



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP**  
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Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

22 April 2021

*Dear Sir George,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 April to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

It has been the position of every British Government since 1967 that the OPTs (the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and Gaza), were not lawfully part of the State of Israel at its creation or at any point thereafter. In line with Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and subsequent Council resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as under Israeli military occupation.

A final determination of the status of Jerusalem should be sought as part of a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. It must ensure Jerusalem is a shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, with access and religious rights of both peoples respected.

Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside European Ambassadors on 25 February 2021. I raised the issue of evictions of Palestinians from their homes, with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020, and the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raises this issue regularly with the Israeli authorities. Officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. On 8 April, the Consul General Jerusalem visited families at risk of eviction in Sheikh Jarrah, restating UK opposition to evictions of Palestinians from their homes. We will continue to make clear our serious concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem.

This includes the evictions of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian property; the construction of illegal Israeli settlements; removal of residency rights from Palestinians; possible unilateral changes to the municipal borders and severe difficulties of access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank.

The British Government also supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction in the West Bank through our legal aid programme. This helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. Of those cases provided with legal representation through British funding, 96% have resulted in suspension of demolitions and evictions, allowing Palestinians to remain in their homes.

We recognise that Palestinians face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure in East Jerusalem and Area C. Practically, this leaves Palestinians with little option but to build without permission, placing their homes at risk of demolition on the grounds they do not have a permit. The UK's long standing position is that we support the Oslo Accords that set out a process for the gradual and incremental transfer of a range of these responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority. On the issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the UK respects the independence of the ICC and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline.

The context to this issue is the enduring tragedy of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The Government believes that a negotiated two-state solution is the only way to end conflict. We do not underestimate the challenges, but if both parties show bold leadership, peace is possible. The UK is ready to do all it can to support this goal.

*Yours ever,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', is centered on the page.

**The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**