



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

13 August 2019

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

Dear George

Thank you for your email of 25 July to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] and a number of other constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am replying as the Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East and North Africa.

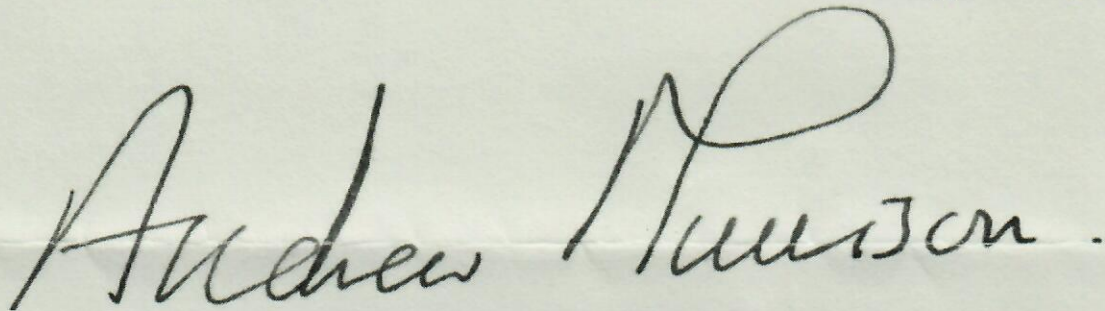
On 23 July, the UK alongside the Governments of France, Germany and Spain, issued a statement strongly condemning the demolition by Israel of Palestinian buildings in the district of Wadi al Hummus. On the same day, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) reiterated our concern at the UN Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East.

We are seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. We will continue to argue for a just outcome for all the people affected by illegal settlement construction and confiscation of land due to the Separation Barrier.

In this specific case, the demolitions were particularly egregious as a number of the buildings were located in Areas A and B, under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority according to the Oslo Agreements, and thus constitute a violation of these agreements. They set a dangerous precedent that directly jeopardises the two state solution, which is why I raised our deep concern, to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, on 24 July.

Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate through their policies a genuine commitment to the two-state solution. They should do all they can to reverse the negative trends – including systematic settlement expansion and demolitions in the West Bank, violence and incitement, and the dire situation in Gaza.

A just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. The UK will continue to press the parties to make progress towards peace, maintain calm, refrain from taking actions which could make the resumption of negotiations more difficult and focus once again on finding common ground. We do not underestimate the challenges, but if both parties show bold leadership, peace is possible. The UK is ready to do all it can to support this goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Murrison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "A" and "M".

The Rt Hon. Dr Andrew Murrison MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa