



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
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Stephen Hammond MP
House of Commons
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16 June 2021

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 June to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on behalf of your constituent, Sana Iqbal, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK offers our condolences to the families of those civilians killed. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts, working closely with the US. Hamas must now end all attacks on Israel. It is also important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. The UK will provide £3.2 million of new UK aid to the UN agency for Palestine refugees, UNRWA, responding to the UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, launched on 19 May. The funding will help provide food, water, and emergency shelter to Palestinians affected by the recent escalation in violence in Gaza.

The UK's opposition to evictions of Palestinians from their homes are long-standing and well known. The UK is clear that, in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, evictions are contrary to international humanitarian law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. The British Government supports Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem facing demolition or eviction through our legal aid programme. This helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. In 97 per cent of cases our legal aid has resulted in the suspension of demolitions and evictions, allowing Palestinians to remain in their homes.

The British Government has made its position on boycotts/sanctions clear. While we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it necessary, we are firmly opposed to boycotts/sanctions. We believe that imposing sanctions or boycotts on Israel or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts would not support our efforts to progress the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution. The UK is strongly opposed to the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Movement against Israel. We are strongly against boycotts which divide people and reduce understanding.

On the issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the UK respects the independence of the ICC and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline.

The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', is centered on the page.

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa