

THE KENNINGTON - BETHLEHEM LINK

c/o 69c De Laune Street, Kennington, London SE17 3UR
kennington.beth@gmail.com www.kenningtonbethlehem.org.uk

13 July 2023

Dear

I am writing as Chair of the Kennington Bethlehem Link and also as a member of your constituency. You will see other constituents are signatories to our original letter. This was sent by post and in two emails. We are rather disappointed that we have not received a reply.

Since we wrote to you in May the situation on the ground in Palestine is worse by the day. Most recently the Israeli Defence Force incursions, demolitions, violence and deaths in Jenin.

The three points / calls we made in our original letter still stand, in particular the challenge to the Israeli government's flouting of international law in relation to settlement expansion and discrimination towards Palestinians. Israel's oversteps its right to self-defence by the kinds of actions it takes against Palestinians, and young people and children in particular.

We very much hope that we will receive a response to this letter and hear how you are raising your concerns for what is happening in Palestine and perhaps offer us an up-date as to the role that the Labour Party is taking in these days.

Yours sincerely

Pat Gaffney

Chair, Kennington Bethlehem Link

(Below a copy of our original letter)

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12 May 2023

Dear

The Kennington Bethlehem Link was formed ten years ago to establish educational and cultural links between communities in Kennington and Bethlehem and to raise awareness of life in Bethlehem and Palestine. Among other things, we have hosted young people from Bethlehem and we have particularly close ties with the Aida Refugee Camp and a number of our group have made visits to Bethlehem, including the camp. Most recently we have held a public briefing with a human rights monitor from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

Over the years we have seen a marked deterioration in the life of our friends in Palestine. According to the Israeli Human Rights group, B'Tselem, Israeli forces killed 146 Palestinians in the West Bank during 2022. This was the largest number since 2004. 34 of those killed were minors.

On 15 May Palestinians will be commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, the process of ethnic cleansing, colonisation and dispossession that saw over 750,000 Palestinians driven into exile and more than 500 towns and villages wiped from the map.

Violence, the abuse of human rights and injustice against those of all ages in the Palestinian community continue today. This does nothing to ensure the safety and security of the Israeli community and in all likelihood will ensure the reverse.

We appeal to you at this time to urge the British Government to use all means in its power to contribute to a just peace in Palestine and Israel by:

- recognising Palestine as an independent state.
- challenging the Israeli government's flouting of international law in relation to settlement expansion and discrimination towards Palestinians.
- ending UK arms sales to Israel. The weapons and military technology that we sell are used to enforce the illegal occupation of Palestine.

We would also welcome an opportunity to speak with you, either in the House of Commons or at one of our regular meetings.

Pat Gaffney, Chair and members of the Kennington Bethlehem Link Committee

Suzette Aagaard
Rev Canon Angus Aagaard
Steve Adamson
Sue Codrington
Pat Gaffney
Gill Lucas
Marc Kerr-Sheppard
Patrick Tatham
Miranda Townsend