



House of Commons  
International Development  
Committee

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**Humanitarian situation  
in Gaza**

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**Second Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 28 February 2024*

## The International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for International Development and its associated public bodies.

On 1 September 2020, DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were merged to form the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The Committee remains responsible for scrutiny of those parts of FCDO expenditure, administration and policy that were formerly the responsibility of DFID.

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## Introduction and context

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On 7 October 2023, a horrific act of terrorism was perpetrated in Israel by Hamas fighters based in Gaza. Innocent civilians, many young, were brutally attacked, murdered, injured or taken hostage from inside their own country. This crime was atrocious and at this time, with not all hostages released, it is ongoing.

As a response to this despicable attack, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) moved into Gaza and conflict ensued. Since then, the situation in Gaza has moved to one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has seen. Those providing aid - professionals who have seen much suffering through natural disasters and wars around the world - say that they have no words to describe what is happening to civilians in Gaza. These normally passionate, eloquent people are left speechless and they feel powerless after what they have witnessed, not least the speed, the intensity and that it is 100 per cent man-made.

And then there are the Palestinian people themselves. It is clear that a political process is urgently required. This report does not try to work through that. But in the meantime, millions of people have been displaced, some multiple times, and they are now literally trapped with nowhere to go, facing starvation, disease and the deepest despair.

The International Development Committee was concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza from the start of this crisis and took evidence on 14 November 2023 and 9 January 2024 to hear from the United Nations (UN) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) operating in the region. The Committee visited Cairo in February 2024 to meet with NGOs, ambassadors based in the region and the Egyptian Government, and also travelled to Al Arish in North Sinai (the closest region to Rafah in the Gaza Strip). The Committee visited the hospital where Palestinians from Gaza receive emergency treatment and the logistics hub where aid is collected by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

The Committee is grateful from the support of the British Embassy in Cairo and to all the bodies who have provided evidence both formally and informally. The Committee is turning this report around rapidly as a deadline of 10 March (start of Ramadan) has been set before Israel extends its offensive into Rafah.

# 1 The Humanitarian Situation in Gaza

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## Humanitarian situation

1. The humanitarian situation in Gaza was difficult before October 2023. The World Food Programme estimated that more than 60 per cent of Gaza's population faced food insecurity prior to the 7 October attack<sup>1</sup> and most of the food imported into Gaza travelled first through Israel. Gaza relied on Israel for approximately half of its total electricity supply and almost all of its liquid fuel supplies.<sup>2</sup>

2. After the horrific acts of 7 October 2023, the situation escalated. António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, issued a statement on 27 October 2023 stating that:

The humanitarian system in Gaza is facing a total collapse with unimaginable consequences for more than 2 million civilians. As the bombing intensifies, needs are growing ever more critical and colossal.<sup>3</sup>

3. Describing the situation on the ground to the Committee in November 2023, Shaina Low, Adviser to the Norwegian Refugee Council said "... our staff ... have lived through multiple escalations in Gaza and have said, day after day, that it is the worst day of their lives. Each day gets worse and worse, and nothing compares to previous escalations."<sup>4</sup> Yasmine Ahmed from Human Rights Watch said:

There is no way to describe this other than as a humanitarian crisis that is getting worse and worse by the minute, by the hour and by the second. There are no more adjectives, as others have said, to describe what is happening.

4. Since then, the situation has deteriorated further, and witnesses struggle to articulate it. Rohan Talbot, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), told this Committee in January 2024: "If we were describing catastrophe six weeks ago, I do not know what word to use to describe the health situation today."<sup>5</sup> Nebal Farsakh, Spokesperson for the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), said the situation is "absolutely beyond catastrophic". These sentiments were echoed by NGOs and UN workers that the Committee met on its visit in February, all of whom said they had no words left to describe the worst situation they had seen in their long careers in this sector.

5. There have been many suggestions of how to improve provision of food aid, such as air drops or maritime aid.<sup>6 7</sup> On 27 February, the International Development Minister Andrew Mitchell announced to the House of Commons that Britain and Jordan had airdropped 4 tonnes of supplies to the Tal al-Hawa Hospital in Gaza City.<sup>8</sup> But this is a drop in the ocean compared to need and these options can only provide a small part of the solution.

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1 The Guardian, [Crisis in Gaza: why food, water and power are running out](#), 17 October 2023.

2 CNN, [Fuel is a vital lifeline in resource-strapped Gaza - here's why](#), 30 October 2023.

3 United Nations Press Release, [Humanitarian System for More than 2 Million Civilians in Gaza Facing Total Collapse, Secretary-General Warns, Once Again Urging Ceasefire, Aid Delivery at Scale Needed](#), (SG/SM/22010), 27 October 2023

4 Q3

5 Q63

6 European Union, [EU organises new aid flights to Gaza](#), 7 November 2023.

7 The Telegraph, [UK plans to delivery Gaza aid by sea with European allies](#), 31 October 2023.

8 HC Deb vol 746 col 147 [27 February 2024](#)

6. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) tracks the number of trucks that get into Gaza with aid in its daily reports. It was noted to the Committee that “a truck” is not a very useful metric, as there is no explanation of what it may be carrying or how needed the cargo is. However, there is no better metric at this time. The pre-crisis average was 500 trucks per working day in 2023. It should be remembered that at this time Gaza was still producing its own food and shops and warehouses were stocked. In February 2024, the average was under 60 trucks a day, with only 4 trucks crossing on one particular day just before the Committee visited Al Arish.<sup>9</sup> This unpredictable supply adds to the despair for the people of Gaza, who have resorted in the last month to “self-distribution” of aid from trucks, when and if they get in.

7. It would be inaccurate to say that Israel is entirely preventing aid getting into Gaza by road. However, it has established a deeply-bureaucratic, logistically-complex system for aid access which slows the process down and costs lives.

8. Currently all shipments require preauthorisation based on Israel’s criteria. Each pallet has to be of specific dimensions which are not standard so require manufacturing. The Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) is the only organisation currently transporting aid into Gaza by truck. It has six centres across Egypt and all supplies are sent to Gaza via its Al Arish depot, which is in a military zone due to previous ISIS activity. The ERCS has developed a QR code for every pallet which carries extensive information including the contents of the pallet, donor and intended recipients.

9. The Kerem Shalom crossing is now the only humanitarian access point for trucks. There are seven land crossings into Gaza but even before the crisis, some had been closed for many years.<sup>10</sup> Karem Shalom is reached via a 4km Israeli-controlled corridor. Each truck takes on average 2–3 hours to enter, unload, scan and return. The ERCS has to unload the goods at an intermediary point and leave; it is prohibited to transfer goods from truck to truck. Only when all the ERCS trucks have left are the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) trucks able to enter the area. This means that the ERCS and PRCS trucks never cross, and also slows down the transfer of aid considerably. Only 250 trucks are allowed into the ‘airlock corridor’ at any time. Scanning of goods only happens between 7am - 4.30pm.

10. At any one time there can be over 1000 trucks waiting to enter Gaza with aid. On its visit to Al Arish, the Committee was told by ERCS that some trucks were waiting up to 25

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9 OCHA [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 140](#), 23 February 2024

10 Crossings into the Gaza Strip include:

Erez/Beit Hanoun--in the far north of Gaza, for crossings of people. It was attacked by Hamas on 7 October and does not appear to have reopened.

Kerem Shalom: in the far south of Gaza. It reopened in December, though aid crossing there has been disrupted by protests on the Israeli side.

Rafah Crossing: currently the main crossing

The remaining crossings have been closed for several years:

-Karni crossing: in the north-east of Gaza. Closed in 2011, though it’s recently been reported that it will be reopened.

-Sufa/al-Awdah crossing: in eastern Rafah, closed by Israel in 2008.

-Al-Shujaiah/Nahal Ouz crossing: designated for fuel, closed in 2010.

-Al-Karara/Kissufim: east of Khan Yunis, closed in 2005, now mainly used by the IDF for moving tanks and other vehicles into Gaza.

Source: [The seven border crossings of Gaza](#), Al Jazeera

days in a queue, a process that used to take just hours. The ERCS is having to house, clothe and pay for the drivers and vehicles for this period. Goods are perishing and life-saving medicine and supplies are not reaching the intended beneficiaries.

11. In addition, the Israeli checkpoint keeps rejecting specific items of cargo, and if one item is rejected the whole truckload is rejected. The ERCS is not told which particular item has been rejected, so endless second guessing occurs. Rohan Talbot tried to describe the confusion MAP feels about what items are permitted (and which are not):

... .. there are these questions about what is allowed in. There is a dual-use list. Israel has a number of restrictions. It checks everything that is going into Gaza, but it is not known what is on that dual-use list. There are items that we understand have been turned back, but we do not know what those items are within the broader perspective of the aid that is being allowed into Gaza.

12. On its visit to Al Arish, the Committee was shown a warehouse full of rejected items that had not made it to Gaza. They included wooden boxes containing children's books, gauze swabs, water filtration bags, vaccine refrigerators and anaesthesia machines.

13. Access to the north of Gaza is even more difficult. With no local crossing, trucks have to travel through the rest of the Gaza Strip to get there and pass many hundreds of thousands of displaced people, which means they often can't get that far. The World Food Programme has had to institute a "temporary pause" to its food distribution in the north of Gaza. Dr Richard Brennan, WHO Regional Emergency Director, said that over 15 per cent of children under 2 years old in northern Gaza are showing signs of malnourishment, whereas before the conflict started, less than 1 per cent of children under 5 in all of Gaza were malnourished.<sup>11</sup>

14. At the same time, Dr Brennan said that the healthcare system is collapsing in Gaza, and the WHO has not been able to get to the north to meet needs. Between 1 January and 12 February 2024, the UN made the request to the IDF for 77 missions to the north of Gaza. Of these, 12 were facilitated, 3 partially facilitated, 39 denied, 14 impeded and 9 postponed.<sup>12</sup> There are now few healthcare facilities of any sort and those that exist are barely functioning<sup>13</sup> and often staffed by volunteers.

**15. Getting aid into Gaza is logistically unnecessarily difficult. There are multiple checks and at the time the Committee visited, it was taking 20–25 days for a truck to get from the Egyptian Red Crescent warehouse in Al Arish into Gaza, a journey of around 30 miles. NGOs spoke of almost malicious bureaucracy, which saw trucks turned back for carrying just one perceived dual use item (although it was not explained what that one item was, nor why it was rejected).**

**16. *The UK Government must call for all existing land crossings to be opened and for opening hours extended. This would speed up aid getting through the border and allow access to other areas of Gaza, particularly in the north. Ultimately, this is the only way to avoid famine. Pressure must be put on Israel to speed up the progress of aid through checkpoints and border crossings.***

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11 Q94

12 Q94

13 Q96

## Protection of aid workers

17. The people of Gaza are desperate. Matthew Hollingworth, Palestine Country Director, World Food Programme (WFP), told the Committee how people reacted when a food delivery reached Gaza city in mid-February:

When we crossed into Gaza city, thousands, tens of thousands of people swarmed forward, desperately trying to get their hands on the assistance that we were bringing. Because they came too close to the checkpoint, the tank opened fire on them, killing some, hitting my vehicle. .... I can't imagine how hungry you ... or your family must be for you to be willing to continue running in waves into machine-gun fire for a box of food.<sup>14</sup>

18. OCHA reported that by day 140 of the conflict (23 February 2024), 161 UN colleagues and at least 340 healthcare workers (according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza) had been killed.<sup>15</sup>

19. Dr Richard Brennan, Regional Emergency Director, World Health Organisation (WHO), noted that there have been over 150 UN staff killed since the start of the conflict, including one WHO staff member with her husband, baby and other family members.<sup>16</sup> He said there were numerous examples of entire families being killed.<sup>17</sup>

20. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is experienced at setting up humanitarian deconfliction systems in past conflicts; these are designed to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the midst of military operations.<sup>18</sup> However, this Committee was told by those on the ground that these systems are not working, evidenced by the number of deaths and injuries of aid workers and strikes on NGO facilities. On 9 January, Nebal Farsakh from the PRCS told the Committee that “at least 13 ambulances .... have gone completely out of service and 19 other ambulances have been severely damaged”<sup>19</sup> and the Committee heard on its visit that these numbers have now increased to 142.

