

**Research Briefing**

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By Library specialists

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# 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict: UK and international response

## Summary

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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 [took an estimated 240 hostages](#), as part of what it called “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”.

In response, Israel’s military forces conducted [air strikes against Hamas in Gaza](#). On 28 October, Israeli ground attacks in Gaza began with the [aim of “destroy\[ing\] Hamas’ governing and military capabilities and to bring the hostages home.”](#) Hamas also continued to fire rockets into Israel. A [pause in fighting](#) to release hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli prisons began on 24 November 2023. The Israeli Government said [the pause will last a maximum of 10 days](#).

In Gaza, the UN has said [residential buildings are among the sites targeted by Israel](#) and has raised concerns for the humanitarian situation. [Hezbollah](#), a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK, has also [fired rockets from Lebanon into Israel](#) and Israel has conducted airstrikes against Hezbollah.

This is the [fourth high-level conflict between Hamas and Israel](#) since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007.

Citing Israeli authorities and the Hamas-controlled Government Media Office, the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) says that since 7 October, more than 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been reported killed and 5,431 injured. Over 15,000 Palestinians have been reported killed and over 36,000 injured across Gaza and Israel ([as of 29 November 2023](#)).

This briefing provides information on the UK and international response to the conflict. It also includes UK Government advice for British nationals.

## International response

### UN Secretary General and UN Security Council

On 24 October, [the UN Secretary General, António Guterres called for an “immediate humanitarian ceasefire”](#).

On 9 October, the Israeli Government announced a [“complete siege” of Gaza](#) and called for [civilians to evacuate northern Gaza](#). The UN Secretary General called for Israel to [rescind the evacuation order](#), and for Hamas to release its hostages. He has also called for [unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza](#).

On 15 November, the [UN Security Council passed a resolution](#) which called for the immediate release of all hostages by Hamas and for “urgent and extended humanitarian corridors” throughout Gaza. Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States abstained. The UK and US said [they abstained because the resolution did not condemn the Hamas attack](#) against Israel on 7 October. Russia [called for a ceasefire](#).

The [Israeli representative to the UN criticised the resolution](#) for failing to condemn Hamas and said Israel “will continue to act until Hamas is destroyed and the hostages are returned”. The Palestinian representative, Riyad Mansour (representing the Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank), said the resolution [should have called for an immediate truce](#).

## Pauses in fighting

On 9 November, the US said [Israel would begin four to five hour pauses in its military operations in northern Gaza](#). The Israeli Defence Forces has said these are [“tactical, local pauses” for the delivery of aid and not a ceasefire](#).

A pause in fighting began on 24 November to enable the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli prisons. [Qatar and Egypt mediated the agreement](#) for an initial four day pause. As of 30 November, a [three day extension has been agreed](#). Before the agreement came into effect on 24 November, Israel said the pause would last no longer than ten days and that [fighting would then resume](#).

## Rafah crossing

The Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza was closed for much of the initial period after 7 October. Following negotiations, on 18 October [Israel agreed to the reopening of the crossing for limited humanitarian aid only](#).

From 1 November, [the Rafah crossing also opened “for time limited periods”](#) to allow up to 500 foreign nationals and injured Palestinians to leave daily. A spokesperson for the UN Secretary General said the pause from 24 November [allowed UN aid to Gaza to be “scaled up”](#) but that aid deliveries “barely register” against the need of the population.

## United States, EU and G7 response

The United States has [deployed additional military assets](#) to the Middle East and Israel to act as a deterrent against escalation by [Hezbollah in Lebanon](#) and by [other groups aligned with Iran](#). Both the [United States](#) and the [European Union](#) have announced additional humanitarian aid to the region.

The G7 (the United States, Japan, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and the EU) says it [supports “humanitarian pauses and corridors”](#) in the conflict to allow the delivery of aid, release of hostages, and civilian movement. US President Joe Biden has said [the United States will not support negotiations](#) for a ceasefire until Hamas has released the hostages it took.

## UK Government response

### Advice for British nationals

The UK Government states any [British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#) and [Lebanon](#) should register their presence with the UK Government. It has also said that [all British nationals should leave Lebanon](#).

### UK military and humanitarian response

[The UK Government has deployed military assets](#) to the Middle East to promote de-escalation and conduct surveillance activities.

The UK has also announced [£60 million in aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#) (OPTs) since 7 October. No UK aid is directed via Hamas, instead it is arranged through UN agencies. The Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs](#), provides more on UK aid.

### UK statements on the conflict and diplomatic actions

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has [condemned the 7 October attack by Hamas](#). He has defended Israel's right to defend itself, said Israel should take steps to protect civilians in Gaza, and that the UK will work diplomatically to secure the delivery of humanitarian aid and prevent regional escalation. The [Prime Minister](#), [Foreign Secretary](#), Lord David Cameron, and [former Foreign Secretary](#), James Cleverly, have also met with leaders in the Middle East to discuss the conflict, humanitarian aid and access, regional de-escalation and the release of hostages.

### Position on a ceasefire and humanitarian pause

In line with the US position, the [UK Government has supported temporary "humanitarian pauses"](#) in the fighting for the delivery of aid and the release of hostages. This is also the [position of the Labour Party](#), while [the SNP has called for a ceasefire](#). The Liberal Democrats have called [an "immediate bilateral ceasefire"](#) between Israel and Hamas. Speaking on 18 October, James Cleverly said [he did not believe Hamas would respect a ceasefire](#).

On 15 November 2023, the House of Commons voted on Labour and SNP amendments in the King's Speech debates, which called for [longer humanitarian pauses as "a necessary step to an enduring cessation of fighting"](#) (Labour) and for the [Government to "press all parties to agree to a humanitarian ceasefire"](#) (SNP). The amendments can be read in [full in Hansard for 15 November 2023](#).

Responding for the Government, Minister for Policing Chris Philp reiterated its position that Hamas [would not adhere to a ceasefire and unilateral action by Israel "would not be fair or just"](#). Both amendments failed to pass: 290 votes against 183 in favour (Labour) and 293 to 125 (SNP).

## 1

## Events since 7 October 2023

This is a summary of events from 7 October to 29 November 2023. It is not intended to provide detailed information on the ongoing fast-moving events. Further reading on the current conflict, its outlook, and humanitarian situation is provided in section 6 of this briefing.

During active conflicts and because of the challenges that journalists, researchers and civil society organisations have with accessing a conflict zone, reports on specific stories and accurate statistics can be difficult to verify.

The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) publishes [daily updates on casualties](#). BBC Verify's, [How the dead are counted in Gaza](#), 16 November 2023, explains how they are reported.

### Initial Hamas attacks against Israel

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

The group launched several thousand rockets into Israel, conducted attacks in border areas, [killing around 1,200 civilians](#), and took a reported 240 hostages, as part of what it called "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood".<sup>2</sup>

Hamas spokesperson Mohammed Deif, the commander-in-chief of the [Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades](#) (Hamas' military wing), said the attack against Israel was "in response to the continued Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people and violations at the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#)".<sup>3</sup>

On 8 October, in response to the attacks, the Israeli security cabinet formally declared war against Hamas and said it would carry out "significant military activities" against it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The UK has proscribed Hamas and it is subject to sanctions, see: Home Office, [Islamist terrorist group Hamas banned in the UK](#), 26 November 2021 and HM Treasury, [Current list of designated persons: Counter terrorism \(international\)](#), 16 June 2022, pp3-4

<sup>2</sup> [How Hamas duped Israel as it planned devastating attack](#), Reuters, 10 October 2023; [Hamas hostages: Stories of the hostages taken by Hamas from Israel](#), BBC News, 27 November 2023

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Report, [The Middle East, including the Palestinian question: Emergency closed consultation](#), 7 October 2023

<sup>4</sup> [Security Council confirms Israel at war \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 8 October 2023

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has condemned violence “on both sides”.<sup>5</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>6</sup>

## Israeli air strikes and actions in Gaza

### Recovery of Israeli territory and actions in Gaza

On 9 October 2023 Israel said it had recovered most of the Israeli territory initially taken by Hamas.<sup>7</sup>

On 11 October 2023, a cross-government war cabinet was formed in Israel, bringing some opposition figures into government.<sup>8</sup>

Israel has launched hundreds of airstrikes against Hamas sites in Gaza and what the Israeli Defence Forces describe as its “operational infrastructure”.<sup>9</sup>

On 28 October, the Israeli Defence Forces commenced a ground offensive in Gaza. The Israeli Government said it aims to “destroy Hamas’ governing and military capabilities and to bring the hostages home”.<sup>10</sup>

In advance of the offensive, the Israeli Government told civilians to evacuate northern Gaza.<sup>11</sup> This action drew criticism from the UN Secretary General, who called the evacuation order “dangerous and deeply troubling” and for Israel to grant “unimpeded access for humanitarian aid” to Gaza.<sup>12</sup> In November, Israel has also told civilians to leave parts of southern Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

### Situation reports by UN agencies

Alongside its military operations, Israel restricted the delivery of fuel, water, and energy to Gaza, citing concerns that fuel could be used by Hamas.<sup>14</sup> In November, Israel allowed a limited amount of fuel to be delivered to support

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<sup>5</sup> [Palestinian President Abbas condemns violence against civilians](#), Reuters, 12 October 2023

<sup>6</sup> [A guide to Palestinian and other anti-Israeli factions](#), Foreign Affairs, 10 October 2023

<sup>7</sup> [A timeline of the surprise attack by Hamas on Israel](#), ABC News, updated 18 October 2023

<sup>8</sup> [Israel’s Netanyahu, Gantz reach deal to form emergency government](#), Al-Monitor, 11 October 2023

<sup>9</sup> [Israel pounds Gaza and prepares for ground operation](#), Financial Times, 10 October 2023; UNOCHA, [Flash update in the Gaza strip and Israel 10](#), 16 October 2023

<sup>10</sup> [Israel launches Gaza war’s second phase with ground operation, Netanyahu says](#), Reuters, 28 October 2023

<sup>11</sup> [Palestinians flee northern Gaza after Israel orders 1 million to evacuate as ground attack looms](#), AP, 13 October 2023

<sup>12</sup> UN, [Middle East on “verge of the abyss” UN warns \[...\]](#), 15 October 2023; UN, [Why Israel must reconsider its Gaza evacuation order](#), 13 October 2023

<sup>13</sup> [Israel tells people in east of Gaza’s Khan Younis to evacuate](#), Reuters, 16 November 2023

<sup>14</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



the work of the [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees](#) (UNRWA). UNRWA had previously said a lack of fuel had hindered its work.<sup>15</sup>

In November, pauses in fighting allowed an increased amount of aid to be delivered (see below).

Gaza is heavily dependent on Israel for its energy and water,<sup>16</sup> and UN agencies have reported shortages in food, energy, and water and damage to hospitals and other infrastructure. The UNRWA, the World Health Organization and UNOCHA have also reported fighting, military operations, or air strikes in and around hospitals, schools, UNRWA sites, and places of shelter in Gaza, as well as a high level of population displacement.<sup>17</sup>

UNOCHA provides daily updates on the humanitarian situation on its website: [Current hostilities in Gaza and Israel: Impact since 7 October 2023](#) (browse the page for ‘flash updates’ and ‘reported impact’).

The UK Government says it has raised the importance of protecting civilians and adhering to international humanitarian law when conducting military operations directly with the Israeli Government, while “recognising that Hamas is embedded in parts of the civilian population [of Gaza]”.<sup>18</sup>

## The Rafah border crossing

The Rafah crossing is one of three crossing points in and out of Gaza, and the only non-Israeli entry and exit point. It is controlled and operated by the Egyptian Authorities and is primarily used for the movement of people.

Egypt has restricted the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza via the Rafah crossing since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007.<sup>19</sup> Access to the crossing was initially limited after 7 October 2023 for most of the time,<sup>20</sup> though the Egyptian Government said the crossing was not officially closed but became inoperable due to the Israeli air strikes on the Gaza side.<sup>21</sup>

On 18 October Israel agreed to the reopening of the crossing for limited humanitarian aid only. This did not allow for the movement of people across the border.<sup>22</sup> On 1 November, the crossing also opened “for time limited

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<sup>15</sup> [Israel to allow some fuel into Gaza after US push-officials](#), Reuters, 18 November 2023

<sup>16</sup> Unicef, [The Gaza Strip. The humanitarian impact of 15 years of blockade](#), June 2022

<sup>17</sup> UNRWA, [Situation report 35](#), 22 November 2023; UNOCHA, [Flash update 46](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>18</sup> PQ 1688 [[Gaza: Israel](#)], 21 November 2023 and PQ 895 [[Gaza: Hospitals](#)], 20 November 2023

<sup>19</sup> In 2005 Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza. Afterwards, the EU set up a monitoring mission ([EUBAM Rafah](#)) to provide a third-party presence. The monitors were withdrawn for security reasons after Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See UNOCHA, [Flash updates in the Gaza Strip and Israel numbers 2, 3, 4, and 7](#), October 2023

<sup>21</sup> [Gaza aid arrives at border crossing but no plan for delivery yet](#), Reuters, 17 October 2023

<sup>22</sup> [Israel will let Egypt deliver some aid to Gaza \[...\]](#), AP, 18 October 2023

periods” to allow up to 500 foreign nationals and injured Palestinians to cross into Egypt daily.<sup>23</sup>

Egypt has been wary of enabling the movement of Palestinians into Sinai via the crossing. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has said Egypt “rejects any attempt to resolve the Palestinian issue [...] through the forced displacement of Palestinians from their land, which would come at the expense of the countries of the region”.<sup>24</sup> The Egyptian Government has also said it wants to avoid Sinai becoming a base for attacks against Israel.<sup>25</sup>

On 30 October 2023, the Office of the UN Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, called for the opening of an additional crossing at Kerem Shalom between Israel and Gaza as “the only crossing equipped to rapidly process a sufficiently large number of trucks” of humanitarian aid.<sup>26</sup>

The UK Government has also said it is pressing relevant authorities to allow humanitarian aid and assistance, including fuel, through the Rafah crossing,<sup>27</sup> and for Israel to consider utilising facilities at Kerem Shalom.<sup>28</sup>

## Pauses in fighting, November 2023

On 15 November 2023 the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for more and extended humanitarian pauses in the conflict. Section 4.1 of this briefing provides more on the UN debate and response to the resolution.

### Announcement of “tactical, local pauses”

On 9 November, the White House said Israel would begin four-hour pauses in its military operations in northern Gaza. The Israeli Defence Forces have said these are “tactical, local pauses” for the delivery of humanitarian aid and do not constitute a ceasefire.<sup>29</sup> The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would not agree to a ceasefire until hostages are released.<sup>30</sup>

### Pause for the release of hostages

Following mediation by Qatar and Egypt, on 22 November Hamas and Israel agreed to a pause in fighting to allow for the release of hostages taken by

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<sup>23</sup> [Rafah crossing: First Britons leave Gaza but others face nervous wait](#), BBC News, 1 November 2023

<sup>24</sup> [Egypt rejects displacement of Palestinians into Sinai, says Sisi](#), Reuters, 18 October 2023

<sup>25</sup> As above and see also [Fear of Gaza exodus looms over Egypt](#), Financial Times, 17 October 2023

<sup>26</sup> UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East](#), 30 October 2023

<sup>27</sup> HC Deb, [24 October 2023](#), c719

<sup>28</sup> HC Deb, [9 October 2023](#), c139

<sup>29</sup> [White House says Israel will begin daily four-hour pauses in northern Gaza](#), BBC News, 9 November 2023 and [Israeli army says allowing “humanitarian pauses” in Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 9 November 2023

<sup>30</sup> [Israel open to ‘tactical little pauses’ to let aid into Gaza, Netanyahu says](#), Politico, 7 November 2023

Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The pause began on 24 November.<sup>31</sup>

The agreement was for an initial four-day pause to release 50 hostages for 150 prisoners, with the potential for extensions to enable the release of further hostages. Israel said the pause would be up to a maximum length of ten days from the date the first hostage was released by Hamas (24 November).<sup>32</sup> The pause has been extended for three days (to 1 December 2023).<sup>33</sup>

Israel's Government said no prisoners convicted of murder will be released.<sup>34</sup>

Before the agreement was implemented, the Israeli Government said it would "continue the war" after the pause "in order to return home all of the hostages, complete the elimination of Hamas and ensure that there will be no new threat to the State of Israel from Gaza".<sup>35</sup>

The agreement has allowed more fuel and humanitarian aid into Gaza. On the first day of the pause, the UN said the "biggest humanitarian convoy" to the UNRWA's reception point in Gaza since 7 October had been delivered.<sup>36</sup> However, on 27 November a spokesperson for the UN Secretary General said the amount of aid delivered "barely registers against the huge needs of 1.7 million displaced people" in Gaza.<sup>37</sup>

In response to the agreement, a spokesperson for the UN Secretary General called for a humanitarian ceasefire, saying the "dialogue that led to the agreement must continue".<sup>38</sup> The Palestinian Authority welcomed the agreement and renewed its call for a complete ceasefire.<sup>39</sup>

For the US, President Biden said he expected "all aspects of this deal to be fully implemented".<sup>40</sup> The UK Foreign Secretary, Lord David Cameron, welcomed the agreement and urged all parties to ensure it is "delivered in full" and for aid to reach Gaza "on a sustained basis".<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> [Briefing: Israel and Hamas choose words carefully on Gaza deal](#), BBC Monitoring, 23 November 2023; [Cabinet decision on hostage deal published: Truce to be limited to 10 days from first release](#), Times of Israel, 22 November 2023; Government of Israel, [Publication to the public regarding Government decision 1077](#) (in Hebrew)

<sup>32</sup> Previous footnote and [What we know about Israel-Hamas Gaza deal on hostages](#), BBC News, 24 November 2023

<sup>33</sup> [Israel, Hamas extend Gaza truce by one day in last minute deal](#), Reuters, 30 November 2023

<sup>34</sup> Who are the Palestinian prisoners to be released in the Israel-Hamas hostage deal?, Haaretz, 22 November 2023 (via [Nexis News](#))

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Return of hostages: Statement](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>36</sup> UN, [UN delivers more aid into Gaza on first day of humanitarian pause](#), 24 November 2023

<sup>37</sup> UN, [Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary General](#), 27 November 2023

<sup>38</sup> UN Secretary General, [\[...\] Secretary General urges continued dialogue between parties aimed at full humanitarian ceasefire](#), 27 November 2023

<sup>39</sup> Palestinian media react to Israel-Hamas deal, BBC Monitoring, 22 November 2023

<sup>40</sup> White House, [Statement from President Joe Biden \[...\]](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>41</sup> FCDO, [Foreign Secretary statement on Israel-Hamas hostage agreement](#), 22 November 2023; PQ 2785 [[Israel: Palestinians](#)], 27 November 2023

In Gaza, the pause has largely held. However, Hamas and the Israeli Defence Forces accused each other of beginning a short violent clash on 28 November.<sup>42</sup>

## Concerns about regional escalation of the conflict

Shared hostility towards Israel between Hamas and Iran-aligned groups in the Middle East such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, militias in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen has created fears the current conflict between Israel and Hamas may widen.<sup>43</sup> Violence has also been reported in the West Bank.

Iran has backed the Hamas offensive (see below, section 4). However, speaking in October 2023, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said there was “nothing” to suggest Iran was “directly involved in this attack [by Hamas against Israel], in planning it or in carrying it out”.<sup>44</sup>

### West Bank

Violence between Palestinians, Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and Israeli settlers has been reported.

From 7 October to 27 November, UNOCHA reported a daily average of six “incidents” by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. “Incidents” include attacks resulting in casualties, damage to Palestinian-owned property, or both. This is an increase from an average of three since the beginning of 2023.<sup>45</sup>

UNOCHA also reports ongoing search-and-arrest operations by the IDF, the exchange of fire between some Palestinians and the IDF, and confrontations and demonstrations.<sup>46</sup>

### Hezbollah in Lebanon

Hezbollah is a Shia military and political group, which emerged during the Lebanese civil war of the 1980s. It is [proscribed as a terrorist organisation](#) by the UK Government.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> [Israel troops in northern Gaza targeted with bombs \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 28 November 2023

<sup>43</sup> Commons Library, [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#), section 1

<sup>44</sup> US State Department, [Secretary Antony J Blinken with Kristen Welker](#), 8 October 2023

<sup>45</sup> UN, [Rise in intimidation, settler violence in the West Bank, warns OCHA](#), 1 November 2023; UNOCHA, [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, flash update 52](#), 27 November 2023

<sup>46</sup> UNOCHA, [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, flash update 52](#), 27 November 2023; International Crisis Group, [Settler violence rises in the West Bank during the Gaza war](#), 6 November 2023

<sup>47</sup> Home Office, [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), 15 September 2023, ‘Hizballah’

On 8 October 2023, Hezbollah launched missiles and conducted artillery attacks on some military sites in northern Israel “in solidarity” with Hamas.<sup>48</sup> While there have been no large-scale movements, clashes between Israel and Hezbollah continue to be reported on the border.<sup>49</sup>

## Attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria

Since 7 October, attacks have been reported against US forces in the region from Iran-aligned militia groups and others in Syria and Iraq.<sup>50</sup> The US has conducted “self-defence” strikes in response in Syria and Iraq which it states are “intended to solely protect and defend US personnel”.<sup>51</sup> Israel has also conducted airstrikes on some sites linked to Iran in Syria.<sup>52</sup>

## Houthis in Yemen

The group emerged in the 1990s in reaction to Saudi influence in the country. They have been in conflict with the internationally recognised government of Yemen since 2014 and control most of northern Yemen.<sup>53</sup> The Houthis launched drone and missiles against Israel on at least three occasions in the first month of conflict.<sup>54</sup>

## Houthi attacks on shipping

In November, the Houthis also said they would target Israeli ships in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb Strait. In response to a Houthi seizure of a ship on 20 November, the UK Government condemned the action and said: “Iran must actively restrain these groups to prevent the conflict [between Israel and Hamas] escalating across the region”.<sup>55</sup>

There have been further reports of attacks on Israeli-owned shipping in the region during November.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> [Hezbollah tells Palestinian militants “our guns and rockets are with you.”](#) Al-Arabiya News, 8 October 2023

<sup>49</sup> [Officer, 2 soldiers killed in clash with terrorists on Lebanon border; mortars fired](#), Times of Israel, 9 October 2023 and [Hezbollah’s Nasrallah refrains from entering Israel-Hamas war, praises Iraq, Yemen proxies](#), Al-Monitor, 3 November 2023

<sup>50</sup> [More attacks on US forces following strike on Iran-backed targets in Syria](#), VOA, 13 November 2023

<sup>51</sup> US Department of Defense (DoD), [Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III’s statement on US military strikes in Eastern Syria](#), 26 October 2023; US DoD, [Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III’s statement on US military strike in Eastern Syria](#), 8 November 2023; [US gunship strikes Iran-backed militias in Iraq \[...\]](#), Al-Monitor, 21 November 2023

<sup>52</sup> [Syria front on edge as Israel targets airports\[...\]](#), Al-Monitor, 13 November 2023

<sup>53</sup> Commons Library, [Yemen in 2023: Conflict and status of peace talks](#), section 1

<sup>54</sup> Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, [The Houthi war on Israel](#), 8 November 2023

<sup>55</sup> [Yemen’s Houthi leader says group to target Israeli ships in Red Sea](#), Alarabiya News, 15 November 2023, [Houthis seize ship in Red Sea with link to Israeli company](#), Reuters, 20 November 2023; [Seizure of MV Galaxy Leader by the Houthis—UK statement](#), 21 November 2023

<sup>56</sup> [US Navy seizes attackers who held Israeli-linked tanker \[...\]](#), AP, 27 November 2023; [An Israeli-owned ship was targeted in suspected drone attack \[...\]](#), AP, 25 November 2023

## 2

# UK Government and UK Parliament statements

For a full list of parliamentary proceedings on the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict, see the House of Commons Library research briefing, [Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A parliamentary reading list](#), November 2023.

## 2.1

### Government statements

#### Prime Minister's statements to the Commons

The Prime Minister has delivered two statements to the Commons on the conflict, on [16 October](#) and [23 October](#) 2023.

On 16 October 2023, the Prime Minister described the attack by Hamas against Israel as a “pogrom”. He said:

- The attack was a “fundamental challenge to any idea of co-existence” which he described as “essential” to peace and stability in the region.
- Israel had an “absolute” right to defend itself, deter further incursions, and secure the release of hostages, in line with international humanitarian law.
- The UK would call upon Israel to take “every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians”.<sup>57</sup>

#### Three UK Government priorities

On 16 October, the Prime Minister said the UK response has three elements:

- Working to prevent further escalation and threats against Israel through deploying UK forces to monitor and provide regional surveillance (see section 3.2). The UK will not intervene militarily in Gaza.

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<sup>57</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc24-5

- Increasing humanitarian aid for the Occupied Palestinian Territories and calling for humanitarian access to Gaza.
- Working diplomatically to support stability in the region, including for a two-state solution (see below for high-level diplomatic contact).<sup>58</sup>

## Government statements on specific issues

### Calls for a ceasefire

The Government does not support a ceasefire in Gaza. Speaking on 18 October, the then Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, said the Government would not call for a ceasefire, arguing that he “had seen nothing [...] which leads me to believe that Hamas would respect calls for a ceasefire”.<sup>59</sup>

On 25 October, the Prime Minister said while the UK would not support a ceasefire, the Government “recognised” there may need to be “specific pauses” in fighting. This would be to create a “safer environment” for the delivery of humanitarian aid, release of hostages and for allowing British nationals and others to leave Gaza.<sup>60</sup>

Following the US announcement on 9 November that Israel would begin four to five-hour pauses in the fighting, the International Development Minister, Andrew Mitchell, said the Government welcomed this as an “important first step” but said “longer pauses that cover wider areas will be needed”.<sup>61</sup>

The Government also welcomed the “coordinated release of hostages and pause in the fighting” in November and the opportunity it offered for increasing the amount of aid to Gaza.<sup>62</sup> Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, told the UN Security Council on 29 November that the pause “should not be a one-off; we must collectively build from it” to release hostages, deliver aid and protect civilians.<sup>63</sup>

### Two-state solution

On support for a two-state solution, on 22 October the Prime Minister said the [Abraham Accords](#) (in which Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco normalised their diplomatic relations with Israel) were important.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc24-5

<sup>59</sup> HC Deb, [18 October 2023](#), c339

<sup>60</sup> HC Deb, [25 October 2023](#), c827

<sup>61</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), c508

<sup>62</sup> FCDO, [The UK welcomes the agreement for a coordinated release of hostages and pause in the fighting in Gaza \[...\]](#), 22 November 2023

<sup>63</sup> UN, [World must not look away from the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza \[...\]](#), 29 November 2023

<sup>64</sup> HC Deb, [23 October 2023](#), c592. Sudan also signed the Accords but has not signed a bilateral agreement with Israel.

However, the Prime Minister also said there must be “renewed energy” on supporting more effective Palestinian Governance and “challenging actions that undercut legitimate aspirations for Palestinian statehood”.<sup>65</sup>

The Prime Minister has reiterated the long-standing position of the UK Government that it will “recognise the state of Palestine when it best serves the interest of peace”.<sup>66</sup> For more on this topic, see the Commons Library debate briefing, [UK Government recognition of the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel](#), 2021.

## Violence in the West Bank

In November 2023, the Minister for the Americas and the Caribbean, David Rutley, said the Government condemns “any incidence of violence against settlers by Palestinians” and that Israel “must take tangible steps to grip settler violence” and hold those responsible to account:

Our position is clear: we strongly condemn any incidence of violence against settlers by Palestinians. Reports of Palestinian civilians being murdered by settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) are appalling. Israel must take tangible steps to grip settler violence, and to hold those responsible accountable. The Prime Minister and the former Foreign Secretary [James Cleverly] have raised this with Prime Minister Netanyahu and [Israeli] Foreign Minister Cohen, and we have also stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.<sup>67</sup>

## International humanitarian law

In response to a parliamentary question asking if the Government had assessed whether the Israeli Government is complying with international human rights law, the Minister for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, stated on 8 November 2023 that “it is not for the Government to make such an assessment; it is for lawyers and a court to do so”.<sup>68</sup>

The Minister also reiterated the Government’s position “that all countries must abide by international humanitarian law and the rules of law”.<sup>69</sup>

On 15 November 2023, the Minister for International Development also said it was “not for Ministers to seek to state where the [[International Criminal Court, ICC](#)] has jurisdiction; that is for the Chief Prosecutor.<sup>70</sup> The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Chalk, echoed this on 21 November:

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<sup>65</sup> HC Deb, [23 October 2023](#), c592.

<sup>66</sup> HC Deb, [22 November 2023](#), c318

<sup>67</sup> PQ 892 [[West Bank: violence](#)], 20 November 2023

<sup>68</sup> HC Deb, [8 November 2023](#), c165

<sup>69</sup> HC Deb, [8 November 2023](#), c165

<sup>70</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), c513



Questions about prosecution are matters for independent prosecutors. It is not for Ministers in this Parliament to make that sort of decision: that will be a matter for independent prosecutors, whom I would expect to exercise their discretion freely and fairly.<sup>71</sup>

The Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, has said his office has “jurisdiction over current events in Gaza and in the West Bank”.<sup>72</sup> Israel has rejected ICC jurisdiction on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past.<sup>73</sup>

Section 6 of this briefing provides resources on the ICC and international law.

## UK arms sales to Israel

In response to a parliamentary question on whether the UK had assessed the potential impact of arms sales to Israel on civilian deaths and compliance with international humanitarian law, on 20 November 2023 the Defence Secretary, Grant Shapps, said:

All [UK] export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the strategic export licence criteria. This Government will not use any export licences to any destination where applications are not consistent with the criteria. [...]

our defence exports to Israel are relatively small—just £42 million last year [...].<sup>74</sup>

In response to a separate question, the Minister of State for Defence, James Cartlidge, said the Government is monitoring the situation closely and “if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Criteria, those licences will be revoked”.<sup>75</sup>

The criteria for UK arms exports are set out in the Commons Library research briefing, [UK amends its criteria for arms exports](#), July 2022. The UK applies eight criteria to assess these applications (see sections 2 to 10 of the briefing) which 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.

## The effectiveness of the Rafah crossing for aid

On 8 November 2023, the Minister for International Development, said the volume of trucks carrying humanitarian aid through the Rafah crossing is “nowhere near enough” and “cannot be, even were it operating at full capacity.” He said the UK was exploring additional measures, such as

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<sup>71</sup> HC Deb, [21 November 2023](#), c178

<sup>72</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>73</sup> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Israel rejects the ICC’s decision regarding the scope of its territorial jurisdiction \[...\]](#), 7 February 2021

<sup>74</sup> HC Deb, [20 November 2023](#), c2

<sup>75</sup> PQ 203627 [[Israel: Arms trade](#)], 26 October 2023

humanitarian pauses, and was “urging” Israel to consider utilising other crossings, including Kerem Shalom.<sup>76</sup>

## Israel’s evacuation order for northern Gaza

In response to a parliamentary question on Israel’s evacuation order for northern Gaza, the Prime Minister said: “Israel is attempting to minimise the impact on civilians by asking people to leave northern Gaza”.<sup>77</sup>

## UK nationals in Gaza and deaths

The UK Government believes there are three British nationals held hostage by Hamas. It states 14 British nationals have been killed during the conflict (from 7 October to 7 November 2023).<sup>78</sup>

## Funding for the Community Security Trust in the UK

Following reports of a rise in antisemitic offenses in the UK, the Prime Minister has announced £3 million in funding for [the Community Security Trust \(CST\)](#) for Jewish community buildings, synagogues, and schools in the UK.<sup>79</sup> The CST is a charity that protects Jews from antisemitism and other threats. In the November 2023 Autumn statement, the Chancellor said he would repeat this £3 million funding to the CST next year.<sup>80</sup>

The Chancellor also announced up to a further £7 million for organisations such as the [Holocaust Memorial Trust](#) to address antisemitism over the next three years, including in schools and universities.<sup>81</sup>

## 2.2

## Response by Opposition and other MPs

The Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer has condemned Hamas’ attack as an act of terror. He has called for humanitarian access to Gaza, protection for civilians and humanitarian workers, and said greater efforts must be made towards a two-state solution and cooperation between Israel and Arab states.<sup>82</sup>

He has also called for a “humanitarian pause” in the fighting to allow the delivery of aid to Gaza.<sup>83</sup> In a speech on Labour’s approach to the conflict on

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<sup>76</sup> HC Deb, [8 November 2023](#), c139

<sup>77</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c29

<sup>78</sup> [Three British hostages are still in Gaza, says Justice secretary](#), The Telegraph, 7 November 2023

<sup>79</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc23

<sup>80</sup> HM Treasury, [Autumn statement 2023](#), 22 November 2023, p32

<sup>81</sup> As above

<sup>82</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc25-6

<sup>83</sup> [Sir Keir Starmer meets Muslim MPs as tensions reignite over Israel-Hamas war stance after mosque visit](#), Sky News, 25 October 2023

31 October 2023, Keir Starmer said a “humanitarian pause [...] must start immediately” and argued it was the “only credible approach” to alleviate “Palestinian suffering, [see] aid distributed quickly [and create] space to get the hostages out”. Keir Starmer also said:

Over time, the facts on the ground will inevitably change in relation to both hostages being rescued and Hamas’s capability to carry out attacks like we saw on October the 7<sup>th</sup>.

And we must move to cessation of fighting as quickly as possible.<sup>84</sup>

The Shadow Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, has also said a new UK special envoy on the Middle East should be appointed to “recharge” negotiations on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>85</sup>

The Leader of the SNP Group in the House of Commons, Stephen Flynn, said peace will require the defeat of Hamas, the opening of humanitarian corridors to Gaza and protection of civilians and international leadership.<sup>86</sup> He has called for a “ceasefire”.<sup>87</sup>

The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Alicia Kearns (Con) has urged the Government to ensure Israel adheres to international law when conducting military operations against Hamas in Gaza. She has also called for the UK to appoint a special envoy for the Middle East peace process.<sup>88</sup>

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Sir Ed Davey, Alicia Kearns and a number of other MPs have also called upon the Government to proscribe as a terrorist group [Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC). Iran has provided past support to Hamas.<sup>89</sup>

Sir Ed Davey has called for a “immediate bilateral ceasefire” between Israel and Hamas as a “step towards peace”.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Labour Party, [Keir Starmer’s speech on the international situation \[...\]](#), 31 October 2023

<sup>85</sup> David Lammy MP, [Labour will work for a Palestinian state](#), The Guardian, 4 November 2023

<sup>86</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c28

<sup>87</sup> HC Deb, [23 October 2023](#), c595

<sup>88</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c29

<sup>89</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), cc28-9

<sup>90</sup> Liberal Democrats, [An immediate bilateral ceasefire in Israel and Gaza](#), 12 November 2023

## 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 Shah. In addition to personnel in Iran, it exerts wider influence in the region by providing money, technology, and training.<sup>91</sup>

The UK sanctions the entirety of the IRGC under its nuclear sanctions, meaning it applies asset freezes and travel bans. In response to calls for its proscription, the Government says it will keep this under review. This would create offences in the UK for being a member, among other things.<sup>92</sup>

For more information about Iran's influence in the Middle East, the actions of the IRGC, and UK sanctions against Iran and Iran-aligned groups, see:

- House of Commons Library research briefing, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), April 2023
- House of Commons Library research briefing, [What is the status of the Iran nuclear deal?](#), October 2023.

## 2.3

## Commons vote on amendments to the Loyal Address

On 15 November 2023, the House of Commons voted on two amendments to the [Motion for the Loyal Address](#) made by Labour and the SNP which considered the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Both amendments failed to pass.<sup>93</sup>

The Labour amendment, amendment (r), welcomed the announcement of temporary humanitarian pauses in the conflict but called for them to be extended as a “necessary step to an enduring cessation of fighting as soon as possible”. The full amendment read:

and [the House] submit to Your Majesty that this House wishes to see an end to the violence in Israel and Palestine; unequivocally condemn the horrific terrorist attack and murder of civilians by Hamas, call for the immediate release of all hostages and reaffirm Israel's right to defend its citizens from terrorism; believe all human life is equal and that there has been too much suffering, including far too many deaths of innocent civilians and children, over the past month in Gaza; reaffirm the UK's commitment to the rules-based international order, international humanitarian law and the jurisdiction of the ICC to address the conduct of all parties in Gaza and Hamas's attacks in Israel;

<sup>91</sup> Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), p8

<sup>92</sup> HC Deb, [6 July 2023](#), c1001

<sup>93</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), cc674-764

call on Israel to protect hospitals and lift the siege conditions allowing food, water, electricity, medicine and fuel into Gaza; request the Government continue to work with the international community to prevent a wider escalation of the conflict in the region, guarantee that people in Gaza who are forced to flee during this conflict can return to their homes and seek an end to the expansion of illegal settlements and settler violence in the West Bank; and, while acknowledging the daily humanitarian pauses to allow in aid and the movement of civilians, believe they must be longer to deliver humanitarian assistance on a scale that begins to meet the desperate needs of the people of Gaza, which is a necessary step to an enduring cessation of fighting as soon as possible and a credible, diplomatic and political process to deliver the lasting peace of a two-state solution.<sup>94</sup>

The Labour amendment was defeated by 290 votes to 183.<sup>95</sup>

The SNP amendment, amendment (h), called on the Government to “join with the international community in urgently pressing all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire”. The full amendment read:

“but [the House] respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech fails to include measures that would require the Government to uphold international law and protect all civilians in Israel and Palestine; unequivocally condemn the horrific killings by Hamas and the taking of hostages; reaffirm that there must be an end to the collective punishment of the Palestinian people; call for the urgent release of all hostages and an end to the siege of Gaza to allow vital supplies of food, fuel, medicine and water to reach the civilian population; note the growing calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire from the United Nations and its aid agencies; and therefore call on the Government to join with the international community in urgently pressing all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire”.<sup>96</sup>

The SNP amendment was defeated by 293 votes to 125.<sup>97</sup>

Responding for the Government, the Minister for Policing, Chris Philp said:

A ceasefire with Hamas in place cannot be just. Hamas have said that they intend to destroy Israel, and that they would once again perpetrate atrocities like those committed on 7 October. They continue to hold hostages, including children and British citizens, and they continue to fire rockets into Israel. To ask Israel to cease firing unilaterally would not be fair or just.<sup>98</sup>

## 2.4

### Scottish Parliament motion

On 21 November 2023, the Scottish Parliament supported a SNP Government motion by 90 votes to 28 that condemned the Hamas attack on 7 October, demanded the unconditional release of hostages taken by Hamas, the

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<sup>94</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), c674

<sup>95</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), cc755-57

<sup>96</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), cc755-57

<sup>97</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), cc757-761

<sup>98</sup> HC Deb, [15 November 2023](#), c753

upholding of international humanitarian law, and for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.<sup>99</sup>

The full motion is available on the Scottish Parliament's website, [The situation in the Middle East, S6011342](#), 21 November 2023 and the full debate in the [Parliament's Official report for 21 November 2023](#).

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<sup>99</sup> Scottish Parliament, [The situation in the Middle East, S6M-11342](#), 21 November 2023

## 3 UK Government actions

### 3.1 UK diplomatic activity

Since 8 October 2023, the then Foreign Secretary, the Minister for the Middle East, the International Development Minister, the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister have all visited Israel and other states in the region, including Turkey, Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. The Prime Minister has also met with the leader of the Palestinian Authority, President Mahmoud Abbas, and the King of Jordan.<sup>100</sup>

As Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly has also spoken to Iran's Foreign Minister to call for Iran to use its influence with groups in the region to prevent escalation.<sup>101</sup>

On 22 November, the new Foreign Secretary, Lord David Cameron, met the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Indonesia and Nigeria, the Secretary General of the Arab League, and the Qatari ambassador in London to discuss the conflict, de-escalation and a two-state solution.<sup>102</sup> He has also visited the Middle East for talks.<sup>103</sup>

#### UK Prime Minister's contact with Israeli Prime Minister

On 8 October 2023 the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and "offered [...] any support Israel needs".<sup>104</sup>

[Speaking separately to reporters in the UK](#), on 9 October Mr Sunak said the UK is "poised" to offer diplomatic, intelligence or security support.

He said in his phone call with Mr Netanyahu that the UK has previously provided "the kinds of equipment that they've [Israel] used to defend themselves over the past couple of days" and that the UK would "continue to

<sup>100</sup> FCDO, [Foreign Secretary travels to Middle East to help prevent regional spread of conflict](#), 19 October 2023; [Rishi Sunak lands in Israel as world leaders seek de-escalation](#), BBC News, 19 October 2023; Ministry of Defence, [Defence Secretary travels to Middle East on regional security mission](#), 26 October 2023; FCDO, [UK Minister for the Middle East visits Israel and the West Bank](#), 1 November 2023; FCDO, [UK Development Minister arrives in Egypt \[...\]](#), 15 November 2023; FCDO, [Middle East Minister visits Bahrain and Qatar for talks \[...\]](#), 18 November 2023

<sup>101</sup> FCDO, [Foreign Secretary's call with Iranian Foreign Minister](#), 3 November 2023

<sup>102</sup> FCDO, [Foreign Secretary commits to working with Islamic states closely on Israel-Gaza crisis \[...\]](#), 22 November 2023

<sup>103</sup> FCDO, [UK commits to further support to get aid into Gaza](#), 24 November 2023

<sup>104</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel](#), 8 October 2023

provide [support]—whether that’s diplomatic, intelligence or security support—as they need”.<sup>105</sup>

The two Prime Ministers spoke again on 12 October and 19 October 2023. Mr Sunak confirmed the deployment of UK military assets to the region (see below). He also:

Agreed [with Mr Netanyahu] that Hamas can never again be able to perpetrate atrocities against the Israeli people. Noting that Hamas has enmeshed itself in the civilian population in Gaza, the Prime Minister said it was important to take all possible measures to protect ordinary Palestinians and facilitate humanitarian aid.<sup>106</sup>

The Prime Minister has also raised Israeli settler violence in the West Bank directly with Mr Netanyahu and the “need to allow more aid into Gaza [and] to take all possible measures to minimise civilian casualties”.<sup>107</sup>

## Prime Minister’s contact with Palestinian Authority

Mr Sunak has met with the leader of the Palestinian Authority, President Mahmoud Abbas. They discussed avoiding further escalation and ensuring calm in the West Bank, the UK’s support for the Palestinian Authority in trying to secure peace and security, and humanitarian support for Gaza.

The Prime Minister also reiterated the UK’s “support [for] a two-state solution, with a Palestinian state existing alongside a safe and secure Israel”.<sup>108</sup>

## Prime Minister’s contact with other regional leaders

The Prime Minister has also been in contact with other Middle East leaders to discuss the reopening of the Gaza crossing, regional de-escalation, and negotiations for the release of hostages.

### Egypt

Mr Sunak has met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, in which Mr Sunak noted Egypt’s “historic role” in the region, including in seeking de-escalation. He offered UK support to keep the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza open for humanitarian and consular reasons, including for British nationals.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> [Sunak says UK is “poised” to offer Israel military help if required](#), The Guardian, 9 October 2023

<sup>106</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel](#), 13 October 2023 and [PM meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel](#), 19 October 2023

<sup>107</sup> HC Deb, [7 November 2023](#), c17

<sup>108</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [PM call with President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority](#), 16 October 2023 and [PM meeting with the President of the Palestinian Authority](#), 20 October 2023

<sup>109</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [PM call with President el-Sisi of Egypt](#), 12 October 2023 and [PM meeting with President el-Sisi of Egypt](#), 20 October 2023



### Jordan

On 15 October, the Prime Minister spoke to King Abdullah II of Jordan in London, as part of the King's tour of European capitals seeking an end to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.<sup>110</sup>

### Turkey

The Prime Minister spoke to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 16 October. Issues they discussed included the peace process and facilitating humanitarian aid to Gaza.<sup>111</sup>

### Saudi Arabia

The Prime Minister has met with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman. Issues discussed included de-escalation and Iranian proxy groups in the region (such as Hezbollah in Lebanon).<sup>112</sup>

### Qatar

Mr Sunak has met with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. The Prime Minister discussed areas of cooperation including the safe passage of aid to Gaza and negotiations to release hostages held by Hamas.<sup>113</sup>

### Republic of Cyprus

Mr Sunak spoke to the President of Nikos Christodoulides of the Republic of Cyprus, on 18 October. They discussed the repatriation of British nationals via the country.<sup>114</sup>

## 3.2

## Deployment of UK military forces

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>115</sup>

- 12 maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft, to patrol against the potential transfer of weapons to terrorist groups.

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<sup>110</sup> [Jordan's King heads to Europe to garner support to end Gaza conflict](#), Asharq Al-Aswat, 14 October 2023

<sup>111</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM call with President Erdoğan of Turkey](#), 16 October 2023

<sup>112</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia](#), 19 October 2023

<sup>113</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM meeting with the Amir of Qatar](#), 20 October 2023

<sup>114</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM call with President Christodoulides of Cyprus](#), 18 October 2023

<sup>115</sup> PQ 48 [[Military aircraft: Mediterranean region](#)], 12 November 2023

- A Royal Navy task group to support any potential humanitarian efforts. The group includes aircraft, helicopters, a company of royal marines, and two ships (RFS 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>116</sup>

A total of 1,000 UK armed forces personnel have been deployed across the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>117</sup> Some additional personnel have also been moved to Tel Aviv, Beirut, and Jordan with the aim of protecting British military personnel and citizens.<sup>118</sup> The Government has also requested existing UK military forces in the region to bolster their contingency plans.<sup>119</sup>

The Commons Library research briefing, [UK forces in the Middle East](#), provides more on the UK's military presence in the region.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.3 UK humanitarian aid

The Chair of the International Development Committee, Sarah Champion (Lab), has called for the UK to increase its funding to ensure countries around Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) can support refugees from Gaza.<sup>121</sup>

Since 7 October 2023, the UK Government has announced £60 million in aid for the OPTs.<sup>122</sup> This is additional to earlier commitments announced in July and September 2023 which totalled £27 million in aid during 2023/24.<sup>123</sup>

The new funding will provide essential food items and services such as food, water, and emergency shelter. It will be spent via “trusted partners”, such as UN agencies. The Government says the UK provides no funding to Hamas and all funding to the OPTs “undergoes rigorous oversight”.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Defence Secretary sends Royal Navy destroyer east of Suez](#), 30 November 2023

<sup>117</sup> PQ 2004 [[Mediterranean region: Armed forces](#)], 23 November 2023

<sup>118</sup> HC Deb, [20 November 2023](#), c4

<sup>119</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [Prime Minister deploys UK military to Eastern Mediterranean to support Israel](#), 13 October 2023

<sup>120</sup> For the current distribution of personnel across five states, see PQ 2760 [[Middle East: Armed Forces](#)], 27 November 2023

<sup>121</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c35

<sup>122</sup> HCWS1091 [[Update on humanitarian situation and UK humanitarian efforts in Gaza](#)], 24 October 2023; FCDO, [UK commits further support to get aid into Gaza](#), 24 November 2023

<sup>123</sup> FCDO, [Annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023](#), July 2023, p268 and FCDO, [Foreign Secretary announces new support for almost 6 million Palestinian refugees](#), 13 September 2023

<sup>124</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [UK announces £10m humanitarian aid for civilians in Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), 16 October 2023

The Government also says it is contact with leaders in the Middle East to arrange ongoing humanitarian access to Gaza.<sup>125</sup>

The first UK flight to deliver aid to Egypt left on 25 October 2023. Supplies are being distributed via the Egyptian Red Crescent.<sup>126</sup> As of 27 November, four flights have taken place.<sup>127</sup>

On 14 November 2023 the UK issued a general licence to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and funding from the UN and other select humanitarian organisations to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This licence provides for limited exemptions from the UK sanctions regime for humanitarian funding and material only.<sup>128</sup>

Separately, the Scottish Government has announced £750,000 towards the UNRWA in Gaza.<sup>129</sup>

### UK Government advice for those making donations

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office page, [Gaza: what you can do to help](#), provides advice for individuals and companies making safe donations to support the humanitarian response in Gaza.

## 3.4

### New sanctions against Hamas

Before the conflict began in October 2023, the UK applied sanctions against Hamas and a range of Iran-aligned groups and individuals in the Middle East, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>130</sup>

On 14 November 2023, the UK Government announced six more designations to its counter terrorism sanctions list, including four members of Hamas and two financiers of Hamas. UK sanctions include travel bans, asset freezes and arms embargoes. The action was coordinated with the United States (see below, section 4.3).<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> HCWS1091 [[Update on humanitarian situation and UK humanitarian efforts in Gaza](#)], 24 October 2023

<sup>126</sup> Ministry of Defence and FCDO, [UK delivers humanitarian aid to support Palestinian civilians](#), 25 October 2023

<sup>127</sup> FCDO, [UK commits further support to get aid into Gaza](#), 24 November 2023

<sup>128</sup> Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation and FCDO, [QFSI General Licence INT/2023/3749168](#), 14 November 2023

<sup>129</sup> Scottish Government, [Humanitarian aid for Gaza](#), 2 November 2023

<sup>130</sup> Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), section 3.2

<sup>131</sup> [US, UK impose new round of sanctions on Hamas following attack](#), Reuters, 14 November 2023; FCDO, [The UK sanctions list](#), updated 14 November 2023; FCDO, [UK and US hit Hamas leadership with targeted sanctions](#), 14 November 2023

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## 4 International response

### 4.1 United Nations

#### Statements by the UN Secretary General

In response to the October conflict, the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, has:

- Condemned the “abhorrent attacks by Hamas and others against Israeli towns”.
- “Recognized” the “legitimate grievances of the Palestinian people” but said “nothing can justify these acts of terror”.
- Called for Hamas to immediately cease attacks and release all hostages
- Called for Israel to conduct its military operations in accordance with international humanitarian law.
- Said he is “deeply distressed” by the Israeli announcement of a “complete siege of the Gaza strip” and called for humanitarian access for UN agencies.
- Called for a negotiated peace to the conflict in line with UN resolutions for a two-state solution to the conflict.<sup>132</sup>

Addressing the UN Security Council on 25 October, the Secretary General said that to “ease epic suffering, make the delivery of aid easier and safer, and facilitate the release of hostages, I reiterate my appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire”.<sup>133</sup>

For further UN statements from the Secretary General and other UN agencies, see the [UN page on the Israel-Gaza crisis](#) and UN, [How the UN works behind the scenes during crises](#), 17 October 2023.

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<sup>132</sup> UN, [Press conference: António Guterres](#), 9 October 2023

<sup>133</sup> UN, [Amid increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, Secretary General tells Security Council Hamas attacks cannot justify collective punishment of Palestinian people \[...\]](#), 24 October 2023

## UN Security Council

### Resolution passed on 15 November 2023

On 15 November 2023, the [UN Security Council](#) passed Resolution 2712.

The US, UK and Russia abstained on the resolution, while the remaining 12 members of the Council voted in favour.<sup>134</sup>

The UK and US said they would not vote in favour of the resolution because it did not condemn the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. The UK representative to the Security Council, Dame Barbara Woodward, nonetheless said it was “vital and overdue for the Council to speak on this crisis and we [the UK] strongly support the resolution’s purpose: to get aid in, and hostages out”.<sup>135</sup>

Russia had proposed an amendment for a ceasefire abstained on the unamended resolution.

The full text of UN Security Council Resolution 2712 (2023) can be found on the [UN Library site](#). In the below extract, the Council said it:

Demands that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law [...]

Calls for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip for a sufficient number of days to enable, consistent with international humanitarian law, the full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access [...]

Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages [...]

Calls on all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to their survival [...]

Requests the Secretary-General to report orally to the Security Council on the implementation of this resolution at the next mandated meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East [...]

The Israeli representative to the UN, Gilad Erdan, criticised the resolution for failing to condemn Hamas and argued it was “meaningless.” He said Israel “will continue to act until Hamas is destroyed and the hostages are returned” and that Israel will “continue acting according to international law”.<sup>136</sup>

The Palestinian representative, Riyad Mansour (who represents the Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank but not Gaza), said the

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<sup>134</sup> For this and following paragraph: UN, [Israel-Palestine crisis: Security Council calls for urgent, extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza](#), 15 November 2023 and UN, [Security Council 9479 meeting](#), 15 November 2023

<sup>135</sup> FCDO, [It is right the Security Council calls for a humanitarian pause in Gaza \[...\]](#), 15 November 2023

<sup>136</sup> Ambassador Gilad Erdan on Twitter/X, [The UN Security Council’s resolution is disconnected from reality \[...\]](#), 15 November 2023

resolution should have echoed the call of the UN General Assembly (see below) for an “immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”.<sup>137</sup>

### Previous attempts to pass a Security Council resolution

For it to pass, any resolution of the 15-member UN Security Council requires nine votes in favour and no vetoes from the five permanent members of the United States, Russia, China, the UK, and France.<sup>138</sup>

Before the 15 November resolution, the UN Security Council considered four draft resolutions on the Israel-Hamas conflict. Disagreements mostly focused on whether a resolution should seek a “humanitarian ceasefire” or “humanitarian pause” in the conflict and if the resolution should condemn the actions of Hamas on 7 October.<sup>139</sup>

Unsuccessful resolutions were considered on 16 October (proposed by Russia),<sup>140</sup> 18 October (drafted by Brazil),<sup>141</sup> and 25 October (when alternative resolutions were proposed by Russia and the United States).<sup>142</sup>

The UK representative said the Government had been seeking a “balanced text” in the Security Council which included condemnation of Hamas, a re-affirmation of Israel’s right to self-defence, the protection of civilians, and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.<sup>143</sup>

## UN General Assembly

Unlike the Security Council, votes of the General Assembly (constituted of all UN member-states) are non-binding.

On 27 October, the General Assembly voted 121 to 14 (with 44 abstentions) for an “immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”. The resolution also 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>144</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> UN, [Israel-Palestine crisis: Security Council calls for urgent, extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza](#), 15 November 2023

<sup>138</sup> UN, [Security Council](#)

<sup>139</sup> See next paragraph for sources on these debates

<sup>140</sup> UN, [Israel-Gaza crisis: Competing Security Council resolutions reveal diplomatic fault lines](#), 17 October 2023; UN, [Security Council rejects Russian resolution on Gaza](#), 16 October 2023; FCDO, [We cannot support a resolution which fails to condemn Hamas’ terror attacks](#), 17 October 2023

<sup>141</sup> [US vetoes UN Security Council action on Israel, Gaza](#), Reuters, 18 October 2023

<sup>142</sup> UN, [Gaza crisis: Deadlock deepens as Security Council rejects competing resolutions by US and Russia](#), 25 October 2023

<sup>143</sup> As above

<sup>144</sup> UN, [Gaza crisis: General Assembly adopts resolution calling for “humanitarian truce”, civilian protection](#), 27 October 2023

An amendment led by Canada and supported by the United States failed. The amendment would have “unequivocally reject[ed] and condemn[ed] the terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages”.<sup>145</sup>

Israel criticised the resolution passed by the General Assembly as failing to acknowledge Israel’s right to defend itself and lack of condemnation of Hamas. The United States also voted against the resolution, while the UK abstained.<sup>146</sup> Addressing the General Assembly, the UK Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, said that the draft resolution “could have been clearer” on condemning Hamas.<sup>147</sup>

## 4.2 G7 Foreign Ministers

The G7 is constituted of Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, the United States, and United Kingdom, together with the European Union.

Meeting in Tokyo on 8 November 2023, G7 Foreign Ministers issued a [joint statement on the conflict](#). The statement:

- Condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and ongoing missile attacks.
- Emphasised Israel’s right to defend itself in accordance with international law.
- Called for the release of hostages held by Hamas without preconditions.
- Said all parties must allow “unimpeded humanitarian support for civilians [...] and access for humanitarian workers”.
- Supported “humanitarian pauses and corridors” to allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered and foreign nationals to leave.
- Said the “rise in extremist settler violence committed against Palestinians” is “unacceptable, undermines security in the West Bank, and threatens prospects for a lasting peace”.
- Said the G7 was working together to impose sanctions and take other measures against Hamas.
- “Underscore[d] that a two-state solution [...] remains the only path to a just, lasting and secure peace”.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> UN, [Gaza crisis: General Assembly adopts resolution calling for “humanitarian truce”, civilian protection](#), 27 October 2023

<sup>146</sup> UN News Centre on Twitter/X, [UN General Assembly adopts resolution \[...\]](#), 27 October 2023

<sup>147</sup> FCDO, [Hope and humanity must win out against the scourge of aggression and terrorism](#), 27 October 2023

<sup>148</sup> FCDO, [G7 foreign ministers’ meeting in Japan](#), 8 November 2023, section 1

G7 Foreign Ministers issued a further statement on 28 November 2023 in which they welcomed the release of some of the hostages held since 7 October and the increase in humanitarian aid during the November pause in hostilities.

