

Towards an independent Palestinian state: a Scottish call to action

Israel/Palestine: Equal Rights

17 March 2019

From Edinburgh, and the home university of Arthur Balfour, we acknowledge Britain's historical responsibilities in the Holy Land, from before the Balfour Declaration through the British Mandate to today. Gaza was, is, and always will be, an integral part of Palestine. Past British responsibility for present injustice demands British engagement to work urgently for a better future.

The Jewish people exercised their right to self-determination in the Holy Land more than 70 years ago. To this day, the Palestinian people are denied this sacred right. This is the injustice which must end.

Our focus today is on Scotland's role in influencing Britain as a whole – its Government and civil society – to act for true equality: a policy based on those universal values which Britain helped enshrine in international law.

Palestinians and Israelis are obliged to share the Holy Land forever. Inequality does not bring safety and well-being. But how to move to peaceful coexistence, to reconciliation? The two peoples, acting alone, cannot resolve this. So, for the good of both, we must help. President Trump is a hindrance, not a help.

Today we have heard of repressive, dehumanising occupation, violent deaths, injuries and trauma. Rockets only add to the fear and mistrust which haunt both sides. Decisive change on the ground is needed, now.

So, we call for these six measures to be taken:

- First, an end to the closure of Gaza. Twelve years of blockade have blighted lives, increased aid dependency and destroyed hope, especially among the young
- Second, true freedom of worship for all believers – Jewish, Muslim and Christian – at their holy sites in Jerusalem, which must be the shared capital of two states
- Third, respect for the rule of law embodied in UN Security Council Resolutions, most recently Resolution 2334. It condemns illegal Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories Israel occupied in 1967, and calls on all states to distinguish between them and the territories of the state of Israel
- Fourth, accountability and serious consequences for breaking international law;
- Fifth, recognition by the UK Government and European partners of the state of Palestine alongside Israel
- Sixth, UK Government commitment to defend the fundamental rights of both peoples, including their right to security. Free movement of persons and goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and between Palestine and the world, is just such a right.

***Patrons:** Rt Hon Tom Brake MP, Richard Burden MP, Rt Revd Christopher Chessun,
Rt Rev Declan Lang, Baroness Morris of Bolton, Dr Philippa Whitford MP*

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Balfour Project is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) Charity number SC047090

We seek a future of equal rights, security and peaceful coexistence between the citizens of Israel and Palestine in two states along the pre-1967 Green Line. And we support all on both sides of that line who see this outcome as just.

We urge our elected representatives to heed us. The MSPs and MPs with us today will ensure our call is heard in Holyrood and at Westminster.

Balfour Project (www.balfourproject.org)

What is the Balfour Project?

The Balfour Project is a Scottish-registered charity which seeks to advance the education of the British public in the history of Britain's involvement in the Middle East, and particularly Israel / Palestine.

The Balfour Project invites the British public to:

- acknowledge our country's historical responsibilities in the Holy Land through the Balfour Declaration to the British Mandate and today
- support Palestinians and Israelis in building a peaceful future based on equal rights, justice and security for all
- work for Government recognition of the state of Palestine alongside Israel.

The trustees of the Balfour Project are listed on its website www.balfourproject.org