The UK supports Israel’s right to self-defence in line with the UN Charter: UK statement at the UN Security Council

Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

18 October 2023 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-supports-israels-right-to-self-defence-in-line-with-the-un-charter-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

Thank you President.

And let me thank you for your good faith efforts to negotiate this resolution.

The draft resolution on which we have just voted rightly condemns the appalling Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel on the 7th October. It also makes clear that all actions need to be taken in line with international humanitarian law. It stresses the importance of ensuring humanitarian access and protecting civilians, and emphasises this Council’s shared priority of preventing regional escalation of the conflict.

We welcome and support the draft resolution’s attempts to set out the Council’s view on these critical points.

But the draft resolution needed to be clearer on Israel’s inherent right to self-defence in line with the UN Charter after Hamas’ attacks killed over 1,400 people and took almost 200 people hostage.

The draft resolution also ignored the fact that Hamas are using innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields.

They have embedded themselves in civilian communities and made the Palestinian people their victims too.

For these reasons, the United Kingdom abstained on this resolution.

My Prime Minister has been clear that the UK stands with Israel in the face of these atrocities.

We support Israel’s right to defend itself against Hamas, take back the hostages, deter further incursions, and strengthen its security for the long term.

In so doing, we will continue to call on Israel to take all feasible precautions to avoid harming Palestinian civilians and to act in line with international humanitarian law.

We will continue to work closely with Israel and our partners in the region to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. To ensure that civilians are protected and have access to food, water, medicine, and shelter. And to work towards the peace and stability promised by the Two State Solution.

I thank you.