



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Rt. Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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15 July 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 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.

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 OPTs, such as the expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

Israel and the OPTs are a human rights priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Human Rights is a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. This is why we regularly raise concerns with the Government of Israel, where they exist. We call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. I emphasised this point in my recent meeting with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll during my visit to Israel in June 2022.

The UK's position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The final determination of Jerusalem must ensure that the holy city is a shared capital of Israel and a Palestinian state, granting access and religious rights for all who hold it dear. The United Kingdom opposes unilateral action in Jerusalem absent a final status settlement.

The UK is concerned about the fragile security situation in Jerusalem. We look to all parties to take urgent steps to de-escalate tensions. We believe it is important that the historic Status Quo is respected. The Status Quo is the most appropriate means of managing access to the holy sites, and is vital to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif / Temple Mount and all who worship there. All religious sites must be treated with the utmost respect. The UK Government is clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties.

The UK is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. We believe that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community.

During my aforementioned recent visit to Israel and the OPTs in June, I met with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll, and members of the Palestinian leadership including Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh, to reiterate the UK's support for a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with Jerusalem as shared capital.

We firmly believe a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. We will continue to press Israel and the Palestinians strongly on the need to refrain from taking actions, which make peace more difficult.

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