

Written evidence submission to the Foreign Office Select Committee on the Call for Evidence on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from Jewish Voice for Labour (IPC0050)

1. *This submission is made by Jewish Voice for Labour.*

- 1.1. Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) is a Jewish-led organisation for members of the labour, trade union, socialist and progressive movements.
- 1.2. We take inspiration from the long history of Jewish involvement in the socialist and trade union movements and in the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements.
- 1.3. We support the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and oppose the oppression of the Palestinian people by the apartheid state of Israel. This is not done in our name.
- 1.4. Our members campaign relentlessly to further these aims, deploying all peaceful means at our disposal, including submissions such as these.

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

- 2.1. Parliament voted in 2014¹ to recognise a Palestinian State as a matter of urgency. It is well past time to enact this. Dr Zomlot's evidence to this Committee described why full recognition is an essential first step in promoting peace within the region.
- 2.2. The UK has particular responsibility as the mandate power in 1948 when the Israeli state was established and as a full member of the UN Security Council. It must support motions at the UNSC to recognise the injustice and barbarity of the Occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights since 1967 and recognise the cruelty and illegality of Israel's assault on Gaza
- 2.3. The UK should support a ceasefire by immediately conforming to the judgements and recommendations made by the International Court of Justice² and the International Criminal Court³.
- 2.4. As a signatory to the Genocide Convention the UK is required not to undertake any action that would assist Israel in carrying out what the ICJ believe to be an arguable genocide. In particular this means the UK must immediately terminate any contracts to supply arms or components of arms to Israel Failure to do this means that a case may be taken against the UK at the ICJ.⁴
- 2.5. The Home Office must immediately end its ban on Gazan children who require prosthetics from entering the UK for treatment and bring itself into line with other western European countries who are allowing such access.⁵

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

- 3.1. The UK has consistently asserted that it is committed to two-state solution. It has continued with this stance despite the possibility of such a scenario diminishing steadily over time. The spread of Israeli occupation and settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank has made a two-state solution infeasible without fundamental changes to Israeli policy. Unconditional advocating for two states has become empty rhetoric which has impeded, not assisted, finding an arrangement that enables all in the region, Palestinian and Israeli to live in peace and lead fulfilling lives.⁶

¹ Walker, N., Dickson, A., Gill, J. & P. Butchard. 2022. Research Briefing: UK Government recognition of the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0039/>.

² <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-sum-01-00-enc.pdf>

³ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges>

⁴ <https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/statement/the-icj-has-spoken-the-labour-party-is-in-denial/>

⁵ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2024-01/gaza-palestine-children-medical-treatment-italy-bambino-gesu.html>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/01/opinion/two-state-solution-israel-palestine.html>

- 3.2. British involvement in the region arose from an imperialist and colonialist European mindset that asserted that the ‘civilised countries’ could exercise control of and dispose of the territories of ‘the natives’ at will. This was the basis of the Balfour Declaration that promised a homeland, not a state, to Jews without any involvement of the residents of Palestine. The declaration itself was based not on concerns for Jews but rather on British strategic interest in pursuing its war against the Ottoman Empire⁷
- 3.3. The secret Sykes-Picot agreement, signed between Britain and France, assigned Palestine to the British sphere of influence and gave League of Nations mandate powers to Britain. The declaration and the agreement between them established the framework for a Zionist migration which was from the start a supremacist vision and not one of living among and with the indigenous people. The few adherents of a humanist Zionism like Buber and Arendt were easily marginalised,⁸
- 3.4. The Zionist project of ethnic cleansing, was overt and explicit in 1948 and operationalised in Plan Dalet⁹. In the immediate aftermath of the Nakba created by the plan, ethnic cleansing was enforced by the prevention of the return of refugees and the seizure of the property of internally displaced Palestinians by the creation of the legal artifice of ‘present absentees’¹⁰. Any country implementing such laws can be characterised as Apartheid state. The UNSC took no action then or subsequently to challenge such policies
- 3.5. Israel’s current policy towards Gaza and the West Bank continues the processes of ethnic cleansing. The Generals’ Plan which aims to clear all Palestinians from the north of the Gaza Strip is being enacted in real time in December 2024¹¹. The reports of reputable organisations such as Amnesty International¹², Human Rights Watch¹³, Médecins Sans Frontières¹⁴ and other NGOs provide ample evidence of the territory being made uninhabitable; and that genocide, which is being adjudicated at the ICJ, is a clear and accurate description. Meanwhile our government urges ‘restraint’.
- 3.6. The process of turning the West Bank into a series of Palestinian enclaves has accelerated in the last two years with violence by Israeli settlers towards Palestinians being tolerated and even assisted by Israeli armed forces¹⁵. The UK has only taken extremely limited action against individuals and organisations despite UN resolutions and this limited action has had little to no effect.
- 3.7. The UK Government consistently states that it upholds international law. Yet the Israeli State continues to disregard human rights and international law with impunity. In 2006 the Israeli’s killed 660 civilians in the occupied territories, mostly in the Gaza Strip, amongst whom were 141 children. 1,500 Palestinians were killed in Operation Cast Lead in 2008, 2,200 in Operation Protective Edge¹⁶. A significant precursor to the events of October 7th was the harsh, homicidal response by Israel to the overwhelmingly non-violent 2018 Great March of Return when 223 Gazans were killed including, medical staff and many children. While the EU and the UN deplored such disproportionate use of force, the statements were

⁷ <https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/policy-of-deceit-britains-treachery-over-palestine-laid-bare/>

⁸ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/jewish-selfdetermination-beyond-zionism-lessons-from-hannah-arendt-and-other-pariahs-by-jonathan-graubart-philadelphia-temple-university-press-2023-218p-2995-paper-10450-cloth/A5C41E654DC6416A073E84E37E38ED6F>

⁹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/plan-dalet-for-war-of-independence-march-1948>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Present_absentee

¹¹ <https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/there-is-a-plan-to-end-this-the-generals-plan-to-end-this-hell-on-earth-hell-on-earth/>

¹² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

¹³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/12/19/israels-crime-extermination-acts-genocide-gaza>

¹⁴ <https://www.msf.org/msf-report-exposes-israel%E2%80%99s-campaign-total-destruction>

¹⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/17/west-bank-israel-responsible-rising-settler-violence>

¹⁶ Pappé, Ibid.

correctly perceived by the Israeli Government as performative and not threatening. In the current hostilities, evidence is emerging that the Israeli Defence Force treats all Palestinians in Gaza as enemies and has authorised middle ranking soldiers to kill civilians where it deems necessary¹⁷.

3.8. The conclusions that can be drawn are that those British interventions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries contributed to the ongoing decades of conflict in Israel/Palestine. The expressed aim of Likud, the governing party in the coalition, is to establish a Jewish supremacist state ‘from the river to the sea’¹⁸. The conflict is not between two equal protagonists. Statements demanding that Israel exercises restraint appear have had little or indeed no effect.

4. ***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?***

4.1. Past errors and inaction undoubtedly make resilient measures to bring about justice and peace frighteningly difficult. It is clear that unilateral action by Britain will be less effective than joint action. Progress is largely dependent on the actions of Israel’s leading patron, the USA, and Britain is likely to have little influence on the decisions of the incoming Trump administration. Nevertheless President Trump should be reminded of the failures of Anglo-American actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and their subsequent financial, reputational and political costs,

4.2. The Government has made clear that it wishes to be more cooperative with the countries of the EU. Britain should place joint action to restrain Israel’s aggression high on the agenda of discussions with the EU. In these discussions Britain should urge that we along with EU states should join Spain, Belgium and Ireland in supporting the South African submission to the ICJ¹⁹. The submission could draw upon the powerful presentation made by the current Prime Minister in support of the case against Serbia in relation to genocide in Vukovar²⁰ which although terrible was far less extensive than the devastation in Gaza.

4.3. Britain should encourage coordinated moves towards a joint recognition of a Palestinian State by a number of EU and Commonwealth countries would have a significant impact on international opinion.

31st December 2024

¹⁷ Kubovitch, Y. 2024. 'No Civilians. Everyone's a Terrorist': IDF Soldiers Expose Arbitrary Killings and Rampant Lawlessness in Gaza's Netzarim Corridor, Haaretz, 18th December.
<https://archive.ph/RHuUy#selection-401.0-401.130>.

¹⁸ Likud’s 1977 election manifesto: “Between the sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty.”

¹⁹ <https://unric.org/en/south-africa-vs-israel-14-other-countries-intend-to-join-the-icj-case/>

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1ZHu8654nQ0>