

From: Siobhan Baillie  
Date: 22 February 2024 at 14:41:37 GMT  
Subject: Your email: Ceasefire in Gaza

Dear Andrew

Thank you for taking the time to write to me about a ceasefire in Gaza and the planned Scottish Nationalist Party vote in Parliament on 21st February 2024.

You may have seen that there were no votes about a ceasefire in the end. No MP voted against a ceasefire or for any of the various motions that were being discussed.

For the avoidance of doubt though, while the wording of the political parties differs in some places, it is clear that we all want an end to the fighting, the hostages released and a ceasefire that lasts.

A vote did not happen due to an issue with the Speaker changing the rules to assist the Labour party on an 'opposition day' for the SNP. The SNP were furious and refused to vote. The Speaker has since apologised.

I think it was right for the government to decide not to participate in the debate given the procedural shenanigans and arguments I witnessed between the SNP, Labour and the Speaker. I have never seen such fury and angry scenes in the House of Commons chamber.

You will be aware that opposition day votes generate a lot of activity for political parties as they use them for political mischief and pre-prepare social media posts etc but they are not binding.

I am sure that, like me, you are not interested in procedural wrangling in Parliament and you want to see the international community work to bring an end to the fighting for Israeli and Palestinian individuals, families and the hostages that are still being held released. If you follow my work, you will know that I try my best to stay out of political spats and just get on with my work. This is an emotional issue for many of us given the impact on children and families so the scenes in parliament were unedifying.

I have communicated local people's views about this matter in Parliament and to Ministers in meetings and I will continue to do so. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes. Please also note that I am trying not to engage with a lot of the social media noise on this as it is my view that it is only serving to raise the heat of an already difficult issue rather than helping people in Israel and Gaza or communities in the UK.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly spoken from the dispatch box about the work that the UK and allies are doing to bring an end to the fighting and get more aid into Gaza. We saw that a pause was agreed previously to release hostages, albeit I understand it was brought to an end by Hamas. I sincerely hope that another agreement can be reached without delay so that all the hostages can be returned and more aid can reach people in Gaza.

It is right in my view that there are mounting challenges from the UK and US to extending the war into Rafah where so many people are sheltering in Gaza even if there are members of Hamas hiding there. I know that Israeli forces have given a 3-week warning to assist people to leave but I have raised concerns about this. I know many local people feel the same.

The Labour party continues to support the UK government's position and activities on this matter as far as I can tell. The leadership would not support the SNP motion which caused part of the issue with the vote on the 21st.

As I have received over 300 emails about this vote, I have prepared this response to be sent to all of you to avoid people waiting. There is no disrespect intended. I receive thousands of emails every week as well as attending various meetings and debates so we are trying to find ways to respond as swiftly as possible. Please do not hesitate to come to one of my surgeries if you would like to speak to me in person about this issue or any other.

I hope you are keeping well.

With kind regards,

Siobhan

Siobhan Baillie MP  
Member of Parliament for Stroud  
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA