

Matt Western MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

21 April 2026

Dear Matt,

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 February, regarding export licences to Israel and the situation in Gaza.

The suffering in Gaza has been intolerable. This Government has worked tirelessly to try to bring this conflict to an end. From our first day in office we called for an immediate ceasefire, the release of the hostages and the unrestricted flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The ceasefire agreement announced on 8 October was therefore a moment of profound significance, relief and hope after two years of suffering.

The UK is focused on supporting the transition from a ceasefire to a sustainable peace. We will continue to play our part, not just in supporting the implementation of phase one of the peace initiative, but also on the crucial work on recovery and reconstruction.

In relation to export licensing, the Government's position remains unchanged. Whilst most of the licences suspended in September 2024 have since expired (licences typically being issued for a period of two years), all new licence applications have since that time been assessed on the same basis, with more than 40 licences refused between September 2024 and 31 July 2025 in cases where we assess that equipment could be used in military operations in Gaza.

The basis for this ongoing decision making continues to be our International Humanitarian Law assessments, and these continue to find that Israel is not committed to complying with IHL in Gaza, which informs our decision that there would be a clear risk that exported items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of IHL. The Foreign Secretary and Business and Trade Secretary are keeping the situation under review to ensure that the UK's assessments are up to date and can account for an evolving situation. While the situation has improved under the ceasefire, the assessments have continued to raise concerns and we would need to see evidence of sustained improvements to consider changing our approach.

When the suspension of export licences was announced in September 2024, and when the suspension of negotiations on a new free trade agreement were announced in May 2025, the Government on both occasions made clear that these actions were taken on the basis of concerns arising from Israel's military operations in Gaza, and that we would continue to press Israel to address those concerns. We continue to do so at all levels.

However, for licence applications to be approved, or remaining suspensions 'lifted', exports need to be assessed as compliant with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. Such decisions are based on these criteria, including assessment of compliance with international humanitarian law, and are not contingent on wider considerations of the trading relationship, or our trade negotiations.

We take our responsibilities for export controls extremely seriously, and I would point to the judgment of the High Court in 2025, which upheld the Government's thorough and lawful decision making in this area.

Finally, may I reassure you that this Government will continue to do all we can to seize this chance for a better future for the Israeli and Palestinian people and to secure lasting peace and security in the region.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris Bryant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "B".

Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister of State for Trade
Department for Business and Trade