

Israel, Palestine and the Law

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The priority is to stop the violence. **Britain has a role**, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the close ally of the US, a friend of Israel and of the Palestinians. **Britain has a responsibility**: we gave Israel its birth certificate through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, governed Palestine 1917-48, and left a mess for the UN to clear up when we walked away. It still isn't cleared up. **Britain has a duty** to give a lead to advance equal rights for both peoples – Palestinian and Israeli. **British Government policy** is to promote the outcome of two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine, with borders along the pre-June 1967 lines, and Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states. This policy is undermined systematically by illegal Israeli settlements, growing rapidly on occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank, and by the 14 year old blockade of Israeli occupied Gaza.

International Law is our most reliable compass to guide us through the maze of charge and counter-accusation. **Britain** wrote much of that law, after World War II, including the Geneva Conventions, which outlaw settlements. **If Global Britain is to be respected globally**, Britain should uphold and implement international law consistently, without fear or favour. Britain needs others to respect the rules-based order; our universal values, including equal rights, and the need for compliance.

Within Israel, the recent 'Nation-State Law' (2018) and the rise of far-right Jewish political parties have intensified the sense of social exclusion and **second-class status of Israel's Arab citizens**. The heavy destruction and loss of life in Gaza, meanwhile, compounds an already desperate humanitarian situation there. Israel's bombardment will increase the sense of hopelessness and rage among Gazan youth in particular. This can only **perpetuate the cycle of violence**. Many Jews in Britain are dismayed by these developments. It is essential that **voices around the world speak out**, voicing concern over inequalities and extremism in Israel as they would over similar issues in other democratic societies, and demanding an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The British Government should recognise Palestine now, alongside Israel. The vision of two sovereign states living at peace is shared by all parties at Westminster. **Recognising Palestine** shows British parity of esteem for both peoples, with respect for their equal rights to self-determination, and proves that the two-state outcome is the focus of our efforts, there being no better alternative.

Recommendations

1. **Call for an urgent halt to the violence, equal treatment for all within Israel and the occupied territories, and reconstruction and relief for Gaza (including an end to the Israeli blockade)**
2. **Fulfil Britain's historic responsibility to Israel and to Palestine, recognising both states and advancing equal rights for both peoples, including mutual security**
3. **Promote international law without fear or favour, with serious penalties for wrong-doing**
4. **With the US and European partners, lead work towards a just, sustainable peace in the framework of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions.**

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