



DAVID CAMERON & ANNALENA BAERBOCK

David Cameron: Why the UK and Germany back a sustainable ceasefire

The foreign secretary and his German counterpart call on all parties to work towards a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine — once the killing has stopped

David Cameron and Annalena Baerbock Saturday December 16 2023, 6.00pm GMT, The Sunday Times

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These are harsh, dangerous times. The catastrophic scenes in the Middle East following Hamas's brutal attack on Israel on October 7 epitomise this.

As parents, it breaks our hearts to see so many children killed or wounded. Each death of an innocent on and since October 7 is a tragedy. Families are in mourning. Communities are in shock. The region is in crisis.

Neither of us wants to see this conflict last a moment longer than necessary. As a [British Conservative](#) and German Green, we come from very different political traditions. But we both entered politics believing that, even in the darkest moments,

we can change a desperate situation for the better, and we share a yearning for peace, in the Middle East as elsewhere around the world.

We know from our engagement in the region and debate in our own countries that this feeling is widespread. Only extremists like [Hamas](#) want us stuck in an endless cycle of violence, sacrificing more innocent lives for their fanatical ideology. But our goal cannot simply be an end to fighting today. It must be peace lasting for days, years, generations. We therefore support a ceasefire, but only if it is sustainable.

We know many in the region and beyond have been calling for an immediate ceasefire. We recognise what motivates these heartfelt calls. It is an understandable reaction to such intense suffering, and we share the view that this conflict cannot drag on and on. That is why we supported the recent humanitarian pauses.

We saw at the end of November: pauses work. So we are pushing the diplomatic effort to agree further pauses to get more aid in and more hostages out. More than 130 hostages remain in [Gaza](#) ; all people whose loved ones are living in agonising fear. Hamas must free them all immediately. Cruelly holding them only delays progress towards peace.

But let us be clear. We do not believe that calling right now for a general and immediate ceasefire, hoping it somehow becomes permanent, is the way forward. It ignores why [Israel](#) is forced to defend itself: Hamas barbarically attacked Israel and still fires rockets to kill Israeli citizens every day. Hamas must lay down its arms.

Let us imagine that we did press Israel to cease all military operations forthwith. Would Hamas stop firing rockets? Would it release the hostages? Would its

murderous ideology change? An unsustainable ceasefire, quickly collapsing into [further violence](#), would only make it harder to build the confidence needed for peace.

We must also think carefully about the nature of any longer-term peace deal. Even before October 7, it was hard to imagine Hamas as a real partner for peace. After October 7, we can have no illusions. Leaving Hamas in power in Gaza would be a permanent roadblock on the path to a two-state solution.

We have both met survivors from October 7. We have both seen the pain of Palestinian civilians whose families have died. We are in no doubt. We cannot expect Israelis to live alongside those dedicated to repeating the horrors inflicted by Hamas. And we cannot expect Palestinians to live among those who endanger them by lurking under their homes, schools and hospitals.

This does not mean, however, that we can do nothing right now. We must do all we can to pave the way to a sustainable ceasefire, leading to a sustainable peace. The sooner it comes, the better – the need is urgent. We are also focused on three vital areas.

First, like any other country in the world, Israel has the right to defend itself but, in doing so, it must abide by international humanitarian law. Israel will not win this war if its operations destroy the prospect of peaceful coexistence with Palestinians. They have a right to eliminate the threat posed by Hamas. But too many civilians have been killed. [The Israeli government](#) should do more to discriminate sufficiently between terrorists and civilians, ensuring its campaign targets Hamas leaders and operatives.

Second, we must get more aid to ordinary Palestinians. It breaks our hearts to see children in the rubble of their destroyed homes, not knowing where to find food or water, not knowing where their parents are. We have both, therefore, increased our funding for humanitarian aid to Gaza, getting life-saving supplies to those in desperate need.

And we are both committed to doing more. We welcome Israel reopening the Kerem Shalom crossing. We need unhindered deliveries into Gaza directly via as many crossing points as possible, so that much greater volumes of aid start flowing.

Finally, all those who want to end the suffering need to work together on a solution that delivers long-term security for both peoples. Our Arab partners, in particular, have a crucial role to play in this. They have shown strong humanitarian commitment and they have even more political weight to bring to the table. The rise of extremism is a threat to all of us, not just to Israelis and Palestinians.

A two-state solution requires both sides to feel safe living side by side. Extremist settlers in the West Bank are seeking to sabotage any such efforts, violently forcing Palestinians from their homes. We strongly condemn these hateful acts.

The Palestinians need a team of leaders who can give them the security and good governance they deserve. We need to guarantee that the violence we are seeing is never repeated. That is the only route to lasting peace.

During such a crisis, it can seem difficult to think of such a seemingly distant endpoint. But we must. We want fighting to cease not just today, but in the future. We want an end to the killing not just today, but in the future. We want peace for Israeli and Palestinian children, today and in the future.

The tragic deaths of so many compel us to act today, focused on how we get to that goal in the future.

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