

29 November 2023

Sam Goodman

## After the “pause” in fighting: What can the UK materially do to support Israel and Palestine?

---

NEW  
DIPLOMACY  
PROJECT

### TOP LINES

- The UK Government has to acknowledge that the reality on the ground in both Israel and Palestine has changed dramatically since Hamas’s attack on October 7, the taking of 240 hostages, and the subsequent Israeli Defence Force operation in Gaza.
- On 24 November 2023, Israel and Hamas [agreed](#) a four-day humanitarian pause brokered by Qatar which includes the staggered release of 50 hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. At the time of writing, the pause remains in effect and there is [speculation](#) that Hamas will release between another 20-40 hostages and the current pause will be extended by two-four days.
- This paper, through a narrow frame, outlines what the UK Government can practically do to improve the situation on the ground for both Israelis and Palestinians following the pause in fighting.

### SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Increasing bilateral and multilateral humanitarian aid in Palestine*

- The UK Government should consider increasing further the amount of funding it provides to UNRWA and return its funding to 2018 levels. This should include new transparency mechanisms to ensure that UK aid is not misspent or syphoned off to support the activities of terror groups like Hamas.
- Ministers should back Labour’s call for the UK Government to provide matching funding to private humanitarian aid appeals from the Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross.
- The UK Government should commit to a package of development aid for the Egyptian Government to help support Palestinians from Gaza who find safe refuge in the country temporarily.
- The FCDO should [reintroduce](#) and recommit to a bespoke cross-departmental fund to support the Middle East Peace Process and contribute to a joint-fund with partners for the reconstruction of Gaza. This should include helping support and develop civil society groups in Palestine and Israel.

- The FCDO should reintroduce a designated Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.
- The UK Government should enter into a dialogue with Israeli officials over an appropriate support package the UK can offer Israel to recuperate from the economic impact of the current crisis.

### ***Deterring a wider conflict in the region***

- The UK Government must be ready to deploy further military assets to the region to support a strategy of deterrence leveraging its close partnerships with other NATO allies including those in Europe and the USA. The USA remains the largest power broker in the region, and it is acting to defend Western interests and liberal values. The UK must stay close to the US administration, with a view to influencing them when desired.
- Diplomatically, the UK faces a challenging tight-rope when it comes to managing relations with Iran. There is a strong case for the Government moving forward with the proscription of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation, but this would come at a diplomatic cost. The UK Embassy in Tehran will remain an important back channel to the regime to encourage de-escalation in the region.
- The UK Government should utilise its close diplomatic relationships with the Gulf States, Egypt, and Jordan to gain valuable intelligence regarding potential flashpoints for escalation and to convey messages to Iran and Hezbollah on the need to avoid further destabilisation of the region. This could include a working group with Arab states which focuses on achieving peace in the region.
- The UK Government should consider re-appointing a peace envoy for the Middle East to coordinate diplomatic efforts.
- The UK should support Israel's mission to dismantle the capabilities of Hamas within humanitarian law. In turn, it should discourage violence from extremist settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and join calls from the USA that it will [consider](#) sanctions against those individuals involved.
- As part of a strategy of deterrence, the UK Government should state its recommitment and support for the International Criminal Court including with continued funding. Where there is credible evidence of violations of international law or war crimes, Ministers should commit to supporting international efforts to investigate after the conflict has ended.

### ***Seeking the release of the remaining hostages and an extension of the pause in fighting***

- Ministers should urge US officials and the Gulf States (particularly Qatar) that have more influence over Israel and Palestine to publicly and privately continue to press for the release of the remaining hostages and an extension of the humanitarian pause in the fighting, to allow the continuation of humanitarian corridors.

- UK intelligence services should work with like-minded partners in the region to identify the location of hostages in Gaza who are not being held by Hamas.
- Calls for an extended humanitarian pause in the fighting must be paired with calls on Arab states in the region to disavow Hamas and support peace-efforts.
- The UK should encourage the Egyptian Government to open the Rafah Crossing as a humanitarian corridor to allow Palestinians fleeing the conflict to gain temporary safe haven with the guarantee of return after the fighting has ended. In this regard the UK Government could use its close diplomatic and military relationship with Egypt to compel the Sisi Regime to do the right thing, including offering financial support to offer temporary accommodation for refugees and reviewing UK loans and supporting underwriting financial assistance to the Egyptian Government at the IMF and World Bank as we have done so [in the past](#).

### **Supporting Israel's right to defend itself and a broader peace settlement for the Palestinian people**

- Peace for the region begins with the assurance of safety and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The UK Government must play its part in guaranteeing that security, which includes supporting Israel's right to defend itself within the confines of international law and similarly calling out attempts to undermine the viability of a Palestinian state.
- The UK Government must continue to offer its unflinching support for Israel's right to defend itself and in helping the Israeli Government identify and bring to justice those individuals involved in planning, financing, and arming Hamas's attack in Southern Israel. This includes cooperating with Israeli intelligence services.
- It is clear that controversial judicial reforms outlined by the Netanyahu Government undermined Israel's security and the readiness of the Israeli Defence Force to protect the country. The UK Government should support efforts towards fostering a resilient and well-functioning democratic system in Israel. This could include suggesting a commission to review the impact Israel's electoral system has played in the country's lurch towards extremism.
- The UK Government should press the Israeli Government to suspend settlement building, and press Palestinian authorities to commit to tackling the terrorism within Palestine.
- The UK should work with regional partners on a credible framework for the future management of Gaza and to build a credible alternative to Hamas in the eyes of the Palestinian people. This must include a clear plan for reconstruction and a commitment to support the re-establishment of meaningful peace talks in the future, which leads to a timeline for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.
- Learning from the example of Northern Ireland, the UK Government should support the Alliance for Middle East Peace's [proposal](#) for an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and offer matching funds to donations made by the USA (currently \$250m over five years) and other like-minded partners.

## Background

- The UK has to acknowledge that the reality on the ground in both Israel and Palestine has changed dramatically over the last seven weeks and the UK Government must consider what it can practically do to improve the situation.
- Israel will not countenance the existence of Hamas following its attack in Southern Israeli which saw 1,400 Israeli citizens lose their lives and more than 240 people taken hostage.
- Hamas has ruled Gaza since 2007 and was designated as a terrorist organisation by the UK in November 2021. Before October 7, it had made consistent efforts to thwart peace, and had done little to measurably improve the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.
- Israeli airstrikes into the Gaza strip in response to Hamas's attack have seen more than 13,300 Palestinians lose their lives and displaced 1.2 million people.
- Many Labour frontbenchers, the Leader of the Labour Party in Scotland, and the Labour Mayors in Manchester and London, as well as over [120 MPs and peers](#) have called for a ceasefire.
- The United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations General Secretary have called for a ceasefire.
- The decision by the Israeli Government to cut off water and electricity to Gaza has faced international criticism, with Amnesty International and experts at the United Nations asserting it violates international law.
- On 28 October, the Israel Defence Force began deploying ground forces into Gaza, with the Israeli Prime Minister claiming its operation in Gaza has entered the second stage.
- On 24 November 2023, Israel and Hamas [agreed](#) a four-day humanitarian pause brokered by Qatar which includes the staggered release of 50 hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. At the time of writing, the pause remains in effect and there is [speculation](#) that Hamas will release between another 20-40 hostages and the current pause will be extended by two-four days.
- There remain wider concerns that the crisis may deteriorate into wider regional conflict with Iran or Hezbollah in Lebanon intervening. In response, the US has deployed two aircraft carriers and the UK has deployed one aircraft carrier to the Mediterranean.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the UK [funded](#) between 6% and 9% of the core delivery of services of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians Living in the Near East (UNRWA).
- [According](#) to the International Development Select Committee, since 2018 UK funding to UNRWA has decreased by about 60% from approximately £70.3 million in 2018 to £28.6 million in 2021.
- On 23 October 2023, the UK Government [pledged](#) a further £20 million in aid for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, taking the full amount pledged in the last few weeks to £30m.

