

London, October 17, 2023

British Palestinians call for an immediate ceasefire and end to British complicity in Israel's ethnic cleansing

As British Palestinians, we stand together, united by our shared history, by the spirit of our people, and by a commitment to universal principles of justice. Compelled by the urgency of the unfolding atrocities in our homeland, we write today to affirm our presence once again and reassert our common humanity, in the face of attempts to erase our existence and dehumanise our people as we face an ethnic cleansing on a scale not seen since the 1948 *Nakba*.

A massive onslaught is underway against our people, with increasing numbers of human rights organisations raising the alarm that what Israel is carrying out is most accurately described as genocidal. The crime of genocide is defined as the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". Israel's Minister of Defence has promised, "Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything."

Palestinians in Gaza, the majority refugees displaced in 1948, are saying they are experiencing a new *Nakba*. On Thursday 12th October, Israel announced its plan of ethnic cleansing in Gaza. An impossible ultimatum was issued to the 1.2 million people living in the north to evacuate. Those who are able to leave know from experience that if they do, they may be prevented from returning to their homes. Many are determined to stay, preferring to face death over a second expulsion as Israel prepares to raze the civic, economic, social, and cultural heart of Gaza to the ground. Now under complete siege, without access to water, electricity, fuel or food, our people are bombed from air, land, and sea. Complete neighbourhoods are flattened, schools, universities, medical facilities are damaged or destroyed, over 1 million Palestinians have been made homeless and over 2,750 killed. Hundreds of thousands of troops are now amassed ready to invade, mobilised by the conviction that they are coming to deal with "human animals".

Here in Britain, the chilling echoes of this country's colonial legacy in Palestine reverberate in the orders to deploy British military support to Israel and statements

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of leaders who invoke self-defence in order to justify the starvation and ethnic cleansing of an occupied people, endorsing Israeli military doctrines designed to “open the gates of hell” in Gaza. On government orders, public bodies and institutions intended to embody universal principles have been compelled to honour an occupying power that exercises a regime of apartheid over our people. At the same time, the Palestinian flag, and other symbols of our national identity, along with those citizens who stand with us in common humanity, are defamed and intimidated by politicians, and threatened with criminalisation.

At this critical hour, we affirm that:

- The **inalienable rights of the Palestinian people** are enshrined in decades of international law and United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, and the failure to fulfil these rights is the root cause of the conflict.
- International humanitarian law **prohibits forcible transfer, collective punishment of populations**, which includes siege, the harming of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure.
- Our **equal rights to participate in public life in this country** - to raise our voices and to protest - are guaranteed by national human rights legislation.

We therefore call on public representatives **to take immediate action to fulfil their duties under international law to ensure the protection of an occupied people**, specifically to:

- Demand an **immediate ceasefire**, lifting of the siege to restore electricity, fuel, water, food; and unimpeded humanitarian access in order to protect Palestinian lives, in line with international law.
- **Suspend UK diplomatic and military support to Israel** as it perpetuates war crimes and crimes against humanity and implicates the UK government in these atrocities.
- Ensure that public bodies uphold their legal responsibilities to **protect equal participation in democratic and civic space**, by defending the rights of Palestinians in Britain and those who stand with our people in a spirit of solidarity and common humanity.

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