

STATEMENT to B&NES Council Meeting on 30 November 2023

Gaza Ceasefire Commitment

I'm making this statement on behalf of a coalition of Bath organisations who have been actively calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. These include Bath Campaigns Network, Bath TUC, Bath Friends of Palestine, Bath Stop War, and Rethinking Security BANES. Additional organisations have indicated they wish to join this call to action, and will be added to the statement online.

We would like to start by saying that we unequivocally condemn all violence, express deep mourning for all victims, and call for the safe return of those illegally held on both sides in the Israel/Gaza conflict.

Bath & North East Somerset Council has a commendable history of addressing global challenges and must act on its moral responsibility to speak out against the "textbook genocide" in Gaza, as termed by a leading UN official, academics and humanitarian agencies.

The Local Government Act empowers action in the community's best interests, recognising global interconnectedness. Past precedents set by this council—such as the Climate Emergency Resolution and lighting up council-owned buildings in Ukrainian flag colours—clearly illustrate a collective belief that our responsibilities extend beyond local boundaries.

The civilian death toll in Gaza is catastrophic, including over 6,150 children, thousands still lying under the rubble, and countless wounded in need of urgent medical attention and humanitarian support. This is particularly poignant for our community, with constituents directly impacted.

Each of you will receive a link to sign a public online letter calling for a permanent ceasefire. This visible commitment lets constituents know where each of you stands, contributing to building momentum for further actions, such as a council resolution.

Before concluding, we ask: How many of you, who wear a poppy with pride, want to show your commitment to 'never again'? We urge you to actively work towards a world where 'never again' is a reality. By signing, you declare commitment to justice and peace, standing with 76% of the British public supporting a ceasefire (YouGov poll).

In conclusion, there can be no neutral stance on war crimes—collective punishment, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Our local decisions impact globally, engaging your responsibility to compel just actions from the government. Take a stand against these injustices and position yourselves on the right side of history. In the words of Desmond Tutu, 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.'

Thank you for your attention and in anticipation of your commitment to peace, justice, and the rule of law.

Nicola James

