

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

RECOGNITION IS THE BEGINNING

**2 JUNE 2026
LONDON**



**Britain
Palestine
Project**



OSCR

Scottish Charity Regulator
www.oscr.org.uk

Registered Charity
SC047090

Peace with justice, security and equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians

info@britainpalestineproject.org • www.britainpalestineproject.org

Scottish Registered Charity No. SC047090

Reg. address: 30 South Oswald Road, Edinburgh, EH9 2HG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference
Webpage

- 1** Professor Adam Sutcliffe's welcome
- 2** Andrew Whitley's welcome
- 3** Palestinian Ambassador H.E. Husam Zomlot's opening remarks
- 5** Jordanian Ambassador H.E. Manar Dabbas' remarks
- 6** William Dalrymple - Palestine's place in history
- 7** Professor Avi Shlaim - Historical perspectives
- 9** Dr Anne Irfan - Palestinian refugee politics & representation
- 10** Max Rodenbeck, Dr Dahlia Scheindlin & Nour Odeh
- The question of Palestine in global public opinion
- 13** Professor Nick Maynard & Sam Rose
- The humanitarian context
- 15** Daniel Levy - The geopolitical context
- 16** Shawan Jabarin, Baroness Helena Kennedy & Jessica Stober
- The international legal situation
- 20** The UK political situation: what can the UK do?
- 23** The global political situation: what can be done?
- 25** Dr Brian Brivati - Conclusions and BPP Policy Platform
- 26** Britain Palestine Project Statement of Principles
- 27** Calls for action by the UK Government



On Spotify



Conference
YouTube
Playlist



On Apple
Podcasts



The full conference transcript, speaker biographies, and recordings of every session, are available here: www.britainpalestineproject.org/conference2026

The conference is also available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and all major podcast platforms. Simply search "Britain Palestine Project" to find the recordings.



**"Public
debate
matters."**

Professor Adam Sutcliffe's welcome

**Professor of History at King's
College London specialising
in European intellectual and
religious history.**

**"The pressure we bring to
bear in our societies... does
make a difference."**

"Firstly, the more we learn, the more we realise how much more we need to learn. We all need to inform ourselves more about Palestine and the wider issues that relate to it, so that we can deepen our own understanding and help to promote a wider recognition and understanding of these issues in circles within which we move.

Secondly, and this is the most important aspect of today, we have to recognise that the recognition of understanding is only the start, and it prompts the immediate follow-up question, what are we going to do about all of this? What are we going to do to contribute to positive change in Palestine and in the wider region?"





Andrew Whitley's welcome

Chair of the Britain Palestine Project, founder of Geo-Political Advisory Services, former Policy Director of The Elders, BBC and Financial Times journalist, Human Rights Watch director, and senior UN official.

"The humanitarian situation in Gaza is simply unspeakable."

"[The ICJ Advisory] opinion was delivered two years ago. We understand that the Prime Minister is a busy man. He has a lot on his mind these days. But this is a very simple action for him to take. It wouldn't take him more than five minutes at the most. It's really not complicated. It's simply doing the right thing for Palestinians, consistent with the UK's recognition of their statehood and consistent with our own values. So we at the Britain Palestine Project call on [the Prime Minister] today to publish his assessment immediately and accept that Britain has a responsibility to act on the findings of the International Court of Justice."



Left: Zaytoun's stall offering visitors the opportunity to support Palestinian farmers by purchasing ethically sourced products, including olive oil, dates, almonds, soaps and handcrafted gifts. Every purchase helps sustain livelihoods and reinforces Zaytoun's commitment to fair trade and Palestinian resilience. www.zaytoun.uk



His Excellency Dr Husam Zomlot's opening remarks

Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, former Ambassador to the US, academic, economist and adviser to the Palestinian President.

"Those who have been colonised, oppressed and discriminated against identify as Palestinians."

"I just returned from the occupied territory, the West Bank. And I knew how bad the situation there was, but what I saw still shocked me... Israel is moving quickly to implement facts on the ground, escalating its campaign of ethnic cleansing, annexation, and the displacement of the Palestinian people... Gaza has also largely fallen out of the headlines... But I am sure you are all aware of how catastrophic the situation in Gaza remains... Israel's occupying forces are unilaterally taking control of 70% of the Gaza Strip... The Palestinian people in Gaza are being kettled into an ever-smaller parcel of land."

"Make no mistake, the only plan Israel has for Gaza is ethnic cleansing, depopulation and mass transfer of people... But the bitter truth is that Israel has never been serious about peace... We started the Oslo Accords with less than 100,000 illegal settlers. Today, we're talking about more than 750,000 illegal settlers... It is just playing for time until it could make that final move to take over Palestine from the river to the sea."

"Together, let us ensure that recognition becomes not a symbol, but a foundation. A foundation for freedom, accountability, and a just, lasting peace."



"Over the last year, ten more countries have recognised the State of Palestine as sovereign and independent... One of those ten was the United Kingdom. This was particularly significant for us, the Palestinian people, because our long national nightmare of occupation and dispossession began here in London over a century ago with the Balfour Declaration... recognition by the UK has a very particular historic, legal, and political significance... We thank all those of you here in this room and beyond who have worked with us to arrive at that moment in September last year."

"Israel has laid bare its total disregard and contempt for the very basic provisions of international law... The people of the world have seen this, and the public opinion everywhere is shifting. The tide has shifted. Our cause now stands at the epicentre of the global progressive struggle for peace, justice, and human rights... those who have been colonised, oppressed and discriminated against identify as Palestinians... But while recognition is a major step, it is only a beginning. It must be accompanied by substantial action to make self-determination and statehood a reality... That must include a coordinated international effort to hold Israel to account for its numerous violations of international law."





His Excellency Manar Dabbas' remarks

Jordanian Ambassador to the UK, former Chief of Staff to King Abdullah II.

"Months after a "ceasefire" has been reached, aid is not coming to Gaza in any significant quantities yet, and rebuilding has not started... The "ceasefire" has been violated hundreds of times by Israel... Over 600,000 Palestinian kids have not gone to school in almost three years."

"What's happening in the West Bank is critically dangerous... Annexation and confiscation of land are happening de facto... The settlement expansion and settler violence are at unprecedented levels... The E1 settlement plan would further divide the West Bank into two halves... The Palestinian Authority, as we speak, is being suffocated economically."

"But in order for peace to be lasting, it has to be just... We all want to live in peace in the region, and we want a Palestinian state to live side by side with Israel in peace and security, but this is not going to happen while ignoring the big elephant in the room, which is the occupation."



William Dalrymple - Palestine's place in history

Award-winning historian and author, co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival and co-host of the Empire podcast.

Dalrymple situates Palestine within a deep historical framework, using the destroyed coastal village of Esdud as a way into three millennia of continuity, erasure and dispossession. He argues that Palestinian presence is not a late or incidental arrival but part of a continuous Levantine history visible in names, archaeology, genetics, trade, religious transformation and village life. The keynote links this long history to the political erasure epitomised by claims that Palestinians did not exist and insists that recognition requires restoring memory as well as acknowledging statehood. Dalrymple also places particular responsibility on Britain, from Balfour through the Mandate, for creating the structures that enabled the Nakba and then failing to teach or confront that history in schools. He draws a direct line between historical erasure and contemporary destruction in Gaza, arguing that attacks on hospitals, universities, archives and religious sites are also attacks on a people's memory and rights. Recognition, in his conclusion, matters only if it leads to action, accountability, justice and a viable Palestinian state.

"There is a people. There has always been a people. They are still there."

"In 1969, Golda Meir declared... there was no such thing as the Palestinians... We know now beyond all reasonable scientific doubt that modern Palestinians derive between 81-87% of their ancestry from Bronze Age Levantine populations... Palestinians and Israeli Jews are not, at a genetic level, two alien peoples fighting over someone else's land... They are... estranged children of the same ancient civilisation... This is not a political statement. This is the findings of modern science, of genetics... Milan Kundera put it with devastating precision, *'The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory...'* We are gathered here today to confront the consequences of that erasure and the beginning, at long last, of its reversal."

"There are moments when a government's neutrality is itself a form of participation in evil."

"The Nakba happened because politicians in this country enabled it... We designed the architecture within which one people's catastrophe was made to fall upon another's heads... 78 years ago this summer, 750,000 Palestinians were driven out of their homes and villages... At the end of 1948, less than 15% of Palestinians remained where they had always lived. 85% had been ethnically cleansed... This country has a historic responsibility... to see the establishment of an actual viable Palestinian state...

Last year, the UK finally recognised the state of Palestine. But recognition without the effort to enable that state ever to be born is just an empty gesture... Britain has led coalitions, imposed sanctions, opened its courts, and sent weapons in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine... That principle is exactly what is required for Palestine... We did not cause the invasion of Ukraine. We did enable the dispossession and eviction of the Palestinians, and we did train up and arm their dispossessioners. I cannot stand here and speak only in the *longue durée* of history without acknowledging what is happening now in front of our eyes."

"It is in the darkest blackness of the night that we dream best."

Professor Avi Shlaim - Historical perspectives

**Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Oxford University,
British Academy Fellow and leading historian of the Arab-Israeli
conflict.**





Professor Shlaim presents the conflict as a product of British imperial policy and Zionist settler colonialism. He describes the Balfour Declaration as a colonial document that recognised national rights for a Jewish minority while denying equivalent rights to the Palestinian majority. The British Mandate was structured to prevent democratic representation until demographic conditions favoured Zionism, and the crushing of the Arab Revolt disabled Palestinian political capacity before 1948. He links this history to the Nakba and insists that it was not a single event but an ongoing process driven by ethnic cleansing. Shlaim also criticises contemporary British policy, arguing that the UK has continued to support Israel diplomatically, militarily and materially during the war in Gaza. He cites arms exports, intelligence flights, diplomatic cover and the refusal to recognise genocide as evidence of complicity. Britain's recognition of Palestine is therefore far too little and far too late unless accompanied by apology, accountability, reparations and a real departure from a century of pro-Zionist policy.

"Britain should have recognised the Palestinian right to statehood back in 1917."

"The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was made in Britain. Britain was the original sponsor of Zionist settler colonialism... Britain accorded national rights to the Jews and only civil and religious rights to the Palestinians... Britain stole Palestine from the Palestinians and handed it over to the Zionists... The Arab Revolt of 1936 to 1939... was crushed by the British Army with the most horrific brutality... In 1948, three quarters of a million Palestinians became refugees... The Nakba is not a one-off event. It's an ongoing process... Yet no British government has ever acknowledged its responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy."

"Britain's record in supporting Israel in the savage war in Gaza has been fully documented... Britain is the third-largest arms supplier to Israel... Britain has also offered Israel diplomatic protection... The RAF has flown 738 intelligence flights over Gaza on behalf of Israel... Israel has destroyed 82% of the homes and civil infrastructure in Gaza."

"No politician should be an unconditional supporter of anything."

"During the Second World War, it was the Jews who were the defenceless victims of Nazi Germany. Today, it's the Palestinians in Gaza who are the defenceless victims of the Jewish state."

Dr Anne Irfan - Palestinian refugee politics and representation

**Historian at University College
London specialising in Palestinian
displacement and refugee politics,
and author.**

Dr Irfan argues that recognition of Palestine must lead to recognition of all Palestinians, not only those living in the West Bank and Gaza. She emphasises that more than half of the Palestinian people live elsewhere, including Palestinian citizens of Israel and millions of refugees across the Arab world. By narrowing the diplomatic conversation to the occupied territory alone, the international system reproduces fragmentation and weakens collective Palestinian rights. Irfan frames the Nakba as both the original expulsion and the continuing denial of return, which transformed displacement into a durable political process. She examines refugee camps as spaces not only of humanitarian need but of national agency, education, refusal and mobilisation. Her account of UNRWA challenges Israeli claims that the agency has always been a pro-Palestinian political project, showing instead that refugees resisted early resettlement schemes and demanded education as part of their struggle. She concludes that Palestinian refugees remain central actors in the national movement, and that full recognition must include the right of return of Palestinians everywhere. Her intervention broadens the political field of recognition from borders and diplomacy to people, memory, camps, families and dispersed national belonging.

**"The vast majority of
Palestinians in Gaza are
already refugees from the
Nakba itself."**



**"Many Palestinian refugees
have been forcibly divorced,
not only from their land and
their homes, but also from their
loved ones."**

"When we speak about the Palestinian people today... we are typically referring to the Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza... around 5.4 million people. But this constitutes less than half of the Palestinian people worldwide... by focusing only on those, we exclude the majority of Palestinians... Among those who we exclude are the two million Palestinians who hold Israeli passports... and the more than six million Palestinian refugees... Israel is constantly creating more and more refugees... During the course of the Gaza genocide, it has displaced nearly the entirety of the population of Gaza."



Max Rodenbeck - The question of Palestine in global public opinion

**International Crisis Group Senior Adviser and former Economist
Middle East correspondent**

**"Among US Democrats under fifty,
the figure is 84%."
(Referring to the proportion with an
unfavourable view of Israel)**

Rodenbeck argues that global opinion on Palestine has shifted sharply. Polls show Israel's international support collapsing, especially among younger and more educated people, while criticism is also growing among American Jews. Yet Rodenbeck warns that opinion is not the same as power. Large undecided blocs remain vulnerable to well-funded messaging, and older, more pro-Israel voters, donors and legislators retain disproportionate political influence.

The central challenge is to convert sympathy, awareness and moral revulsion into organised

political action: persuading the wavering middle, widening the coalition for Palestinian rights and moving pressure up the chain from public attitudes to parties and governments.

"Opinions have changed quite radically in the last two years... In a very liberal... part of Brooklyn, the Park Slope Food Co-op held a referendum on whether to boycott Israeli goods... the motion passed with 67% of members... Another scene was the annual Israel Day Parade... Zohran Mamdani... was the first mayor in the city's history to say he would not attend the parade..."

**"There has been a huge shift
in public opinion and... in
global understanding of
Palestine."**



Left: Women in Hebron supports economic empowerment, preserves Palestinian cultural heritage, and helps women build sustainable livelihoods despite ongoing challenges. www.womeninhebron.com

Dr Dahlia Scheindlin - The question of Palestine in global public opinion



**Political analyst,
public opinion
researcher,
columnist and
author**

Dr Scheindlin analyses Israeli and Palestinian public opinion after October 7 through survey research. Despite asymmetry of power, public opinion on both sides has often moved in parallel, hardening in response to violence and trauma. After October 7, both Israeli and Palestinian societies became more hardline on questions of de-escalation, diplomacy, force and views of the other. In Israel, Jewish public opinion showed very high support for the war in Gaza, while Palestinian citizens of Israel were consistently less supportive of escalation. Support for a ceasefire among Israelis was significant but was largely driven by the desire to release hostages and by distrust of Netanyahu's political motives, not by humanitarian concern for Gaza. Scheindlin also records deep mutual dehumanisation and declining Israeli support for a two-state solution, now far below earlier levels. Younger Jewish Israelis are often more hardline than older cohorts. Global opinion may influence policy over time, but Israeli opinion itself is unlikely to shift simply because Israel's international standing deteriorates. Her analysis warns that outside pressure may matter more than internal Israeli opinion in creating incentives for a different political direction.

**"We've seen the decline from a firm majority... a slow and steady incremental decline, losing the majority, dipping below 50% already in 2018."
(On support for two states)**

Nour Odeh - The question of Palestine in global public opinion

Palestinian political analyst, journalist and former government spokesperson.

Nour Odeh reads the UK's recognition of Palestine as evidence of both change and constraint. Global public opinion has shifted dramatically against genocide, ethnic cleansing and Israeli exceptionalism, yet mainstream Western politics still moves only under pressure and only in ways that preserve the existing balance of power. She criticises recognition that is not accompanied by action on international law, settlement goods and services, trade, accountability and the treatment of Israeli officials facing international arrest warrants. Odeh also highlights the collapse of trust in mainstream media, arguing that many people have bypassed traditional filters because they have seen the destruction of Gaza directly and cannot unsee it. From a Palestinian perspective, she says the world has finally begun to witness what Palestinians have long known about dehumanisation, institutional bias and racism. The task now is to keep politicians under pressure, especially at election time, and to reject performative language that substitutes concern for action. She frames the issue as decolonisation and freedom, not simply a renewed peace process. Her conclusion is uncompromising: Palestinians no longer accept frameworks that require them to prove their humanity before gaining their rights.



"The world cannot unsee what they've seen since 2023. They cannot unlearn what they've learned... There is a shifting dynamic in global public opinion about Palestine... But that shifting global public opinion is still not able to overcome the wall of established mainstream attitudes in politics."

"If you recognise Palestine, you cannot trade with goods produced on stolen land... You cannot treat the Israeli government as a normal government because it is not."

"This is not about a peace process. This is about decolonisation. This is about Palestinian freedom, and the expectation that if you can just pound Palestinians enough and force them to meet certain criteria to make Israelis comfortable, to give them some of their rights, that is no longer a workable formula. I know many of our politicians still think it is, but let me tell you the alternative view in Palestine. It is not. Three years almost after the onset of the genocide, the level of tolerance for this kind of dehumanising colonial rhetoric is quite literally near zero."

"There are no extremist settlers and peace-loving settlers. At the end of the day, they are on someone else's land."



Professor Nick Maynard - The humanitarian context

Consultant gastrointestinal surgeon who has led multiple medical missions to Gaza, Chair of MAP UK

Professor Maynard gives an eyewitness account of Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. Drawing on direct surgical experience in Gaza, he describes mass casualties, destroyed hospitals, severe shortages of pain relief, blood, sterile supplies, fuel and nutrition, and patterns of injuries he regards as incompatible with claims of careful civilian protection. He cites official estimates of deaths, child casualties and amputations, stressing the scale of trauma and the deliberate destruction of the healthcare system. Maynard's testimony is built around individual patients - children, women, healthcare workers and detainees - to show what the statistics mean in human terms.

"Starvation is being used as a weapon of war."

He describes hospitals as targeted, healthcare workers as killed, detained and tortured, and patients dying of preventable causes because Israel blocked food, milk formula, medical supplies and aid. His testimony also condemns the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation as a system that placed starving people in direct line of fire and that they were used as target practice while waiting to collect food. He closes by honouring Gazan healthcare workers who continue to serve despite mortal danger, describing them as the reason he keeps returning - and hoping.

"The Lancet medical journal... estimates that at least 100,000 have been killed directly by trauma alone. We know that more than 22,000 children have been killed... more than 30 children have been killed on average every single day in Gaza... Over 40,000 children have lost one or both parents, and... there's more than 4,500 child amputees... The Lancet... estimated... the death toll from excess deaths, when you take into account the diseases that haven't been treated, like cancer, like heart disease, kidney disease, strokes, exceeds half a million. It means that at least 10% of the population of Gaza has been killed during this military assault... This is a typical scene that I witnessed in my many trips to Gaza... Not enough beds... people are being treated on the ground... the majority of them are women and children."

**"Every time I tell this story, I can hear her screams as that leg was straightened."
(The hospital was out of painkillers)**

Sam Rose - The humanitarian context

Senior UNRWA official with extensive humanitarian experience in Palestine

"Rather than repairing water lines... we resort to water trucking at a cost of around one million dollars a day."

Sam Rose presents Gaza's post-"ceasefire" reality as a continuing catastrophe rather than a recovery. Although Israeli legislation prevents UNRWA from bringing supplies or international staff into Gaza, the agency's Palestinian workforce, infrastructure and community trust have enabled essential services to continue. He stresses that any reduction in violence or improvement in aid access is only relative to the extreme conditions before the "ceasefire". Around 1.4 million people remain in tents, most school buildings have been destroyed, families struggle daily for food, water and sanitation, and disease risks are increasing amid rubble, waste and inaccessible landfills.

Rose highlights education as an urgent need and an expression of Palestinian determination. Children returned rapidly to UNRWA classrooms, yet schools remain crowded with displaced families and educational materials are barred because they are not classified as strictly life-saving. Meanwhile, Israel's expanding territorial control cuts people off from agricultural land, the sea and humanitarian facilities, increasing dependence on aid while making delivery more costly and inefficient.

Palestine must not be reduced to a humanitarian emergency. The crisis reflects a project of dispossession and control that must be addressed through sovereignty, decolonisation, self-determination and international law. What is permitted in Gaza, he warns, may become a model elsewhere.

"UNRWA continues to face immense political, financial and operational pressures in Palestine, particularly in Gaza... It is the infrastructure, the know-how, the community trust and the 11,000 people we have on the ground every day that allow those services to continue... The humanitarian situation for the more than two million people in Gaza remains a total catastrophe... The vast majority of the population continue to live in absolute squalor... More than 90% of school buildings have been destroyed... There is no real ceasefire... What has been remarkable... is the drive and desire of people to have a normal life again... Within weeks of the "ceasefire"... we had more than 50,000 boys and girls back in classrooms at UNRWA schools... Gaza continues to defy all metrics for a humanitarian crisis."

"We should not forget the situation across Palestine. This is not simply a humanitarian crisis; it is a political project to make life unliveable... Our mistake as an international community has been to reduce Palestine to a humanitarian issue rather than treating it as an issue of sovereignty, decolonisation and self-determination."



Daniel Levy - The geopolitical context

President of the U.S./Middle East Project and former Israeli peace negotiator and government adviser.

Daniel Levy argues that the diplomatic framework around the “ceasefire”, Trump’s twenty-point plan, the Board of Peace and UN Security Council Resolution 2803 is not a neutral peace mechanism but a structure that legitimises ongoing control over Gaza. He cautions against calling for full implementation of a framework whose opening premise defines Gaza as a deradicalised terror-free zone and whose logic, in his view, conditions basic Palestinian rights on security and administrative tests. Levy says the Board of Peace transfers effective authority away from international law and Palestinian agency into an opaque mechanism aligned with US and Israeli priorities.

He criticises the way the plan treats reconstruction, donor funds, humanitarian delivery, future governance and the International Stabilisation Force, arguing that these arrangements risk entrenching Bantustan-like

"Either you can have a plan designed to maintain this system of dehumanisation, control and worse, or you can have accountability. You can't have both."

fragmentation and disconnecting Gaza from Palestinian national collective rights. While acknowledging the desperation that produced the “ceasefire”, he concludes that the framework should be challenged and undermined, not celebrated as the path to justice. His intervention is a warning that diplomatic language can become another instrument of domination when it displaces accountability and Palestinian self-determination.

"I would suggest that you cannot say, 'We need the full implementation of the “ceasefire” plan, and the full implementation of the International Court of Justice rulings and accountability.' Those things do not go together... Either you can have a twenty-point plan which is designed to maintain this system of dehumanisation, control and worse, or you can have those other things... The first sentence of the twenty-point plan: 'Gaza will be a deradicalised, terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.'... The UN Security Council resolution... hand[s] over the powers of the United Nations and international legality to a Board of Peace... The Board of Peace... is mandated to report back to the Security Council every six months."

Continued overleaf...

"The person now charged with running Gaza... issued his first report to the Security Council... 'The critical variable... is the full decommissioning of Hamas and all armed groups.' Every other element of the plan... is conditioned on that one demand... Everything contained in the International Court of Justice advisory opinion... is contradicted by Resolution 2803... The language of the Security Council resolution says that... 'the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway for Palestinian self-determination and statehood.'... When people say that we need to see it implemented, my response is no: we need to see it shredded and confined to the dustbin of history."

Shawan Jabarin - The international legal situation

**General Director of Al-Haq and
Palestinian human rights lawyer.**

Shawan Jabarin frames UK recognition of Palestine as legally meaningful but insufficient unless it begins a serious reckoning with Britain's historic and ongoing role in denying Palestinian self-determination. He distinguishes opposition to Zionism and Israel's colonial apartheid regime from hostility to Jews, and stresses Palestinian commitment to equal rights, dignity and rule of law. Recognition is not a favour but a belated acknowledgement of rights Britain helped deny under the Mandate. He sets out the UK's obligations: not to aid or assist Israel's unlawful occupation, apartheid, annexation and settlement enterprise; to take positive action to end illegality; to regulate companies, banks, universities and investors;

**"If the UK can impose sanctions to
preserve the territorial integrity,
sovereignty, and independence of
Ukraine, then it has the tools to do
so for Palestine. What is missing is
political will."**



and to support accountability through the ICC, Genocide Convention and Geneva Conventions. He criticises limited arms suspensions and expressions of concern as a wholly inadequate response to what are legal obligations, and calls for trade suspension, settlement disengagement, disclosure of RAF surveillance evidence to international courts, prosecution of dual nationals involved in crimes, reparations and action grounded in Palestinian liberation. Recognition is a test of whether Britain is prepared to act consistently with legal order.

