

ISRAEL–HAMAS CONFLICT

Statement

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [5.21 pm]: I rise tonight to speak on an issue that is very close to my heart. I stand before you as a migrant and as a member of Parliament whose homeland was destroyed by the devastating impacts of war. It is precisely the destruction of my homeland and its people who drove me to this place where I stand today. Seeing the devastation and the conflict and the impact it has on civilians was made clear to me at a very young age. The war that unfolded across former Yugoslavia remains etched in my memory to this day. As I stated in my inaugural speech —

In some parts of the world, including the Balkans, where I come from, politics does not always serve its true and intended purpose. Indeed, sometimes it is politics that causes destruction and the devastation of its people.

I am at a complete loss as to how to describe what is happening in the Middle East. The images unfolding before our eyes leave me feeling paralysed. The horrifying footage fills my heart with a profound sense of distress, pain and grief. Let me begin this statement by saying that my heart breaks for every innocent casualty on both sides of this war. I mourn the innocent Israelis killed on 7 October and condemn the killing and kidnapping of innocent civilians by Hamas. At the same time, my heart breaks seeing the killing of innocent men, women and children in Palestine, which I also condemn. The death toll in Palestine is over 10 000. Over 4 000 of these lives lost are innocent children. These victims are not just numbers. Every single person who lost their life had a name, a face, a story, dreams of a better future and families who loved them dearly. The horrific frequency of children being killed is now so extensive that parents are writing the names of children on their little bodies in the hope that they can be identified after an air strike.

To put this simply, no parent, no person, no-one should ever have to do this. Israel must take every step to protect innocent lives. Innocent Palestinian civilians should not be forced to pay the price for Hamas's crimes. That means that Israel must adhere to both international law and the rules of war, as noncompliance will lead to ongoing civilian deaths. Upholding international law is essential to protect the innocent people of Palestine. Article 77 of the fourth Geneva Convention states —

1. Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault.

The United Nations Security Council deems the killing and maiming of children as a grave violation against children in times of war.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire and human suffering is widespread. The killing of innocent women, children and babies must stop! In the name of all lives, I ask and I plead that humanity be restored. Members, it is incumbent upon us to stand together in the name of humanity and call for an immediate humanitarian solution to end the suffering and despair that is unfolding before our eyes.