

I welcome the Israel and Hamas ceasefire – but now it's time to tackle the big issues head-on.

Sixty six children have died since the outbreak of violence last week.

We cannot afford yet another return to a status quo which will only lead to more innocent deaths in the future.

Every death was completely preventable.

And while a ceasefire is welcome, we cannot return to a status quo.

We need to take meaningful action now to **prevent innocent deaths in the future.**

The potential evictions, demolitions and settlement expansions in the West Bank – which are breaches of international law – **must be stopped.**

The status quo arrangements in Jerusalem must be restored.

It is vitally important that the Palestinians are able to fulfil their democratic right through **new elections including all Palestinian parties.**

In this context, Hamas, as well as the Israeli authorities, must forgo violence and oppression and allow a **legitimate political process to be pursued.**

The UK Government must work with the international community to facilitate the reconstruction of negotiations.

To address these issues, we need a process – but meaningful peace talks have not meaningfully taken place for years.

So it is now time for the UK Government to work with the international community to facilitate the reconstruction of negotiations, negotiations which must take place between two equal partners.

Above all, there must be an injection of new hope into a conflict which has been hijacked by the extremes.

The strongest card the UK can play is to **recognise the state of Palestine,** which will ignite the flames of hope and bring greater balance to future negotiations.

I urge the Government to do the right thing.

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Author:

[International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia 2021](#)

The theme of this year's International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) is resisting, supporting and healing together.

Pre-pandemic there were reports that hate crimes were on the rise.

As we start to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, it perfectly encapsulates many of the needs of LGBT+ people in 2021.

It's now a cliché to say that our "return to normal" can't be a return to the way that things were before, but it's true.

Pre-pandemic there were reports that hate crimes were on the rise, homophobic hate crimes up 19% year-on-year and transgender hate crimes up 16%.

As we start to head back out again, we need to be mindful that **things need to change**.

Resisting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia is essential both at home and abroad.

Domestically, trans people face a **barrage of obstacles and harassment** in our media, and have been routinely **let down** by our government.

In ILGA-Europe's latest ranking of LGBT+ rights in the region, the UK has fallen from its top spot to just 10th position owing to failures in this area.

On the topic of legal gender recognition and bodily integrity, **the UK ranks a miserable 19th**.

We need to keep pushing for **reform of the Gender Recognition Act**, which LGBT+ Lib Dems have written about at length [here](#).

Internationally, we need to keep up pressure on other governments to pursue a much more liberal approach.

Resisting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia is essential both at home and abroad.

That's not just something that takes place at international summits, but through supporting activists on the ground and at local level too, as many Lib Dem Councillors are doing via our [Protect Our Twins campaign](#) in response to abuses against LGBT+ people in Poland.

But that's not all – we also need to keep up the case for a **pro-LGBT+ and humanitarian asylum policy**.

Many of us were horrified last week to read the devastating case of Alireza Fazeli Monfared who was killed just days before he was due to leave Iran.

The UK must play its part and be a safe haven for those in need.

Supporting LGBT+ voices, be they in our media, politics or community is vital too.

In too many workplaces, LGBT+ people still face barriers.

As reported in Stonewall's reported in 2018 report, more than a third of LGBT+ people have hidden the fact that they're LGBT+ at work for fear of discrimination, and nearly two in five bi people aren't out to anyone at work.

In addition, there is evidence for a shocking LGBT+ pay gap to the sum of almost £7000 a year.

This problem is compounded when other factors like **gender, race and disability** are added in.

Fighting for the rights of LGBT+ people, particularly in this area, is a real bread and butter issue.

And in our media and in our politics **we need to confidently support our trans siblings who are under sustained attack.**

An attack on one part of the LGBT+ community is an attack on all of us.

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For the past 12 months health has dominated our headlines and national conversation like never before.

So how can we incorporate healing and caring into our fight against intolerance?

We can start with campaigning for better access to **inclusive and respectful health and social care** for all LGBT+ people.

This could apply to trans and non binary people interacting with the care service, to LGBT+ people feeling the need to go "back in the closet" as they enter elderly care.

This is an upcoming generational challenge, and we need to ensure dignity for all is at the heart of social care reform.

Similarly, we need to keep pushing for **better mental health and homelessness support** – two areas that particularly impact LGBT+ people.

We can all play a part in challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

As the Albert Kennedy Trust's latest report makes clear, there is much to be done – **but also much that sits within our power to do.**

From challenging prejudiced attitudes among our friends and family and to showing your solidarity to advocating for the big changes we need to see, we can all play a part in challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Progress is not inevitable. but fighting for it is hardwired into our liberal values.

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Author:

[Everything you need to know about the Government's proposed Bills](#)

Here's a rundown of the key Bills being proposed by the Government in the Queen's Speech

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Author:

[Thank you for your election efforts](#)

A great team effort

We've had a huge set of elections in difficult circumstances. It was a massive combined effort of volunteers and staff, candidates and agents, helpers and donors, to get several hundred Liberal Democrats elected. Thank

you to everyone who played their part in an impressive team effort.

Commiserations too for everyone involved in campaigns that didn't make it this time. Many of our very best Parliamentarians, council leaders and other elected officials have lost elections on the way to their successes. I hope that when you have had a chance to rest and catch up on life outside politics, those examples encourage you to continue your commitment to our party.

A special thank you to retiring councillors who were expecting to stand down last May and had to hold on for another year. Your continued commitment over that extra year is much appreciated.

Thank you too to the many volunteer agents who haven't quite yet been able to stop electioneering. Getting those election expense returns sorted is an important task!

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Eid Mubarak!

Eid marks the end of Ramadan – a holy month of prayer and personal reflection.

I'm sure it feels strange to celebrate again with Covid restrictions in place.

But despite the many challenges of the past year, I'm amazed at how we've pulled together as a country – making it clear that we are a nation of carers.

And Muslims across the UK have made **huge contributions to our communities.**

From frontline workers to the more than 100 Muslim community support groups that helped those in need, **the Islamic principle of acting in service to others has no doubt been on full display this year.**

So to everyone celebrating Eid, I wish you joy and peace.

Eid Mubarak!

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