



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



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Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
House of Commons
London
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Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 October to the Prime Minister on behalf of a number of your constituents about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), which has been passed to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to respond. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Middle East.

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 I have also been proactively engaging

our 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. We have reached out to our 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 work with key international partners to ensure the aid reaches those in need.

I note your constituents' suggestions. Half of this new funding will support an appeal by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA), which is responding to critical food, water, health, shelter and protection needs in Gaza. A further £2.75million is being made available to UN OCHA's Humanitarian Pooled Fund to bolster the humanitarian response, while up to £1million will be available for positioning humanitarian supplies in the region to ensure they can be distributed as quickly and effectively as possible. The £20m will be distributed among trusted partners to ensure relief supplies can be delivered as quickly and effectively as possible.

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,

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LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

Minister of State

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict