

19.5 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South of the Chief Minister regarding Palestine. (OQ.60/2026)

The U.N. (United Nations) Commission of Inquiry in June 2026 stated that Israeli forces “deliberately carried out acts inflicting death, severe bodily and mental harm on hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children” and concluded the acts “form part of a deliberate strategy to destroy the future of the Palestinians in Gaza by targeting their children”; is the Chief Minister prepared to use his voice to condemn the genocide happening in Palestine?

Senator L.J. Farnham (The Chief Minister):

I share the Deputy’s profound concern for civilians and particularly children in Gaza. The findings of the June 2026 report of the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry are exceptionally grave. The commission concluded that Israeli authorities and security forces deliberately targeted Palestinian children and that this conduct resulted in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. I condemn without reservation the killing, suffering, forced displacement and profound psychological harm suffered by Palestinian children. I equally condemn all conduct that targets civilians on any side. I would, however, remind Members that the commission is an independent U.N. investigative body and the final judicial determination of genocide remains a matter for the competent international courts. That distinction does not lessen the seriousness of the commission’s evidence or conclusions which cannot be ignored. Israel has the right to defend its population against terrorism; however, that must be exercised in accordance with international law. Nothing can justify the death and suffering to civilians on such a devastating scale. While Jersey does not determine foreign policy, we are not prevented from speaking out in support of international law and fundamental humanitarian principles. We must continue to advocate for the immediate and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, a permanent ceasefire and a diplomatic settlement that delivers a lasting peace, security, dignity and justice for both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples. [Approbation]

19.5.1 Deputy T.A. Coles:

I am glad to hear that the Chief Minister does condemn this act and uses the term “genocide” in his response. The U.K. is set to have a new Prime Minister on Monday. As one of the acts for the Chief Minister, would he write to the U.K. Prime Minister to voice that same concern?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I have consistently spoken out where I believe international humanitarian law has been breached, and I will continue to do so. In discussions with U.K. Ministers on this topic, I have reaffirmed Jersey’s support for the U.K. applying all means at its disposal to ensure this happens, working with international partners and local organisations to get help where it is most needed. I will follow up this discussion with the Minister for External Relations, and it is certainly something we would be prepared to mention to the new administration when we meet with them.

19.5.2 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

I welcome and agree with the sentiment expressed by the Chief Minister in his initial response. I would just like to press him a little on the fact that the question did specifically refer to genocide. Could the Chief Minister please confirm whether he agrees with experts such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam, Christian Aid, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Amos Goldberg, the Jewish-Israeli Holocaust Professor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Omer Bartov, The Israeli Dean’s Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brown University and Raz Segal, the Israeli historian and Professor of Genocide and Holocaust Studies at Stockton University. I could go on, the list is extensive. Could the Chief Minister please confirm whether he agrees with these experts that we are witnessing a genocide taking place in Gaza?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

As I said in my remarks, I condemn without reservation the suffering that is currently going on. I reminded Members that the commission is an independent investigative body and the other organisations, respected, incredible organisations that the Deputy mentioned, make a point - a very valid and distinct point - which does not lessen the seriousness of the evidence they provide. I remind Members again that they are not courts and the determination of genocide remains a matter for the competent international courts in due course. It is difficult to say, because I have not studied every single article and piece of evidence in detail, and I will defer to the international courts, but I am absolutely appalled at the actions taken by the Israeli authorities which has caused death and suffering to a large amount of civilians for which I think there can be no justifiable reason.

19.5.3 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The Chief Minister has already referred to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, which I think he respects. Could he clarify that when it comes to the arrest warrant that was issued for the current Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, that there is still currently a warrant out for his arrest for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity? Does the Chief Minister recognise the validity of that arrest warrant?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Well, again, I have not studied the detail of the arrest warrant and I am not sure what the position of the U.K. Government is on that. We align our foreign policy with that of the U.K. Government. While I might agree in principle that the perpetrators of such humanitarian actions should be held to account, I am not in a position - I do not have the full detail to hand - to comment on that right now.

19.5.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

It is a strange position to take given the fact that previous answers said that the Chief Minister recognised the International Criminal Court and that they should decide on matters of ...

The Bailiff:

Yes, but the question about the warrant is beyond the question that the Chief Minister was asked. It is beyond the original question. I allowed it but it was beyond the original question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

To bring it back, whether it is to do with genocide or the immediately-related issues to what is going on in the Middle East in this regard, can the Chief Minister give an assurance that he supports the upholding of international law and the recognising of international institutions such as the I.C.C. (International Criminal Court)?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I think I did allude to that in my opening remarks, and I do absolutely. I hope I speak on behalf of all Islanders when I say we continue to support international law at all times. I cannot really add much more I think in strength and personal feeling to what I have already said. We will see what happens in the fullness of time. As I said, it is certainly a matter I am prepared to discuss further with the Minister for External Relations and the new U.K. administration when we meet with them.