21. The Committee asked all organisations it has met and heard evidence from how they are able to uphold a duty of care to their staff. Managers have admitted it is difficult, if not impossible.

22. Dr Ghada Al Jadba, UNRWA Chief of Health in Gaza, described how she and colleagues feel working in Gaza.

It is difficult to cope with this situation. It is a very inhuman situation. ...  
... We try to be strong ... ..... Maybe sometimes we look to others who lost their beloved people—who saw their sons or daughters in pieces in front of them. I feel that maybe I am lucky, because I am not like them ...  
... but still we have this huge fear about our family members, our friends and everything else.

14 Q96

15 OCHA [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 140](#), 23 February 2024

16 Q96

17 Q97

18 Refugees International, [Delivering Aid to Gaza](#), 17 November 2023

19 Q72



One of my colleagues said to me, “Do you know, I feel that I am not a human being. I feel that I am a ghost,” and I find that that really describes what I am feeling. ....There is a statement that says that, when you live with an inhuman situation for a long period of time without it changing, you will lose the feeling of humanity inside yourself. This is very dangerous. I am afraid that many of the people in Gaza have reached this situation.<sup>20</sup>

23. Shaina Low from the Norwegian Refugee Council said:

For us, our staff are in a position where they are in need of assistance and struggling to find the things that they need, and also trying to do the best that they can to serve those in need as well ... .. We are all struggling to find that balance of what we can be asking our staff to do versus what is realistic, given the constraints that they are trying to work under ... .<sup>21</sup>

24. Melanie Ward, Chief Executive of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) gave details about her colleagues:

MAP’s Gaza team comprises 20 people, all of whom are Palestinian ... .. Among the 19 colleagues who are still in Gaza, almost all of them have been displaced, and many have lost family members. All are struggling to find food and clean water for themselves and their families. ....

Amid deep personal grief and fear, they continue to distribute whatever aid they can find and still procure locally—blankets, hygiene kits, food, hot meals—in devoted service to their communities and the welfare of their fellow human beings.

25. This Committee commends the professionalism and humanity of all healthcare and aid staff.

**26. The deconfliction system, whereby organisations notify the Israeli military about where they are going to be working and distributing aid, is not working, and aid workers have been killed and injured in their duties.**

**27. NGOs and UN organisations have explained how their operations are severely limited by the scale of destruction in Gaza. The infrastructure is poor and some roads are impassable – and the desperation of the inhabitants means journeys present many challenges for their staff. With almost two million people living around Rafah City, which is close to the only aid crossing - an area where previously 250,000 people were living - it is almost impossible to move aid further into the Gaza Strip.**

***28. The UK Government must prioritise urgent discussions with the Israeli authorities to speed up security and improve the deconfliction systems so that aid workers can operate more safely. The UK Government should lead discussions with the international community to increase security for aid workers in the region.***

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20 Q65

21 Q6

29. Unfortunately, little can be done from the UK to support the mental health of aid workers at this time, but no one should lose sight of the scale of care that will be needed for these people - as well as the wider Gazan population - after this conflict comes to an end.

## Food aid

30. At the end of December, OCHA reported that 2.2m people in Gaza were facing Crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or above), with 1.2m people facing Emergency levels (IPC Phase 4) and more than half a million people facing Catastrophic levels (IPC Phase 5).<sup>22</sup>

31. Matthew Hollingworth said that there simply isn't enough aid getting into Gaza.

We need to be seeing 500 trucks [per day] to be going into Gaza to make a difference ... .. Gaza city alone, we need to see 60 trucks going in every single day ... . We are seeing a drop in the ocean.<sup>23</sup>

32. At the same time, safe water is in very short supply. Dr Richard Brennan noted that minimum international standards are 3 litres per person per day of clean water and 15 litres to include water for washing, cooking and sanitation. In Gaza, people have access to just 1.8 litres of clean water, on average, and 6–7 litres in total.

33. **Current border restrictions will make it impossible to avert a famine. The state of desperation in Gaza has been emphasised to this Committee. Food is not getting through in anything close to the amounts needed. Lack of certainty of supply is driving desperate behaviour in the population and gives opportunity for organised crime to step in.**

34. **Both of these issues would be lessened by a massive increase in food aid entering Gaza—flooding the market, as some aid workers have described it. Opening more crossings would allow more trucks to enter, but logistics systems must be improved so that more trucks can flow through each day. A system that on a bad day is restricting access to just a handful of trucks is not going to solve these massive problems.**

35. *The UK Government must make it an absolute priority to avoid famine by getting sufficient amounts of food into Gaza, as measured by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). This will give certainty to the population there, which will ease other issues, including improving security for aid workers and disincentivising illicit market activity. This entails Israel opening up existing crossings, providing a more streamlined entry system and communicating about why goods are being returned.*

## Internal food market and commercial imports

36. As noted, before the 7 October attacks, more than 500 trucks were crossing into Gaza each working day - and a very large proportion of these were commercial vehicles. Such deliveries were supplementing supply stores and locally-produced food so should be regarded as topping up supplies, not sufficient to alleviate the current food crisis.

22 OCHA, [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 140](#), 23 February 2024

23 Q100

37. Matthew Hollingworth told the Committee his experience of the food market in Gaza:

... prior to this crisis, Gaza was a very significant producer of its own food, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, chicken, meat, eggs ..... production-wise .... it was actually doing well.<sup>24</sup>

38. But he noted that since the crisis “the food producing capacity of the Gaza Strip has been decimated”.<sup>25</sup>

39. Restoring the commercial deliveries into Gaza is essential. It was announced in December 2023 that Israel would allow commercial trucks into Gaza<sup>26</sup> and the Committee was told by businessmen from the region that they are ready to move goods. However, there have been a relatively small number of deliveries and, as they join the same border queues as the aid trucks, they have had a very limited impact on overall supplies. Matthew Hollingworth noted that “we need other entry points for both aid and trade .... if we’re going to see markets improve”.

