

**Research Briefing**

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By Library specialists

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# Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: UK response to the conflict since July 2024

## Summary

- 1 The situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2024
- 2 UK Government and opposition statements
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## Summary

On 7 October 2023, the Palestinian group Hamas, officially designated a terrorist group by many countries including Israel, the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom, commenced an armed assault against Israel. It launched several thousand rockets into Israel and conducted attacks in border areas, [killing around 1,200 civilians](#) and [taking 253 hostages](#), as part of what it called “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”.

In response, in October [Israel conducted air strikes against Hamas in Gaza](#) and launched a ground attack to “[destroy Hamas’ governing and military capabilities and to bring the hostages home](#)”. Hamas continued to [fire rockets into Israel after 7 October](#). Fighting in Gaza is ongoing.

This briefing provides information on the UK response, including activity at the UN and statements from the government and opposition parties from 5 July 2024. The Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#) details the international response to the conflict, including actions at the UN Security Council, the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court, and wider violence in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

## Ongoing hostilities and casualties

Fighting between Israel and Hamas is centred in southern Gaza, Khan Younis and the Rafah crossing into Egypt, where in May [Israel announced it would conduct “limited” operations against Hamas](#) and ordered the evacuation of Palestinian civilians. [Around 90% of Palestinians in Gaza are displaced](#).

Citing Israeli authorities, the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health and Palestinian civil defense, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) says that [since 7 October over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been reported killed and around 5,400 injured](#). At least 40,861 Palestinians have been reported killed, a further 10,000 are missing or under rubble and 94,398 injured across Gaza and Israel ([as of 4 September 2024](#)).

There is also [ongoing violence in the occupied West Bank](#) and [hostilities between Israel and Iran-aligned Hezbollah](#) (also a proscribed terrorist group in the UK) in Lebanon and northern Israel. Other Iran-supported groups such as the [Houthis in Yemen](#) and [Shia militias in Iraq and Syria](#) have been launching attacks on civilian shipping and against US and Israeli targets.

On 13 April, [Iran launched its first direct attack on Israel](#). It said this was in retaliation for an attack on its consulate in Syria, launching 330 drones and missiles (of which 99% were intercepted).

## Pauses in fighting and ceasefire proposals

From 24 November to 1 December, a pause took place to enable the release of hostages. Before the pause began, Israel said it would last no longer than 10 days and that [fighting would then resume](#). The pause enabled the [release of 110 hostages](#) from Gaza and 240 Palestinian prisoners from Israel.

On 10 June, the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\) passed a resolution](#) introduced by the US for a three-stage plan to end the conflict, [backed by Israel](#). Its first stage includes the release of many hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israel, an increase in aid and withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas of Gaza. The UNSC called on Hamas and Israel to implement the agreement. [Israel said it remains committed to destroying Hamas](#).

## UK actions and response (from 5 July 2024)

### Government advice for British nationals

- Any [British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#) and [British nationals in Lebanon](#) should register their presence with the UK Government. The government advises that [all British nationals should leave Lebanon](#). In July 2024 the Foreign Secretary warned that [the UK may not be able to arrange the immediate evacuation](#) of British nationals from northern Israel and Lebanon if events escalate.
- UK visa holders in Gaza can [contact the UK for assistance to leave](#) if they hold valid permission to enter or remain in the UK for more than six months and have a spouse/partner or a child aged 17 or under in the UK.
- There are [no exit routes for foreign nationals to leave Gaza](#) due to fighting around the Rafah crossing. The UK is looking for alternatives.

### Military, diplomatic and humanitarian actions

- [The UK Government has deployed military assets](#) to promote de-escalation and conduct surveillance activities. The government has [not provided “lethal or military equipment”](#) to Israel since 7 October 2023.
- UK military assets [supported the defence of Israel against Iran in April](#) and will continue to do so. The UK is also participating in [Operation Prosperity Guardian](#) to protect Red Sea shipping from Houthi attacks and is conducting air strikes against the group alongside the United States.

- In 2023/24, [the UK provided over £100 million in aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#). None is directed via Hamas. In July, the government announced [new funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees \(UNRWA\)](#). New UK funding had been paused in January following allegations some of its staff were involved in the 7 October assault. In July, the UK announced it would continue funding following UNRWA commitments to reform to ensure its neutrality. The briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip](#), has more.

## Government and opposition statements on the conflict

- Ceasefire and hostages: the UK Government [backs the Biden-proposed three stage ceasefire agreement](#), as did [the Conservatives when in government](#). The [Liberal Democrats back a ceasefire](#), something [also supported by the SNP](#).
- Arms exports: in September the UK Government said it would [suspend around 30 of the 350 arms export licences in place to Israel, following a review](#). Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that the UK continues to support Israel's right to self defence in line with international humanitarian law, but he had concluded that [“for certain UK arms exports to Israel there does exist a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law”](#). A statement [sets out the government's reasoning](#).

The Conservatives [criticised the announcement's timing](#) and questioned how it would support the release of hostages. The [Liberal Democrats](#) and [SNP](#) welcomed the decision but called for UK restrictions to go further.

- Two-state solution: [Labour says it will recognise a Palestinian state](#) alongside a “safe and secure Israel” when it judges this will best support the peace process. The [Conservatives also support a two-state solution](#). The [Liberal Democrats intend to introduce a bill](#) for the immediate recognition of a Palestinian state. The [SNP intend to bring a vote to the Commons](#) on recognition.
- Israeli settler violence: the [UK has announced visa restrictions](#) against “extremist Israeli settlers” and [keeps further sanctions under review](#). Israel's Prime Minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu, condemned the violence](#).
- International Criminal Court (ICC): in May 2024 the ICC prosecutor applied to the court's judges for warrants against three Hamas leaders and two Israeli leaders (Mr Netanyahu and the defence minister). The [full press release](#) details allegations against the specific individuals.

When in government, the [Conservatives questioned whether the ICC had jurisdiction](#), as Israel is not a member of the court. It [intended to submit observations to the ICC](#) on the topic. The Labour government [did not submit any observations](#) by the ICC's 26 July deadline, [“in line with its position that this is a matter for the Court to decide on”](#). Mr Lammy says [the UK should respect any ICC decision](#).

- International Court of Justice (ICJ): South Africa has brought a case against Israel at the ICJ. The ICJ has [issued three preliminary orders](#) that call for Israel to increase aid and to minimise civilian casualties (among other measures). In January 2024, Mr Lammy said Israel should comply “in full”. The [Liberal Democrats say that the UK should comply](#) with the ICC (see above) and the ICJ. The [SNP has also said this](#).
- Post-conflict Gaza: both Labour and Conservative governments said [Hamas cannot be allowed to remain in Gaza](#) and threaten Israel. Mr Lammy has also said that Israeli Defence Forces cannot remain in Gaza. He has suggested “trusted” Arab states may take a security role there.

# 1 The situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2024

## Events since 7 October and in the wider Middle East

The section below provides a brief overview of events since 7 October 2023. It focuses primarily on the period since early July 2024 (when a new UK Parliament was elected and a new government formed).

It is not intended to provide detailed information on fast-moving events.

During active conflicts, statistics and reports on specific events can be difficult to verify. This is because journalists, researchers and civil society organisations face challenges accessing conflict zones.

The Commons Library research briefing [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UK response to July 2024](#) provides more information on events in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 7 October 2023 to early July 2024. Section 1 of the briefing includes links to further reading, fact-checking resources, and statements issued by the Israeli Government, Palestinian Authority and UK Government.

The Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#) sets out UN Security Council and international court action, the activities of Hezbollah, the Houthis and other Iran-backed groups, and the responses from the US, the EU and Middle East states.

## 1.1 Hamas's attack on Israel and Israel's response

### Hamas assault on 7 October 2023

On 7 October 2023, the Palestinian group Hamas, officially designated a terrorist organisation by the Israeli, US, and UK governments, commenced an armed assault against Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas and [other Palestinian armed groups](#) (including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, also a designated terrorist organisation in the UK) launched several

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office, [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), updated 26 April 2024



thousand rockets into Israel and conducted attacks in border areas. They killed around 1,200 civilians and took a reported 251 hostages to Gaza.<sup>2</sup>

In September 2024, it was estimated that 101 hostages remained in Gaza, including four taken hostage before 7 October 2023. Israeli officials estimate that “at least 35” of them are presumed to have died.<sup>3</sup>

Hamas continued to fire rockets and projectiles into Israel after 7 October, including from Lebanon. The number of rockets being fired has fallen in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

## Israeli ground offensive in Gaza from October 2023

In response to the assault, on 8 October Israel’s security cabinet declared war on Hamas and said it would launch “significant military activities” against it.<sup>5</sup>

On 28 October 2023, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commenced a ground offensive in Gaza.<sup>6</sup> This has continued, aside from the pause between 24 November and 1 December 2023 (see below).

On 15 January 2024, the Israeli Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, said that the “intensive phase” of the IDF action in northern Gaza had ended.<sup>7</sup> The IDF also said that it had completed the “dismantling” of Hamas in north Gaza. However, in May it resumed its actions in the area, saying Hamas was aiming to “reassemble”.<sup>8</sup>

In February, the Israeli Government said it intended to extend its offensive to southern Gaza and the Rafah governorate if the hostages were not released.<sup>9</sup>

Israel’s government estimated between 5,000 and 8,000 Hamas fighters were in Rafah, along with the hostages taken on 7 October 2023. The majority of Palestinians in Gaza, around 1.5 million, had been displaced to Rafah by earlier action.<sup>10</sup>

Israel said it would arrange for the evacuation of civilians before it commenced its Rafah action.<sup>11</sup> The US, UK and other states said they would not support a “major” offensive in Rafah without a plan to protect civilians.<sup>12</sup>

On 6 May, the IDF action commenced and on 7 May it took control of the Rafah crossing. The Rafah crossing, closed since 7 May, was the main corridor

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<sup>2</sup> [Six hostages’ bodies retrieved, Israel’s military says](#), BBC News, 20 August 2024

<sup>3</sup> [Hostage deaths build pressure on Netanyahu for Hamas deal](#), FT, 2 September 2024

<sup>4</sup> [Hamas fires rockets into Israel from Lebanon](#), New York Times, 29 April 2024

<sup>5</sup> [Security Council confirms Israel at war \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 8 October 2023

<sup>6</sup> [Oct. 28: Israel expands ground offensive inside Gaza](#), Times of Israel, 28 October 2023

<sup>7</sup> [Gallant: Intense fighting is over in northern Gaza](#), Times of Israel, 15 January 2024

<sup>8</sup> [Israel’s return to areas of Gaza it said were clear of Hamas \[...\]](#), CNN, 13 May 2024

<sup>9</sup> [Israeli minister says ground offensive in Rafah will begin by Ramadan \[...\]](#), CNN, 19 February 2024

<sup>10</sup> [Israel’s troops take control of Rafah border crossing in Gaza](#), Bloomberg, 7 May 2024

<sup>11</sup> [Netanyahu orders military to plan evacuations from Rafah](#), BBC News, 10 February 2024

<sup>12</sup> UN, [Speakers in Security Council urge Israel to stop military incursions into Rafah](#), 20 May 2024; [Israel’s operation in Rafah doesn’t cross US red lines — White House](#), BBC News, 29 May 2024

for the delivery of aid since October 2023 (though other points are being used). Rafah was also the only point for civilians to leave Gaza. Limited medical evacuations have taken place since May via other routes.<sup>13</sup>

Fighting is also taking place in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, where the IDF has issued evacuation orders for Palestinian civilians.<sup>14</sup>

In August, the UK Government said that Israel “must ensure it complies” with international humanitarian law when issuing evacuation orders.<sup>15</sup> It said that Israel “must minimise evacuation orders” and “provide sufficient notice of at least 24 hours”.<sup>16</sup>

On 23 June, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that “the intense phase of the fighting against Hamas is about to end”, and some IDF would be moved to the Lebanese border for “defensive purposes”. Hezbollah has launched rocket and projectile attacks against Israel from Lebanon (see below).<sup>17</sup>

On 10 August, an IDF strike on al-Tabeen school in Gaza city was reported by Hamas to have killed at least 93 people. The strike was condemned by the Palestinian Authority. The IDF says that Hamas’s estimate of the number of people killed is inflated and has so far verified the deaths of 31 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters in the strike. At the UN, the UK said that it was “appalled” by the Israeli strike on al-Tabeen school “where Palestinian civilians were sheltering”. The UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that “Hamas must stop endangering civilians. Israel must comply with international humanitarian law”.<sup>18</sup>

In May, Israeli and American officials estimated that the number of Hamas fighters had been reduced from between 20,000 and 25,000 before the conflict to between 9,000 and 12,000.<sup>19</sup>

On 9 September, the Israeli Defence Minister said that “Hamas as a military unit no longer exists” and is engaged “in guerilla warfare”. Israeli action in Gaza was “wrapping up”. He said the “centre of gravity is shifting to the north”.<sup>20</sup>

Broadly, Hamas has two leadership structures: a political one, based outside Gaza, and a military one, based in Gaza. At least eight senior Hamas leaders have been killed since 7 October 2023. On 13 July, the head of the military

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<sup>13</sup> World Health Organization, [WHO and UAE evacuate 85 patients from Gaza](#), 30 July 2024

<sup>14</sup> [Israel expands evacuation order in Gaza’s Khan Younis \[...\]](#), Al-Monitor, 11 August 2024

<sup>15</sup> FCDO, [Palestinians have nowhere safe to turn](#), 13 August 2024

<sup>16</sup> FCDO, [The UN are running out of safe places for their staff](#), 29 August 2024

<sup>17</sup> [Netanyahu says “intense phase” of Rafah fighting ending \[...\]](#), France 24, 23 June 2024

<sup>18</sup> [Hamas says over 100 killed in Israeli strike on Gaza school](#), BBC Monitoring, 10 August 2024; [IDF names another 12 Hamas, Islamic Jihad terrorists \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 12 August 2024; [Hamas denounces UK foreign secretary’s remarks on Gaza school](#), BBC Monitoring, 10 August 2024; FCDO, [Palestinians have nowhere safe to turn](#), 13 August 2024

<sup>19</sup> [Diminished Hamas switches to full insurgent mode](#), Reuters, 6 June 2024

<sup>20</sup> [Israel defence minister says Gaza truce deal a ‘strategic opportunity’](#), France 24, 10 September 2024; [Gallant signals Lebanon ground operation](#), Jerusalem Post, 10 September 2024

wing, Mohammed Dief, was killed in Gaza. On 31 July, the Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Iran. Israel has not confirmed or denied it was responsible for Haniyeh's death.<sup>21</sup>

In August, Hamas appointed Yahya Sinwar as its new overall political leader. Sinwar had been Hamas's political leader in Gaza since 2017. Israeli intelligence identifies him as the primary planner of the 7 October assault against Israel.<sup>22</sup>

## Israeli Government and Palestinian Authority statements on the 2023/24 conflict

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said "total victory" in the conflict has four elements:

when we eliminate the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, bring all of our hostages back home, ensure that Gaza will never again constitute a threat to Israel, and return our residents in the south [of Israel] and the north [of Israel] securely to their homes [...]<sup>23</sup>

He has also set out an aim to "deradicalize" Palestinian society (referring to a change in Palestinian leadership and the curriculum taught in schools).<sup>24</sup> Following the killing of Hamas leader Muhammad Deif in July 2024, Mr Netanyahu also said that "we will reach the entire Hamas leadership".<sup>25</sup>

The Israeli Government says it is committed to conducting its operations in line with international law, increasing aid, and avoiding civilian casualties.<sup>26</sup>

The [Palestinian Authority has had limited authority over Gaza](#) following the 2006 victory by Hamas in parliamentary elections. In 2007, fighting between Hamas and [Fatah \(the majority party of the Palestinian Authority\)](#) resulted in Hamas taking control of Gaza.<sup>27</sup>

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has called for an immediate ceasefire, more humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza.<sup>28</sup>

In July 2024, China hosted talks in which [Hamas and Fatah signed a declaration to end their division](#) (this is not the first time such an agreement has been reached). China said it hoped it would lead to reconciliation and the

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<sup>21</sup> US Institute for Peace, [Israeli assassination of Hamas leaders](#), 1 August 2024

<sup>22</sup> [Hamas names Yahya Sinwar as new overall leader](#), BBC News, 6 August 2024

<sup>23</sup> Israeli Prime Minister's Office, [Statement by PM Netanyahu](#), 13 July 2024

<sup>24</sup> [Benjamin Netanyahu: our three prerequisites for peace](#), Wall Street Journal, 25 December 2023

<sup>25</sup> Israeli Prime Minister's Office, [Statement by PM Netanyahu](#), 13 July 2024

<sup>26</sup> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Hamas-Israel conflict 2023: FAQs](#) (PDF), 6 December 2023

<sup>27</sup> [A guide to Palestinian and other anti-Israeli factions](#), Foreign Policy, 10 October 2023

<sup>28</sup> [Palestinian leadership reiterates call for immediate end \[...\]](#), WAFA, 1 June 2024

“realisa[tion] of independent statehood at an early date”. In response, Israel, the UK and the US reiterated that Hamas should not retain control of Gaza.<sup>29</sup>

## 1.2

# Humanitarian situation in Gaza and access

## Statements on casualty numbers

Citing Israeli authorities, the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health and Palestinian civil defense, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) says that since 7 October, [more than 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been reported killed and around 5,400 injured](#). At least 40,861 Palestinians have been reported killed, a further 10,000 are missing or under rubble, and about 94,398 reported injured across Gaza and Israel ([as of 4 September 2024](#)).<sup>30</sup>

Data on Palestinian casualties are not restricted to civilian deaths and injuries. In August 2024, the UK told the UN Security Council that of the 40,000 people killed to date, “children account for nearly a third of identified casualties”.<sup>31</sup>

More information on how these figures are reported and the challenges involved is provided in BBC Verify articles, [How the dead are counted in Gaza](#) (16 November 2023) and [Why is the UN citing lower death toll for women and children?](#) (16 May 2024) and a Reuters article, [How many Palestinians have died in Gaza? Death toll explained](#) (9 December 2023).

The Israeli Government contests the casualty figures cited by UNOCHA. In September Mr Netanyahu said that the ratio of civilian to combatant deaths was “1 to 1” and that between 17,000 and 18,000 “Hamas operatives” had been killed from 7 October 2023 to September 2024.<sup>32</sup> Israeli authorities have named 706 soldiers and 66 police officers killed on and since 7 October 2023.<sup>33</sup>

## Displacement and humanitarian need

UN agencies have reported fighting, military operations, and air strikes in and around hospitals, schools and places of shelter across Gaza.<sup>34</sup>

Around 90% of Gaza’s 2.2 million population are displaced within the strip.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [Hamas and Fatah sign a declaration \[...\]](#), AP, 23 July 2024; PRO Foreign Affairs Ministry, [Palestinian factions sign \[...\] declaration](#), 23 July 2024; PQ 3016 [[Palestinian Authority](#)], 9 September 2024

<sup>30</sup> UNOCHA, [Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>31</sup> FCDO, [Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world to be a child](#), 22 August 2024

<sup>32</sup> [Netanyahu lashes out at foreign press for “false” reporting](#), Times of Israel, 4 September 2024

<sup>33</sup> [Authorities name 704 soldiers, 63 police officers killed \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 1 September 2024

<sup>34</sup> UNOCHA, [Flash update 46](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>35</sup> UNOCHA, [Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip](#), 31 July 2024

In June 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported a “high risk” of famine across the whole of Gaza if the conflict continues and aid access is restricted. It reported that 495,000 people were currently in phase 5 of food insecurity (classed as “Catastrophe/Famine” in the [IPC’s food insecurity scale](#) (PDF). It said 96% of the population of Gaza (2.15 million) face “high levels of acute food insecurity” through to September 2024.<sup>36</sup>

Israel argues that the IPC report had methodological weaknesses and says it places no limits on the amount of aid, including food, that can enter Gaza.<sup>37</sup>

The World Food Programme has said it has been forced to provide reduced rations in Gaza due to limited aid entering southern and central Gaza.<sup>38</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of the threat of disease. The first case of polio in Gaza in 25 years was confirmed in August 2024. The WHO has launched a vaccination campaign but said pauses in the fighting are necessary to vaccinate children and allow sustained access for health workers (the UN Secretary General has made a similar request). In 2023, polio vaccination coverage in Gaza stood at 89%, down from 99% in 2022.<sup>39</sup>

On 29 August, the WHO welcomed a “preliminary commitment” from Israel for “specific humanitarian pause” to support the vaccination of children.<sup>40</sup> Pauses to allow for vaccination began on 1 September.<sup>41</sup>

## Aid access

Gaza is heavily dependent on Israeli energy and water.<sup>42</sup> On 9 October 2023 Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said there would be a “total siege” of Gaza with no electricity, water, food or fuel, though these goods have subsequently been allowed to enter.<sup>43</sup> Since November 2023, Israel has allowed limited amounts of fuel to enter Gaza to support the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).<sup>44</sup>

There are five main crossing points into Gaza: Rafah, “Gate 96”, West Erez, and Erez crossings, which are primarily used for people. The fifth main crossing, Kerem Shalom, is used to transmit goods between Israel and Gaza.

In June, the UNOCHA said access constraints, fighting, fuel shortages and food insecurity had made it difficult to deliver aid across Gaza. It said the

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<sup>36</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [Gaza: Acute food insecurity situation](#), 25 June 2024

<sup>37</sup> [“Multiple factual flaws”: Israel contests UN-backed report \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 30 March 2024; Israeli Government, [Swords of Iron: humanitarian efforts](#), updated 7 May 2024

<sup>38</sup> World Food Programme, [State of Palestine](#), accessed 2 August 2024

<sup>39</sup> WHO, [Gaza: first polio case confirmed](#), 23 August 2024; UN, [Gaza remains at “high risk” of polio virus spread](#), 14 August 2024; UN, [Guterres appeals for “polio pause” in Gaza](#), 16 August 2024

<sup>40</sup> Security Council Report, [The Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#), 29 August 2024

<sup>41</sup> UN, [Gaza: Polio vaccination campaign moves to southern areas](#), 5 September 2024

<sup>42</sup> Unicef, [The Gaza Strip. The humanitarian impact of 15 years of blockade](#), June 2022

<sup>43</sup> [Defence Minister announces ‘complete siege’ of Gaza \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 9 October 2023; [UN says fuel shortages will halt Gaza aid operations within a day](#), CNN, 26 October 2023

<sup>44</sup> [Israel to allow some fuel into Gaza after US push-officials](#), Reuters, 18 November 2023

closure of the Rafah crossing since the Israeli offensive in May 2024 and “challenges in retrieving fuel in Kerem Shalom” were leading to “major fuel shortages”, affecting water, sanitation, health and other facilities.<sup>45</sup> In August, UNOCHA said fighting and evacuation orders were “severely impact[ing] our ability to deliver essential support and services.”<sup>46</sup>

Currently, four crossings are open but not Rafah, which has been closed since the Israeli offensive in the Rafah governorate in May.<sup>47</sup> The UN, US and UK, among others, have called for an increase in the amount of aid entering Gaza to meet the [aim of 500 trucks a day set by Israel](#). UNOCHA figures from September report that the highest daily average occurred in April, when 169 trucks entered each day (this does not include fuel trucks).<sup>48</sup>

Section 1.3 of the Commons Library briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip](#), provides information on the UK assessment on access and the changes it wants Israel to implement to increase the delivery of aid.

## 1.3

## Situation in the West Bank

### Levels of violence

Violence is ongoing in the West Bank. UNOCHA reports that 2023 was the “deadliest year” for Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank since it began recording casualties in 2005 (with 36 Israeli and 506 Palestinian deaths).<sup>49</sup>

UNOCHA also states that in 2023 there were 1,229 incidents involving Israeli settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that resulted in damage or Palestinian casualties. This was the highest total since it began collecting incident data in 2006.<sup>50</sup>

In 2024, UNOCHA has reported ongoing search-and-arrest operations by the IDF and confrontations and demonstrations, resulting in deaths and injuries.<sup>51</sup>

BBC Monitoring analysis reports a rising use of air and drone strikes by the IDF in the West Bank. The number of Israeli drone and air strikes totalled 47 from the summer of 2023 to 28 August 2024. Before this, the last reported air strike was in 2006. Israel has said the use of aircraft is to address the “mounting terrorism” and armed activity in the West Bank.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> UN, [Aid constraints and health issues persist \[...\]](#), 28 June 2024; UNRWA, [Situation report 115](#), 26 June 2024

<sup>46</sup> UN, [In Gaza, evacuation orders threaten to uproot UN's aid hub once again](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>47</sup> [Aid to Gaza choked off as border crossings closed](#), VOA, 7 May 2024

<sup>48</sup> UNOCHA, [Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>49</sup> UNOCHA, [Hostilities in Gaza Strip and Israel, flash update 80](#), 30 December 2023

<sup>50</sup> UNOCHA, [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, flash update 94](#), 16 January 2024

<sup>51</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian situation update 198, West Bank](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>52</sup> [Israel increases West Bank air strikes](#), BBC Monitoring, 29 August 2024

In August 2024, Israel launched a counter-terrorism operation in four cities in the West Bank. This is reportedly the first time since 2005 that several Palestinian cities in the West Bank have been targeted simultaneously.<sup>53</sup> IDF forces reportedly withdrew after ten days.<sup>54</sup> The IDF announced it had killed Hamas fighters in the West Bank.<sup>55</sup> Israel has also accused Iran of seeking to smuggle weapons to Hamas via Jordan and the West Bank.<sup>56</sup>

On 28 August, the UN Secretary General's spokesperson had called for an "immediate cessation" of the operation and said it was "fuelling an already explosive situation" and "undermin[ing] the Palestinian Authority".<sup>57</sup>

The UK Government also said it was "deeply concerned" by the IDF military operation and the "methods Israel has employed", though recognised Israel's right to defend itself.<sup>58</sup>

In September, UNOCHA reported that from 7 October 2023 to 2 September 2024, 652 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These included 634 killed by Israeli forces, 11 by Israeli settlers and seven where it remains unknown if they were killed by the IDF or settlers.<sup>59</sup>

During the same period, 18 Israelis, including 13 members of the IDF and five settlers, were killed by Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In Israel, attacks by Palestinians from the West Bank resulted in the deaths of 10 Israelis and seven Palestinian perpetrators.<sup>60</sup>

Over the same period, UNOCHA recorded around 1,300 attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians. In over 120 of the attacks Palestinians were killed and injured, in about 1,050 there was damage to Palestinian property, and over 140 attacks led to both casualties and damage.<sup>61</sup>

In February 2024, the US said the West Bank had experienced "unprecedented levels of violence by Israeli extremist settlers targeting Palestinians" and "violence by Palestinian extremist militants against Israeli civilians".<sup>62</sup> In July, the UK said that "settler violence have reached record levels" and that it would act against those who "undermine a two-state solution".<sup>63</sup> Both have announced sanctions against some involved in the violence (see section 3.4 for the UK).

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<sup>53</sup> [Israel military launches major West Bank operation](#), BBC News, 28 August 2024

<sup>54</sup> [Israeli forces withdraw after 10-day raid](#), BBC Monitoring, 6 September 2024

<sup>55</sup> [Israel says Hamas leader killed on third day of West Bank operation](#), BBC News, 30 August 2024

<sup>56</sup> [FM Katz accuses Iran of smuggling weapons into West Bank](#), Times of Israel, 29 August 2024;

[Jordan foils arms plot as kingdom caught in Iran-Israel shadow war](#), Reuters, 15 May 2024

<sup>57</sup> UN, [Statement attributable to the spokesperson for the Secretary General](#), 28 August 2024

<sup>58</sup> FCDO, [UK statement in response to IDF military operation \[...\]](#), 30 August 2024

<sup>59</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian situation update 213, West Bank](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>60</sup> As above

<sup>61</sup> As above

<sup>62</sup> US DoS, [Department press briefing](#), 1 February 2024

<sup>63</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c300

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has condemned settler violence but said “accusations against the settlement movement [are] baseless” and those involved in the violence are not representative.<sup>64</sup> In response to a settler attack on one village in August 2024, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said a “small, radical minority...is harming the law-abiding settler public and Israel’s status”.<sup>65</sup>

The head of Shin Bet (the Israel Security Agency), Ronen Bar, argued in an August 2024 letter to the Israeli Government (later released by the Israeli press) that settler violence was causing “indescribable” damage to Israel and some acts constituted “terror”.<sup>66</sup>

The comments and actions of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is responsible for Israel’s police force, have been criticised by some Israeli leaders. In August, Mr Ben-Gvir said he was open to putting a synagogue at Al-Aqsa/Temple Mount. He also prayed at the site. The site is sacred to both Jews and Muslims. Under an informal 1967 Israeli arrangement (often referred to as the “status quo”) only Muslims are allowed to pray at the site.<sup>67</sup>

In response to Mr Ben-Gvir’s comments, Mr Netanyahu said there is no change in the “status quo”. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant accused Ben-Gvir of “endanger[ing] national security” and Interior Minister Moshe Arbel said he should be removed from office and was endangering Israel’s relationship with Arab states. Mr Ben-Gvir rejected the criticism.<sup>68</sup> The UK “strongly” condemned Mr Ben-Gvir’s comments.<sup>69</sup>

## Israeli settlement expansion

The US says Israeli settlements in the West Bank are “inconsistent” with international law.<sup>70</sup> The UK Government also considers settlements to be “illegal under international law” and that their expansion should be halted.<sup>71</sup>

In July 2024, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said expansion was at “record levels [and] the Israeli Government have seized more of the West Bank in 2024 than in the past 20 years”. He said this was “unacceptable”.<sup>72</sup>

In March 2024, the Israeli Government approved plans for new settlements in the West Bank, the first since June 2023.<sup>73</sup> In August 2024, it published one of

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<sup>64</sup> [PM pans West Bank attacks by “handful of extremists”](#), Times of Israel, 9 November 2023

<sup>65</sup> [Jewish settlers descend on West Bank village](#), Haaretz, 16 August 2024

<sup>66</sup> [Shin Bet chief warns PM and ministers](#), Haaretz, 22 August 2024

<sup>67</sup> [Backlash in Israel as far-right minister’s statement on holy site](#), BBC Monitoring, 27 August 2024; [Cabinet ministers warn Ben Gvir endangering Israel](#), Times of Israel, 26 August 2024

<sup>68</sup> As above

<sup>69</sup> FCDO, [UK statement in response to IDF military operation \[...\]](#), 30 August 2024

<sup>70</sup> [Blinken reverses Trump-era policy on Israeli settlements](#), Axios, 23 February 2024

<sup>71</sup> PQ 527 [[Israeli settlements](#)], 23 July 2024; FCDO, [Five outposts to be legalised \[...\]](#), 30 June 2024

<sup>72</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c300

<sup>73</sup> [Israel approves plans for 3,400 new homes \[...\]](#), BBC News, 6 March 2024, [Israel unveils big West Bank land seizure \[...\]](#), France 24, 22 March 2024



the plans. It said this was in response to four European states choosing to recognise a Palestinian state (see paragraph below) and the backing of the Palestinian Authority for a case brought by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).<sup>74</sup>

In response to the decisions of Norway, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia to recognise a Palestinian state in June 2024, the Israeli Government said it would take steps to “strengthen settlement” in the West Bank.<sup>75</sup> On 28 June the Israeli security cabinet legalised five outposts (settlements) in the West Bank and cancelled some exit visas for Palestinian Authority officials (among other measures).<sup>76</sup>

The Palestinian Authority criticised the settlement legalisation as a “deliberate sabotage” of a potential two-state solution.<sup>77</sup>

## 1.4 Wider regional hostilities in 2023 and 2024

A risk of greater regional escalation and drawing Iran and Israel into an extended, open, direct conflict, remain. Since 7 October 2023 Iran-supported groups have been undertaking attacks against Israel and US forces in the region, who have launched retaliatory strikes.

For Iran’s role and conflict in the Red Sea, Lebanon and Iraq and Syria, see Commons Library briefings [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#) (sections 7.1 and 7.2), [Israel-Iran April 2024: UK actions and response and response](#), [UK and international response to the Houthis in the Red Sea](#) and [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#).

### Lebanon, the Red Sea, Syria, and Iraq in 2024

- There have been daily exchanges of fire between [Hezbollah in Lebanon](#) (a proscribed terrorist group in the UK) and the IDF in northern Israel, causing thousands of civilians to be displaced on both sides of the border. [Civilians have been killed](#) in Lebanon, Israel, and the Golan Heights (the UK Government [does not recognise the Golan Heights as Israeli territory](#)).
- [The Houthis](#), which control most of Yemen’s population, have been [attacking civilian ships in the Red Sea](#), as well as launching attacks on Israel. The US and UK have undertaken joint strikes against Houthi sites. Two maritime coalitions, led by the US and the EU, have been launched.

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<sup>74</sup> [Israel publishes plan for new West Bank settlement](#), Reuters, 14 August 2024

<sup>75</sup> Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, [Announcement](#), 17 June 2024

<sup>76</sup> [Security cabinet okay legalising 5 outposts](#), Times of Israel, 28 June 2024

<sup>77</sup> [Palestinians condemn Israel’s plan to legalise West Bank settlements](#), BBC Monitoring, 29 June 2024

- Iraqi and Syrian militias have been launching attacks, primarily on US military bases in the Middle East. Both the US and Israel have been launching retaliatory strikes.

In April 2024, Iran [launched more than 330 drones and missiles against Israel](#), in what it said was in retaliation for an attack on its consulate in Syria (Israel has neither confirmed nor denied it was responsible).

## Risks and acts of escalation since July 2024

Risks and acts of escalation increased further in late July 2024:

- 19 July: Houthis conducted their first lethal strike against Israel, killing one civilian and injuring 10 more. In retaliation, on 20 July the IDF attacked Yemen for the first time, targeting Houthi-controlled Hodeida port (the number of casualties is uncertain. The human rights group, Human Rights Watch, reported six deaths).<sup>78</sup>
- 28 July: The US and Israel blamed Hezbollah for a strike on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 people (Hezbollah denied responsibility). Israel conducted a strike killing a Hezbollah commander in Beirut. The Lebanese Government says five civilians were killed.<sup>79</sup>
- 31 July: The political leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Iran. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement. Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah and the Houthis said they would retaliate against Israel.<sup>80</sup>

At a meeting of the UN Security Council on 31 July, the UN Secretary General and Security Council members called for restraint.<sup>81</sup> China and Russia condemned the killing of Haniyeh and said it would “sabotage” peace efforts. The Palestinian Authority and Iran criticised Israeli actions in the region, while Israel said that Iran was “the number one sponsor of terrorism” and that Israel would defend itself.<sup>82</sup>

France, the UK and the US urged Iran to restrain its proxies and allies. The UK said that escalation was in “no-one’s interest” and urged calm. It said Iran must stop the supply of weapons to Hezbollah and the Houthis and attacks by these groups must stop. It reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire and immediate release of hostages.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> [Yemen’s Houthis launch drone strike on Israel \[...\]](#), PBS, 19 July 2024; [Israel strikes Houthis in Yemen \[...\]](#), BBC News, 20 July 2024; HRW, [Israeli port attack possible war crime](#), 19 August 2024

<sup>79</sup> [Golan Heights attack raises concerns of war \[...\]](#), Axios, 27 July 2024; [Hezbollah confirms a top commander was killed in Israel strike in Beirut](#), AP, 1 August 2024

<sup>80</sup> Atlantic Council, [Two top Hamas and Hezbollah leaders have been killed. What’s next?](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>81</sup> UN, [Security Council debates ‘serious and dangerous escalation’ \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>82</sup> UN, [Briefing security council in wake of Hamas leader \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>83</sup> FCDO, [The UK is deeply concerned by the escalation of tensions in the Middle East](#), 31 July 2024

Iran said such calls not to respond “to a violation of its sovereignty” were “lack[ing] political logic and contradict principles of international law”.<sup>84</sup>

In early August, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, which has 57 members including Albania, Nigeria, Iran, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia, issued a statement blaming Israel for the killing of Ismail Haniyeh as a “crime of aggression, a [...] violation of international law [...] and a serious infringement” of Iran’s sovereignty”. It said all states should refrain from any actions that support Israeli presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>85</sup>

The US said it was not informed or involved in the operation to kill Haniyeh and reiterated its call for a ceasefire in Gaza as the “best way to bring the temperature down everywhere”.<sup>86</sup> On 2 August President Biden said the death of Haniyeh “doesn’t help” the chance of a ceasefire agreement.<sup>87</sup>

In August, the US reiterated its view that “no one truly wants a full-scale war between Lebanon and Israel” and that a diplomatic solution was possible.<sup>88</sup>

Israel’s Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, has said that if Iran attacks Israel he expects the UK and France, as well as the United States, to “join Israel not only in defence but also in attacking significant targets in Iran”. He said this would prevent “an all-out war” and ensure Iran “pays a heavy strategic and economic price”.<sup>89</sup>

## Hezbollah response in August and potential for Iran

On 25 August, Hezbollah said it [launched around 320 rockets and projectiles against Israel](#), killing one Israeli soldier and injuring two others. Israel conducted pre-emptive airstrikes targeting Hezbollah sites in Lebanon. Hezbollah and the allied Amal group said three of their fighters had been killed. This was reportedly the [largest Israeli action against Hezbollah since the 2006 conflict](#).<sup>90</sup>

In August Iran’s Foreign Minister said the response to the death of Haniyeh will be “definite and calculated”.<sup>91</sup> The US said on 27 August that Iran remains “postured and poised” to launch an attack against Israel, though the chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said the same day that since the Hezbollah attack the immediate risk of a wider conflict in the Middle East had declined (but still remained).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> [Iran dismisses European calls for restraint amid Mideast tensions](#), Reuters, 13 August 2024

<sup>85</sup> Saudi Press Agency, [Final communiqué: OIC extraordinary foreign ministers meeting](#), 7 August 2024

<sup>86</sup> US Department of State, [Secretary Blinken with Teresa Tang](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>87</sup> [Biden says killing of Hamas leader Haniyeh not helpful for ceasefire talks](#), Reuters, 2 August 2024

<sup>88</sup> [Hochstein says he thinks Israel and Lebanon’s Hezbollah can avoid war](#), Reuters, 14 August 2024

<sup>89</sup> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [FM Katz meets with the foreign ministers \[...\]](#), 16 August 2024

<sup>90</sup> [Israel and Hezbollah exchange heavy fire](#), BBC News, 26 August 2024; [Israeli navy soldier killed, two hurt during Hezbollah attack](#), Times of Israel, 25 August 2024

<sup>91</sup> [Iran doesn’t seek to raise regional tensions, foreign minister tells](#), Reuters, 26 August 2024

<sup>92</sup> [White House says Iran is still ‘postured and poised’](#), Times of Israel, 27 August 2024; [Top US general says risk of broader war eases a bit after Israel-Hezbollah exchange](#), Reuters, 27 August 2024

Speaking in September, the head of MI6, Richard Moore, said he “suspect[s]” Iran will “try [and retaliate against Israel] and we won’t be able to let our guard down for the type of activity that the Iranians might try and prosecute in that direction”.<sup>93</sup>

## 1.5

# Negotiations on hostages and ceasefire

## “Tactical, local” pauses

In November 2023 and June 2024, the IDF announced daily “tactical pauses” in its military operations to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>94</sup>

In September 2024, pauses in fighting in Gaza have also been held to allow the vaccination of children against polio.<sup>95</sup>

## 2023 pause

Following mediation by Qatar and Egypt, a pause in fighting took place from 24 November to 1 December 2023 to allow for the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Hamas released 105 hostages from Gaza and Israel released 240 Palestinians from Israeli prisons.<sup>96</sup>

## 2024 proposal for a three-stage cessation of hostilities

On 31 May, US President Joe Biden announced a three-phase agreement, which he said Israel had proposed and Qatar had passed to Hamas:

- Stage 1: the release of some hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a full ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas of Gaza.
- Stage 2: the exchange of all remaining hostages, complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the “cessation of hostilities permanently”.
- Stage 3: a plan for the reconstruction of Gaza.<sup>97</sup>

The plan was supported in a resolution of the UN Security Council (including the UK) in June, which called on Israel and Hamas to implement it.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> [UK spy chief says still expecting Iranian retaliation](#), DW, 8 September 2024

<sup>94</sup> [Israeli army says allowing “humanitarian pauses” in Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 9 November 2023; [Israel’s plan for ‘tactical pause’ for aid raises questions \[...\]](#), CNN, 17 June 2024

<sup>95</sup> [Israeli army approves Gaza humanitarian pauses for polio vaccination](#), 30 August 2024

<sup>96</sup> [Gaza truce extension faltered \[...\]](#), New York Times, 1 December 2023

<sup>97</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden on the Middle East](#), 31 May 2024

<sup>98</sup> UN, [Gaza: Security Council adopts US resolution \[...\]](#), 10 June 2024

Speaking on 31 May, President Biden said that “ Hamas no longer is capable of carrying out another October 7<sup>th</sup>” and Israel can therefore “ make this offer without any further risk to their own security”.<sup>99</sup>

On 2 September, President Biden argued that Mr Netanyahu was not doing enough to secure an agreement.<sup>100</sup> In early September, the Washington Post reported that the United States was planning to present Israel and Hamas with a “ final”, “ take it or leave it” hostage release and ceasefire proposal.<sup>101</sup> US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said he would not give a timetable on the development of any new proposal or its contents.<sup>102</sup>

The US has also argued that a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas will help to address the tensions in Lebanon, the Red Sea and elsewhere.<sup>103</sup>

The Palestinian Authority is not participating in the talks.<sup>104</sup>

In September, the US Joint Chiefs of State confirmed that the US was making contingency plans if negotiations end, including for a resulting escalation across the Middle East region.<sup>105</sup>

Section 2.2 of the Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#), has further information on the UN resolution and international positions on a ceasefire.

## August 2024 call for renewed talks

In August the United States said that only the details for the “ implementation” of the framework agreement remained to be agreed.<sup>106</sup>

On 9 August 2024 the US, Egypt and Qatar issued a statement saying that a “ framework agreement [...] is now on the table with only the details of implementation left to conclude”. They confirmed the agreement was in line with the three-stage process endorsed by the UN Security Council in May.<sup>107</sup>

The three states said there was “ no further time to waste nor excuses from either party for further delay”. They called on both sides to resume discussions. The EU, the UK, France, and Germany endorsed the request.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden](#), 31 May 2024

<sup>100</sup> [Netanyahu not doing enough to free Gaza hostages, says Biden](#), BBC News, 3 September 2024

<sup>101</sup> [US plans to present ‘take it or leave it’ \[...\] deal \[...\]](#), Washington Post, 1 September 2024

<sup>102</sup> US State Department, [Press briefing](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>103</sup> US State Department, [Press briefing](#), 29 July 2024; US State Department, [Secretary Blinken at a conversation on US foreign policy](#), 1 July 2024

<sup>104</sup> White House, [Press gaggle by national security communications advisor](#), 15 August 2024

<sup>105</sup> [US military draws up contingency plans for collapse of ceasefire talks](#), FT, 6 September 2024

<sup>106</sup> US embassy in Israel, [Joint statement from the leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar](#), 9 August 2024

<sup>107</sup> As above

<sup>108</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [Joint statement on the Middle East](#), 12 August 2024; Council on the European Union, [Israel/Palestine: statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU](#), 9 August 2024

In an official briefing to the press on 4 September, a senior US administration official said that “90%” of the deal had been agreed:

The deal has 18 total paragraphs. Fourteen of those paragraphs are finished and, I have to say, are identical [to that in July] [...] One paragraph has a very technical fix, and the other three paragraphs have to do with the exchange of prisoners to hostages [...] So, basically, 90% of this deal has been agreed.<sup>109</sup>

The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has made similar remarks and said that “pretty much everything” other than issues including the Philadelphi corridor (see below) and “how hostages and prisoners are exchanged” is agreed.<sup>110</sup> On 5 September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the “90%” statement as “exactly inaccurate”.<sup>111</sup>

Hamas has argued that the Israeli Government wants to add demands to prolong the talks. Reported proposals include Israeli control of the Rafah border crossing, [the Philadelphi Corridor](#) (citing a desire to prevent weapons smuggling into Gaza) and [the Netzarim Corridor in the centre of Gaza](#) (to screen Palestinians moving between north and south Gaza). Israel denies it has tried to add new conditions and that these were “clarifications” to the framework.<sup>112</sup>

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has argued that Israel should compromise on the Philadelphi Corridor so it can reach an agreement with Hamas.<sup>113</sup> He said that agreeing a deal and a six-week pause is a “strategic opportunity” for Israel that “gives us a high chance to change the security situation on all fronts”.<sup>114</sup> On 4 September, Mr Netanyahu said that Israel cannot leave the corridor, as there is a risk that not all hostages will be returned (for stages 1 and 2 of the proposed agreement) and “you can enable the rearmament of Gaza [Hamas] through the Philadelphi Corridor”.<sup>115</sup>

Other members of the Israeli coalition government have said they will resign if the conflict ends without the defeat of Hamas.<sup>116</sup>

Israel says that Hamas should release the hostages immediately and accused it of trying to add 29 amendments to the framework (Hamas denies this).<sup>117</sup> Mr Netanyahu has also said [other issues included](#) the ratio of hostages to Palestinian prisoners and Israel’s demand to veto the release of some prisoners.<sup>118</sup> He has also questioned how committed Hamas is to an

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<sup>109</sup> White House, [Background press call on efforts to secure the release of hostages](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>110</sup> US State Department, [Secretary Blinken at a press availability](#), 5 September 2024

<sup>111</sup> [Netanyahu is unequivocal about ceasefire and hostage agreement](#), CNN, 5 September 2024

<sup>112</sup> [A top Hamas official says the group is losing faith in the US](#), AP, 15 August 2024; [Israel was less flexible in recent Gaza ceasefire talks](#), New York Times, 13 August 2024

<sup>113</sup> [Israeli defence minister calls for deal to bring hostages home](#), Reuters, 1 September 2024

<sup>114</sup> [Israel defence minister says Gaza truce deal a ‘strategic opportunity’](#), 10 September 2024

<sup>115</sup> [Netanyahu says his April claim was not intended literally](#), Times of Israel, 5 September 2024

<sup>116</sup> [Israeli ministers threaten to quit \[...\]](#), BBC News, 2 June 2024

<sup>117</sup> [Netanyahu denies claims he changed conditions \[...\]](#), Jerusalem Post, 13 August 2024

<sup>118</sup> [Netanyahu says his April claim was not intended literally](#), Times of Israel, 5 September 2024; [Gaza talks stall over details of hostages-for-prisoners swap](#), New York Times, 5 September 2024

agreement, following the [recovery of the bodies of six hostages](#) by the IDF that Israel said were killed by Hamas on 1 September.<sup>119</sup>

Hamas has also called for a permanent ceasefire, while Israel supports only a temporary pause for the release of hostages.<sup>120</sup>

On 1 September, Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid called for nationwide strikes to pressurise the Israeli Government to come to an agreement with Hamas to secure the release of hostages held in Gaza, arguing the government is not doing so for “political reasons”.<sup>121</sup> The call for a strike followed the death of six hostages, which the IDF said occurred shortly before they were able to recover them from Hamas captivity. Protesters in Israel and some relatives of those taken hostage by Hamas have called for a deal for their release to be secured quickly.<sup>122</sup>

Mr Netanyahu said Israel would “settle accounts” with Hamas in Gaza and that efforts to reach an agreement for their release continue.<sup>123</sup>

## 1.6 Governing post-conflict Gaza

### Statements by Israeli Government

The Israeli Government, alongside governments such as those of the United States and UK, has stated that Hamas cannot play any role in the government of post-conflict Gaza.<sup>124</sup> In February 2024, Mr Netanyahu proposed a discussion plan to the Israeli security cabinet on post-conflict Gaza. Reports suggest it included:

- Civilian management of Gaza by “local representatives” not affiliated with Hamas. The Palestinian Authority is not mentioned in the plan.
- The closure of UNRWA and its replacement by other aid groups.
- The demilitarisation of Gaza, save for weapons “necessary to maintain public order”, after which reconstruction will be carried out by countries “acceptable to Israel”.
- An Israeli presence on the Gaza–Egypt border to prevent smuggling and the creation of a border security zone on Israel’s border with Gaza.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> As above

<sup>120</sup> [Hamas has offered a ceasefire deal \[...\]](#), CNN, 8 May 2024

<sup>121</sup> [Lapid calls on Histadrut, employers to strike](#), Jerusalem Post, 1 September 2024

<sup>122</sup> [Tens of thousands rally in Israel calling for hostage release deal](#), BBC News, 1 September 2024

<sup>123</sup> [Instigated after hostages killed, Netanyahu blames Hamas \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 1 September 2024

<sup>124</sup> Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, [Statement by PM Netanyahu](#), 21 January 2024

<sup>125</sup> [No reconstruction in Gaza without demilitarisation](#), Axios, 22 February 2024; US Institute for Peace, [Plan for Gaza’s future highlights the challenges that lie ahead](#), 29 February 2024; [Netanyahu presents plan for post-war Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 23 February 2024

Mr Netanyahu's discussion plan followed four principles announced by Israel's Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, in January. Mr Gallant's plan also included Israeli security control of Gaza and Egyptian-coordinated control of the Rafah crossing. Mr Gallant said there would be no Israeli settlements established in Gaza. However, some Israeli ministers have called for this and for the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza. This statement was condemned by the US and UK governments, among others.<sup>126</sup>

In a speech to the US Congress on 25 July 2024, Mr Netanyahu reiterated his position on the governing of post-conflict Gaza and that Israel would maintain responsibility for security. He did not explicitly mention a role for the Palestinian Authority:

My vision for that day is of a demilitarized and deradicalized Gaza. Israel does not seek to resettle Gaza. But for the foreseeable future, we must retain overriding security control there to prevent the resurgence of terror, to ensure that Gaza never again poses a threat to Israel.

Gaza should have a civilian administration run by Palestinians who do not seek to destroy Israel [...]

A new generation of Palestinians must no longer be taught to hate Jews but rather to live in peace with us [...]

Following our victory, with the help of regional partners, the demilitarization and deradicalization of Gaza can also lead to a future of security, prosperity and peace [...]<sup>127</sup>

On 26 July, the Chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General CQ Brown, said that for the US there had not been "a lot of detail" from the Israeli Government on post-conflict plans, though discussions were continuing.<sup>128</sup>

## Position on recognising a Palestinian state

In July 2024, the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) voted for a motion opposing a Palestinian state.<sup>129</sup> The motion was passed by 68 votes to 9 (out of a total membership of 120). The motion followed the decisions of Spain, Norway, Slovenia and Ireland to recognise a Palestinian state. The motion said:

The Knesset of Israel firmly opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state west of Jordan. The establishment of a Palestinian state in the heart of the Land of Israel would pose an existential danger to the State of Israel and its citizens, perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and destabilize the region.

It will only be a matter of a short time until Hamas takes over the Palestinian state and turns it into a radical Islamic terror base that operates in

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<sup>126</sup> [Israeli defence minister outlines plans for post-war Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 5 January 2024; [US, UK, France blast Israeli conference on Gaza resettlement](#), Times of Israel, 30 January 2024

<sup>127</sup> ["We're protecting you: Full text of Netanyahu's address to Congress"](#), Times of Israel, 25 July 2024

<sup>128</sup> [US not seen a detailed post-war plan from Israel, Gen. Brown says](#), Reuters, 26 July 2024

<sup>129</sup> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [PM Netanyahu's remarks at the start of a government meeting](#), 18 February 2024 and [Israel opposes 'unilateral' imposition](#), Reuters, 18 February 2024; [Knesset votes resoundingly \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 22 February 2024



coordination with the Iranian-led axis to eliminate the State of Israel. Promoting the idea of a Palestinian state at this time would be a reward for terrorism [...]<sup>130</sup>

The Palestinian Authority and Arab governments criticised the resolution.<sup>131</sup> Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the vote was “hugely disappointing”.<sup>132</sup>

Mr Netanyahu was not present for the vote. In February, the Israeli cabinet approved a resolution rejecting international recognition of a Palestinian state without direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>133</sup>

## Statements and actions of the Palestinian Authority and Arab Gulf states

The Palestinian Authority rejected the discussion plan put forward to the Israeli security cabinet in February 2024 as “continuing Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories and preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state”.<sup>134</sup> The Authority has also said it is willing to govern in Gaza but not without a “political solution for the West Bank”.<sup>135</sup>

In March 2024, the Palestinian Authority’s President Abbas appointed a new Prime Minister, Mohammed Mustafa, and cabinet.<sup>136</sup> The US and the UK welcomed the Prime Minister’s appointment and called for “credible and far-reaching reforms”.<sup>137</sup> Both governments support a role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, subject to it making reforms. Hamas criticised Mr Mustafa’s appointment.<sup>138</sup>

Israel collects revenue on the Palestinian Authority’s behalf. In May 2024, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said that some revenue would be held to protest the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor applying for arrest warrants against the Israeli Prime Minister and Defence Minister and the Palestinian Authority pursuing “unilateral” efforts for international recognition of a state.<sup>139</sup>

As set out in section 2.4 of the Commons Library on the [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and international response](#), the Palestinian Authority has

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<sup>130</sup> Knesset, [Knesset Plenum votes in favour of declaration that parliament opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state](#), 18 July 2024

<sup>131</sup> [Israeli resolution opposing Palestinian state draws Arab condemnation](#), BBC Monitoring, 19 July 2024

<sup>132</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c310

<sup>133</sup> [Israel rejects international recognition of a Palestinian state](#), BBC Monitoring, 18 February 2024

<sup>134</sup> [Palestinians reject Netanyahu’s plan for post-war Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 24 February 2024

<sup>135</sup> [Palestinian PM: We will not run Gaza without solution for West Bank](#), The Guardian, 29 October 2023

<sup>136</sup> [Palestinian Authority announces a new cabinet \[...\]](#), AP, 28 March 2024

<sup>137</sup> [Palestinian president appoints long-time adviser as prime minister](#), BBC News, 15 March 2024; HC Deb, [26 March 2024](#), c1394; HC Deb, [12 March 2024](#), c139

<sup>138</sup> [Hamas criticises new Palestinian appointment](#), BBC Monitoring, 19 March 2024

<sup>139</sup> [Smotrich holding NIS 170 million in PA tax revenue \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 10 May 2024

also sought to advance full Palestinian membership of the UN. The US vetoed a Security Council resolution to this effect in April 2024. The UK abstained.

The Palestinian Authority reports it has lost around two-thirds of its tax revenues since October 2023 (though some funds were transferred in April and July). This, together with a decline in foreign aid over several years, has weakened the Palestinian Authority's ability to pay public sector salaries and provide services.<sup>140</sup> The G7 (including the UK, EU, and US) have collectively called on Israel to release tax revenue to the authority, which they believe should replace Hamas in Gaza and argue will help ensure stability in the West Bank.<sup>141</sup>

Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, have said they will not fund Gaza's reconstruction until sufficient progress is made on a two-state solution.<sup>142</sup> In July, there were reports that the UAE was willing to join a multinational security force in Gaza, but this has not been confirmed.<sup>143</sup>

## Further resources and reading

The Commons Library briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU, and regional response](#) provides more on the international response and activities in international organisations including the UN Security Council, International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court.

- US Institute for Peace, [Wither ceasefire talks after Hamas kills six Israeli hostages?](#), 4 September 2024
- International Crisis Group, [Stemming Israeli settler violence at its root](#), 6 September 2024
- Jonathan Lincoln in Foreign Affairs, [How to keep the peace in \[post conflict\] Gaza](#), 4 September 2024
- Washington Institute, [Prioritising the West Bank amid escalation and deterioration](#), 30 August 2024
- Chatham House, [All-out war between Israel and Hezbollah is far from inevitable](#), 29 August 2024
- Chatham House, [The real schism in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire talks is about who decides Gaza's future](#), 23 August 2024
- Center for Strategic and International Studies, [Why Iran will escalate](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>140</sup> [Gaza war drives Palestinian budget deficit up by 172%](#), Reuters, 23 July 2024. See also World Bank, [New update on the Palestinian economy](#), 23 May 2024

<sup>141</sup> HL Deb, [21 May 2024](#), c948; White House, [G7 Apulia Leader's communiqué](#), 14 June 2024

<sup>142</sup> [Gulf states press for two-state roadmap](#), The Guardian, 13 December 2023

<sup>143</sup> [UAE willing to joint multinational force in Gaza](#), Financial Times, 18 July 2024

## 2

# UK Government and opposition statements

### Further reading

For information on the statements of the UK Government and opposition parties before 5 July 2024 (under the Conservative government), see:

- Commons Library, [Israel-Hamas conflict: UK actions and response, October 2023 to July 2024](#)

A full list of parliamentary and government statements in this earlier period is provided in the below briefing:

- Commons Library, [Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A parliamentary reading list, 2020-July 2024](#), 25 July 2024.

### Other resources and commentary on UK policy

- The Conversation/Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), [UK suspends 30 arms export licences to Israel—but it won't change much in the war in Gaza](#), 3 September 2024
- RUSI, [Foreign Secretary Lammy's "balanced position" on Israel-Palestine](#), 19 July 2024
- Chatham House, [The next UK government should make conflict resolution the centrepiece of its Middle East and North Africa policy](#), 7 June 2024

## 2.1

# Government priorities and ceasefire demand

Speaking in the Commons in October 2023, shortly after the 7 October 2023 Hamas assault, the then Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer, spoke in “condemnation of terror [and] in support of Israel”. He said Israel had the right to recover those taken hostage by Hamas and to defend itself, in accordance with international humanitarian law.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c25

Mr Starmer also said that there could be “no safety” for Israel while Hamas has the capability to carry out attacks in Israel.<sup>145</sup>

In a statement to the Commons on 19 July 2024, after taking office, Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said that the government supported:

- An “immediate ceasefire” and the immediate release of hostages.
- More aid entering Gaza. Mr Lammy referenced Israel’s commitment in April 2024 to [“flood Gaza with aid”](#), but said “more aid must enter Gaza”. He argued Israel “imposes impossible and unacceptable restrictions” on aid entering Gaza and said the Rafah crossing, closed since early May, should reopen to aid.
- Ending Israeli settler violence in the West Bank and halting the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. He said the settlement expansion was “unacceptable”.<sup>146</sup>

Mr Lammy said that the Biden-proposed three-stage ceasefire plan, agreed by Israel and [endorsed by the UN Security Council in June](#), should be agreed and implemented. The first stage of the ceasefire would include the release of most of the hostages held by Hamas (see section 1.5 for more).<sup>147</sup>

Mr Lammy has also warned against escalation on the Israel-Lebanon border and condemned Hezbollah’s attacks on Israel. In July, he said the widening of the conflict “was in no-one’s interest” and that the UK would continue to push for a diplomatic solution along the lines of [UN Security Resolution 1701](#). This resolution requires Hezbollah to disarm and for no foreign troops in Lebanon.

He also said a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas would “help to prevent an escalatory cycle” in Lebanon.<sup>148</sup>

## Opposition parties also back a ceasefire

The UK, then led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, voted in favour of the Biden ceasefire proposal at the UN Security Council in June 2024.<sup>149</sup>

In July, Shadow Foreign Secretary Andrew Mitchell confirmed that the Conservative party still supported this plan being implemented.<sup>150</sup> Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Layla Moran, has also called for an immediate ceasefire, as has the SNP.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c25

<sup>146</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c300-302

<sup>147</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c306

<sup>148</sup> HC Deb, [30 July 2024](#), cc1201-2

<sup>149</sup> FCDO, [UNSC adopts resolution on proposed ceasefire and hostage deal](#), 10 June 2024

<sup>150</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c221

<sup>151</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c227 and HC Deb, [21 February 2024](#), c724

## 2.2

## UK arms sales to Israel

## The value of UK arms sales

In May 2024, the then Minister for Industry and Economic Security, Alan Mak, told the Commons Business and Trade Committee that in 2022 the UK granted licences for defence exports worth £42 million to Israel. This was 0.15% of the UK's total export licenses in 2022 and less than 1% of Israel's defence imports. He said the figures remained similar in the 12 months to June 2023 (£41 million) and that this was the “ballpark [yearly] average” since 2008.<sup>152</sup>

## UK arms licencing criteria

All arms exports are assessed against the UK's strategic export licensing criteria.<sup>153</sup> There are eight criteria, detailed in sections 2 to 10 of the Commons Library research briefing, [UK amends its criteria for arms exports](#). These include respecting human rights, determining if the provision of arms would undermine peace and security, and whether provision would undermine UK national security or that of allied countries.

Data released in June 2024 covering licences between 7 October 2023 and 31 May 2024 states that 108 licences were issued for exports to Israel in this period. A total of 345 licences to sell arms to Israel exist (including those issued before 7 October). No licences were rejected or revoked in this period.<sup>154</sup>

More information can be found in the Commons Library research briefing, [UK arms exports to Israel](#).

## Government review and actions, September 2024

On taking office in July 2024, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, commissioned an up-to-date assessment on whether any UK arms licences to Israel risk facilitating a serious breach of international humanitarian law.<sup>155</sup>

Mr Lammy said a “blanket ban” on arms sales to Israel would not be right, due to the threats that Israel faces from Hamas, Hezbollah, and other armed and terrorist groups in the region. However, he said it was right to review the use of offensive weapons by Israel in Gaza.<sup>156</sup>

In opposition, as Shadow Foreign Secretary, Mr Lammy had called for the government to release its legal advice on arms sales.<sup>157</sup> In response to a

<sup>152</sup> Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: UK arms exports to Israel](#), HC 690, 21 May 2024, Q46

<sup>153</sup> PQ 1408 [[Arms trade: Israel](#)], 26 July 2024

<sup>154</sup> Department for Business and Trade, [Export control licencing data: 31 May 2024](#), 11 June 2024

<sup>155</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c218

<sup>156</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c308

<sup>157</sup> [Lammy says he has “serious concerns” about Israel’s actions in Gaza](#), The Guardian, 7 April 2024

question on whether he would do so now in office, he said his decision on arms exports would be made with “full accountability and transparency”.<sup>158</sup>

Also before taking office, Labour had said it did not want UK-supplied arms to be used in an Israeli offensive in Rafah.<sup>159</sup>

On 2 September 2024, [Mr Lammy told the House of Commons](#) that following the review he had concluded that:

for certain UK arms exports to Israel, there exists a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Mr Lammy also said that it had not been possible to make a “determinative conclusion” on allegations regarding Israel’s conduct of hostilities:

in part because there is insufficient information either from Israel or other reliable sources to verify such claims. Nevertheless, it is the assessment of His Majesty’s Government that Israel could reasonably do more to ensure that lifesaving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza [...]

The Foreign Secretary also said that there “can be no doubt” that Hamas does not adhere to international law and embeds itself in the civilian population and infrastructure in Gaza. Mr Lammy said that the UK continues to support Israel’s right to self-defence, in line with international law, and that the “point of the [arms licencing] process” is “in no way to punish Israel, but to make sure that our export licensing regime remains among the most robust in the world”.

He said the UK’s action was not a “blanket ban or an arms embargo” because Israel must have the right to defend itself against Hezbollah, the Houthis and Hamas. He said that the action “will not have a material impact on Israel’s security” or affect the F-35 strike fighter programme that supplies aircraft to more than 20 countries (except where components go directly to Israel, [which are included in the restrictions](#)). Mr Lammy also said that the UK provides around 1% of Israel’s arms imports.<sup>160</sup>

Following the Foreign Secretary’s conclusion, the Business and Trade Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, [announced that “approximately 30 licenses” of the 350 in place to Israel would be suspended](#). Mr Reynolds said the 30 licences “includes components for fighter aircraft (F-16s), parts for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), naval systems, and targeting equipment”.<sup>161</sup>

No further information has been provided on the licences or equipment.

The Business Secretary’s statement said that while Israeli ministers had “affirmed” their commitment to comply with international humanitarian law,

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<sup>158</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c307

<sup>159</sup> [Labour expresses concern over Rafah offensive and UK arms](#), ITN, 12 May 2024

<sup>160</sup> HC Deb, [2 September 2024](#), cc37-40, 45, 48, 144; PQ 3745 [[F-35 aircraft](#)], 5 September 2024

<sup>161</sup> HC Deb, [2 September 2024](#), c37; HCWS64 [[Statement from the Secretary of State](#)], 2 September 2024

the UK Foreign Secretary said there were “significant doubts about its record compliance”.<sup>162</sup>

The government has said it will continue to assess Israel’s commitment to humanitarian law, including with “regard to the provision of food and medical supplies to civilians in Gaza and the treatment of detainees”, and keep its policy on arms licencing to Israel under review.<sup>163</sup>

Speaking in September, the Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the UK Government was “deeply concerned by credible claims of mistreatment” of detainees by Israel. He told the House he was:

deeply concerned by credible claims of mistreatment of detainees, which the International Committee of the Red Cross cannot investigate after being denied access to places of detention. Both my predecessor [Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron] and all our major allies have repeatedly and forcefully raised these concerns with the Israeli Government. Regrettably, those concerns have not been addressed satisfactorily.<sup>164</sup>

The Government has published a statement on the factors it took into account in its decision, as FCDO, [Summary of the international humanitarian law process, decision and the factors taken into account](#), 2 September 2024.

The Israeli Government criticised the announcement on the suspension of 30 arms licences. Mr Netanyahu said it was “shameful” and the Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, said Israel “operates in accordance with international law [...] and expect[s] ally nations like Britain to recognise that”.<sup>165</sup>

The United States said it would not comment on the UK decision but would continue to support Israel’s defensive capabilities. The US State Department said that “there’s been no determination by the United States that they [Israel] have violated international humanitarian law”.<sup>166</sup>

The UK-based Lawyers for Israel has written to the government saying it will seek a judicial review of the 30 suspensions if the decision is not reversed.<sup>167</sup> Palestinian rights group Al Haq and UK-based Global Legal Action Network are pursuing legal action to expand the UK suspension to include F-35 equipment, with hearings expected in the high court in November 2024.<sup>168</sup>

## Position of opposition parties

When in government, the Conservatives conducted reviews of arms exports licences to Israel in line with the arms export criteria. It judged that no

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<sup>162</sup> HCWS64 [[Statement from the Secretary of State](#)], 2 September 2024

<sup>163</sup> As above

<sup>164</sup> HC Deb, [2 September 2024](#), c39

<sup>165</sup> [UK suspends 30 of 350 arms export licenses to Israel](#), Times of Israel, 2 September 2024; [Netanyahu condemns UK suspension of some arms exports to Israel](#), ITV News, 3 September 2024

<sup>166</sup> White House, [On the record press gaggle by \[...\]](#), John Kirby, 3 September 2024

<sup>167</sup> [UK Lawyers for Israel, Legal challenge to UK Government ban on arms sales \[...\]](#), 8 September 2024

<sup>168</sup> Al-Haq, [GLAN and Al-Haq continue legal action over government decision \[...\]](#), 3 September 2024

licences needed to be suspended or revoked. In May 2024, then Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, also argued that ending arms exports would “make Hamas stronger and make a hostage deal less likely”. He also cited the [April 2024 attack by Iran against Israel](#) as a reason for not imposing blanket bans on arms sales.<sup>169</sup>

In response to the UK Government announcement in September 2024, the Leader of the Opposition, Rishi Sunak, criticised the timing of the decision, which followed the deaths of six hostages in Gaza and the deployment of UK forces to defend Israel from Iranian attack. He also questioned the government on how the UK action would help secure the release of the hostages held in Gaza.<sup>170</sup>

The government said the timing reflected its decision to inform the Commons of its conclusion as soon as Parliament returned from the summer recess and reiterated its position that Israel has the right to self-defence.<sup>171</sup>

The Shadow Foreign Secretary Andrew Mitchell said that he “feared” the decision would “offend Israel”.<sup>172</sup>

In April 2024, Liberal Democrat Leader, Sir Ed Davey, argued that arms sales to Israel should be suspended.<sup>173</sup> In July, the party called for the government to suspend arms sales to Israel “while there are questions over their human rights record”.<sup>174</sup> Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Layla Moran welcomed the Foreign Secretary’s announcement in September 2024 as a “step forward” but said the decision should have also included an assessment of the use of UK-supplied equipment in the West Bank as well as Gaza.<sup>175</sup>

In December 2023, the SNP Defence Spokesperson, Martin Docherty-Hughes, argued the UK should “cease extending arms licences to the state of Israel and to immediately halt the export of weapons or components”.<sup>176</sup> The SNP welcomed the decision in September 2024 but said that the number of licences suspended was “far too limited a response” and called for the advice and legal assessment on why the other licences remain to be published.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> [UK ban on selling arms to Israel would strengthen Hamas, says Cameron](#), BBC News, 12 May 2024

<sup>170</sup> HC Deb, [4 September 2024](#), c302

<sup>171</sup> HL Deb, [5 September 2024](#), c1244

<sup>172</sup> Andrew Mitchell MP on Twitter/X, “[Announcing an arms embargo](#)”, 2 September 2024

<sup>173</sup> [Lib Dems call on government to suspend arms sales to Israel](#), Sky News, 3 April 2024

<sup>174</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c306

<sup>175</sup> Liberal Democrats, [Israel arms export suspension](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>176</sup> HC Deb, [12 December 2023](#), c226WH; Scottish Government, [Letter to Lord Ahmad](#), 12 April 2024

<sup>177</sup> [SNP demand evidence as Labour suspend \[...\]arms licences](#), The National, 2 September 2024



## 2.3

## Post-conflict Gaza and the two-state solution

## Government statements on post-conflict Gaza

On 19 July, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said he had been talking with Middle East governments on the post-conflict situation, including “reforming and empowering” the Palestinian Authority.<sup>178</sup>

Mr Lammy said that Hamas could not be allowed to remain in Gaza and continue to threaten Israel’s security after the conflict. He said that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) would also have to leave the territory. He said what would come next was a “complicated picture”, but it may involve Arab states that Israel trusts to maintain security.<sup>179</sup>

In opposition, Mr Lammy had also said a new UK special envoy on the Middle East should be appointed to “recharge” negotiations on a two-state solution, as a well as a “Western and Arab-led vehicle” established to lead reconstruction and future talks on a two-state solution.<sup>180</sup>

## Government statements on a two-state solution

In July 2024, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said that the UK Government’s “overarching goal” is a “viable, sovereign Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel”. He said the UK would recognise a Palestinian state “at a time we determine” to be “most conducive” to the peace process.<sup>181</sup>

Mr Lammy opposed suggestions that immediate recognition of a Palestinian state “would bring about peace” and said the acceptance of the three-stage plan proposed by President Biden was the best way to achieve this.<sup>182</sup>

In October 2023, then Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer, said statehood “is not in the gift of a neighbour [Israel]. It is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people”.<sup>183</sup>

Mr Lammy said a vote in the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) in July [against recognising a Palestinian state](#) was “hugely disappointing”.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c300

<sup>179</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c304

<sup>180</sup> David Lammy MP, [Labour will work for a Palestinian state](#), The Guardian, 4 November 2023; David Lammy, [Labour will oppose expulsion of Palestinians \[...\]](#), The Guardian, 9 December 2023

<sup>181</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c301; HC Deb, [30 July 2024](#), c1150

<sup>182</sup> HC Deb, [30 July 2024](#), c1150

<sup>183</sup> Labour Party, [Keir Starmer’s speech on the international situation \[...\]](#), 31 October 2023; Labour Party, [Change: 2024 manifesto](#) (PDF), pp124-5

<sup>184</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c310

## Conservative Party

In government, the Conservatives said the UK would recognise a Palestinian state when it judged this to “best serve the objective of peace” and that “bilateral recognition alone cannot end the [Israeli] occupation”.<sup>185</sup> In July, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, confirmed this remained its position:

We should certainly recognise the state of Palestine, but it must be at the right time, as part of an overall solution. To do so prematurely could send a signal [to Hamas and others] that terror pays.<sup>186</sup>

## Liberal Democrats

Speaking in the Commons in July 2024, the Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Layla Moran, said she would introduce a bill for the immediate recognition of a Palestinian state. She introduced similar legislation in the previous Parliament, including in the [2022–23](#) and [2023–24](#) sessions.<sup>187</sup>

She argued recognition would “send a powerful message to the Israeli government” that the UK was “serious” about a two-state solution and that it would also provide “hope” to Palestinians. However, she acknowledged recognition “is not enough” and said steps would also have to be taken against illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>188</sup>

## Scottish National Party

In November 2023, then First Minister Humza Yousaf called for the UK to recognise a Palestinian state to “break, once and for all, the political impasse” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>189</sup> In May 2024, First Minister John Swinney said the SNP will bring forward a vote in the UK Parliament after the July 2024 general election if the UK does not recognise a Palestinian state.<sup>190</sup>

## 2.4

## Role of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

### What is the International Criminal Court?

The [International Criminal Court \(ICC\) is an international court](#) (PDF) dedicated to prosecuting individuals for “the most serious crimes of

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<sup>185</sup> HC Deb, [30 January 2024](#), c705

<sup>186</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c222

<sup>187</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c229

<sup>188</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c229

<sup>189</sup> Scottish Government, [Gaza and Israel: First Minister letter to UK Government](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>190</sup> [SNP will force vote on Palestinian statehood, John Swinney says](#), The National, 28 May 2024

international concern”. It is a court of last resort, complementing, but not replacing, national criminal courts.<sup>191</sup>

In 2015 the Palestinian Authority joined the ICC, a move opposed by the Israeli Government. Israel has rejected ICC jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territories, stating “that no sovereign Palestinian state exists nor does any territory belonging to such an entity”. Israel is not a signatory to the [Rome Statute](#) (PDF), which established and governs the court (neither is the US).<sup>192</sup>

As set out in section 3.1 of the Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and regional response](#), in 2021, the ICC began an investigation into the situation in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The investigation’s announcement was criticised by the governments of Israel, the United States and the UK. Then Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that while the UK Government respected the court’s independence, it did “not accept that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance, given that Israel is not a party to the Statute of Rome and Palestine is not a sovereign state”.<sup>193</sup>

The ICC investigation continues and in November 2023, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, said his office has “jurisdiction over current events in Gaza and in the West Bank”.<sup>194</sup>

## Application for warrants, 2024

In May 2024, the prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, announced he would apply to the court’s judges to issue warrants for the arrest of three Hamas and two Israeli leaders.<sup>195</sup>

The two Israeli leaders were the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. Mr Khan said he had “reasonable grounds” to believe that they “bore criminal responsibility for several war crimes and crimes against humanity” in the 2023/24 conflict.

The [full ICC press release](#) details allegations against the specific individuals. No decision on the application has been made.

On 10 June, the UK, then led by Prime Minister Sunak, applied to the ICC to file an observation on whether the court can exercise jurisdiction over Israeli nationals in the context of the [1990s Oslo Accords](#).

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<sup>191</sup> Commons Library research briefing, [Recent developments at the ICC](#), January 2021

<sup>192</sup> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Israel rejects the ICC’s decision regarding the scope of its territorial jurisdiction \[...\]](#), 7 February 2021; ICC, [State of Palestine: Situation \(Investigation\)](#)

<sup>193</sup> [Boris Johnson condemns ICC Palestine investigation as an “attack on Israel”](#), The Independent, 14 April 2021

<sup>194</sup> Karim Khan in the Guardian, [We are witnessing a pandemic of inhumanity: To halt the spread, we must cling to the law](#), 10 November 2023

<sup>195</sup> This section from ICC, [Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan \[...\]](#), 20 May 2024

The Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, established the Palestinian Authority and governance arrangements over the Occupied Palestinian Territories (among other elements). The UK submission noted that in a previous ICC case, the court had left a ruling on the interpretation of the Oslo Accords for Palestinian jurisdiction over Israeli nationals for a later stage.

In response to the submission, the ICC said it would consider the request on its merits, and that the UK had a deadline of 26 July 2024 to submit written observations.<sup>196</sup> However, under the Labour government, the UK did not submit any information to the court by the 26 July deadline.

On 29 July, the UK Government confirmed it would not submit any observations to the court, “in line with its position that this is a matter for the Court to decide on”.<sup>197</sup> Mr Lammy said the UK’s decision on the ICC did not represent “an abandonment of our close ties and relationship with Israel”.<sup>198</sup>

For further information and the Israeli, Palestinian, American and European response, see section 3 of the Commons Library research briefing [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and regional response](#).

## Response in the UK to the warrant application

### UK Government

In May 2024, Mr Lammy, as Shadow Foreign Secretary, said Labour’s position was that warrant decisions are matters for the ICC and that the UK, as an ICC member, has a legal obligation to implement them (if issued):

Labour’s position is that the ICC chief prosecutor’s decision to apply for arrest warrants is an independent matter for the Court and the prosecutor. [...]

Labour believes that the ICC’s independence must be upheld and respected, and that it is right that the conduct of all parties is addressed by the Court [...]

Labour believes the UK and all parties to the Rome statute have a legal obligation to comply with orders and warrants issued by the ICC. Democracies that believe in the rule of law must submit themselves to it. [...].<sup>199</sup>

In response to a question in July 2024, after taking office, on protecting the independence of the ICC, Mr Lammy said:

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<sup>196</sup> [ICC allows the UK to submit arguments on jurisdiction over Israel](#), Reuters, 27 June 2024; ICC, [Situation in the state of Palestine, pre-trial chamber I, No. ICC-01/18](#) (PDF), 27 June 2024

<sup>197</sup> [Israel disappointed with new UK Government’s position on ICC arrest warrants, official says](#), Haaretz, 26 July 2024; PQ 811 [[Gaza: Israel](#)], 29 July 2024

<sup>198</sup> HC Deb, [31 July 2024](#), c1166

<sup>199</sup> HC Deb, [20 May 2024](#), c657

I believe in the separation of powers [...] It is for judges and the judiciary to have the time to reflect and make their considerations and for politicians to step back and respect them in that process.<sup>200</sup>

### Opposition parties

When in government, in May 2024, Prime Minister Sunak described the request for warrants as a “deeply unhelpful development” and said there is “no moral equivalence” between Israel and Hamas.<sup>201</sup> The then Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron also reiterated the Conservative government’s position that it did not believe that the ICC has jurisdiction in Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>202</sup>

Both the Scottish National Party and Liberal Democrats said the UK should support the actions of the ICC. In July 2024, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, Layla Moran, accused the Conservative government of “undermining” the UK’s commitment to the international rules-based order.<sup>203</sup>

## 2.5

## Role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

### What is the ICJ, and what has it ordered?

The [ICJ is the UN’s highest court](#).

In December 2023, South Africa began proceedings against Israel at the ICJ, alleging Israel is breaching its obligations under the Genocide Convention.<sup>204</sup> The full case will likely last several years.

In 2024, the ICJ has issued three sets of provisional measures on Israel’s actions in Gaza, in January, March and May. These are summarised in section 2.7 of the Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#). These included, in its January measures, increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza and Israel taking “all measures” to prevent the “commission of genocidal acts”.<sup>205</sup>

Israel argues the case is a “distort[ion]” of the Convention. South Africa and the Palestinian Authority argue Israeli military operations must end.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c308

<sup>201</sup> HC Deb, [22 May 2024](#), c872

<sup>202</sup> HL Deb, [22 May 2024](#), c945

<sup>203</sup> HC Deb, [20 May 2024](#), cc649, 659; HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c230

<sup>204</sup> ICJ, [Case overview 192](#)

<sup>205</sup> ICJ, [Case 192, South Africa v Israel, 26 January 2024 Order \(provisional measures\)](#), paras 79, 80,

<sup>206</sup> UN, [Humanitarian response in Gaza ‘completely dependent’ on Palestinian refugee agency](#), 31 January 2024

## Response of Conservative government, to July 2024

In February 2024, the UK Government argued South Africa's case, [brought under the 1948 Genocide Convention](#), was “provocative” and “not helpful in the goal of achieving a sustainable ceasefire”. It said Israel's actions in Gaza “cannot be described as genocide”.<sup>207</sup>

While disagreeing with the action, in February the government said it “respect[s] the role and independence of the ICJ” and its “ruling is binding”.<sup>208</sup>

Speaking in the Commons in January 2024, the then Deputy Foreign Secretary, Andrew Mitchell said some of the court's provisional measures were steps the government had already raised in the conflict, such as increasing aid to Gaza, the immediate release of hostages, and for all parties to be bound by international humanitarian law.<sup>209</sup>

At the UN, the government also [reiterated its position](#) that it is “for courts, not governments, to determine genocide”.<sup>210</sup>

## Response of Labour government, from July 2024

As Shadow Foreign Secretary, in January 2024, David Lammy said that Israel “must now comply with the orders in [the] ruling in full” and that the orders “align closely” with the party's previous calls for a humanitarian truce and sustainable ceasefire.<sup>211</sup>

## Position of Liberal Democrats and SNP

In July Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, Layla Moran, argued that the UK should give its “full throated support” to the ICJ (as well as the ICC), in their investigations and judgement.<sup>212</sup>

In January the SNP's Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Brendan O'Hara, called on the UK to ensure Israel complies with ICJ's provisional measures.<sup>213</sup>

## Separate ICJ advisory opinion, July 2024

The case brought by South Africa is separate to an [advisory \(non-binding\) opinion issued in July 2024 by the ICJ](#), which followed a referral by the UN General Assembly in 2022. This found that “Israel's continued presence in the

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<sup>207</sup> FCDO, [ICJ interim ruling on South Africa vs Israel](#), 27 January 2024

<sup>208</sup> PQ 14354 [[Gaza: Israel](#)], 21 February 2024

<sup>209</sup> HC Deb, [29 January 2024](#), c621

<sup>210</sup> FCDO, [We continue to work intensively with the UN and partners \[...\]](#), 31 January 2024

<sup>211</sup> [Israel must comply with 'profoundly serious ICJ ruling \[...\]](#), The Independent, 26 January 2024

<sup>212</sup> HC Deb, [20 May 2024](#), cc649, 659; HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c230

<sup>213</sup> [SNP urges Cameron to be on 'right side of history'](#), ITV News, 28 January 2024

Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful” and its presence should be brought to an end “as rapidly as possible” (among other conclusions).<sup>214</sup>

The UK Government has not issued a full response to the advisory opinion. The Middle East Minister, Hamish Falconer, said it was an “extremely complex finding covering 90 pages. It was issued after considerable deliberation by the ICJ, and there is a variety of views from the judges.” On 30 July, he said the government would update the House when it has had time to respond.<sup>215</sup>

## 2.6 Israeli settler violence and sanctions

From December 2023 to May 2024, the UK introduced visa restrictions against some Israelis linked to settler violence in the West Bank (see section 3.4).

Speaking for the Conservatives in July 2024, Shadow Minister Alicia Kearns asked whether more sanctions would be forthcoming.<sup>216</sup> Foreign Secretary David Lammy did not commit to further sanctions but said:

[Israeli] Settlement expansion and settler violence have reached record levels. The Israeli Government have seized more of the West Bank in 2024 than in the past 20 years. That is completely unacceptable. This government will in challenge those who undermine a two-state solution.<sup>217</sup>

On 30 July, International Development Minister, Anneliese Dodds, said the government is “keeping all sanctions under review”.<sup>218</sup>

Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Layla Moran, has argued the government should go further and sanction Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich, and the “connected entities that provide support or enable those extremist individuals”.<sup>219</sup> She also called for a ban on trade with illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>220</sup>

In its [guidance on overseas business risk for Israel](#), the FCDO and Department for Business and Trade states the government considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegal, that it does not encourage or support trade with Israeli settlements in the OPTs, that goods imported from them must be labelled, and that goods from them are not entitled to any preferential tariff.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> UN, [Israel’s continued occupation of Palestinian Territory “unlawful”: UN world court](#), 19 July 2024

<sup>215</sup> HC Deb, [30 July 2024](#), cc1162

<sup>216</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c303

<sup>217</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c300

<sup>218</sup> HC Deb, [30 July 2024](#), c1154

<sup>219</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c229

<sup>220</sup> HC Deb, [18 July 2024](#), c229

<sup>221</sup> FCDO and others, [Overseas business risk: The Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), 24 February 2022.

## 3

# UK Government actions

## UK military action against the Houthis and Iran

From January to June 2024, UK forces have conducted four strikes against the Houthis in Yemen in response to their attacks on ships in the Red Sea. In April 2024, the RAF shot down drones and missiles launched by Iran against Israel.

For more on UK military action and sanctions, see the Commons Library research briefings [Houthis in the Red Sea 2024](#) and [Israel-Iran April 2024](#). The briefing, [UK forces in the Middle East](#) (2020), provides background.

## 3.1

# UK diplomatic activity

As set out in the Commons Library briefing [Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A parliamentary reading list, 2020-July 2024](#), from 7 October 2023 the UK Government has engaged with leaders in the Middle East to seek de-escalation, the release of hostages and an end to the conflict, and an increase in humanitarian aid.

## Activity since 5 July 2024

### Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority

On taking office in July 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has spoken to the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli President, Issac Herzog and the Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas.

In July Mr Starmer told Mr Netanyahu that there was an “urgent and clear need” for a ceasefire, the return of hostages and an immediate increase in aid. He also said the conditions for a two-state solution need to be in place, including adequate funding of the Palestinian Authority (Israel collects revenue on its behalf: see above, section 1.3). Mr Starmer also said Israel had the right to self-defence, in accordance with international law.<sup>222</sup>

Mr Starmer raised similar issues with Mr Abbas, and said it was important that the Palestinian Authority undertook reforms. Mr Starmer said he

<sup>222</sup> Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), [PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel](#), 7 July 2024 and [PM meeting with President Herzog of Israel](#), 28 July 2024



supported recognising a Palestinian state as part of the peace process and that statehood was a “undeniable right” of Palestinians.<sup>223</sup>

### Engagement with Iran and others in the region

On 12 August, Mr Starmer spoke with the new Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian, in which he said all parties must de-escalate and Iran must end its support for its allies and proxy groups in the region.<sup>224</sup> According to IRNA news, a state news agency in Iran, Mr Pezeshkian said it was a “legal right” of Iran to respond to the killing of the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran.<sup>225</sup>

Mr Starmer has also spoken to the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE on regional de-escalation and security.<sup>226</sup>

### Foreign Secretary visits to the region

Since taking office, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, has visited Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Qatar and Lebanon to discuss the conflict.<sup>227</sup> He has also spoken to the Lebanese Prime Minister.<sup>228</sup>

## 3.2

## Deployment of UK military forces

### UK military and other aid to Israel

In December 2023, the Ministry of Defence said that, during the current conflict, it would provide Israel with “only defensive [military] matériel, or matériel that might help with the recovery of hostages”.<sup>229</sup>

In response to parliamentary questions, the government said that, to 25 April (the most recent government statement), it has provided no lethal or other military equipment to Israel. It has provided some life-saving medical supplies, including defibrillators.<sup>230</sup>

No government financial support has been provided to Israel during the conflict. Israel is ineligible to receive aid from the UK’s aid budget under internationally agreed aid rules because it is a high-income economy.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>223</sup> PMO, [PM call with President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority](#), 7 July 2024

<sup>224</sup> PMO, [PM call with President Pezeshkian of Iran](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>225</sup> [Iran see retaliation against Israel as “solution”](#), BBC Monitoring, 13 August 2024

<sup>226</sup> PMO, [Call with King Abdullah II of Jordan](#), 15 July 2024; [Call with the Sultan of Oman](#), 15 July 2024; [Call with Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia](#), 15 July 2024; [Call with the UAE President](#), 7 July 2024; [Meeting with Emir of Qatar](#), 28 July 2024; [Meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan](#), 23 July 2024

<sup>227</sup> FCDO, [Regional de-escalation a priority as Foreign Secretary \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>228</sup> [British foreign secretary in a phone call with Mikati](#), National News Agency, 13 July 2024

<sup>229</sup> HC Deb, [5 December 2023](#), c219

<sup>230</sup> PQ 5416 [[Israel: Military aid](#)], 11 December 2023; PQ 23050 [[Israel: Military aid](#)], 25 April 2024

<sup>231</sup> OECD, [Development Assistance Committee: List of Official Development Assistance recipients](#)

Since the Labour government took office on 5 July, no substantial changes have been announced in the status of UK forces. In August 2024 additional UK military personnel were deployed to the region to assist in the possible evacuation of British nationals in the event of a wider Israel-Hezbollah conflict.<sup>232</sup> The Times newspaper reported 1,000 troops are on standby.<sup>233</sup>

The government estimates that 16,000 British nationals are in Lebanon.<sup>234</sup> In the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict, around 4,500 British nationals were evacuated from Lebanon under Operation Highbrow.<sup>235</sup>

The list below details actions taken from 7 October 2023 to 4 July 2024.

On 13 October 2023, [the UK Government announced it would deploy some UK military assets to the eastern Mediterranean](#) to “support Israel, reinforce regional stability and prevent escalation.” Assets deployed are:<sup>236</sup>

- 12 maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft, to patrol against the potential transfer of weapons to terrorist groups.
- A Royal Navy task group to deliver humanitarian aid. It includes aircraft, helicopters, royal marines, and two ships (RFA Lyme Bay and RFA Angus).
- An additional destroyer, HMS Diamond, to support [Operation Kipion](#) (the UK’s existing maritime presence in the Gulf and Indian Ocean).<sup>237</sup> HMS Richmond and HMS Duncan have been deployed as relief.<sup>238</sup>
- 2,500 military personnel (up 1,000 since 7 October).<sup>239</sup> Some have been deployed to Tel Aviv, Beirut and Jordan to protect British citizens.<sup>240</sup>
- In 2024, the UK deployed RFA Cardigan Bay to provide accommodation for US personnel while they constructed a pier to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza (this was due to close in July).<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> FCDO, [UK bolsters support to British nationals in Lebanon](#), 3 August 2024

<sup>233</sup> [British troops on standby to evacuate Lebanon](#), The Times, 7 August 2024

<sup>234</sup> HC Deb, [13 July 2024](#), c1204

<sup>235</sup> Cabinet Office, [GOSE Op Highbrow lessons learnt](#), undated

<sup>236</sup> PQ 48 [[Military aircraft: Mediterranean region](#)], 12 November 2023

<sup>237</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Defence Secretary sends Royal Navy destroyer east of Suez](#), 30 November 2023

<sup>238</sup> Royal Navy, [HMS Richmond takes over from HMS Diamond](#), 6 February 2024; Ministry of Defence, [HMS Duncan deploys to the Red Sea to protect shipping routes](#), 27 May 2024

<sup>239</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Defence Secretary visits Israel and OPTs \[...\]](#), 7 December 2023

<sup>240</sup> HC Deb, [20 November 2023](#), c4

<sup>241</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Royal navy ship joins international effort \[...\]](#), 26 April 2024

## 3.3

## UK humanitarian aid

The Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs](#), provides more on UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the continuation of funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) and aid access. No UK aid is provided via Hamas.

## UK aid funding in 2023/24

Over £100 million in aid was provided to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) during 2023/24. The UK also appointed a humanitarian coordinator.<sup>242</sup>

## Aid funding in 2024/25

In July 2023, the government said it planned £29 million for the OPTs in 2024/25. It has made five announcements on spending in 2024:

- June: £15 million in aid for the Palestinian Authority, to be spent via the World Bank. This will pay public sector salaries, support essential services and fund anti-corruption and other reforms.<sup>243</sup>
- July: £5.5 million, for the charity UK-Med.<sup>244</sup>
- July: £21 million for [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East](#) (UNRWA).<sup>245</sup>
- August: £6 million for UNICEF, the UN children's fund, in Gaza.<sup>246</sup>
- September: Together with Kuwait a joint £4.5 million for UNICEF (covering UNICEF work in both Gaza and Yemen).<sup>247</sup>

The announcement of UNRWA funding followed a decision by the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, to resume UK funding for to the agency in July.

In January, the Conservative government had paused decisions on future UK funding to UNRWA following allegations that several of its staff were involved in the Hamas assault of 7 October. Mr Lammy's decision followed UN reviews into UNRWA and commitments of the agency to carry out reforms.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>242</sup> Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs](#), section 1.3

<sup>243</sup> FCDO, [UK contributes financial aid to the OPTs to increase stability](#), 1 June 2024

<sup>244</sup> FCDO, [Foreign Secretary calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza \[...\]](#), 15 July 2024

<sup>245</sup> See section 4 of the Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip](#)

<sup>246</sup> FCDO, [Development minister calls for peace and security in the Middle East](#), 7 August 2024

<sup>247</sup> FCDO, [UK and Kuwait agree new partnership to provide vital aid](#), 4 September 2024

<sup>248</sup> See section 4 of the Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip](#)

The UK Government says it will monitor UNRWA's neutrality and work.<sup>249</sup>

In August 2024 UNRWA announced that nine staff would be sacked. This was in response to evidence obtained by the UN's Office for Oversight Services that suggested the staff "may have been involved in the 7 October attacks". This review was separate to that led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna and which published its report in April 2024. It also follows the earlier sacking of 10 UNRWA staff in January 2024.<sup>250</sup>

## 3.4 New UK sanctions and visa restrictions

### Sanctions against Hamas and others

Before October 2023, the UK applied sanctions against Hamas and other Iran-aligned groups in the Middle East, including Hezbollah and the Houthis.<sup>251</sup> UK sanctions include travel bans, asset freezes and arms embargoes. New sanctions include:

- 14 November 2023: four members of Hamas and two financiers.<sup>252</sup>
- 13 December: leaders and financiers of Hamas and [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#).<sup>253</sup>
- 14 December: seven people, including the Hamas representative to Iran and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members.<sup>254</sup>
- 22 January 2024: five individuals and one entity involved in arranging finance for Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.<sup>255</sup>
- 27 March 2024: two financiers for a Hamas-supporting media network.<sup>256</sup>
- 29 August 2024: a travel ban against two previously sanctioned individuals respectively linked with Hezbollah and a media network, "Gaza Now" (linked to terrorism promotion).<sup>257</sup>
- 4 September 2024: Three members of the IRGC and an IRGC unit for "destabilis[ing] the region".<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> PQ 868 [[UNRWA](#)], 26 July 2024

<sup>250</sup> UN, [Nine UNRWA staff to be fired for potential role in 7 October attacks on Israel](#), 5 August 2024

<sup>251</sup> Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), sections 2.2, 2.3

<sup>252</sup> FCDO, [The UK sanctions list](#); FCDO, [UK and US hit Hamas leadership with targeted sanctions](#), 14 November 2023

<sup>253</sup> FCDO, [UK and US target Hamas with new sanctions to isolate terror group](#), 13 December 2023

<sup>254</sup> FCDO, [New Iranian sanction regime comes into force](#), 14 December 2023

<sup>255</sup> FCDO, [UK, US and Australia sanction key figures in Hamas' financial network](#), 22 January 2024

<sup>256</sup> HM Treasury, [New sanctions on persons linked to Hamas supporting media network](#), 27 March 2024

<sup>257</sup> HM Treasury, [Travel ban on two individuals \[...\]](#), 29 August 2024

<sup>258</sup> FCDO, [UK suspends around 30 arms export licences to Israel \[...\]](#), 2 September 2024

## Proscribing Hizb ut-Tahrir as a terrorist group

In January 2024, the Home Secretary proscribed [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#), an armed Islamist group based in Lebanon which operates in 32 countries and praised the Hamas assault of 7 October, under the Terrorism Act 2002.<sup>259</sup>

## Visa restrictions against Israeli settlers

In December 2023, then Foreign Secretary, Lord Cameron, announced the UK would ban those responsible for settler violence in the West Bank from entering the UK. He called on Israel to “hold the preparators accountable”.<sup>260</sup>

In February, the UK imposed travel and financial restrictions against four individuals involved in West Bank violence.<sup>261</sup>

A further four individuals were sanctioned in May, and two groups: Hilltop Youth and Lehava.<sup>262</sup>

## UK sanctions against Iran and proscription of IRGC

Iran’s [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) was established as a counterweight to Iran’s regular armed forces following the Iranian revolution of 1979 that overthrew the last Shah. In addition to personnel in Iran, it exerts wider influence in the region by providing money, technology, and training.<sup>263</sup>

The UK sanctions the entirety of the IRGC under its nuclear sanctions, meaning it applies asset freezes and travel bans. The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Sir Ed Davey, and the former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Alicia Kearns, have called for the proscription of the IRGC as a terrorist group. This would create offences in the UK for being a member, among other things.<sup>264</sup>

In January 2023 the then Shadow Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said Labour would support proscription, “either by using existing terrorism legislation or by creating a new process of proscription for hostile state actors”.<sup>265</sup>

The 2024 Labour Party manifesto said that the UK “lacked a comprehensive framework to protect” itself from the actions of hostile states and groups. It cited examples of the [Skripal poisonings](#) in Salisbury and [actions of the IRGC](#). Labour said it would “take the approach used for dealing with non-state terrorism and adapt it to deal with state-based domestic security threats”.<sup>266</sup>

On taking office in July 2024, Mr Lammy said he “stood by” his comments in opposition and would, over the coming months, review the context of terrorist activity and state threats with the Home Secretary.<sup>267</sup>

For more information on the UK debates on proscription, see section 2.4 of the Commons Library research briefing, [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#).

## 3.5

## How has the UK voted at the UN?

## UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UK has not used its veto at the UNSC since 1989, and not on an issue relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 1956 Suez Crisis.<sup>268</sup>

In 2023 and 2024 UNSC disagreements centred on whether a resolution should support a humanitarian “ceasefire” or “pause” and if it should condemn the actions of Hamas on 7 October.<sup>269</sup> In 2023 the UK said it wanted a “balanced text” which condemned Hamas and re-affirmed Israel’s right to self-defence, the protection of civilians and the delivery of aid.<sup>270</sup>

Since October 2023, the UNSC has passed four resolutions on the conflict:

- UNSC [Resolution 2735](#), 10 June 2024. The full text of the resolution can be found on the [UN Library site](#). It noted a proposed three-stage resolution to the conflict and urged Israel and Hamas to accept it. The UK voted yes.<sup>271</sup>
- UNSC [Resolution 2728](#), 25 March 2024. The full text of the resolution can be found on the [UN Library site](#). It “demands” an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan by all parties and the unconditional and immediate release of all hostages. The UK voted yes.<sup>272</sup>
- UNSC [Resolution 2720](#), 22 December 2023. The full text of the resolution can be found on the [UN Library site](#). It “demanded” humanitarian aid to Gaza be increased. The UK voted yes.<sup>273</sup>
- UNSC [Resolution 2712](#), 15 November 2023. The resolution’s full text can be found on the [UN Library site](#). The UNSC said it called for the urgent creation of humanitarian corridors and for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The UK abstained.<sup>274</sup>

<sup>259</sup> Home Office, [Home Secretary declares Hizb ut-Tahrir as terrorists](#), 15 January 2024

<sup>260</sup> [UK Foreign Secretary announces ban on ‘extremist Israeli settlers’](#), BBC News, 14 December 2023

<sup>261</sup> FCDO, [UK sanctions extremist settlers in the West Bank](#), 12 February 2024

<sup>262</sup> FCDO, [UK sanctions extremist groups and individuals for settler violence](#), 3 May 2024

<sup>263</sup> Commons Library, [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#)

<sup>264</sup> HC Deb, [6 July 2023](#), c1001; HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc28-9

<sup>265</sup> HC Deb, [31 January 2023](#), c186

<sup>266</sup> [Labour Party Manifesto 2024](#), p15

<sup>267</sup> HC Deb, [19 July 2024](#), c304

<sup>268</sup> UN Library, [UNSC meetings and outcomes tables: Vetoes](#)

<sup>269</sup> See next paragraph for sources on these debates

<sup>270</sup> UN, [Deadlock deepens as Security Council rejects competing resolutions \[...\]](#), 25 October 2023

<sup>271</sup> FCDO, [UNSC adopts resolution on proposed ceasefire and hostage deal](#), 10 June 2024

<sup>272</sup> FCDO, [The UK has long called for an immediate humanitarian pause](#), 25 March 2024

<sup>273</sup> FCDO, [The UK supports Security Council resolution 2720 on aid to Gaza](#), 22 December 2023

<sup>274</sup> FCDO, [It is right the Security Council calls for a humanitarian pause in Gaza \[...\]](#), 15 November 2023

For more detail on these resolutions and the seven votes at the Security Council on resolutions that did not pass, see sections 2.2 and 2.6 of the Commons Library research briefing [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and regional response](#). This includes information on US, Israeli and Palestinian Authority reaction to the resolutions.

## UN General Assembly (UNGA)

All members of the UN make up the UNGA. UNGA votes are non-binding. There have been two votes at the UN General Assembly on the conflict since October 2023, both in 2023.

The UK abstained in both votes. In both cases, it argued that the resolution should have condemned Hamas:<sup>275</sup>

- 27 October 2023: UNGA voted 121 to 14 (with 44 abstentions) for an “immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”. The resolution called for all parties to “immediately and fully comply” with obligations under international law, for Hamas to release its hostages and for Israel to rescind the order for civilians to evacuate northern Gaza.<sup>276</sup>
- 12 December 2023: UNGA backed a resolution “demanding” the release of hostages, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for all parties to comply with international humanitarian law. A total of 153 states voted in favour, 10 voted against (including the US and Israel) and 23 abstained (including the UK and Germany).<sup>277</sup>

Section 2.3 of the Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and regional response](#) provides more on these debates, including statements by the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Government.

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<sup>275</sup> FCDO, [Condemning Hamas’ terrorism should not be controversial](#), 27 October 2023 and PQ HL1172 [[Gaza: Ceasefires](#)], 29 December 2023

<sup>276</sup> UN, [GA adopts resolution calling for “humanitarian truce”](#), 27 October 2023

<sup>277</sup> UN, [UNGA votes by large majority for immediate humanitarian ceasefire](#), 12 December 2023

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