

## Top lines|

- Labour utterly condemns Hamas's appalling and ongoing attacks on Israel. We stand in solidarity with Israel in this dark hour. There can never be a justification for terrorism. We are deeply saddened by the news that 17 British citizens are dead or missing following the attacks.
- We fully support Israel's right to defend itself, rescue hostages and protect its civilians. The hostages must be released immediately.
- As we have said from the beginning, all leaders must act in line with international law.
- That means there must be humanitarian access to Gaza, and continued supplies of food, water, electricity and medicines.
- We must remember the responsibility for this crisis lies with Hamas.
- Both Israelis and Palestinians are suffering terribly because of Hamas's actions which have set back the cause of peace. We must not conflate Hamas with the Palestinian people.
- We agree with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken who has said: "Israel has the right, indeed the obligation, to defend itself and to ensure that this never happens again ... How Israel does this matters. We democracies distinguish ourselves from terrorists by striving for a different standard ... That's why it's so important to take every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians."
- It's heart-breaking to see so many civilians affected. We must remember the responsibility for this crisis lies with Hamas. Hamas terrorists are not the same as the Palestinian people and do not represent their legitimate right to dignity, freedom, justice, and self-determination. It's heart-breaking to see so many civilians affected and we mourn the loss of every civilian life.
- We are very concerned about the humanitarian situation on the ground in Gaza. Given the evacuation has started, there should be safe corridors within Gaza, as the EU and US have said. We are speaking to the UN, NGOs and the UK government about how civilians in Gaza can be protected.
- We have pressed the government to set out a clear plan to ensure the safe return of British nationals in Israel who want to return. We welcome that rescue flights are starting to be chartered and will work with the government on this.
- We must not allow these tragic events to divide our communities. The Community Safety Trust and the Metropolitan Police have reported a steep increase in antisemitic incidents in recent days, including abuse and assaults. Tell Mama has reported a tripling of cases to their services within the last six days, including reports of Islamophobia threats, abuse and assaults.
- We denounce hate crime in the strongest terms. We are in touch with the police, the CST and Tell Mama, who are coordinating the response to such threats. We expect to see a robust response to all incidents of hate associated with the conflict, and call on government to support these groups and to play their part in preventing an escalation of tensions

## **Hate incidents**

- The Community Safety Trust and the Metropolitan Police have reported a steep increase in antisemitic incidents in recent days, including abuse and assaults. The CST are reporting a 494% increase in antisemitic incidents compared to the same six-day period last year. Strong police action to pursue criminal offences and to ensure security and reassurance for Jewish communities across the UK has our full support. There is no place in Britain for antisemitic hate.
- Tell Mama has reported a tripling of cases to their services within the last six days, including reports of Islamophobic threats, abuse and assaults. There is no place in Britain for Islamophobia. The police and government must work with Muslim communities and Tell Mama to ensure there is a robust response to incidents to keep communities safe.
- We denounce hate crime in the strongest terms. We are in touch with the police, the CST and Tell Mama, who are coordinating the response to such threats. We expect to see a robust response to all incidents of hate associated with the conflict, and call on government to support these groups and to play their part in preventing an escalation of tensions.

## **Community tensions**

- Over recent days we have seen an escalation in tensions within the UK associated with the conflict. Jewish and Muslim communities have often borne the brunt of these tensions.
- There are very strong views on all sides of this debate. But it is important that events in the Middle East do not drive hate or violence here in the UK.
- We all must play our part in easing and quelling these tensions, rather than fanning the flames.
- Community groups across the country are playing their part in easing these tensions and bringing people back together. We support those efforts, and call on government to work with devolved mayors, local authorities, religious leaders and the police to help drive those efforts forward.

## **Protests**

- The glorification or promotion of proscribed terrorist groups like Hamas is a criminal offence which must be dealt with robustly. Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation that has committed terrorist atrocities. Any promotion of them on Britain's streets is unlawful and cannot be tolerated.
- \* The police need to ensure that clear action is taken to prevent intimidation, harassment or hate crime and to maintain public order whilst safeguarding the right to legitimate forms of peaceful protest. These are operational judgments for the police, in conjunction with community groups, and we support them in this work.
- The Metropolitan Police have stated that waving a flag is not in and of itself a criminal offence - and that it will only be treated as such if it is seen as intimidation, or intending to cause harassment, alarm or distress. The police will need to exercise their operational judgment about

where those distinctions are drawn, in conjunction with community groups. understanding the distinction between supporters of Hamas and supporters of Palestine.

