

Immediate Genocide Bill

Purpose: Define the UK’s legal approach to identifying, classifying, and responding to genocide claims.

Implementation:

The Council of Ethics would form a sub-committee of legal and humanitarian experts to review allegations of genocide, referencing UN standards (UN Genocide Convention, 1948; ICC Rome Statute, 1998).

Findings would mandate automatic parliamentary debates and potential legal or diplomatic penalties if genocidal acts are credibly identified (House of Lords Constitution Committee, 2022; The Guardian, 23 December 2024).

Recognition of Palestine

Purpose: Correct the existing imbalance by offering Palestinians the legal and diplomatic standing recognized by most UN member states.

Implementation:

The Council sets clear, evidence-based benchmarks for immediate or phased recognition, aligning with ICJ and UN rulings (ICJ Advisory Opinion, 2004; UNGA 67/19, 2012).

An annual progress report would detail whether the UK meets these benchmarks and provide a rationale for continued deferrals (House of Commons Library, 2022; FCDO, 2021).

Ethical Arms Licensing Process

Purpose: Prevent the UK from facilitating international law breaches.

Implementation:

Transfer veto authority from the Trade Minister to the Council of Ethics, ensuring strict adherence to Geneva Conventions (1949) and the Arms Trade Treaty (2014).

Enforce legal consultation on each high-risk export, with potential penalties—such as immediate license revocation—if subsequent investigations confirm misuse (Dutch Parliament Records, 2023; Transparency International, 2022).

Consistency in Conflict Response

Purpose: Uphold Britain's reputation as a law-abiding and humanitarian power.

Implementation:

The Council would institute universal criteria (e.g., civilian casualty thresholds) to trigger arms embargoes or sanctions in any conflict where violations occur (UNHRC, 2021; House of Commons Library, 2023).

Departments failing to apply these standards would face Council-led review and recommended ministerial accountability (House of Lords International Agreements Committee, 2023; BBC, 2023).

(3) Reporting and Journalist Issues

(3.1) Clear Claims on the Issues

Editorial Bias on Occupied Territories

Mainstream outlets often claim “Israel has the right to defend itself,” neglecting the legal complexities of defense on occupied land (ICJ, 2004; UN Security Council Resolution 2334, 2016). Such phrasing misleads audiences (Ofcom, 2022; KernowDamo, 2024) by omitting key details about illegal occupation and Palestinian rights.

Targeting of Palestinian Journalists

Entities like Reporters Without Borders (2023) and Al Jazeera (2024) report dozens of Palestinian journalists killed, suggesting possible deliberate targeting of the press. Official UK statements rarely acknowledge this, leading many to conclude that the UK tacitly condones restrictions on press freedom (UNESCO, 2023; House of Commons Debates, 2024).

Use of Anti-Terror Legislation to Silence Reporting

Some Palestinian reporters document alleged war crimes or humanitarian crises in Gaza, only to face intimidation under anti-terror laws (UNHRC, 2021; Amnesty International, 2023). The UK has not publicly condemned these measures, risking complicity in censoring crucial war-zone reportage (Press Gazette, 2023; Dropsite News, 2023).

(3.2) Proposed Solutions & Council Role

Editorial Guidelines on Illegal Occupation

Purpose: Ensure factual reporting on the status of occupied territories.

Implementation:

The Council of Ethics establishes mandatory disclaimers whenever coverage mentions “Israel’s right to defend itself,” clarifying that such defence is contested under occupation law (ICJ Advisory Opinion, 2004; BBC Charter, 2017).

Non-compliance would invoke Ofcom reviews and possible penalties, such as suspension of broadcasting privileges (House of Lords Communications Committee, 2023; Ofcom, 2022).

Protection of Journalists

Purpose: Guarantee freedom of the press and safety for all reporters, including Palestinians.

Implementation:

Conduct an annual “Press Freedom Audit” in conflict zones, referencing data from Reporters Without Borders (2023) and UNESCO (2023).

Any department or agency failing to act on evidence of journalist harassment faces Council-led disciplinary recommendations, potentially escalating to ministerial oversight (Hansard, 2024; House of Commons Library, 2023).

Investigatory Panel for Media Bias

Purpose: Provide recourse for repeated allegations of partial or misleading coverage.

Implementation:

Modeled after the Norwegian Press Complaints Commission, the Council forms a panel to adjudicate bias claims (Norwegian Council on Ethics, 2023; Pressens Faglige Utvalg, 2022).

Persistent bias could result in funding curtailment or stricter licensing conditions if outlets fail to meet impartiality standards (House of Lords Communications Committee, 2023).

(4) UK Trade Concerns

(4.1) Clear Claims on the Issues

Conflict of Interest with Trade Minister

As the primary decision-maker on arms licenses, a Trade Minister is incentivized to boost commerce, potentially prioritizing profit over humanitarian obligations (Department for International Trade, 2022; HMRC, 2023). This setup is “completely inappropriate,” risking moral and legal compromises.

Settlement Goods & Illegal Occupation

Despite UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) declaring Israeli settlements illegal, the UK imposes no ban on settlement-derived products (ICJ, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2022). Critics argue this omission indirectly funds continued land confiscation and displacement of Palestinian residents (UNRWA, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023).

Financial Aid Flows During Blockade

Observers report Israel benefiting from foreign aid while simultaneously imposing resource restrictions in Gaza (UNICEF, 2023; The Guardian, 23 December 2024). The UK’s refusal to condition financial support—unlike certain other European states—may undercut any incentive for ceasefire or negotiation (House of Commons Debates, 2023; YouGov, 2023).

(4.2) Proposed Solutions & Council Role

Reassign Arms Licensing Authority

Purpose: Remove commercial bias from decisions that have humanitarian impact.

Implementation:

The Council of Ethics holds final licensing authority, incorporating independent legal experts (Arms Trade Treaty, 2014; Geneva Conventions, 1949).

Penalties for violations include immediate suspension of export licenses and possible legal proceedings if willful complicity in war crimes emerges (Transparency International, 2022; Dutch Parliament Records, 2023).

Ban Settlement Goods

Purpose: Align UK trade with international law deeming these settlements illegal.

Implementation:

Mandate labeling or outright prohibition of products from occupied Palestinian territories (HMRC, 2023; House of Commons Library, 2022).

Announce trade penalties for repeated breaches, such as fines or suspension of import privileges (UNHRC, 2021; Amnesty International, 2023).

Ethical Aid and Financial Transparency

Purpose: Prevent UK funds from perpetuating humanitarian crises.

Implementation:

The Council conducts an annual Ethical Trade Audit, identifying links to settlement expansion or blockade enforcement (Oxfam, 2023; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2023).

Should the audit uncover ongoing human rights abuses, the Council may recommend funding freezes, echoing policies used against other regimes violating international law (House of Lords International Agreements Committee, 2023; Gov.uk, 2022).

(5) UK Legal Compliance (National and International)

(5.1) Clear Claims on the Issues

Obligations Under the Genocide Convention

The UK has pledged to oppose and prevent genocide (Hansard, 2022; House of Commons Library, 2023), yet credible allegations of genocidal acts in Gaza (UN Genocide Convention, 1948; The Guardian, 23 December 2024) remain unexamined. This contradiction casts doubt on Britain's integrity and compliance with international treaties (UNHRC, 2021; Amnesty International, 2023).

Geneva Conventions & ICC Statutes

As a signatory to the Geneva Conventions (1949) and the ICC Rome Statute (1998), the UK must avoid enabling or ignoring collective punishment or targeting of civilians (ICRC, 2022; ICC, 1998). However, official statements rarely confront allegations of disproportionate force in occupied Palestinian territories (ICJ, 2004; House of Commons Petitions, 2024).

Secrecy Surrounding Legal Advice

Repeated demands for publishing the Government's legal rationale for arms supplies—especially in conflict zones—have gone unanswered, provoking suspicion that the UK is concealing legally dubious activities (Freedom of Information Act, 2000; House of Lords Constitution Committee, 2022). Without transparency, the UK's adherence to the Arms Trade Treaty (2014) remains questionable (House of Commons Library, 2023; KernowDamo, 2024).

(5.2) Proposed Solutions & Council Role

Comprehensive Genocide Bill & Independent Verification

Purpose: Create a legal mandate to investigate and declare genocidal acts.

Implementation:

The Council of Ethics would initiate inquiries upon receiving credible genocide allegations, referencing UN criteria (UN Genocide Convention, 1948; ICC Rome Statute, 1998).

Sanctions could be recommended if the Council deems evidence sufficient, prompting immediate parliamentary debate (House of Lords Constitution Committee, 2022; The Guardian, 23 December 2024). Also appropriate proscription and de-proscription, accordingly.

Mandatory Compliance Checks

Purpose: Align arms exports and foreign policy with the Geneva Conventions and ICC statutes.

Implementation:

All relevant decisions must pass an International Law Checklist, overseen by the Council (ICRC, 2022; ICC, 1998).

The Council publishes a quarterly Compliance Bulletin, detailing whether each government action meets these legal standards (House of Commons Library, 2023; Gov.uk, 2022).

Government departments failing to comply risk penalties ranging from budgetary constraints to ministerial investigation.

Publishing or Summarizing Government Legal Advice

Purpose: Guarantee transparency regarding potential complicity in war crimes.

Implementation:

Under Council oversight, the Government must release or summarize legal opinions on arms exports to conflict zones, barring narrowly defined national security exceptions (Freedom of Information Act, 2000; House of Lords Constitution Committee, 2022).

Prolonged or unjustified secrecy would trigger Council-led measures to hold responsible departments or ministers accountable (House of Commons Debates, 2024; YouGov, 2023).

(6) Conclusion

The Israel-Palestine conflict represents a pivotal test of the UK's commitment to upholding human rights, legal norms, and credible governance (House of Commons Library, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023). Ongoing arms exports, unrecognized Palestinian statehood, and potential genocidal actions in Gaza invite urgent scrutiny of Britain's moral stance (UN Genocide Convention, 1948; The Guardian, 23 December 2024). Despite numerous petitions seeking reform (Petition 649343, Petition 648225, Petition 300450), progress remains stalled. The UK's reluctance to enforce international standards in an illegally occupied territory, combined with media bias and trade-driven policymaking, underscores the need for robust, impartial oversight (ICJ Advisory Opinion, 2004; UN Security Council Resolution 2334, 2016).

A UK Government Council of Ethics, empowered to create universal frameworks for departmental adherence, to consult with appropriate qualified persons and experts on appropriate penalties, and to enforce transparency, would not only protect the rights of civilians and journalists but preserve Britain's global reputation (Norwegian Council on Ethics, 2023). By enacting a Genocide Bill, clarifying arms licensing, mandating balanced media reporting, and publishing legal advice, the Council can ensure the UK meets its commitments under the Geneva Conventions, the ICC Rome Statute, and the Genocide Convention (House of Lords International Agreements Committee, 2023).

(6A) A Turning Point for British Position and Politics

The proposed Council marks a transformative moment in British foreign and domestic policy. In a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, the UK's credibility, economic resilience, and moral leadership rely on credible accountability mechanisms (Chatham House, 2022; ONS, 2023). This is no longer a matter of isolated conflict management; rather, it is a defining juncture in shaping Britain's ethical standing on the world stage. Implementing the Council's frameworks would demonstrate the UK's readiness to move into a new era of principled governance, one that safeguards future trade prospects, fosters diplomatic integrity, and upholds universal human rights.

By embracing these measures—clear guidelines, consistent enforcement, and legally grounded penalties—Britain can elevate its political culture and reaffirm its foundational

values, proving itself a steadfast partner in the pursuit of global justice and sustainable peace (UNESCO, 2023; House of Commons Library, 2023).

30th December 2024