

Guildhall Speech 16th May 2024 – Marie Duffy

Good evening.

The UK has a long and proud history of welcoming refugees to its towns and cities.

Bath can rightfully take pride in itself on how swiftly it rolled out the Homes for Ukraine scheme and how those families benefitted from having a dedicated team to help arrange their visas, to being hosted by local residents or fast tracked to secure housing as well as help with enrolling their children into local schools. The support from the council has been admirable.

I understand that the govt and that BANES Council was allocated a percentage of the set up £150 million pound fund million pounds that was set aside by the government to assist the Ukranian people with settling into the UK. What was the amount allocated to BANES and how was it implemented?

(I just want to see a bigger picture and there is no disrespect within my question.)

Will the Council support our MP, Wera Hobhouse who has joined cross party MPs striving for peace and the urgent need to get aid into Gaza? BANES Council is part of the governance of this country and I feel that it should act in a humanitarian manner in the same way it did for Ukrainians fleeing the war in their country. Without wishing to minimise the suffering of the Ukranian people, I must point out that Palestinian people and children are not at war with Israel, they are victims of genocide. If anything these people should be treated as asylum seekers as they are being terrorised in their own country.

Will the Council commit to rolling out a similar scheme for Palestinians who have managed to escape the country & need sanctuary or who have relatives right here in Bath or the South West ready to support them?

Surely we should be leading the way and opening our hearts and homes to these poor people? There are Bath residents with family members trapped in Gaza, suffering the most unimaginable horrors, some have lost many, many members of their immediate family in ways that are too horrific to repeat. Whilst they continue to live and work and study in Bath, paying taxes and contributing to society, their voices seem to go unheard. The Council must engage with Palestinian residents of Bath and commit to assisting them in the same way that they did for Ukrainians. .

We all have a moral duty to help the Palestinians in whatever way we can, no matter how small. We are global citizens with plenty of information at hand, minute by minute news and graphic footage of the massacres pumped into our living rooms through our tv screens.

As a LibDem Council you should be supporting Wera and listening to the people of Bath as she has done regarding the atrocities that are happening to their families in Gaza.

Bombing innocent civilians & children that have already been displaced is not self defence. It is genocide.

It's not eviction it's ethnic cleansing.

It's not merely a conflict it's 75 yrs & 7 months of occupation, land theft, & apartheid & massacres by the IOF.

This was a planned genocide. Now is the time to choose which side of history you want Bath to be remembered for: it's humanitarian spirit or for being a bystander & ignoring the cries of the desperate.

Thank you