"Recognition of Palestine matters... politically, diplomatically, and legally. But if recognition matters and is the beginning, then the question becomes: the beginning of what?... Recognition is not a favour to Palestinians. It is a belated and partial acknowledgement of legal rights that the UK itself has systematically and continuously denied..."

"The UK has special fundamental non-derogable obligations to respect and to promote the Palestinian people's fundamental legal rights to self-determination..."

Continued overleaf...



(L - R) Baroness Helena Kennedy, Jessica/Jess Stober & Jawan Shabarin

"Israel's construction of settlements, its annexation, settler colonial apartheid regime, and permanent occupation are breaches of fundamental non-derogable norms of international law... The UK is legally required not to render aid or assistance... and to take positive action to bring the illegality to an end."

"Palestinians are not asking for exceptional treatment. They are asking for the rule of law."

"These duties require the UK to stop all military, economic, diplomatic, and technological support to Israel that maintains the illegal occupation, annexation, and apartheid... The UK has an obligation to hold Israeli perpetrators of international crimes in Palestine to account... Palestinians are not asking for exceptional treatment. They are asking for the rule of law... Expressions of concern do not discharge legal duties. Humanitarian aid cannot compensate for complicity in the structures that produce a humanitarian catastrophe... Governments rarely fulfill their obligations simply because the law is clear. They do so when people make the political cost of non-compliance impossible to ignore... Recognition must be the beginning of choosing the full liberation of Palestine."

Baroness Helena Kennedy

- The international legal situation

Barrister, Labour peer, and Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

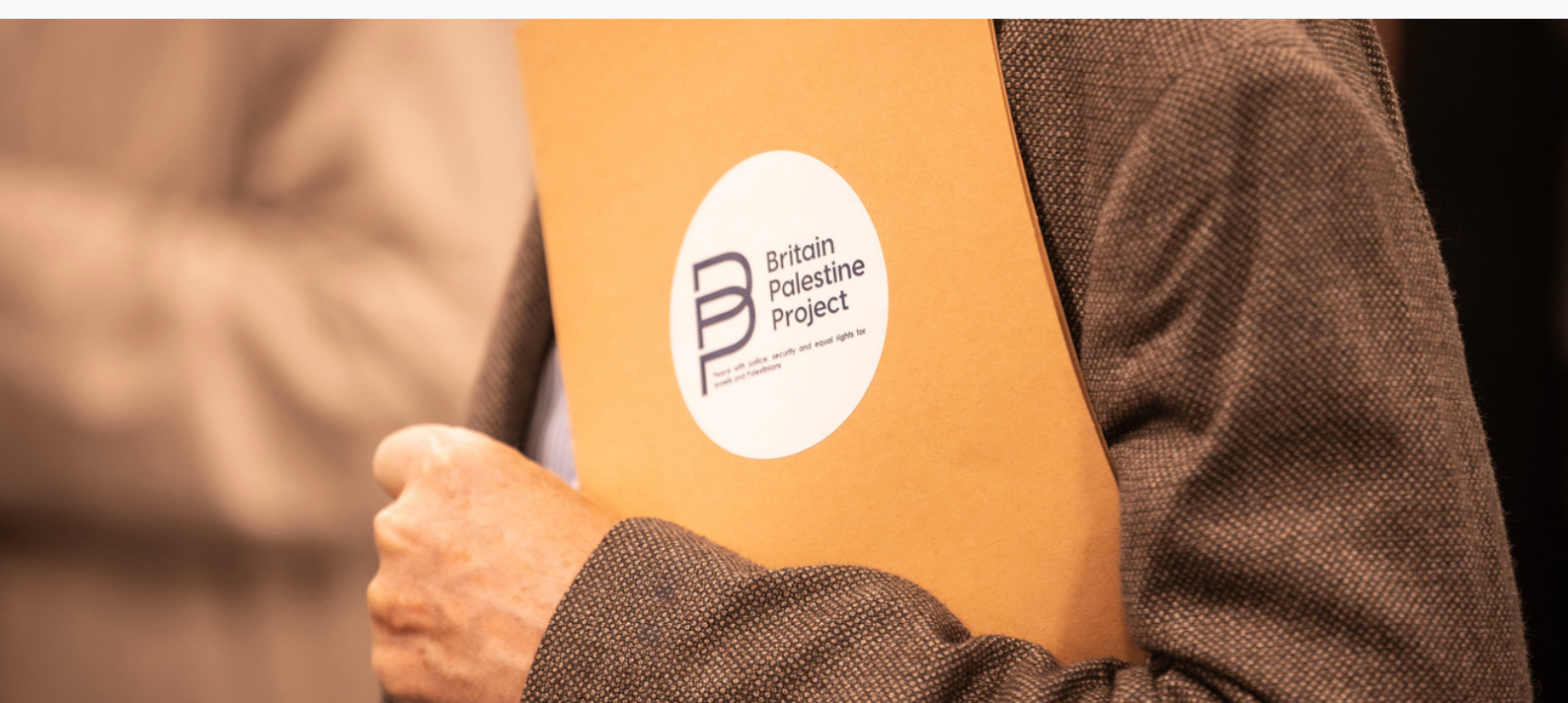
"We are currently seeing an unravelling of the rules-based order – the set of laws that were meant to take us on a journey towards greater humanity, compassion and kindness."

Baroness Kennedy explains the UK's legal responsibilities in the framework of international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention's protections for civilian populations. She argues that the rules-based order is unravelling because states are ignoring obligations designed after the Second World War to prevent collective punishment and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Drawing on her work on the ICC evidence panel, she describes reviewing evidence for arrest warrant applications against Hamas leaders and Israeli officials, including Netanyahu and Gallant. The panel was unanimous that the evidential threshold was met in relation to the obstruction of humanitarian aid, starvation and denial of medical supplies.

"The language of 'collateral damage' should never be used, because there is no satisfactory definition of what that means."

