



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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23 January 2024

Dear Cllr Cathy Scott,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 January about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The Ministerial and Treat Official Correspondence Team in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has been asked to reply.

Israel has endured the worst terrorist attack in its history at the hands of Hamas. We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but it must comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We keep under continuous review whether they are abiding by their obligations.

No-one wants to see this conflict go on a moment longer than necessary. This means achieving a sustainable ceasefire - one that will last and prevent another generation of children living under the constant threat of war - with Hamas no longer in power in Gaza, able to threaten Israel with rocket attacks and other forms of terrorism. A ceasefire will not last if hostages are still being held. Ahead of a permanent ceasefire, we want to see immediate and sustained agreements to be reached. This will allow for hostages to leave and vitally more medical and humanitarian aid to enter Gaza – helping to create the conditions for a durable peace. There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. Our focus must be on practical solutions that save lives and end this conflict.

The UK trebled our aid commitment this financial year and is doing everything it can to get more aid in and open more crossings. The current levels are woefully inadequate and are deepening the humanitarian crisis. Israel must take immediate steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of unhindered aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity. We have supported the United Nations World Food Programme to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza, with 750 metric tons of life-saving food aid arriving in the first delivery.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) must be respected and civilians protected. Israel

must act within IHL and we want to see Israel limit its operations to military targets and avoid killing and injuring civilians and destroying homes.

The UK played a leading role in securing the passage of Security Council resolution 2720, which set out the urgent demand for expanded humanitarian access. The Foreign Secretary continues to discuss and press for the action that needs to be taken to increase aid to Gaza in his regular calls with his Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, US and Palestinian Authority counterparts. The Foreign Secretary has appointed Mark Bryson-Richardson as his Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

For a peaceful solution, four things must happen. There must be: a Palestinian-led government in Gaza and the West Bank; a concrete plan to help reform and support the Palestinian Authority; a massive reconstruction plan for Gaza; and the political horizon towards delivering a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

Yours sincerely,

**Ministerial and Treat Official Correspondence Team
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