



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

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

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25 August 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 August to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of your constituent, \_\_\_\_\_, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East.

We strongly condemn the firing of over 1,100 rockets at civilians by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the ongoing campaign of terror attacks by the group, which has resulted in the deaths of civilians, both Israelis and Palestinians alike. As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, the UK stands by Israel and its right to defend itself in the face of such terrorism and violence. In exercising its right to self-defence, Israel has an obligation to ensure that its actions comply with international humanitarian law.

The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 7 August, which was an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. Our support was reiterated by Ministers Rehman Chisti and Lord Ahmad, and in our statement to the UN Security Council on 8 August by the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, James Kariuki. We have also expressed our thanks to Egypt, Qatar and the office of UN Special Coordinator, Tor Wennesland, for their mediation efforts. We now urge all parties to do their utmost to ensure the ceasefire is durable and prevents further violence. The UK offers its deepest condolences to the families of Palestinian civilians killed during the escalation, particularly the tragic deaths of children. We look to the Israeli authorities to ensure timely and thorough investigations into these reports.

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.

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 situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a two-state solution. We call on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law and to promote peace, stability and security. We urge all parties to find a way back to dialogue and towards direct negotiations, and I emphasised this point in my visit to the Israel and the OPTs in June 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' 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**