

Somerset Council

Full Council
20 December 2023



Motions on Notice

Executive Member: All

Division and Local Member: All

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A. Motion on the immediate bilateral ceasefire in Israel-Gaza conflict

The following motion will be proposed by Councillor Helen Kay and seconded by Councillor Habib Farbahi:

Council condemns the awful terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7th October 2023.

Council is horrified by the scenes of violence in the weeks and days since, in particular the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza where thousands of innocent Palestinians have already been killed and over 136 Israelis are still being held hostage.

Council affirms that Hamas remaining in Gaza is not tenable, for the security of Israelis and the future of Palestinians, but additionally it is clear that a military solution to eliminate Hamas is not possible.

Council further affirms that a lasting peace and a two-state solution is the only way to guarantee the dignity and security which both Palestinians and Israelis deserve.

Council believes:

- 1) All combatants must act in accordance with the rules of war and international humanitarian law.

- 2) The hostages held by Hamas must be unconditionally released.
- 3) Essential supplies of water, food, medicine and electricity must be restored to Gaza, and the passage of aid into Gaza must be facilitated.
- 4) Israel has a right in international law to protect its citizens which means targeting terrorists, not civilians, and ensuring that innocent Palestinians do not pay the price for Hamas' actions.
- 5) With a humanitarian catastrophe, ongoing hostage situation, and the risk of regional escalation growing, now is the time to attempt movement towards a political solution.
- 6) The UK Government must lead calls for an immediate bilateral ceasefire which will:
 - a) Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza
 - b) Provide an opportunity to realise the release of the hostages
 - c) Allow for an intensive period of diplomacy to realise a political solution, to get Hamas out of Gaza, and realise a two-state solution and a lasting peace.

Council accordingly resolves to write to the UK Government to call for an immediate bilateral ceasefire.

Council notes with deep concern the severe reverberations of this crisis in the UK, with Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities all fearing and grieving, and condemns the rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia since 7 October 2023.

Council thanks community leaders for the role they are playing in reducing tensions at this sensitive and difficult time.

Council calls upon community leaders and public figures to act responsibly and work to bring communities together at this sensitive time.