



## **Statement on Gaza and Rwanda asylum policy**

Friday 17 November, 2023

*Read our previous statements on the violence in Israel and Palestine [here](#).*

The motion to call for an immediate ceasefire was defeated in parliament yesterday evening, with 293 votes to 125. As our members [Oxfam](#) have said, 'History will remember that the UK Parliament lacked the moral courage to send a clear message that the suffering of civilians must stop'. Had the UK voted for a ceasefire, this would have served as clear message that the indiscriminate military operations must be stopped. Instead, it has given Israel 'carte blanche'. The UK has, yet again, failed to uphold its international commitments to protect and uphold human rights. The need for a ceasefire remains urgent, a humanitarian pause fails to protect the Palestinian people but, rather, postpones the inevitable continuation of these crimes against humanity. An immediate and total ceasefire is the only possibility to slow down the violence and confront the structural, racialised and gendered components of Israel's occupation of Palestine- the longest occupation in modern history.

The UK's failings on the international level also extend to the domestic, as shown by the proposed Rwanda asylum policy. The Supreme Council, the UK's highest court has found that Rwanda is not a safe third country for the government to send asylum seekers and that it would be unlawful to be removed there. As [HRW](#) say, this is a huge victory that will protect the rights of countless people who have come to the UK seeking safety. The Rwanda deal represents a culmination of years of hostile environment measures, where migrants and asylum seekers have been subjected to disgracefully racist treatment at the border and at detention centres across the country. Furthermore, the UK is avoiding its responsibilities to people fleeing persecution and violence from countries where it has often had a direct hand in exacerbating conflicts, such as Afghanistan and Yemen. If the UK is genuine about its international commitments, then it must apply such domestically. We urge the UK to abandon the Rwanda asylum policy and repeal the illegal Migration Act which makes it harder for all-asylum seekers, men, women and children, to prove their claims, undermines universal human rights and detains people indefinitely and more. Again, peoples' lives are not pawns in the Governments political game. The UK has explicitly defined in its [Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027](#) the importance of ensuring consistency between domestic and international policy, as 'foreign and domestic policy do not operate in isolation'. With these commitments at the forefront, the Government must now look again at its asylum policies and work with migrant rights organisations, women rights organisations, and civil society and pass immigration policies that prioritise the lives and needs of asylum seekers.

**Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Secretariat**