

Question to Sheffield City Council, Full Council meeting, February 7th 2024

On January 26th, the International Court of Justice ruled that South Africa's charge of Genocide against Israel was sufficiently plausible for the case to be heard in full. In its interim ruling, the Court instructed Israel, inter alia, to "*refrain from any acts that could fall under the Genocide Convention and to ensure its troops commit no genocidal acts in Gaza*" and "*to take measures to improve the humanitarian situation for Palestinian civilians.*"

None of this has happened. 174 Palestinian civilians were slaughtered in the 24 hours following the Court's ruling; shelters are still being bombed; hospitals are still besieged; aid convoys have faced protests by crowds of flag-waving Israeli citizens; 80 bodies, which had been stolen by Israel from a vandalised Gaza cemetery, were sent back from Israel in a lorry, now so badly decomposed that their identification and dignified reburial – as humans with names - was impossible. The list goes on.

All of us - including our youngsters - are seeing this livestreamed on social media and faithfully reported on Al Jazeera - .

In relation to this, the Coalition has been told that some Sheffield schools are failing their pupils on a number of levels:

- The ICJ ruling on genocide should be a curriculum element in all schools given its importance and rarity, because active citizenship means understanding the rule of law, both UK and international.
- Young people should be guided to reliable reference points for forming their own opinions, such as internationally respected human rights bodies like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.
- Youngsters need to talk and test their views, whatever those views, in a safe environment, with teachers.
- **Is this sensible pedagogy dominating?** No. Many students, distressed by what they see on social media and asking what is being done about it, are further distressed by a silence on Palestine imposed by some schools, a silence which stands in sharp contrast to fulsome support and open discussion of Ukraine's invasion by Russia - youngsters know double standards when they see them, and so do their parents.

Question:

- Does the Council recognise that legitimate discussion on Palestine is being suppressed in our city?
- What mechanism are there for concerns to be reported to the Council by parents, youngsters and teachers?