## 1. Increasing our bilateral and multilateral humanitarian aid to Palestine and other actors in the region

### *The state of UK aid to Palestine*

The UK's development aid program to the Middle East and North Africa in recent times has fallen victim to cuts to the UK's Overseas Development Aid budget, [falling from £606.6m in 2020/21 to £554m in 2021/22](#).

In the case of Palestine historically aid has been given via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians Living in the Near East (UNRWA), between 2016 and 2021, the UK [funded](#) between 6% and 9% of the core delivery of services of the UNRWA.

[According](#) to the International Development Select Committee, since 2018 UK funding to UNRWA has decreased by about 60% from approximately £70.3 million in 2018 to £28.6 million in 2021.

On 23 October 2023, the UK Government [pledged](#) a further £20 million in aid for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, taking the full amount pledged in the last few weeks to £30m for UNRWA.

The Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross have introduced [appeals](#) for humanitarian aid for Palestinians living in Gaza. Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary and Foreign International Development Minister have [called](#) for the UK Government to provide matching funding to the Disasters Emergency Committee's appeal.

There is a strong case for using any increase in multilateral aid to the Palestinian Authorities as an opening to encourage reform and the strengthening of democratic accountability to the people of Palestine.

Following the agreement of a four-day humanitarian pause in fighting, Hamas has [stated](#) that 340 aid trucks have entered Gaza.

### *UK aid to assist Egypt*

Since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel and the subsequent military operation by the Israeli Defence Force in Gaza, the UK has [shipped 21 tonnes of essential humanitarian aid](#) to Egypt for agencies working on the ground in Gaza. On 2 November 2023, the UK Government committed plans to ship a further 30 tonnes of vital aid.

### *UK material support for Israel*

Hamas's attack on Israel and the subsequent military response has placed a significant financial strain on Israel's economy. Israel has [mobilized](#) a record 350,000 reservists, the equivalent of roughly 8% of its workforce, and more than 120,000 Israelis have been forced to leave their homes as the conflict escalates.

Directly after the attack the shekel [weakened](#) to its lowest level since 2012 and Israeli stocks are currently some of the world's worst performing stocks for investment.

Lenders have speculated that the cost of the conflict is [around \\$2.5bn a month](#) for Israel and according to Bank Hapoalim the total cost could amount to as much as [1.5% of Israel's GDP](#) as foreign investment is paused, private consumption has fallen, and construction projects are delayed.

## **Recommendations**

- The UK Government should consider increasing further the amount of funding it provides to UNRWA and return its funding to 2018 levels. This should include new transparency mechanisms to ensure that UK aid is not misspent or syphoned off to support the activities of terror groups like Hamas.
- Ministers should back Labour's call for the Government to provide matching funding to private humanitarian aid appeals from the Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross.
- The UK Government should commit to a package of development aid for the Egyptian Government to help support Palestinians from Gaza who find safe refuge in the country temporarily.
- The FCDO should [reintroduce](#) and recommit to a bespoke cross-departmental fund to support the Middle East Peace Process and contribute to a joint-fund with partners for the reconstruction of Gaza. This should include helping support and develop civil society groups in Palestine and Israel.
- The FCDO should reintroduce a designated Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.
- Ministers should support the continuation of the Abraham Accords which seeks the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.
- The UK Government should enter into a dialogue with Israeli officials over an appropriate support package the UK can offer Israel to recuperate from the economic impact of the current crisis.

## **2. Deterring a wider conflict in the region**

The primary goal of Hamas's attack in Southern Israel has been to elicit a military response from the Israeli Defence Force against Gaza and spur a wider conflict in the region, with the hopes of Iran and Hezbollah based in Lebanon attacking Israel.

