

Cross-Party Group on Palestine

20th November 2024 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Pauline McNeil MSP, Co Convener CPG Palestine
Maggie Chapman MSP, Co Convener CPG Palestine
Bill Kidd MSP

Invited guests

Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director, Human Rights Watch

Non-MSP Group Members

Eman ElBahnassawy
Allan Gordon
Anne Alden
Colin Cooper
Yasmina Ferrigan
Yasmina Ahmed
Amy McNeese-Mechan
Bashir Oudeh
Asif Dean
Basia Gordon
Jon Pullman
Mike Whitehead
Roger Spooner
Monica Spooner
Olivia Pullman
Alison Waugh
John Badenhorst
Carol Morton
Omar Shamma
Sheila Trachsler
Chris White

Apologies

Ruth Maguire MSP
Mercedes Villalba MSP
James Dornan MSP

Agenda item 1

Presentation by Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director, Human Rights Watch

Yasmine provided an overview of human rights and international humanitarian law issues in relation to the conflict in Gaza particularly in relation to the matter of UK arms sales to Israel from the UK and the part played by funding for arms companies from the Scottish Government.

It was noted that given recent ICC rulings supply of arms could constitute UK complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Focus was paid to the licences of F35 components where 15% of the components of F35 fighter jets which are used in Gaza and are used in and are now being used in Lebanon, are produced in the UK are produced in the UK that go indirectly to Israel and the need for transparency around these licenses to ensure compliance.

The use of arms in the West Bank was also explored noting that the International Court of Justice in an opinion in July found that the occupation itself is unlawful, and they also found that there were a number of acts, including systemic discrimination that amounts to racial segregation and apartheid and another a number of other violations by Israel and in that judgement, very importantly, it sets out a series of things that third states, including the UK, should do.

Human Rights Watch noted that the UK Government should consider Banning settlement goods and look at suspending the UK Partnership and Trade agreement, the 2030 road map with Israel, which provides for further military security and technological ties with Israel.

Agenda item 2

Presentation of “‘Hopeless, Starving, and Besieged’: Israel’s Forced Displacement of Palestinians in Gaza,”

The group was briefed on Human Rights Watch’s latest report “‘Hopeless, Starving, and Besieged’: Israel’s Forced Displacement of Palestinians in Gaza,”

The report concluded that Israel is committing and is responsible for war crimes, not just one, but multiple war crimes of forced displacement of Palestinians.

It noted that 1.9 million Palestinians have been displaced in Gaza out of out of a population of 2.2 million people and that 84% of Gaza is under evacuation orders.

The report looked specifically at the provision set out in Article 49 of the Geneva Convention which states that certain evacuation orders can be lawful; however, they must meet certain criteria.

The report looked in detail at 184 evacuation orders with the aid of extensive satellite imagery in relation to the exemptions, whose rationale state that any evacuation order must be for an imperative military reason and that imperative reason means that there must be no alternative.

Research found that this criteria was not met and amounted to forced evacuation.

The second exemption is that any evacuation is in the interest and safety of the people who are being evacuated and that the population must be provided with access to food, water, healthcare, sanitation and shelter. Then it must be temporary, and that people must be allowed back to the place.

The report found that on every single count Israel had repeatedly violated these provisions and had committed war crimes.

The routes people were told to take were unsafe or bombed. The safe zones were bombed and had no running water, no access to food and no proper shelter.

Furthermore, the destruction of the areas the population had inhabited meant that they would not be able to return.

The report then goes into great detail and these details have been presented to the UK Foreign Office.

Agenda item 3

Group discussion

The group asked questions with regards a timescale for the legal action being taken in order to ensure that the UK Government complied with ICC rulings.

The group also asked about what they could do to pressure the UK Government and elected representatives and agreed to draft a letter for comment at the next meeting asking for the Scottish Government's on a range of issues raised I the meeting.

ENDS