

Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry - The Israeli-Palestinian conflict
Written evidence submitted by Oxfam GB (IPC0107)

Oxfam has been working in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) and Israel since the 1950s and established a country office in the 1980s. Since October 2023, Oxfam has mounted a humanitarian response in Gaza despite unprecedented challenges. Alongside our partner organisations, Oxfam has delivered cash, food, water, essential basic items and restored water and sanitation services, supporting over 1.1 million people in Gaza. Prior to October 2023, our work focused on working with Palestinian and Israeli partner organisations with the most vulnerable communities in Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Area C of the West Bank to improve livelihoods and rights.

1. [UPDATE 21 JANUARY 2025] A temporary ceasefire agreement has been reached, but this is fragile and there are no guarantees that each next phase will be agreed. The asks and contents of the following submission still remain relevant. The immense suffering Israel has inflicted on Gaza has happened under the watch and protection of world leaders, including the UK. A pause in hostilities does not negate the UK's legal obligations and the UK Government should still immediately suspend all remaining arms licences to Israel given the ongoing risk of international humanitarian law being further violated. The UK must use all diplomatic tools available in its toolbox to pressure Israel into ending its ongoing occupation and the siege of Gaza. The world needs to hold Israel accountable for its atrocity crimes and ensure that Palestinians can live in freedom and dignity. Without justice, there will be no peace.

Overview

2. Over a year of mass atrocities committed by the Government of Israel, in response to the attacks, including war crimes, on 7 October 2023 led by Palestinian armed groups on Israel in which over 1,200 people were killed and 240 people taken hostage, has impacted every corner of Gaza. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic, and one that is entirely man made by 15 months of a relentless Israeli military offensive and the deliberate deprivation of the essentials needed to survive, following 17 years of a crippling blockade. Over 46,000 Palestiniansⁱ have been killed in Gaza and over 110,000 injured as of 14 January 2025,ⁱⁱ with over tens of thousands of people missing or forcibly disappeared under millions of tonnes of rubble. The UN Human Rights Office examined fatalities over a six-month period and found that 70% of fatalities were women and children, with children from 5-9 years old most represented^v.
3. Prior to the interim ceasefire, 90% of the population were internally displaced and all Palestinians in Gaza were at risk of famine^{vi}, a situation exacerbated by people being deprived from access to clean water and sanitation, a collapsed health sector, the severing of power and fuel supplies and the spread of infectious diseases. Food and water have been weaponised by Israel in its military campaign in Gaza, and aid deliveries continue to be blocked, deliberately hampered and targeted. Gaza has become “unfit for human survival” as Joyce Msuya, the acting UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs said in November 2024^{vii}. Some aid is now getting into Gaza, but the crisis is far from over.
4. The Government of Israel has long maintained control over water across the OPT, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, both in times of relatively low-intensity conflict and in times of escalations. The deliberate and systematic destruction and obstruction of Gaza's water and sanitation infrastructure since October 2023 has led to severe water shortages and widespread health crises. Oxfam research shows significant damage to water production wells, storage

¹ These figures are likely huge underestimations as collecting data has become increasingly difficult due to the destruction of much of Gaza's infrastructure. Estimates from the Lancet suggest a mortality rate from 64,000 to over 186,000 as more probable.

reservoirs, desalination plants and wastewater facilities, drastically reducing water availability and creating unsanitary conditions.^{viii} Oxfam's attempts to import critical supplies like water desalination units and repair materials have been obstructed by Israeli restrictions. The systematic destruction of water facilities and inflammatory statements by Israeli officials show that Israel led the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT to conclude that Israel is committing the crime against humanity of extermination.^{ix} This includes the destruction of at least 12 Oxfam-funded facilities by May 2024. Establishing the status of other sites has been impossible due to denial of access to water sites by Israel.

5. In the North Gaza Governate comprising of Jabalia, Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun, Israel intensified its military offensive, killing more than 2,700 people in less than 2.5 months between 6 October and 16 December 2024, and forcibly displaced around 130,000 people, devastating livelihoods^x. Oxfam and other international humanitarian agencies had been continually prevented from delivering lifesaving aid in the North Gaza Governorate since 6 October when Israel escalated its military siege bar an extremely limited amount of stock already stored there. One Oxfam worker said at the time: "The north is cut off [...] there is only chaos and confusion, hunger and death. In the north, no one can help those people – no one – no food, no electricity, only famine. It's horrific to contemplate."^{xi}
6. Under international humanitarian law, an occupying power bears significant responsibilities towards the occupied population, including ensuring protection, maintaining medical services and facilitating humanitarian relief. Despite these legal obligations, Israel's policies and practices continue to systematically and deliberately block and undermine any meaningful international humanitarian response in Gaza. In March 2024, Oxfam released a report^{xii} documenting seven fundamental constraints to humanitarian access across Gaza, in addition to the total military siege of Gaza, amounting to collective punishment, this also included an unjustifiably inefficient process of inspections and protocols, arbitrary rejections of items and attacks on aid workers, humanitarian facilities and aid convoys. Nine months after this report, the humanitarian infrastructure has only been further decimated and undermined, making it impossible to operate any meaningful humanitarian response. At the same time, the Knesset has passed bills to ban UNRWA, the biggest and most established agency that has been delivering aid and sustenance to the people of Gaza for years. Piece by piece, Israel is systemically dismantling Gaza as a land that is autonomous and liveable for Palestinians.
7. On the basis of months of evidence and vast documentation of the multiple atrocities, it is clear that Israel has committed war crimes, including the crime against humanity of extermination. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that there is a risk of genocide in Gaza and issued measures to Israel within its power to prevent and punish the commission of all acts in relation to the articles of the Genocide Convention^{xiii}. 12 months on from the ruling, the situation in Gaza has only worsened and Israel has failed to implement any measures ordered to remedy the immediate crisis by the ICJ. The UK Government has failed to put any significant pressure on Israel to do so, continuing to use its permanent seat on the UN Security Council to protect Israel from the consequences of its actions.

Key Recommendations

8. The UK's foreign policy approach to Palestine and Israel has failed. It is crucial that the UK reassess its current approach and refocus its efforts with international law and accountability at its centre. Key recommendations for the UK Government include, but are not limited to:
 - a) The UK Government must use every diplomatic and economic lever at its disposal to help secure a permanent and lasting ceasefire, to stop the death and destruction, ensure Israel allows enough aid

in, and to ensure the safe release of all the remaining hostages held in Gaza and the thousands of arbitrarily detained Palestinian prisoners held illegally by Israel.

- b) The UK Government must immediately suspend the issuance of new licences and supplies under all extant arms export licences for all arms, parts and components and technology to Israel, as well as stopping all military intelligence, technology, and support. This must immediately include stopping UK made components for the F-35 fighter jet programme reaching Israel, in line with the UK's obligations under domestic and international law.
- c) The UK Government must adhere to its obligations under international law, respect the International Court of Justice rulings, and advocate for adherence to international law and accountability for all parties to the conflict, including holding Israel accountable for its atrocity crimes.
- d) The UK Government must promote the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and promote compliance with international humanitarian law at every opportunity. This must include pressuring Israel to immediately halt the forced displacement of civilians in Gaza, to guarantee and facilitate safe, unhindered access for all humanitarian assistance, the safety and well-being of all humanitarian staff and the cessation of all illegal activities, such as settlement expansion, and advocating for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces and settlers from the OPT. The UK Government must ensure that UK law and its actions, as well as other UK entities including private entities and local government are in compliance with the ruling of the ICJ on the duty not to aid and assist Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory.
- e) The UK should implement trade restrictions on goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The UK must also undertake a thorough review of the existing UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement and review the current negotiations over a new free trade agreement to ensure compliance with the ICJ ruling on the unlawful Israeli occupation and the UN General Assembly Resolution on its implementation, and suspend these pending the outcome of this review and the end of the occupation.
- f) The UK Government should increase good quality UK aid funding to the humanitarian response, including to Palestinian NGOs and CSOs, especially women-led organisations, and build on existing successful multilateral efforts. On UNRWA, the UK must pressure Israel to halt the implementation of UNRWA-ban bills and continue to champion UNRWA and continue to commit generous and non-conditional funding.

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

- 9. In the last 15 months, we have witnessed a total erosion of international law in relation to Gaza. Several States, including the UK, have enabled - passively or actively - likely violations of the Geneva Conventions through continued diplomatic cover, public statements of support for the military operations, impeding or refusing to support calls for a ceasefire at the UN Security Council, direct military assistance, as well as the sale and transfer of arms despite evidence of the risk of such equipment being used in serious violations of international law and crimes against humanity.
- 10. The UK and its regional and international partners have been too slow and applied too little pressure to Israel in order to help bring about a ceasefire in the early stages of this conflict. The previous Conservative UK Government continually delayed calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and abstained on UNSC votes that called for one. The Labour Party in opposition proactively prevented its own MPs from symbolically voting for a ceasefire in November 2023 and only started calling for a humanitarian ceasefire in February 2024 – 5 months after the military offensive started and after over 29,000 Palestinians had already been killed^{xiv}. Whilst the Labour Party in Government has called for a ceasefire since taking office, there has been little in the way of tangible action to help secure one. This has contributed to a climate of impunity which has allowed Israel to continue its offensive with little pressure or impetus from the UK and other States to try and reach a political

settlement. The UK must use every diplomatic and economic lever it has to help bring about a permanent ceasefire. The UK must stop treating the Government of Israel as a good faith actor and apply every form of pressure possible to show that the UK will not stand for the actions and ongoing violations of international law. Further delays or gentle pleas to Israel will not work and will lead to countless more deaths and destruction in the process.

Arm licences

11. One of the UK’s most significant lever is that of its arms licences to Israel. Between 2015-2023, the UK has licensed at least £494 million worth of military exports to Israel, through 1,302 standard licences^{xv}. In the same period, the UK issued 67 unlimited-value licences open licences to Israel. Despite the escalation of violence in Gaza between October 2023 and May 2024, the UK issued over 100 new arms export licences to Israel^{xvi}. In September 2024, the new Labour Government suspended 29 out of 361 active licences to Israel^{xvii}, based on the conclusion that Criteria 2c of the Strategic Export Licencing Criteria (SELC) - a clear risk such equipment might be used to commit serious violations of IHL - was breached owing to the failure of Israel to provide adequate aid and the mistreatment of detainees². Despite the suspension, there are more extant arms export licences for Israel in December 2024 than before the suspension, as illustrated in the table below.^{xviii xix}

Table 1. Number of UK arms licences to Israel

May 2024		December 2024		
Licence type	Number of licences	Licence type	Number of licences	Of which suspended
Standard individual export licence (SIEL)	290	Standard individual export licence (SIEL)	304	14
Standard individual trade control licence (SITCL)	0	Standard individual trade control licence (SITCL)	0	0
Open individual export licence (OIEL)	51	Open individual export licence (OIEL)	58	2
Open individual trade control licence (OITCL)	4	Open individual trade control licence (OITCL)	6	0
Total	345	Total	368	16

12. Crucially, the largest and most important part of the UK’s arms trade with Israel – the supply of F-35 fighter jet components through the global US-controlled supply system - was not impacted by the suspension and given a special exemption despite the UK Government’s admitted knowledge that these could be used in violations of IHL, contrary to the Government’s obligations under the SELC. In the Open Position Statement of the Secretary of State pertaining to the Judicial Review of the Government, it states “the F-35 Carve Out accepts that there is clear risk that F-35 components might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of IHL but determines that in the exceptional circumstances outlined by the Defence Secretary, these exports should nonetheless continue”^{xx}.
13. The UK provides approximately 15% of the components in the F-35 stealth bomber aircraft being used in Gaza, including the rear fuselage and active interceptor system, ejector seats, aircraft tyres, refuelling probe, laser targeting system, and the fan propulsion system^{xxi}. Durability testing for the F-35 is also undertaken in the UK. The UK also provides intelligence from overflights of Gaza to enable

² The suspension of licences related to use in current military operations in Gaza also included 6 licences which have now expired, 2 licences that have now been amended to remove Israel as a potential ultimate end-user, and 5 Open General Export or Trade Control Licences now amended to remove Israel as a permitted destination. 29 licences in total were covered by the scope of the suspension.

military operations, and allows the US to use UK air bases on Cyprus to do the same which facilitates Israeli attacks in Gaza. Israel's air offensive on Gaza would be significantly impacted if the UK halts its sale of F-35 components to Israel. The UK market is completely vital to the manufacturing supply chain and could not be filled by other companies for a number of years.

14. The Government claim that they are unable to prevent supplies through the global supply chain going to Israel, and that therefore the suspension need not apply to parts and components sent indirectly. However, there is nothing in the SELC that allows them to continue exports of parts indirectly to Israel via a third party once a determination is made that the criteria 2c is breached. If the "clear risk" exists, then no such exception is made, and the transfer is not allowed. Nor can the UK use Article 3 - on maintenance of peace and security as a reason to export - because the transfer violates article 2c, consideration of Article 3 is unnecessary and has precedence. If any one of the so-called "mandatory" criteria (including Criterion 2) is breached, compliance with the others is irrelevant.
15. The fact that the F-35 global parts supply system, administered by the US, does not allow for the UK to differentiate where parts are sent is irrelevant in law. The UK could apply end-use conditions that state that any parts that it allows to enter the programme cannot reach Israel. Currently the UK is outsourcing enforcement of UK arms export control legislation to the United States. All partners to the F-35 programme use a common, global distribution system for parts and components for maintenance and repair that is highly automated - initially named ALIS. This system means that all parts are trackable anywhere in the world at all times, and that the plane automatically orders necessary maintenance even while in flight, so parts and engineers are sent to the appropriate base to reduce downtime. In recent years, this has been replaced by a more efficient version of the supply chain management systems called ODIN. A part sitting on a shelf in one of the global warehouses, for example in the Netherlands, can be identified and transported in advance of use to any F-35 airbase in its region. Claims by the UK that suggest it is impossible to track parts are untrue, although the system does not currently allow for the UK to know which part will go to which end user. A simple software tweak (initiated by the US) prohibiting the transfer from global warehouses to Israel would be enough to resolve this issue. In the absence of such a fix, the global supply system is non-compliant with UK legislation and the UK should not feed parts and components into that system.
16. The UK could also work with the United States in conjunction with other F-35 partner countries, to make tweaks to the system that would mitigate for the risk of parts and components being sent states that are committing violations of international humanitarian law with them. If the US refuses to make such a tweak, then UK transfers into the programme are still unlawful under the UK's legal obligations. Under these conditions the government must find other ways to supply NATO and other partners through the global F-35 supply chain while applying end-use conditions preventing F-35 parts reaching Israel.

Diplomatic measures

17. The UK Government - past and present - has refused in no uncertain terms to condemn the actions of Israel over the past months and refuse to unequivocally say that Israel is deliberately obstructing or breaking international law in Gaza. Israel is an ally to the UK and must use its diplomatic relationship to promote the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and promote compliance with IHL at every opportunity. This must include pressuring Israel to immediately halt the forced displacement of civilians in Gaza, to guarantee and facilitate safe, unhindered access for all humanitarian assistance, the safety and well-being of all humanitarian staff and the cessation of all illegal activities, such as settlement expansion, and advocating for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces and settlers from the OPT. The UK must also exert pressure on Israel and other involved parties, including issuing confidential protests, making public denunciations, and leveraging international forums to condemn unlawful actions and demand accountability. It is crucial that the UK and all third states use language

in public and private statements that reinforces the importance of adhering to the Geneva and Genocide Conventions and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The UK should also use its role as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council and table a resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which allows states to introduce restrictive measures or take military action to secure a ceasefire.

18. The UK must also ensure that all parties are complying with previous UN Security Council Resolutions, the ICJ provisional measures and ICJ advisory opinion. The advisory opinion by the ICJ "Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the OPT including East Jerusalem"^{xxii} issued on 19 July 2024, has brought a significant shift in the legal framework regarding the situation in the OPT. The ICJ has determined that Israel's continued presence in the OPT is unlawful, along with the associated settlement regime, annexation and use of natural resources. The Court added that Israel's legislation and measures violate the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid. The ICJ mandated Israel to end its occupation, dismantle its settlements, provide full reparations to Palestinian victims and facilitate the return of displaced people. Furthermore, UNGA resolution #GA/12626, on the unlawful presence of Israel in the OPT, was put forward by the Palestinian Mission to the UN, which was adopted by the UNGA on the 18 September 2024^{xxiii}. It sets out numerous obligations on States and international organisations, including the obligation not to recognise as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of Israel in the OPT.
19. While both the ICJ advisory opinion and the UNGA resolution are not legally enforceable, they carry great legal weight and moral authority. They are regarded by many international law experts as definitive interpretations of international laws and principles, and their conclusions often guide state behaviour and international policy. The UK must adhere to its obligations under the advisory opinion and address the unlawful nature of Israel's presence in the OPT.

Trade relations

20. As of December 2024, Israel was UK's 45th largest trading partner, with a total value of £5.6 billion in trade of goods and services.^{xxiv} The UK is also currently in negotiations with Israel for a new free trade agreement. It is crucial that the UK immediately undertakes a thorough review of the existing UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement and its associated trade privileges. This agreement incorporates respect for human rights as an 'essential element' of the agreement, entitling the UK to invoke its breach as a ground to terminate or suspend the agreement in whole or in part. The UK government must ensure that UK law and its actions, as well as other UK entities including private entities and local government are in compliance with the ruling of the ICJ on the duty not to aid and assist Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestinian Territory.
21. The UK should implement trade restrictions on goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT. The UK must also undertake a thorough review of the existing UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement and review the current negotiations over a new free trade agreement to ensure compliance with the ICJ ruling on the unlawful Israeli occupation and the UN General Assembly Resolution on its implementation, and suspend these pending the outcome of this review and the end of the unlawful occupation.
22. The UK should also implement trade restrictions on goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT. This includes banning the exports of settlement products to Israeli entities and individuals in the occupied territory, as well as prohibiting imports of such goods. The UK-Israel FTA should be reviewed and amended to exclude any benefits to entities operating in or profiting from the occupation.

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

23. UK Government policy since October 2023 has failed to address the immediate humanitarian catastrophe being unleashed on Gaza. Long before October 2023, UK policy had also been failing Palestinians and been insufficient in attempts to address the systemic and root causes of this ongoing cycle of violence. What can be learned from this failure is that the UK must take a new approach to Israel, putting adherence to international law at the centre of its approach.

Failure to improve humanitarian access

24. Since October 2023, the previous and current UK Government made improving humanitarian access a central pillar to their policy agenda towards Gaza and Israel, continuously calling for increased humanitarian access and assistance. Similarly, the international community, diplomats, the UN and ICJ have all called for increased humanitarian access and assistance, yet no international initiatives yielded any positive results or improvement until the temporary ceasefire. On the contrary, humanitarian assistance had been in steady decline. October 2024 saw an all-time low of humanitarian aid trucks entering Gaza, with only 37 humanitarian trucks per day^{xxv}. Of the meagre 34 trucks of food and water given permission to enter the North Gaza Governorate between 6 October to 16 December 2024, deliberate delays and systematic obstructions by the Israeli military meant that just twelve managed to distribute aid to starving Palestinian civilians. For three of these, once the food and water had been delivered to the school where people were sheltering, it was then cleared and shelled within hours^{xxvi}.
25. The UK has also invested in aid initiatives such as air drops - 12 airdrops at a cost of £230,000-£315,000 per plane - and the US-led initiative of the 'floating pier' - at a cost of £9.7million^{xxvii}. Such efforts have proven to be ineffective and were at the time widely critiqued by humanitarian actors, including Oxfam, who noted such efforts would not have been able to deliver aid in the quantities needed, and were unsafe and undignified. There were repeated calls for States to focus on pressuring Israel to open land borders for safe delivery of humanitarian aid and to focus on stopping the bombardment. Whilst small increases in UK aid funding, and the new governments resumption of funding to UNRWA have been welcomed and critical, they have not gone far enough or been part of a wider effort to pressure Israel and all conflict parties to secure a ceasefire, which is as aid agencies such as Oxfam have been saying for many months, is the best way to ensure a meaningful humanitarian response can happen.
26. Most recently, the Israeli Knesset passed two bills that would function to dismantle UNRWA and all of its activities from 26 January 2025. These bills will have direct operational and legal impact on UNRWA's services and millions of Palestinian people will be affected. It also fundamentally undermines the internationally recognised multilateral system. These actions are not, as claimed, about UNRWA's neutrality, or about its humanitarian work. They are about UNRWA's protection of the status of Palestine Refugees. They seek to unilaterally undermine a future political solution, and they contravene the orders and opinions of the ICJ and UN resolutions. The UK has rightfully raised its concern at these bills^{xxviii}, but more must be done to pressure Israel, in line with the recommendations above to ensure that Israel halts the implementation of these bills. Alongside this, the UK must continue to champion UNRWA and continue to commit generous and non-conditional funding for the coming year. Oxfam and other humanitarian INGOs operating in OPT depend on UNRWA, and will not engage in workarounds that undermine them, international norms, and the broader humanitarian response.

Need for coherent foreign policy approach that addresses systemic issues

27. The UK Government has repeatedly failed to have a coherent cross-departmental approach to Israel and Palestine. The UK has fuelled the catastrophe in Gaza by allowing the sale of crucial arms and components to Israel, in breach of its commitments under domestic and international law. Simultaneously the Government is calling for a ceasefire and saying it is doing all that it can to help improve humanitarian access and assistance to the population living under siege.
28. In addition, despite the UK releasing some statements calling for the violence to stop, it has repeatedly failed to act on and act on its words. For example, while the UK supported UN Security Council Resolution 2728 calling for a ceasefire, it failed to back robust enforcement mechanisms, leading to continued escalation of violence. The UK also abstained from key UN votes calling for investigations into potential war crimes, despite evidence from Oxfam and multiple other international and UN agencies showing systematic targeting of civilian areas, including health facilities and schools. This represents a clear contradiction and incoherence in the UK's foreign policy, as well as undermining the UK's credibility and commitment to peace.
29. The UK has also failed to apply a consistent foreign policy approach across different geographical contexts and the UK's legal approach to genocide prevention has also varied in different contexts, making effective implementation of its obligations by the UK impossible. For example, the UK has had a robust approach to Russia in relation to their invasion of Ukraine, calling out war crimes and providing funding for the prosecution of those committing war crimes^{xxxix}. This whilst the UK has still failed to concretely call out or condemn war crimes being committed by Israel and continues to potentially facilitate violations of international law through the ongoing sale of arms to Israel. In the case of the violence in Sudan, the UK has also had a strong position in terms of atrocity crimes and the need to prevent these, with Development Minister Dodds noting in the House of Commons on 13 January 2025 "irrespective of any genocide determination, it is clear that atrocities have been committed in this conflict and that those responsible must be held to account" and noting the UK is "determined to do all we can, as the UK, to work with others, to press the warring parties to abide with international law and to protect civilians – collecting information, promoting prevention and ensuring accountability."^{xxx} This is in stark contrast to how successive UK Ministers have avoided making determinations of atrocity crimes being committed by Israel, made their own determinations of genocide not happening to the Palestinian people, and repeatedly undermined South Africa's case at the ICJ despite legal proceedings not yet having come to a final determination. This includes previous and current Prime Ministers Rishi Sunak^{xxxi} and Keir Starmer^{xxxii}, and previous and current Foreign Secretary's Lord Cameron^{xxxiii} and David Lammy^{xxxiv}.

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?

UK aid

30. Prior to October 2023, UK aid contributions to the OPT had been declining in real terms over recent years. In 2022-2023 the UK spent just £25.7 million on aid to the Palestine, including contributions to UNRWA^{xxxv}. In contrast, in 2019, the UK spent close to £180 million^{xxxvi}. In 2023/24, the UK committed £101.25 million, and £112 million for 2024/25, including £34 million for UNRWA^{xxxvii}. These increases have been in direct response to the crisis in Gaza. The reduction and unpredictability of UK aid has weakened the capacity of local actors to respond to crises, leaving communities more vulnerable. Increased UK aid, alongside a consistent foreign policy approach to Palestine and Israel that has international law at its core, is crucial to peace efforts. The UK and other donors should focus funding on the humanitarian response, and provide direct and quality funding to Palestinian NGOs and CSOs, including women-led organisations, as well as through organisations like Oxfam that have long

standing partnerships with local CSOs, and strengthen liquidity through cash programming to mitigate the collapse of the banking system and its adverse effect on local partners^{xxxviii}.

31. Oxfam has seen success when working through multilateral frameworks, such as WASH cluster coordination. The UK must build on these efforts, and not allow COGAT to supplant these tried, tested and transparent processes for coordination, and ensure the UK's leadership in similar multilateral efforts, working with other donors to fund mechanisms, demand improved access to coordination mechanisms (particularly for Palestinian CSOs and NGOs), and address safe and secure movement of aid workers and active participation in Cluster meetings. All of which could bolster resilience and long-term peacebuilding.
32. There must be a timebound plan for Gaza, in line with UN resolutions, that demands Israel lifts the blockade of Gaza within a set period following a permanent ceasefire. The international community, including the UK, must exert pressure on Israel to lift the siege, or any meaningful recovery will remain impossible. Only then can Gaza begin to rebuild, and people start to recover from the devastation. Donors must support a reconstruction approach, together with the Palestinian authorities, stakeholders and CSO's, that looks at the actual needs which will bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe and revive Gaza's economy. The international community must connect new reconstruction efforts to a time-bound plan to end the blockade, including benchmarks and accountability mechanisms.

Forced displacement

33. The escalation of violence and forced displacement of Palestinian communities since October 2023 is the latest chapter in a long history of mass forced displacement, expulsion and refugeehood that have overshadowed Palestinian existence since the start of the British Mandate. Since the creation of the State of Israel, successive Israeli governments have overseen a continuous cycle of dispossession of Palestinians. In the years since the blockade and closure of Gaza in 2007, Gaza residents have experienced multiple instances of displacement, often corresponding to escalations in Israeli military attacks. During the 2014 Gaza war, for example, approximately 100,000 Palestinians were internally displaced^{xxxix xl}. Since 7 October, 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza have been forcibly displaced, and most recently under the guise of 'evacuation orders'. There has also been a dramatic increase in settlement building and Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, accelerating displacement. UN figures show that in 2024 there have been 15,591 Palestinian in the West Bank displaced and over 10,000 structures destroyed.^{xli} This historical context has cultivated a deep-rooted Palestinian connection to the land, with Palestinians inside Gaza describing the prospect of permanent exile as a fate worse than bombs.
34. Such displacement cannot be viewed in isolation from Israel's broader unlawful conduct in the OPT, manifested in an expansionist intent and the annexation of territory. For decades, the Israeli government has systematically worked to expel Palestinians from the areas it controls. This strategy, evident in the West Bank through coercive measures and the restriction of access to resources, is now being intensified in Gaza at a horrific scale. Forcible transfer and deportation are serious violations of international law and atrocity crimes and third states have a legal obligation to stop existing transfers and prevent such acts taking place in future. Since the onset of the current offensive, numerous reports have emerged of plans by Israeli governmental bodies and officials to 'relocate', or expel, Palestinian residents of Gaza to areas outside the OPT. Israel military action in the North Gaza Governate appears to be the latest attempt to alter the territorial integrity of Gaza. The

UK has publicly rejected the suggestion that Palestinians be relocated outside Gaza^{xlii}, and stated its opposition to forcible transfer of Palestinians from north Gaza and the reduction of Gaza's territory.^{xliii}

35. These systemic issues must be addressed as part of a sustainable peace process. The UK must firmly oppose and actively prevent any actions or policies by the Israeli government that could legitimise or lead to the ongoing or extended forced displacement of Palestinian residents of the OPT, including any 'evacuation plans' within or beyond Gaza's borders, or reduction of the physical territory of the OPT, including Gaza. This includes insisting on guarantees against the repetition of unlawful acts such as forcible transfers, deportations, forced evictions, the demolition of homes and productive assets, and any Israeli authorities practices, policies or legislation that contribute to the acquisition of Palestinian territory and negate the Palestinian right to self-determination. The UK must also take all possible steps to ensure that all displaced Palestinians within Gaza are permitted to safely return to their usual place of residence as soon as hostilities in those areas cease, and take all possible steps to ensure that all displaced Palestinians within the West Bank are permitted to safely return to their usual place of residence.

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