

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Humanitarian situation in Gaza, HC 953

Tuesday 19 June 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 19 June 2018.

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Richard Burden; Ivan Lewis; Lloyd Russell-Moyle; Paul Scully; Virendra Sharma.

Questions 1 - 64

Witnesses

I: Rachel Evers, Director of Legal Affairs, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UN OCHA; Aimee Shalan, Chief Executive, Medical Aid for Palestinians.

II: Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP, Minister of State, DFID/FCO; Emma Donnelly, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department, DFID.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Rachel Evers, Jamie McGoldrick and Aimee Shalan.

Q1 Chair: Good morning and welcome. This is an International Development Committee session on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We have two panels. Can I welcome the first panel? Our usual practice is we go straight into the questions. Please, when you first answer a question, introduce yourself. We have 45 minutes with you before we take evidence from the Minister, and during that 45 minutes we are seeking to cover eight areas. We will be concise with our questions, I promise, and if you are able to be concise with your answers, that would be much appreciated.

Let me start off with an opening question to each of you, beginning with the violence on or around 14 May. Can you say a little bit for us by way of introduction about the impact of that violence on the humanitarian situation in Gaza? Rachel, would you like to go first?

Rachel Evers: Yes, sure. From UNRWA's perspective, since late March thousands of Palestinians have participated in the so-called Great March of Return. It must be recognised that many of those demonstrating want to express their fears, their anxieties and their hopes in a non-violent and peaceful manner. At the same time, we are very concerned about the violence that has occurred, the possible escalation and the impact that possible escalation will have—including both sides, in some corners—and the excessive use of force on the side of Israel.

We have seen the WHO figures. I presume they have been shared with this panel, so I do not need to go into them, but we have seen a lot on the ground, because, obviously, we have a number of clinics on the ground in Gaza. The impact on UNRWA has been the overflow from the hospitals into our clinics because the hospitals are unable to cope. We have seen a high percentage of demonstrators hit by live ammunition, which has obviously again raised serious concerns about the excessive use of force. We have called publicly for maximum restraint on all sides, echoing the Secretary-General and others, including my colleagues from UNSCO.

In terms of UNRWA specifically, the impact on us is that approximately 2,600 Palestinians have been treated at UNRWA health centres. Some 84% of the reported cases were gunshots of varying severity. Two thirds of them were classified as moderate or severe. Most of the patients approach our health centres for post-operative care, such as surgical dressing of wounds and medical treatment. However, as I said, a lot of the patients require hospitalisation that could not be continued or endured because of early discharge. This is in addition to UNRWA's standard 1 million consultations a quarter. A lot of elective surgeries have been postponed, and we are now in emergency mode.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

You are also talking about the impact on UNRWA of long-term disabilities. We have seen long-term physical disabilities based on the injuries we are seeing and a requirement for extensive physiotherapy in the coming months. We have seen again the reference to the different types of injuries, the lower-limb injuries in particular. We have also seen a number of amputations. So far, the figures, we have been told, are of 40 amputations, including four children. This is going to put a lot of pressure on UNRWA from a health perspective. Thank you.

Jamie McGoldrick: To add to what we have just heard from Rachel, the health system in Gaza has been underperforming for a long time because of a lack of resources, a lack of capacity and a lack of ability to treat regular and normal illnesses. We have seen what has happened since the Great March of Return demonstrations on the 30th. I was there on the 14th and 15th when it happened, and I saw myself, when the first wave of people who had been shot came into those hospitals, how professional both the Al-Quds Hospital and the Shifa Hospital were, but how unable they were to cope with that wave of people that came in. What has happened is that there is an already overstretched health system and health sector in Gaza, and this has only added massive burden to that. It has been exacerbated by long-term shortages of medicine, the lack of salary being paid to health workers and the lack of budget support to hospitals in those areas outside the UNRWA hospitals and clinics.

As was referred to, the number and gravity of injuries is going to cause massive problems for the hospitals. The ICRC and other medical charities who are working on the ground there to address those issues have found it very, very difficult to cope with the numbers. As Rachel mentioned, there will be long-term requirements. The doctors in the hospitals tell you that some of these patients will need five to seven more surgeries—vascular surgeries and bone reconstruction—for them to even start the process of rehabilitation. We are talking about over 500 people in that category. There is no dedicated wing in any hospital to absorb those numbers. Many of the normal wards have been turned to trauma wards, so you have thousands of people waiting for elective and normal chronic illness surgeries who are unable to get that. There is a massive queue of people waiting outside.

That comes at a time when there is an overall situation in Gaza, in terms of the water and the electricity that we need to keep going for those hospitals to function. We had budgeted for fuel for those hospitals and clinics to run to the end of the year, but because of the pressure of the hospitals working 24/7—radiology and all the other aspects—the fuel we have assigned will run out at the end of August. So there are not just the hospitals and the health system itself; there are the associated sanitation issues. There is the overall economic collapse of the situation as well.

Aimee Shalan: I am from Medical Aid for Palestinians. I was also in Gaza on 14 and 15 May, and we had an orthoplastic team that was working at Shifa Hospital at that time. In fact, one of the members of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the team—a senior orthopaedic surgeon from King's College Hospital—had been there for 10 days assessing the wounds in different hospitals and the treatment that people had received, over the whole period since 30 March, and trying to get an overview of the number of injuries and also the kinds of care that were now required.

That was before the 14th. The 14th was an extraordinary and shattering day. There was a real concern that if the shooting continued at the same level, the hospital system would absolutely collapse. Having said that, the job that they did was quite extraordinary. That day, it was reported that there were 1,359 gunshot wounds. The system itself really did stand up until the afternoon, when the flooding of patients coming in made it very, very difficult to co-ordinate.

They had tried to ensure that there was a good system from the medical centres that were along the border in the return camps, as they are called, and make sure that they were referred to the right hospitals so that the most severe cases would be going to the right hospitals. That system did hold up. However, it is quite extraordinary, looking at the number of injuries that have come through.

We believe it is a reasonable assumption that there are at present 1,200 patients in Gaza that are awaiting orthoplastic treatment for the treatment of open fractures to their legs as a result of gunshot wounds. Typically, those gunshot wounds have involved a very small entry point and a very large exit point. The bone is usually severely fragmented, and if it divides the main vessels and the lower part of the leg loses blood supply, that means there has to be urgent revascularisation; otherwise, amputation is inevitable. That has to happen within six hours.

On 14 May, by 10 in the evening, there were 70 patients at Shifa Hospital—this is just Shifa Hospital—who were still awaiting orthopaedic surgery. The following morning, there were still 40 patients, which meant that they had been there for over 12 hours in severe pain, and the only pain relief that they had was ibuprofen. I will be very quick, but I just wanted to say that these injuries will require 12 to 18 months of outpatient care. If they are untreated, it will go on to chronic osteomyelitis—deformity, pain and grossly reduced mobility. Most people will be unable to work or support themselves. While the treatment is extremely expensive, it is much cheaper than the alternative, which is a whole generation of young men and women who would be unable to work.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Before I come to Virendra for the second question, I should, before asking my first question, have declared my relevant entry in the Register of Members' Interests. Like many other members of the Committee, I have visited Israel and Palestine in the past—mostly recently in 2011.

Q2 Mr Sharma: Aimee mentioned this briefly, or touched on it, but I will ask the question so any of you have the opportunity to extend on it. How



does the current situation translate into quality and experience of daily life for the majority of people in Gaza, both inside and outside the refugee camps? What support and assistance do you think is most important right now for people living there?

Aimee Shalan: I have gone to Gaza on many occasions over many years. I have to say that the quality of life is at an all-time low. People's morale is at an all-time low. Often, because of the electricity and fuel crisis, we are seeing a situation where there are four to five hours of electricity a day, which has an enormous effect on the hospitals. Just talking about life in general, this means that people are having to curtail their lives in all sorts of different ways. They feel totally under siege. They have not been able to leave. The majority of people in Gaza are not able to leave. Unemployment is extremely high, especially for the youth. I think it is around 60% for young people between the ages of 15 and 29.

There is no sense that there is a future for anybody in Gaza, and that is having a huge impact on their psychological state, because there is clearly no traction for change at all. You have a situation now where young people are saying that life is a living death. That is a very disastrous situation for us to be in. We have now been in a situation of blockade for 11 years without any significant change, or the only changes seem to be for the worse, if we are looking at the current situation today.

Q3 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** What are the key headline risk factors that could contribute and do contribute to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the quality of life for people living in Gaza? Rachel, what are the real underlying reasons for this?

Rachel Evers: We have heard the blockade has had a significant impact on life in Gaza, of course, as well as other things, but on the ground in particular. One statistic that always really strikes me in an overwhelming way is that 10 years ago the number of Palestine refugees we needed to provide food assistance to was 80,000. Now that figure is 1 million—1 million Palestinian refugees over the period of the blockade require food assistance.

I will try to summarise risk factors. From an UNRWA perspective, we are facing an existential funding crisis. It is safe to say that UNRWA is probably the second largest employer in Gaza after the authorities. We hire over 18,000 people in Gaza. With that shortfall, one of the biggest cuts we have faced is in emergency assistance. The US decided to cut \$300 million in January, and \$90 million of that usually would have gone to Gaza's emergency assistance. It would have covered things like food, community mental health programmes, psycho-social support, shelter repair and so forth.

The risks from the funding crisis on an already overstretched Gaza are really an extremely serious and imminent situation. When I say "imminent", we do not, for example, have enough money to deliver food



in the third quarter. We have enough to buy it; we do not have enough to deliver it. For the final quarter, we do not have enough to buy it at all.

When it comes to education, which is obviously a very serious service, we provide education to over 270,000 kids in Gaza—90% of them, by the way, have never left the Gaza Strip. We see education as a very important aspect of dignity and of course other things—we include human rights and tolerance programmes—and we do not have enough money to open the schools in August.

If I can summarise the risks—and we all know UNRWA in Gaza, in particular, is a seriously stabilising factor both from a human perspective and a security perspective—we are going to be making some very serious decisions in July. That could have a devastating impact on an already burgeoning crisis.

Q4 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Is that the same kind of situation for NGOs? Particularly, are you finding that there are restrictions that mean that you cannot do your day-to-day work? Who is placing those restrictions on you, if they are there?

Aimee Shalan: There are restrictions that make our day-to-day work very difficult. There are very long and protracted processes we have to go through—for instance, at the moment, in getting limb reconstruction equipment into Gaza. It takes a long time. We have to take a photograph of every single piece of equipment we are getting in. We have to clear it through customs, we also have to clear it as a donation, and then we also have to clear it through COGAT to ensure that we can get it into Gaza. That can take a long time. The Israeli authorities, in terms of COGAT, have been trying to expedite that.

Q5 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Is it always successful once you have gone through that process, or are things sometimes rejected?

Aimee Shalan: We have had a case in the past where there was equipment—breast prostheses—that was stuck in customs for nine months. By the time it got to Gaza one of the patients that it was intended for had actually died. There are times when we have delays. That, again, can be for a number of different reasons in terms of the bureaucratic system. In terms of patient care, however, there are many restrictions, particularly the permit system for allowing patients to get the treatment they need outside of Gaza, whether that is in the six specialist Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem, or in the West Bank, Israel or abroad.

Also, in terms of delivering training, one of the biggest issues is training for medical workers in Gaza in order to ensure that we have a system that is developing. That is one of our biggest obstacles. Those are obstacles in terms of getting permits from Israel, getting out through Rafah—because the border has been closed for so long—and also getting a non-objection letter from Jordan if we get a permit from Israel to travel



HOUSE OF COMMONS

abroad, and sometimes there are difficulties getting UK visas for practitioners to come and train for periods of time here. It is absolutely essential for medical professionals to be able to have access to international training; otherwise you have a stagnating system.

Q6 Richard Burden: We will probably be returning in a little while to the issue of funding, but could I perhaps ask you a little bit more about the impact of the blockade? Israel, when the term “blockade” is used, disputes that there is a blockade on Gaza. Could I ask for your response to that? They would also probably say that the mechanisms for reconstructing the buildings that have been destroyed in conflict and the ability to get essential equipment and supplies in are provided by the so-called Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Could you describe your views of that? First of all, could you describe what it is, and, secondly, give your views of how it is working?

Jamie McGoldrick: The GRM—the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism—was set up to facilitate the ability of material to come in to try to rebuild the houses that were destroyed during the 2014 hostilities. That is linked to a dual-use list that has material on there that has to get expedited quickly to bring that equipment in. Unfortunately, the list that is there is inconsistent. It is not easy to follow. No one has actually seen the list, and there are many issues and many items on that that get blocked for arbitrary reasons. We are trying to review that mechanism right now to make it much more streamlined and available, but the funding for more reconstruction is over—there is no more money in that pot for reconstruction. The mechanism will be used hopefully for facilitating the ability to bring in equipment that is essential for medical support and other types of support as well.

In terms of the blockade, the movement of people in and out, as described by colleagues, is difficult. Getting patients out for treatment is difficult. Even the movement of international staff through various crossings, for example, has become much more complicated. It is a challenging environment to work in. For us to have a permissive space to work in is not easy either. It is not something we can guarantee, as something we need. In terms of moving people in and out, especially national staff, many are not allowed to come out from Gaza—those who are working for NGOs or UN agencies. Sometimes when they do get prevented from getting a permit, they also get a year ban. We have to work on them and work on the ability for them to move around. That is for training purposes and for the ability to get out and be part of their own teams, NGOs and UN agencies.

Q7 Richard Burden: In relation to the GRM, can you tell the Committee who the parties are to the agreement that set up the GRM?

Jamie McGoldrick: The parties are the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Egyptians. Those are the three. There is a tripartite meeting that has met previously, and there is another one that is forthcoming; they will



HOUSE OF COMMONS

meet again to undertake this review that has been agreed to. Those are the parties.

Q8 **Richard Burden:** Is the international community a party to the agreement?

Jamie McGoldrick: Yes.

Q9 **Richard Burden:** Through which mechanism?

Jamie McGoldrick: The UN. We have a monitoring mechanism, a monitoring unit, which oversees and facilitates the goods being processed by the GRM.

Q10 **Richard Burden:** You said that there is doubt about what is classified as dual-use materials. Under the GRM, who has the right to classify that?

Jamie McGoldrick: The Israelis have the right to oversee what comes in. The problem is there is inconsistency as to what people think is on that list. An example would be that people can bring in wood to construct furniture, for example, but would not be allowed to bring any solvent to use to stick the furniture together. There are inconsistencies we are trying to work on to make it much easier, to make businessmen more able to do that, and to help people who are bringing material in for construction purposes or equipment that is needed, for example, to repair some of the dialysis machines, incubators and places in the hospitals.

Q11 **Richard Burden:** Is there any mechanism for arbitration on that? If it is an international agreement, does Israel have the power to arbitrate on what is an international agreement, or do the parties collectively have the right to arbitrate on that?

Jamie McGoldrick: It is a bilateral discussion between those people importing and the Israeli authorities. COGAT is one of the interlocutors we have in that regard. That is who we work with to get the clearance and get the ability for those goods to be brought in.

Q12 **Richard Burden:** Are you happy with that?

Jamie McGoldrick: There is a review coming up on the mechanism itself. We have always found COGAT to be very helpful, straightforward and technical in that regard. It is a good relationship.

Mr Lewis: Good morning. I would also refer people to the Register of Members' Interests. *[Interruption.]* Richard, I think you maybe wanted to do that too.

Richard Burden: My apologies. I should also declare that I have been to Israel and Palestine on several occasions, most recently in April 2016, in a visit organised by Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Council for Arab-British Understanding, funded by the Joseph Hotung Foundation.

Q13 **Mr Lewis:** I would refer people again to the Register of Members' Interests—I will not list specifics. I want to focus on finance. The first



HOUSE OF COMMONS

issue would be clarity. There are so many figures flying around in terms of the funding required for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the consequences of recent events. Could you—I do not know who; it may be Jamie, I suspect—give us a definitive figure, linked specifically to Gaza, that is required to respond to the humanitarian crisis, including recent events?

Jamie McGoldrick: The current humanitarian response plan for Palestine is £540 million. We are currently sitting at 18% funded. That covers both the West Bank and Gaza. I would refer to Rachel specifically on what she has in terms of UNRWA, which is part of that, as well as some other programmes it has outside this plan. We do not break it down in terms of a Gaza budget and a West Bank budget. We do it sectorally, for example on food assistance or water, sanitation and health.

Specifically on what is happening right now, we issued a white paper, which was a paper for fundraising, specifically from 30 March. The three areas where we looked for funding were health support to hospitals; the second part was psycho-social, and the third part was monitoring. That was for \$5 million. Since then, we have upgraded that by another \$15 million. We have asked for \$20 million altogether. That \$20 million is for this current crisis affecting the health and the psycho-social support, as a direct result of the violence that has taken place in the demonstrations. It is a \$20 million figure, and we have currently received \$5 million. We need \$15 million more.

Q14 **Mr Lewis:** I think the Committee would totally agree that there is a dreadful humanitarian crisis in Gaza. You lump Gaza and the West Bank together. Do you view the situation in the West Bank as being a humanitarian crisis?

Jamie McGoldrick: There are humanitarian requirements there too.

Q15 **Mr Lewis:** Is there a humanitarian crisis?

Jamie McGoldrick: There are humanitarian needs there. It is not at the same scale as you have in Gaza. Gaza has been a catastrophe for years. On top of that, since 30 March, there has been a crisis on top of a catastrophe. While we are addressing the crisis, the underlying trends and underlying requirements, such as water and sanitation, energy and all those other aspects, have never been addressed and are not being addressed. As we address the crisis since 30 March, underlying that, things are collapsing: for example, the food needs, as mentioned by Rachel, the poverty, the lack of purchasing power, the unemployment and the economy. We are not addressing that, because we are 18% funded.

Q16 **Mr Lewis:** I understand. What I am getting at is, although I understand the sectoral showing, it would help if there was some differentiation in terms of saying there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, this is the funding requirement to deal with the issues that you have quite rightly just identified, and this is the gap. At the moment, you are saying that that



figure is not available, because of the lumping together of Gaza and the West Bank.

Jamie McGoldrick: We could make an estimate that is probably about 70% for Gaza and 30% for the West Bank.

Q17 **Mr Lewis:** What monitoring accountability and transparency is there in terms of the use of the money that is provided for humanitarian assistance? For example, there is a need to make sure it is not used for terrorist activities, making tunnels and all the rest of it. It is not just a question of security issues but also a question of corruption, lack of governance and waste. What sort of accountability mechanisms are in place in terms of best use of whatever resources are made available?

Jamie McGoldrick: I will make a general point, and then I will pass to Rachel, as they have operations on the ground in Gaza. As in any context we work in, we have the regular audit oversight, monitoring and evaluation. That is there in place. Specifically in Gaza, because of the connection to terrorism, as you mentioned, there is much more scrutiny there. We are very well aware of us needing to be very transparent and needing to be on top of all the issues there to make sure the partners we have are the right partners, and to make sure they comply with the rules and regulations of the UN system. The NGOs have their own systems, as well. There is a collective understanding that that is a sensitive point, but we follow it.

Rachel Evers: I will try to be brief. Starting at the overarching level, as United Nations agencies we obviously have a strong commitment to the humanitarian principles. In the area we operate in—one that is very key—aside from humanity, there is neutrality. First of all, in terms of the income coming in, taking UNRWA as an example, it is 94% funded by voluntary contributions. Every single agreement we have with our donors will include a variety of conditionality. A key one is neutrality—i.e. ensuring the funds coming in are not used for the wrong purposes, and ensuring we abide by all of the neutrality and UN rules, including suppression of terrorism, et cetera, and the sanctions list that the UN holds.

UNRWA has a very extensive neutrality framework. It is divided into various sections, targeting any type of potential breaches in different areas. You have the external evaluation from donors, which Jamie has alluded to, where you would have regular evaluations. For example, the EU has regular verifications, and some of those verifications will include looking at these aspects to ensure that the funding does not reach the wrong recipients. We also have extremely detailed vetting requirements, where we vet staff, suppliers, vendors and beneficiaries—for example, UNRWA beneficiaries go on twice a year. They are vetted against the UN and other lists. There is a mechanism in place, and UNRWA is probably one of the agencies in the UN at the forefront of that because of where we work and the, often, allegations that we see out there from different lobby groups. Does that answer you?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q18 Mr Lewis: It does. Can I ask both Jamie and Rachel another point, and then I will finish on this issue of finance? It is suggested that a central part of the US Administration's initiative on the Middle East will be a significant amount of money raised for Gaza specifically. We have already heard that Mahmoud Abbas has said he does not want this money to be raised in this way. I assume, whatever we think about other aspects of American policy in the Middle East, if the Americans were to raise a substantive amount of money from Gulf countries and other countries in the Middle East, to enable you to deal more effectively with the humanitarian situation, you would welcome that. I just want clarity on whether you would welcome that as a central part of a new US initiative on the Middle East.

My final point is in terms of UNRWA's impartiality. As I understand it, for refugees, the status of refugees is normally limited to one generation. The Palestinians are the only group where that definition of "refugee" can stretch to five generations. Can you explain whether that is true and why that is the case?

Rachel Evers: I can take the first question. Would we welcome US funds? I am talking from an UNRWA perspective. Currently our deficit is £250 million. As far as we have been told, we will be receiving no further money from the US. That is certainly the policy level. If money was to come through via some new plan or other, I am not at liberty, nor do I have the mandate, to say we would welcome it, because I have not seen the conditionality attached. I have no idea how it will be presented. UNRWA has no seat at the political table. We are a humanitarian agency. I cannot really say whether we would accept it. Of course, more income coming into extremely vulnerable people is something we would support.

Jamie McGoldrick: I would echo that and say that, in any context in which you work as humanitarians, the money is given to you with no conditions, and you are allowed to use that money to address the humanitarian needs as identified in your response plan. Funding from any source would be considered and accepted.

Q19 Chair: Would one of you like to respond to Ivan's other question about the refugee definition?

Rachel Evers: Yes, sure. We have seen since January a lot of press on UNRWA, following the de-funding from the US. We have obviously gone into major fundraising campaigning, including our own Dignity Is Priceless campaign. We had a conference in Rome. We had funds coming in from our partners in the Gulf countries and others, including Turkey, et cetera.

There has been a lot of press about UNRWA's definition of refugees. I would refer anybody who throws that out there to the 1951 Refugee Convention. I would refer them to the definition of refugees, and the only other agency we know is the Refugee Agency—UNHCR. If people do the proper research, they will find that this is a standard definition of refugees and that actually UNRWA's is narrower than UNHCR's. Why?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Because UNRWA's definition passes through the male line; by the way, we received a lot of complaints on that because of the gender issues, whereas UNHCR's definition passes descendancy through both lines. So it is not true.

Q20 Chair: Rachel, on the broader issue of funding of UNRWA, and the cut by the Trump Administration, how are other donors rising to the challenge of making up that funding shortfall? In particular, the second panel has the Minister, so what do you want the UK to do more of to make up the Trump cuts?

Rachel Evers: First of all, I am here on behalf of the Commissioner-General to express sincere thanks to the UK Government for the generous support that has come through to UNRWA. The UK is the fourth-ranked largest donor in terms of overall contributions. We have seen a consistent level of contribution over the years, including £50 million in 2017, and we are still on track from that perspective. By the way, in any of the reviews by DFID, we have triggered A grades and, I think, what is called "green/amber", which are very high results. Is your question what more can be done?

Chair: Yes.

Rachel Evers: Currently, if we are looking at Gaza, first of all on the impact of the recent Great March, UNRWA has estimated it needs an extra \$10 million to deal with the impact on our clinics alone. In terms of the situation on the ground, we do not want to see food assistance being removed, as it would reduce the calorific intake in the most vulnerable—because you are talking about abject and absolute poor families and those who earn \$1.75 a day and up to \$3.75 a day. If that was to be removed for the rest of the year, we would be in an extremely dire situation vis-à-vis those people. We need funding for the emergency appeal, including psycho-social support and contributions to continuing community mental health.

As I said, we have vocational programmes in Gaza, which are extremely important. The figures in April and May show that unemployment has gone up to 49.1% in general. Female unemployment is much higher than that. We need tangible income coming in for the most vulnerable projects, to ensure the consistent service delivery. I am not saying that could avoid a humanitarian disaster, because none of us at this table believe we are not already there; we have seen the UN revise the 2020 report, and already it has escalated—we are in it.

Q21 Paul Scully: Jamie, you mentioned earlier on about how the availability of electricity is affecting healthcare. I wonder what the quality of supply is like at the moment in terms of wider humanitarian support in other areas and maybe what the prospects are for the future as well.

Jamie McGoldrick: Right now we have four hours of electricity per day. That is what is coming in through a number of sources, be it the Egyptian



lines or the Israeli lines, and fuel that is brought in to run the Gaza power plant. Four hours is what people currently receive. Obviously we are trying to expand the possibilities there, to try to increase the amount of electricity coming in and expand the number of hours for people to have electricity. We also have an emergency fuel fund, which we use for the facilities for water and sanitation and for health institutions. We supply that to them. We need £4.5 million between now and the end of the year to keep those going because of the requirements there. The electricity is fundamental to everything else that goes on there: water, energy and the ability for hospital and schools to run. We are trying to convert many of the health institutions to solar panels and solar power. That is not easy to do.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee has a number of large-scale capital investment projects, which are longer term—the 161 kV line and various ways of improving the lines into Gaza—but I doubt they are going to happen any time soon. The conditions on the ground are not there. The reconciliation among the parties is not right. The parties concerned are maybe not on the same page. We are going to be in this emergency supply mode for quite a significant time. Having solar is one thing, and having much more funds available to buy fuel and keep fuel going for public consumption, but also for the hospitals, schools and water and sanitation centres, is very vital. Otherwise, more and more people will use unpotable water, because water-trucking is 20 times more expensive than tap water. The poorest will get hit first, and their health will suffer because of the use of that contaminated water.

Q22 Paul Scully: Thanks very much. I was consistent with the rest of the panel in failing to declare my Register of Interests as well. Most recently, I went to Israel just last month.

Following up on solar panels, there is a lot of work going on with solar energy in Israel. What are the prospects? What are the difficulties with solar panels?

Jamie McGoldrick: It will be just getting funding, first of all. We have some donors lined up to provide some funding for that, but it is a big initiative to get all of the primary healthcare centres on solar. It will draw away from the grid itself. The bigger hospitals cannot have solar. They just operate at too high a voltage for that. This is what we are trying to do. Getting the material in—good material—getting maintenance in and getting batteries in may be problems for the dual-use list. There may be problems with bringing some of those in from the outside.

Q23 Paul Scully: That is what I was going to ask you. Is it considered dual use?

Jamie McGoldrick: As I mentioned earlier, the consistency of that is not quite there, but we are working very clearly to try to make sure there is a more permissive approach to bringing in batteries, to try to use those for solar for the public health facilities.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q24 **Paul Scully:** Notwithstanding the issues that you have talked about, do you think there is any prospect, even in the medium to long term, about solar panel fields, rather than just sticking it on top of a hospital?

Jamie McGoldrick: That would be the idea: to have areas where you could have solar panel fields. Some areas are restricted. Even inside Gaza you cannot operate agriculturally or putting these panels in, so it is going to be quite difficult to do that. It is more likely to be linked to buildings or public service hospitals and schools, et cetera.

Q25 **Chair:** Can I finish with a question that hopefully there will be time for all three of you to answer, which is about water? Jamie just referred to water. Our predecessor Committee four years ago made a report on the Occupied Territories, and the Government told us in its response that Gaza's aquifer was so saline that less than 10% of the water extracted is safe to drink. If Rachel can start with this one, what is the current situation with regard to access to clean drinking water in Gaza?

Rachel Evers: Certainly, in UNRWA, we have figures that up to 97% of households do not have access to clean water. We also have figures from our health department that we have seen an increase in waterborne diseases. For example, last year the incidence of diarrhoea in children under three doubled, if not trebled. We are seeing a very serious issue there of health issues that will only increase.

Q26 **Chair:** Aimee, we are told by DFID that UK support is providing Gazans with access to clean water and improving sanitation facilities. What is your assessment of the support from the UK and other donors? What kinds of things are being done to try to address the scale of this issue?

Aimee Shalan: I cannot comment a great deal on this, as it is not an area on which we work. One of the big problems with the fact that we have this contamination in Gaza of the coastal aquifer, an expanding population and consumption much higher than production is that 90% of the water now for drinking is purchased or comes from desalination plants. That is very costly for a population that is really struggling economically. It also has greater risks in terms of waterborne disease. I am afraid I cannot comment on DFID's input, but I would like to go back, if possible, to a couple of other relevant questions.

Chair: Very briefly, because we run out of time in two minutes.

Aimee Shalan: On the costs in Gaza, to underline the current emergency, those costs are going up exponentially week on week. To give you a quick idea, 22 Taylor spatial frames, which are used to stabilise the leg, cost us over £200,000, and that was with a 50% discount. The equipment that is required for this is incredibly expensive in terms of the kind of care that is needed. That is on top of the shortages of medicines.

One thing I would say to DFID, in terms of spending, is that all of the focus now, or a lot of international focus, is on the emergency, and not



on the development issues that underlie the crisis in Gaza as well. In terms of a strategy going forward, in dealing with this emergency, we would hope that those long-term development goals are also addressed. One example is our limb reconstruction programme, which was set up in 2014 after the emergency of the war in Gaza in 2014. That has built capacity and established a limb reconstruction unit in Shifa Hospital that is now able to deal with complex surgeries.

It is not enough to deal with what is coming in now, but for any support that is coming through—and we would ask this for all international support that is coming to deal with this emergency—we would ask that they work with the local expertise that has been established there, in order to co-ordinate and ensure that, when their support is pulled out, because it is unlikely that they will be there for the 12 to 18 months in terms of the emergency support, the local medical teams are able to provide a continuum of care.

Q27 Richard Burden: Returning to the issue of shortages and so on, this is really a fairly broad question, but perhaps if you could provide your answers by way of summary.

Chair: Just Jamie for this one, because we are going to overrun.

Richard Burden: How would you characterise Israel's responsibilities to Gaza under international humanitarian law, and how far is it fulfilling those responsibilities?

Jamie McGoldrick: The situation in Gaza is that the blockade and the border controls, both sea and land, make it very difficult for people to have a normal life. They make it difficult for us to operate as easily as we could and should. They make prices of goods very, very expensive. They mean businessmen are not able to get permits as easily as they should. Those numbers have come down, so trade has come down. You can see by the number of trucks that come into Gaza—the commercial trucks have gone down. The purchasing power of individuals on the ground there is massively in deficit. You have people—shopkeepers and suppliers—in debt courts or in prison, because they cannot afford to pay. There are salaries that have not been paid from Ramallah for months. All of that exacerbates the situation on the ground.

Israel is there. It is providing this blockade, and that makes it a restrictive environment. Under international humanitarian law, with the principles that we use of impartiality, independence, humanity and all the usual principles, we expect a permissive approach from the Israeli authorities in that regard.

The situation in Gaza is not getting any better. The collapse of UNRWA is only adding to an already very catastrophic situation. Unless we have a way of all parties who are involved in this going through a reconciliation process—and ultimately the parties in neighbouring countries, including Israel, being much more supportive of the humanitarian endeavour that we try to address with 18% funding—we are facing a very, very uphill



HOUSE OF COMMONS

struggle. There is no humanitarian solution to this problem; it is a political solution. We can only do our best with limited funding, as we are getting cuts in more and more places. It is a very, very difficult ask to do.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I am afraid we are out of time. I want to thank all three of you for your evidence this morning. Please do feel free to stay to listen to the Minister and DFID official. Thank you very much for joining us here today.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP and Emma Donnelly.

Chair: We move now to our second panel, Minister Alistair Burt and Emma. I am going to ask Richard to open the questioning.

Q28 **Richard Burden:** Thank you very much for coming along. I am going to open up by asking you what you think the impact of the violence on and around 14 May has been on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and on the prospects for its alleviation as part of an overall peace process.

Alistair Burt: Thank you very much for the opportunity to come and talk. As colleagues know, I was in Gaza fairly shortly after the incidents of 14 May, so I am happy to give some observations on that generally and answer any specifics. May the 14th was a significant shock to every part of the situation there for those involved in those events. The Israeli Government officials that I met, and reports of those in Gaza—as you know, we have no contact with Hamas—indicated that the severity of those impacts on that day had produced a degree of shock all round. Because of that, I felt when I was there that prospects for the future in Gaza, both immediate and medium term, in terms of development and humanitarian prospects, might be affected for the good because of what had happened.

Without pinning blame or anything like that—and I have to talk about that further—I think there was a recognition that something significant had happened and that, if it was not to happen again, something serious has to happen about the future of Gaza.

On your immediate question, obviously the most severe impact was on medical supplies and the medical situation. I went to the Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City. I met doctors and I saw some of those who had been wounded in the events surrounding the protests. The hospital was spotlessly clean. The staff were very good at explaining what had happened. There was no political angle to it. I was not given a political lecture or anything else; I just saw some of the young people who had been injured, and spoke to them. We became aware, obviously, over the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

course of the protests that because of the number of people who had been injured, there was a reduction in the availability of medicines, bandages and of immediate things that are necessary to deal with an incident like that. I took the opportunity to announce an extra £1.5 million, given to ICRC, as the best mechanism that we had to put funds into the health system. That was the immediate impact.

Longer term, of course, those who have been wounded in the leg are going to have mobility issues. We cannot just see this as one set of incidents that happened at the time. There will be long-lasting effects. That will have to be built into the calculations of the health needs of those in Gaza for the future.

In terms of other aspects to the humanitarian situation, I do not think they are necessarily affected by the protest per se. The situation on food, water and power, which I am sure we will cover, remains very serious, but maybe there are some opportunities to do more about that in the future, and perhaps a recognition that we cannot go on as we are in relation to Gaza may have some impact. The immediate issue was on the health side, and that is why we moved as quickly as we could to provide some extra support.

Q29 Richard Burden: One of the things that has attracted a lot of international concern has been that fact that health workers and first responders have been killed and wounded as part of the violence last month. Could I ask you a little bit about, first, what mechanisms of accountability are in existence, and, second, how they are going to investigate what is happening and hold anybody accountable, wherever that evidence leads.

Alistair Burt: The figures that we have suggest that between 30 March and 3 June, two health workers were killed, 328 were injured by live ammunition and tear gas by Israeli forces, and 45 ambulances were affected by protests in Gaza. Clearly, there has to be a sense that health and aid workers are protected and should be protected. There is likely to be debate about individual cases and what people may or may not have been doing with information that is just not available to us, but the figures are fairly stark.

Of course, the death in particular of Razan Al-Najar, the young woman paramedic who was killed shortly after I returned to the UK, was particularly shocking. I am not aware of what justification there would be for the death of this young woman. I have not seen anything that would strike me as any justification for this. The outpouring of grief in Gaza seemed to me to be entirely spontaneous and justified from what was seen. I say again—and I think we all feel the same—that no matter what the background and circumstances of all this has been and whatever investigation is carried out, the scale and the circumstances of misery being produced in Gaza are now almost overwhelming. Accordingly, there need to be the political efforts to make the changes all around that are necessary.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

In relation to the investigation of incidents, I repeated while I was there what I said in the House of Commons, and what the Prime Minister put directly to Prime Minister Netanyahu when she saw him: that there needs to be an independent and transparent investigation as to what has happened. Let us be very clear amongst ourselves about what this means and what this does not mean. It is highly unlikely, because of Israel's experiences in the past, that they are going to accept an investigation conducted solely by an outside body. They have the UN investigation, the Goldstone inquiry, which they quote as an example of a very biased attempt to investigate circumstances surrounding them. It seems to me unlikely that that is a path that would be accepted; the same is true with the HRC.

The Israelis, of course, have an investigative mechanism of their own through their armed forces, as many states have in relation to similar incidents. We have suggested strongly that there might be an independent element added to this, which would be recognised by people outside Israel as adding credibility to any findings of fact that emerge. We have yet to have a full response. We understand the Israeli Government are conducting an investigation of their own, as they would, and claim to have very high standards of investigation in relation to shots fired by its military in these circumstances.

What also needs to be clear is that any attempt to find out what happened in relation to Hamas activity to propel people to the border will be almost impossible. No one will give any evidence in Gaza against Hamas or give evidence likely to put them at risk. Hamas do treat people with severity for opposing them and putting forward information about them. I do not think we can be in any doubt about that. Accordingly, trying to find out what happened in relation to those who went close to the border, and the circumstances of those who are killed or wounded, will be immensely difficult, as will getting any information from Hamas or from the Gaza side.

When we talk about an investigation into this and all the circumstances of this, by and large people are talking about the Israelis, because they are most likely to produce information, but we have to be clear that it is likely there will be elements of this whole business that we will probably never be able honestly to uncover, but the UK position is to press for an independent and transparent inquiry as best we can.

Q30 **Richard Burden:** You say you have not had a full response from Israel about including an independent element in their inquiry.

Alistair Burt: Not yet, no.

Q31 **Richard Burden:** Has there been any response from Israel on that matter?

Alistair Burt: I do not think there has been an official response. It was of course relatively recently that the Prime Minister met with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I am not aware of an official response to a number



HOUSE OF COMMONS

of requests made. Of course, there is a UN Security Council request for transparency, as well. I am not aware of any response to that so far.

Q32 **Richard Burden:** The UK abstained on the establishment of an inquiry by the UN Human Rights Council. The vote went through nonetheless. Is the UK position now that that inquiry, whilst it did not feel that it was the ideal way of doing it, should be supported?

Alistair Burt: The UK recognises that this inquiry will go ahead. It does not necessarily require any support or anything else from the United Kingdom. It has been agreed it will go ahead, and it will go ahead. I do not think the United Kingdom will necessarily make any further comment about it. We will wait and see what emerges.

Q33 **Richard Burden:** One of the concerns that has been raised about all of this is that if there is no accountability, whether it be accountability of Israel for its action, or perhaps accountability of Hamas for its actions, what is left is a culture of impunity whereby these things just carry on and on and on, with those responsible knowing nothing is ever going to happen. They are right, are they not?

Alistair Burt: Yes, I agree with that. This is one of those areas where you look at the various norms we have all worked to for as long as we can remember and ask what is left if these norms break down. I am here neither for Hamas nor for the state of Israel. The state of Israel has concerns about how it is seen by others and the inquiries launched against it, in a manner that is well known to members of the Committee. Equally, trying to get anything in relation to Hamas is opaque because of the violence with which they will deal with an inquiry.

The real victims of this are those who were killed and wounded, those who have been damaged in the protest and those who live in the circumstances of Gaza. They all deserve much better. They deserve a different political outlook that gives them opportunities. Certainly, like anyone else who has been the victim of incidents, they deserve a process that will find out what happened, partly to make sure that these incidents do not happen again.

Whether or not an inquiry does that, it is incumbent on the rest of us to do all that we can to make sure that the causes of the protests are dealt with as best as possible and that the future of Gaza is seen in a different way by those responsible for its future, whether it is those who govern it internally or those responsible for its security outside. As we have indicated, and we all believe, we cannot go on as we are.

Does the lack of an inquiry mechanism that is acceptable to those who have been involved suggest that there is little accountability? It may certainly look that way. Accordingly, we must do all we can to see how we can change that equation. Being honest about the circumstances, some of this will prove extremely difficult.

Q34 **Richard Burden:** Is one of the areas where we as the UK do have the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

ability to demand some kind of accountability the weapons and components that the UK has licensed for export to Israel? Licences issued in the last two years have included things like assault rifles, sniper rifles and so on. Has the UK undertaken any investigations into whether any of those arms or components has been used in Gaza? If so, what have those investigations consisted of?

Alistair Burt: We have indeed. All the extant licences that were in place once the protest and live fire started were looked at to make sure there was nothing there that could be considered as being used in what was happening in Gaza. We were sure that that was not the case. We have no evidence and nothing that leads us to believe that anything the United Kingdom has sold has been used in Gaza. We have no evidence of that, but we have indeed looked at the licences produced most recently, just to try to satisfy ourselves in relation to that.

Q35 **Richard Burden:** Sniper rifles and assault rifles theoretically could have been used in Gaza. My question is about what checks the UK has undertaken to satisfy itself that they have not been used?

Alistair Burt: We have done checks. I am happy to supply further information about precisely what checks those have been, but we have indeed, because it was one of the first things we thought of: that we have to try to find out. As you know, the whole process of this—and you know a great deal about it, Richard—is that when an arms sale is considered, the element of risk is considered right at the outset. Accordingly, in order to inform us in future, as well as to consider whether any existing licences have to be suspended or stopped, that degree of risk has to be calculated on the best evidence we have, so we need to make appropriate inquiries to find out whether or not there is anything that would constitute something that would prevent the issuing of a licence and the granting of a sale. That has been done in these cases, and that is why the information given to me enables me to say that we have no evidence to say there have been any breaches there. I am happy to supply further details to the Committee of what processes have been gone through.

Chair: If you could, that would be very helpful.

Q36 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Can I be clear on that particular point? Have you done end-use checks for these weapons or not?

Alistair Burt: We have done checks on the licences that were extant currently, to make sure there is nothing in terms of those licences that requires suspension or anything else. The information we have on previous licences is that we have no evidence that the end use of those weapons sold has been in Gaza.

Q37 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Let me be clear: you are doing checks on the licences that are currently in process.

Alistair Burt: Yes.



Q38 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Those checks under the licence regime do not look at final end use after they have been given; they only look at what the state is saying they will be used for. The answer that I got back from Graham Stuart in the Department for International Trade was that no checks had been made on the end use of licences that had already been granted. Whilst he had no information, and you are saying you have no information, that weapons have been used in Gaza, surely that is because no active checks have been made to make sure that they have not been. Of course you have no information, because you have done no checks.

Alistair Burt: I do not believe I can make that statement unless we have obviously done some process to allow that phrase to mean something. As I say to the Committee, I will find out precisely what the background to that is, to make sure the Committee is clear, as we are, in relation to that.

Q39 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Graham said, "We have no extraterritorial powers to restrict the end use of goods, and that is not considered". This is his answer. It would be good if you could get back, because what I am hearing seems to be slightly contradictory.

Alistair Burt: Fine. As the Minister made clear, and as the process is, there is a calculation of the element at risk at the beginning of what the end use may be and everything else. After that, no, if you look at the number of licences that are issued, there is no regular process of checking, but in circumstances such as this, we would like to be as sure as the Committee on the information we can get. I will find out how the Department has satisfied itself to give me the information to say what we have said.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: It would be useful if you could write to the Committee in public or even in confidence on the checks that have been done to make sure for the previous weapons sold.

Q40 **Chair:** Can I follow up with you, Minister, on your response to Richard regarding the UN independent inquiry? You have set out the reasons why the UK abstained. I took your answer to be that this will go ahead but we are not really engaging with it.

Alistair Burt: This is the HRC inquiry.

Q41 **Chair:** Would it not make more sense for us to engage with it and try to ensure it is a successful independent inquiry?

Alistair Burt: I am sure we will deal with any requests from the inquiry to assist in the normal manner. It is not an inquiry we are going to run or be any part of, but if any information is sought from the United Kingdom in relation to that inquiry, it will be given. We will answer questions from the inquiry—of course we will—but I do not suspect we will be the focus of the inquiry.

Q42 **Chair:** In terms of us supporting that to be as successful an inquiry as possible, and one that is genuinely independent to meet concerns on all



HOUSE OF COMMONS

sides in order to get answers to the questions, my sense is we are kind of abstaining from that, having abstained on the vote.

Alistair Burt: We hope it will be, but I make the same points that I did before. If this inquiry is going to be able to get answers from the other side of the fence, I would be very interested. That would be very important.

Our position is very clear. I have spoken, both in public and private, to colleagues about this. I do not accept at the moment the narratives of either of the two extremes. Gaza is not full of terrorists, nor was everything in relation to those marches peaceful. The marches were exploited, and there is a concern about the degree of live fire. That is the UK position, and that is my position. That is all our common-sense understanding of it.

In terms of trying to find out exactly what happened, there is far more likelihood of finding out from the Israeli Defense Forces what action they took and what they did in individual circumstances than there is of finding out almost anything from the organisers of the march that they would wish to conceal. That is simply a reflection of the nature of the rule of Hamas in Gaza, which is cruel and violent.

Q43 Mr Lewis: Good morning. I think everybody would accept that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is horrendous, the Palestinian people living in Gaza are the victims of that humanitarian crisis, and it should be entirely unacceptable in the 21st century that that is happening. The day-to-day realities for the people who are living there are horrendous. If there is to be a solution, first of all there has to be a political solution; a humanitarian response is fine, but there has to be a political solution. To have a political solution, does the Minister accept that there has to be some frankness about the context of the Gaza situation?

What I would say to the Minister is that the situation is not static. Hezbollah has just won an election in Lebanon. Hezbollah is committed to the destruction of the state of Israel. That is on one border. Iran is now in Syria on another. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and others are very active in Gaza. Hamas runs Gaza. These are all organisations that state very overtly that one of their primary objectives is not just a state for the Palestinian people but the destruction of the state of Israel. Does he agree with me that that context for a political settlement cannot be ignored by those who would choose to narrow the focus on this and hold the Israelis responsible solely or predominantly for the humanitarian situation in Gaza?

In terms of the recent protest, again nobody would dispute the requirement to minimise the loss of life and casualties. Nobody would dispute that, but does the Minister also accept that this was not a spontaneous outpouring of anger? This was whipped up by Hamas and other organisations in Gaza, which encouraged civilians and others to approach the border and make it clear that terrorists—Hamas terrorists—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

would be willing to try to breach that border and, if necessary, murder Israelis on the other side of that border.

Chair: Come on, Ivan. You have asked about four questions.

Mr Lewis: The important point I am making is that the narrative, as the Minister said, has to be contextualised if we are going to have a discussion that is adult and mature about a solution, because what we want in terms of the humanitarian crisis—

Chair: I think your point is clear. Minister to answer.

Alistair Burt: You know me well enough. I hope in all the answers I have given about this, I have done my best to set it exactly in the context that you put forward. I said a moment ago that I do not accept the extreme narrative on one side or the other. It is a mixture of things. The political context you set out very well. Israel is required to think about a future that currently involves those who are dedicated to its destruction. It is impossible and not right to ask a state party involved in those circumstances to seek to negotiate on such a basis; that is why the internationally accepted position is that Hamas has to move towards the so-called Quartet principles if it seeks to do so.

That is not to say that there are no circumstances in which people are talking to people. When I returned from Israel, the last newspaper I picked up was a copy of *Haaretz*, and the lead article was a senior IDF official saying, "It's time to talk to Hamas". That means, even in the darkest times, people are looking for ways to get through. It perhaps reflects the narrative I began with to say there has been a sufficient shock to the system.

Hamas is not necessarily desperately popular in Gaza. There is an argument—an allegation—that when it claims a number of its operatives were killed, this may or may not be true, because certainly people in Gaza believe that innocent people, people not belonging to Hamas, were urged to go forward. Therefore, people with no connection to Hamas were killed. Hamas stands accused of that. Therefore, it can be part of their political narrative to say, "No, no, no, these were all Hamas operatives". The point is we do not know, hence the second point that trying to find out what happens is extremely difficult.

The context of political discussions is that, certainly looking forward, Gaza has to be part of that overall agreement we still are hoping for and wishing for. Political leadership in Gaza will clearly have to change or there will have to be different attitudes expressed. Were there clear statements from Hamas leaders that suggested that, should Hamas terrorists get through the border, they would kill Israelis? Yes, absolutely—we have seen the same videos as everybody else has. Does that mean that all the protests were about that? No, I do not believe it does.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The pressure of living in Gaza is, as we all know, about health, sanitation, water, electricity and the circumstances being entirely miserable. A policy of trying to effect political change in Gaza by applying pressure to its people, by whatever party has sought to apply that pressure, would appear not to be particularly successful. It has led to that built-up frustration that was clearly recognised by the organisers of the protest—who were not all Hamas—to express their concern about a political principle they wish to bring forward. It is my sense that those were exploited in some way, but we will not know. It is a mixture.

You are right: any sensible discussion of this has to be from neither blinkered one side or the other. It has to recognise the genuine pressures on the state of Israel from those who would kill if they got the opportunity and broke through a border, and the difficulties of those who live in Gaza and the objectionable leadership that they are suffering because of the views of Hamas.

Q44 Paul Scully: I wonder if, briefly, you could complete the context and fast-forward to the time when you and I were both separately in Israel; you were in Gaza on the day that 70 rockets were launched across into Israel. How has that affected the political dynamic? How have the rocket attacks continued to put that pressure on, and how has that affected the humanitarian support in Gaza itself, perhaps from where they have been launched from?

Alistair Burt: The rocket attacks that you refer to on the Monday—I cannot remember the exact date, but I was there so I remember the context quite well—was the largest rocket attack that had emerged from Gaza since 2014. Some 60-odd rockets were fired. It was clear there was going to be an IDF response, which there was a few hours later. That response, as people noticed, was a very measured response. There was no loss of life in Gaza as a result. Installations were hit by those that the IDF had identified as the perpetrators of the attack.

All then went quiet. As I say, part of the context—and I would stress this because there have to be some optimists in this terrible situation—is that there is some contact between various parties in this, as we all know, though not necessarily overt. I return to what I said right at the beginning. The events were sufficiently shocking for people to realise that if this carries on, there is an inevitable further confrontation and further loss of life.

There is no political hope, because of the grip Hamas has on the population, and there appears to be no political hope in relation to a settlement of the issue. It is incumbent on the international community, first, to do all it can to relieve the humanitarian situation, and also, in doing so, to look for medium and longer term economic development and to put more money into Gaza so that people are able to trade more. That can be encouraged through the new head of COGAT following his predecessor in allowing greater access, so that there is some livelihood and opportunity for people in Gaza that can be built on and used as an



HOUSE OF COMMONS

opportunity for the further political steps we are all looking forward to take.

The fact that there is some recognition on each side of just how far people can go is a reflection of that, and just maybe that exchange, and the fact that it did not develop into anything further, might just be that recognition. I cannot remember the sequence; I think it was before the young woman paramedic was killed a few days later. Maybe that was the final shock to the system, having people saying, "Just no more of this".

Chair: Thank you very much. We have focused a lot on the political context for obvious reasons. We are going to move now to some questions that are much more specifically around the humanitarian and development steps that DFID and others can take. Lloyd is going to lead off.

Q45 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** I am, but I want to quickly ask: you say that it needs a political solution, and you say that we want to move people away from Hamas. That is all very good. Do the violence and ongoing blockade of Israel push people away from Hamas or push people towards Hamas?

Alistair Burt: I am not sure you need necessarily see it purely in the context of Hamas.

Q46 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** You are the one that raised the point that Hamas is part of the problem. You are the one that raised that. That is why I am asking whether Israeli actions actually help build up Hamas and do everything that you are saying you do not want.

Alistair Burt: No, I do not give a sense of building up Hamas; I said that I think Hamas's position in Gaza is not particularly strong. It is the only political force there because they kill anyone else who comes along—unless they are more extreme, as the Islamic Jihad and others are—but it is clear that they will not tolerate, and over the years have not tolerated, anything else. That is how Hamas came to be in control of the areas.

The point is about the actions of the state of Israel, and of course Egypt and others, in terms of restrictions on Gaza. If there was a political intent to persuade people in Gaza to seek an alternative leadership because of the restrictions they were suffering, that objective would not appear to have been reached. I do not think there is a sense, however, that that has necessarily built up Hamas.

As I say, Hamas does not tolerate opposition. There may be opportunities for something different. We all know about the reconciliation process and everything else, so I am not going to link the two in that way, but the restrictions have certainly affected the quality of life in Gaza in a significant way. The United Kingdom believes that changing those certainly assists the people of Gaza with their future and may have a beneficial political effect in due course.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

- Q47 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Hamas won the election in 2006, and they have strengthened during the occupation, and there are many academics that would say the Israelis' actions have actually helped build Hamas, and that is the direct consequence of the illegal blockade. How does DFID identify—this is the main question—support and assistance that is most needed right now for people living in Gaza? How do we do that assessment for how British Government resources are best leveraged?

Alistair Burt: We have people there. DFID and the UK embassy operate from Tel Aviv, as the UK consulate in Jerusalem operates on the West Bank. We have people who operate in Gaza, and of course we work through international organisations. The relationships with UNICEF and with UNRWA in particular are very strong and very good. There is no shortage of information. It is not closed to that sort of information. The information that is available about the difficulties on water, on fuel, on food and the economy are well known.

We do not have any difficulty in identifying with partners where we should help. We choose to work through UNRWA in relation to education and other supplies. We choose to look forward and see what further economic help we can deliver through DFID's economic package, which we already have working there. We are not short of information about what we need to do. As I said earlier, if there is an emergency, such as the support we offered before the turn of the year in terms of the appeal for Gaza that was made then, and then the medical assistance appeal that is being made now, we are able to do that.

- Q48 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** What are our key priorities now?

Alistair Burt: Let me run through some of them. The first is humanitarian support. As I said, there is the £1.5 million to the ICRC appeal, which helps treat patients in 11 hospitals under pressure in Gaza by restocking vital medical supplies, including surgical equipment, bandages and medicine, to help provide physical rehabilitation services for around 4,000 people.

As far as UNRWA is concerned, we have provided £50 million to UNRWA in the last financial year, making us one of the top five donors. We have advanced the next year's funding forward because of the pressures on UNRWA. UNRWA has 22 health centres in Gaza, which provide primary health serviced to approximately 1 million patients. We support those. UNRWA provides psycho-social support in Gaza through its community mental health programme, deploying 274 school counsellors. We also support the UN Access Coordination Unit with £2.5 million from 2011 to 2018.

We are working on water. Since 2017, we have provided support through UNICEF for up to a million people in Gaza, by addressing urgent water and sanitation needs. The funding total to date is £1.9 million, with £334,000 of this left to disburse by September this year.



Q49 **Chair:** Alistair, sorry to interrupt, but is that specifically on water?

Alistair Burt: That is specifically on water. I wanted to try to bring it to something that was understandable, rather than just the figures. For example, it is over 1,000 domestic water roof storage tanks, each with a 1,000 litre capacity, for families whose tanks were damaged in the 2014 conflict; over 3,000 water storage tanks for drinking water, because the water in the pipes is not drinking water; and chemicals to chlorinate water, including in 280 water wells and 38 desalination plants.

In addition, we have an economic package that works to try to provide support for those trading. It includes support for trade, job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water. If you look at Gaza in terms of water, sanitation, health, fuel and the economy, DFID is active in all these areas, either individually or through partners.

Q50 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** It is quite an impressive list, but the UK Government still believe that Gaza is occupied, according to the UN Security Council resolution, by a developed country. Should it be that another developed country has to come to the aid of an area of land occupied by a wealthy developed country, or should it be that we are requiring Israel to pay for all this damage that they have caused?

Alistair Burt: Well, the Committee exists in the real world, doesn't it—

Q51 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** We put pressure on Israel to contribute more so we are able to particularly help with that shortfall of UNRWA, which is really struggling at the moment.

Alistair Burt: As the Committee knows well, the politics of this area are extremely difficult. As Mr Lewis has made clear, Israel is dealing with an area of land in which the governing body is a terrorist organisation dedicated to its destruction. That provides some complications in how the matter is handled. We work with the Israeli Government, and I make representations to the Israeli Government when I am there. I saw the Minister responsible for Gaza. I saw the head of COGAT, who deals with the day-to-day workings. Longer term, I have no doubt that the response of Israel to the Nikolay Mladenov proposals that came forward at the Security Council was a positive one.

Again, as Ivan Lewis made clear, this is not a static position. This is not a status quo. It is moving all the time. Because of the international interest in it, because of the misery of the people of Gaza, and because of the politics of the region, the sense that it just cannot be left is very strong. It is a combination.

Our political efforts are directed, of course, to Israel's responsibility, which is why we talk to Israel about easing the restrictions, the dual use and the ability to get materials in to deal with material damage and the like, but we are also aware of the political realities that have made some of that difficult, because of the actions of those who have taken direct



HOUSE OF COMMONS

action against Israel using materials that have been brought in, et cetera. It is a complex package.

To put it all onto Israel and say that our efforts should only be directed there would be wrong. If we did that, we would be leaving out the people of Gaza, who are caught in the middle of this. Our approach is balanced and correct, but in the longer term, we do not want to be involved in this at all. In the longer term, we want an agreement here. We want to see a good future for the people of Gaza and the sort of political settlement that means a Palestinian state, incorporating Gaza, can be side by side with a secure Israel. That is what we all want to see.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: That is a good moment to segue to talk about the risks and factors going forward.

Q52 **Chair:** Thanks very much, Lloyd. On UNRWA, can you say what the UK is doing to help to make up the shortfall in funding as a consequence of the Trump Administration's cuts in funding to UNRWA, not just relating to Gaza, though obviously our focus today is Gaza?

Alistair Burt: We cannot completely replace this. What we have done is we have brought forward this year's tranche of funding, so an extra £28 million went into the pot earlier. We continue to work with UNRWA on reforms and changes that it might make to its processes. We talk to other donors about their responsibilities as well. We have made it clear that we do not agree with the American decision. Whatever the politics may be, taking it out on the people of Gaza and Palestinians in other areas is not the right answer, and I made my own support clear. When I was in Jordan recently, I went to visit an UNRWA school and a clinic, and I obviously did what I did in Gaza, so our support is clear. We appeal to other donors to help. We are doing what we can to bring forward money. There may be something further we can do as well, but I have to make it clear that we cannot replace the substantial sum that the United States has provided to UNRWA.

Q53 **Chair:** In the first panel, we heard from Medical Aid for Palestinians about how, because of the focus on the emergency nature of the situation in Gaza, there is not the focus on development that one would like. What is DFID doing to try to get, alongside the immediate and proper response to a humanitarian catastrophe, work on longer term development?

Alistair Burt: There are two things. We are finalising a new programme that will help to address the underlying causes of humanitarian strife in Gaza by focusing on economic development. This will help to lift the overall standard of living by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water. I am not yet in a position to announce the figures on that, but it will be a significant increase in the economic development programme that we already have, so that is something for the immediate.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

In the medium and longer term, we will give full backing to Nickolay Mladenov's plans for greater development of infrastructure, but we are already involved there. I went to see one of the desalination plants and the site of the next that we are going to be contributing to, in terms of greater water access. We will support the special envoy's plans in relation to electricity and power distribution. We know that the availability of power is poor. Moving the Gaza power plant from diesel to gas will cut its costs by about two thirds. We will be engaged in supporting that.

In all this, we are neither losing sight of the immediate in terms of the immediate humanitarian response, nor the immediate that is away from the humanitarian response—this need for greater liquidity, which is recognised in Israel, as it is anywhere else in Gaza. Our economic plans will do that. We are also not neglecting the medium and longer term, which will make a contribution no matter what the political future of Gaza may be.

On improved sanitation, there are 43 Olympic swimming pools a day of raw sewage currently going into the Mediterranean. That is unacceptable. The intense efforts from the international community and everyone, including Israel, to deal with that and find the mechanisms to improve the infrastructure are vital. I hope DFID is able to persuade the Committee that we are engaged in all parts of this process.

Q54 Paul Scully: It was interesting what you said about the power station. Could you tell us what the quality of supply is like at the moment?

Alistair Burt: I can. Gaza has three main sources of electricity supply: Israel, Egypt and the Gaza power plant. The most stable of these supply sources is that from Israel, which provides 120 megawatts of electricity through 10 feeder lines. Egyptian supply lines are erratic and in need of upgrade, and the GPP, the power plant, is reliant on expensive and inconsistent fuel to operate, which means its supply fluctuates. The power plant's supply ranges between nought and 90 megawatts, depending on the availability of fuel, and usually operates at less than 50% of its capacity. It has not been functioning since 6 June.

Usually, the fuel that operates GPP comes from Israel via the PA. A recent disagreement between the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company and the PA on fuel taxation has led to the cessation of fuel supply from the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, forcing the distribution company to purchase its fuel from Egypt. As a result of these unstable and fluctuating supply sources, electricity hours in Gaza vary. Gaza has been receiving an average of four hours of electricity per day since mid-April. The Gaza power plant has been down since 6 June, and only Israeli lines have been functional. Emergency fuel is only available for 70 days from the end of May for water and sanitation facilities, health facilities and solid waste collection facilities. According to OCHA, fuel for emergency facilities will be depleted by August 2018. That is the fuel supply situation.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q55 Paul Scully: With the Israeli supply, is there any sense, where it does go down, that it is down to non-payment or problems from the Gaza side, or is it a non-violent protest from Israel? To what extent might that be?

Alistair Burt: I might turn to Emma here for a bit more detail, but my understanding is that the supply is connected to the PA and the revenues it collects. There has been a dispute about how these revenues are used. The amount of revenues that the Palestinian Authority is prepared to spend on Gaza has gone down, with instructions to restrict the fuel supply to save that money, and that is what has restricted the Israeli supply.

Emma Donnelly: As the Minister said, all of these humanitarian development challenges are in the context of the political situation in Gaza. Clearly, to improve the electricity supply, we need to encourage the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli authorities to agree a sustainable process of supplying electricity into Gaza. The economic development programme that the Minister was referring to, and that we are working up, does not ignore those difficult challenges; it is fundamentally about trying to find the agreement with the Israeli Government authorities and the Palestinian authorities to find opportunities to improve electricity supply, to improve investment and to relax some of the regulations that would allow greater investment and job creation.

I am afraid there is not a simple, one-line answer. All of these issues are incredibly vexed and complex, but we recognise that part of the story. We cannot wave a magic wand and improve economic development or electricity supply in Gaza; we need to encourage the parties to work together to come to solutions and agreements that can improve the situation. I am sorry. Did that answer your question?

Q56 Paul Scully: Yes, that was fine, thank you. Minister, we heard from the first panel about how the energy supply is affecting humanitarian support and healthcare provision. I am wondering if you saw any of this or spoke to any people about this when you were in Gaza, and what stories they told you.

Alistair Burt: It is a fact of life. People know, when the electricity supply goes off, they have to use generators and the like. As I say, I was not, at the hospital, given any lectures on the difficulties under which they were suffering, because they were clear. Did they have power in the hospital that morning? Yes, they did. Were they able to treat patients? Yes, they could. Clearly, interruption of power supplies, particularly for hospitals, is a very serious matter, and the generators burn out if they are used excessively, et cetera. There is a ready market for generators, of course, because as soon as you work in that sort of economy, prices change and generators do not always end up where they plan to end up.

We have to be realistic about it: none of it is very good. The restoration of legitimate power sources to ensure that they are available right the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

way through the day is clearly a prerequisite for the economy of Gaza picking up and people living any semblance of a normal life.

Q57 Paul Scully: The World Bank sees the Occupied Palestinian Territories as one of the best locations for solar power. I was just wondering if DFID or perhaps CDC has any plans to work with Gaza to provide solar panels. Again, we were talking about this in the first panel. It could either be per building or solar panel fields, if there is any prospect of them, as they have done in Israel itself quite successfully.

Alistair Burt: Yes, it has come up. Again, I will let Emma answer.

Emma Donnelly: The short answer is yes. The work that we are planning on economic development includes working in partnership with the other big actors, including the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation. One of the things we are specifically exploring and looking to support is solar power, which is sustainable. It does not depend on imports, and it is better in countless ways. It feels very much like a win-win, if we can get it off the ground.

Q58 Mr Lewis: I want to predominantly ask you a finance-related question, but in view of Lloyd's comments, I would also like to ask you for some clarification. There are those of us who believe in a two-state solution. The pro-Palestinian campaigners around the world demanded that Israel left Gaza, because it was defined as an occupation. From memory, Israel left Gaza unilaterally. Hamas then unilaterally took over Gaza—a terrorist organisation committed to the destruction of the state of Israel. It started firing rockets at Israel. That led to the serious constraints that are currently being applied, sometimes described as a blockade. Does the Minister agree that it is very important that we get the sequence of events correct? Does he also agree that, as I understand it, Egypt is applying a blockade to Gaza on the Rafah Crossing, because of their security concerns?

Alistair Burt: The only thing missed out of your narrative was Hamas expelling the PA violently, as part of their taking control of Gaza, but everything else fits a narrative that is commonly accepted. The other bit you might include is that Israel physically evicted Israeli settlers from Gaza, using their own forces to remove Israeli settlers. Again, you are right to raise this because, in the political context of the time, this has given a sense to the state of Israel that it left territory, it swapped land for peace and was not met by peace in response. What we have to do is see through all this to the condition of the people and recognise the political realities, because it is not the only place in the world where there are violent groups operating.

After this length of time and a failure to deal with this politically and move on from where we were, what new things can we inject and what can we do differently that will relieve the conditions in Gaza and undermine any sense of terrorism and the base that terrorists use, to



protect Israel, protect the people of Gaza and move forward with the overall political settlement? That should be our aim.

Q59 Mr Lewis: On the finance question, if we are going to resolve the current problem and build a better future, we cannot rewrite history. It is very important. A political context for this discussion is the psychological impact not on Israeli Governments of one colour or another, but on Israeli voters, from the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, which then led to a terrorist organisation lobbing rockets at the state of Israel. It is important to understand the impact on voters in Israel, which has led to Governments of a political persuasion, arguably, strengthening their position.

On finance, in terms of the lack of transparency and clarity—the first panel tried to be as helpful as possible to us in their evidence—can we be absolutely clear, or is it possible to be clear, of the total cost required to meet the humanitarian crisis in Gaza right now? What is the total amount of money required, and what is the UK contribution so far? Some of this money is linked to money spent in the West Bank, and some of the appeal is linked to resources spent in the West Bank. Is it possible to be clear and transparent about the amount of money required to respond to the humanitarian crisis specifically in Gaza?

Is it equally possible to be clear about the UK's contribution to that? Have the UK Government and the Minister been consulted by the US Administration on any initiative that they are embarking on, which would put the rebuilding of Gaza at the heart of a new political peace process in the Middle East? Have the UK Government been consulted on that by the American Administration? If the Americans were willing and able to galvanise large amounts of resources from Arab countries, would the UK Government positively support that as a contribution towards responding to the humanitarian situation?

Alistair Burt: Let me deal with the second bit first, while Emma sorts through the figures for the first. There is some money that is specifically directed towards Gaza, and there is some money that is given to both the West Bank and Gaza; I will ask Emma to deal with that. The specific sums to Gaza are clearly and easily identifiable.

On your second point, yes, there was a meeting in March in Washington where either both the envoys or one of the envoys, Jason Greenblatt, brought together international colleagues to talk about Gaza. We were indeed represented, not at ministerial level; it was an officials' meeting. It was clear that, in the work of the envoys as they consider what proposals to bring forward, which we hope they will in due course, there was a good look at Gaza. It involved elements that we see identifiably in Nickolay Mladenov's plan—not connected, but there is common agreement on what Gaza needs in terms of medium and longer term infrastructure, as we have already discussed. It needs the power, it needs the safe water, it needs the sanitation. For ease of trade, it needs better trade in and out, but, as you have rightly identified, the risks are



still there for a state that fears that there are people who harbour the determination to hurt and kill Israeli citizens, so there is caution about what goes in and out. That will not be fully relieved until there is a political settlement and Israel can be sure of what is going in and out, and knows that it is not taking any risks.

Yes, indeed, we are very interested in proposals going forward from Gaza. My conversations with the Chancellor have not been as extensive as the Prime Minister's on the NHS, but, nonetheless, I am not in a position to say that we will be able to fund it completely. There is no doubt that I very much, and I am sure the Foreign Secretary and the Government, would want to continue our support and interest in Gaza. In the future, if proposals come forward, we will be looking very carefully at what we can do to assist. We assist now, and I am really interested in what we can do in the future.

Q60 Mr Lewis: In the context of this, because of the breakdown of relationships between the American Administration and the Palestinian Authority, and the response initially of Mahmoud Abbas to the suggestion that America may be raising substantial amounts of money for a Gaza reconstruction programme and his apparent rejection of that, what is the UK doing because of its positive relationship with the Palestinian Authority, as I understand it? Is the UK currently able to play a pivotal role in terms of the international community's interaction with the PA, because of the breakdown of relations with the US? Is the UK trusted by the PA? Do we feel that, despite the situation with the Trump Administration, we continue to have a very positive relationship?

Alistair Burt: I can only answer on our side. Clearly I cannot give the Palestinian Authority view as to how trusted we are or not. What I can say is this: we have urged the Palestinian Authority to reconnect with the United States. We hope they will be able to do so. We think that is very important going forward. We have made it very clear that we do not see a resolution of the issue unless the United States is engaged and involved. Accordingly, we believe the PA should be part of that because, when proposals come forward, it would be much better if the PA had been engaged beforehand.

The decision on moving the Jerusalem embassy hurt the PA significantly, and they felt their reaction was what they needed to demonstrate because of their own support and the feelings of Palestinians. The United Kingdom entirely understands that but, at some stage, that relationship needs to be restored. In the meantime and going forward, I hope the relationship that the United Kingdom has built up with the Palestinian Authority over time, which has been support for state-building in a variety of different ways, certainly enables me to have good access to significant individuals in Ramallah, in the Palestinian Authority, who engage very well with our consulate-general. We think there is a basis there.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I would be very pleased and happy if that relationship enabled, when the envoy's proposals come forward, the United Kingdom to play a very positive role with other partners—European partners in particular—to take forward those opportunities. It seems unlikely that the United States will be able to do this solely. Accordingly, others who have been engaged will have a role to play. As most of you know, I would be very keen and hopeful that we would be able to do that—the sooner the better, but the proposals may have to wait for a little while to come forward.

- Q61 **Chair:** It must be incredibly frustrating having to work with an American Administration that is acting unilaterally, cutting UNRWA and moving the embassy to Jerusalem. The Palestinian Authority's response is completely rational and understandable, is it not?

Alistair Burt: You may say that, Chairman.

- Q62 **Richard Burden:** The previous panel gave us evidence about the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism and described it as an agreement between Israel, the PA and Egypt, with the international community as a partner, but within which the whip hand about what happens and what does not is held by one of those parties, not by agreement—in other words, by Israel. In particular, they told us about the problems of dual-use lists, which seem to be inconsistent, where it is not clear what is on a dual-use list and what is not. Could you say whether the UK supports any changes to the GRM in the reviews being undertaken and, if so, what those changes should be?

Alistair Burt: We support the mechanism. Since its inception, we have provided £1.6 million worth of support to it, and we intend to keep on supporting it. We agree with the UN assessment on the continued need both for the mechanism and the monitoring unit, but there is a review of the mechanism going on at the moment, which we are following very closely from the UN. The reality of it is that this is a difficult process, in terms of materials in and out. It is not cut and dried.

As has already been mentioned, the context of the movement of materials is a very political one because of what has been uncovered over a period of time. You have, on the one hand, the misuse of materials in tunnels and things used to attack the state of Israel; on the other hand, you have the schools that need to be rebuilt, the infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt and everything else. Common sense would tell you that one should not happen and the other should, but it is not always easy to work that process. Yes, we support the mechanism and we support a revision of the rules. We support easing where possible, where Israel's security is not affected and the mechanism could be used to get the materials in that will benefit the people of Gaza.

- Q63 **Richard Burden:** Do those complexities not suggest that the decision-making power about what should or should not be allowed in should not rest with one of the parties, but should rest with the



international community? Is that one of the things that the UK is pushing for?

Alistair Burt: Being straightforward, the practicalities are that Israel is not going to relinquish control of something on which its security depends. If it believes that, should the mechanism not be within its hands, it should fall to the use of those who would transfer materials that could damage Israel, it is not going to do this. It would not be fair to its own people. Again, it calls out for the creation of a settlement in which Israel does not need to fear that, because we have sorted out the politics. That is the only way this will end. Expecting Israel to take a decision that might end up harming people in the state of Israel is unrealistic.

Q64 **Richard Burden:** There has been a lot of discussion, and you have been asked, perfectly understandably, a lot of questions, highlighting the complexity of the situation in Israel and Palestine. While recognition of complexity is important for perspective, would you agree that it should not become the enemy of clarity? To that extent, do you believe that Israel remains in occupation of Gaza?

Alistair Burt: Yes. Legally I do not think there is any doubt about that. As you know, we refer to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, both on the West Bank and in Gaza. I know there is some attempt to change these terms by some, but it is not the United Kingdom's position. In terms of complexity and clarity, absolutely it is complex. Nothing is incapable of a solution but, because of the risks being run in the region as a whole—as Ivan Lewis made clear and I said before, Israel has greater risks than the Palestinian people—while there are terrorist groups prepared to exploit that issue, it needs to be on its guard.

We need to be cognisant of that, but we also need to be cognisant of the circumstances in which terrorism can breed and why the people of Gaza just deserve a better future. Again, I repeat: to say that all the people in Gaza are terrorists is just wrong and does nobody any credit or any good. Accordingly, we need to think beyond that.

I believe there are opportunities now. The special envoy has good ideas going forward. I hope that, when the envoys come forward with their proposals, they will be the basis of something workable. We hope that those who are already engaged in talking to those who, even now, still profess violent views towards Israel—nothing is incapable of change or solution—have some success in moderating those views to mean there might be a chance of going forward in Gaza with those who are currently in control.

Chair: On that note, I am going to bring matters to a close because the House is observing a minute's silence at midday, on the anniversary of the attack on the Finsbury Park mosque. Can I thank all of our witnesses today for their evidence and bring this session to a close?