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Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Foreign Affairs

Iveagh House

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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

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The Hon Hamish Falconer MP

Middle East Minister

FCDO

9 March 2026

Palestine/Israel : British-Irish Parliamentary cooperation – calls for Government action

Dear Minister, Dear Secretary of State, Dear Middle East Minister,

Thank you for your respective letters of 3 March.

We much regret the absence of progress on Government actions commended in our letter to you of 22 December, and deplore the deterioration in conditions on the ground in the state of Palestine, rightly recognised as such by both our Governments.

As we write, Israel has again closed the Gaza Rafah crossing and locked down the entire West Bank.

The Government actions set out in our December letter still stand. They are :

- a ban on trade in goods and services (including investment) with illegal Israeli settlements
- accountability for breaches of International Law, whoever commits them
- enabling the UN and NGOs to do their jobs in Palestine
- Gaza access by diplomatic missions accredited to Palestine.

The Israeli and US attacks on Iran will potentially be used as an excuse for inaction. This would be a mistake. The same disregard for international law by Israel and others, and the failure of the international community to hold them to account, cannot continue.

Some will point to this inaction as the driver behind these unlawful attacks on Iran. However oppressive and corrupt this Iranian regime may be – and it is – ignoring the law opens the door to mayhem and worse.

In Gaza, the « ceasefire » of October last year is not genuine ; over 600 Palestinians have been killed since then - most of them women and children. Israel continues to deny access to diplomats, journalists and international aid workers, and severely restricts food, medicines and temporary accommodation. It denies access for mobile hospitals on spurious grounds. The « Gazafication » of the West Bank is intensifying, with the forced displacement of entire Palestinian communities, rampant murderous settler violence aided and abetted by the Israeli army, and unlawful measures to annex de facto the West Bank, tearing up the Oslo Accords. The Israeli Security Cabinet's decision to register Palestinian land as Israeli state property is an assertion of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, in flagrant breach of international law. This is annexation.

In this context we ask you to address specifically two illegal Israeli actions : the issuing of tenders to build the E1 settlement with the declared aim of « burying the two-state solution » and the ban on UNRWA and 37 international NGOs from operating in Palestine.

E1 settlement tenders – action needed

Tenders have been issued to build E1. We ask you and like-minded opponents of this disastrous project to warn now, before tenders are opened, that any individual or corporate body engaging in planning and building E1 puts at risk their ability to do business in or with our countries. Tenders were to be opened on 16 March. The US/Israel/Iran war means that deadline will not be met – but the warning by our governments is urgently needed.

We recommend that this warning be followed by a comprehensive ban on trade with settlements – goods, services and investment – consistent with the July 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and, in the case of Ireland, the unanimous advice of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade.

UNRWA and international NGOs operating in Palestine

The Israeli Government's unlawful ban on 37 reputable NGOs is now before the Israeli High Court. We ask the British and Irish Governments to make clear to Israel that there will be severe economic and political consequences if it does not rescind the banning order, and permit UNRWA to fulfil the mission it holds from the UN General Assembly. Enclosed is a factual assessment by the Norwegian Refugee Council (funded by both our Governments) of the truly terrible impact on the lives of Palestinians unless these decisions are reversed. We are witnessing systematic efforts to « privatise » the delivery

of humanitarian assistance and thus destroy the UN and international aid structures on which peoples across the world depend. Gaza is only the start. We must not let it happen.

We ask you to respond urgently to these two specific requests. We reserve the right to raise Israel/Palestine in the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (22-24 March).

Signed