

Full Council

9 January 2022



Report of: Tim O’Gara, Director Legal and Democratic Services

Title: Petition Debate: Israel – Gaza Conflict

Recommendation

That Full Council debates the petition and refers it to the Mayor / relevant Cabinet member for a formal response.

Summary

Under the Council’s petitions scheme, where a petition has 3,500 or more signatures from people who live, work or study in Bristol, the petition organiser can request a Full Council debate.

The Council has received a petition in relation to the Israel – Gaza Conflict.

The petition organisers have requested that Full Council debates the petition.



Details of the petition

1. The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition title / subject: **Petition on Israel – Gaza Conflict.**

Petition wording:

We the undersigned as residents, workers and students in Bristol, call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a lifting of the siege to end the humanitarian disaster.

We ask all Bristol councillors to do the same.

We ask for a minute's silence to be held in Bristol's Full Council meeting on Tuesday 14th November, to commemorate all those killed in the atrocities.

We ask for City Hall to be lit up in Palestinian colours, to express sympathy for those who have lost their lives or been injured, the same as it did when lighting up City Hall in the colours of the Israeli flag.

By the time of the United Nations Security Council meeting of 30th October, 8,300 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza, over 3,400 of them children, with over 6,300 children injured. As the UNICEF representative pointed out, that is an average of more than 420 children being killed or injured each day in Gaza.

Palestinians should not be facing collective punishment; no nation, no people or community should have to endure collective punishment. This has included the blockade of electricity, food, water and fuel and the forced displacement of civilians. These actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity under international law and we must not stand by and let it happen.

Gaza is home to 2.2 million people, over half of whom are children. Before this crisis began, over 80% of the population relied on aid, now this crisis has turned to catastrophe. The innocent civilians in Gaza have had nothing to do with this crisis and bear no responsibility to its outcome.

Five UN agencies, including The World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have called for a humanitarian ceasefire as they described the conditions in Gaza as "catastrophic". Leaders across all faiths, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, have also called for a ceasefire and polling shows over three quarters of the British public support a ceasefire.

We call for a just political settlement and we ask Bristol's political representatives to add their voices to this call.

As a City of Sanctuary, we will all work together to ensure the safety of all our communities – Muslim and Jewish alike and are ready to welcome refugees from Gaza.

2. The petition has been organised by Bristol Palestine Solidarity Campaign
3. The petition has secured 5154 signatures to date, 4866 from Bristol residents. Verified as of 14 December 2023.
4. The Full Council is asked to debate the petition.
5. Under the petition scheme, the petition organiser is permitted up to 5 minutes to present and speak to the petition. The petition scheme allows a further period of up to 15 minutes for discussion of the petition by councillors at the Full Council meeting.
6. The Full Council has agreed the following in relation to dealing with petitions with over 3500 signatures: The topic of the debate should be referred to the Mayor/Cabinet, or other relevant body with the petitioner's views and Full Council's views.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the debate, the Full Council is recommended to refer the petition to the Mayor, in order that the Mayor can consider his response, in liaison with the relevant Cabinet member.