

Written evidence submitted by Mrs Laura Preston (IPC0082)

Background Information:

I submit this evidence as a deeply concerned member of the public. Like many, I have been closely following the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with horror and have spent a lot of time reading and researching the subject and background to further my understanding of the situation. I have recently joined the newly formed NGO, Children Not Numbers, as a volunteer fundraiser because I feel compelled to do all I can to bring an end to the enduring and unjust suffering of so many. I am not religious; nor do I have Palestinian or Israeli heritage – I am a citizen of the world who will not stand by and be silent in the face of such injustice and bloodshed.

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

1. Urge the UK and other international partners (e.g. USA) to end arms sales to Israel - this would incentivize Israel to push harder for a ceasefire deal as it demonstrates the disapproval of their key allies and shows Israel there are consequences for red lines crossed and war crimes committed. It could also be considered to change the decision maker on this from a trade minister to an ethics minister.
2. The UK should encourage international partners to end financial aid to Israel and instead redirect the funds to helping rebuild Gaza and regions of Lebanon that have been most affected by the humanitarian crisis. This would lessen the impact of war on innocent civilians and begin the rebuilding of societies.
3. The UK and key regional and international partners should incentivise the Israeli Government to allow aid trucks into Gaza; this is key in paving the way for a ceasefire deal as it alleviates the damages of war on Palestinian civilians. This would initially require written affirmation that Israel would not attack or bombard the aid trucks, or else face a punishment as seen fit by each member state. There must be consequences for a state that does not allow in aid trucks – what precedent does that set for future world conflicts?
4. To allow a free and candid documentation of the events occurring in Gaza, the UK and allies must urge Israel that the Palestinian Press and journalists must be protected and there must be written and recorded assurance from Israel that they shall not be targeted. This is fundamental in the creation of a ceasefire deal as it highlights the importance of Palestinian lives and perspective, which has previously been undermined.
5. The UK government should collaborate with key countries in the region to gain a balanced view of the current crisis and understand how to achieve a ceasefire deal beneficial and fair for all members involved.
6. There needs to be a recognition of a Palestinian state; a ceasefire deal would be more feasible if the Palestinians were truly treated as equals with the Israelis.
7. These are all actions the UK can undertake, to reach a sufficient and long-lasting ceasefire deal that will lead to long term peace within the region. The UK government has a moral duty to encourage regional and international partners to take these same actions, to end the pain and suffering of innocent civilians, that Israel's indiscriminate bombardment has led to.

Question Two: What can be learned from the record of UK Government policies to date?

1. The record of UK Government policies to date have been insufficient in providing a viable solution to the end of the suffering. Firstly, whilst, the UK has called for a ceasefire, there has not been any measures taken to enforce this.

2. Secondly, in the Labour Manifesto, it was written that there would be consideration of the recognition of a Palestinian State – this has yet to occur, despite Labour’s many months in power. Labour has stated it will recognise a Palestinian state alongside a “safe and secure Israel” when it judges this will best support the peace process. However, a ceasefire is integral to the peace process, and the lack of recognition of the Palestinian State’s right to exist, reflects an imbalance and reveals how little the UK values Palestinian lives, in Palestine and in Britain.

3. Thirdly, the Foreign Secretary David Lammy has suggested “trusted” Arab states may take a security role in Gaza, instead of Hamas or the IDF, yet this negates the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination. The Palestinians must be given resources and support to rebuild financially, yet the political involvement of the leadership in Gaza by the UK and others should end.

Question Three: 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?

At a time of uncertainty caused by conflicts elsewhere and changes in leadership in the international community, the UK can assure the resilience of efforts to bring about a lasting peace by:

1. Protection of civilians on all sides of the conflict – directing funds towards rebuilding communities and providing aid to those in need.
2. Holding countries to account that may have violated international law – e.g. the UK Government should cooperate with the International Court of Justice in conducting a detailed review of whether Israel has violated international humanitarian law. This is integral in ensuring long lasting peace in the region as justice will have been imparted.
3. Ensuring freedom of speech and accurate media broadcasting: the UK Government must hold an investigation towards the news broadcasted by the BBC (supposedly the impartial news service of our country) and other news stations and ascertain the accuracy of their sources and bias in their portrayal of the ongoing crisis. In addition to this, the coverage done by Palestinian journalists in this time of war must be recognised and images such as those photographed by Palestinian individuals in Gaza must be acknowledged and presented in British Media.
4. Recognising a Palestinian state and the right of Palestinians to be safe, secure and have a peaceful place to live – these factors have only been applied to Israel by the UK and international allies such as the USA.

These actions must begin, pre-ceasefire and must continue post-ceasefire. The UK must remain neutral and impartial in their support for humanity and representation of all parties involved.

31st December 2024