# Community vigil highlights concerns over Cornwall Council's ties to Gaza humanitarian crisis



At a gathering outside County Hall, also known as Lys Kernow, in Truro on Tuesday, April 15, 2024, deep concerns were raised regarding the Cornwall Council's alleged complicity in ongoing humanitarian crises in Gaza. The event saw community members unite to honour the tragically high number of at least 17,400 Palestinian children reported amongst the casualties since October 2023. Participants solemnly read the names of several hundred infants and presented a letter directed at council members, imploring them to acknowledge their moral and legal obligation to uphold international humanitarian law.

This vigil took place just before the final full council meeting ahead of local elections scheduled for May 1, 2024. The embattled council faced scrutiny over appointments, particularly that of Lord John Hutton, recently installed chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Forum. Notably, Hutton chairs Pearson Engineering, a military equipment manufacturer wholly owned by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd, which operates under the auspices of the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

During the meeting, members of the public pressed council leaders on whether they would call for Hutton's resignation from Pearson, citing the grave situation in Gaza and the International Criminal Court’s classification of it as a genocidal act. In an astonishingly dismissive response, Cornwall Council leader Councillor Linda Taylor vehemently denied any allegations of the council being complicit in genocide, asserting, “I would like to make it clear that Cornwall Council does not endorse or support genocide in Gaza or anywhere else.” However, her arguments appeared weak as many interpreted them as a failure to critically engage with the deeply concerning ethical implications of Hutton’s position.

Taylor further claimed that a prior monitoring officer had reached out to Hutton earlier in the year regarding these serious concerns and conveyed his assurances that Pearson Engineering does not supply military equipment for operations in Gaza. Such claims seem crafted to downplay the distressing intersection of local governance and global military interests, leaving many sceptical about the council's actions—or lack thereof. “Any suggestion that Pearson is involved in unlawful actions is completely without foundation,” she further asserted, but that left many wondering where accountability lies.

The council's moral compass was further questioned as several attendees raised concerns over the council's pension investments and their alleged ties to funding for arms used against civilians. The public inquiry spotlighted the apparent disregard for local opinions and the troubling ethics of investing taxpayer money in the arms industry. Councillor Mike Thomas, chair of the council's pension committee, hastily detailed the council's management of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for Cornwall, trying to assure citizens that these investments were legal and purely operational.

In a somewhat evasive reply, Thomas claimed Cornwall Council is part of the Brunel Pension Partnership, which maintains a façade of ethical integrity by asserting they do not invest in controversial weapons. He proudly stated that as of December 31, 2024, only a minuscule 0.34 per cent of their diversified investment portfolio was in the aerospace and defence sector—a baffling point in light of the broader public discontent over funding raised concerns about the complexity of global supply chains.

Those seeking clear acknowledgment of the council's investment policies and statements regarding the Israel/Palestine situation were directed to the responsible investment section of the Cornwall Pension Fund website. Yet, for many local residents, such reassurances seem woefully insufficient. Rather than grappling with pressing ethical decisions, the council's leadership appears determined to distract and deflect, fostering increasing frustration amongst constituents who demand accountability and principled governance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://caat.org.uk/news/we-will-not-be-complicit-powerful-vigil-remembers-the-children-of-gaza-outside-cornwall-council/> - This URL corroborates the vigil outside Cornwall Council, where concerns were raised regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, particularly focusing on the involvement of council figures with military interests.
* <https://www.ctcinfohub.org/crisis-in-the-middle-east/> - This link supports the broader context of humanitarian crises and religious responses in the Middle East, including the situation in Gaza.
* <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-04-17/debates/65D2C3D1-F094-4D2C-A6A2-267BAA710BE2/HumanitarianSituationInGaza> - This parliamentary debate transcript highlights the severe humanitarian situation in Gaza, involving efforts to improve aid access and the political context surrounding the conflict.
* <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/uk-humanitarian-aid-gaza-information-note-may-2024> - This report details the challenges in delivering UK humanitarian aid to Gaza, underscoring the complexities and inefficiencies in addressing the humanitarian crisis despite increased funding.
* <https://commonsbusiness.parliament.uk/Document/88339/Pdf> - This document references various Early Day Motions, including those related to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, highlighting the political actions being considered in response to the crisis.