



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

29 May 2018

Our reference: MIN-3786-2018

Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your letter of 15 May to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am replying as the Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East and North Africa.

The recent violence in Gaza and the West Bank has been shocking. The loss of life and the large number of injured Palestinians is tragic. We call on all sides to show restraint and abide by international law. Such violence is destructive to peace efforts.

We have been clear that the UK supports the Palestinians' right to peaceful protest. It is deplorable that extremist elements are exploiting these protests for their own violent purposes. We will not waver from our support for Israel's right to defend its borders. But the large volume of live fire is extremely concerning. We implore Israel to show greater restraint.

There is an urgent need to establish the facts of what happened, through an independent and transparent investigation, including why such a volume of live fire was used and what role Hamas played in events. Given the importance of accountability, we welcome Israel's commitment to investigate the conduct of operations. We urge that its findings be made public and, if wrongdoing is found, those responsible be held to account.

Ultimately, Hamas's ongoing decision to embrace violence and reject the Quartet Principles lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. The UK's position on Hamas is clear: Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel, and accept previously signed agreements. Hamas faces a fundamental decision about whether it is prepared to accept the Quartet Principles and join efforts for peace, or whether it will continue to

use terror and anti-Semitic incitement, with all the terrible consequences for the people of Gaza and Israel.

Hamas's military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001, and the UK retains a policy of no contact with Hamas in its entirety. Any peace agreement should ensure that Hamas permanently ends rocket fire and attacks against Israel, the Palestinian Authority resumes control of Gaza and restores effective and accountable governance, and Israel lifts its restrictions in order to ease the suffering of ordinary Gazans.

The recent violence makes clear the urgent need for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We need a political process to move us closer to our goal of a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel living alongside an independent and viable Palestinian State, which improves the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza.

This conflict will only be resolved when violence is rejected and negotiations take place. The UK is doing all it can to support this goal.

In ever
Alistair

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