## *Iran*

In the case of the Islamic State of Iran, its leadership has publicly backed Hamas with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [meeting](#) with Hamas's leadership based in Tehran. However, the regime has also been keen to distance itself from the attack [stating](#) that it had no prior knowledge and it was organised by Hamas within Gaza.

Historically, the Iranian regime has funded and offered arms to both Hamas and Hezbollah based in Lebanon. It regularly calls for the destruction of Israel and Iranian officials [congratulated](#) Hamas on their "surprise attack" on Israel.

Iran benefits from improved relations with Arab states, and avoiding direct confrontation. The Iranian regime has called for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza strip and backed [calls](#) for a UN resolution to pause fighting in Gaza and create corridors for humanitarian aid.

Given Iran's biggest military backer Russia, is currently distracted and entrenched in its own war with Ukraine and the regime remains shaken at home by popular protests in 2022, it may be reasonably deterred from a direct military conflict with Israel. The greatest deterrence has been the USA which has expressed its willingness to support Israel.

## *Hezbollah in Lebanon*

Since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel, there have been clashes between Israeli Defence Forces and Hezbollah on the Lebanon-Israeli border. With Hezbollah launching rocket attacks against Israel [the day after](#) Hamas's attack (on 8 October 2023). Its leadership has [confirmed](#) that so far 57 of its fighters have been killed.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in his first address since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel [refused](#) to be drawn on whether Hezbollah would be drawn into a wider regional conflict with the Israeli Defence Forces, stating that "All options are on the table on the Lebanese front".

Nasrallah praised attacks against US military bases in the region in Iraq and Syria, but [distanced](#) Hezbollah from Hamas's attacks saying they were conducted by Palestinians and organised in secret and from Iran outlining that Hezbollah's current military operation "has no bearing on any decision or move to be taken by any other faction within the resistance axis."

On 6 November 2023, the Foreign, Commonwealth, Development Office [issued](#) a notice for UK nationals to leave Lebanon and announced the withdrawal of some embassy staff citing that the "has the potential to deteriorate quickly with no warning."

## *Attacks on US troops in Syria and Iraq*

The Pentagon has reported that since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel, US forces in Iraq and Syria have been subject to attacks with drones and rockets [at least 37 times](#).

Following these attacks the US Administration has announced that it will deploy an additional 300 troops to "to support regional deterrence efforts and further bolster U.S. force protection capabilities."

The US has [attributed](#) the attacks to Iranian backed proxy-groups operating in both countries.

### *Settler violence in the West Bank*

Settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank has doubled since 7 October 2023, with Israeli human rights group Yesh Din [noting](#) 172 incidents of settler violence.

Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East have [stated](#) that 132 Palestinians have been killed at the hands of settlers and more than 1.4 million Palestinians displaced since the start of the conflict (a population the size of Birmingham).

The Biden Administration has [warned](#) that it may use sanctions against settlers in the West Bank, including travel bans, unless the violence ends.

### **Recommendations**

**The UK Government can play a role in deterring a wider regional conflict** that will significantly increase the death toll of civilians, undermine peace and stability, and run the risk of seeing more countries drawn into the conflict.

On 13 October 2023, the Prime Minister [announced](#) the deployment of a P8 aircraft, surveillance assets, two Royal Navy ships – RFA Lyme Bay and RFA Argus – three merlin helicopters and a company of Royal Marines, to 'deliver practical support to Israel and partners in the region, and offer deterrence and assurance.'

Since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel, the US has deployed two aircraft carriers, a nuclear-powered submarine, fighter aircraft, and a further 1,000 troops to deter wider conflict in the region. As well as provided a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defence system to Saudi Arabia and Patriot surface-to-air missile systems to Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

- The UK Government must be ready to deploy further military assets to the region to support a strategy of deterrence leveraging its close partnerships with other NATO allies including those in Europe and the USA. The USA remains the largest power broker in the



region, and it is acting to defend western interests and liberal values. The UK must stay close to the US administration, with a view to influencing them when desired.

- Diplomatically, the UK faces a challenging tight-rope when it comes to managing relations with Iran. There is a strong case for the Government moving forward with the proscription of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation, but this will likely come at a diplomatic cost. The UK's Embassy in Tehran will remain an important back channel to the regime to encourage de-escalation in the region.
- The UK Government should utilise its close diplomatic relationships with the Gulf States, Egypt, and Jordan to gain valuable intelligence regarding potential flashpoints for escalation and to convey messages to Iran and Hezbollah on the need to avoid further destabilisation of the region. This could include a working group with Arab states which focuses on achieving peace in the region.
- The UK Government should consider re-appointing a peace envoy for the Middle East to coordinate diplomatic efforts.
- The UK should support Israel's mission to dismantle the capabilities of Hamas within humanitarian law. In turn, it should discourage violence from extremist settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and join calls from the USA that it will [consider](#) sanctions against those individuals involved.
- As part of a strategy of deterrence the UK Government should state its recommitment and support for the International Criminal Court including with continued funding. Where there is credible evidence of violations of international law or war crimes, Ministers should commit to support international efforts to investigate after the conflict has ended.

### **3. Seeking a humanitarian pause and the release of hostages**

Since Hamas's attack on Southern Israel and the subsequent military response by the Israeli Defence Force in Gaza, there have been significant civilian casualties on both sides.

Israeli authorities have confirmed that 1,400 people were killed in the initial attack and over [240 hostages](#) remain captive in Gaza. While the authorities in Gaza run by Hamas have claimed that Israel's military operation has seen 10,022 people lose their lives.

More than [half of the hostages in Gaza are foreign nationals](#) including 15 Argentinians, 12 Germans, 12 Americans, 6 French and 6 Russians. This makes up the largest group of foreign nationals considered missing and dead with 24 confirmed killed and 21 unaccounted for.

The decision by the Israeli Defence Force to cut off water and electricity to Gaza has faced international criticism, with some asserting it violates international law. Similar criticisms have been lodged at Israel for [cutting off](#) telecommunications and internet services to Gaza City.

On 28 October 2023, the Israeli Defence Forces deployed ground forces into Gaza and on 5 November 2023 [confirmed](#) that they had surrounded Gaza City and effectively split Gaza into two.

The Israeli Government has stated that it will no longer [accept](#) Hamas governing Gaza and being able to use the Gaza Strip as a base to fire rockets and launch terrorist attacks at Israel. Its current military operation seeks to dismantle the extensive network of tunnels that Hamas has erected across Gaza City, which has allowed it to conduct its terrorist operations.

Since the start of the crisis, Israel has encouraged the Palestinian population of Gaza to move south to minimise civilian casualties as a result of its military operation and facilitated routes.

The United Nations General Secretary, a number of UK parliamentarians, and civil society groups have called for a ceasefire over a humanitarian pause. Critics of a ceasefire have argued that there is no way that Hamas or Hezbollah would honour such a ceasefire, while the Israeli Government has rebuffed calls for a ceasefire.

The Israeli families of the hostages in Gaza [remain](#) split on the question of whether a humanitarian pause in the fighting is the best way to secure the release of hostages.

On 24 November 2023, Israel and Hamas [agreed](#) a four-day humanitarian pause brokered by Qatar which includes the staggered release of 50 hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The Israeli Government has [said](#) it will extend the pause by a further day for every additional 10 hostages Hamas releases.

Hamas has released the hostages to Egyptian authorities at the Rafah border crossing. Those released [include](#) a number of foreign nationals, as well as some Israeli women and children.

The Israeli Government have [outlined](#) their intention to continue ground-operations in Gaza when the pause ends and has acknowledged that the current pause does not apply to the border with Lebanon where Hezbollah exchange fire with Israeli defence forces on 23 November 2023.

On 26 November 2023, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani [called](#) on Hamas to undertake efforts to locate more than 40 Israeli hostages that are being held by other groups and individuals in Gaza.

At the time of writing, the pause remains in effect and there is [speculation](#) that Hamas will release between another 20-40 hostages and the current pause will be extended by two-four days.