They also called on “all parties” to “build on the provisions of the deal and to ensure greater humanitarian aid continues to reach civilians in Gaza on a sustained basis”.<sup>149</sup>

## 4.3

## United States

### Statements

President Joe Biden has condemned the actions of Hamas as “pure, unadulterated evil” and said the United States would “stand with Israel” and he would be seeking additional funds from the US Congress to support the country. President Biden has also pledged additional military assistance, including interceptors to replenish Israel’s “[iron dome](#)” (its anti-missile system).<sup>150</sup>

The Biden Administration has requested an additional US\$14.3 billion from Congress for Israel: US\$10.6 billion for air and missile defence support and US\$3.7 billion for embassy support and foreign military financing. Funds for additional humanitarian assistance have also been requested.<sup>151</sup>

While describing the Hamas attack as “like 15 9/11s” for Israel (a reference to the September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center), President Biden “cautioned” Israel to avoid the “mistakes” he said the United States made after the attack. He said Israel’s actions should be “deliberate” and follow “an honest assessment about whether the path you are on will achieve” the desired objectives.<sup>152</sup>

A visit to Jordan to meet with the leaders of the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Egypt was cancelled following an explosion at a hospital in Gaza City on 18 October.<sup>153</sup>

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that Israel should “tak[e] every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians” and that he was engaged with countries in the region to make sure civilians can “get out of harm’s way” and to organise humanitarian assistance.<sup>154</sup>

In a phone call with the Israeli Prime Minister on 6 November, President Biden raised the “possibility of tactical pauses” in the fighting to allow civilians to

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<sup>149</sup> FCDO, [Israel and Gaza: G7 foreign ministers’ statement](#), 28 November 2023

<sup>150</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden on the terrorist attacks in Israel](#), 10 October 2023

<sup>151</sup> [What’s in Biden’s \\$106 billion supplemental funding request](#), Reuters, 20 October 2023

<sup>152</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden on the October 7<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks](#), 18 October 2023

<sup>153</sup> [Biden cancels visit to Jordan after hospital explosion in Gaza](#), Politico, 17 October 2023

<sup>154</sup> US Department of State (DoS), [Secretary Antony J Blinken remarks to the press](#), 15 October 2023



leave areas of conflict, enable the delivery of humanitarian aid, and for potential hostage releases.<sup>155</sup> President Biden has said a ceasefire will only be considered once Hamas has released all hostages.<sup>156</sup>

Speaking on 8 November 2023 at the G7 meeting in Tokyo, Secretary Blinken said the United States would not support Hamas retaining control of Gaza or Israel re-occupying Gaza. Instead, he said Gaza should be unified with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. He also re-emphasised US opposition to a ceasefire while Hamas retains control:

[...] those calling for an immediate ceasefire have an obligation to explain how to address the unacceptable result it would likely bring about: Hamas left in place, with more than 200 hostages, with the capacity and stated intent to repeat October 7th – again and again and again.

Ultimately, the only way to ensure that this crisis never happens again is to begin setting the conditions for durable peace and security, and to frame our diplomatic efforts now with that in mind.

The United States believes key elements should include no forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza—not now, not after the war. No use of Gaza as a platform for terrorism or other violent attacks. No reoccupation of Gaza after the conflict ends. No attempt to blockade or besiege Gaza. No reduction in the territory of Gaza. We must also ensure no terrorist threats can emanate from the West Bank.

We must also work on the affirmative elements to get to a sustained peace. These must include the Palestinian people’s voices and aspirations at the centre of post-crisis governance in Gaza. It must include Palestinian-led governance and Gaza unified with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

And it must include a sustained mechanism for reconstruction in Gaza, and a pathway to Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in states of their own, with equal measures of security, freedom, opportunity, and dignity.<sup>157</sup>

## New US sanctions

There have been four rounds of US sanctions announced since 7 October:

- 18 October: The US Treasury department imposed new sanctions on members of Hamas and its financial facilitators. These included a “Qatar-based financial facilitator” and members of Hamas’s investment network in Turkey and Algeria.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> [Readout of President Biden’s call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel](#), 6 November 2023

<sup>156</sup> [Biden says “we can talk” about Israel-Hamas ceasefire after hostages are released](#), The Hill, 10 October 2023

<sup>157</sup> US DoS, [Secretary Antony J. Blinken at a press availability](#), 8 November 2023

<sup>158</sup> US Department of the Treasury, [Treasury sanctions Hamas operatives \[...\]](#), 18 October 2023

- 27 October: The US State Department sanctioned individuals involved in training Hamas members and organisations with ties to Hamas, [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#), and [Iranian Bonyad Shahid](#).<sup>159</sup>
- 14 November: The US designated six individuals linked to Hamas or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This was done in coordination with the UK.<sup>160</sup>
- 27 November: Sanctions targeting the Iran-aligned Iraqi militia group, [Kataib Hezbollah](#), and a member of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, were announced in response to attacks on US forces in Iraq.<sup>161</sup>

## US military assistance and deployments

The United States has deployed additional military assets to the region to act as a deterrent against regional escalation by Iran-aligned groups, to support US troops already in the region, and to provide military assistance to Israel. Actions include:

- Deploying two aircraft carriers and accompanying warships to the Eastern Mediterranean in a “deterrence posture”.<sup>162</sup> The US has also deployed a submarine.<sup>163</sup>
- Placing 2,000 US troops on a “heightened state of readiness” to respond to any deterioration in the security environment in the Middle East. However, no decisions have been made to deploy any forces.<sup>164</sup> As of 2 November, an additional 900 US troops have been redeployed to the region (these include some of the 2,000 previously announced).<sup>165</sup>
- Deploying a squadron of F-16 aircraft to “enhance the ability of US forces to defend themselves” in the region.<sup>166</sup>
- Sending additional missile defences to Israel.<sup>167</sup>
- Sending military advisers to Israel to aid its military response.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> US DoS, [Designating individuals and entities with ties to terrorist organisations](#), 27 October 2023

<sup>160</sup> US DoS, [Designating additional Hamas and Palestinian Jihad officials and supporters](#), 14 November 2023

<sup>161</sup> [US issues sanctions targeting Iran-aligned militia groups \[...\]](#), Reuters, 17 November 2023

<sup>162</sup> [The US will send a carrier strike group to the Eastern Mediterranean in support of Israel](#), AP, 9 October 2023 and [US second carrier strike group \[...\]](#), CNN, 15 October 2023

<sup>163</sup> US DoD, [US has four objectives in the Middle East](#), 6 November 2023

<sup>164</sup> US DoD, [Statement from Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh \[...\]](#), 17 October 2023

<sup>165</sup> US DoD, [US military continues to focus on supporting Israel, Ukraine](#), 26 October 2023

<sup>166</sup> US DoD, [F-16s head to Middle East to help protect US troops](#), 24 October 2023

<sup>167</sup> [US to send two Iron dome batteries to Israel](#), The Hill, 25 October 2023

<sup>168</sup> [Pentagon rushes defenses and advisers to Middle East \[...\]](#), AP, 24 October 2023

## US Humanitarian assistance

The US has announced US\$100 million in humanitarian assistance for Gaza and the West Bank to support over one million people affected by conflict. It will be provided through “trusted partners” such as UN agencies.<sup>169</sup>

## 4.4

## European Union

### Statements

EU High Representative Josep Borrell has criticised the Hamas offensive and condemned attacks on civilians and terrorist actions.<sup>170</sup>

He has argued that EU states should increase their cooperation with Arab states to “make peace between Arab countries and Israel” and that any negotiations should involve the Palestinians (though not Hamas, which the EU considers to be a terrorist group), arguing that without that “the cycle of violence will restart again”.

A summit of EU leaders was held on 17 October, in which leaders condemned the terrorist attacks of Hamas and said Israel had the right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law.<sup>171</sup>

A further summit took place on 26 October. A call for “pauses [in fighting] for humanitarian need” was among the conclusions.<sup>172</sup> There has been disagreement within the EU. For example, Spain’s Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, has called for a ceasefire. Germany has called for temporary pauses in the fighting, as has France at the UN Security Council.<sup>173</sup>

### Humanitarian assistance

On 9 October 2023 the EU said it would review its aid to the Palestinian Authority to ensure no funding reaches terrorist groups. In November, the review concluded that no EU aid funds were being accessed by Hamas.<sup>174</sup>

The EU has pledged a total of €100 million in additional humanitarian aid since 7 October 2023.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> White House, [US announcement of humanitarian assistance \[...\]](#), 18 October 2023

<sup>170</sup> This and next paragraph from EU External Action, [Press remarks by Josep Borrell](#), 10 October 2023

<sup>171</sup> European Council, [Video conference of the members of the European Council](#), 17 October 2023

<sup>172</sup> European Council, [Council conclusions, 26 and 27 October 2023](#), para 16

<sup>173</sup> [Israel Gaza: EU leaders set to discuss humanitarian pauses](#), BBC News, 26 October 2023; UN, [Israel-Gaza crisis: US vetoes Security Council resolution](#), 18 October 2023

<sup>174</sup> [EU to continue aid to Palestinian after review \[...\]](#), Politico, 21 November 2023

<sup>175</sup> European Commission, [EU increases humanitarian aid to Gaza by €25 million](#), 6 November 2023

The EU has also established a humanitarian air bridge to fly essential aid to Egypt to deliver to humanitarian organisations in Gaza,<sup>176</sup> and is exploring the potential for a maritime corridor from Cyprus to deliver aid.<sup>177</sup>

Individual EU member states have also announced humanitarian assistance. For example, France is deploying a naval ship to support Gaza hospitals and states its total aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories will be €110 million in 2023.<sup>178</sup> Germany has announced committed €91 million since 7 October (including existing funds).<sup>179</sup>

France also hosted a conference on the humanitarian situation in Gaza on 9 November 2023. President Emmanuel Macron called for a “humanitarian pause very quickly” and said “we have to work towards a ceasefire”. The head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East, Philippe Lazzarin, called for all crossings into Gaza to be opened.<sup>180</sup>

## Sanctions

The European Union first added Hamas to its list of designated terrorist organisations in 2003 (though this was subject to challenges in EU courts and the group was most recently re-designated in 2021).<sup>181</sup> This means the group is subject to freezing of funds and other financial assets and that no funds or economic resources can be made available to them.<sup>182</sup>

The European Union has not announced new sanctions against individual members of Hamas since 7 October. On 22 November, the French Government said it was “pushing for sanctions at the European level against senior Hamas officials, individually”.<sup>183</sup>

## 4.5

## Russia

The Russian Government has described the October conflict as a “great danger” for the region and blamed the “blocking by the West of the work of the Middle East Quartet” for the lack of progress on a sustainable peace.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>176</sup> European Commission, [EU launches Humanitarian Air Bridge operation \[...\]](#), 16 October 2023

<sup>177</sup> European Commission, [Speech by President von der Leyen \[...\]](#), 9 November 2023

<sup>178</sup> Permanent Mission of France to the UN, [Statement by Ms Catherine Colonna](#), 24 October 2023 and [Macron: France to send navy ship to support Gaza hospitals](#), Politico, 25 October 2023

<sup>179</sup> Federal Foreign Office, [Germany increases humanitarian assistance for people in Palestinian territories](#), 19 October 2023 and [Development Ministry releases funds \[...\]](#), 7 November 2023

<sup>180</sup> [Aid groups call at Paris conference for immediate ceasefire in Gaza](#), Reuters, 9 November 2023

<sup>181</sup> [Common Council Position 2003/651/CFSP of 12 September 2003; Top EU court returns Hamas to terror list after 3-year break](#), Courthouse News Service, 23 November 2021

<sup>182</sup> Council of the European Union, [EU terrorist list: List of persons, groups and entities subject to specific measures to combat terrorism](#)

<sup>183</sup> [France calls for sanctions against Hamas officials](#), Al-Monitor, 22 November 2023

<sup>184</sup> [Arab League chief heads to Moscow to discuss Gaza crisis](#), Arab News, 8 October 2023

The quartet is constituted of the UN, United States, European Union, and Russia, with the role to help facilitate Middle East peace negotiations. Its last statement was issued in November 2021, and meetings ceased after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>185</sup>

Hamas leaders met with Russian officials in Moscow in late October. Issues discussed included the release of hostages and evacuation of foreign nationals from the region.<sup>186</sup>

## 4.6

### China

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said the country is “deeply concerned” about the escalation and called for “relevant parties to remain calm, exercise restraint, and immediately end the hostilities”.<sup>187</sup>

On 21 November, following a meeting with a group of Muslim-majority countries led by Saudi Arabia, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for an immediate ceasefire and a peace conference to build international consensus for a “comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue”.<sup>188</sup>

China's Government has also said that Israel's actions in Gaza are “beyond the scope of self-defence”.<sup>189</sup>

China has faced criticism from the United States and Israel for not condemning Hamas, which it does not consider to be a terrorist group.<sup>190</sup>

## 4.7

### Arab League

The [Arab League](#) is an alliance of Arab states across the Middle East and North Africa and seeks to support collaboration among its members.<sup>191</sup>

Meeting in Cairo on 11 October 2023, the League issued a statement calling on Israel to resume talks with the Palestinian Authority on securing a two-state solution to the conflict.<sup>192</sup> The League's Secretary General, Ahmed Abul Gheit, also called for an immediate ceasefire, condemned attacks on civilians and

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<sup>185</sup> Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, [Middle East Quartet](#) and , [There's only one right way for Israel and Saudi Arabia to normalise relations](#), Haaretz, 29 June 2023

<sup>186</sup> [Hamas leaders arrive in Moscow as the Kremlin attempts to showcase its clout](#), New York Times, 26 October 2023

<sup>187</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, [Remarks on the escalation of tensions between Palestine and Israel](#), 8 October 2023

<sup>188</sup> China stepping up mediation efforts in Israel-Gaza war, BBC Monitoring, 21 November 2023

<sup>189</sup> [China: Israel's actions in Gaza 'beyond scope of self-defence'](#), Middle East Memo, 15 October 2023

<sup>190</sup> A closer look at China's position on Hamas, BBC Monitoring, 1 November 2023

<sup>191</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [Arab League](#), updated 25 May 2023

<sup>192</sup> [Arab ministers urge Israel to resume talks on two-state solution](#), The Guardian, 11 October 2023

criticised Israel's actions in Gaza as "collective punishment" prohibited by international law.<sup>193</sup>

The League has also opposed Israel's calls for Palestinians to move from northern to southern Gaza, with some Arab states drawing parallels with the [1948 displacement of Palestinians](#) during the First Arab–Israeli War. Israel's Government has defended the call as a "precautionary action" to minimise casualties in Gaza,<sup>194</sup> as has the UK (see above, section 3.1).

A joint meeting between the League and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (see next section) was held in Saudi Arabia on 11 November 2023. The resulting joint statement called for:

- an end to the conflict.
- the delivery of humanitarian aid, including fuel, into Gaza.
- the International Criminal Court to investigate Israel for "violations" in Gaza.<sup>195</sup>

## 4.8 Organization for Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has 57 member-states, and says it aims to be "collective voice of the Muslim world".<sup>196</sup>

On 13 October 2023, the group's Secretariat issued a statement to express "its absolute rejection and condemnation of Israel" and what the OIC described as Israel's "calls for the forced displacement of Palestinian people." The OIC also called for the establishment of humanitarian corridors to Gaza.<sup>197</sup>

On 29 October, the Secretariat issued a statement which condemned the "continued and escalating Israeli military aggression against the Gaza strip".<sup>198</sup>

The OIC held a joint summit with the Arab League in November in which both organisations called for an end to the conflict: See above, section 4.7.

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<sup>193</sup> [Arab League chief calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza](#), BBC Monitoring, 11 October 2023

<sup>194</sup> [Arab states say Palestinians must stay on their land as war escalates](#), Reuters, 14 October 2023

<sup>195</sup> Arab-Islamic summit calls for end to Gaza war, BBC Monitoring, 11 November 2023

<sup>196</sup> OIC, [About](#)

<sup>197</sup> OIC, [OIC affirms its absolute rejection of calls for the forced displacement \[...\]](#), 13 October 2023

<sup>198</sup> OIC, [OIC strongly condemns the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against Gaza](#), 29 October 2023

## 4.9

## Response of Middle Eastern states

## Gulf Cooperation Council members

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassem Albudaiwi, (whose members are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates/UAE) has called for an immediate ceasefire and cited the “Israeli occupation forces” and “flagrant Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people and holy sites” as “responsible for the current situation”.<sup>199</sup>

Many Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE, have condemned the expansion of Israeli military operations into Gaza in late October, as did Egypt and Lebanon.<sup>200</sup>

The UAE, which signed the Abraham Accords with Israel in 2020, has described the attacks by Hamas as “a serious and grave escalation” and called on both parties to de-escalate and avoid an expansion of the violence.<sup>201</sup> President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the UAE has been the first Arab leader to speak to Mr Netanyahu since the Hamas attack. The leaders have agreed to remain in contact.<sup>202</sup>

Bahrain, which also signed the Accords with Israel in 2020, says its ambassador has returned from Israel. Israel’s foreign ministry says, “relations between Israel and Bahrain are stable”.<sup>203</sup>

Saudi Arabia, which has been in talks with Israel during 2023 to normalise its relations with the country, has called for an “immediate halt” to the conflict.<sup>204</sup> It also warned “of the risk that the situation could explode as a result of the continued [Israeli] occupation, the denial of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights and the repeated systematic violation of their holy places”.<sup>205</sup>

In October, media reports suggest talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia on the normalisation of diplomatic relations have been paused.<sup>206</sup> However, in November the Biden Administration stated Saudi Arabia remains “interested” in discussions on normalisation.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>199</sup> [Saudi Arabia joins global calls for de-escalation \[...\]](#), Arab News, 7 October 2023

<sup>200</sup> Arab states condemn Israel’s ground operation in Gaza, BBC Monitoring, 29 October 2023

<sup>201</sup> UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [UAE calls for protection of civilians \[...\]](#), 8 October 2023

<sup>202</sup> [Netanyahu speaks with UAE president in first call with Arab leader \[...\]](#), Al-Monitor, 16 October 2023

<sup>203</sup> [Bahrain seeks to balance anger over Gaza with ties to Israel, US](#), Reuters, 24 November 2023

<sup>204</sup> [Saudi Arabia joins global calls for de-escalation of conflict between Palestinians, Israelis](#), Arab News, 7 October 2023

<sup>205</sup> Saudi warns Israel, while Arab states differ amid deadly flare-up, BBC Monitoring, 7 October 2022

<sup>206</sup> [Saudi Arabia pauses normalisation talks with Israel \[...\]](#), France 24, 14 October 2023

<sup>207</sup> [White House: Saudi Arabia is still interested in pursuing mega-deal](#), Axios, 31 October 2023

## Egypt

Egypt has played an important role in negotiating past ceasefires in Gaza, though it is also critical of Hamas.<sup>208</sup> President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has said the Egyptian Government has made “intensive contact” with all parties to the conflict and said any talks should “tackle the root causes” of the conflict.<sup>209</sup>

On 21 October, Egypt hosted a one-day “peace summit”. The UK Foreign Secretary and UN Secretary General were among the officials and ministers to attend.<sup>210</sup> However, the summit did not result in any agreement on containing the violence.<sup>211</sup>

## Turkey and Qatar

Some Hamas leaders are based in Turkey and Qatar, though the Turkish Government has reportedly asked some to leave following the 7 October attacks.<sup>212</sup> Qatar, though also a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (see above) does not consider Hamas a terrorist group (unlike Saudi Arabia and the UAE, for example), and neither does Turkey.<sup>213</sup>

On 25 October, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan described Hamas as a “patriotic liberation movement”.<sup>214</sup> Both Israel and Turkey have recalled their respective diplomats.<sup>215</sup> President Erdoğan has also called for a re-intensification of negotiations on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and said that “lasting regional peace” will only be possible when a two-state solution is achieved.<sup>216</sup>

Both Turkey and Qatar have offered to negotiate for the release of hostages from Gaza,<sup>217</sup> with Qatar leading successful negotiations with Egypt for a pause in fighting for this purpose in November (see above, section 1).

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<sup>208</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Egypt’s shifting Hamas policies](#), 26 July 2021

<sup>209</sup> Egypt State Information Service, [Sisi urges tackling root causes of Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#), 9 October 2023

<sup>210</sup> FCDO, [Cairo Peace Summit: Foreign Secretary’s statement](#), 21 October 2023 and UN, [Secretary General’s remarks to Cairo summit for peace](#), 21 October 2023

<sup>211</sup> [Cairo Peace summit ends without Gaza breakthrough](#), Reuters, 21 October 2023

<sup>212</sup> [Eyng Gaza mediator role, Turkey cools Hamas ties, Erdogan restrains rhetoric](#), Al-Monitor, 22 October 2023

<sup>213</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [What is Hamas?](#), 9 October 2023; [Qatar, Iran, Turkey and beyond: The galaxy of Hamas supporters](#), France 24, 14 October 2023

<sup>214</sup> [Turkey’s Erdogan hails Hamas as liberators, leaving détente with Israel in shreds](#), Al-Monitor, 25 October 2023

<sup>215</sup> [Israel recalls diplomats from Turkey after Erdogan’s ‘grave’ statements](#), Al-Monitor, 28 October 2023; [Turkey recalls ambassador to Israel ahead of Blinken’s visit](#), Al-Monitor, 4 November 2023

<sup>216</sup> [Two-state solution only way to achieve peace in Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#), Al Arabiya News, 8 October 2023

<sup>217</sup> [Qatar pressing Hamas to release women, children and elderly hostages-official](#), Times of Israel, 15 October 2023; [Turkey’s Erdogan in talks with Hamas over release of Israeli hostages](#), The New Arab, 12 October 2023



## Iran

Iran has provided material and other support to Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon in the past.<sup>218</sup>

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has blamed Israel and its partners for “endangering the security of the regional states” and said the Hamas attack would bring to an end the “harassment of Palestinian women and prisoners” and the “constant desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque”.<sup>219</sup>

The Iranian Government has warned of “escalation” if Israeli military forces enter Gaza and called for countries to stop exporting oil to Israel.<sup>220</sup>

Section 6 provides further resources on the international response to the conflict.

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<sup>218</sup> See Commons Library research briefing, [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#) and US Institute for Peace, [Iran, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#), 21 May 2023

<sup>219</sup> [Iranian president: Israel responsible for regional instability](#), Fars News Agency, 8 October 2023

<sup>220</sup> [Iranian FM: Gaza could turn into graveyard for Israeli soldiers](#), Fars News Agency, 16 October 2023; Turkey, [Iran FMs warn over Israel’s expansion of Gaza war, disagree on oil boycott](#), Al-Monitor, 1 November 2023

## 5

# UK Government advice for British nationals

## Government advice for the region

### Travel advice

Current travel advice can be found on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) travel advice pages for [The Occupied Palestinian Territories](#) and [Israel](#).

It advises against all travel to some parts of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and against all but essential travel to other parts.

[The FCDO also advises against travel to all parts of Lebanon.](#)

### Registering their presence

The FCDO advises that [any British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories should register their presence with the department.](#)

The FCDO also states [any British nationals in Lebanon should register their presence with the department.](#)

To register requires an email address and British passport number.

## Commercial flights arranged for British and other nationals

On 12 October, the UK Government announced it was facilitating commercial flights for British nationals from Israel. Flights were subject to the security situation on the ground.<sup>221</sup>

Government-assisted departures were arranged from 14 October to 19 October 2023. Commercial flights are continuing.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>221</sup> FCDO, [UK Government to arrange flights to get British nationals out of Israel](#), 12 October 2023

<sup>222</sup> FCDO, [UK government continues to facilitate British nationals leaving Israel and Gaza](#), 14 October 2023; FCDO, [Travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories](#)

Other countries that have arranged flights for the repatriation of some of their nationals include Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the United States.<sup>223</sup>

The UK Government has also deployed a “rapid deployment team” to assist British nationals and local consular officials.<sup>224</sup>

To 16 October, the Government said 500 British nationals had left Israel.<sup>225</sup>

## Access to the Rafah crossing

On 1 November 2023 it was announced that the Rafah crossing would be open to allow up to 500 foreign nationals and injured Palestinians into Egypt for time-limited periods each day.<sup>226</sup>

As of 29 November 2023, the UK Government says that:

Some 245 UK-supported foreign nationals have crossed at Rafah; of those who have left, 175 are British nationals, 27 are country-based UK staff, 43 are Palestinian dependants, and 67 people are waiting to cross.<sup>227</sup>

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has provided Egyptian authorities, who control the crossing, with the names of those who wish to leave Gaza.

The FCDO said UK officials are in Egypt to “ensure we can provide the necessary medical, consular and administrative support needed” for British nationals. The department said:

We understand that the crossing will continue to be open for controlled and time-limited periods to allow specific groups of foreign nationals, including British nationals, to cross. It is for the Egyptian and Israeli authorities to determine who is permitted to cross, and when. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will contact Embassies to let them know when their foreign nationals can cross. Should we receive notification from the Israeli and Egyptian authorities that individuals are permitted to cross, we will notify those people individually.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> [Governments repatriate citizens from Israel](#), Reuters, 12 October 2023

<sup>224</sup> FCDO, [UK government continues to facilitate British nationals leaving Israel and Gaza](#), 14 October 2023

<sup>225</sup> HC Deb, [16 October 2023](#), c23

<sup>226</sup> This and subsequent paragraphs from [Rafah crossing: First Britons leave Gaza but others face nervous wait](#), BBC News, 1 November 2023

<sup>227</sup> HL Deb, [29 November 2023](#), c1091

<sup>228</sup> FCDO, [Travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories](#)

## 6

# Resources and further reading

The following is a selection of government, press and media articles relevant to the 2023 conflict between Israel and Hamas. The House of Commons Library is not responsible for the content or accuracy of external content.

## Commons and Lords Library material

- Commons Library research briefing, [UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs](#). Sources on the humanitarian situation, value and monitoring of UK aid, and the role of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).
- Commons Library research briefing, [Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A parliamentary list, 2020-23](#). UK Parliamentary material and press statements relating to the conflict during the current parliament.
- House of Lords Library, [Israel-Hamas conflict: Latest developments](#), 20 October 2023

## Humanitarian situation and casualties

- UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), [Gaza emergency](#).
- UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), [Occupied Palestinian Territories](#).
- UNOCHA reports [daily casualty statistics](#) on its website.
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [UK–Occupied Palestinian Territories development partnership summary](#), July 2023. Summary of UK aid programme. The UK does not provide aid directly to the Palestinian Authority or Hamas.

## Analysis and outlook for the conflict

### General information

- Council on Foreign Relations, [What is Hamas?](#), October 2023. An overview.
- Washington Institute, [The Israel-Hamas war 2023: FAQs](#), October 2023

- Center for Strategic and International Studies, [The War in Gaza and the death of the two-state solution](#), 11 October 2023
- International Crisis Group, [A second October War in Israel-Palestine](#), 9 October 2023. The first October War was that of 1973, 50 years ago.
- Washington Institute, [The Hamas-Israel war: One month on](#), 9 November 2023

## On the potential for regional escalation

- Middle East Institute, [A new Israel-Gaza war and regional reverberations](#), 10 October 2023
- Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [Hamas-Israel escalation: The risk of a regional spillover](#), 13 October 2023
- International Crisis Group, [Deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah must hold](#), 14 October 2023.
- Middle East Institute, [Israel-Hamas war: Conflict scenarios, risks of regional escalation, and US diplomacy](#), 16 October 2023
- Washington Institute, [Will Hezbollah hold back or escalate?](#), 16 October 2023
- European Council on Foreign Relations, [Bracing for a broader conflict: How the Israel-Hamas war could escalate](#), 20 October 2023
- [Iran's quandary: How to stay out of Israel's war on Hamas](#), Reuters, 23 October 2023
- Atlantic Council, [The global consequences of the Israel-Hamas war are just beginning: What to watch](#), 24 October 2023
- [Will there be a wider war in the Middle East?](#), Foreign Policy, 3 November 2023
- Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, [The Houthi war on Israel](#), 8 November 2023
- Arab Gulf states Institute in Washington, [Iranian proxies and allies respond to the war in Gaza](#), 9 November 2023
- International Crisis Group, [Understanding the risks of US-Iran escalation amid the Gaza conflict](#), 10 November 2023
- Middle East Institute, [Iranian-backed militia attacks on coalition forces threaten to ignite eastern Syria](#), 13 November 2023
- Middle East Institute, [The perils of underestimating the Houthi threat](#), 16 November 2023

- Brookings Institute, [On Hezbollah, Lebanon and the risks of escalation](#), 17 November 2023
- Washington Institute, [Gaza war shows heightened risk of escalation in the region](#), 17 November 2023
- Chatham House, [The closer Israel gets to destroying Hamas, the more likely war with Hezbollah becomes](#), 17 November 2023
- Washington Institute, [Will an Iraqi front open in the Hamas-Israel war?](#), 21 November 2023
- Chatham House, [The Hamas-Israel hostage deal could pave the way to de-escalation and ultimately peace](#), 22 November 2023
- Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [The “other” wide of the war: West Bank violence escalating](#), 23 November 2023
- International Crisis Group, [With all eyes on Gaza, Israel tightens its grip on the West Bank](#), 24 November 2023

## Response in the Middle East region

- Washington Institute for Near East Policy, [International reactions to the Hamas attack on Israel](#), 11 October 2023
- Chatham House, [Middle East and North Africa countries should lead the way de-escalating the Israel-Hamas War](#), 11 October 2023.
- Atlantic Council, [The legal challenges in holding Iran accountable for supporting Hamas](#), 24 October 2023
- [Why Iran is gambling on Hamas](#), Foreign Affairs, 1 November 2023
- International Crisis Group, [The Gaza war reverberates across the Middle East](#), 4 November 2023
- Middle East Institute, [Assessing the resilience of Israel’s regional ties, one month on](#), 6 November 2023
- Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [The Gulf, the Riyadh summit and the Hamas-Israel war](#), 17 November 2023

## On fighting and humanitarian access in Gaza

- Chatham House, [Israel has the capacity to significantly damage Hamas with a ground offensive. But politics will restrain it throughout](#), 17 October 2023
- Atlantic Council, [Humanitarian aid cannot be weaponised](#), 18 October 2023

- Carnegie Middle East Center, [The perils of a Gaza invasion](#), 19 October 2023
- Chatham House, [Humanitarian pauses and ceasefires—what are the differences?](#), 6 November 2023

## On the role of the UK and European countries

- European Council on Foreign Relations, [How Europeans should respond to the Hamas offensive against Israel](#), 9 October 2023
- Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [Europeans, Israel and Palestine](#), 6 November 2023
- Chatham House, [To engage in the Middle East peace process the UK needs dedicated leadership](#), 8 November 2023
- Middle East Institute, [The EU and the Israel-Hamas war: A narrow but important niche](#), 14 November 2023

## On the role and position of the United States

- Chatham House, [President Biden’s Middle East visit reveals the challenges for US diplomacy](#), 18 October 2023
- Middle East Institute, [America faces brewing crisis of confidence among key Middle East partners](#), 13 November 2023
- Atlantic Council, [The post-7 October US strategy in the Middle East is coming into focus](#), 21 November 2023
- [The war that remade the Middle East: How Washington can stabilise a transformed region](#), Foreign Affairs, 20 November 2023
- [Washington’s looming Middle Eastern quagmire](#), Foreign Affairs, 24 November 2023

## On the position and role of Russia and China

- Middle East Institute, [The war in Gaza as a major test of China’s Middle East peace diplomacy](#), 19 October 2023
- [In Israel-Hamas war, Russia’s leverage erodes, outflanked by US naval power](#), Al-Monitor, 22 October 2023
- [Russia manoeuvres carefully over the Israel-Hamas war as it seeks to expand its global clout](#), Associated Press, 25 October 2023
- Chatham House, [China’s approach to the war in Gaza is not anti-Israel. It’s designed to contain the US](#), 25 October 2023

## Maps

- Reuters, [Mapping the conflict in Israel and Gaza](#), regularly updated.
- Washington Institute, [Mapping clashes along the Israel-Lebanon border](#), regularly updated.
- Institute for the Study of War, [Interactive map: Israel's military operation in Gaza](#), regularly updated.
- Financial Times, [The Israel-Hamas war in maps: Latest updates](#), regularly updated.

## International law

- International Red Cross, [What is international humanitarian law?](#), April 2022. An introduction to the topic.
- UN, [Explainer: What is international humanitarian law?](#), 19 October 2023. Provides an introduction and links to relevant international agreements.
- The Economist, [Is Israel acting within the laws of war?](#), 14 October 2023.
- Just Security, [The siege of Gaza and the starvation war crime](#), October 2023
- Reuters, [What war crimes laws apply to the Israel-Palestinian conflict?](#), October 2023
- Just Security, [Expert guidance: Law of armed conflict in the Israel-Hamas War](#), October 2023.
- New Humanitarian, [How have Israel and Gaza broken the laws of war?](#), October 2023
- Catherine Gegout in the Conversation, [Where the ICC stands if war crimes are committed on either side of the Israel-Hamas war](#), 23 October 2023
- Karim Khan (the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court) in The Guardian, [We are witnessing a pandemic of inhumanity: To halt the spread, we must cling to the law](#), 10 November 2023
- Louis Lillywhite in Chatham House, [Medical facilities must be protected in Gaza's urban conflict](#), 11 November 2023



## Other resources

The House of Commons Library subscribes to several news-outlets providing foreign policy analysis. These include BBC Monitoring and Foreign Affairs.

These can be access for parliamentary users via [the Library resources page](#) and via Nexis news (which provides access to a range of subscription news-services).

Some fact-checking services are also monitoring video and other media produced during the conflict. These include:

- [BBC Verify](#). Reporting includes on the [Al-Ahli Arab hospital explosion](#) and [Israeli attacks in southern Gaza](#)
- [Channel 4 FactCheck](#). Reporting includes the [Hammas attacks on civilians](#)
- [Bellingcat](#). Netherlands-based investigative group. Reporting includes [Hammas attacks against Israeli civilians](#) and [Israeli strikes on Jabalia refugee camp targeted at Hammas](#)
- [Airwars](#). UK-based not for profit that assesses civilian harm incidents alongside known sources, including in the [2023 conflict](#), using its published [methodology of recording and assessment](#)

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