

I very rarely write a column on foreign affairs, in part because it is not my specialism, but this week it seems appropriate given recent high profile global events.

The downing of flight MH17 over the Ukraine by, it appears, pro-Russian separatists has rightly shocked the world. I cannot imagine the horror for the families of victims that were innocently sitting in their seats reading, sleeping, watching movies at 33,000ft only for their lives to be cut short so tragically as a consequence of a conflict none of them were involved in. This horrific attack has rightly led our news bulletins and brought home the civil war taking place not too far from here.

Likewise the conflict in the Gaza area between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants has dominated recent news reports, in particular the innocent civilians needing medical and humanitarian support as a consequence of conflict and subsequent retaliation. At the time of writing the UN is leading calls for an immediate ceasefire after last weekend saw the conflict spiral into a bloodbath.

Meanwhile elsewhere in the Middle East, bombs have exploded and killed people in Baghdad, the civil war continues to kill and displace people in Syria, Libya is seeing increased violence and Egypt remains a country of severe unrest.

What should the West, and in particular the UK and US be doing to help? It is a question that is almost impossible to answer, or at least one that will unlikely reach consensus. The only thing we can really do, in my opinion is, especially in the Middle East, provide as much support for humanitarian relief as possible and urge through the UN a peaceful resolution. There is no easy answer but the horror and tragedy of these recent international events is awful and a reminder that even the might of the West will not always be able to protect the innocent.