



Solutions Not Sides



UN & UK POSITIONS ON

Palestine-Israel

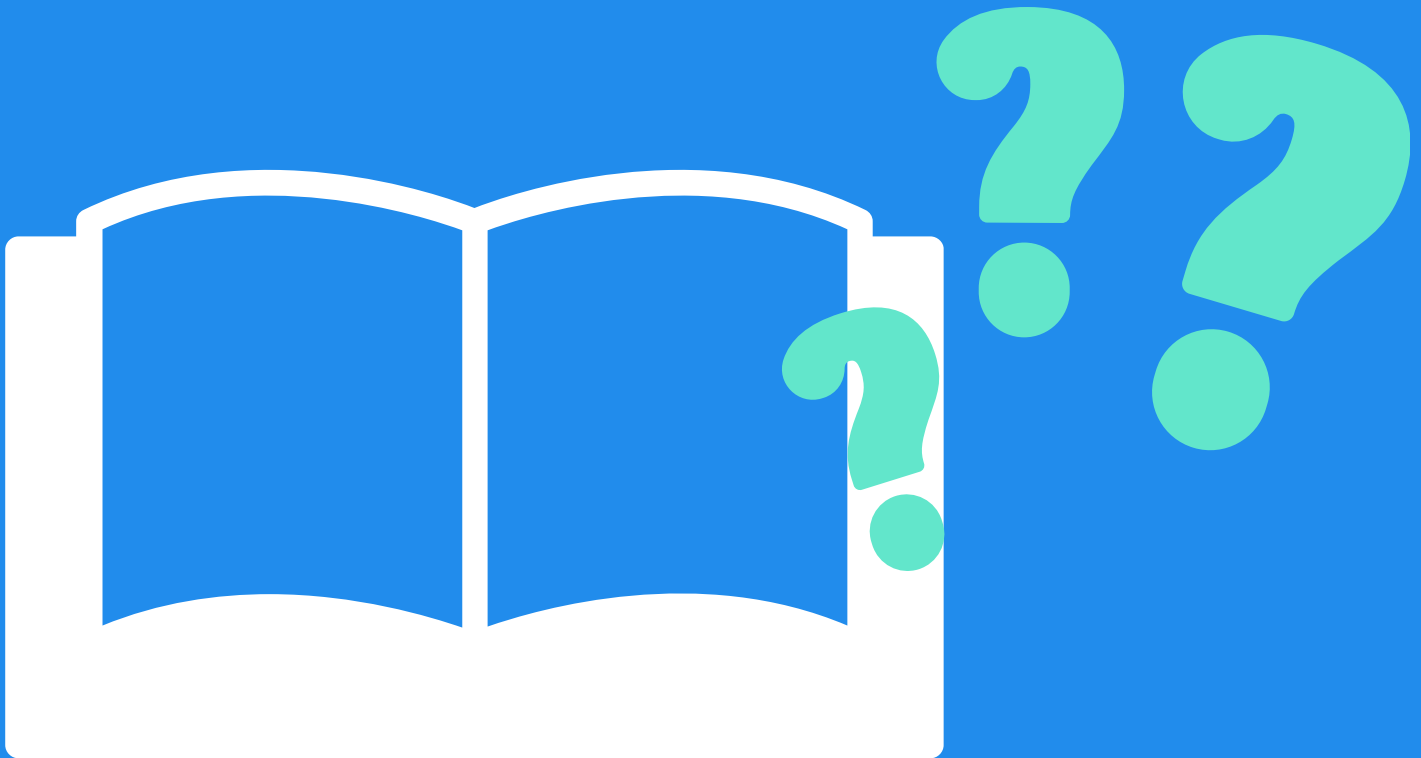


TEACHER RESOURCE



A guide to UN & UK positions on Israel-Palestine

INTRODUCTION



Words are important right now - everyone has the right to choose the language they want to use. It is neither the right, nor the place of a British education charity to make rulings on geo-political issues, it is the place of international governments and courts.

Therefore, rather than tell people what terminology we think they should or shouldn't use (beyond our anti-racism guides), we will present in this guide some information about statements from the United Nations (UN), of which the UK is a member, and also British Government positions, so that people can come to an informed decision for themselves.

This information may also change over time as events develop, and we are committed to update our curriculum and resources regularly.

GLOSSARY



Apartheid:

The United Nations, through its human rights experts, has described Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories as constituting apartheid. In March 2022, Michael Lynk, a UN Special Rapporteur, stated that Israel's policies in these territories meet the international legal definition of apartheid[1][3]. Additionally, other UN experts and reports have echoed this assessment, highlighting a system of racial oppression and discrimination against Palestinians[5][7]. The UK Government has not applied this label to Israel's actions, but does view the occupation as illegal under International Law (see below).

Sources:

[1] Israel's 55-year occupation of Palestinian Territory is apartheid - ohchr
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/israels-55-year-occupation-palestinian-territory-apartheid-un-human-rights>

[2] Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination ...
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>

[3] Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in OPT: Israel ...
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-opt-israel-has-imposed-upon-palestine-an-apartheid-reality-in-a-post-apartheid-world-press-release/>

[4] World Court Finds Israel Responsible for Apartheid
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/19/world-court-finds-israel-responsible-apartheid>

[5] Israel/OPT: Latest UN recognition of apartheid comes amid soaring ...
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/israel-opt-latest-un-recognition-of-apartheid-comes-amid-soaring-attacks-on-palestinian-homes/>



[6] The argument that Israel practices apartheid, explained - Vox
<https://www.vox.com/23924319/israel-palestine-apartheid-meaning-history-debate>

[7] UN report: Israel has established an 'apartheid regime' - Al Jazeera
<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/3/18/un-report-israel-has-established-an-apartheid-regime>

[8] UK rejects Israel 'apartheid' label in new trade and security pact
<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-israel-new-trade-security-agreement-challenge-apartheid-label>

Colonial:

A United Nations human rights expert has described Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory as indistinguishable from a "settler-colonial" situation. A UN independent expert and stated that this occupation must end to allow Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination[2]. Additionally, the same UN independent expert mentioned that Israel treats Palestinian territories like colonies[7]. These statements reflect the UN's perspective on Israel's actions in the occupied territories, aligning them with characteristics of settler colonialism. The UK Government has not described Israel as 'colonial'.

Sources:

[1] Is Israel a "settler-colonial" state? The debate, explained. - Vox
<https://www.vox.com/world-politics/24128715/israel-palestine-conflict-settler-colonialism-zionism-history-debate>

[2] Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, tantamount to ...
<https://operationalsupport.un.org/en/israels-illegal-occupation-of-palestinian-territory-tantamount-to-settler-colonialism-un-expert>

[3] Is Israel a settler colonial state? - Stroum Center for Jewish Studies
<https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/israel-hebrew/why-israel-isnt-a-settler-colonial-state/>

[4] Why Israel is Not a Settler Colonial State | AJC <https://www.ajc.org/why-israel-is-not-a-settler-colonial-state>



[5] Allegation: Israel is a Settler Colonialist Enterprise - ADL

<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/allegation-israel-settler-colonialist-enterprise>

[6] How international law is used to cover up Israeli settler-colonialism

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/12/10/how-international-law-is-used-to-cover-up-israeli-settler-colonialism>

[7] Israel treats Palestinian territories like colonies, says UN rapporteur

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/12/israel-treats-palestinian-territories-like-colonies-says-un-rapporteur>

Ethnic Cleansing:

A UN official has accused Israel of ethnic cleansing. Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, stated that Israel practices ethnic cleansing by removing Palestinians from their homes and historic lands[3]. Additionally, a UN human rights investigator has accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing" in pushing Palestinians out of East Jerusalem[6]. These accusations have been made in the context of ongoing conflicts and military operations involving Israel and the Palestinian territories. The UK Government has not accused Israel of ethnic cleansing.

Sources:

[1] Claim 4: Israel commits ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians

<https://unwatch.org/item-7/claim/claim-4-israel-commits-ethnic-cleansing-against-the-palestinians/>

[2] Israel, Hamas accused of war crimes in new UN report - BBC News

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cl55gzp7vn9o>

[3] UN official accuses Israel of genocide, ethnic cleansing - Asia Times

<https://asiatimes.com/2023/10/un-official-accuses-israel-of-genocide-ethnic-cleansing/>

[4] UN expert warns of new instance of mass ethnic cleansing of ... -

ohchr <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-warns-new-instance-mass-ethnic-cleansing-palestinians-calls>



5] UN expert accuses Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza - Al Jazeera

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/26/un-expert-accuses-israel-of-several-acts-of-genocide-in-gaza>

[6] U.N. rights investigator accuses Israel of 'ethnic cleansing' | Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/world/un-rights-investigator-accuses-israel-of-ethnic-cleansing-idUSBREA2K1JO/>

[7] UN Expert Accuses Israel Of Several Acts Of 'Genocide' In Gaza

<https://www.barrons.com/news/un-expert-accuses-israel-of-several-acts-of-genocide-in-gaza-ba3ae5a4>

Genocide:

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated in its ruling of January 2024 that: “In the Court’s view, the facts and circumstances... are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible.” The ruling did not decide that an allegation of genocide was plausible, but emphasised that there was a risk of irreparable harm to the Palestinian right to be protected from genocide [5]. So far, neither the UK Government, nor the ICJ has stated that genocide is occurring in Gaza.

Sources:

[1] Experts react: What the International Court of Justice said (and didn't ...

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/experts-react-what-the-international-court-of-justice-said-and-didnt-say-in-the-genocide-case-against-israel/>

[2] The ICJ's Findings on Plausible Genocide in Gaza and its ...

<http://opiniojuris.org/2024/04/05/the-icjs-findings-on-plausible-genocide-in-gaza-and-its-implications-for-the-international-criminal-court/>

[3] Explaining the International Court of Justice's Ruling on Israel and ...

<https://global.upenn.edu/perryworldhouse/news/explaining-international-court-justices-ruling-israel-and-gaza>



[4] Israel must comply with key ICJ ruling ordering it do all in its power ...
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/01/israel-must-comply-with-key-icj-ruling-ordering-it-do-all-in-its-power-to-prevent-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

[5] Israel-Gaza: What did the ICJ ruling really say? - BBC News
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3g9g63jl17o>

[6] Israel defying ICJ ruling to prevent genocide by failing to allow aid ...
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-defying-icj-ruling-to-prevent-genocide-by-failing-to-allow-adequate-humanitarian-aid-to-reach-gaza/>

[7] Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of ...
<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

[8] What is South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ? - BBC
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67922346>

Holocaust:

Neither the UN nor the UK Government describe Israel's actions as perpetrating a 'Holocaust'. This term was applied to the Nazi genocide for specific reasons due to the meaning of the Greek term that is the linguistic root of this word and the methods of killing used in that genocide. Therefore, applying this term would be a hurtful 'dig' at Jewish people, as Israel is a majority Jewish state, and the main targets of the Nazi genocide were Jews. See our guide to avoiding hate speech for more information.



Israel and Palestine:

The United Nations (including the UK) recognises Israel. Israel was admitted as a member of the UN on May 11, 1949, following a vote in the General Assembly that approved its application for membership[1] [2]. However, not all UN member states recognise Israel as a sovereign nation; as of December 2020, 165 out of 193 UN member countries recognised Israel[2].

Sources:

[1] Israel and the United Nations - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_and_the_United_Nations

[2] Countries that Recognize Israel 2024 - World Population Review

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-that-recognize-israel>

[3] International Recognition of Israel - Jewish Virtual Library

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/international-recognition-of-israel>

[4] International Court of Justice ruling confirms that Israel's presence in Palestinian territory is unlawful

<https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/international-court-justice-ruling-confirms-israels-presence-palestinian-territory-unlawful>

[5] UN General Assembly demands Israel ends occupation of Palestinian territories <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx9z96ldveo>



Sources:

- [6] Declaration of Israel's Independence, 1948 | American Experience <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/truman-israel/>
- [7] Creation of Israel, 1948 - Office of the Historian - State Department <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>
- [8] UN top court to give opinion on Israeli occupation <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjerjzxlpvdo>

The United Nations (including the UK) does not fully recognise Palestine as a member state but acknowledges it as a non-member observer state. As of June 2024, 146 out of 193 UN member states recognise Palestine as a sovereign state[1][2]. The UN General Assembly granted Palestine this observer status in 2012, which allows participation in debates but not voting rights[2][4]. Despite broad recognition, Palestine's full UN membership is hindered by the United States' veto power in the Security Council[2].

Sources:

- [1] UN experts urge all States to recognise State of Palestine | OHCHR <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/un-experts-urge-all-states-recognise-state-palestine>
- [2] International recognition of the State of Palestine https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_recognition_of_the_State_of_Palestine
- [3] Mapping which countries recognise Palestine in 2024 - Al Jazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/22/mapping-which-countries-recognise-palestine-in-2024>
- [4] The impact of recognising a Palestinian state - BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn44j1njggjo>
- [5] As More Governments Recognize State of Palestine, Crucial to Keep ... <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gapal1469.doc.htm>



[6] UN General Assembly demands Israel ends occupation of Palestinian territories

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx9z96ldveo>

[7] Declaration of Israel's Independence, 1948 | American Experience | PBS

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/truman-israel/>

[8] International Court of Justice ruling confirms that Israel's presence in Palestinian territory is unlawful

<https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/international-court-justice-ruling-confirms-israels-presence-palestinian-territory-unlawful>

Martyrdom:

Neither the UN nor the UK Government glorify violence by individuals on either side as 'martyrdom'.

Nakba:

The United Nations has adopted the term "Nakba" to describe the events of 1948, which involved the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the Arab-Israeli war. The term is used to highlight both historical and ongoing injustices faced by Palestinians. In 2023, the UN held its first-ever commemoration of Nakba Day, marking its recognition of the term and its significance in Palestinian history[1][2][3]. The UK Government has not officially adopted the term "Nakba" in its governmental discourse or policy.



Sources:

[1] Nakba of 1948 and Today Are Not Separate Events, but Ongoing ... <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gapal1467.doc.htm>

[2] About the Nakba - Question of Palestine - the United Nations <https://www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/>

[3] Nakba - Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nakba>

[4] The UN is distorting the meaning of the Nakba - UnHerd <https://unherd.com/newsroom/the-un-is-distorting-the-meaning-of-the-nakba/>

[5] UN expert warns of new instance of mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, calls for immediate ceasefire <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-warns-new-instance-mass-ethnic-cleansing-palestinians-calls>

[6] Israel, Hamas accused of war crimes in new UN report <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cl55gzp7vn9o>

[7] Claim 4: Israel commits ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians Archives - UN Watch <https://unwatch.org/item-7/claim/claim-4-israel-commits-ethnic-cleansing-against-the-palestinians/>

[8] UK media are suppressing mentions of Israel's 'genocide' in Gaza <https://www.declassifieduk.org/uk-media-are-suppressing-mentions-of-israels-genocide-in-gaza/>



Occupation:

The United Nations views Israel's presence in the Palestinian Territories as an occupation. The UN General Assembly recently passed a non-binding resolution demanding that Israel end its "unlawful presence" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within a year[1][2][5]. This resolution reflects the UN's stance, supported by an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, which also declared Israel's actions in these territories as illegal under international law[1][2].

Sources:

[1] UN General Assembly demands Israel ends occupation of ... - BBC
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdx9z96ldveo>

[2] UN votes against Israel's occupation of Palestine: Will it change ...
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/19/unga-resolution-against-palestine-occupation-will-it-change-anything>

[3] UN General Assembly demands Israel ends occupation of ... - BBC
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx9z96ldveo>

[4] The UK's explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly ...
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uks-explanation-of-vote-on-the-un-general-assembly-resolution-on-the-icjs-advisory-opinion-on-israels-presence-in-the-occupied-palestinian-terr>

[5] General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Historic Text Demanding ...
<https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12626.doc.htm>

[6] UN demands Israel end 'unlawful' presence in Palestinian territories ...
<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-demand-israel-end-unlawful-presence-palestinian-territories-within-12-months-2024-09-18/>

[7] UN experts warn international order on a knife's edge, urge States to ...
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/09/un-experts-warn-international-order-knifes-edge-urge-states-comply-icj-advisory>



The UK Government also views Israel's presence in the Palestinian Territories as an occupation. The UK Government consistently refers to these areas as the "Occupied Palestinian Territories" and considers Israeli settlements there illegal under international law[1][2]. The UK has called for Israel to end its presence in these territories, aligning with the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion that deems the occupation unlawful[3][4]. The UK advocates for a negotiated two-state solution to resolve the conflict[2].

Sources:

[1] The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is wholly ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-expansion-of-israeli-settlements-in-the-west-bank-is-wholly-unacceptable-and-illegal-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

[2] British Government's Current Position: The occupation of Palestinian ...

<https://balfourproject.org/the-occupation-of-palestinian-land/>

[3] International Court of Justice ruling confirms that Israel's presence in ...

<https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/international-court-justice-ruling-confirms-israels-presence-palestinian-territory-unlawful>

[4] ICJ says Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal - BBC

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjerjzxlpvdo>

[5] UN General Assembly demands Israel ends occupation of ... - BBC

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx9z96ldveo>

[6] Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory - Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territory>

[7] Israel-Hamas conflict: UK response October 2023 to July 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9874/>

[8] Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: UK response to the ...

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10085/>



Terrorist [Applied to Hamas]:

The United Nations has not officially designated Hamas as a terrorist organisation. A top UN official, Martin Griffiths, stated that "Hamas is not a terrorist group for us," referring to it as a political movement[2]. This position contrasts with many countries, including the United States, European Union, and Israel, which have designated Hamas as a terrorist organisation[1][3]. There have been calls from various entities for the UN to recognise Hamas as a terrorist group, but it remains off the UN Security Council's list of designated terrorist organisations[3].

Sources:

[1] What Is Hamas? | Council on Foreign Relations

<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hamas>

[2] Top UN Aid Official Says Hamas Is Not a Terrorist Group - FDD

<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/02/16/top-un-aid-official-says-hamas-is-not-a-terrorist-group/>

[3] Senator Collins, Bipartisan Group Urge UN to Designate Hamas as ...

<https://www.collins.senate.gov/newsroom/senator-collins-bipartisan-group-urge-un-to-designate-hamas-as-a-terrorist-organization>

[4] Special Coordinator, Stressing 'All Sides Must Urgently Change ...

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15710.doc.htm>

[5] Israel and Hamas added to UN list for violating children's rights -

BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cv223vlerdvo>

[6] Israel-Hamas conflict: UK response October 2023 to July 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9874/>

[7] Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version>

[8] [DOC] P9_TA(2023)0373 - European Parliament

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0373_EN.docx



However, the UK Government has designated Hamas as a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000[1][4][5].

Sources:

[1] Man arrested over chants at pro-Palestine protest - BBC

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgj454xzzy9o>

[2] Hamas - foreign terrorist organization - DNI.gov

https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/hamas_fto.html

[3] What Is Hamas? | Council on Foreign Relations

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

[4] Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version>

[5] UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9900/>

[6] Israel-Hamas conflict: UK response October 2023 to July 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9874/>

[7] BBC defends policy not to call Hamas 'terrorists' after criticism

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-67076341>

[8] BBC Told By UK Government To Call Hamas A Terrorism Group

<https://deadline.com/2023/10/bbc-hamas-terrorism-uk-government-pressure-1235568657/>



Terrorist [Applied to certain Jewish settlers in the West Bank]:

Neither the UN nor the UK Government has referred to any West Bank Jewish settlers as "terrorists". The UK has imposed sanctions on four extremist Israeli settlers involved in violence against Palestinians in the West Bank[1] [2]. These sanctions include financial and travel restrictions targeting individuals who have committed human rights abuses[1].

Sources:

[1] UK sanctions extremist settlers in the West Bank - GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-settlers-in-the-west-bank>

[2] The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is wholly ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-expansion-of-israeli-settlements-in-the-west-bank-is-wholly-unacceptable-and-illegal-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

[3] International action against Israeli settlers who commit violence in ...

<https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-03-05/international-community-takes-action-against-israeli-settlers-who-commit-violence-in-the-west-bank-grows.html>

[4] Israeli settler violence - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_settler_violence

[5] The UK has helped create the crisis in the Middle East. Do we now ...

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/09/26/the-uk-has-helped-create-the-crisis-in-the-middle-east-do-we-now-have-the-objectivity-to-help-solve-it/>

[6] Israel-Hamas conflict: UK response October 2023 to July 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9874/>

[7] The British Army in Palestine | National Army Museum

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/conflict-Palestine>

[8] UK slaps sanctions on West Bank settlers for 'egregious' violence ...

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/uk-slaps-sanctions-on-west-bank-settlers-for-egregious-violence-following-us-move/>



War Crimes:

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has not yet concluded any cases regarding war crimes by Israel or Palestine. An investigation was opened in 2021 into alleged war crimes by Israeli military forces and Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas, since June 2014[1]. Arrest warrants have been requested for leaders from both sides, including Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas's Yahya Sinwar[2].

Sources:

- [1] International Criminal Court investigation in Palestine - Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court_investigation_in_Palestine
- [2] Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for ...
<https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state>
- [3] The ICJ and ICC put Israel on notice but cannot stop the war
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/05/icj-and-icc-put-israel-notice-cannot-stop-war>
- [4] What Do the ICC Warrants Against Israel and Hamas Mean ... - RUSI
<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/what-do-icc-warrants-against-israel-and-hamas-mean-conflict>
- [5] State of Palestine | International Criminal Court <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>
- [6] Alarm in Israel at reports of possible ICC legal action over Gaza - BBC
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68938022>
- [7] Have war crimes been committed in Israel and Gaza and what ...
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/31/have-war-crimes-been-committed-in-israel-and-gaza-and-what-international-laws-apply>



Thank You

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