

Written evidence from Dr Agnes Kory (IPC0096)

1. Introduction

1.a

I am a Jewish Holocaust Child Survivor and a volunteer Holocaust researcher. I was born in Budapest but have lived in the UK for the past sixty years; for the past fifty-five years as a British national.

1.b

Being a musicologist, my volunteer Holocaust research and publications/presentations mostly focus on Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. However, the horrors and what preceded them are integral parts of my publications/presentations.

1.c

My mother wrote a detailed diary of what she went through during the Holocaust. Doing so, she gave a full insight into Hungarian Holocaust history. On my 13th birthday my mother presented her diary (memoir) to me with a cover page saying that she wanted me to be aware of all she wrote about, for me to remember and fight that such times should never be repeated.

1.d

I took my mother's wish to heart, hence followed my lifelong voluntary Holocaust research which had its first tangible manifestation in an academic paper – still held at the Institute of Musicology Budapest – sixty-two years ago.

1.e

I am deeply concerned about current horrors which are often referred to (as, indeed, also in this FAC inquiry) as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (rather than relentless war). I am horrified by the often-declared opinion that the Holocaust justifies Israel's actions against Palestinians.

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

2.a

The oft repeated statement by UK leaders – “Israel has the right to defend itself” – should be accompanied by an acknowledgement for the plight of Palestinians who also have the right for self-defence. Therefore, with or without cooperation with regional and international partners, the UK should take active steps for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

2.b

A ceasefire is meant to bring together fighting sides. Currently the UK supplies weapons to one side: to be credible for its wish for a ceasefire, the UK should halt all arm sales to Israel.

2.c

Most arms supplied to Israel come from the US and Germany. UK's input is minimal compared to that of the US and Germany. Even if the UK suspended all arm sales to Israel, the horrors would not stop. However, if UK arm sales to Israel stopped, the UK would become more credible when declaring a wish for the much overdue cease fire.

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

3.a

UK government policies seem to lean heavily towards one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This FAC inquiry seems to be in the minority of UK government manifestation to acknowledge that there is an issue between Israel and Palestine: the usual terminology is Israel versus Hamas.

3.b

When considering the plight of Israel, UK government policy seems to rely on UK Jewish opinion. However, the UK Jewish opinion considered by government appears to be only that offered by the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Deputies, and the Jewish Labour Movement.

3.c

There are many UK Jewish organisations whose views differ from those of the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Labour Movement. UK Government policies do not concern themselves with views of, for instance, Yachad, Naamod, Jewdas, Haredi Jews, Jewish Voice for Labour, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Jewish Network for Palestine, and the Jewish Socialist Group.

3.d

UK government policies seem not to take any notice of high-ranking learned Jewish UK judges. On 17th October 2023, ten days after the Hamas attack on Israel, eight leading Jewish UK judges published a letter in The Financial Times. They clearly stated that wars must be conducted according to relevant laws and these laws apply to both Israel and Hamas. Most disappointingly, UK policies do not seem to engage with this significant letter yet the eight leading judges included Lord Neuberger, Former President of the UK Supreme Court as well as Richard Hermer KC that is The Rt Hon Lord Hermer KC, our current attorney general.

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.a

The UK government should make its efforts (to bring about a lasting peace) transparent. Over the past fourteen months I had response letters from my own MP – who is on the front bench of our current government – stating that she and her Labour Party colleagues work hard for peace. However, such unspecified statements do not counter the public's perception according to which the UK government is siding with one side in the conflict, thus rendering its efforts unbalanced.

4.b

The UK should honour its obligations to the International Court of Justice. This is basic.

Dr Agnes Kory (PhD, Musicology) – Jewish Holocaust Child Survivor

8th January 2025