



Dr Simon Opher MP
Member of Parliament for Stroud
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7116

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom

The Rt Hon James Murray MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

22nd May 2026

Dear Secretaries of State,

RE: Medical Evacuation of Children in Gaza

We write to you as a cross-party group of MPs to urge you to reopen and scale up the UK's medical evacuation programme for patients from Gaza, particularly children.

The war has devastated Gaza's health sector. Hospitals have been decimated, essential medicines and medical equipment are in short supply, and critical services including oncology, advanced trauma care, cardiac treatment and neurology are largely unavailable. Ongoing restrictions on the entry of supplies continue to exacerbate shortages.

As a result, thousands of critically ill patients in Gaza have no viable pathway to life-saving treatment, nor is there any realistic prospect that this will change in the near future.

Over 18,500 patients, including approximately 4,000 children, are estimated by the World Health Organization and Gaza's Ministry of Health to require urgent medical evacuation. Both organisations warn that the true number is likely to be significantly higher due to mass displacement, poor documentation, and severely restricted access to functioning hospitals. Between July 2024 and March 2026, at least 1,092 patients died while waiting for evacuation, an average of 65 preventable deaths every month.

While we acknowledge the medical evacuation of 51 children for treatment in the UK last autumn, this figure remains vanishingly small when set against the scale of need, which continues to grow as conditions in Gaza further deteriorate.

Since October 2025, only 793 patients have been evacuated, compared with 1,700 during the much shorter January–March 2025 ceasefire. Following recent regional escalations, medical evacuations are again suspended entirely, leaving thousands in limbo as their conditions deteriorate. The burden of responding to this crisis has fallen overwhelmingly on a small number of regional states. Egypt, Jordan and the UAE have received 84% of evacuated patients. The regional countries have the expertise, but the needs outstrip any possible capacity to treat those who need it. The UK has the clinical capacity, expertise and moral obligation to do more.

Constituency Office:
5a Lansdown, Stroud, GL5 1BB
Tele: 01453 621304
Email address: simon.opher.mp@parliament.uk



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Gaza's health system cannot be rebuilt overnight, and critically ill patients cannot afford to wait.

We therefore urge you to reopen the UK's medical evacuation pathway from Gaza without delay, working with international partners to ensure evacuations are predictable, scaled up, and delivered at pace.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Simon Opher MP
Dr Peter Prinsley MP
Dr Scott Arthur MP
Patricia Ferguson MP
Anneliese Dodds MP
Lee Dillon MP
Alex Sobel MP
James Naish MP
Peter Lamb MP
Kirsteen Sullivan MP
Zarah Sultana MP
Chris Hinchcliff MP
Clive Lewis MP
Susan Murray MP
Steve Darling MP
Ian Sollom MP
Layla Moran MP
Colum Eastwood MP
Grahame Morris MP
Andy McDonald MP
Ben Lake MP
Liz Saville Roberts MP
Ann Davies MP
Llinos Medi MP
Afzal Khan MP
Tris Osborne MP
Nadia Whittome MP
Cat Smith MP
Lorraine Beavers MP
Martin Rhodes MP
Iqbal Mohamed MP
Cat Eccles MP
Ian Roome MP
Ian Byrne MP

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Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP
Claire Hanna MP
Marsha de Cordova MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Rachael Maskell MP
Diane Abbott MP
John McDonnell MP
Andrew George MP
Mary Glendon MP
Apsana Begum MP
Neil Duncan-Jordan MP
Kim Johnson MP
Paula Barker MP
Torcuil Crichton MP
Órfhlaith Begley MP
Pat Cullen MP
John Finucane MP
Chris Hazzad MP
Dáire Hughes MP
Cathal Mallaghan MP
Paul Maskey MP
Tom Gordon MP
Shokat Adam MP
Alison Hume MP
Lizzi Collinge MP
Imran Hussain MP
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Vikki Slade MP
Uma Kamaran MP
Graham Leadbitter MP
Brendan O'Hara MP
Tracy Gilbert MP
Emma Lewell MP
Sarah Champion MP
Lee Barron MP
Rupa Huq MP
Ben Maguire MP
Bambos Charalambous MP
Rosie Duffield MP

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Hannah Spencer MP
Adrian Ramsay MP
Ellie Chowns MP
Sian Berry MP
Carla Denyer MP
Jas Athwal MP
Dr Beccy Cooper MP
Manuela Perteghella MP
Brian Mathew MP
Monica Harding MP
Matt Western MP
Joe Morris MP
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Cameron Thomas MP
Abtisam Mohamed MP
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Stella Creasy MP
Ian Lavery MP
Yasmin Qureshi MP
Josh Babarinde MP
Tahir Ali MP
Debbie Abrahams MP
Steve Witherden MP
Clive Efford MP
Warinder Juss MP
Alison Bennett MP
Liz Jarvis MP

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