

## **Liberal Democrat amendment to Oldham Group Motion: The Conflict in Gaza**

**Moved by Councillor Al-Hamdani**

**Seconded by Councillor Harkness**

Whatever your background, creed, colour, or political persuasion, there is no one in this borough that has been left untouched by the current conflict in Gaza.

As national politicians squabble in parliament, the ongoing conflict has resulted in significant loss of life. Over 30000 Palestinians have died so far, The majority, 21000 at the most recent count, are women and children. This is in addition to the nearly 1200 Israelis and others who were killed as a result of the Hamas attacks on 7 October.

As the numbers of the innocent Palestinians being killed increase and with no end to suffering in sight, we call upon this Council to act and add the voices of the people of Oldham to those of the millions across the world appalled by the atrocities of the conflict in Gaza.

However small our voice, we as a council should add our name to the many Councils across England pleading for an immediate ceasefire and to stop the violence and protect civilian lives. This should include the release of hostages and detainees, and lead to a long-lasting credible solution to this conflict.

However insignificant we know our influence to be, we must speak out in support of the aid agencies that are being prevented from reaching those that are starving to death. The need for humanitarian agencies to provide essential aid and assistance to those affected by the conflict is critical.

As this council knows, many Oldhamers have donated to these agencies. As we debate this issue, there are groups of children and young people from across our town raising funds for these aid agencies. They are pleading with us to help get the aid through. We are pleading with you all here to do what can be done and help people from starving to death.

Caring about others does not make us extremists. From all backgrounds, all of us are traumatised by the images of the horrors of the conflict in Gaza. We are concerned about the daily reported breaches of human rights, including allegations of genocide and ethnic cleansing. No one, however powerful they are, should be above the law. Which is why the people of this borough believe it is right that investigations to hold perpetrators accountable are done so through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court.

This is why so many of us were shocked by the comments of the leader of the Labour Party Sir Keir Starmer when he shared his belief in an LBC radio interview on October 11th that Israel had the right to cut off electricity and water to the population of over 2 million civilians in Gaza. What the Labour Party leader is describing is collective punishment. Collective punishment is a war crime.

At its core, this motion seeks to affirm the United Kingdom's commitment to upholding human rights, promoting peace, and holding perpetrators of violence and atrocities accountable for their actions. No matter the justification of this atrocity, the cause of humanity should be at the forefront of all our minds.

The Council notes;

the convention of the prevention and punishment of the crime and genocide as the first human right treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9th December 1948

that according to the Genocide Convention, ratified by 153 states including the United Kingdom, that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law that collective punishment is a war crime as prohibited by treaty in both international and non-international armed conflicts, more specifically Common Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 4 of the Additional Protocol II

The council further notes;

- that after initially abstaining or failing to turn up to vote supporting a ceasefire, all 3 Oldham Labour Party MPs now support what Labour describe as an 'immediate humanitarian ceasefire' which does not go far enough to stop the plausible case of genocide

- the statement from the Secretary-General of the United Nations condemning the incident in northern Gaza on 29 February in which more than a hundred people were reportedly killed or injured while seeking life-saving aid and his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages

- the head of UNICEF's warning that without safe water, "many more children" will soon die from disease. "Access to sufficient amounts of clean water is a matter of life and death...children in Gaza have barely a drop to drink...without safe water, many more children will die from deprivation and disease in the coming days."

-the order from the ICJ for Israel to facilitate the provision aid was one of six provisional measures ordered by the Court on 26 January 2024. Since that period, Amnesty International has reported that Israel has continued to disregard its obligation as the occupying power to ensure the basic needs of Palestinians in Gaza are met and failed to lift restrictions on the entry of life-saving goods, or open additional aid access points and crossings or put in place an effective system to protect humanitarians from attack that in its January 26 decision, the ICJ ordered Israel to take steps to prevent any acts of genocide in Gaza. The Court required that Israel ensure that it does not commit acts that might fall within the scope of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This includes that Israel takes steps to punish any Israeli who might have individually committed acts of genocide or incited others to commit acts of genocide in Palestine.

The Council resolves;

1. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister reiterating the United Kingdom's commitment to adhering to the Geneva Convention and International law

and request that His Majesty's Government communicate this with all

2. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to all 3 Oldham MPs, Debbie Abrahams, Jim McMahon & Angela Raynor, on behalf of the people of Oldham, condemning the statement issued by their party leader Sir Keir Starmer and ask that all 3 MPs confirm their understanding that collective punishment is a war crime

3. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary General of the United Nations informing him that the citizens of Oldham stand alongside millions from across the world and support the United Nations demands for an immediate ceasefire and for Humanitarian aid to be provided to all those in need in the affected area of Gaza

4. To write to the Foreign Secretary requesting that our government does everything possible to help bring the governments of Israel and Palestine together to resolve the issue and create a two state solution so that innocent lives are no longer at risk