## **Recommendations**

**The UK Government should use its diplomatic relationships with Gulf States, European allies, and the USA to encourage the adoption of a humanitarian pause to give space for the erection of humanitarian corridors** for the delivery of aid and to give civilians time to move South out of the conflict zone.

Calls for a humanitarian pause must come alongside a call for the release and return of all hostages and the surrender of Hamas in the name of peace.

- Ministers should urge US officials and the Gulf States (particularly Qatar) that have more influence over Israel and Palestine than the UK currently does to publicly and privately continue to press for the release of the remaining hostages and an extension of the humanitarian pause in the fighting to allow the continuation of humanitarian corridors.
- UK intelligence services should work with likeminded partners in the region to identify the location of hostages in Gaza who are not being held by Hamas.
- Calls for an extended humanitarian pause in the fighting must be paired with calls on Arab states in the region to disavow Hamas and support peace-efforts.
- Similarly, the UK should encourage the Egyptian Government to open the Rafah Crossing as a humanitarian corridor to allow Palestinians fleeing the conflict to gain temporary safe haven with the guarantee of return after the fighting has ended. In this regard the UK Government could use its close diplomatic and military relationship with Egypt to compel the Sisi Regime to do the right thing, including offering to review UK loans and supporting underwriting financial assistance to the Egyptian Government at the IMF and World Bank as we have done so [in the past](#).

#### **4. Supporting Israel's right to defend itself and a broader peace settlement for the Palestinian people**

A secondary goal of the attack by Hamas in Southern Israel is to isolate Israel diplomatically from the rest of the world and comes off of the back of an unprecedented thawing of relations between Israel and its neighbours in the Middle East.

This goal has been mixed in its success. Turkey, Bolivia, Honduras, Chile, Bahrain, and Jordan have all [recalled](#) their Ambassadors from Israel and South Africa has [removed](#) all of its diplomats from the country in protest of the loss of civilian life in Gaza which they describe as "war crimes".

From the perspective of Israel, it is unlikely to end its military operation until it has neutralised the threat of Hamas and will likely see Israeli Intelligence services seek to target Hamas's leadership outside of the Gaza Strip.

On 7 November 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [stated](#) that Israel would likely continue to take overall responsibility for the security of Gaza going forward.

Countries across the world have called for there to be the resumption of meaningful peace talks between Israel and Palestine as a way out of the current crisis, with the rationale that this would offer ordinary Palestinians hope and mitigate the appeal of Hamas.

In terms of reconstruction costs for Gaza, after the seven-week conflict in 2014 reconstruction was estimated at [close to \\$4 billion](#). That figure is likely to be substantially bigger when the current conflict ends.

Labour Friends of Israel has [noted](#) that funding for civil society efforts at peace-building between Israel and Palestine have been poorly funded in the past. Historically, \$44 per person per year has been spent on civic society peacebuilding in Ireland, compared to a mere \$2 per person in Israel-Palestine.

## **Recommendations**

- Peace for the region begins with the assurance of safety and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The UK Government must play its part in guaranteeing that security, which includes supporting Israel's right to defend itself within the confines of international law and similarly calling out attempts to undermine the viability of a Palestinian state.
- The UK Government must continue to offer its unflinching support for Israel's right to defend itself and in helping the Israeli Government identify and bring to justice those individuals involved in planning, financing, and arming Hamas's attack in Southern Israel, this includes through cooperation between UK and Israeli intelligence services.
- It is clear that controversial judicial reforms outlined by the Netanyahu Government did undermine Israel's security and the readiness of the Israeli Defence Force to protect the country. The UK Government should commit to ensuring that it will defend Israel's democratic system in the future and oppose any future attempts to undermine the rule of law and democracy as part of guaranteeing Israel's right to exist. This could include supporting a commission to review the impact Israel's electoral system has played in the country's lurch towards extremism.
- The UK Government should press the Israeli Government on suspending settlement building and the Palestinian authorities on committing to action to tackle the emergence of terrorism within Palestinian land.
- Ministers should work with regional partners on a credible framework for the future management of Gaza and to build a credible alternative to Hamas in the eyes of the Palestinian people. This must include a clear plan for reconstruction and a commitment to support the re-establishment of meaningful peace talks in the future which leads to a timeline for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.
- Learning from the example of Northern Ireland, the UK Government should support the Alliance for Middle East Peace's [proposal](#) for an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian

Peace and offer matching funds to donations made by the USA (currently \$250m over five years) and other like-minded partners.

## **5. Trade Offs**

If the UK Government is going to become a serious player in the re-establishment of viable peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians this will require a re-shuffling of foreign policy priorities and there will be clear trade-offs.

The most apparent is when it comes to the UK's relationship with the Egyptian Government and the governments of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar. All of whom will be needed if there is to be a realistic chance of a peace settlement. That will require maintaining close economic and military ties with governments who have questionable human rights records for the wider aim of a lasting settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Such closeness will likely mean that previous commitments to tackle kleptocracy at the heart of the City of London and restrict investment from the Gulf States in strategic parts of the UK economy are effectively put on ice.

Similarly, the UK will have to maintain cordial ties with the Turkish Government and the Governments of Lebanon and Jordan all of whom could seek to undermine any efforts at peace to suit their own domestic audiences.

Even the Iranian Government that is openly hostile to UK interests would need to be neutralised in some way to ensure that it does not undermine peace talks through its financing and political cover of both Hezbollah and Hamas. That might hamstring any further sanctions the UK Government is willing to place on the country.

Peacebuilding efforts will require the goodwill and support of both the Jewish and Muslim communities of the UK. The voices of various civil society groups based in the UK deserve an opportunity to feed their insights and expertise into the Government's policy towards peacebuilding in the region.

What is abundantly clear is the UK is incapable of walking and chewing gum at the same time and focusing on more than one crisis at once. That means hard choices regarding limited military, development, and diplomatic resources. Either re-deploying assets from other geographic areas and cutting programs to service the Middle East or committing to an expansion of the amount of funding UK development, diplomacy, and defence receive. This author favours the latter, which is the only way to take foreign policy seriously.

These difficult trade-offs must be communicated in a transparent and frank manner to the British public and a mandate garnered by the electorate at the next General Election with

political parties offering clear plans and commitments on the role the UK could play in re-starting the peace process.

### **The Author:**

**Sam Goodman** is co-chair of the New Diplomacy Project, a director at the China Strategic Risks Institute, and Director of Policy and Advocacy at Hong Kong Watch. He previously worked as a political advisor for the Labour Party and is the author of *The Imperial Premiership: the role of the modern prime minister in foreign policymaking 1964-2015*.

### **This paper was reviewed by:**

**Josh Crine** is a consultant at Flint Global, he previously worked in international policy in the UK government, and has worked as a journalist based in Israel.

**Michael Rubin**, is Director of Labour Friends of Israel. He has been at LFI since 2016, prior to that he worked for the Labour Party and was National Chair of Labour Students.

**A reviewer** from an NGO which focuses on working for a British Middle East policy that promotes conflict resolution, human rights and civil society in the Arab world.

**David Lawrence** is a co-chair and co-founder of the New Diplomacy Project and is a Research Fellow at Chatham House.

\*The reviewers of this paper do not formally endorse any of the views or recommendations of the author and this paper.

---

### **About the New Diplomacy Project:**

The New Diplomacy Project is helping Labour to develop a foreign policy for the 21st Century. Our experienced network of foreign policy researchers provides expert advice to Labour MPs and Lords, from real-time reactions to global events to in-depth policy briefings on complex areas of foreign policy. We seek to expand Labour's capacity to think about foreign policy, whilst complementing and bolstering the work of its frontbench team.

[www.newdiplomacy.uk](http://www.newdiplomacy.uk)

**@NewDiplomacyUK**