

Written evidence submitted by The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) (IPC0067)

1. About

The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) is a leading British grassroots organisation committed to justice, equality, and the well-being of Muslim communities in the UK. Founded in 1997, MAB engages in social activism, political advocacy, and community empowerment, with a focus on human rights and social justice both locally and globally.

MAB has long been a vocal advocate for Palestinian rights, consistently calling for an end to the Israeli occupation and supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Through grassroots mobilisation, political engagement, and humanitarian support, MAB has championed Palestinian rights, raised awareness about Israel's violations of international law, and advocated for the UK's policies to align with justice and accountability.

2. Introduction

The Muslim Association of Britain submits this evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee as part of its inquiry into the United Kingdom's role in addressing the Israel and Palestine.

This submission seeks to address three key questions outlined by the Committee:

- 1. What can – and should – the UK do, in cooperation with regional and international partners, to help bring about a ceasefire?**
- 2. What can be learned from the record of UK Government policies to date?**
- 3. 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?**

In light of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the rapid evolution of regional dynamics, and the erosion of the rules-based international order, this submission offers concrete recommendations for recalibrating the UK's foreign policy. It calls for a strategy grounded in justice, accountability, and international law to ensure Britain's credibility as a global actor and its effectiveness in fostering stability.

Drawing on our expertise and engagement with communities across the UK, this submission not only critiques current UK policies but also provides actionable steps to support a sustainable and just resolution to the conflict, in alignment with Britain's professed principles of fairness and human rights.

3. The UK's Role in Achieving a Ceasefire

The UK must use every lever at its disposal to secure an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. History has shown that Israel responds only to sustained pressure, not statements. Decades of impunity, enabled by diplomatic inaction, have emboldened its disregard for international law and perpetuated its aggressive policies against Palestinians.

A credible demand for a ceasefire requires decisive measures, not rhetoric. The UK must impose an arms embargo, suspend trade agreements tied to illegal settlements, and support targeted sanctions against those driving violations of international law. These actions would demonstrate principled leadership, set a global precedent for accountability, and exert the tangible pressure necessary to halt the onslaught and pave the way for lasting peace.

3.1 Arms Embargo

The UK's current arms export policy is grossly inadequate in addressing its complicity in Israel's actions. Despite suspending 29 of 361 export licenses, the UK continues to manufacture and supply components, such as those used in F-35 fighter jets deployed in the bombardment of Gaza and Lebanon. This direct linkage implicates Britain in Israel's ongoing violations of international law. A complete arms embargo is not only a moral and legal imperative but also a powerful tool to signal that the UK will no longer tolerate impunity.

The response from Israeli leadership to even partial suspensions underscores the leverage Britain can wield. Prime Minister Netanyahu's concerns about a domino effect among Israel's arms suppliers reveal the potential for UK action to inspire broader international accountability. By imposing a full embargo and ceasing all military collaboration, including the use of UK bases, the UK would take a definitive stance against violations, align its policies with its stated commitment to international law, and exert meaningful pressure for a ceasefire.

3.2 Trade Agreements

The UK must urgently reevaluate its trade relationship with Israel. The existing UK-Israel trade agreement includes a human rights clause, providing a clear legal basis to suspend it in light of Israel's grave breaches, including illegal settlement expansion and systematic human rights abuses in Gaza and the West Bank. Yet rather than leveraging this mechanism, the UK continues to pursue deeper economic ties, as evidenced by the 2030 Roadmap.

Suspending the trade agreement and halting negotiations for its expansion would send a strong message that the UK does not reward impunity. Resumption of trade should be contingent upon Israel ceasing its violations and adhering to international law. Additionally, banning the import of products from illegal settlements would align the UK's trade policies with its obligations under international law.

3.3 Sanctions

The UK must impose robust, targeted sanctions on Israeli officials and organisations complicit in grave violations of international law. Current measures, limited to a small number of individuals and organisations, fail to address the systemic, state-backed nature of these abuses. Sanctions should extend to those responsible for incitement to genocide, illegal settlement activities, and the forcible displacement of Palestinians.

Law in Palestine has documented over 500 instances of incitement to violence and genocide, so much so they have compiled a separate database for statements made after the ICJ ruling, underlining the persistent culture of impunity¹. The statements by people with command authority – state leaders, war cabinet ministers and senior army officers – and by other politicians, army officers, journalists and public figures reveal the widespread commitment in Israel to the genocidal destruction of Gaza.

Reclassifying settler violence and incitement as terrorism, rather than mere criminality, would compel the UK to reassess its engagement with Israel, cutting economic ties, military aid, and diplomatic protections. Effective sanctions would not only hold perpetrators accountable but also deter further violations, signalling that the UK is committed to upholding international law. By taking decisive action, Britain can demonstrate it will no longer tolerate impunity and reassert its leadership in the global pursuit of justice.

3.4 UK's role with regional and international partners

The UK, as President of the UN Security Council, has a unique opportunity to lead global efforts towards an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Each time the UK abstains or turns a blind eye to calls for urgent action, it undermines international law and the credibility of multilateral institutions. The UK must use its presidency to advocate for legally binding resolutions that demand an end to Israeli bombardment, the lifting of the siege on Gaza, and the establishment of mechanisms to ensure humanitarian access.

Empty words and inaction erode the dwindling confidence in the international order and embolden other states to disregard its principles. How the UK has responded thus far, and what it chooses to do next, will set a lasting precedent for global stability and the legitimacy of international governance.

4. UK policies to date

The UK's policies towards Palestine have been characterised by a consistent failure to uphold justice, marked by inaction and a lack of accountability. This has emboldened Israel's violations of international law, perpetuated Palestinian suffering, and eroded the UK's global credibility. Despite repeated calls for justice, British policy has remained entrenched in an unconditional relationship with Israel, prioritising political and economic alliances over peace. The UK's dependence on the United States has often come at the expense of justice.

¹ Law for Palestine Releases Database with 500+ Instances of Israeli Incitement to Genocide
<https://law4palestine.org/law-for-palestine-releases-database-with-500-instances-of-israeli-incitement-to-genocide-continuously-updated/>

For decades, British governments have aligned themselves with policies rooted in the colonial betrayal of the Balfour Declaration, which dismissed Palestinians as "non-Jewish communities" and paved the way for their dispossession. The catastrophic consequences of that declaration are clear in the ongoing violence faced by Palestinians, including the recent assault on Gaza, which has claimed thousands of lives and displaced over 1.5 million people. The UK bears a historic responsibility to address this injustice, not as a passive observer, but as an active participant in its creation.

4.1 Double Standards on the Global Stage

Despite its professed commitment to international law, the UK has consistently undermined its own principles through its voting pattern at the United Nations and its failure to hold Israel accountable for its violations. The UK's actions at the UN have often demonstrated a clear bias in favour of Israel, even when the international community has called for accountability. In 2022, for instance, the UK abstained or voted against crucial UN resolutions addressing Palestinian rights, including measures condemning Israel's illegal settlement expansion and affirming Palestinian self-determination. This is part of a broader trend: the UK has repeatedly shielded Israel from scrutiny, voting against or abstaining from resolutions that would hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law.

This stands in stark contrast to the actions of other European nations, such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, which have supported such resolutions. In particular, the UK's position on resolutions calling for an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine has been a key example of its double standards, as it continues to uphold Israel's actions despite overwhelming international condemnation.

4.2 Domestic Policy and Complicity

Domestically, the UK government has shown more outrage against those who stand for Palestinian rights than the violations committed by Israel. Notably, the previous Conservative government's anti-boycott bill, which banned boycotts targeting Israel, and the current Labour government's refusal to hold Israel to account further stifle calls for justice and accountability. This has entrenched the UK's complicity in the oppression of Palestinians, reflecting its unwillingness to confront its role in perpetuating injustice.

The UK's 2030 Roadmap for UK-Israel Bilateral Relations, signed in March 2023, further illustrates this complicity. The agreement deepens economic, security, and technological ties with Israel while ignoring the escalating human rights violations in Gaza and the West Bank. At a time when Israel was accelerating illegal settlement expansion and enacting apartheid policies, this agreement rewards Israel's systematic violations and signals that the UK prioritises trade deals over the fundamental rights and dignity of Palestinians. Despite calls for a more principled foreign policy, Labour's support for such agreements underscores a continued alignment with Israel's actions, even as these violate international law.

These policies and actions have tangible consequences. By shielding Israel from accountability, the UK has emboldened its government to act with impunity. Examples abound: the illegal annexation of East

Jerusalem, the expansion of settlements in flagrant violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2334, the blockade of Gaza that constitutes collective punishment, and the repeated military assaults that target civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and places of worship. Each instance of UK inaction or complicity sends a clear message: international law can be flouted without consequence.

This policy of selective enforcement is morally indefensible and strategically disastrous. By undermining international mechanisms for justice, the UK is eroding the very legal frameworks it claims to champion. It fosters a dangerous precedent that rights are not universal but granted at the discretion of powerful states—a precedent that threatens global stability and the rule of law for all.

5. Towards lasting peace

5.1 A Crisis of Policy, Principle, and Impunity

For far too long, the UK has lacked a coherent strategy for the Middle East, prioritising trade agreements and deferring to the United States for political direction. This has left the UK complicit in Israel's ongoing violations of international law, while failing to uphold principles of justice and accountability. The urgency for a fundamental reset has never been greater. The genocide in Gaza, alongside fast-moving developments across the region, demands a foreign policy grounded in international law.

The UK's double standards have isolated it on the global stage. In February 2024, the UK abstained from a UN Security Council vote on a Gaza ceasefire, while the US exercised its veto, showing the UK's continued shielding of Israel. Similarly, in the International Court of Justice hearings on Israel's occupation, the UK and US stood almost alone in protecting Israel from accountability. The UK was also part of a shrinking minority opposing a UN General Assembly resolution to end the occupation in September 2024. As Israel faces increasing global isolation, so too does the UK in its unwavering support for impunity.

This failure to uphold international law erodes the global rules-based order, setting a dangerous precedent that encourages authoritarian regimes to act with impunity. By selectively applying international norms or disregarding them altogether, the UK contributes to a fragmented system where powerful states and their allies can violate human rights without fear of consequences. This emboldens oppressive governments to expand their agendas, exploit weak enforcement mechanisms, and suppress dissent both domestically and internationally, further destabilising an already fragile global landscape. In doing so, the UK undermines its credibility as a defender of human rights and international norms, damaging its reputation on the global stage and diminishing its influence in shaping meaningful responses to crises. Consequently, the UK risks becoming an increasingly irrelevant actor, sidelined from global efforts to ensure peace, stability, and the protection of universal values.

To break the cycle of impunity and restore its credibility, the UK must take decisive, principle-driven action. This includes imposing an immediate arms embargo, suspending trade agreements linked to

illegal settlements, and supporting international investigations into war crimes. Holding Israel accountable is essential not only for justice in Palestine but for reaffirming the UK's commitment to a sustainable and peaceful international order. Failure to act will further isolate the UK and undermine its ability to engage in meaningful diplomacy.

6. Final Recommendations

6.1 Immediate and Comprehensive Arms Embargo

The UK must enforce a full arms embargo on Israel, halting the export of weapons, military technology, and dual-use equipment that could contribute to violations of international law. This includes suspending the transfer of components for drones, missiles, and other weaponry used in the indiscriminate killing of civilians. The embargo should also cover the cessation of military training and intelligence-sharing agreements.

6.2 Ending Economic Complicity

The UK must suspend trade agreements with Israel, particularly the 2030 Roadmap, until Israel ceases violations of international law. Additionally, the UK must ensure trade policies comply with human rights obligations, including banning imports from illegal settlements.

6.3 Sanctions to End Impunity

The UK should impose robust sanctions on Israeli officials, entities, and individuals responsible for war crimes, genocidal incitement, and settlement expansion. The UK must also support international investigations into these violations and ensure accountability under international law.

6.4 Leading International Accountability

As President of the UN Security Council, the UK has a pivotal role in demanding a ceasefire in Gaza. It must avoid abstaining or shielding Israel from accountability. Instead, the UK should advocate for binding resolutions to end the siege, ensure humanitarian access, and protect Palestinian rights. The UK should also unequivocally support ICJ and ICC processes.

6.5 A Fundamental Reset of UK Middle East Policy

The UK must fundamentally reorient its Middle East policy, abandoning outdated approaches and embracing a strategy grounded in justice, equality, and human rights. This includes supporting Palestinian rights, ending complicity in illegal settlements, and prioritising a just peace. A values-driven policy will restore the UK's global credibility.

7. Conclusion

As we speak, the Gaza Strip lies in ruins, a wasteland where lives are shattered, and the dead are buried beneath the rubble of relentless Israeli bombing. Men, women, children, and the elderly—each a victim of indiscriminate terror—struggle to survive amidst deprivation and disease. Israel has spared no one:

journalists, doctors, children, pregnant women, humanitarian workers, and even UN staff. Entire families are obliterated, and generations are wiped out. Gaza has become a graveyard for children, with more children killed in four months by Israel, than in four years of worldwide wars.² The international community can no longer stand idly by while Israel continues this massacre. The urgency to end this injustice cannot be overstated, and we call on this committee to act with the seriousness and urgency that this moment demands. The time for rhetoric is over; decisive action is required to stop the suffering if the government is serious about upholding its commitment to human rights and dignity.

31st December 2024

² More children killed in Gaza in four months than in four years of worldwide wars, says UN
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/03/13/children-killed-gaza-united-nations-wars-worldwide/>