



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
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Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Our ref: MC2021/11091

25 May 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 May 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.

The UK has not made an assessment of this report. It is the policy of this government that any judgment on whether serious crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision after consideration of all the available evidence, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue, encouraging the Israeli government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all. The UK also engages with Israel on issues of concern related to its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem work closely with all sectors of Israeli and Palestinian society to encourage tolerance and progress towards peace.

The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions. But we do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the settlements, as part of Israel and indeed the settlements are not covered by the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement, which now governs our trade with Israel. We believe that open and honest discussions, rather than imposing sanctions or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts, best supports our efforts to help progress in the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution.

The Government takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and aims to operate one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. Regarding UK arms exports to Israel, the Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, and if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, those licences will be revoked.

The UK position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a two-state solution. A two state solution is the only way to preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity. The UK has urged the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work together to meet their obligations under the Oslo Accords, and to work towards a sustainable solution to the conflict. We also call on all parties to abide by International Humanitarian Law and to promote peace, stability and security.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

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