



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon Lord Cameron of
Chipping Norton**
Secretary of State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and Development
Affairs

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
Tel: 0207 008 5000

Email:
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/fcdo

Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

4 December 2023

Dear Sarah,

Humanitarian Situation in Gaza

Thank you for your thoughtful letter on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and thank you also for your kind words on my appointment as Foreign Secretary. I want to start by echoing your tribute to those aid workers and organisations operating in Gaza, who are enabling the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance in the most difficult conditions and join you in remembering those who have lost their lives.

As you know, I visited the region from 22-24 November and naturally focussed my attention on the humanitarian crisis. In my meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders I emphasised that the flow of aid into Gaza continues to be insufficient to prevent the deepening of this humanitarian catastrophe.

We share the Committee's concerns – too many civilians, including women and children, are losing their lives. Israel has a right to defend itself and to ensure that an attack like that on October 7 can never happen again. But Israel's actions must comply with International Humanitarian Law and Israeli forces must take every possible step to minimise harm to civilians. During my visit I stressed that international humanitarian law must be respected and civilians protected. I also recently met with NATO Foreign Ministers and discussed the situation in detail with a number of key allies in the margins of the NATO summit.

The evidence that you recount speaks to the tragedy unfolding in the region. We need a collective and urgent effort to get aid – including food, water, fuel and medical supplies – into Gaza as fast as possible, by as many routes as possible, including by sea. To this end, we are continuing to press the Government of Israel for unhindered humanitarian access and substantive humanitarian pauses to allow more aid to enter Gaza. We welcomed the cessation of hostilities that began on 24 November, and the concurrent commitment to increase the scale of aid flowing across the Rafah crossing. This pause served as a confidence-building mechanism, and we hope for further such pauses in the future.

On your specific questions:

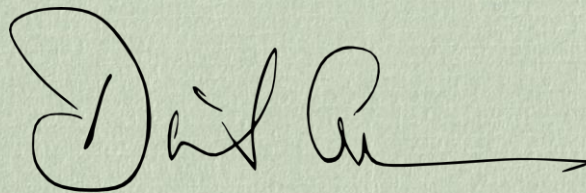
- Since 7 October the UK has committed £60 million in additional aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This includes: £10m to UNRWA to provide life-saving assistance and protection to Internally Displaced Persons in Gaza; £3m to UNICEF to provide child sensitive social protection and cash assistance to vulnerable families; and over £7m to OCHA to support coordination and the UN-led humanitarian pooled fund. A further £10m has been allocated to partners for the provision of core relief items and to provide technical humanitarian expertise. Further allocations, within the newly announced £30m envelope, will be made in due course.
- Four UK flights carrying a total of 74 tonnes of aid have landed in Egypt (on 25 October, 2 November, 3 November and 24 November). Through these shipments we have responded to information from UK partners in the region on what they need to manage and deliver aid more effectively. Shipments have included lifesaving items such as wound care packs, water filters and solar powered lights, as well as vital equipment specifically requested by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society to improve the efficiency of the international humanitarian response to Gaza, including forklift trucks, belt conveyors and lighting towers. We have deployed additional UK humanitarian advisers to Cairo and Jerusalem.
- To assess the categories of humanitarian assistance required we are working closely with trusted partners on the ground who have the best understanding of needs. Their priority is for flexible funding to ensure they can adapt quickly to changing needs, maintain operations and procure locally.
- Over 40% of the Gazan population are under 18. UK humanitarian aid will help ensure the specific needs of children are met. We recognise the disproportionate impact of war on children and the moral, legal, and strategic imperative to protect children from the effects of conflict. We also recognise the importance of providing mental health support to deal with the longer-term impact of the conflict, in addition to recovering the primary healthcare system.
- The UK government continues to explore **all** options to address the immediate barriers faced at border crossings. We welcome the limited movements to date of aid trucks into Gaza through Rafah, but it is vital that more aid routes into Gaza are established and sustained access allowed. We are urging Israel to open other existing land border crossings, such as **Kerem Shalom**.
- We have engaged closely with partners at the UN Security Council and we welcome the language on humanitarian pauses included in the recent resolution (2712) that is consistent with the UK's priorities.
- On our plans for future Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), I direct the Committee to the current planned allocations under which the OPTs are allocated £29m next year. However, as outlined in the FCDO Annual Reports and Accounts 2022-23, allocations are indicative and subject to revision. Allocations are continually reviewed to respond to changing global needs, including humanitarian crises, fluctuations in Gross National Income and other ODA allocation decisions.

- Gaza's recovery and reconstruction will be a major undertaking. A strong, coordinated international effort will be needed. As the Prime Minister set out in his Lord Mayor's Banquet speech of 13 November, alleviating the suffering of civilians is our priority, but we need to create a new political horizon. The UK will work with allies across the region to push for peaceful co-existence. That means providing the serious, practical and enduring support needed to bolster the Palestinian Authority.

I would like to thank you for your reference to the Committee's report on UK aid for refugee host countries, and for your recommendations on this subject of central importance. As was set out in the Government's response, we concur that it is the shared responsibility of the international community to maintain a focus on displacement crises around the world, including through support for countries hosting displaced populations.

I thank you again for your engagement on this most crucial issue. Please be assured that I will continue to engage with you on these important issues.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Cameron', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

THE RT HON LORD CAMERON OF CHIPPING NORTON
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary