

Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Written evidence submission from ICAHD UK (IPC0054)

Summary

- The British Government must stop treating the state of Israel as an exception to adherence of international law. By not doing so, international law is meaningless.
- Conflict management must give way to addressing the root cause of Israel's settler colonial and apartheid policies it implements over the Palestinian people.
- It is time to identify an effective resolution based on international law that addresses both people groups who live in Israel/Palestine.

1. Information about the organization submitting this document

1.1 This report is submitted by ICAHD UK, *a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee – Registration Number 6060984*, which supports the [Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions](#) (ICAHD), established in 1997 and based in Jerusalem. ICAHD strives to be an actor in the political process of ending Israeli violations of international law. ICAHD was registered as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) but lost its charitable status in 2016 and since then has worked as a grassroots organization.

1.2 ICAHD takes as its focus for mobilization, Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) done in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Demolitions done in the OPT and within Israel proper are clear demonstrations of Israel's apartheid policies that it has imposed over the indigenous Palestinian population.

1.3 Over the years, ICAHD's activists have been involved in non-violent resistance to demolitions by standing in front of Israeli bulldozers and by chaining themselves to homes. The houses are still demolished however these actions slowed down the demolition process so fewer homes are demolished in any one day. It is increasingly difficult to continue with this form of resistance because Israeli authorities often close off the areas where demolitions take place making it impossible for Israelis to confront demolition officials. In addition, even Israeli activists opposing demolitions are subject to arrest.

1.4 ICAHD has also been involved in rebuilding 189 Palestinian homes done primarily as a form of non-violent political protest though we also realize that this fulfils the family's humanitarian needs. The rebuilding brings Israelis and Palestinians together who oppose Israel's settler colonial agenda and to demonstrate that they refuse to be enemies.

1.5 ICAHD works for a just and sustainable solution for both Israelis and Palestinians based on international human rights law.

1.6 ICAHD UK was established in 2004 and uses ICAHD analysis in education and awareness-raising to inform people about the situation on the ground in Israel and the OPT.

1.7 ICAHD UK has recruited hundreds of UK citizens to participate in ICAHD's rebuilding of Palestinian homes and to participate in its issue-based study tours that take internationals to witness the reality on both sides of the divide in Israel/Palestine and to engage with key leaders who are outstanding examples of the best of humanity.

1.8 ICAHD UK briefs political representatives and raises funds to support ICAHD's work. Over the years ICAHD UK has worked collaboratively with other like-minded organisations and faith groups. It is part of the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP), based in Brussels.

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

2.1 The British government should accept the conclusions of the most respected human rights organisation, [Amnesty](#), along with [Human Rights Watch](#), on genocide being conducted against the Palestinian population.

2.2 The British government should publicly declare it will observe the decisions presented by UN bodies.

2.21 It should take seriously the conclusions of the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the OPT where [Francesca Albanese states that Israel is committing genocide](#).

2.22 And the British government should acknowledge that the International Court of Justice ([ICJ](#)) [announced in January 2024 that Israel is conducting plausible genocide in Gaza](#).

2.3 The British government should stop its arms trade with Israel. ICAHD UK agrees with the information provided by other organisations such as [Campaign Against the Arms Trade](#), [Amnesty](#), [Medical Aid for Palestinians](#), [Oxfam](#), and others.

2.4 By not calling Israel to account as war crimes are committed, the British government is complicit. It must impose sanctions on Israel to pressurize it to call for a permanent ceasefire, with crossings opened to allow in humanitarian aid. The government must strongly object to any part of the Gaza strip being annexed to the state of Israel and taken over by Israeli Jews.

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

3.1 The British government has never honoured the Balfour Declaration because it has not fulfilled its promise to the non-Jewish population, the indigenous

Palestinians. The [Balfour Project](#) has done extensive research on Britain's historic and ongoing responsibilities where these facts are documented. It is long-over due for Britain to address this issue.

3.2 The British government has not held Israel to account for its clear violations of international law. For twenty years, ICAHD UK has lobbied the British government on the issue of Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes. Within the state of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, demolitions happen on virtually a daily basis, destroying the lives of thousands of Palestinians. This is all part of Israel's ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian population as it pursues its settler colonial agenda to take as much land of historic Palestine as possible and with as few Palestinians as possible. At best the government issues words of condemnation but it has not implemented any meaningful actions that have resulted in Israel stopping the demolitions which then results in the forced displacement of thousands of the indigenous Palestinian population from their homeland.

3.21 The demolition categories and [ICAHD's statistics on Israel's demolition](#) of homes and structures vital for living are recorded and found on the ICAHD website..

3.22 ICAHD produces [monthly reports on the number of demolitions](#) that happen on a monthly basis, the reason for the demolitions, the number of people displaced, and the number of people affected by the demolitions. The year 2024 has been marked by the Israeli state enacting its most aggressive, sustained demolition campaign across East Jerusalem and the West Bank since the Nakba. The locations most at risk are East Jerusalem, and Masafer Yatta (the South Hebron Hills) and the Jordan Valley within Area C. Demolitions have also increased in Area B.

3.23 In the Negev/Naqab, Israel has prepared The Population Exchange Plan which aims to forcibly displace about 9,000 residents from 14 Palestinian Bedouin villages and agricultural communities that Israel has never recognized. This means that for the last 70 years they have been denied all infrastructural services such as electricity, water, health and education.

3.231 The Palestinians are forced to move to one of seven towns such as Hura, Rahat, and Lakiya which are like "reservations". They are ranked in the lowest cluster of the socio-economic rankings of localities in Israel where they are denied their traditional way of life. Israel then replaces them with a similar number of Jewish settlements.

3.232 During 2024, three unrecognized villages were demolished with the residents forcibly displaced. Over the years, ICAHD UK lobbied British parliament on the threat to Umm Al-Hiran. Despite the campaigns and the legal work to save the village, it has now been completely erased. In November, the state of Israel pressurized the residents to self-demolish their beloved homes or face exorbitant fines.

3.3 The British government is not taking into account the 2024 rulings of the ICJ and the ICC regarding Israel's violations

3.31 This is not a conflict between two equal parties. Israel is an occupying power in a [prolonged occupation deemed illegal by the ICJ](#).

3.32 The government must clearly declare that Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant will be arrested as war criminals if they step foot in the UK, therefore complying with the [decision of the ICC](#).

3.4 The British government has not changed its rhetoric from this being a conflict rather it is settler colonialism and apartheid.

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 Confirm that it continues to classify Israel as an occupying power in the West Bank and the Golan Heights and that Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem. Confirm that it will not move the British Embassy to Jerusalem.

4.2 Insist on each of these points as the minimum requirements for a two-state solution:

4.21 A Palestinian state must have control over its internationally recognized borders, a fundamental criterion of sovereignty, access to Arab markets to its economic viability.

4.22 It must be territorially contiguous. To make the West Bank a coherent state territory, most or all of Israel's settlements will have to be removed since their very location was strategically planned to guarantee permanent Israeli control. And an extraterritorial passage for people and goods would have to be established between the West Bank and Gaza.

4.23 Within its national territory it must exercise sovereign control over all its resources, from natural resources – water, land, minerals, quarries and natural gas – to sacred sites and tourist attractions. And it must have the ability to develop its economy if it is to meet the needs of the coming generations.

4.24 In that vein, the Palestinian state must include East Jerusalem, the most significant symbol of Palestinian national and religious life and a major part of its economy, tourism being one of Palestine's largest industries. Here an arrangement of shared sovereignty over the Old City might be possible.

4.25 As opposed to Israel's demand that the Palestinian state be demilitarized, it must have the ability to defend its sovereignty and territory. At the least a Palestinian armed force is required that has policing capabilities within the state's borders and sovereignty of action on them, backed up by international guarantees of the state's sovereignty.

4.26 And the state must have the capacity to reintegrate those Palestinian refugees who choose to return.

4.3 The British government should consider the voices of Palestinian and Israeli civil society who call for a one democratic state solution.

4.31 ICAHD confronts Zionism as settler colonialism whose aim has always been to transform an Arab country into a Jewish one (Judaization). That is why Israel has sought to take as much land of historic Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians on the land as possible.

4.32 ICAHD calls for all colonial structures of domination and control to be dismantled and for the creation of a single democratic state offering equal rights for all citizens in a shared democratic society.

4.33 ICAHD UK supports ICAHD's involvement with the [One Democratic State Campaign](#) (ODSC) that was launched by Palestinian and Israeli Jewish activists, intellectuals and academics in early 2018 in the city of Haifa. It aspires to cooperate and coordinate with individuals and groups, inside and outside historic Palestine, who seek to achieve liberation. The ODSC is the most developed of all the one state groups and presents a [ten-point political programme](#).

31st December 2024