

Who stands up for Palestine?

South Africa stood up for human rights and the rule of law when the UK, US and Israel did not.

We welcome the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that 'Israel must take all measures to prevent any acts that could be considered genocidal'.

On 26 January the ICJ ordered Israel to prevent 'killing members of a group, causing bodily harm, inflicting conditions designed to bring about the destruction of a group, preventing births'.

Deaths

The ruling highlighted tens of thousands of deaths, injuries and the destruction of homes, schools, medical facilities and massive displacement. Many Palestinians lack basic foodstuffs, drinkable water, electricity, essential medicines or heating.

Fifteen per cent of women giving birth in Gaza are likely to experience complications; maternal and newborn death rates are already rising.

Britain reacts

Two weeks before the hearing, Rishi Sunak's spokesman called South Africa's case "completely unjustified and wrong". A



Cape Town 11 Nov 2023. Photo: Ashraf Hendricks

few days later Sunak told the Commons it was "unhelpful". "We don't agree with it and I don't believe it is right".

Immediately after the verdict, a nameless spokesperson claimed the Government respect the role and independence of the ICJ, but they had "considerable concerns about this case". Minister Andrew Mitchell told the Commons on Monday "we do not believe that Israel's actions in Gaza can be described as a genocide".

UNRWA

Next came an attack on the UN's Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the main international agency providing humanitarian aid in Gaza. Israel accused twelve of its 30,000 staff of involvement in the attack of 7 October. This was a planned and cynical propaganda stunt to deflect the ICJ ruling. The UN sacked them and launched an investigation but several countries including the UK followed the US lead and cut off funding immediately.

Many thousands of lives depend on UNRWA. If it cannot function, the UK's defunding will be aiding and abetting genocide. Nothing that happened on 7 October can justify that.

End Complicity in Genocide

We say ongoing violations of international law in Gaza will not end without a comprehensive, permanent ceasefire. We agree with South Africa that all States must cease funding and facilitating Israel's military actions, to avoid aiding and abetting genocide.

But that collusion is exactly what is happening, nationally and right here on Merseyside. We demand MPs and the Government accept the ICJ ruling and end UK complicity in genocide. ➡