



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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The Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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20 October 2020

Dear George

Thank you for your letter of 22 August to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of your constituent, _____ about the sale of arms to Israel. I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

We have consistently made clear our firm opposition to Israeli annexation, which would be contrary to international law, counterproductive to securing peace in the region, and a severe blow to prospects for a two-state solution. The Prime Minister outlined this in a phone call with PM Netanyahu on 6 July and in an article in the Israeli Press on 1 July. I reiterated this message to Israeli counterparts, including PM Netanyahu, on 25th August.

The UK is actively encouraging parties back to dialogue. During my visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 24 and 15 August, The Foreign Secretary encouraged the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians to build on the momentum of the United Arab Emirates-Israel announcement, and suspension of annexation plans, to resume dialogue. We continue to work closely with international partners strongly advocating a two-state solution and encouraging a return to meaningful negotiations.

We also remain concerned at the high numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal and security issues relating to the occupation. All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. In doing

so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties. We have also stressed the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, which they have a duty to under the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Conventions.

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.. 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 takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and aims to operate one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world.

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

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