

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting – 18th July 2024

Green Group Motion on Peace

To be proposed by Councillor Joanna Wright

Council Notes:

1. East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and Gaza are internationally recognised by the UN as being under illegal occupation by Israel¹. Amnesty International states that Gaza has been subject to 16 years of blockade² and multiple NGOs recognise a system of apartheid within this region³.
2. On the 7th October 2023, Palestinian militant group, Hamas, launched an assault on Israel disputing their occupation– the European Parliament has ruled this the deadliest attack on a Jewish community since the end of the Holocaust⁴.
3. The UN states that all nations have a right to self-determination and self-defence, but these must be conducted within international law⁵. Nevertheless, a devastating and violent conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza has ensued since 7th October 2023:
 - a. Tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives in this conflict⁶, including Israeli and British citizens⁷, but fatalities are predominantly Palestinian women and children^{8,9}.
 - b. Approximately 75 percent of Gaza's total population, equating to millions of people, have been displaced¹⁰. The displacement exacerbates challenges in the asylum system, forcing individuals to seek refuge as asylum seekers and refugees.
 - c. The conflict has left Palestine without critical infrastructure, food, water, and resources: multiple hospitals have been targeted in IDF operations, contravening the Geneva Convention¹¹; UN officials have deemed the supplies sent to Gaza via trucks as "grossly inadequate"¹², many of which have been blocked by the IDF; the lack of access to clean water has led to the spread of disease due to inadequate sanitation facilities¹³; Palestinians suffer daily from malnutrition, famine, and starvation¹⁴.
 - d. Both Hamas and Israel detain hostages. The Geneva Convention defines 'the taking of hostages' as 'grave breaches' and are defined as War Crimes by Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁵[10].

4. Israel's ongoing targeting of Gaza, most recently in Rafah - where many refugees have sought shelter, poses a grave threat to geopolitics. Deliberate attacks on non-combatant civilians or civilian infrastructure are deemed as war crimes under the Rome Statute. Amnesty International has warned that Israel's recurrent assaults on Rafah violate these international laws¹⁶;
5. The International Court of Justice (ICJ)¹⁷, the highest court of the United Nations, has heard a case of alleged genocide by Israel¹⁸. The ICJ issued an interim ruling instructing Israel to prevent genocidal acts and enable humanitarian assistance, despite which civilian casualties in Gaza have not decreased¹⁹.
6. Israel has proceeded to target Iran, including a consulate building, which is illegal under international law. The attack killed civilians, officers, and the Iranian ambassador.
7. The global consequence of this unrest is clear; for instance, the UK-US have launched airstrikes in Yemen in response to Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea in support of Palestine. The Red Sea serves as a critical maritime corridor for global trade, linking Europe, Asia, and Africa. Any disturbance in this region can significantly impact global trade flows. Consequently, international conflicts like these also affect residents and businesses in B&NES by driving up consumer prices, energy costs due to disruptions in oil transportation, and heightening investment and trade uncertainty²⁰.
8. The international conflict has heightened security concerns, exacerbated social and political divisions, increased defence and military budgets, potentially distressed diaspora communities, led to protests, occupations, and demonstrations, and influenced media coverage, shaping public perceptions and attitudes within B&NES.²¹

Council:

1. Recognises that the UK has an historical responsibility in this conflict and should support innocent civilians affected by it while striving to secure long-term peace.
2. Reinforces that Hamas do not represent the Palestinian people – and the Palestinian people are not Hamas.
3. Reiterates the ICJ's insistence that Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent acts contravening the genocide convention, ensuring, with immediate effect, that its forces do not commit any act of genocide and immediately improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.
4. Expresses deep sympathy for all those affected by the conflict in Israel and Palestine, offering support to those in the B&NES area impacted by this conflict.
5. Believes in the long term there can only be a political solution to this crisis. Discussions must restart immediately for a two-state solution, aiming for a safe

and viable Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel, to achieve lasting peace.

6. Hopes for an immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.
7. Believes that Muslims, Jews, and people of all faiths and none should feel safe and supported worldwide and condemns the increase in Antisemitic and Islamophobic violence and abuse in the UK.
8. Affirms all political leaders have a responsibility to try to prevent genocide.

Council therefore:

1. Supports calls for ceasefire locally, nationally and internationally.
2. Asks the Council Leaders to write to the Government urging a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and advocate for lasting peace with a two-state solution on the global stage.
3. Repeats its dedication to combat racism and discrimination in our communities and condemns the use of all dehumanising language. We call on our communities to treat each other with respect and refrain from inflammatory terminology.
4. Through the Equalities Action Commission, resolve to explore how the Council can better support and facilitate events for people of all faiths and none, enabling them to come together and express solidarity and sadness in response to these events.
5. Promote and facilitate access to local services that offer the best support for residents.
6. Pledge to support these services and facilitate their needs, as they play a key role in assisting and nurturing our residents during these challenging times.
7. Supports the UK Resettlement Scheme to allow a route to safety for the most vulnerable in Gaza with emergency pathways for those seeking refuge from the conflict and emphasises our readiness to provide support and open our arms to innocent people displaced and affected by these events.
8. Fly the UN flag as a symbol of peace outside the town hall until a ceasefire is agreed.

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Study-on-the-Legality-of-the-Israeli-occupation-of-the-OPT-including-East-Jerusalem.pdf>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2022/02/qa-israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-cruel-system-of-domination-and-crime-against-humanity/>

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2022/02/qa-israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-cruel-system-of-domination-and-crime-against-humanity/>

⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0373_EN.html

⁵ <https://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

⁷ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/humanitarian-situation-in-gaza/>

⁸ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-24/debates/17465F6F-4705-40A0-9250-0939AA74444B/IsraelGaza>

⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68430925>

¹⁰ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/humanitarian-situation-in-gaza/>

¹¹ <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/South-Africa-v-Israel.pdf>

¹² <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/humanitarian-situation-in-gaza/>

¹³ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-19/debates/3C0812EC-E75C-4F39-873B-2EAC5CF71E51/IsraelAndGaza>

¹⁴ <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1654922>

¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/29/jailed-without-charge-how-israel-holds-thousands-of-palestinian-prisoners>

¹⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/13/has-israel-committed-war-crimes-in-rafah#:~:text=At%20least%2095%20people%2C%20including,the%20human%20rights%20organisation%20said.>

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>

¹⁹ [https://www.icj-](https://www.icj-cij.org/home#:~:text=On%2029%20December%202023,Gaza%20Strip%20and%20requested%20the)

[cij.org/home#:~:text=On%2029%20December%202023,Gaza%20Strip%20and%20requested%20the](https://www.icj-cij.org/home#:~:text=On%2029%20December%202023,Gaza%20Strip%20and%20requested%20the)

²⁰ Example: The newly opened Keynsham Recycling Centre has stated that this conflict is directly affecting their operations (comment made to Cllrs on the sites opening tour).

²¹ Other local examples include:

- Damage and graffiti related to the conflict found at the Bath Labour offices on November 14, 2023.
- Multiple public speakers have expressed their condemnation of the situation in Gaza, supporting a ceasefire, during Council minutes (Nicola James; Jibraan Kidwai 'The plausible ruling of genocide in the ICJ and how it affects the people of Bath'; Emma Owens 'The impact of the Israel/Gaza war on the people of the city of Bath'; Johyna Ballout 'The situation in Palestine and its impact on the residents of Bath'; Alice Georgiou 'The impact of the Israel/Gaza conflict on the people of BANES')
<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=272&MIId=6323>
<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=272&MIId=6327>
<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=272&MIId=6321>
<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=272&MIId=6221>
- Wael Arafat, whose family and friends have died in the conflict, has been admitted to the Royal United Hospital in Bath following a hunger strike calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-67741956>
- Events held at The Guildhall, such as The Interfaith gathering on 5th February 2024, underscore the undeniable impact of this international conflict on B&NES resources.
- An open letter calling for ceasefire was sent to B&NES Councillors <https://bathcampaigns.org.uk/open-letter-to-banes-councillors/>

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- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
 - *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*