



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

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The Rt Hon. George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 13 December 2017 to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East.

The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear. We support a negotiated settlement leading to: a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps; with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states; and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

When the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Netanyahu on 2 November 2017, she reiterated the UK's continued opposition to settlement activity and our firm commitment to a two-state solution as the best way to bring about stability and peace to the region. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's support for a two-state solution and expressed concern about settlements and demolitions when he visited Israel and the OPTs in March 2017. I raised the issue of settlement expansion with the Israeli Minister for Regional Cooperation and the Deputy Minister in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office during my visit to Israel in August 2017.

I agree that there is an urgent need to address the terrible situation in Gaza. I visited Gaza on 21 August 2017 and saw the issues first hand. We welcome the Egyptian-brokered reconciliation agreement of 12 October 2017 and the resumption of Palestinian Authority (PA) control at the border crossings with Israel in November 2017. We need a durable agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict and transforms the situation in Gaza.

We are supporting around 1 million Gazans through United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) by providing clean water, rehabilitating sanitation facilities and promoting hygiene standards to stop the spread of disease. We are also supporting humanitarian access, enabling reconstruction efforts and investing in job creation. Additionally, the UK is a long-term supporter of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides basic services to 1.3 million people in Gaza including basic education and health care.

We welcome the PA's recent steps to reinstate electricity supply to Gaza which has increased supply from an average of five hours a day to seven hours per day. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and continue to monitor it closely.

The UK will continue to urge all the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

Yours ever

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THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa