



Balfour
Project

Human Rights in Palestine:

Responsibility and Accountability

Conference Programme



17 May 2023

Church House, London & Online



Mission Statement

Acknowledging Britain's historic and continuing responsibilities, we work through education and advocacy to advance equal rights for all in Palestine/Israel, regardless of race or creed. We raise public awareness of the issue in Britain. We seek to persuade our Parliament and Government to demand that the rule of law and fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination, are upheld in Palestine/Israel. We urge our Government to recognise the State of Palestine now, as a step towards equality and an end to the occupation which began in 1967.

How you can help

Please consider a donation to help us keep going.

www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/balfour-project

Welcome from Andrew Whitley, Balfour Project Chair

The title of our conference Human Rights in Palestine: Responsibility and Accountability is particularly timely. This year marks significant 75 year anniversaries for both Palestinians and Israelis; anniversaries set against a background of an increasingly turbulent political situation, escalating violence, continuing denial of Palestinian national and individual human rights and diminishing prospects for a just end to the occupation.

The Palestinians' right to self-determination is crucial, and our position on this is clear, but as important to the lives of Palestinians under occupation is the way in which their human rights continue to be eroded by the actions of the occupying power; actions purporting to be security driven, but increasingly appearing to be designed to weaken Palestinian society, culture and cohesion and to isolate them from international contacts and support. The International Community, and particularly the UK with its additional historic responsibility, must act to demand respect for Palestinians' human rights now, it cannot wait upon the realisation of Palestinian national rights.

Our distinguished speakers will analyse the International Law obligations of the Occupation both for Israel and the International Community, and describe the discriminatory legal and land-use systems which for many legal scholars, meet the threshold definition of apartheid in the Occupied Territories. The day to day reality on the ground for Palestinians will be explored including the lack of security for people, homes and businesses, limitations on freedom of movement, expression and assembly, on access to health and the abuse of children's rights. A panel of speakers will identify actions that the United Kingdom - government, parliament and civil society- should take to advance equality between Palestinians and Israelis, and to ensure responsibility is identified and accountability required for continuing abuses of fundamental human rights. This action list will be put to our panel of MPs and further developed to be published soon after the conference.

Conference Schedule

Church House, Westminster & Online
Wednesday 17 May 2023

2.00pm Welcome - Andrew Whitley, Balfour Project Chair

2.10pm Introduction to Conference—Baroness Sayeeda Warsi

2.25pm Keynote Speech followed by Q&A—Francesca Albanese, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories

3.10pm Realities on the Ground Separate & Unequal—Omar Shakir*, Human Rights Watch

Access to Health—Melanie Ward, Medical Aid for Palestinians

Children's Rights & Child Prisoners—Miranda Cleland* , Defense for Children International—Palestine

Freedom of Movement, Expression and Assembly—Shawan Jabarin, Al-Haq

4.30pm Break

4.40pm Panel Discussion followed by Q&A chaired by Dr Phyllis Starkey, Balfour Project Trustee

with Francesca Albanese, Shawan Jabarin, Melanie Ward and Suhad Bishara, Adalah

5.30pm Parliamentary Panel chaired by Sir Vincent Fean, Balfour Project Vice-Chair

with Flick Drummond (Conservatives), Bambos Charalambous (Labour), Dr Philippa Whitford (Scottish National Party) and Layla Moran (Liberal Democrats)

6.15pm Closing Statement—Andrew Whitley

6.25pm Close

Speaker will be attending virtually

Human Rights in

Palestine:

Responsibility and Accountability

To book your in-person or
online ticket place, visit

[www.balfourproject.org/
2023conference](http://www.balfourproject.org/2023conference)

Thank you

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possible without the support
of our Friends and donors.





Accessing the conference online

To register for this online conference, please visit

www.balfourproject.org/2023conference

You will then receive an email with your personal joining link. The same link can be used to attend any or all of the sessions across this two-day conference. You are free to log in and out as you please using your personal link.

Please type any questions you have to the speakers in the chat box. The speakers are not monitoring this, but some questions will be taken forward to the Q&A session at the end of the day.

Recordings and transcripts of the sessions will later be available on the Balfour Project website.

2.00pm

Welcome by Andrew Whitley, Balfour Project Chair

Andrew Whitley is founder and executive director of Geo-Political Advisory Services (GPAS), a UK-based consultancy that works on the alleviation of armed conflict in the Middle East and Asia. He was previously Policy Director and interim Chief Executive of The Elders, a journalist with the BBC and Financial Times, and the founding director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, then known as Middle East Watch. At the UN, Andrew held senior posts at UNCTAD, the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations and at UNRWA.

2.10pm

Introduction by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi



A lawyer, a businesswoman, a campaigner and a cabinet minister, Sayeeda Warsi has had many roles, but she is best known for being the first Muslim to serve in a British cabinet. In August 2014 she resigned from Government citing the Government's "morally indefensible" policy on Gaza.

2.25pm

Keynote Speech
followed by Q&A

Francesca Albanese, UN
Special Rapporteur for
the oPt



Francesca Albanese was appointed the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, by the Human Rights Council at its 49th session in March 2022 and has taken up her function as of 1 May 2022. She is a lawyer by training, specialized in human rights.

Albanese is an Affiliate Scholar at the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University, as well as a Senior Advisor on Migration and

Forced Displacement for a think-tank, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD). She has widely published on the legal situation in Israel and the State of Palestine; Her book "Palestinian Refugees in International Law", co-authored with Lex Takkenberg, is considered a milestone in refugee academic literature. She regularly teaches and lectures on international law and forced displacement at universities in Europe and the Arab region. Ms. Albanese has also worked as a human rights expert for the United Nations, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees.



**Omar Shakir,
Palestine Director,
Human Rights Watch**



**Melanie Ward, CEO,
Medical Aid for
Palestinians**

3. 10pm Reality on the Ground, chaired by Andrew Whitley

Separate & Unequal - Omar Shakir

Omar Shakir serves as the Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, where he investigates human rights abuses in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza and has authored several major reports, including a 2021 report comprehensively documenting how Israeli authorities are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution against millions of Palestinians. As a result of his advocacy, the Israeli government deported Omar in November 2019. Prior to his current role, he was a Bertha Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights, where he focused on US counterterrorism policies, including legal representation of Guantanamo detainees. A former Fulbright Scholar in Syria, Omar holds a JD from Stanford Law School, an MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Affairs, and a BA in International Relations from Stanford.

Access to Health - Melanie Ward

Melanie Ward is CEO of Medical Aid for Palestinians, which works for the health and dignity of Palestinians living under occupation and as refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. Melanie has served as a Human Rights Observer in both Hebron and Yanoun, in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Before joining MAP, Melanie worked for the International Rescue Committee, where she held a number of senior leadership roles: these included serving as IRC's UK Executive Director; Deputy Country Director in Nigeria and in Lebanon; and as IRC's European Director of Policy and Advocacy. She has led UK advocacy for both ActionAid and Christian Aid, and worked in the UK and Scottish Parliaments.

Children's Rights & Child Prisoners - Miranda Cleland

Miranda is the Advocacy Officer at Defense for Children International - Palestine where she works to protect and promote the rights of Palestinian children. Miranda has a bachelor's with honors from American University's School of International Service, where she studied international affairs as well as Arabic language and literature. She lives in Washington, D.C.



**Miranda Cleland,
Defense of Children
International—
Palestine**

Freedom of Movement, Expression and Assembly - Shawan Jabarin

Shawan Jabarin is the general director of Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organisation in the West Bank. From 2005 to 2009, Jabarin was a member of the Board of Directors of Defense for Children International - Palestine. Jabarin began volunteering with Al-Haq while he was a student at Birzeit University. He joined Al-Haq as a field researcher in 1987. He became its director in 2006. In February 2011, Jabarin was appointed by Human Rights Watch (HRW) to its advisory board that oversees reporting on Arab-Israeli affairs. In May 2013, Jabarin was elected vice president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), an independent international NGO based in France. Jabarin had also been elected Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists. In August 2016, Jabarin was elected Secretary General of FIDH. He spent six years in Israeli prison without charge or trial during the 1980s and 1990s.



**Shawan Jabarin,
Director, Al-Haq**

4.30pm Break





Dr Phyllis Starkey, Balfour Project Trustee

Phyllis Starkey was a Member of Parliament from 1997-2010 during which time she was Chair of the All Party Britain Palestine Group, then PPS to the Middle East Minister in the FCO, in 2005 she became Chair of the Select Committee for Communities & Local Government. In parliament she was active in campaigning for the labelling of settlement goods, and after 2010 worked with others to persuade the EU to follow suit and to exclude settlements from benefitting from EU funds, programmes or preferential trade benefits.

4.40pm Panel Discussion followed by Q&A, chaired by Dr Phyllis Starkey, Balfour Project Trustee with Francesca Albanese, Shawan Jabarin, Melanie Ward and Suhad Bishara, Adalah

Suhad Bishara, Adalah

Dr. Suhad Bishara is the Legal Director and Director of the Land and Planning Rights Unit at Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. She has worked with Adalah since 2001. Dr. Bishara has more than 20 years of experience litigating cases before the Israeli Supreme Court and served as lead lawyer in major human rights cases regarding Palestinian citizens of Israel and international humanitarian law cases concerning Palestinians in the 1967 Occupied Territory before the Israeli Supreme Court. She holds an LL.B. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and an LL.M. in Public Service Law from New York University School of Law (USA), and received her PhD from King's College School of Law in London and taught Human Rights Law at the college. She was Palestine & Law Fellow at Columbia University Law School. Suhad is also one of the founders of Kayan - A Feminist Organization based in Haifa.



5.30pm Parliamentary , chaired by Sir Vincent Fean, Balfour Project Vice-Chair

Flick Drummond, Conservatives

Flick Drummond is the Conservative MP for Meon Valley, and has been an MP continuously since 12 December 2019.



Bambos Charalambous, Labour



Bambos Charalambous is the Labour MP for Enfield, Southgate, and has been an MP continuously since 8 June 2017. He currently undertakes the role of Shadow Minister for the Middle East.



Sir Vincent Fean

Sir Vincent Fean was a member of the British Diplomatic Service 1975-2014. His last post was as Consul-General, Jerusalem (2010-14). Before Jerusalem, he was Ambassador to Libya, and previously High Commissioner to Malta.

Vincent advocates equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians, and British Government recognition of the state of Palestine alongside Israel on pre-June 1967 lines. He is the Vice Chair of Trustees of the Balfour Project.





**Dr Philippa Whitford,
Scottish National
Party**



**Layla Moran, Liberal
Democrats**

Originally from Belfast, Philippa moved to Scotland at the age of 10 and went on to study Medicine at Glasgow University. After 30 years as a Breast Cancer Surgeon in the NHS, Philippa was elected to the UK Parliament in 2015 as the Member for Central Ayrshire.

Philippa was re-elected in June 2017 and again in December 2019, and spent 6 years as SNP Shadow Health Spokesperson, 2 years as Shadow Europe Spokesperson and is currently the Spokesperson for Scotland.

In the early 1990s, Philippa spent 18 months as a medical volunteer in a UN hospital in Gaza and, since 2015, has worked with Medical Aid for Palestinians to establish a 'Medical Bridge' project between clinicians in Scotland and those in Palestine to improve treatment for women with Breast Cancer who live in the West Bank and Gaza.

Layla has been the Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon since 2017. She is the Liberal Democrats' Foreign Affairs and International Development Spokesperson, an issue that she is deeply passionate about having grown up around the world. She was previously, as an ex-teacher, the party's education spokesperson.

6.15pm Closing Statement—Andrew Whitley

6.25pm Close



Monica Spooner

What is the Balfour Project?

The Balfour Project was born when Monica Spooner, a retired doctor in Edinburgh, visited Israel and Palestine in 2008 with her husband, Roger.

‘I saw the achievement of a Jewish homeland, but discerned great anxiety and fear,’ she recalls. ‘I saw the pain of the Palestinians, and discovered their anger towards Britain. They felt betrayed by the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which the British Government promised support for a homeland for Jews in Palestine so long as this did not prejudice the rights of the existing inhabitants, 90% of whom were Arab at that time.

‘Now that homeland is a reality. But the Palestinians have no freedom. ‘Studying this history, I realised that we British acted with duplicity, making several contradictory promises, and finally washed our hands of Palestine, leaving the Jews and the Palestinians to an undeclared war for domination. We in Britain are not taught these shameful episodes. I met others who felt similarly, and together we launched the Balfour Project. We have been joined by academics, politicians, clergy and citizens from all parts of the UK.

‘We are discovering a vast network of people throughout the country who are equally committed to peace and justice for both Palestine and Israel.’

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Balfour Project



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