40. ***Commercial vehicles have always formed a vital part of supplies to Gaza. The UK Government must put pressure on Israel to allow commercial goods to enter and be delivered to Gaza safely to supplement other resources.***

41. ***Gazans also need to be supported to rebuild their own internal food market, from growing fruit and vegetables to raising livestock - all of which occurred before this crisis. The UK must build this into any future plans for its support to Gaza after the current conflict.***

## Medical care in Gaza and ongoing healthcare

42. The healthcare system in Gaza is falling apart. In January, Rohan Talbot made a comparison between the then-current position and November 2023:

At that point, only half of Gaza’s hospitals were still functioning. Now it is around a third, and those hospitals are working at around three times their capacity, sometimes with as little as 30 per cent of their staff. At that point, around 1.4 million people had been displaced. Now it is approaching 2 million people. .... It is now 450,000 cases of infectious diseases, including more than 100,000 cases of acute watery diarrhoea,<sup>27</sup> more than half of those in under-fives, as well as skin diseases, hepatitis, respiratory illnesses, etc. Those are spreading significantly. We should say that these are all underestimates because public health surveillance has collapsed, along with the rest of the healthcare system.

43. During its visit to Cairo in February, the Committee met Dr Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, the Egyptian Minister of Health and Population. He briefed Committee members on the work that Egypt was doing to support Gazans in hospitals throughout Egypt, including

24 Q98

25 Q98

26 The Times of Israel [US reveals Israel let commercial trucks into Gaza for the first time since war began](#) 18 December 2023

27 At 23 February OCHA was reporting over 300,000 cases of acute respiratory diseases and over 200,000 cases of acute watery diarrhoea

triage at Al Arish when they first crossed the border. Egypt is supporting both patients with traumatic injuries and patients with chronic conditions, such as those with cancer or requiring dialysis. He noted the medical items that were now in short supply in Egypt, such as gloves and other basic equipment. The MoHP has shared this list with foreign governments.

44. The Committee also met Minister Nivine El-Qabbage, the Egyptian Minister for Social Solidarity and the Vice President of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS). She briefed the Committee on the work her Ministry is doing to place families (including parents and siblings of child patients) who leave Gaza with their sick relatives and also about the work of the (ERCS) in coordinating aid through Al Arish in to Gaza and evacuating patients.

45. The ERCS is currently supporting the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) with establishing a field hospital in Gaza. Whilst this is vital given the breakdown of healthcare, it is concerning, unless there are assurances from Israel, how it will be protected.

**46. The Egyptian Red Crescent Society and Egypt’s Ministries of Health and Population and of Social Solidarity must be praised for their heroic work on the front line of supporting Gazans and coordinating efforts. *The UK Government must acknowledge the disruption this crisis is causing to the Egyptian economy and its public services. The UK Government must understand the resulting problems that Egypt is seeing with shortages of medical equipment and rising prices for its own population and offer the support that it requires (and not what the UK thinks that it may need).***

47. As well as traumatic injuries, Gazans with longer-term chronic conditions, such as cancer, diabetes or those requiring dialysis, are suffering and dying because they cannot access treatment. Dr Brennan said that the WHO “knows people are dying because of lack of treatments”.<sup>28</sup> Recent academic research has projected that there will be thousands of excess deaths in Gaza due to disruptions in public health and resulting overcrowding, inadequate hygiene conditions and insufficient food intake.<sup>29</sup> A best-case scenario, with immediate ceasefire and no epidemics, could result in around 6,000 excess deaths whilst the worse-case (continued conflict, outbreaks of disease and insufficient food and clean water) projected over 85,000 excess deaths.

**48. While the comments above will mitigate some of the worst horrors of the situation, the Committee is clear that unless there is a lasting ceasefire, this catastrophe will continue to escalate. According to those we spoke to, anything less than 30 days would not allow enough aid in, or give time for medical and aid workers to get required visas.**

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28 Q105

29 [Excess deaths due to Gaza crisis](#), London School of Tropical Medicine and John Hopkins University, 23 February 2024

## 2 After the violence

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### Three-pillar approach to an end to the violence

49. This Committee published a report in October 2022 entitled *From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world*, which recommended the Government “introduce a strategy for preventing and responding to mass atrocities globally”.<sup>30</sup>

50. In its response,<sup>31</sup> the UK Government said that it could “not commit to developing a written strategy” but that the “Mass Atrocity Prevention Hub is directing resource towards implementation across a range of workstreams and working closely with geographic and thematic teams, and, where appropriate, across Government, to deliver and monitor progress on preventing atrocities”. It stated that it would “continue to bolster monitoring capabilities to identify and escalate atrocity risks before they occur and work with partners on how [the Government would] develop our approaches to take account of new threats and challenges, ensuring that [it is] aware and inclusive of groups at risk”. It committed to taking a whole-of-government response to atrocity prevention. The Government response to Gaza will show whether this commitment has been acted upon.

**51. There needs to be a three-pillar approach to this crisis and its lasting resolution – covering political, security and humanitarian. All three are essential and cannot be seen in isolation, and whilst it is not the remit of this Committee to make recommendations in the political or security arenas, the UK Government must do more in all three – both to help ease the suffering of the civilians in Gaza and also maintain, or possibly try to regain, its credibility with its partner countries in this region.**

52. The newly established Office for Conflict Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) was cited by the UK Government in its response to the Committee’s recommendations. A new atrocities prevention hub was part of this Office and when giving evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee in January 2024, Dr Kate Ferguson Co-Executive Director of Protection Approaches, described the team as:

a very small team who work extremely hard. Their mandate is to co-ordinate the UK’s response and obligations on atrocity crimes, which is an enormous weight to bear. They are the co-ordinating mechanism we have been asking for, yet they are expected to do that in a strategic manner and to provide an urgent response when crises come. We are all very aware of how many enormous, desperate fires are raging around the world. They are expected to hold all that. Most of the team are fairly junior, so although they are brilliant, they don’t have the political heft to march into a Minister’s office or advise the head of the crisis response team—in whatever context it might be—with equity. They do it in a different way. I do think they are trying.<sup>32</sup>

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30 [From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world](#), Third Report of Session 2022–23 HC 149

31 [From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world: Government response to the Committee’s Third Report](#), Fourth Special Report of Session 2022–23 HC 992

32 Foreign Affairs Committee: [Follow-up to Xinjiang inquiry](#), HC 541 Q21

53. In its previous report, this Committee welcomed the Government's introduction of the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) with a hub to consider atrocity prevention. However, it seems that this hub has not met its promise. *The FCDO should revisit our previous report and look at how to improve the hub, because it should be forming a central part of the Government's response in Gaza and it appears not to have the resource to give the leadership across Whitehall that is required.*

### Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

54. OCHA is reporting that over 1.7 million Gazans have been internally displaced.<sup>33</sup> This represents 75 per cent of Gaza's population before 7 October. Dr Richard Brennan from the WHO said that he had "never seen that level of displacement" in his 31-year career.<sup>34</sup> Whilst in the region, the Committee was told that the figure was nearer 85 per cent displaced. But, until the dead and missing are accounted for, it is impossible to know. Whatever the true figure is, this is a huge percentage of the population and the long-term effects cannot be under-estimated.

