

Emma Owens statement

The question I would like to ask you in this room is this: Is supporting Israel's right to commit Genocide still the safest thing for Bath politicians to do?

We assume that the persecuted and besieged population of Gaza are the only ones facing an existential risk in this crisis. They are a population mainly of unarmed children after all. What kind of backlash could we possibly face here in Bath as long as our politicians play it safe, block debate and support the far more threatening nuclear armed Israel? It is only Palestinians dying after all, it isn't our babies, our children or our grandchildren.

It might feel immoral, to stand by as people are killed on an industrial scale, are starved or are forcibly displaced.... But it is the line of least resistance until, as US Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield in the UN stated, "we reach a final solution" to the Palestinian problem.

We have got used to it being safe for our politicians to ignore the moral quagmire embodied in the state of Israel. We can all agree that we don't like military occupation and that Apartheid is a cruel and racist system. We don't agree with populations having different legal systems or with children being imprisoned and tortured without trial. We don't like settlements or settlers for that matter. We can also all agree that Netanyahu is an obstacle and his governmental colleagues are less than ideal. They should not be using genocidal rhetoric or starving and murdering so many children. Nevertheless, our politicians stand with Israel because to do something else feels too dangerous and too controversial.

Things can change quickly. We are told we are the pre-war generation. We too can be occupied. How can we argue that our occupier has no right to starve us in Bath, to cut off our water, to kill our children, to demolish our homes, schools and hospitals. On what basis? Which international laws do we live by and therefore hold others to?

What do you think the future holds as the cold winds of a crashing global economy start to blow? What if the election and huge public anger changes our politics? What happens if our moral authority has drained away? Will there be a reckoning for those on the wrong side of history as this tinderbox of war starts to flame out of our control? Will justice be restored and the guilty punished? The truth is, we do not know.

In closing: Future populations, your children and your grandchildren will want to know, where were you? what did you do when the Palestinian people were being so cruelly exterminated? If you are wise, you will prepare your answer now.