

Written evidence submitted by Mrs Amber Amir, Mrs Rukhsana Chohan, Mrs Gulshan Firdous, Mrs Rizwana Mahmood to the Parliamentary Inquiry on UK Foreign Policy Regarding Israel and Palestine (IPC0061)

Summary:

We, a group of concerned British nationals, submit this evidence to the parliamentary inquiry regarding the UK's foreign policy and its role in the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the West Bank. The UK has a critical responsibility in addressing the humanitarian disaster resulting from Israel's actions, ceasing arms sales to Israel, and holding Israel accountable for its violations of international law. We urge the UK government to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and reassess its historical and ongoing support for Israel, particularly in light of the destructive impact on Palestinian civilians.

Introduction:

We, as concerned British nationals, are deeply disturbed by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank, which has escalated due to Israel's military operations. The UK's role in this conflict, particularly in terms of arms sales, military support, and its historical involvement through the Balfour Declaration, requires immediate reassessment. We believe that the UK government must act to protect civilian lives, stop the ongoing violence, hold Israel accountable for its actions, and work toward a just and lasting peace in the region.

Key Points:

1. **Ceasefire and Protection of Civilians:** The situation in Gaza and the West Bank is not simply a result of crossfire but an ongoing campaign of heavy bombardment by Israel, which has caused significant civilian casualties, including the deaths of women, children, media reporters, doctors, and humanitarian workers. Entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble, with hospitals, schools, homes, and critical infrastructure destroyed. This has created a dire humanitarian crisis where basic necessities, including medical care, food, and shelter, are increasingly scarce.

We urge the UK government to advocate for an immediate ceasefire, ensuring the protection of civilian lives and allowing for the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. It is essential that Israel be held accountable under international law for its actions, and that the UK pressures Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights standards.

2. **Arms Sales to Israel:** The UK continues to supply arms to Israel, despite evidence that these weapons are being used in operations that result in the death of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure. This is in direct contradiction to the Arms Trade Treaty, which mandates that signatories should not export arms to states where there is a clear risk they will be used to violate international law.

The UK must immediately cease all arms sales to Israel. Continuing to supply arms undermines efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and violates the UK's responsibility to ensure that its military exports do not contribute to war crimes and other human rights abuses.

3. **Accountability for Violations:** There is ample evidence of Israel's violations of international law, including accusations of war crimes, apartheid, collective punishment, and

disproportionate use of force. Reports from organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations have documented Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank, which include indiscriminate attacks on civilians, destruction of infrastructure, and targeting of medical facilities.

The UK must support international efforts to hold Israel accountable for these violations. This includes supporting the International Criminal Court's investigations and ensuring that Israel faces consequences for its actions, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

4. **Recognition of Palestine:** The UK should formally recognize Palestine as a sovereign state. This recognition would send a clear message of support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and contribute to efforts toward a two-state solution. Over 130 countries worldwide have already recognized Palestine, yet the UK has hesitated to take this step, despite its significant role in the historical context of the conflict.

Recognizing Palestine as a state would also help level the diplomatic playing field and encourage a more balanced approach in the peace process, contributing to a resolution based on international law and fairness.

5. **UK's Historical Role:** The UK has a significant historical role in the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which expressed support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. This declaration, followed by Britain's administration of Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, set the stage for the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The UK's ongoing political, economic, and military support for Israel over the last seven decades has played a major role in shaping the current conflict.

The UK must take responsibility for its role in the conflict and acknowledge how its historical and continued support for Israel has contributed to the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people. This responsibility should guide the UK's actions in pushing for a just resolution that respects the rights and sovereignty of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Detailed Evidence and Analysis:

1. **Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza:** The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic, with more than 2,000 civilians killed during recent escalations, many of them women and children. Humanitarian aid organizations, including the UN and the Red Cross, have documented the dire conditions in Gaza, including the destruction of hospitals and medical facilities, a collapse of health services, and the shortage of food, water, and essential supplies. This is exacerbated by the Israeli blockade, which restricts the movement of goods and people into and out of Gaza.

The blockade, which has been in place since 2007, severely limits the ability of Palestinians to access essential services and leads to widespread poverty and hardship. The UK must advocate for the end of the blockade and for the immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, ensuring the protection of medical personnel and facilities.

2. **International Law and Accountability:** Numerous international bodies and human rights organizations have documented Israel's violations of international law in Gaza and the West Bank. The UN has reported that Israeli forces have used disproportionate force, targeting

civilian areas, hospitals, and schools. Furthermore, Israel's continued settlement activity in the West Bank, the expansion of settlements, and the demolition of Palestinian homes are in violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The UK must support calls for accountability and advocate for Israel's actions to be investigated and prosecuted under international law. This includes supporting the ICC's investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

3. **Arms Trade and the Arms Trade Treaty:** The UK has been a significant supplier of arms to Israel, including bombs, fighter jets, and military drones, which have been used in recent military operations. These weapons have been deployed in areas heavily populated by civilians, leading to unnecessary deaths and destruction. The UK is a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty, which prohibits the transfer of arms to states that are likely to use them in ways that violate international law.

The continued sale of weapons to Israel undermines the UK's commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty and international law. It also directly contributes to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and violates the principle that arms should not be used to fuel conflict or harm civilian populations.

4. **Recognition of Palestine:** The UK's reluctance to formally recognize Palestine as a sovereign state has been a significant barrier to progress in the peace process. Recognition would affirm the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and send a clear signal to the international community that the UK is committed to a just and fair resolution of the conflict.

Recognizing Palestine would also support efforts for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, which is widely supported by the international community, including the United Nations.

5. **UK's Historical Role:** The Balfour Declaration and the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel have played a central role in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The UK's political and military support for Israel over the past 70 years has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict and the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people.

The UK must take responsibility for its historical role and ensure that its actions today contribute to a fair and lasting peace. This includes ceasing arms sales to Israel, pushing for accountability for violations of international law, and supporting the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

We call on the UK government to:

1. Immediately cease all arms sales to Israel and halt military support.
2. Advocate for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of civilians in Gaza and the West Bank.
3. Support international efforts to hold Israel accountable for violations of international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.
4. Recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

5. Acknowledge the UK's historical role in the conflict, particularly through the Balfour Declaration, and take responsibility for its role in shaping the current situation.

These actions are essential for addressing the humanitarian crisis and achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

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