- The police will need to assess the situation on a case by case basis and use their operational judgment to ensure that legitimate protest can take place but that there is zero tolerance for antisemitic hate or the promotion of proscribed terrorist groups, both of which must face the full force of the law.
- The Met have also written to the Attorney General and Crown Prosecution Service asking for urgent clarity and guidance on charging thresholds relating to hate crime, to support policing through the coming days

## **Q&A**

### **Q. Do you support the siege of Gaza?**

- Hamas' barbaric actions are terrorism and can never be justified. Hamas should immediately release all hostages.
- Israel has a right to self-defence and to rescue hostages.
- Of course that must be in line with international law, as we've been saying from the start.
- The situation in Gaza is heart-breaking. Both Israelis and Palestinians are suffering terribly because of Hamas's actions.
- That's why we need increased humanitarian access. Food, water and electricity matter. This is in line with what international partners like the US, the EU, the UN and other partners have called for.

### **Q. Access to food and water has reportedly been cut off so surely this is a breach of international law?**

- Let me be absolutely clear, Israel has a right to defend itself and rescue hostages in line with international law.
- This is a live operation and a fast moving situation. I know there are live and sensitive discussions involving the US, Israel, the UN, international partners and countries in the region to secure humanitarian access and essential supplies for people in Gaza.
- No one wants civilians to suffer. And there must be a clear distinction between Hamas terrorists and the Palestinian people.

- International law should be upheld and humanitarian access is vital.

**Q. Does that mean that you condemn the siege?**

- Our position is the same as international partners - Israel has the right to defend itself and rescue hostages in Gaza, but international law must be upheld.
- That applies in how Israel exercises its right to self-defence, how civilians are protected and how humanitarian relief is provided.
- As President Biden said, the rules of war must be upheld. We lose international law at our peril.
- That is completely consistent with our utter condemnation of Hamas and our full solidarity with Israel.

**Q. Isn't that different to what Labour said previously?**

- No - we have always been absolutely clear that Israel has a right to defend itself in line with international law.
- This position has been backed up by international partners like President Biden and President Macron who have said the same thing.

**Q. Do you support the evacuation order?**

- We've been clear that Labour supports Israel's right to defend itself, in line with international law.
- We are very concerned about the humanitarian situation on the ground in Gaza. Given the evacuation has started, there should be safe corridors within Gaza, as the EU and US have said.
- We are speaking to the UN, NGOs and the UK government about how civilians in Gaza can be protected.

**Q. Do you support a ground invasion?**

- This is a fast-moving situation and an active operation. We support Israel's right to defend itself and rescue hostages in line with international law.

**Q. What is Labour's position on reports that Israel has been using white phosphorous?**

- We support Israel's right to defend itself and rescue hostages.
- As we have said from the beginning, all leaders must act in line with international law, and civilians must be protected.

**Q. Surely Israel has broken international law?**

- At this stage, these are just reports from Human Rights Watch, and we are not in a position to give a running commentary.
- We support Israel's right to defend itself and rescue hostages.
- As we have said from the beginning, this must be in line with international law.

**Q. Should it be a crime to wave a Palestinian flag?**

- Waving a flag is of course not in and of itself a criminal offence.
- The important thing here is context. The waving of a Palestinian flag in a peaceful way in a neutral setting will not be an offence.
- It's very different if flags and protests are stationed outside of synagogues or Jewish school or in Jewish areas, and where those protests are designed to intimidate or harass the Jewish community or cause harm, and we are very clear that there must be zero tolerance for antisemitic hate on British streets.
- It is also the case that any explicit support for or glorification of Hamas is illegal because Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation.
- The police will need to assess this on a case by case basis and use their operational judgment to ensure that legitimate protest can take place but that there is zero tolerance for antisemitic hate or the promotion of proscribed terrorist groups, both of which must face the full force of the law.

**Q. How concerned are you about the safety of Jewish communities here in the UK, what should be done to keep them safe?**

- These reports of antisemitic abuse, threats, damage and assaults are truly appalling.
- British Jews have a right to feel safe and secure.
- Labour fully support extra assistance for Jewish communities.
- We will work with the police, the Community Security Trust and the Government so Jewish communities in Britain are protected and feel safe.

**Q. Do you agree with the BBC on refusing to describe Hamas as terrorists?**

- Hamas are terrorists. They are proscribed as such in the U.K and so there are questions for the BBC about their position.

**Q. So should the government intervene to tell the BBC to change?**

- Hamas are terrorists. They are proscribed as such in the U.K and so there are questions for the BBC about their position.
- We hope they listen to the arguments being made and come to their own conclusions. Because Hamas is a terrorist group, proscribed under UK law.

**Q. Why are you not calling for a ceasefire?**

- Because Israel has the right to defend itself from Hamas and ensure its citizens are safe. This is an ongoing hostage situation.
- This is an unprecedented attack on Israel and its citizens, there is no justification for this terror.
- In the long-term Israel has every right to ensure those responsible for this barbaric attack are brought to justice and no longer have the means to launch further attacks on its citizens.
- At the same time, we want international law to be upheld, civilians need to be protected and there must be humanitarian access to Gaza.

**Q. Would Labour support the provision of military aid to Israel?**

- As far as we understand it, no request has been made by Israel for U.K. military aid and we should not speculate.
- The US has already provided a large package of assistance, as Blinken is making clear on his visit to Israel today.

**Q. Isn't this just the result of Israel's actions over many years?**

- No. The terrorist attacks launched against Israel are utterly appalling. Civilians raped and murdered. Young people executed at a music festival. Women and children kidnapped and taken back to Gaza.. None of this is justifiable and we unequivocally condemn it.
- We have always said that violence cannot resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; only negotiations will.

**Q. You said Israel has a right to defend itself, doesn't Palestine have a right to defend itself?**

- Defending yourself does not include terrorist rocket attacks, gunmen in Israeli territory and the kidnapping of Israeli women and children. It sets back the cause of peace.
- Throughout the conflict, Labour has been strong and consistent advocates for justice, human rights and international law. There will not be a just and lasting peace until both Israelis and Palestinians enjoy security, dignity and human rights.

**Q. Do you support cutting off aid to Palestine?**

- No. We must never conflate the Palestinian people with Hamas. Hamas is a terrorist organisation proscribed under British law. Labour supported that proscription.
- We do not provide aid to Hamas and we need to make sure that no British aid is ever helping terrorism — full stop.
- We should continue to support the Palestinian people. Stopping funding for essential hospitals, medicines and schools would not help anyone and would hurt innocent Palestinians.

**Q. What role should Britain be playing right now?**

- In the short term it's important that the international community shows solidarity with Israel in the face of this outrage, helps to protect civilians and support humanitarian access in Gaza, and prevents a wider regional conflict.
- Longer term, there has been a deep failure on behalf of the international community to keep a functioning peace process alive for many years.
- Ultimately, if we want a just and lasting peace, we need a secure Israel, a sovereign Palestine and dignity, security and human rights for all Israelis and Palestinians.

**Q. Should the U.K. be playing a role to revive the peace process?**

- Hostages are still in Gaza, the operation is still live. We must be focussed on this at the current time.
- The UNSC has met to consider the crisis but failed to achieve the unanimity required for a peace process at this stage.
- Arab states are likely to lead calls for diplomatic initiatives over the coming weeks. It's right that the U.K. plays its role at the appropriate time.

**Q. Is it right that Labour Shadow Cabinet members shared a platform with the Palestinian Ambassador this week?**

- The Labour frontbench have made resolutely clear our condemnation of Hamas' actions, that Hamas are terrorists, and our solidarity with Israel in the face of the attacks and supported Israel's right to defend itself within international law.
- It's vital that we maintain the distinction between Palestinians and Hamas terrorists.

**Q. Will Labour support an independent Palestine in the future?**

- Of course, we support a two-state solution and will continue to do so, but I acknowledge that feels a long way away at this stage. Thanks to Hamas' brutal attack.
- A future Labour government will work with international partners to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel as part of the efforts to secure a two-state solution.