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Dear Sir Stephen,

Israel/Gaza – Government's legal advice.

Thank you for your letter of 21 March.

The Government continues to monitor the situation in Gaza closely and has been consistent in engagements with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and with Israel at all levels, that whilst we support Israel's right to defend itself and its people against attacks from Hamas, it must do that in accordance with its obligations under international law. Legal advice that the Government has received regarding Israel's compliance with international law is privileged and is not published.

Similarly, as you will know, it is a long-standing convention that the fact of whether the Law Officers have been approached for advice, or the content of any advice that they have given, should not be revealed outside Government without their consent. The purpose of that convention is to ensure that such advice can be sought and given freely with a view to aiding sound decision-making and to furthering the maintenance of the rule of law within government. For that reason, the Law Officers' consent is rarely given and whilst I recognise the deep concern with which many people are viewing the situation in Gaza, I do not intend to give it in this instance.

Yours,

RT HON VICTORIA PRENTIS KC MP
ATTORNEY GENERAL