55. With this displacement comes a lack of infrastructure and loss of dignity. Dr Richard Brennan noted that in some of the shelters, shared facilities means that there is one latrine for 400–500 people. International minimum standards would be 1 to 20 people.<sup>35</sup> This adds to huge public health risks and gives no dignity to anyone, especially women and girls.

56. Back in 2021, António Guterres, the UN Secretary said "If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza".<sup>36</sup> Sam Rose, Director of Planning at United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), updated the Committee:

Save the Children brought out a report last year, saying that already 80 per cent of children in Gaza were living with depression, grief and fear. It is such an abnormal environment in Gaza that people have been growing up in.

If you are a 17-year-old or 18-year-old in Gaza, you have lived through four or five conflicts.

57. In its report on UK aid for refugee host countries,<sup>37</sup> this Committee noted that:

The UK must avoid imposing unsuitable approaches from outside on refugee host countries. Instead, it should work with local civil society organisations to identify and implement best practice for each context. It should recognise the vital role that municipalities play in providing support and services as part of a broader effort to shift power and resources to affected communities.

33 OCHA [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 140](#), 23 February 2024

34 Q94

35 Q115

36 [Seventy-fifth session of UN GA/12325](#), 20 May 2021

37 [UK aid for refugee host countries](#) Session 2022–23 HC 426



58. When any of our interlocutors could manage to look to the future, they said that it would take many years, possibly decades, to rebuild Gaza. The latest OCHA figures report that over 60 per cent of housing units in Gaza have been destroyed or “partially destroyed”, with 83 per cent of groundwater wells not operating and major damage and destruction caused to all infrastructure, from sanitation facilities to hospitals and schools.

**59. The internally displaced people (IDPs) in Gaza will not be able to go home when the fighting ends. Most do not have a home or livelihood to go to and children will have missed months of education. This means that that the whole population will likely be dependent on aid and living in temporary shelters for a long time. All international partners must recognise this and build this in to longer-term plans.**

### Post-Ceasefire plan

60. In her recent statement to the UN Security Council,<sup>38</sup> Dame Barbara Woodward, the UK Permanent Representative to the UN, noted that “simply calling for a ceasefire now doesn’t make it happen and won’t make it sustainable”. In its recent visit to the region, it was made clear to the Committee in many discussions with those on the ground that a halt to fighting is essential to allow aid to those who need it, and that it must be sustainable.

61. In its February 2024 report, *Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy*, the World Bank notes that “facilitating trade and private sector activity in the West Bank and Gaza, to allow income generation” will be necessary post-ceasefire to avert “a dramatic recession, a large uptick in poverty, and a continued unparalleled shock to the economy”.<sup>39</sup>

62. OCHA is reporting that more than 1 million children in Gaza are in need of mental health and psycho-social support.<sup>40</sup> These problems will surely also be reflected in the adult population.

63. The Committee did not take evidence on plans to rebuild, but will return to collecting evidence about that phase in the future. However, businesses the Committee met were interested in methods of support that went beyond grants. The recent White Paper<sup>41</sup> detailed the UK Government’s commitments to scaling up development funding through alternative financing mechanisms, including mobilising private capital, issuing further guarantees, and exploring the provision of hybrid capital to increase lending from multilateral development banks.

**64. *It is difficult to see past the horrors that are ongoing in Gaza today. But the UK Government must plan for the next phase. These plans must include the Palestinian people and will include discussions with bilateral partners and also multilateral organisations. It is in no one’s interest to create a dependent population, and this is something that the Gazans to whom the Committee spoke were very clear on.***

**65. *The UK Government must listen to the people of Gaza and include them in the plans for reconstruction. Allowing them to rebuild their businesses alongside their homes***

38 [Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward](#) at the UN Security Council meeting on Gaza, 22 February 2024

39 World Bank [Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy](#), February 2024

40 OCHA [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 140](#), 23 February 2024

41 [International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change, a white paper on international development](#), CP 975, November 2023

*will allow much-needed economic activity to restart, help to restore the dignity of the Gazan population and rebuild their lives. The UK Government should consider all the tools at its disposal, such as the alternative financing mechanisms set out in the recent White Paper, to support Gazan businesses to support themselves. Where infrastructure grants are given, Gazan businesses must be the first considered for contracts with the UK Government looking at providing bank guarantees alongside.*

66. *The UK has specialisms in which it can lead, such as Preventing Sexual Violence. The UK Government needs to prioritise working with Palestinian civil society in all stages of the rebuilding in Gaza and encourage international partners also to include the Palestinian people in their future plans. The rebuilding should happen in a manner that preserves their dignity as well as improve the living conditions and the economy.*

### **Gaza Recovery Conference**

67. In June 2023, a conference was held in the UK bringing together the international community to support Ukraine's recovery and economic future.<sup>42</sup> The UK brought together over 1,000 public and private sector organisations, representing 59 countries, 33 international organisations, over 400 businesses and 130 civil society organisations.

68. The recovery in Gaza will be arguably longer and harder, given the economic basis from which it was starting.<sup>43</sup> The World Bank has reported for years that the Gazan economic situation is very difficult due to long-term instability.

69. *The UK Government should use its convening power and host a conference to consider how reconstruction of Gaza can be factored into future plans and how the international community can support that in a sustainable manner. This conference should include potential donor nations, multi-lateral organisations, such as the UN, and Palestinian businesses who have been involved in rebuilding Gaza previously and have expertise to share as well as a stake in the future.*

### **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**

70. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established to carry out direct works programmes for Palestinian refugees, running education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. It is widely acknowledged that UNRWA is the only body able to undertake the public services work that needs doing in Gaza, both as the conflict continues and once there is an end to the fighting.

71. In January 2024, UNRWA dismissed several employees after allegations of their involvement in the horrific attacks of 7 October.<sup>44</sup> The UK, and other countries, suspended its funding to UNRWA pending investigation.<sup>45</sup>

42 [Ukraine Recovery Conference 2023](#), 22 June 2023

43 World Bank [Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy](#), February 2024

44 [Serious allegations against UNRWA staff in the Gaza strip](#), 26 January 2024

45 [Allegations about UNRWA staff and 7 October attacks](#): FCDO statement, 27 January 2024



72. **This Committee understands that the UK Government wants to see UNRWA improve its governance and then return to receiving funding for its work in Gaza. *The UK Government must push for this to happen quickly, both so that UK funding continues but also that international partners are persuaded to restart their funding as well, otherwise the consequences for public services will be catastrophic, both in the Gaza Strip and in the other areas where UNRWA works, including the West Bank and refugee camps in the region.***

73. **UNRWA is the only functioning organisation in parts of Gaza and the people of Gaza need its support. Whether it needs to be reformed to support long-term regeneration in Gaza is an important question but is one for the future planning.**

### International Humanitarian Law

74. Every conversation this Committee has had, and all evidence sessions this Committee has held, cover whether International Humanitarian Law is being upheld in Gaza. Some interlocutors have very strong views that this is not the case, but all are questioning some of the actions of Israel in relation to the conflict in Gaza. Yasmine Ahmed from Human Rights Watch said they were “very concerned about the potentially unlawful attacks”, noting that “it is clear from international humanitarian law that Israel cannot be attacking medical facilities and medical professionals without considering all of that under international humanitarian law”. She also raised that “it is absolutely unlawful for Hamas to be operating in the context of civilian infrastructure”.<sup>46</sup>

75. Even if there are not clear breaches of international law, Israel has at times been operating against the spirit of humanitarian law, as aid continues to trickle into Gaza at a speed that does not satisfy the requirements for basic human needs. Matthew Hollingworth from the WFP said he felt “international law is being tested to breaking point”.

76. There have been more than 30,000 traumatic deaths since the start of the conflict in Gaza. The WHO estimates that almost 65 per cent these have been amongst women and children, the inverse of what one would expect to see in a normal conflict situation, where the majority of deaths would be of men of fighting age.<sup>47</sup>

77. And be it deliberately or mistakenly, medical workers are being injured and killed. Whilst the Committee was in the region, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported the death of two staff family members in an MSF shelter in Khan Younis.<sup>48</sup> OCHA reports at least 340 healthcare workers have been killed.

78. **It is not within this Committee’s remit to consider International Law but, in every conversation, it was raised with us and the arguments made were compelling that breaches of international law are taking place. *The UK Government must insist that Israel complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law. It must work with international partners to hold Israel to account in this.***

79. ***Following the ruling by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, the UK Government must push Israel to allow the necessary aid into Gaza. The Committee has***

46 Q49

47 Q94

48 [MSF strongly condemns Israeli attack on MSF shelter in Al-Mawasi](#), 21 February 2024

*received no reassurance that healthcare workers and facilities are being protected, as is required under international humanitarian law, and the UK Government must insist that every measure is taken to offer this protection.*

80. *And the UK Government must press for evidence to be gathered contemporaneously so that thorough investigations about compliance with international law on both sides can take place after the fighting stops.*

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## The Humanitarian Situation in Gaza

1. Getting aid into Gaza is logistically unnecessarily difficult. There are multiple checks and at the time the Committee visited, it was taking 20–25 days for a truck to get from the Egyptian Red Crescent warehouse in Al Arish into Gaza, a journey of around 30 miles. NGOs spoke of almost malicious bureaucracy, which saw trucks turned back for carrying just one perceived dual use item (although it was not explained what that one item was, nor why it was rejected). (Paragraph 15)
2. *The UK Government must call for all existing land crossings to be opened and for opening hours extended. This would speed up aid getting through the border and allow access to other areas of Gaza, particularly in the north. Ultimately, this is the only way to avoid famine. Pressure must be put on Israel to speed up the progress of aid through checkpoints and border crossings.* (Paragraph 16)
3. The deconfliction system, whereby organisations notify the Israeli military about where they are going to be working and distributing aid, is not working, and aid workers have been killed and injured in their duties. (Paragraph 26)
4. NGOs and UN organisations have explained how their operations are severely limited by the scale of destruction in Gaza. The infrastructure is poor and some roads are impassable - and the desperation of the inhabitants means journeys present many challenges for their staff. With almost two million people living around Rafah City, which is close to the only aid crossing - an area where previously 250,000 people were living - it is almost impossible to move aid further into the Gaza Strip. (Paragraph 27)
5. *The UK Government must prioritise urgent discussions with the Israeli authorities to speed up security and improve the deconfliction systems so that aid workers can operate more safely. The UK Government should lead discussions with the international community to increase security for aid workers in the region.* (Paragraph 28)
6. Unfortunately, little can be done from the UK to support the mental health of aid workers at this time, but no one should lose sight of the scale of care that will be needed for these people - as well as the wider Gazan population - after this conflict comes to an end. (Paragraph 29)
7. Current border restrictions will make it impossible to avert a famine. The state of desperation in Gaza has been emphasised to this Committee. Food is not getting through in anything close to the amounts needed. Lack of certainty of supply is driving desperate behaviour in the population and gives opportunity for organised crime to step in. (Paragraph 33)
8. Both of these issues would be lessened by a massive increase in food entering Gaza—flooding the market, as some aid workers have described it. Opening more crossings would allow more trucks to enter, but logistics systems must be improved so that

more trucks can flow through each day. A system that on a bad day is restricting access to just a handful of trucks is not going to solve these massive problems. (Paragraph 34)

9. *The UK Government must make it an absolute priority to avoid famine by getting sufficient amounts of food aid into Gaza, as measured by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). This will give certainty to the population there, which will ease other issues, including improving security for aid workers and disincentivising illicit market activity. This entails Israel opening up existing crossings, providing a more streamlined entry system and communicating about why goods are being returned.* (Paragraph 35)
10. *Commercial vehicles have always formed a vital part of supplies to Gaza. The UK Government must put pressure on Israel to allow commercial goods to enter and be delivered to Gaza safely to supplement other resources.* (Paragraph 40)
11. *Gazans also need to be supported to rebuild their own internal food market, from growing fruit and vegetables to raising livestock - all of which occurred before this crisis. The UK must build this into any future plans for its support to Gaza after the current conflict.* (Paragraph 41)
12. *The Egyptian Red Crescent Society and Egypt's Ministries of Health and Population and of Social Solidarity must be praised for their heroic work on the front line of supporting Gazans and coordinating efforts. The UK Government must acknowledge the disruption this crisis is causing to the Egyptian economy and its public services. The UK Government must understand the resulting problems that Egypt is seeing with shortages of medical equipment and rising prices for its own population and offer the support that it requires (and not what the UK thinks that it may need).* (Paragraph 46)
13. *While the comments above will mitigate some of the worst horrors of the situation, the Committee is clear that unless there is a lasting ceasefire, this catastrophe will continue to escalate. According to those we spoke to, anything less than 30 days would not allow enough aid in, or give time for medical and aid workers to get required visas.* (Paragraph 48)

### After the violence

14. *There needs to be a three-pillar approach to this crisis and its lasting resolution – covering political, security and humanitarian. All three are essential and cannot be seen in isolation, and whilst it is not the remit of this Committee to make recommendations in the political or security arenas, the UK Government must do more in all three – both to help ease the suffering of the civilians in Gaza and also maintain, or possibly try to regain, its credibility with its partner countries in this region.* (Paragraph 51)
15. *In its previous report, this Committee welcomed the Government's introduction of the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) with a hub to consider atrocity prevention. However, it seems that this hub has not met its promise. The FCDO should revisit our previous report and look at how to improve the hub,*

*because it should be forming a central part of the Government's response in Gaza and it appears not to have the resource to give the leadership across Whitehall that is required. (Paragraph 53)*

16. The internally displaced people (IDPs) in Gaza will not be able to go home when the fighting ends. Most do not have a home or livelihood to go to and children will have missed months of education. This means that that the whole population will likely be dependent on aid and living in temporary shelters for a long time. All international partners must recognise this and build this in to longer-term plans. (Paragraph 59)
17. *It is difficult to see past the horrors that are ongoing in Gaza today. But the UK Government must plan for the next phase. These plans must include the Palestinian people and will include discussions with bilateral partners and also multilateral organisations. It is in no one's interest to create a dependent population, and this is something that the Gazans to whom the Committee spoke were very clear on. (Paragraph 64)*
18. *The UK Government must listen to the people of Gaza and include them in the plans for reconstruction. Allowing them to rebuild their businesses alongside their homes will allow much-needed economic activity to restart, help to restore the dignity of the Gazan population and rebuild their lives. The UK Government should consider all the tools at its disposal, such as the alternative financing mechanisms set out in the recent White Paper, to support Gazan businesses to support themselves. Where infrastructure grants are given, Gazan businesses must be the first considered for contracts with the UK Government looking at providing bank guarantees alongside. (Paragraph 65)*
19. *The UK has specialisms in which it can lead, such as Preventing Sexual Violence. The UK Government needs to prioritise working with Palestinian civil society in all stages of the rebuilding in Gaza and encourage international partners also to include the Palestinian people in their future plans. The rebuilding should happen in a manner that preserves their dignity as well as improve the living conditions and the economy. (Paragraph 66)*
20. *The UK Government should use its convening power and host a conference to consider how reconstruction of Gaza can be factored into future plans and how the international community can support that in a sustainable manner. This conference should include potential donor nations, multi-lateral organisations, such as the UN, and Palestinian businesses who have been involved in rebuilding Gaza previously and have expertise to share as well as a stake in the future. (Paragraph 69)*
21. This Committee understands that the UK Government wants to see UNRWA improve its governance and then return to receiving funding for its work in Gaza. *The UK Government must push for this to happen quickly, both so that UK funding continues but also that international partners are persuaded to restart their funding as well, otherwise the consequences for public services will be catastrophic, both in the Gaza Strip and in the other areas where UNRWA works, including the West Bank and refugee camps in the region. (Paragraph 72)*

22. UNRWA is the only functioning organisation in parts of Gaza and the people of Gaza need its support. Whether it needs to be reformed to support long-term regeneration in Gaza is an important question but is one for the future planning. (Paragraph 73)
23. It is not within this Committee's remit to consider International Law but, in every conversation, it was raised with us and the arguments made were compelling that breaches of international law are taking place. *The UK Government must insist that Israel complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law. It must work with international partners to hold Israel to account in this.* (Paragraph 78)
24. *Following the ruling by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, the UK Government must push Israel to allow the necessary aid into Gaza. The Committee has received no reassurance that healthcare workers and facilities are being protected, as is required under international humanitarian law, and the UK Government must insist that every measure is taken to offer this protection.* (Paragraph 79)
25. *And the UK Government must press for evidence to be gathered contemporaneously so that thorough investigations about compliance with international law on both sides can take place after the fighting stops.* (Paragraph 80)

## Appendix: Letter from Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 31 January 2024

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Thank you for your letter of 17 January regarding the healthcare situation in Gaza. I echo your assessment of the deteriorating situation and I remain deeply concerned by it.

I also pay tribute to the brave health workers operating under almost insurmountable challenges - the accounts I am hearing are horrific. I am hosting a meeting in early February, which will include NGOs and a number of UK-based medical professionals that have recently returned from Gaza. I will hear first-hand their assessment of the situation on the ground and ideas on what more the UK could do to help. My focus is very much on identifying practical solutions that will help ensure aid reaches the people who so desperately need it.

The evidence you shared from UNRWA, MAP and PRCS is shocking and heartbreaking. That is why we need to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible.

Last week I travelled to Israel and the West Bank and wider region, working with partners to help build a plan to move from an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. For this to happen, we have identified five vital steps:

- A political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution;
- The formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package;
- Removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel;
- The release of all Israeli hostages, and;
- Hamas no longer in charge of Gaza.