Kennedy distinguishes between the International Criminal Court, which can punish individual perpetrators, and the International Court of Justice, which deals with state responsibility and territorial or civil matters. She also highlights the killing of journalists, the use of drones and facial identification, allegations of sexual violence in detention, and the need to demand stronger UN leadership, sanctions and accountability from the UK government. Her contribution connects courtroom thresholds, political courage and public pressure, insisting that law only matters when governments are forced to honour it.

"We have to be demanding of our government that it upholds international law and challenges those who seek to dismantle the institutions designed to protect it."



Jessica Stober - The international legal situation

International lawyer specialising in international humanitarian law, accountability and atrocity crimes.

"An avocado grown in a settlement should not be treated as if it was an avocado grown in Israel."

Jess Stober argues that recognition must produce legal consequences in UK policy on trade, arms licensing and settlements. Drawing on her experience litigating forced displacement cases in the West Bank, she says the Israeli domestic legal system gives legal form to dispossession while maintaining an illusion of justice. International law, she argues, is therefore the essential forum. Palestine's accession to treaties after recognition by international bodies such as UNESCO enabled cases before the ICC and ICJ, including South Africa's genocide case and the 2024 ICJ advisory opinion on occupation. Stober focuses particularly on settlements as a structural violation of Palestinian

"Water-irrigated settlement farms flourish alongside Palestinian communities that are denied enough water, sometimes even to drink."

rights that drives forced displacement, land seizure, apartheid, exploitation of natural resources and annexation. She criticises the UK's reliance on differentiation, which has not stopped settlement goods entering the UK market, and argues that recognition should require a reassessment of settlement trade and the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement. She also urges action on sexual and gender-based violence linked to displacement and a genuine zero-tolerance policy on conflict-related sexual violence. Her proposals translate recognition into specific levers: import controls, sanctions, legal review, business accountability and litigation support.

"There is a human cost to settlement agriculture, and it is paid by Palestinians."



(L - R) Chris Doyle, Dame Emily Thornberry MP and Debbie Abrahams MP

The UK political situation: what can the UK do?

Chris Doyle – Director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and commentator on Middle East affairs.

"We've mastered the art form of vacuous press releases that express concern, deep concern, and drum roll, grave concern."

Chris Doyle argues that the central UK political task is to end British complicity in Israel's actions. He links contemporary policy to Britain's historic role in the Nakba and calls for an end to arms sales, military and security cooperation, intelligence overflights and all trade or dealings with settlements in the occupied State of Palestine. Doyle criticises the Foreign Office's habit of diplomatic fudging, saying British policy claims to support a two-state solution while doing little to dismantle a one-state reality of apartheid. He describes government language as cowardly and passive, more willing to express

"Have you ever heard a British minister saying Palestinians or Lebanese have a right to self-defence?"

concern than to identify perpetrators or act. While welcoming UK recognition of Palestine and sanctions on two Israeli ministers, he argues that recognition has been treated as an endpoint rather than a starting point. He emphasises the importance of public pressure, parliamentary lobbying, protest and narrative discipline, and urges campaigners to keep attention on realities on the ground so politicians cannot displace the debate onto secondary controversies. The contribution combines institutional critique with organising advice, arguing that pressure from citizens and MPs has already moved government and must continue.

"Imagine, if there'd been no marches, no vigils, no protests, no lobbying of MPs... what would UK government policy have looked like?"

"Just as we were complicit in the Nakba, Britain continues today to be complicit. We are still selling arms to Israel. That's got to end. End all military and security cooperation with Israel... End trade and all dealings with Israeli settlements... We can impose a raft of sanctions... We can state unequivocally that the ICC arrest warrants must be adhered to... UK foreign policy since last September has proceeded as if recognition is the endpoint, not the starting point of a way forward... It shouldn't have needed us to lobby the government to do this. The government should've done it because it was the right thing to do, and years ago."

**Dame Emily Thornberry MP –
Labour MP for Islington South and
Finsbury, former Shadow Foreign
Secretary and Chair of the Foreign
Affairs Select Committee.**

Dame Thornberry frames her parliamentary work around whether an action advances two states, peace and justice, or whether it is a distraction. She stresses the strategic contradiction facing Israel: if it continues towards one state while claiming to remain democratic, Palestinians must have equal rights, yet Israeli politicians do not answer how that would work. Thornberry welcomes UK recognition of Palestine but insists it was only a first step, not a performative endpoint. Gaza's continuing misery, killings and lack of reconstruction show that the "ceasefire" and Board of Peace have not produced real progress. Meanwhile, policies of assassination, land-grabbing and settlement expansion are snuffing out the possibility of two states. Her practical emphasis is on retaining focus, working with other countries that recognised Palestine, and moving together towards sanctions, financial restrictions and trade consequences for settlements. She also calls for the UK to respond to the ICJ advisory opinion before its second anniversary, because legal obligations flow from its findings. Her tone is pragmatic and parliamentary: keep Palestine visible, build coalitions, and turn recognition into enforceable economic and legal consequences.

**Debbie Abrahams MP –
Labour MP for Oldham East
and Saddleworth and Co-
chair of the Britain-Palestine
All-Party Parliamentary
Group.**

Debbie Abrahams describes the Britain-Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) as focused on common human rights across the region and on turning recognition into viability for Palestine. She identifies settlement expansion, especially E1, as an immediate threat to any viable Palestinian state. Rather than wait for government action, the group has developed practical steps with international allies, including learning from Ireland's sanctions legislation and using existing UK powers under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act. The APPG, with support from BPP, has identified 43 UK businesses previously connected to settlement expansion and notified them that involvement in E1 or similar activity would be unlawful. The aim is to replicate this with allies in Europe (led by Ireland), and Australia. In discussion she returns to the rule of law and equal human dignity, arguing that the UK loses credibility when it sanctions Russia for occupation but fails to apply comparable principles to Israel. Her contribution is practical and time-sensitive, treating E1 as a test case for whether recognition can be defended before geography makes it hollow.

"What can we do to make sure that the unlawful settlements don't expand? What can we do following the announcement at the end of December about the E1 settlement area, which if that goes ahead... then there will be no viable Palestinian state. So what could we do? Our focus has been about developing international alliances, for example with the Irish government. They now have a bill where they are implementing sanctions on goods. We already have that facility."



Paul Gerrard – Campaigns and Public Affairs Director at the Co-op Group and former senior UK civil servant specialising in ethical trade and public policy.

Paul Gerrard explains the Co-op's human-rights-centred approach to trade; evidence that major businesses can act where political will exists. The Co-op has explicitly refused to stock settlement goods since 2007 and, under a broader human-rights policy, no longer stocks products from 17 countries of concern, including Israel. Because the Co-op is owned by millions of members, these policies reflect member pressure as well as corporate values. British policy should actively help the Palestinian economy, not merely restrict settlement trade. Drawing on the Co-op's relationship with Zaytoun, he describes obstacles facing Palestinian producers: restricted water access, travel barriers for workers, especially women, and punitive transport costs that make moving goods from the West Bank to Haifa vastly more expensive than shipping from Haifa to Europe. As a former senior civil servant in customs, he rejects claims that identifying settlement goods is technically too difficult; the obstacle, he says, is political will. His remarks translate ethical policy into operational detail, showing that trade rules, sourcing decisions and customs enforcement can either entrench or challenge occupation.

"The first point I'll make is that big businesses can take action should they choose to, and should they choose not to, then that is a choice. The second point I would make is that we did both those things because our members asked us to. We're owned by 7.5 million members now. Our members also asked us to do all we can to help build up the Palestinian economy."

Shawan Jabarin – General Director of Al-Haq

"If God gave them this land, they recognise God when it comes to the land; they do not recognise God when it comes to saving people's lives and not killing them... I think this claim is a myth being used politically."

"Palestine is the most documented genocide case in history... There is no lack of information... Zionism and the Zionist movement are racist, principally because they promise the superiority of one group over another... Without action, things will continue. The absence of action encourages Israel to continue. That is complicity."





(L to R) Shawan Jabarin, Dr Julie Norman, Sir Vincent Fean, Nomi Bar-Yaacov, Daniel Levy

The global political situation: what can be done?

Daniel Levy – President of the U.S./Middle East Project and former Israeli peace negotiator and government adviser.

Daniel Levy shifts from legal analysis to political strategy: he argues that international law has already made the case, but it does not implement itself; the question is how to accumulate power, build alliances and alter incentives. He situates Palestine within wider geopolitical shifts away from US dominance, rising global public mobilisation, changes in Jewish opinion and potential opportunities in Europe, the Global South and regional middle powers. Levy stresses that the strategic goal is to affect what Israel can get away with by making impunity costly, because domestic Israeli politics will not change unless the incentive structure changes. He warns against cul-de-sac measures that isolate individual settler violence rather than the state structures behind settlements. He also identifies a major obstacle: the absence of a coherent Palestinian political freedom movement with authority to define priorities and impose discipline. Levy's broader argument is that pressure must focus on trade, arms, international accountability, sports and cultural normalisation, while also articulating a rights-based alternative to Zionist ethno-supremacy. The final emphasis is on strategy: naming the system accurately, building pressure where power lies and offering a future based on equal rights.

"I don't think [Zionism] has even done what's written on the tin, which is Jewish safety and wellbeing."

"We are witnessing tectonic plates shifting geopolitically... We see what has been called global Palestine... Civil society can and does do brilliant and amazing things... Crucially, we're trying to impact what Israel can and cannot do... We've seen where impunity leads us... We have to be laser-focused on how do you create a different incentive structure."

"There is an actual existing Zionism which has demonstrated itself to be incompatible with peace, dignity for Palestinians... but it's also demonstrated itself to be incompatible with Jewish safety and wellbeing."

Dr Julie Norman – Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at University College London specialising in conflict, peacebuilding and the Middle East.

Dr Julie Norman argues that despair is understandable but inaction is not. The twenty-point plan should not be treated as the only path, and alternative reconstruction proposals for Gaza should be examined, especially those that centre Palestinian autonomy and resilience rather than either pure private investment or a charity model. Any Gaza plan must maintain the link with the West Bank and preserve Palestinian national continuity. She also highlights the immense trauma and intergenerational mental health consequences that must be built into future recovery. On the West Bank, Norman supports banning settlement trade as a natural consequence of recognising Palestine, while also encouraging investment in Palestinian businesses and young people. Palestinian Authority reform should aim to increase legitimacy among Palestinians, not merely satisfy Israeli or international security preferences. Finally, she welcomes principled disagreement within the room and insists that recognising Israeli trauma does not diminish commitment to Palestinian rights.

"Not doing anything is not an option. There are always excuses: We have to wait until the Israeli elections. The UK can't do anything against the US. I push back on all of those and say we've heard today from people from the legal sector, health sector, practitioners, NGOs: there is always something to do."

Nomi Bar-Yaacov – International lawyer and geopolitical analyst

Nomi Bar-Yaacov focuses on concrete action the UK and its partners can take, especially in the period before Israeli elections. She argues that the UK should not only publish the Attorney General's advice on the ICJ advisory opinion but implement the opinion through working groups designed to end the illegal occupation. She describes occupation as the root of corruption and brutality, and says the current Israeli government responds only to action, not statements.

Her examples include Belgian measures limiting consular services to dual nationals living in occupied territory, demands around Palestinian children and prisoners in Israeli jails, suspension of arms export licences, settlement trade restrictions and coordination with European governments. Israeli civil society, human rights organisations and former security figures need to be part of any strategy to influence the Israeli electorate, because sidelining Israel alone may strengthen Netanyahu or similar leaders. Peace requires accountability, including evidence from RAF surveillance being provided to international courts. Her remarks combine legal accountability with political realism, arguing that pressure on Israel should be designed to produce choices for voters and institutions.

Shawan Jabarin – General Director of Al-Haq

Shawan Jabarin criticises UN Security Council Resolution 2803 and the Board of Peace framework from the standpoint of international law and Palestinian rights. He says Al-Haq and other Palestinian organisations warned Security Council members that the text breached international law principles, failed to mention self-determination and subordinated Palestinian rights to a new occupation-like arrangement serving Israeli control. He questions whether reconstruction will happen under such a framework and argues that planning has been shaped by Israeli military and intelligence priorities, surveillance and business interests rather than Palestinian welfare. Jabarin also discusses Palestinian political representation, Hamas, Marwan Barghouti and prisoners. Israel interferes deeply in Palestinian democracy, arrests elected representatives and uses administrative detention to punish society. He rejects the blanket Israeli narrative that labels Palestinian actors as terrorists, while also stressing that the core issue is a settler-colonial, apartheid and illegal occupation regime. His final emphasis is strategic hope: public conscience is awakening and Palestinians should not fear the future. Palestinians must be allowed to choose their representatives and future without external management or Israeli veto.

