



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Rt Hon. Amanda Milling MP
Minister for Asia and the Middle East

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 0207 008 5000

Email:
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Rt. Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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14 July 2022

Dear George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 June 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.

The UK continues to monitor closely the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, further exacerbated by the conflict in May 2021 and impact of COVID-19. We remain longstanding supporters of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and their work to support Palestinian refugees across the region including Gaza. At the UNRWA pledging conference in New York in June 2022, we announced a new multi-year funding programme with the agency providing £15 million in 2022. Our annual contribution to their programme budget helps UNRWA provide education to over 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls), and access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees.

In 2021 the UK also provided £2 million to UNICEF to help the most vulnerable people in Gaza, especially children to continue their education, meet their basic needs, and hopefully to fulfil their potential.

UK aid also works to address the underlying causes of humanitarian need and economic decline in Gaza. Our economic development programme aims to lift the overall standard of living in by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water.

We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to end restrictions on movement, access and trade 15 years of these restrictions have caused significant damage to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians and that supporting prosperity for Gazans is firmly in Israel's long-term interests. We encourage a time bound commitment for a durable solution for Gaza.

The Government does not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo would lead to progress in the peace process. The Government takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates 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.

The Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. This includes where we determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate internal repression, or where we determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law. We publish information of all export licences issued, refused and revoked on a quarterly and annual basis as official statistics on Gov.uk.

The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region. I emphasised this point in my recent visit to the Israel and the OPTs in June 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Milling', followed by a long horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Rt Hon. Amanda Milling MP
Minister of State for Asia and the Middle East