



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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30 October 2023

Dear Gaza Lawyers Government Correspondence,

Thank you for your email of 27 October to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). Your correspondence has been passed to the Ministerial and Treat Official Correspondence Team in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for a response.

The UK condemns the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli and international citizens. But we are clear: Hamas is a terrorist organisation, which neither speaks for nor acts in the interests of the Palestinian people.

The UK is also clear that Hamas bears responsibility for these acts of terror and we support Israel's legitimate right to defend its citizens proportionately and act against terrorism. There is never justification for the brutal targeting of civilians. Terrorism will not prevail.

The Prime Minister spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 12 October and visited Israel on 19 October. He expressed condolences on behalf of the British people for all those killed, injured, or kidnapped in this unconscionable tragedy, the true scale and horror of which becomes clearer every passing day. He has engaged extensively, including with President Biden, King Abdullah of Jordan, President Sisi of Egypt, President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the Amir of Qatar. The Foreign Secretary and Lord Ahmad, the FCDO Minister responsible for the Middle East and Human Rights have also been proactively engaging their counterparts. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel on 11 October and Egypt on 19 October and attended a summit convened by President Sisi in Egypt on 21 October. The Foreign Secretary and FCDO Ministers have reached out to their partners in the region, including with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Morocco, Bahrain and Lebanon.

We want to see both Israelis and Palestinians living safe and secure in peaceful proximity, not under the threat of terrorism. Any civilian death resulting from the conflict is a tragedy. But Hamas deliberately murdered and kidnapped in Israel and now callously puts civilians in Gaza at risk. We have been clear that Hamas must immediately release all hostages.

Like any nation, Israel has a legitimate right to act against terrorism and defend its security. This must be done in line with international humanitarian law but we also recognise that Israel faces an enemy that embeds itself behind civilians. We have called on Israel to take every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians. Humanity, rule of law, decency and the respect for human life is what sets us apart from the mindless violence of the terrorist.

The UK's position on international law is unwavering and we continue to make clear to all parties that all possible measures must be taken to ensure civilian casualties are minimised and to facilitate humanitarian aid to the civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary emphasised these points during his recent visit to Israel. Israeli President Herzog has also said Israel will abide by international law.

An acute humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Gaza, which requires a global response. The UK is calling for immediate, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access for lifesaving aid to reach civilians. This includes adequate volumes of food, water, fuel and medical supplies. We welcome the news that trucks of humanitarian aid are now slowly being allowed to enter Gaza via the Rafah crossing. However, these are not enough. The safety of civilians and humanitarian personnel is critical to enable aid to reach those who need it most.

On 23 October, the Prime Minister announced to the House of Commons a further £20 million of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. This is in addition to the £10 million in support for the Palestinian people he announced on 16 October. He has reiterated the UK's condemnation of Hamas and called for humanitarian organisations to be allowed to deliver life-saving aid. We are working with key international partners to ensure the aid reaches those in need.

We are also clear that peace, security and stability for Israelis and Palestinians alike can only be achieved through a collaborative and concerted effort towards a two-state solution; a secure Israel, living side by side with an independent and viable Palestinian state.

Yours sincerely,

Ministerial and Treat Official Correspondence Team
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office



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Our ref: TO2023/21636
Your ref:

14 November 2023

Lawyers Gaza Letter Initiative

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Dear Lawyers Gaza Letter Initiative,

Thank you for your follow up correspondence of 9 November to the Prime Minister about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The FCDO Correspondence Team has been asked to respond.

As we noted in our previous response, the UK supports Israel's right to defend itself in line with International Humanitarian Law. We have pressed Israel to ensure its campaign is targeted against Hamas leaders and military infrastructure; to allow aid to enter Gaza; to end settler violence; and to work with the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to improve the desperate humanitarian situation. It is vital that all parties ensure that their actions are proportionate, necessary and minimise harm to civilians.

The UK's position on international law is unwavering and we continue to make clear to all parties that all possible measures must be taken to ensure civilian casualties are minimised and to facilitate humanitarian aid to the civilians in Gaza. The former Foreign Secretary emphasised these points during his recent visit to Israel. Israeli President Herzog has also said Israel will abide by international law.

The UK is working intensively to get much greater amounts of aid into Gaza. We need a collective international effort to get aid in as fast as possible - including food, water, and fuel and medical supplies - by as many routes as possible. We welcome the agreement to allow some trucks of aid into Gaza through Rafah, but it is not enough. We urge Israel to open other border crossings.

We are calling for a humanitarian pause to facilitate delivery of critical humanitarian aid and, crucially, to allow hostages and British nationals to leave. We are urgently exploring all diplomatic options and all practical routes, working with the UN and partners in the region and beyond. The UK does not support a ceasefire, which would only allow Hamas to entrench itself in Gaza and launch further attacks.

We are also clear that peace, security and stability for Israelis and Palestinians alike can only be achieved through a collaborative and concerted effort towards a two-

state solution; a secure Israel, living side by side with an independent, secure and viable Palestinian state.

Yours sincerely,

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office