

**Speaking up for Palestine - Jumu'ah Khutbah**  
**October 2023**

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment. We praise Him, seek His help, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our own souls and from our sinful deeds. Whomever Allah guides, no one can misguide, and whomever Allah allows to go astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without any partners, and I bear witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is His servant and Messenger.

*“Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from Al Masjid Al Haram to Al Masjid Al Aqsa; the environs of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed He is the Hearing, the Seeing.” [Al Isra 17:1]*

Dear respected brothers and sisters,

Today, I stand before you to discuss a topic of paramount importance, a duty that is deeply ingrained in the teachings of Islam - the duty to fight oppression. Oppression is a grave sin and a scourge that plagues our world, causing untold suffering and injustice. As Muslims, we are not only encouraged but obligated to stand up against oppression in all its forms.

The Quran is replete with verses that emphasise the importance of justice and the prohibition of oppression. In Surah Al-Hujurat (49:9), Allah says, *“And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah”*. This verse makes it clear that fighting oppression is not only a right but a duty upon the believers. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, *“A Muslim is a brother to another Muslim; he does not oppress him and does not abandon him (in his time of need)”*. [Muslim]

Oppression can take many forms, whether it is political, economic, social, racial, or even within our own homes. It is our duty as Muslims to stand up against oppression wherever and whenever we encounter it. Over the last week we may have seen the news on the coverage of Palestine. The situation in Palestine is a stark reminder of the injustices and oppression that persist in our world today. The ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people is a matter of great concern for the entire Muslim Ummah, and indeed, for all people of conscience around the world. The Palestinian people have endured immense suffering, displacement, and loss for over half a century. They have been denied their basic human rights, including the right to self-determination, freedom, and dignity. Their lives are marked by hardships, from restricted movement and access to clean water to living under constant threat of violence.

We must also remember that the Palestinian issue is not just a matter of politics or geography; it's a matter of humanity. It is about the right of people to live in peace and security, to have access to clean water, to educate their children, and to practise their religion freely. These are the basic human rights that should be afforded to all people, regardless of their faith or nationality. For over 70 years the Palestinians have been persecuted and discriminated against. Furthermore, since 1967 there have been constant attacks on Al-Aqsa, the third holiest site for Muslims. Innocent worshippers are attacked and assaulted by the Israeli forces, beating them with batons and rifles.

*The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "whoever sees an evil should change it with his hands, if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue, if he is unable to do that too, then change it with his heart (i.e. think of it to be evil) and this is the weakest form of Imaan". [Muslim]*

The hadith makes it evident that merely acknowledging something as wrong without taking any physical or verbal action to rectify it represents the lowest and feeblest level of faith. We should not content ourselves with such a minimal form of faith. While we may not always have the physical means to directly intervene and stop the oppression, Alhamdulillah, Allah has blessed us and put us in a position where we are able to at least use our tongue, our speech and our voices to take a stand against this injustice.

However, when using our speech, we must be careful to not use terms or protest in a way that undermines the cause of Palestine rather than supporting it. I will mention a few points for us as British Muslims.

1. We should be cautious not to equate support for "Palestine" and its people with Hamas, which is a proscribed terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000. The UK law prohibits encouraging support for a proscribed organisation, which includes Hamas. However, expressing support for "Palestine," the "Palestinian people," their right to self-defence, and resistance against occupation is entirely permissible. Such expressions are protected under the Human Rights Act 1998, ensuring freedom of speech and self-determination in accordance with international humanitarian law.
2. Avoid using the term "Jew" or "the Jews" when criticising the policies of the Israeli regime. It is important not to hold Jewish people in general responsible for the decisions of the Israeli regime. To attack Jews as people, and to hold them collectively responsible, is anti-semitism. Furthermore, It is crucial to recognise that many Jews, both in the UK and worldwide, oppose Israel's policies in Palestine. To counter false accusations that supporters of Palestine are anti-Semitic, it is vital to differentiate between Jewish individuals, who are not collectively responsible for the situation in Gaza, and the Israeli regime, which bears responsibility. Engaging in anti-Semitic speech harms the Palestinian cause by reinforcing the incorrect notion that being pro-Palestine equates to anti-Semitism. Therefore, when discussing these issues, it is important to refer to "Israel," the "Israeli regime," or the "Israeli government," rather than using the term "Jews."

3. Finally, the following are examples of legitimate criticisms of Israeli human rights abuses, which we should speak up about:
  - a. The occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza which is recognised by international law as an illegal occupation.
  - b. Its separation wall, and the Jewish-only settlements, which are built on stolen Palestinian land and are recognised as illegal under international law.
  - c. The military control over Gaza, including its land borders, airspace, maritime zones, imports, exports, population registry, sewage systems, and electricity grids. This tight control, which began in 2007, has led to more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, approximately 53%, living below the poverty line.
  - d. The significant military superiority of Israel which is evident in the stark difference in the number of Palestinian casualties as compared to Israelis. To illustrate, from 2008 up to the latest assault, Israel has conducted five major military operations in Gaza, resulting in approximately 6,400 Palestinian fatalities, in contrast to 308 Israeli casualties.
  - e. The disintegration of Palestinian society in 1948, leading to the expulsion of more than 800,000 Palestinian Arabs from their residences, is commonly referred to as "the Nakba," which translates to "catastrophe."
  - f. The right of return for the many Palestinian refugees dispersed across the Arab world and beyond. This right is considered a fundamental element of the Palestinian people's self-determination, as reaffirmed in UN General Assembly Resolution 3236, which asserts the Palestinians' inalienable right to return to their original homes and properties from which they were displaced.
  - g. The general policies of collective punishment against the Palestinian people, recognized as a violation of international humanitarian law, particularly under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This includes actions like the economic strangulation of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, leading to a humanitarian crisis due to the actions of Hamas. For instance, during the fifth offensive on Gaza in October 2023, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced a "complete siege on Gaza," cutting off electricity, food, water, and gas. Human Rights Watch condemned this as "abhorrent" and a "war crime," emphasising that it constitutes collective punishment.
  - h. Finally, Israel as an apartheid state. Israel fits this definition because there exists two distinct legal systems for Palestinians in the West Bank and Israeli settlers residing on Palestinian territory acquired through dispossession. Palestinians are

subject to Israeli military law, while Israeli settlers have their own civilian courts. To further bolster the assertion that Israel can be categorised as an apartheid state based on this distinction, you can highlight that in 2021, Human Rights Watch became the first prominent human rights organisation to accuse Israel of committing the crime of apartheid. Amnesty International and a UN expert subsequently echoed this charge in 2022. Moreover, various Israeli human rights groups, including B'Tselem, had previously made the same accusation. Notably, even a former head of Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, has recently acknowledged that Israel qualifies as an apartheid state. Hence, this claim should not be a matter of controversy.

These are just a few examples of the main areas that we are legally permitted in the UK to rally and write against in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people. You can employ these examples to compose a letter to your local Member of Parliament, conveying your profound concern and dismay over the situation in Palestine. In addition to raising our voices and putting pen to paper, let us not overlook the most crucial act of all, which is to raise our hands in prayer to the Almighty, the Most Mighty, the Most Supreme, the Most Just - Allah.

May the Almighty assist the people of Palestine, and remove from them oppression and persecution. May He grant them safety and tranquillity, and bestow peace upon their land. May He support them, protect them from all harm, grant them strength and patience in the face of adversity and make them a beacon of hope in our hearts. Aameen

وأخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين