

When there is no compromise or common ground there is n...

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I watched some of the debate in parliament yesterday on the situation in Israel.

I looked at quite a lot of other media on the issue.

And most of what I saw was closed-mindedness and insular polarity.

The issue was presented as if there were two sides to this issue. Either Israel or the various states opposing it are right, but in that case, the other cannot be. That seems to be the common argument.

I heard too many hints and suggestions that because of what Hamas did last October, which was a war crime, Palestinians must suffer, which is an utterly unjustifiable claim.

Time after time, I heard the claim that Israeli actions are justified by self-defence when no sane person can pretend that the disproportionate response to its own security failure can justify its offensive action in many countries.

And with honourable exceptions, I heard a few suggestions that the human suffering from this war is felt on all sides and that we have a duty to all those who are afflicted in whatever way that might be.

The reality is that the leaderships of Hamas, Hezbollah and Israel have all made hideous mistakes in the pursuit of their goals. All of them have blood on their hands. They should all be held responsible.

So, too, should all those who have enabled this situation by the supply of weapons, knowing what they might be used for, be held to account. That includes successive UK governments.

But it is as apparent that the polarisation of debate on this issue now serves no purpose at all.

There is no right or wrong side here. There are sides with worries, concerns and claims,

matched by counter-claims. These all require reconciliation to be resolved, not force. And the use of force by all sides in this dispute only prolongs it and makes it worse.

To be insular - as too many are - can only defer that reconciliation.

In that case, a wise politician would not act as Starmer is doing. He defends Israel too readily when many of its actions are indefensible.

He calls for ceasefires, knowing that they will not be delivered because the foundations for their success do not exist and are made harder to achieve by his own actions.

And he refuses to acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinians, and now the Lebanese and others, who are the innocent victims of all this, when without that recognition, there can be no outcome to what is happening.

Is it really so hard for a politician to realise that there can be both right and wrong on all sides in a dispute? Can they not look for good wherever it might be found? Can't they see that doing so is what creates the basis for peace?

Apparently not, seems to be the answer. And that is worthy of condemnation, because it means that those who cannot do so can contribute nothing to a successful outcome to the stress that afflicts the whole Middle East now.