

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman Copeland and Councillors Bower, F. McAteer and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Motion

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie proposed:

“This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The Council will hold a Special Council on that date to give our solidarity and support to the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world has watched the indiscriminate murder of thousands of civilians in the Middle East.

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We look on at the horrific onslaught in the Middle East and the daily bombardment of Gaza and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for immediate ceasefires, for the immediate release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Nic Bhranair.

Amendment 1

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Motion, standing in the name of Councillor Beattie, be amended as follows:

"This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated- 29th November- as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the- Palestinian- people'. The Council **meeting** will hold a Special Council on that date to give **demonstrate** our solidarity and support ~~to~~ **for** the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world has ~~watched~~ **is watching unprecedented war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.**

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We mourn the loss of over 14,000 Palestinians killed in the recent atrocities and express our horror and condemnation at Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza, including the indiscriminate murder of thousands killing of civilians in the Middle East and destruction of civilian infrastructure, the forced expulsion of over 1 million Palestinians from Northern Gaza and the catastrophic consequences of Israel's total siege.

We look on ~~also~~ ***express our alarm*** at the horrific onslaught ~~dehumanising rhetoric of Israeli officials, and escalating settler violence~~ in the Middle East ~~West Bank~~.

This Council also reiterates our condemnation of the daily bombardment of Gaza murder and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and kidnapping of hundreds of Israelis on 7th October by Hamas. We know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for ***an*** immediate ~~ceasefires~~ ***ceasefire***, for the immediate ***end to the siege of Gaza*** and the release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

~~The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.~~

We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Gaza and Israel.

This Council also recognises the ~~International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people~~ is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the ~~Palestinian people~~ of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

~~In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems.~~

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This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two state solution.”

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The meeting will demonstrate our solidarity and support for the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world is watching unprecedented war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.

We mourn the loss of over 14,000 Palestinians killed in the recent atrocities and express our horror and condemnation at Israel’s collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure, the forced expulsion of over 1 million Palestinians from Northern Gaza and the catastrophic consequences of Israel’s total siege.

We also express our alarm at the dehumanising rhetoric of Israeli officials, and escalating settler violence in the West Bank.

This Council also reiterates our condemnation of the murder and kidnapping of hundreds of Israelis on 7th October by Hamas.

We know from our own experience, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for an immediate ceasefire, for the immediate end to the siege of Gaza and the release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Gaza and Israel.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

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This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two state solution.”

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when nine Members voted for the motion and forty-seven against and it was declared lost.

Amendment 2

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the following paragraphs be added to the end of the motion standing in the name of Councillor Beattie:

“The Council also recognises that Israel has proven immune to the normal procedures of international pressure and diplomacy. Further notes that Israel is currently in defiance of over 50 UN resolutions passed against it, yet continues to advance a policy of illegal settlements, land seizure, denial of rights, including the right to return home to Palestinians, continues to target civilian infrastructure, continues to imprison over 5000 prisoners with no prospect of fair treatment or trial, and in doing so has demonstrated a consistent refusal to uphold standards of human rights, or comply with international law. The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

To this end, the Council:

- I. will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;*
- II. will write to Queens University encouraging it to rescind the position of honorary chancellor to Hilary Clinton;*
- III. will refuse to host US diplomats, such as the recent visit of US Special Envoy Joe Kennedy, at the City Hall while the US continues to lend political and military support to Israel;*

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IV. publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and

V. publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel's campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing."

On a vote, four Members voted for the amendment and fifty-one against and it was declared lost.

The Proposer, Councillor Beattie, with the consent of the Council, agreed to accept the insertion of the following paragraphs:

"We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Palestine.

This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two-state solution."

Furthermore, he agreed to accept the insertion of the following paragraphs from the amendment, standing in the name of Councillor Collins:

"The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

To this end, the Council:

- *will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;*
- *publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and*
- *publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and*

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urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel's campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing."

He further agreed to the addition of the following paragraph, at the request of Councillor de Faoite:

"The Council will also reinstall the Christmas charity collection box on the marble in City Hall to collect donations for Medical Aid for Palestine."

The Motion, as amended, therefore read:

"This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The Council will hold a Special Council on that date to give our solidarity and support to the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world has watched the indiscriminate murder of thousands of civilians in the Middle East.

We look on at the horrific onslaught in the Middle East and the daily bombardment of Gaza and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for immediate ceasefires, for the immediate release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Palestine.

The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

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In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems.”

The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

To this end, the Council:

- will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;
- publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and
- publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel’s campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing.”

The Council will also reinstall the Christmas charity collection box on the marble in City Hall to collect donations for Medical Aid for Palestine.

This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two-state solution.”

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, standing in the name of Councillor Beattie, when thirty Members voted for the motion and sixteen against, with nine no votes and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson