

Edinburgh City Council officially declares its recognition of Palestine as an independent state

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officially declared its recognition
of Palestine as an independent
state.**

Councillors voted in favour of the move at a meeting on Thursday after a motion was tabled by the SNP group.

The recognition should be a “contribution to a renewed peace process which results in a two-state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state”, a Labour administration amendment which was passed stated.

The position is not currently held by the UK Government, which said previously it will “recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace”.

It comes almost eight months after Israel launched strikes on Gaza in response to Hamas’ surprise attacks which killed around 1,200. Since October 7 more than 37,551 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory’s Hamas-run health ministry.

SNP group leader on Edinburgh Council Simita Kumar, who tabled the motion, said: “2.3 million Palestinians are trapped inside the Gaza Strip, they have been subjected to terrifying

bombardment, to hunger, multiple displacements and constant fear.

“In some cases whole families, generations, are dead.”

Cllr Kumar said Palestine had “one of the most historic and religious significance in our world, but the very evidence of the existence has been systematically removed from our maps”.

She added: “Here now we as a council body can choose to recognise Palestine as a state in all we can do as a council. So I appeal to my fellow councillors to join me and recognise Palestine as a state, it is long overdue.”

Conservatives on the council proposed taking ‘no action’ but after this was defeated voted in support of recognising Palestine as an independent state.

Tory group leader Iain Whyte said it would have been “better had we not had to discuss this at this stage” as it was a controversial topic to discuss in the midst of a general election.

He said: “It’s a matter for the UK Government to consider, not for the City of Edinburgh Council to consider.

“We are pretty powerless on this issue. That’s not a surprise because this is a conflict a long way away and which we have little or no control.

“Ultimately, it is down to the protagonists to get round the table and come to a decision on changing the conflict.

“A two-state solution is very difficult when you’ve got Hamas, a terrorist organisation that does not believe in the right of the state of Israel to exist.”

However Labour councillor Katrina Faccenda argued it was “important to “show solidarity with the people of Gaza and the horrific situation they are having to live with right now”.

She added: "It is also important we show we support a pathway to peace.

"Recognising the Palestinian state is hugely important because if there is no state you can't support a two-state solution."

Kevin Lang, Lib Dem group leader, said: "What we want is an end to the conflict. We want people, particularly innocent people, to be able to live their lives free from war, violence, conflict.

"We need talking, not fighting and that's why I agree with the Labour amendment for the need for a bilateral ceasefire."

The Greens' Alys Mumford said officially recognising Palestine was "a vital step towards building a just and lasting peace".

She said: "While it's clear the current government of Israel pays no heed to international statements, Netanyahu himself said 'when the international pressure rises we need to stand together against the attempts to stop the war'.

"International statements do matter, because unlike the Israeli government we do want the war to stop, we need the war to stop."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter