

# Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



## Has the Israeli government learnt nothing from horrors in history?

**T**RY to spend as much time as possible in these articles talking about nice things that are happening around Chelmsford, plus positive, interesting things that are taking place in Parliament.

There are miles of column inches being written every single day about negative events around the country and across the world and, while I usually have opinions on them, I don't always feel that this column is the right place to air them. Sometimes, however, I have to speak out. This is one of those occasions.

I want to tell you how utterly disgusted and angry I am about what is happening in Gaza.

I should start by saying that this is not my field of expertise, nor do I have any direct, personal connections with anyone in or from Gaza. Despite my Jewish-sounding surname, I'm also not Jewish, and I have no direct connections with Israel. So I come to this issue as an observer with no vested interest.

I am just a human being, genuinely struggling to understand how the Israeli government's assault on the civilian population in Gaza could have been allowed to escalate to the jaw-dropping heights we now see.

We are at a place where tens of thousands of Palestinians have died and 90 per cent of the population has now been displaced.

I find myself simultaneously surprised by the situation and not surprised at all. The outrageous hypocrisy of the leaders of a people who have been persecuted throughout history – Jews – similarly bringing destruction, devastation, and death to a neighbouring population of ordinary civilians. Has nothing been learnt from history?

I want to be very clear that while I utterly condemn the Israeli government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and supported by hardline Israeli ministers such as Smotrich and Ben Gavir, the crimes we are seeing on our TV screens every day are not – and should not be – attributed to the whole Israeli population.

Ordinary Americans are not responsible for the increasingly anti-democratic and far-right actions of Donald Trump; British citizens are not



Marie Goldman MP speaking in the House of Commons  
MARIE GOLDMAN

I am struggling to understand how the assault on the civilian population of Gaza has been allowed to escalate.

responsible for the actions of our own government in power – so long as, of course, when we have the chance to change those governments, we vote to do so if we aren't happy with them.

So we must never fall into the trap of tarring all Israelis with the brush of the Israeli government.

So while I may reference Israel in this article and in other places in relation to this issue, this is usually shorthand for the Israeli government.

I also want to stress that the barbaric attack on Israel by Hamas

on October 7, 2023 was horrific. Their continued refusal to release the hostages they still hold, coupled with the unforgivable delay in releasing those that have already been freed, is unacceptable.

But that does not justify the continued indiscriminate bombardment and starvation of Palestinians in Gaza. While I completely support the rights of any country to defend itself and to retaliate where necessary, I believe what we are seeing in Gaza is totally disproportionate.

We see on our television screens, in newspapers and online, the heart-wrenching, stomach-churning images of emaciated children, clinging on to life, but with little prospect of actually having one.

Aid has been woefully inadequate, and deliberately blocked and sty-

mied by the Israeli government. Netanyahu continues to make promises that it is increasingly obvious he has no intention of keeping.

And governments across the world – including our own – have been painfully slow to react.

I don't really know why that is. Perhaps it's about history – a reluctance to acknowledge the hypocrisy I referred to earlier. Perhaps it's about diplomacy happening behind the scenes. Whatever it is, it isn't working.

So, what should we be doing about it?

Well, we must continue the pressure. I raised this issue in the House of Commons earlier this month and called for the Government to take further action (you can watch a clip at [youtu.be/KZPSxjOHm08](https://youtu.be/KZPSxjOHm08)).

I welcome the recent announcement from the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, about the suspension of trade talks with the Israeli government, as well the sanctions being considered against some Israeli ministers. But we need to go further.

We need the UK Government to suspend arms exports to Israel – something my party, the Liberal Democrats, has been calling for repeatedly. Our leader, Ed Davey, was the first leader of a major UK party to call for this, as early as April last year.

We should also immediately recognise the state of Palestine, which will move us along the path to a two-state solution – the only truly lasting solution. This is a vital card which the UK can and should play at this desperate moment.

And we should, of course, be continuing diplomatic efforts, not just with Israel (including talking with opposition parties in Israel), but also with our friends and allies in the rest of the Middle East.

Much of this work is ongoing and behind the scenes. Personally, I have had meetings with ambassadors and other parties on these issues. I don't tend to post about these on social media or write about them in newspaper columns, but these meetings are happening.

Where we can, many MPs are trying to use whatever influence they have to resolve this truly horrendous situation.

But the truth is plain to see – we are a very long way off resolving the conflict. It is also extremely hard to see Netanyahu backing down voluntarily. It seems his own political survival is now so bound up in this that there is no way out for him, so he presses on. But then again, that presumes he wants to stop – I'm not so sure he does.

So we must press on too and continue to do all we can to put pressure on the Israeli government, as well as Hamas, to de-escalate. In the meantime, the humanitarian catastrophe is impossible to ignore. I know, from the hundreds of emails I receive on this subject, that it's something the public cares deeply about. I want you to know that I do too. I can't speak for other parties, but the Liberal Democrats will continue to do what we can to call for stronger action to bring about peace and ultimately save lives.

Thanks for reading.

Marie