



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Matt Western MP
House of Commons
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Dear Matt,

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 November, about Israel and Palestine. I apologise for not replying sooner and appreciate your patience.

As you rightly point out, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains extremely challenging. Over 70,000 people have been killed and more than 90% of the population have been displaced. Even with the ceasefire, vast numbers of people are still struggling to find enough to eat, and many are living in truly catastrophic conditions.

While there has been some improvement in the level of UN-coordinated aid entering Gaza, the volume remains insufficient and must be rapidly bolstered to ease the scale of suffering. We continue to call on Israel to immediately lift restrictions and allow essential aid in; such as food, shelter, medical supplies and fuel to reach those in desperate need, in line with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We welcome Rafah reopening for people to cross both ways on foot, allowing some in desperate need to access medical care in Egypt. However, much more still needs to be done.

International NGOs are integral to the humanitarian response in Gaza. The INGO deregistration process must be stopped, and all INGOs operating in line with IHL and humanitarian principles should be registered without further delay. Without delivery by all UN entities and their principled NGO partners, a fast response at scale is simply not possible. On 30 December, the Foreign Secretary led a statement on behalf of ten countries making clear that it was impossible to deliver the 20-Point Plan, or to meet the desperate needs of Gaza's people without NGOs, and that any attempt to stem their operations is unacceptable.

As part of the 20-point plan, the UK has deployed civilian and military advisors to support the Civil-Military Coordination Centre that aims to coordinate humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. We are also providing £81 million of humanitarian and early recovery support, as part of our £116 million programme for Palestine this financial year.

UK support so far has meant more than 647,000 have received food, 300,000 people have improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene services. Our partnership with UK-Med has facilitated more than 800,000 patient consultations in Gaza.

We welcome the commitment to move to Phase 2 of the Peace Plan. We will continue to work closely with international partners in relation to the UK's role in supporting the next phase. Whilst the implementation of Phase 1 has not been as fulsome as we want with continued violations and fatalities and ongoing restrictions on aid, sustaining momentum is essential to maintaining the ceasefire, addressing the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza by providing increased aid, eliminating the threat from Hamas, and delivering long-term peace for Israelis and Palestinians. These transitional measures should be delivered with the support of the international community, in accordance with international law, with respect for Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination, and in support of a two-state solution with security and peace for both Israel and Palestine.

Since coming to office, this Government has worked to support these efforts. The UK has been consistently clear that the future of Gaza must be Palestinian-led. We recognised the State of Palestine, signed a landmark agreement with the Palestinian Authority and have committed to support their ambitious reform agenda. We imposed three rounds of sanctions on violent Israeli settlers and members of the Israeli cabinet in their personal capacity, stopped exports to the Israel Defence Forces that might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law in Gaza, and – as the conflict continued – suspended negotiations with Israel on a new Free Trade Agreement.

We have also coordinated a series of joint statements with over 30 international partners pushing for urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis. Concretely, we have provided nearly £250 million in development assistance over the past two years and have restored funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We have also evacuated groups of sick and injured children to the UK, as well as Gazan students pursuing their studies in the UK. I co-hosted a Wilton Park summit with regional and international partners on mobilising private finance for Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery and the UK will host a key peacebuilding conference in March to help establish an International Peace Fund for Israel and Palestine.

We will continue to do all that we can to seize this chance for a better future and to secure lasting peace and security in the region, both for the people of Israel and the people of Palestine. Given the rapidly evolving situation in the region, the UK Government regularly publishes details of its engagements and statements on GOV.UK: [Israel and the UK - GOV.UK](#), [Palestine and the UK - GOV.UK](#).

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hamish Falconer', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

HAMISH FALCONER MP
Minister for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan