

Sir Vincent Fean, British Consul General in Jerusalem 2010-2014



My main impression watching the play and watching the film is that I'm glad I'm retired and I don't have to defend the work which successive British governments have taken of after three years in Jerusalem and the 38 years of my career.

I agree strongly with Avi's last point about Palestinian statehood, and the need to acknowledge the right to self determination of the Palestinian people on 22 per cent of mandate Palestine. I also want to underline a personal view, but also the view that the British government takes, that, if you like, the acquired rights to security and freedom and statehood of the state of Palestine are beyond question.

We do need to restore rights to the Palestinians and we do need to acknowledge that the conduct of the occupation, particularly since 1967 contains several illegalities: the settlement construction, the wall which takes 9% of the West Bank without a by your leave, and house demolitions. It was rather chastening to see that we set the trend in house demolitions, but the trend is being continued by the Israeli government in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

I think there are some things we can do. I acknowledge Avi's point about non interference but if we just leave this alone it will get worse, so I don't want us to leave it alone. If we leave it to

the parties, I don't think right now they've got the capacity or shared will to resolve this. So those who believe can pray; can pray for freedom of worship in Jerusalem.

We can all pay. We do. We pay for the reconstruction Gaza - third time in six years we'll be doing that. We pay to keep the Palestinian Authority going in Ramallah, through our Department for International Development. But I think we can also act, not militarily - that would be daft. But act to prevent another Gaza. I am not waiting for the USA. I have a high respect for secretary Kerry, but he's got a lot of weight on his shoulders and not a lot of leverage with Israel. We have some weight: moral, public opinion. Europe tends to look at us on this issue.

And my last point would be to say: if you talk to Muslims - moderate well intentioned British Muslims - the one issue that they come back at us with, when we talk about whether we should bomb the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, is: double standards. I would like to be able to answer that problem. That requires something to change. And I believe that one of the things we can do is to recognise a state of Palestine under occupation now. This government won't do it; the next one might, that's rather up to you - who you vote for. You need to get your Conservative MP to change his or her mind.