

26 July 2024

PCS demands Cabinet Office meeting over Gaza

PCS has called for a meeting with the Cabinet Office on the situation in Gaza and its implications for PCS members.

PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote has written to permanent secretary Cat Little for a meeting to negotiate a satisfactory resolution on:

- The legality of work being undertaken within the civil service and its related areas which involves interaction with the government of Israel
- Our members' obligations, and the employer's interpretation of them, under the civil service code
- Our members' rights and freedoms, particularly in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The letter highlights that for some considerable time, we have been raising concerns across various government departments, and with the Cabinet Office, regarding the situation in Gaza and its implications for our members.

PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote said: "PCS will always defend our members' interests; and it is not in their interests to undertake work that potentially contravenes the law.

"We also stand with the oppressed people of Gaza.

"We sincerely hope that our intervention with the Cabinet Office ends in protections for both."

The letter says: "PCS believes that the UK Government has an obligation to do all it can to prevent acts of genocide. This includes stopping all work within the civil service and its related areas which in any way potentially enable acts of genocide. We are not satisfied that the employer has obtained, nor even sought, legal advice on the legality of its actions, for example, in continuing to approve arms export licences to Israel and in continuing with negotiations on a free trade

agreement with Israel.

PCS also believes that, in forcing our members to continue to undertake work involving interactions with the government of Israel, the employer is potentially putting our members in a position of conflict given their various obligations under the civil service code. We believe that the employer is also potentially asking those members to act in contravention of the law.

PCS further believes that, across some areas of the civil service and its related areas, the civil service code is being used to prevent our members engaging in activity to help the people of Gaza. We also believe that it is being interpreted by the employer in an overly restrictive and potentially unlawful manner that interferes with our members rights under the Equality Act 2010 and various articles of the European Convention on Human Rights.”