

**Written evidence submission to the Foreign Affairs Committee by members of the group Holocaust Survivors and Descendants against the Gaza Genocide (IPC0046)**

**Introduction**

1. We are all members of a larger group, *Holocaust Survivors and Descendants against the Gaza Genocide*.
2. We are all Jews or persons of Jewish descent, who survived or whose parents or grandparents survived the Holocaust or died in it. For this reason, the horror of what is being done to the Palestinian people is intensely relevant to us, triggering painful memories of what we felt and heard in our families. Many of us also have personal or professional knowledge and experience of the countries of the Middle East.
3. The group is made up of individuals of varied political views. What unites us is a desire for a just peace for the people of the Middle East; a condemnation of the genocidal actions of the Israeli government and armed forces; and a rejection of the notion that all Jews support the current state of Israel and that the Holocaust justifies its actions.
4. In addition to this written submission, we would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the oral evidence taken by the Committee.

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

5. Past UK foreign policy has been a direct cause of the present situation in the Middle East from the Balfour Declaration onward; the UK has a unique responsibility and a unique role to play. As a sovereign nation, the UK should be prepared to determine its position and its proposed actions before approaching others to agree on joint actions. As a major global player, it should have the confidence to set an example and act independently.
6. The UK has an obligation to adhere to and uphold international law. Unless this is done equally for all, international law will be weakened for all. The UK should call Israel to account when it breaches international law. The UK Government should recognise that several of its European and Commonwealth partners have been much more proactive in their support for international law and the associated institutions.

7. In order to bring about a ceasefire as a first step towards the achievement of a just peace, the UK should bring influence to bear on both the Israeli government and the Palestinian leadership.

8. The Israeli government, as the occupying power, is by far the more powerful of the two parties; it stands accused of war crimes, of crimes against humanity and of genocide. In the light of these accusations, the UK has a duty to comply with international law and to support the international organisations that uphold it; the failure to take such action risks making the UK itself complicit in these crimes. Along with other countries, the UK should take the obligatory step of ceasing its military and diplomatic support for the Israeli government; such action would encourage the Israeli government and the governments of other countries to comply with their legal obligations.

9. The UK needs to recognise the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance to occupation. Palestinians and their supporters have sought to use political, diplomatic and legal measures alongside peaceful protest to further their cause, but have been repeatedly thwarted, often with extreme violence.

10. In the light of these factors, we submit that the UK can and should take the following specific actions.

10.1. To meet the UK's obligations under international law and exert pressure on the Israeli government:

10.1.1. Unequivocally confirm that the UK will implement the current and any future arrest warrants issued by the ICC with regard to Israel.

10.1.2. Unequivocally confirm that the UK will respect and act on the rulings of the ICJ with regard to Israel.

10.1.3. End all arms exports to Israel, including those via third countries.

10.1.4. End all military cooperation with Israel.

10.1.5. Acknowledge the illegality of the Israeli occupation.

10.1.6. Apply sanctions against the illegal settlements in the West Bank and elsewhere.

10.2. In order to help open the path to a peaceful resolution:

10.2.1. Urgently recognise Palestinian statehood along pre-1967 borders, joining 146 member states of United Nations who have done so.

10.2.2. End the delegitimization of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement.

10.2.3. Remove the barriers for Palestinian civilians, especially but not only children, to come to the UK for medical treatment, recovery and family reunion.

10.2.4. Call for the release of all Palestinian prisoners held without trial or under military law in Israel alongside the release of all Israeli prisoners held in Gaza.

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

11. Internationally, the UK Government wishes to appear as a global force for good. However, it has not lived up to its international obligations and is seen to use double standards when it comes to the application of international law. There is a disparity between the values that the UK claims to hold dear and the actions the UK Government takes with regard to Israel and Palestine. As a result, the UK's reputation is diminished in many parts of the world, not only in the Middle East.

12. There is even a danger that the UK Government's policies have made the UK appear weak. This is partly because of the Government's close alignment to the US government. But it has also been seen that even when Israeli forces have killed UK citizens in Gaza, the UK Government has been unable or unwilling to take action.

13. By giving Israel impunity for its actions, the UK has harmed not only the people of Palestine and the surrounding countries, but also the people of Israel. Over the years, Israeli actions, culture and statements have become ever more extreme and the atrocities have grown increasingly outrageous. Impunity has led to a moral decay.

14. Domestically, the UK Government's policies have undermined freedom of speech and expression. Legitimate criticism of the Netanyahu-led government and factual reporting from Israel and Palestine have been suppressed and even criminalised. The use of anti-terrorism laws against journalists and peaceful activists is a deeply disturbing threat to our liberties.

15. Both at home and abroad, Israeli actions and the UK Government's overt support for them have helped to fuel antisemitism. As survivors and descendants of survivors of the Holocaust, we are horrified that the government of Israel should claim to justify its actions in the name of all Holocaust descendants and in the name of all Jewish people worldwide. There is a danger that for many people around the world and in the UK, this will lead to a misplaced but understandable identification of

all Jewish people as perpetrators or at least as supporters of the atrocities committed by Israel. This puts all Jewish people at risk.

16. The UK Government has done little to acknowledge that not all Jews support Israel and the actions of the Israeli government. As survivors and descendants of survivors of the Holocaust who condemn Israel's genocidal actions, we feel our views are not taken into account and neither are those of many Jews who oppose the actions of the Israeli government.

17. The UK Government has also done little to counter the impression that the origins of conflict lie in ancient disputes between Jews and Muslims. Not only is this dangerously divisive both internationally and domestically, but it also ignores the attacks on the large number of Palestinian Christians, part of one of the oldest Christian communities in the world.

**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?**

18. A lasting peace can only be achieved if the underlying causes that fuel the conflict are resolved. These causes result from long-term actions and policies of the Israeli government that are incompatible with the democratic status to which Israel aspires. They include:

18.1. The occupation of Palestinian land, which the ICJ has confirmed as illegal, as well as the occupation of the territory of other countries.

18.2. The denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

18.3. The displacement, expropriation and collective punishment of Palestinians.

18.4. The apartheid system that discriminates between the rights of Israelis and Palestinians.

18.5. The dehumanising of the Palestinian people.

18.6. The enforced exile of displaced Palestinians and their descendants.

19. Unless these injustices are rectified, a lasting peace is impossible.

20. The spread of the violence to other countries underlines the urgent need to address these issues; it also demonstrates the danger inherent in impunity for Israeli aggression. At the same time, changes in leadership in the international community,

both in the US and in Europe, offer an opportunity for the UK Government to take the initiative.

21. As survivors and descendants of survivors of the Holocaust, we are conscious of how the world failed to act to prevent the horrors which we and our families suffered. We are dismayed that the same is happening again.

22. The UK should have the courage to act independently and to take a lead in calling for the measures described in this submission and taking action to achieve them. In doing so, it would regain much of the respect and moral standing that it has lost by its failure to comply with its obligations under international law so far. It is not too late to act.

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