Dr Brian Brivati - Conclusions and BPP Policy Platform

Executive Director of the Britain Palestine Project, historian of modern British politics and genocide studies, and expert in public policy and human rights.

Dr Brian Brivati closes by drawing together the practical political implications of the day. He emphasises the need to impose sufficient cost on Israel to alter its policy, and asks how far the UK can contribute to that process alone or with partners. Brivati identifies a politically volatile period ahead, including possible elections and leadership contests, as an opportunity to influence British policy. He names several relatively immediate priorities: banning settlement trade in goods and services, working with European partners on E1, pressing for publication and implementation of the Government's response to the ICJ advisory opinion, acting on provisional measures related to genocide and expanding restrictions on arms sales. These are politically attractive asks in a Labour leadership context and could be advanced through constituency-level pressure. Brivati ends by urging participants to write to MPs, organise constituency hustings on just peace and international law, and keep building pressure.



BRITAIN PALESTINE PROJECT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

From the 1917 Balfour Declaration through the British Mandate to May 1948, the UK played a formative role in shaping the political and legal framework of Mandatory Palestine. In this time, it failed to safeguard the civil and political rights of the majority non-Jewish population. Britain bears heavy responsibility, along with Zionists and neighbouring Arab states, for the dispossession and statelessness of Palestinians following 1948. Britain's responsibilities as the Mandatory Power remain central to understanding its continuing obligations in the face of the atrocities of 7th October against Israelis and the genocidal war waged on Gaza by Israel in response.

Israel was admitted to the United Nations in May 1949 based on commitments to uphold the UN Charter and the right of the 750,000 Palestinian refugees to return home. This history establishes a continuing British responsibility to support a just, equitable and lawful resolution, including one that enables the realisation of Palestinian self-determination in the State of Palestine (the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza) and safeguards the security and recognised existence of the State of Israel.

Today, the rights and security of Israelis depend on the rights and security of Palestinians, and vice versa. In recognising the “rupture” in the international order currently underway, and in recognising the rights of both the State of Palestine and the State of Israel to exist, the Britain Palestine Project (BPP) affirms the following Principles as the foundation of our advocacy:

- 1. Ending the occupation and enabling Palestinian sovereignty:** Ending Israel's illegal occupation of the State of Palestine is the overriding priority. Consistent with prevailing international law and UN Security Council resolutions, the State of Palestine is understood as comprising the territory occupied by Israel in June 1967: the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. There can be no business as usual with an occupying power: occupation and de facto annexation must carry consequences and must not be normalised. UK policy should apply pressure to the State of Israel, to enable the State of Palestine to exercise effective sovereignty. Genuine sovereignty requires full Palestinian control over borders, security, natural resources and all state functions, including taxation, customs, currency, and population and land registries. Measures that entrench or prolong the occupation should be met with proportionate consequences.
- 2. Universal application of international law:** International law must be applied consistently and without exception. The same legal principles the UK applies in response to Russia's occupation of Ukraine, or in the pursuit and prosecution of suspected perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in for instance Sudan should apply equally to Israel's occupation of territory of the State of Palestine. Israel's actions in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine must be judged by the legal standards applicable to any state acting beyond its recognised borders. The UK should work with partners to uphold the Geneva Conventions and other relevant international legal obligations, and to support accountability mechanisms.
- 3. Palestinian self-determination and political representation:** Palestinians have the exclusive right to choose their representatives, leadership, and constitutional arrangements without external interference. The UK should engage with Palestinian representatives based on legitimacy conferred by the Palestinian people, preferably through free and fair elections. Decisions regarding the security character of the State of Palestine must derive from the freely expressed will of the Palestinian people through their legitimate institutions or a popular mandate.
- 4. Parity of esteem and equal rights:** A just and durable peace requires equal rights of security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis. UK policy should treat both peoples in practice as equal in rights and sovereignty and should reject frameworks that entrench permanent inequality through occupation or annexation.
- 5. Engagement without complicity:** The UK should pursue principled engagement that avoids complicity in illegality. Engagement, with Israeli- and US-led process is appropriate where it helps end the occupation or alleviates suffering, but participation or support must be withheld where initiatives breach international law or undermine Palestinian sovereignty.

CALLS FOR ACTION BY THE UK GOVERNMENT

1. **Work to end the unlawful 1967 Occupation, advancing Palestinian self-determination:** implement the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and comply with its Provisional Measures on genocide; end arms transfers to and from Israel and all military-to-military cooperation; suspend the UK/Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement.
2. **Disrupt the illegal Israeli settlement project:** sanction any bidder to build or fund the “red line” E1 settlement; ban all UK trade with settlements (goods and services, including investment and insurance); criminalise the purchase of housing or land in settlements; introduce the same UK entry requirements for settlers as for Palestinians.
3. **Treat Palestine as a sovereign, independent state:** insist on Palestinian governance in Gaza and the West Bank, with free movement between all parts of the state; respect Palestinian jurisdiction over all the land of Palestine; combat Israeli annexation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing by all possible means.
4. **Address politically the humanitarian agony of Gaza:** combat Israeli genocide and annexation; full-scale humanitarian and reconstruction efforts and Israeli military withdrawal to accompany Hamas arms decommissioning, with consequences for obstruction by any party. Re-engage the international community now with Palestinians at the head, acknowledging the Board of Peace as a disaster.
5. **Affirm UK responsibility to protect the occupied Palestinian population:** prioritise children’s health and education; insist on proper medical treatment in and evacuations from Gaza and restoration of education services across Palestine; require Israel to end military detention of Palestinian children, with consequences for persisting.



**www.britainpalestineproject.org
info@britainpalestineproject.org**



**PEACE WITH JUSTICE, SECURITY AND EQUAL RIGHTS
FOR ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS**