

Interactions *Between The* *UK* and Palestine

June 2025



Introduction

The following monthly interactions report for June 2025 provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of Palestinian rights campaigns and advocacy in the United Kingdom. This report aims to offer readers a clear understanding of the status of the Palestinian issue and the advocacy movement in the UK as of June 2025. The information presented is crucial for NGOs, iNGOs, interest groups, private individuals, and all other relevant stakeholders engaged with matters concerning Palestine and the UK, providing essential insights.

Government

- On 4 June, Middle East Minister Hamish Falconer condemned Israel's newly introduced measures for aid delivery in Gaza as 'inhumane, foster desperation and endanger civilians' during a House of Commons statement. He expressed deep concern over reports of Palestinians being killed while trying to access aid sites, saying, 'Desperate civilians who have endured 20 months of war should never face the risk of death or injury to simply feed themselves and their families'. Falconer called for 'an immediate and independent investigation' and urged Israel to end its 'unjustified block on aid into Gaza', allowing the United Nations and partners to 'safely deliver all types of aid at scale to save lives, reduce suffering and maintain dignity'.



- On 10 June, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Norway imposed coordinated sanctions on Israeli ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich for inciting violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. The measures, including asset freezes and travel bans, marked a rare rebuke from key Western allies. In a joint statement, the five countries condemned the ministers' extremist rhetoric - including calls for forced displacement and settlement expansion which they said undermines prospects for a two-state solution and fuels ongoing violence.



Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer backed the sanctions, saying they aimed to uphold human rights and preserve the path to peace, while reaffirming support for a ceasefire, hostage release, and humanitarian aid. Smotrich dismissed the sanctions' personal impact but warned of a broader diplomatic rupture, declaring, 'There will be a very strong response toward these countries'. He pledged a 'proper Zionist response' by strengthening Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and warned, 'If anyone thinks that by illegitimate actions like sanctions they can push us to abandon parts of our homeland or endanger our existence, they are gravely mistaken'.

- On 10 June, it was revealed that Labour leadership is set to implement stricter candidate vetting procedures ahead of the 2026 local elections in Brent, amid growing controversy over a motion by Councillor Ihtesham Afzal to twin the borough with Nablus. The move follows public outcry, a 1,000- signature petition, and an official equalities impact assessment warning the proposal could 'risk compounding antisemitism' during a time of heightened community tension over Israel's genocide in Gaza. Brent Council's leadership has faced pressure from residents and communal groups, with at least one organisation considering legal action.
- On 10 June, Middle East Minister Hamish Falconer confirmed in Parliament that the UK government would consider sanctions against Palestinian politicians who engage in antisemitic rhetoric or incitement to violence, affirming that the same standards apply as those used to sanction Israeli ministers Ben-Gvir and Smotrich. Responding to a pointed question from Conservative MP Greg Smith - met with opposition jeers- Falconer reiterated the government's condemnation of incitement on all sides but declined to pre-empt specific future measures.

- On 11 June, UK Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard confirmed that the UK is 'currently' training members of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) on British soil. The statement, made in response to a written parliamentary question from Labour MP Rachael Maskell, revealed that this training is part of ongoing 'routine defence engagement' between the UK and Israel. In his full response, Pollard stated: 'As part of routine defence engagement with Israel, the UK is currently training a limited number of Israel Defence Forces personnel on UK-based training courses'.

The disclosure comes amid Israel's continued genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza. Despite this, the UK Government has maintained its defence cooperation and bilateral relations with Israel, and has played an active role in enabling Israel's genocidal war efforts.

- Speaking to reporters on 16 June, Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed that the UK will not immediately recognise a Palestinian state, despite mounting pressure from MPs and trade unions. Speaking en route to the G7 summit in Canada, Starmer reiterated his commitment to a two-state solution and recognition of Palestine as part of bilateral negotiations, stating, 'Our position on recognition of Palestine as part of the process hasn't changed... that is the only way to peace'.
- On 23 June, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced in a written statement that the UK government intends to designate the pro-Palestinian direct action group Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000, with a parliamentary vote set for 2 July and the ban expected to come into effect by 4 July.

The move follows the group's direct action at RAF Brize Norton, where activists damaged military aircraft, prompting Cooper to label it a 'disgraceful attack'. Once proscribed, it will become a criminal offence to express support for the group, attend related events, display its logo, or publish opinions that could be seen as encouraging support. Penalties include up to 14 years in prison and significant fines, with wide discretion left to police to interpret violations - sparking deep concern from civil liberties advocates, who warn of the chilling effect on lawful protest and the targeting of pro-Palestine activism.



Critics argue the designation represents a dangerous expansion of counter-terror powers and a politically motivated attempt to suppress dissent, particularly around the UK's role in Israel's War on Gaza. Civil rights campaigners, including former Liberty director Shami Chakrabarti, questioned the justification for the proscription, saying it risks criminalising association and peaceful expression. Netpol and other rights groups point to past misuse of counter-terror laws - often along racist and Islamophobic lines - and warn that the vague legal definitions in the Terrorism Act allow for broad, uneven, and potentially discriminatory enforcement. A legal challenge is now expected.

Parliamentarians, political parties, and semi-official bodies

- On 2 June, it was reported that over 250 British Museum staff urged director Nicholas Cullinan and trustees to cut ties with Israeli cultural bodies, following a private Israeli Independence Day event held at the museum on 16 May. Staff voiced concerns that hosting such a celebration - amid Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza - could damage international partnerships and curator relations. The event, approved by senior leadership and attended by UK and Israeli officials, was justified by the museum as consistent with its status as a government-aligned institution.
- A *Middle East Eye* report on 11 June has sparked political uproar in the UK, alleging that former Foreign Secretary David Cameron privately threatened ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan with defunding the court and withdrawing from the Rome Statute if it pursued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders over war crimes in Gaza. The reported call on 23 April 2024 allegedly included Cameron warning that such action would be like 'dropping a hydrogen bomb'. While Cameron and Khan have declined to comment publicly, sources close to the prosecutor said he rejected the pressure, warning it undermined the court's independence and the UK's commitment to international law.

The allegations prompted condemnation across the political spectrum. Labour MP Zarah Sultana called for an investigation into ministers 'complicit' in enabling Israel's actions in Gaza, while Labour MP Bell Ribeiro-Addy demanded an independent inquiry into the UK's role. Scottish National Party (SNP) MP Chris Law called the claims 'shocking' and criticised both past and present governments, a sentiment echoed by Green Party deputy leader Zack Polanski, who accused UK leadership of siding with 'oppressors'.



- On 25 June 2025, the British Medical Association (BMA) passed three groundbreaking motions - 41, 42, and 43 - marking a decisive stance on medical neutrality and political expression in the context of Israel's War on Gaza. Motion 41 asserts that criticism of the actions of the state of Israel is not inherently antisemitic, pushing back against the conflation of political critique with antisemitism. Motion 42 defends the rights of medical professionals and students to criticise states and institutions that violate international law, specifically affirming the right to advocate for Palestinian rights. The motion includes a call to protect those who face disciplinary action for such advocacy and urges medical schools not to censor or penalise students.

Motion 43, brought by the BMA's Lothian division, condemns Israeli military actions targeting Gaza's healthcare system, referencing the destruction of hospitals and the deaths of over 1,000 healthcare workers since October 2023. It also demands the immediate release of arbitrarily detained healthcare professionals in Israel and reaffirms the need to uphold international humanitarian law in conflict zones.

These motions will now be referred to the BMA's international relations panel for implementation planning, and represent a significant and rare example of institutional medical advocacy vis-à-vis international human rights.

NGOs – Solidarity groups

- On 4 June, Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) announced it is bringing a private prosecution against former Bristol University lecturer Dr David Miller over Twitter posts. Miller, now a presenter on Press TV, is accused of violating the 2003 Communications Act by posting messages from November 2024 onwards containing the hashtag 'Dismantle Zionism' and calls for Zionist Jews to be 'held accountable and de-Zionised'. Westminster Magistrates' Court has granted a criminal summons, with the initial hearing set for 2 July 2025.
- On 5 June, British Palestinians issued an urgent appeal to the UK government to end its complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza, highlighting the use of starvation as a weapon of war and condemning continued British arms exports and political support to Israel. At a London press conference hosted by the British Palestinian Committee (BPC) and UK Gaza Community, speakers called for immediate action, with BPC director Sara Hussein stating, 'The UK is not a bystander, it is an active participant'.

Speaking via video from Gaza, Amjad Al-Shawa, director of the Palestinian NGOs Network, described a collapsed humanitarian system 'entirely under Israeli control' and condemned the US- and Israel- backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) as a 'military distribution system'. He warned, 'People walk for hours to reach fenced aid points and are shot at when they arrive. Women, children and the elderly are being humiliated and killed just for trying to eat'.



- The UK's National Palestine Coalition – comprising of Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB), Friends of Al-Aqsa (FoA), Stop the War Coalition (STW), Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CnD) - have condemned Israel's seizure of the Madleen, a British-flagged vessel participating in the Freedom Flotilla. In a statement released on 9 June, they described the incident as an unlawful hijacking and called for the immediate release of the 12 civilians on board, including climate activist Greta Thunberg and French MEP Rima Hassan.

The statement accuses Israel of committing crimes against humanity in Gaza, including the use of starvation as a weapon and recent incidents of violence at aid distribution points. It also criticises the British government for its muted response and failure to take meaningful action.

- On 18 June, results from a YouGov poll commissioned by Action For Humanity and the International Centre for Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) revealed that 55% of Britons oppose Israel's military offensive in Gaza, with 82% of those (equating to 45% of UK adults) characterizing them as genocide. The online survey, conducted between 4–5 June with a representative sample of 2,010 UK adults, also found that 65% support the UK enforcing the ICC's arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he visits the country. Additionally, 30% of respondents support immediate UK recognition of a Palestinian state - rising to 43% among Labour voters - while only 10% oppose the move outright.
- On 25 June, the Co-op announced it will cease sourcing products from Israel and 16 other countries identified as having 'community-wide human rights abuses and violations of international law'. The phased removal, including items such as Israeli carrots and Russian vodka, follows a strong mandate from the Co-op's annual general meeting, where over 75% of representatives voted to support a full boycott of Israeli products. The retailer said it will end contracts in accordance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice.



Ben Jamal, Director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), called the move a 'seismic victory' and praised the Co-op for showing 'great moral courage and ethical principle' by responding to public calls to end economic ties with Israel. 'This beacon of leadership must now be taken up by all other supermarket chains that continue to sell Israeli goods, despite knowing they are supporting war crimes', Jamal added.

Conclusion

June 2025 underscores the volatile and contradictory nature of the UK's posture on Palestine, marked by simultaneous escalation in punitive measures and intensified grassroots mobilisation. On one hand, the government has taken unprecedented steps, including coordinated sanctions on extremist Israeli ministers and a scathing condemnation of aid restrictions in Gaza, reflecting mounting discomfort with Israel's conduct. Yet this principled rhetoric is significantly undermined by revelations of ongoing IDF training on UK soil and plans to designate Palestine Action a terrorist organisation - moves that starkly reveal the enduring militaristic and securitised lens.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's refusal to recognise Palestinian statehood, despite overwhelming public and internal Labour pressure, illustrates a leadership line wedged between international legal realities and domestic political caution. The Brent controversy and tightening candidate vetting suggest a party apparatus still struggling to reconcile public outrage over Gaza with fears of antisemitism backlash and internal fragmentation. Meanwhile, civil society and professional institutions are increasingly aligned in critique and action. The BMA's landmark motions on medical neutrality, the Co-op's retail boycott, and the Freedom Flotilla seizure response mark a lively and active movement across Palestine rights' campaigns. The latest polling data confirms public sentiment is shifting dramatically, with majority recognition of Israel's actions as genocidal and strong support for legal accountability and Palestinian statehood.

June reveals a UK political system being pulled in opposite directions: between realpolitik and rule-of-law commitments, between repression and democratic protest, and between elite paralysis and civic clarity.

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