

Genocide, Colonialism, Apartheid: UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly Places Humanitarian Issues in Gaza a Priority

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The diplomatic community was shocked when US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, claimed alongside Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, "...I come as a Jew." This broke diplomatic rules and norms which prohibit interjecting yourself, and your personal culture, while representing a nation and its interests.

Blinken explained he was raised by a step-father who was a holocaust survivor. These childhood memories of stories related to him of suffering and genocide in Europe became part of his identity.

Lt. Col. James Spencer Cleverly is a British politician and Army Reserve officer who has served as Foreign Secretary since 2022, and is Blinken's counterpart.

Image: Jerusalem, Israel. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly meets with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Prime Ministers Office in Jerusalem. Picture by Simon Dawson / No 10 Downing Street (Licensed under CC BY 2.0)



In 2020, he was appointed Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa, and in December 2021 he became Minister of State for Middle East, North Africa and North America.

His mother, Evelyn Suna Cleverly, was raised under British colonial rule in Sierra Leone. She migrated to Britain in the mid-1960's, became a nurse and raised her son James to be an example of what is possible when given a fair chance.

Evelyn likely told her son stories of her childhood, and may have explained the differences in her life under colonial rule, which were far different than the culture her son was raised in.

When Evelyn left, South Africa was in the dark days of Apartheid. She would have been familiar with the struggles and deprivations of her neighbors to the south. James Cleverly likely grew up with an understanding of what Apartheid means, and the inhumane circumstances many people are forced to live in outside of the United Kingdom.

G7 Meeting

On November 7, Cleverly said from the G7 meeting in Tokyo, the UK is calling for a pause in the Israel-Hamas conflict to allow more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

While supporting Israel's right to defend itself, Cleverly said Israel "must defend itself within the framework of international law."

With the number of dead in Gaza now quickly rising well over 10,000 after a month of airstrikes, Britain will continue to raise the issue and call on Israel to abide by international law, according to Cleverly.

On October 21, Cleverly spoke from a summit in Cairo saying,

"And we are also clear that we must work, and they must work, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza, and that their actions are in accordance with international law."

He added:

"I have spoken directly to the Israeli Government about their duty to respect international law and the importance of preserving civilian lives in Gaza."

"Despite the incredibly difficult circumstances, I have called for discipline and

professionalism and restraint from the Israeli military,” said Lt. Col. Cleverly.

Gaza Occupation Forever

On November 7, Cleverly cautioned Israel that “security responsibility” in Gaza should only be temporary, responding to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s statement saying Israel would maintain “overall security responsibility” in Gaza for an “indefinite period” after defeating Hamas.

Cleverly’s position mirrors Blinken’s position, which does not want to see Gaza under Israeli military occupation as a final solution to the conflict.

“The UK position is clear. It is unchanging. We want to see a two-state solution where a Palestinian state and an Israeli state are living side by side in peace and prosperity,” said Cleverly.

The meeting of G7 foreign ministers of the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Italy ended with a statement condemning Hamas, supporting Israel’s right to self-defense and calling for “humanitarian pauses” in the fighting to speed up aid for desperate Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Apartheid

In March 2022, Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 stated that Israel fits the definition of an Apartheid state.

The Special Rapporteur said that a political regime which so intentionally and clearly prioritizes fundamental political, legal and social rights to one group over another within the same geographic unit on the basis of one’s racial-national-ethnic identity satisfies the international legal definition of apartheid.

On November 6, ANC MP Nkosi Mandela, from Royal House of Mandela in South Africa said,

“We will keep mobilizing South Africans until the apartheid Israel ambassador is expelled and all diplomatic ties with apartheid Israel are cut. We appeal to them to follow this up with expelling the apartheid Israeli ambassador and cutting all diplomatic ties in light of the flagrant disregard for international law, basic humanity and regard for the value of human life as outlined in the Geneva Convention.”

Genocide

“We remain convinced that the Palestinian people are at grave risk of genocide,” the UN experts said recently. “The time for action is now. Israel’s allies also bear responsibility and must act now to prevent its disastrous course of action,” they said.

On November 8, Ione Belarra, Spain’s Minister for Social Rights, accused Israel of a “planned genocide” of Palestinians in Gaza.

On November 6, South Africa’s government recalled its ambassador and diplomatic mission to Israel in condemnation of the bombardment of the Gaza Strip, calling it a “genocide.”

The President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, said recently, “This is not a war; this is genocide.”

Colonialism

Sierra Leone was colonized by a group of British men who brought the “Black Poor” of London, descendants of slaves owned in Britain, to West Africa under a scheme to repatriate the “Black Poor” to Africa since “it was necessary they should be sent somewhere, and be no longer suffered to infest the streets of London”.

In the case of Israel, it is settler-colonialism, where many American Jews have come to the Palestinian lands of the Occupied West Bank, and have invaded, occupied, and set up a two-tiered set of rights. The Palestinians have no rights at all, and the Jewish settlers have all the rights. These settlements are illegal under international law, but Netanyahu continues to expand them as his primary goal when he took office.

In both 2020 and 2021 Cleverly voiced concerns of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and accompanying famine, which demonstrates his soft-heart for humanity.

Cleverly and Blinken both have the same job, and for long-standing allied nations. But, their personal mindset and understanding of the conflict in Gaza and the Occupied West Bank are different and perhaps due to childhood lessons learned from parents.

Cleverly has the right intent: urging that humanitarian needs be put before military conquests. He has asked for the final solution, which the international community agreed upon decades ago, the Two-State solution under the UN resolution parameters.

However noble and just Cleverly is personally, he cannot realize any of his goals for the UK because Blinken and US President Joe Biden hold the keys to alleviating the suffering of Palestinians.

On November 8, Belgium’s Deputy Prime Minister Petra De Sutter, urged sanctions against Israel and an investigation of the bombings of hospitals and refugee camps in Gaza.

Diplomats the world over know one fact, though it is not taught in textbooks; only the United States of America can move Israel on any issue. The keys kept in the Oval Office are the keys which can unlock a future of peace and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians.

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