



October 2023

The events unfolding in Israel are truly horrifying. I join the UK Government in wholly condemning the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad that began on the 7th of October, and in standing resolutely with Israel as it seeks to defend itself against these atrocities.

My thoughts are with those affected, especially the families of those civilians who have been murdered.

The Prime Minister and the UK Foreign Secretary have emphasised the UK's unequivocal support for Israel to their Israeli counterparts respectively. The Foreign Secretary also visited Israel on the 11th of October, witnessing first-hand the devastation caused by Hamas and meeting with Israel's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen to reaffirm the UK's steadfast support. I know that close engagement with Israel will continue as the situation develops.

Discussions with leaders across the globe have also been ongoing, as the Government works to ensure that the world speaks with one voice in opposition to these brutal attacks. The Prime Minister has already issued a joint statement with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and the United States, to express the UK's coordinated and united support for Israel with these allies, and ultimately, a joint commitment to setting the conditions for a peaceful and integrated Middle East. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken with the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, and with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Türkiye, Oman and Qatar, to encourage them to help reduce tensions.

During his call with the Palestinian Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary urged the Palestinian Authority to condemn the terrorist attacks and cooperate with the Israeli security forces, to prevent any further violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The UK recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and supports equal measures of justice and freedoms for Israelis and Palestinians alike. However, Hamas does not represent those aspirations; it offers nothing for the Palestinian people other than more terror and more bloodshed.

I am aware of public concerns about the situation in Gaza. As mentioned, the UK Government unequivocally supports Israel's right to defend itself, as guaranteed by Article 51 of the

United Nations Charter. I must emphasise that the attacks carried out are terrorist attacks, perpetrated by Hamas who are embedded in Gaza, shielding themselves amongst the Palestinian people who reside there.



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Hamas's actions will lead to an increase in humanitarian need in Gaza, and the UN has activated a contingency plan and is working with all parties to secure humanitarian access and scale up the response. UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development officials are closely engaged with this effort, and the Foreign Secretary has urged both the Palestinian Authority and Jordan to both take decisive action to help mitigate this unfolding crisis.

UK Aid funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) is focused on essential basic services and life-saving humanitarian assistance, the majority of which is through dedicated UN programmes. The UK ended direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority in 2021.

Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation, with which the UK has a firm and longstanding non-contact policy. The UK also has robust safeguards against aid diversion in the OPTs, including review of indirect recipients. The Minister of State for Development, Andrew Mitchell, is overseeing the UK's approach to UK aid during this crisis and is reviewing our spend, as is regular practice.

The Prime Minister has made clear his commitment to ensuring that the Jewish community in the UK feels safe and secure at this incredibly difficult time.

This is an extremely difficult and fast-moving situation, and I will be following developments closely.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY