

BRITAIN, PALESTINE, ISRAEL

TRAGEDY IN GAZA

BRITAIN'S LEGACY, SCOTLAND'S ROLE

A conference at Edinburgh University

A CALL TO
ACTION



THE NEWS FROM GAZA

DISPELLING MYTHS AND TELLING THE TRUTH

A seminar at Glasgow University



TRAGEDY IN GAZA

BRITAIN'S LEGACY, SCOTLAND'S ROLE

Gaza, under Israeli military occupation since 1967, is home to two million Palestinians. Most are there because in 1948, when Britain abandoned its Mandate for Palestine, Gaza gave refuge to Palestinians forced to flee from the fighting which erupted. For the last 12 years Israel has blockaded this strip of land. Much of its infrastructure has been destroyed by Israeli bombing. The United Nations says that by 2020 Gaza will be uninhabitable. But the people will still be there. They are locked in.

In March 2019 the Balfour Project held conferences at Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities to examine Britain's historical responsibility for this tragedy, and to explore what our Government and civil society can do now to advance equal rights for all who live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

Sir Vincent Fean, Chair of the Balfour Project, said: 'On the issue of Palestinian self-determination, Scotland is the conscience of the United Kingdom. This is the place where our responsibility to act in support of equal rights is most clearly felt and expressed. I commend the Scottish Call to Action to advance those rights, including through British Government recognition now of the independent state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel. Gaza is an integral part of Palestine, whose people are entitled to the very same rights as Israelis.'

This booklet contains extracts from the conferences and the full text of the Call to Action.





GAZA – UNINHABITABLE BY 2020

Jamie McGoldrick, UN
Humanitarian Coordinator,
Palestine

Mr McGoldrick spoke at
both the Edinburgh and
Glasgow conferences

THE HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC CRISIS in Gaza is man-made. And the key driver is the Israeli blockade. It is seriously debilitating for the average citizen in Gaza.

Gaza's services are crumbling, and the private sector is unable to generate jobs or revenues to support a fast growing population. The Palestinian Authority's punitive approach and the way they treat Gazans – cutting salaries and budget support – are exacerbating the economic woes. A World Bank report last September described the situation as in freefall.

29,000 wounded

The water is not safe to drink. There are four hours of electricity per day. That was made up to 10 hours in October thanks to fuel donated by Qatar, which will run out soon. The lack of electricity, and the destruction of sewage works by bombing, means that the equivalent of 40 Olympic swimming pools of sewage go into the sea every day from Gaza and much of it pollutes the coast of Israel. The water parks in Ashkelon have to close for cleaning because of all the sewage that ends up there.

It's a scene of desperation and sadness where the health and social services have been on the verge of collapse for years, caused by a lack of investment, lack of support, and increased pressure on those systems themselves. Seventy percent of Gazans under the age of 30 are unemployed. They stand on the shores of Gaza and look across the horizon, knowing that there are countries they'll never reach.

This is the background to the Great March of Return which has taken place every Friday since March 2018. The Israeli response has killed 266 people and wounded over 29,000. Israeli Army snipers use weapons at 200-300 metres which are designed for use at a kilometre, and the impact is massive. You cannot recognise limbs which have been hit by these bullets. Then there are people paralysed by spinal injuries, and others who have been blinded. All these need major hospital treatment costing millions, which we don't have. And this on top of the normal workload of the hospitals.

HEALTH CRISIS COMPELS USE OF OUTDATED TREATMENTS ...

Dr Philippa Whitford, MP for Central Ayrshire and a breast cancer surgeon



MODERN TREATMENT FOR BREAST CANCER relies on radiotherapy, which is not available in Gaza. It is available in East Jerusalem, but 45% of Gaza patients who apply to travel there are refused permission by the Israeli authorities. Those diagnosed with breast cancer have had little choice but a mastectomy combined with radical surgery which removes the lymph nodes. This has left half of them suffering from lymphoedema – a heavy swollen arm.

The blockade means that chemotherapy drugs are often in short supply. As a result, the 5-year survival rate of breast cancer patients in Gaza is just 43% – less than half what Israeli or British women can expect.

In response, Medical Aid for Palestinians has recruited surgeons, radiologists, oncologists and cancer nurse specialists from Scotland to work with local breast cancer teams in Gaza and the West Bank. We run two multidisciplinary team (MDT) training visits to each territory every year. We are introducing new diagnostic and surgical techniques, supporting MDT treatment planning from Scotland via Skype and implementing a quality improvement system so that local teams can measure their own progress. We want Palestinians with breast cancer to receive the best treatment and support.

... AND HARMS PATIENTS IN OTHER WAYS

Dr Nahil Alrumi graduated last year as a doctor from the Islamic University of Gaza, which is now training 60 doctors a year.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH SITUATION in Gaza is catastrophic. There are many aspects to this. Let me illustrate one through the experience of my cousin.

He was 13 months old in 2016 when he was diagnosed with leukemia. We can diagnose leukemia in Gaza, but we do not have the equipment to treat it. So he needed to transfer to East Jerusalem. The transfer permit took three to four days – a relatively short time because he was so young. His mother was not granted a permit. Nor were any of my aunts except a 60-year-old who was too sick herself to look after him. So my cousin was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit by himself. After three months his mother was granted a permit.

When she got there my cousin would fall into a tantrum whenever he saw her, and refuse to speak to her. In his mind she had abandoned him.



TALK TO HAMAS AND END THE BLOCKADE

Yossi Mekelberg, Professor of International Relations at London's Regent University and Chatham House

NO HUMAN BEING SHOULD LIVE in the inhumane conditions of Gaza. The real interest of Israel is to see Gazans living in much better conditions. The framework of this humanitarian calamity is the occupation, is the blockade. It has to go.

That means talking to Hamas. You don't have to like what Hamas represents but you have to talk to them, behind closed doors or in public. It would lead to a ceasefire and the opening of crossings, allowing people to move in and out. Any agreement must ensure the safety and security of all people on both sides of the border.

We are celebrating 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We can't seriously say that this is our manifesto unless we implement it in Gaza.

There is a vibrant civil society in Europe and, though the United States is going through a sad phase, they have a liberal side too. We need to regroup, keep bringing up our concerns and resist pressure to drop them.



THE VOICE OF YOUTH MUST BE HEARD

Anas Almassri, who has led Gaza's largest network of youth volunteers working on community development

THE BLOCKADE HAS IMPEDED our economic and political development. Even worse, it has prevented us from connecting to others around the world, joining research projects, building our academic knowledge and contributing to scholarship.

The occupation subjects us to violence, physical, structural and cultural, and the trauma will require several generations to heal. The voice of Palestinian and Israeli youth must be brought to the table. We are the generation that will determine whether any peace or development is sustainable, or merely a pause in a continuum of suffering by Palestinians and Israelis.

Isolated in Gaza, I never met an Israeli until I went to the USA. This ignited my interest in reading about Israelis, only to find they are like us – people, rather than 'the other'. The blockade perpetuates this 'otherization'. Contact is key.

There has been growth in this, though still small and very slow of late. At some American universities, Israelis and Palestinians are invited to engage in programmes such as entrepreneurship. That's been amazing for all the participants. I hope such opportunities for contact will grow.

BRITAIN DENIED SELF-DETERMINATION TO PALESTINIANS

John McHugo,
international lawyer, historian and
author specialising in the Middle East



THE BALFOUR DECLARATION, approved by the British Government in 1917, pledged to assist the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine as long as this did not 'prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. Britain thereby gave itself a conflict of interest, as well as opening a divide between Arab Jews and other Palestinians.

The reference to 'existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine' in the Declaration glossed over and hid from view the fact that Palestine was a settled, Arabic-speaking country. The words were misleading. There may or may not have been an intention to mislead, but that is not the point. They deceived.

Sacred trust betrayed

As Menachem Klein demonstrates in his book *Lives in Common*, relations between the different religious communities in Palestine, though not free of tensions and inequalities, had been fairly harmonious before Britain appeared, and there had been much interaction across different communities.

At the time there was no general doctrine of self-determination in international law, but Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations imposed a "sacred trust of civilisation" on Britain to advance Palestinian "well-being and development", and implied recognition of the Palestinians as a people "whose existence" as a separate nation could be "provisionally recognised". Article 22 was a commitment to bring them to independence. This was an undertaking that Britain failed to fulfil.

Britain's actions aimed at establishing the Jewish national home should have respected the undertaking. Yet because of the promise to implement the Balfour Declaration, Britain did not grant Palestine representative institutions, including an elected parliament and a government made up of native Palestinians that commanded a majority in that Parliament.

The failure to grant these institutions was a major betrayal. It contrasted sharply with all the other mandated territories that had been Turkish and are implicitly referred to (although not mentioned) in Article 22: Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and also Jordan (which was technically part of the Palestine Mandate).

Make no mistake – it was the actions of Britain in attempting to implement the Balfour Declaration that led to this. Britain denied the Palestinian people self-determination while it held the Palestine Mandate. That denial is ultimately what has led us to the situation in Gaza today, and is one factor that has made the Middle East such an unstable place in the seven decades since Britain’s Mandate ended.

Britain carries a responsibility towards the Palestinians who live in Gaza, who are victims of its betrayal of its sacred trust – a historic responsibility that our Government should acknowledge now.



BRITISH POLICY COULD BE CALLED DIVIDE AND RULE

Dr Anthony Gorman,
Islamic and
Middle Eastern Studies,
University of Edinburgh

THE BRITISH PLAN to establish a mixed Legislative Council was rejected by the Arab leaders who largely boycotted the elections of 1923 because they were allocated less than half the number of seats, and because they insisted that participation would be seen as acceptance of the Balfour Declaration, which they were not willing to do. So the British ruled on the basis of a Mandate which recognised the aspirations of the Jewish people but not of the Arab communities.

Britain ruled by mediating between the two communities. This was the basis of the so-called dual society. It might also be called divide and rule. The incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the terms of the Mandate was one reason for the failure of Palestinian leadership. The Palestinians were disadvantaged from the beginning in terms of access to state infrastructure and resources.

The British policy of playing different elements of the Palestinian notability off against each other through patronage and political calculation also played a role. This was a standard strategy of imperial administration, but made more complicated by British undertakings to the Zionist movement, to the League of Nations Charter, and the priorities of successive British governments.

TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE: A SCOTTISH CALL TO ACTION

ISRAEL/PALESTINE: EQUAL RIGHTS

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, can not 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.



At the Edinburgh conference Balfour Project members gave their support to a Call to Action, which was read by **Christine De Luca**, Edinburgh's Makar (poet laureate) from 2014 to 2017.



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.

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.

GAZA AND THE BRITISH MEDIA

The crisis in Gaza is worsening by the day. But the mainstream British media carries little news of it, and social media too often plays to prejudices.

Just before the Edinburgh conference the Balfour Project held a seminar at Glasgow University at which media experts engaged the audience of 300 to discuss how the British and Scottish media can address this challenge.



TELEVISED VIEW FOR WESTERNERS

Hala Alsafadi, Palestinian journalist

I COME FROM GAZA. At the age of 22 I was the youngest TV correspondent there, serving various Western and other outlets. I started in 2012 just as that Gaza War began, and have covered many events in Gaza since then.

The truth about Gaza has always been censored for the Western world. When we shoot footage of the violence, we're told, 'Don't use this, it's not good for Western audiences'. During the 2014 war on Gaza, I was doing a live broadcast about an incident in which children had been killed. My news editor told me through my earpiece to stop talking about it. I kept talking and they cut me off. That cost me my job.

In the TV industry, most Western correspondents stay at luxurious hotels in Gaza City, reporting the news from there. They ask their Gaza fixers to get their stories, and are just on the streets to do their pieces to camera. They lose the humanity behind those stories.

Compare the way the Western media covers the stories in Israel with how they cover the West Bank or Gaza. Look at how the death of Palestinian children is reported in the West. Usually it is the picture of a funeral procession, their bodies wrapped in a flag.

Life and joy amidst conflict

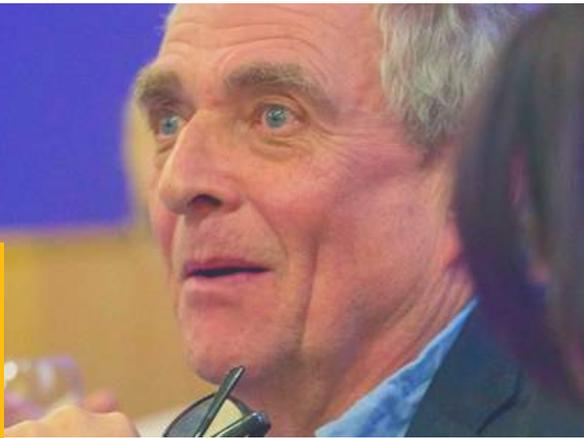
But when an Israeli soldier is killed, the Western media puts pictures of his family, of him playing soccer, hanging out with friends, showing his life when he is out of uniform.

As a result, many people think we're all Hamas. Yes, Hamas is leading Gaza but that does not mean they represent all Gazans. Gaza is not only conflict, it is also full of life and joy. I was denied the opportunity to present this aspect.

The seminar was chaired by **Andrew Whitley**, former Middle East correspondent and ex-Regional Director of UNRWA, the UN organisation responsible for five million Palestinian refugees.

GAZA IS BRIMMING WITH TALENT AND ENERGY

Don Macintyre, journalist
and author of *Gaza*,
Preparing for Dawn



I WAS A CORRESPONDENT in Jerusalem from 2003 to 2012 and keep returning to the region. Writing for *The Independent*, I worked for three editors, none of whom was moved by the noise that comes from elements – and they are only elements – of the pro-Israel diaspora. One programme described me as having a fawning sympathy for Hamas, though anybody who looked at my work would find that a difficult argument to sustain.

But not all editors are as robust as my Jewish editor Simon Kellner, who got a particular amount of flak in this area, I think especially because he was Jewish. I'm not just talking about Britain. It's also true in Australia and it's very true in the United States of America. That has to have an effect on the coverage. Last year many correspondents came to cover the opening of the American Embassy in Jerusalem, but very few came to Gaza even though they knew something big was going to happen.

Since 2006 Israeli journalists have not been allowed to go to Gaza, allegedly for security reasons, and that's a huge shame. When I first went there, Israeli journalists were going in and out of Gaza and the Israeli public were getting a much better picture of what was happening.

Gaza is brimming with talent, energy and entrepreneurial skills, all of which are being stunted by this terrible blockade. The critics of our coverage are emboldened by the fact that one narrative increasingly dominates the Israeli scene despite very brave Israelis such as *Breaking the Silence*, an organisation of ex-soldiers who challenge that narrative all the time.

Is the blockade security-driven?

The Europeans remain the sleeping giant of this conflict. The EU and indeed Britain could do much more. Some senior European diplomats now say it was wrong to boycott Hamas immediately after the 2006 elections that had been clean and clear. There are real questions about whether the 2008 War could have been avoided if the siege had been eased or lifted. There are real questions about whether the blockade is really the security driven mechanism that it's said to be. The media has to highlight these questions.

WE ARE HEARING ONLY ONE SIDE

Greg Philo, Professor of Communications and Social Change, University of Glasgow



I WAS ONCE PHONED up by Radio Clyde and asked to explain the Israeli Palestine conflict in 20 seconds. I decided to try.

I said that the Israeli view is that this is about terrorism. We are a small country under threat, surrounded by enemies. Some would say that God gave this land to the Jews. This is a struggle for self-determination. We all want peace but we're not allowed to have it.

The Palestinian view is that when Israel was set up we lost our homes and our land. In the 1967 war Israel doubled its size and the Palestinians who became refugees have lived under military rule ever since. We are trying to address that and to overthrow the occupation.

It's not complicated. So why have so many people heard the first account but not the second? This is the point that I raised again and again with BBC journalists: why do you have so much trouble talking about a struggle for national self-determination? Why don't you explain what it's like for a people to live under military rule?

BBC journalists made clear to me the pressure they were under. I remember being interviewed on radio and before we started the journalist asked me to talk about the difficulty of being critical about Israel. She said: 'I can't raise that with you as a question.' I said, 'All right. But what kind of situation is it when a journalist cannot ask this question?'

A BBC editor told me that when they had broadcast a story from Israel or Palestine, 'We wait in fear for the phone call from the Israelis. Is it from a monitoring group, from the Israeli Embassy, from the Ambassador? How high has it gone in our organisation? How much flak will we get?'

The BBC belongs to us

We are hearing only one side and we have to fight for change. We need to hear the background. We need to know why this is happening. It is impossible to develop a call for peace, for the resolution of this problem, for justice in that region, unless we hear the truth of what is happening.

I hope you'll all join us in demanding this change. The BBC is a public body. It belongs to us. It ought to take on the difficult challenges of giving alternative views.



APPALLING DISTORTION OF PALESTINIAN HISTORY

Sarah Helm, former Middle East correspondent, *The Independent*, now freelance

GAZA IS AN ONGOING NAKBA, an ongoing catastrophe. Palestinians have been trying to get their voices heard since long before the creation of the state of Israel, since the late 19th century. I recently discovered early news stories from petitioners to the Sultan in Istanbul, saying that their villages were about to be taken over by Zionists settlers. 'Please help us,' they wrote. 'We're losing our land,' and nobody listened.

A journalist needs to know the history because it is absolutely fundamental. Perhaps the biggest distortion of all was the suggestion that in 1948 the Palestinians fled their homes of their own accord on the instructions of the Arab armies. That appalling distortion was allowed to lie on the books until Israeli historians shifted it in the late 1980s. As a result, the Palestinians were never allowed to go home because the world was convinced that it was their own fault.

So why is it any different for us today? We are trying our best to help Palestinians get their voices heard, but we have a lot of problems.

I first went to Jerusalem in 1993. Shortly after the Hebron Massacre of 1994, which I reported on in detail, there was an Israeli attempt to blackball me. I was told that various Israeli government departments would not cooperate with me. Nasty stories were spread about me in the local papers in Jerusalem, hinting that I was anti-semitic. Eventually I was moved from Jerusalem to Brussels. It was a huge blow.

Control unnerves people

I returned as a freelance. The Israeli Government demands that freelancers pass a number of tests to receive a press pass. They asked me to produce a contract with a newspaper, which is a huge challenge for a freelance because that means the newspaper is required to insure you. I hired an Israeli human rights lawyer and appealed. I won the appeal, which was an extraordinary breakthrough.

But that kind of control unnerves people. This is why it is hard to hear the voice we're trying to give to the Palestinians.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Many participants contributed ideas on how British people can respond.

RAISE AWARENESS OF BRITAIN'S LEGACY

OVER THE LAST TWO CENTURIES, British imperialists left footprints in many different lands, and while we can explain the footprints, we cannot easily erase them.

The vast majority of our people do not know what promises Britain made, broke and never intended to fulfil in Palestine 100 years ago.

I was one such person – I knew and cared nothing. A visit to Jordan, Israel and the West Bank eleven years ago changed me completely, and as people offered to work with us the Balfour Project was born.

Its aim is to raise awareness in Britain of our tragic legacy, and to acknowledge our failure to protect and bring to independence all the people in Mandate Palestine. And to support Palestinians and Israelis in building a peaceful future based on equal rights, justice and security for all. Whether a politician, a diplomat or an ordinary citizen, each one of us can play a part in building this future.



Monica Spooner, founder,
The Balfour Project

USE EUROPE'S VOICE AND STRENGTH

Dr Philippa Whitford, MP for Central Ayrshire

THE OCCUPATION MUST END. And so must the erosion of the West Bank. If the Palestinians gave up and became part of one state but that state didn't recognise them as equals, didn't empower them or protect them, they would have lost rather than gained.

There might come a time in 20 years when the people in those two states would consider themselves equal and might choose to organise that part of the world in whatever way they want. But at the moment the power imbalance between Israel – let alone Israel backed by America – and Palestine is so immense that we can't stand by. Israel looks to Europe, they consider themselves part of Europe, and we should use the voice and the strength of the United Kingdom and the European Union.



IT ALL HAS AN EFFECT

Tommy Sheppard, MP for Edinburgh East

I FULLY SUPPORT the Call to Action, and my Parliamentary colleagues and I will make sure that it is taken forward. We will pressure the British Government to live up to its historic responsibilities. What we do in this country has an effect. Every time a question is raised in Parliament, a letter is published or there is a demonstration, it is widely reported in the region, and the Israeli authorities are mindful. All of this work has a point. We just need to do more of it.



WE WILL ENSURE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

Claudia Beamish,
Member of the Scottish Parliament
for the South of Scotland

I RECOGNISE the British Government's historic responsibility in our failure to recognise the rights of Jewish and Arab peoples equally. Labour politicians are determined to keep working for a just solution.

Our recent Scottish Labour conference highlighted the tragedy of three young children who died in a fire while Palestinian firefighters were held back at a checkpoint.

We will continue to call for the Israeli state to be accountable for its many illegal actions in relation to Palestine and charged under international law. We will never be silenced.

Today I commit to the Call to Action. The Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group for Palestine will ensure a Parliamentary motion and a Members Debate highlighting the Call.

DEVELOP GOOD EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Sandra White, Member of
the Scottish Parliament
for Glasgow Kelvin



YOU CANNOT LOOK TO THE FUTURE without knowing the past. In the Parliament we have established a Cross-Party Group to encourage the development of educational resources on Israel / Palestine. Now the Scottish Government has set up a working group to enable schools to better address this question. The Educational Institute of Scotland has carried out sterling work.

Now four schools in Glasgow have twinned with four schools in Palestine, Edinburgh University is offering scholarships to Palestinians and Glasgow University is working with students from the Islamic University of Gaza.

At a commemoration of the Nakba in the Parliament, two Gazans attending the Glasgow Conservatoire gave an awe-inspiring musical performance.

The Scottish Government is supporting the people of Palestine through its humanitarian aid and International Development Fund. Among many other things, it is currently enabling Palestinian fire fighters to train in Scotland.

In the Parliament we should make more use of Members Debates & Questions to raise issues pertaining to Palestine. I would welcome suggestions.

SHOULD SETTLERS BE ALLOWED VISA-FREE ENTRY?

John McHugo, international lawyer and historian

U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL Resolution 2334 distinguishes between Israel and the Occupied Territories and calls upon states to recognise this distinction. In view of this, should a settler living on the West Bank or in East Jerusalem be allowed to enter Britain without a visa just because he has an Israeli passport? This is a matter to raise with the British Government.



BRITISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD COMMIT TO FREE MOVEMENT

Sir Vincent Fean, British Consul-General, Jerusalem 2010-14

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT should affirm its commitment to equal rights between Palestinians and Israelis by recognising now the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel. This decisive step should be accompanied by a pledge to work for legitimate free movement of goods and people between Gaza and the West Bank, and between Palestine and the world.

Who can disagree with equal rights for all who live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River? Or with peaceful free movement between Gaza and the West Bank, both integral parts of the state of Palestine?

HELP US APPLY NELSON MANDELA'S APPROACH

Ilan Baruch, former Israeli Ambassador, now chairing the Policy Working Group in Israel, which is developing proposals for peace between Israel and Palestine

GAZANS ARE DEPRIVED OF the elementary right of equality. The average Israeli income is \$40,000. This is ten times more than in the West Bank and probably 20 times more than in Gaza. That is not a reflection of an economic situation, but of a political situation.

In the context of Gaza misery, I look at the Israeli role. Even though we left Gaza in its entirety, annexation started there. Israel needs to allow the liberation of Gaza.

I served in South Africa when Nelson Mandela was still a living symbol for that magnificent revolution against evil. He told me of his discussions with young revolutionary ANC comrades who wanted to use force. 'I told them that every liberation movement has two arms: the political and the military,' he said. 'We should never use our military arm as long as we hold the upper moral ground. Militarily, the Pretoria government will smash us into smithereens. They have the upper hand. Moral grounds: that's where we are strong.'

Morally unsustainable policy

I apply this message to our current topic. Hamas is a violent liberation movement. It has a military wing led by extremists of the first order. It has also a more pragmatic political wing.



Hamas seeks recognition from the international community as a resistance movement, not a terror organisation. The international community can pose an alternative which enables Hamas to lean towards a moral ground. We can change the format from a game of power where the Israeli government has no match into a game of policy based on moral grounds.

That is my aim. I resigned from my diplomatic position because I could not represent a government that was pursuing a morally unsustainable policy. Since then I have worked with others to bring this approach into policy.

Transform public opinion

In UN Security Council Resolution 242, ambiguity was instilled into the text. The Israeli Government negotiated hard to leave aside which of the territory could be called occupied. Later they used this ambiguity to turn 'occupied' into 'disputed'. Resolution 2334, on the contrary, states clearly that everything beyond the Green Line – the Golan Heights, the West Bank and East Jerusalem – is occupied territory. This gives us grounds for new diplomatic work. I hope the international community will make use of this opportunity.

Israel is very sensitive to international pressure. We are a neurotic society, we go easily to extremes and we seek solidarity. We seek the warmth of the international community. I want you to speak your minds.

The British Government avoids talking with my Government in the harsh language that will make a difference. I would have liked the British Ambassador in Tel Aviv to express the displeasure of the United Kingdom on Israel's policy towards Gaza.

You can help in this. Talk to your MPs. The MPs will raise Parliamentary questions and the

and the Foreign Secretary will find himself obliged politically to instruct his Ambassador in Tel Aviv to speak up.

It was done in South Africa. It can be done in Israel/ Palestine. The victory of a high moral ground that gives the Palestinians equal rights and we all walk tall. Please help us transform public opinion in Israel in favour of security through resolving relations with the Palestinians rather than conflict with them.



BRITAIN IS IN BREACH OF OBLIGATION

Andrew Whitley, former Regional Director, UNRWA

UNDER THE FOURTH Geneva Convention which applies to Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the resident population are protected persons. The signatories to the Geneva Conventions are obliged to uphold them. Britain, as a signatory, is in breach, which is tantamount to a war crime. How these people can be protected is a different matter, but a recognition by the British Government that these people are entitled to protection would be a step forward.



THE ROLE OF A FRIEND OF ISRAEL

Rev Iain Cunningham
Church of Scotland

HISTORY TEACHES US that situations of injustice can often last long – sometimes beyond a person’s lifetime – but they do not last forever. How can we sustain the hope of the Palestinians in Gaza? We are partly to blame for the situation, but those who set up the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate are not around. The worst thing we Scots can do is to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear, and say it is somebody else’s problem. This is the world’s problem.

Focus on Justice and Equality

The immediate thing is to call for an end to the blockade. Homelessness and isolation are a dangerous mix. You know what you get when you put people in a prison and take away any hope of being released.

And we should demand that our Government recognise the state of Palestine, which includes Gaza. Not because that in itself is a solution but because without that, there can be no solution, nor justice. This is not just about ideas, about history, about maps. It’s about people.

I want to be a real friend of Israel. If one of my friends was doing something that I knew was desperately wrong and was harming him, I would want to tell him. We have to find that part of Israeli society that either turns a blind eye to what is going on or would be very uncomfortable if we pointed out that this is wrong. Our focus has to be on justice and equality - not on attacking the people we disagree with.

All societies have their extremes at either end and a lot of people in the middle who need to be convinced – people who haven’t asked themselves whether this is the kind of world they want their children to grow up in. We have to provoke people to explore the consequences of what they do. The alternative is chaos and disaster.



PRINCIPLE ABOVE INTEREST

Dr Imad Karam, London based
Palestinian film-maker

THE INTERNAL PALESTINIAN DIVIDE has been the strongest virus attack against our own *sumud* (steadfastness). It is demoralising. Palestinians, like any other people, aspire to be free, to be equal. Is that too much to ask? International law and international intervention must come in, for everyone’s sake. Only when we put principle above interest can we make a difference.

Several of the speakers were among the signatories of a letter to The Times of 13 September 2018

OSLO AND PALESTINE

Sir, It is painful now to recall the hope we had in the Oslo Accords. Twenty-five years on, cynicism and resignation rule. The Israeli occupation since 1967 has become so entrenched that it is hard to see beyond it. There is a better way, one that does not subordinate the right to self-determination of one people to the security and territorial expansion of another.

Trump's "deal of the century" will not propose equal rights to Israelis and Palestinians. We do. Thus we endorse the Balfour Centenary Declaration (balfourproject.org), and urge the British Government to recognise the state of Palestine alongside Israel on pre-June 1967 lines; uphold international law in deed, including the 4th Geneva Convention that Britain drafted and ratified after the Second World War; give practical effect to UN Security Council Resolution 2334, condemning illegal Israeli settlements and champion the Arab Peace Initiative, offering regional normality to Israel in return for Palestinian freedom.

Britain and France shaped today's Middle East. By recognising Palestine now, Britain will advance the long-term peaceful coexistence of both peoples in the Holy Land, strengthen regional stability and bolster the UK's security.

Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP – Labour, Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary; Rt Hon Jack Straw; Rt Hon Sir Nicholas Soames MP – President, Conservative Middle East Council; Rt Hon Sir Hugo Swire MP – Chairman, Conservative Middle East Council; Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP – Conservative; Rt Hon David Jones MP – Conservative; Fabian Hamilton MP – Labour, Shadow Minister for the Middle East and N Africa; Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP – Labour; Stephen Gethins MP – SNP spokesperson on Foreign Affairs; Rt Hon Tom Brake MP – Lib Dem, Patron of the Balfour Project; Dr Philippa Whitford MP – SNP, Patron of the Balfour Project; Baroness Morris of Bolton – Conservative, Patron of the Balfour Project; Rt Revd Christopher Chessun – Bishop of Southwark, Patron of the Balfour Project; Rt Revd Declan Lang – Bishop of Clifton, Patron of the Balfour Project; Very Revd Dr Andrew McLellan – Church of Scotland, Patron of the Balfour Project; Paul Parker – Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain; Rt Hon Baroness Kennedy QC – Labour; Sir Jeremy Greenstock – Ambassador to the United Nations (retired); Sir Peter Westmacott – Ambassador to the United States (retired); Avi Shlaim – Emeritus Prof of International Relations, St Antony's, Oxford; Layla Moran MP – Lib Dem; Baroness Sheehan – Lib Dem; Tommy Sheppard MP – SNP; Rt Hon Lord Hylton – Crossbencher; Rt Hon Lord Cope of Berkeley – Conservative; Rt Hon Lord Campbell of Pittenweem – Lib Dem; Richard Burden MP – Labour, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Palestine; Grahame Morris MP – Chair, Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East; Rt Hon Baroness Northover – Lib Dem spokesperson on Foreign Affairs; David Warburton MP – Conservative; Andy Slaughter MP – Labour; Seema Malhotra MP – Labour; Chi Onwurah MP – Labour; Rt Hon Marquess of Lothian – Conservative; Dr Tania Mathias – Conservative, former MP and United Nations refugee worker; Rt Hon Lord Steel of Aikwood – Lib Dem; Lord Wood of Anfield – Labour; Rt Hon Lord Warner – Crossbencher; Ellen Dahrendorf; Dr Tony Klug – Middle East analyst; Revd Iain D Cunningham – Church of Scotland; Pat Gaffney – General Secretary, Pax Christi; Sir William Patey – Ambassador to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia (retired); Baroness Meacher – Labour; Rt Hon Sir Stephen Sedley – Visiting Professor, Faculty of Law, Oxford; Sir David Latham – Chief Justice of Appeal (retired); Revd Chris Rose – Director, Amos Trust; Claudia Beamish – Member of Scottish Parliament – Labour; Pauline McNeill MSP – Labour; Alan Waddams – EU Ambassador to Egypt (retired); Robin Kealy – Ambassador to Tunisia and Consul-General, Jerusalem (retired); Sir Richard Dalton – Ambassador to Iran and Consul-General, Jerusalem (retired); Sir Harold Walker – Ambassador to Iraq (retired); Peter Millett – Ambassador to Libya and to Jordan (retired); Anthony Layden – Ambassador to Libya and to Morocco (retired); Sir Vincent Fean – Consul-General, Jerusalem and Ambassador to Libya (retired)

From Palestine: Abbas Shibliak – writer and academic, formerly with the Arab League; Dr Ahmad Khalidi – Senior Associate, St Antony's College, Oxford; Afif Safieh – Head of Mission to the UK and US and Ambassador to Russia (retired); Leila Sansour – CEO, Open Bethlehem; Raja Shehadeh – author, lawyer; Sam Bahour – writer, businessman, activist; Xavier Abu Eid – Adviser, PLO Negotiations Affairs Dept; Dr Ghassan Khatib – Lecturer, Birzeit University; Antoine Mattar – Chairman, Palestine Britain Business Council; Heba Zaphiriou-Zarifi – Analytical psychologist

From Israel: Ilan Baruch – Ambassador to South Africa (retired); Alon Liel – Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (retired); Prof Amiram Goldblum – Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Prof (emeritus) Galia Golan – Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Susie Becher – co-managing Editor, Palestine-Israel Journal; Prof Menachem Klein – Bar Ilan University; Prof (emeritus) Dan Jacobson – Tel Aviv University; Prof (emeritus) Daniel Bar-Tal – Tel Aviv University; Prof (emeritus) Nora Resh – Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Prof (emeritus) Eli Barnavi – Ambassador to France (retired); Hillel Schenker – co-editor, Palestine-Israel Journal; Mossi Raz MK – Member of Knesset – Meretz; Prof (emeritus) Itzhak Schnell – Tel Aviv University; Dr Dmitry Shumsky – Hebrew University in Jerusalem

GAZA, ONE YEAR ON

The Times, 30 March 2019

Sir, A year on from the avoidable deaths of 60 people at the Gaza fence, rockets and reprisals are recurring. This dismal pattern of behaviour must be broken.

Two million people are imprisoned in Gaza, an integral part of Palestine. The UN says that Gaza will not be “a liveable place” by next year. It is unbearable now.

There is a better way than waiting for President Trump’s ‘deal’, a way that does not subordinate the right to self-determination of one people to the security and territorial ambitions of another. We back the Balfour Project’s call for an independent Palestinian state. Israelis need to co-exist securely with their Palestinian neighbours, not deny legitimate free movement.

Britain must take a lead. We urge the government to recognise the state of Palestine alongside Israel and uphold the rule of law, embodied most recently in UN Security Council resolution 2334. Breaches of international law require serious consequences, whoever commits them. We support all on both sides of the pre-1967 ‘Green Line’ seeking equal rights, security and peace.

The Marquess of Lothian, QC; Alistair Carmichael, MP; Ian Murray MP; Tommy Sheppard, MP; Dr Philippa Whitford, MP; Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws; Lord Bruce of Bennachie; Lord Purvis of Tweed; the Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan; Sandra White, MSP; Claudia Beamish, MSP; Pauline McNeill MSP; Ross Greer, MSP; the Rev Iain Cunningham; Sir William Patey, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan; Professor Graham Watt, University of Glasgow

The Balfour Project is a Scottish-registered charity which seeks to advance understanding of Britain’s involvement in the Middle East, and particularly Israel / Palestine. We invite 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.

If you wish to receive occasional Balfour Project newsletters, you can subscribe at www.balfourproject.org. Donations towards the Project’s work are welcome, and can be made through this website. Videos of the Edinburgh and Glasgow conferences can be found at www.balfourproject.org/Scotlandvideos

*Balfour
Project*

Patrons: Rt Hon Tom Brake MP, Richard Burden MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Baroness Morris of Bolton, Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Anglican Bishop of Southwark, Rt Revd Declan Lang, RC Bishop of Clifton, Very Revd Dr Andrew McLellan, Church of Scotland

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