I also pressed the Israelis to do more to get more aid into Gaza and worked with regional partners towards making progress towards a further humanitarian pause.

In December I announced the appointment of my Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson. Mark is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid being delivered to and throughout Gaza, including with regional partners, the UN and other humanitarian agencies.

Lastly, I am sure that you have seen the very serious allegations about UNRWA publicised last week. We have temporarily paused any future funding for UNRWA while we review these allegations. We welcome the swift action UNRWA have taken to terminate contracts while it launches an immediate investigation. We recognise UNRWA is critical in delivering humanitarian assistance into Gaza and across the region and we remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it.



On your specific questions:

**Steps the UK Government is taking to advocate for the protection of healthcare facilities and workers in Gaza:** Reports of attacks against healthcare facilities and health workers in Gaza are extremely troubling and must stop. The Prime Minister and I have repeatedly raised with Israel, the importance of all parties to the conflict adhering to International Humanitarian Law. We played a leading role in securing the passage of Security Council Resolution 2720, which set out the urgent demand for expanded humanitarian access. The resolution stressed the obligation of all parties to the conflict to respect and protect humanitarian relief and medical personnel. Three specific areas I am pressing Israel on are: i) for the IDF Central Command to participate in and respect the UN Humanitarian Notification System for deconfliction of static locations and movement of humanitarian staff and goods; ii) for the UN and partners to be provided with deconflicted routes from the South to the North of Gaza, to enable the movement of convoys on different routes; and iii) that all precautions are taken to protect, medical facilities, civilian infrastructure, aid workers and protected sites.

**Steps the UK Government is taking to ensure that necessary long-term support for those in Gaza, such as psycho-social care is not lost amongst the need for immediate medical provision:** Long-term needs for the civilian population will be immense. We assess that even once the conflict has ended, most people will remain displaced from their homes, in poor physical health and facing widespread diseases, malnourished, with a significant number on the edge of famine and - in the case of babies and infants - facing the risk of cognitive damage due to sustained malnutrition. As you point out, many people will be in need of psycho-social care due to severe trauma. We are not waiting for the 'Day After' to start responding to these needs. We are already supporting NGO partners to mobilize and deploy Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) teams and volunteers across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We are also supporting UNICEF to help children, adolescents and caregivers affected by conflict related violence with emergency and child protection services including MHPSS, and UNRWA to provide psychosocial first aid and other specialized protection services.

**The amount of aid provided for by UK Government funding that has entered Gaza since 7 October:** The UK has delivered 161 tonnes of life saving aid and equipment to Egypt for the Gaza response. This comprised 74 tonnes on board four RAF flights and 87 tonnes on board RFA Lyme Bay, including five tonnes of Cypriot medical supplies. A number of items have been denied entry by Israel (see below). The 161 tonnes also included equipment specifically requested by UK partners in the region, including by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS), to increase the capacity of agencies to manage and deliver significant quantities of aid to Gaza via the Rafah border crossing, such as forklift trucks, conveyor belts and lighting towers. Additionally, we are funding a number of trusted partners through their large-scale appeals to procure and deliver aid to Gaza, including WFP, who have delivered over 2100 tonnes of food via a UK-supported Jordan land corridor. However, the support to large scale appeals prevents us from directly attributing UK funding to specific items.

**The amount of aid provided for by UK Government funding that has been turned back at the Gaza border and the reasons for it:** Lord Ahmad and I visited AI-Arish in December, where we saw first-hand, the impact of lifesaving UK aid to the people of Gaza and discussed with the ERCS, the challenges to the cross-border aid operation. Due to



Israel's dual use policy, some items within the 161 tonnes delivered directly to Egypt by the UK, have been returned to ERCS warehouses in AI Arish until they are able to enter Gaza. This includes 2,560 solar lanterns and 1,350 water filters. The lanterns have been denied on the grounds that they could be used by Hamas to light tunnels. We do not have an explanation for the water filters but continue to press Israel for greater flexibility and visibility on goods allowed into Gaza. In relation to multi-donor appeals, we are unable to attribute individual items turned back at the Gaza border to UK funding.

**Whether aid funded by the UK Government has been distributed fully and by whom:** UK funded aid to Gaza is being delivered by a number of trusted UN, NGO and Red Crescent Society partners. Given the complexity of the operation, it is not possible at this stage to track the distribution of UK funded aid. However, I can confirm that all items on board RFA Lyme Bay have been delivered and distributed in Gaza.

**The steps the UK Government is taking to ensure that aid it has provided for is distributed in accordance with humanitarian principles:** The UK is working with humanitarian partners such as UNRWA, UNICEF, OCHA, ICRC and the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and supports those partners in working according to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. The principle of impartiality - that "humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions" - is particularly relevant in Gaza, where the levels of need are enormous. Humanitarian needs greatly outweigh the capacity of humanitarian agencies to meet them, and therefore, any assistance provided is vital. Those who have been displaced, children, women, the elderly, the injured, the traumatised are assisted as best as agencies can, but until the crossings are fully opened, there will not be enough supplies available to meet needs.

Thank you for highlighting your letter and I look forward to our continues engagement on these issues.

# Formal minutes

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**Wednesday 28 February 2024**

## **Members present:**

Sarah Champion, in the Chair

Mr Richard Bacon

Chris Law

Nigel Mills

## **The humanitarian situation in Gaza**

Draft Report (*The humanitarian situation in Gaza*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 80 read and agreed to.

A paper was appended to the Report as Appendix 1.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

[Adjourned till Tuesday 12 March at 2.00 p.m.]

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Tuesday 14 November 2023

**Sam Rose**, Director of Planning, United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); **Shaina Low**, Adviser, Norwegian Refugee Council

[Q1–33](#)

**Yasmine Ahmed**, UK Director, Human Rights Watch; **Melanie Ward**, Chief Executive, Medical Aid for Palestinians

[Q34–58](#)

### Tuesday 9 January 2024

**Dr Ghada Al Jadba**, Chief of Health in Gaza, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); **Rohan Talbot**, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns, Medical Aid for Palestinians; **Nebal Farsakh**, Spokesperson, Palestine Red Crescent Society

[Q59–89](#)

### Tuesday 27 February 2024

**Dr Richard Brennan**, Regional Emergency Director for Eastern Mediterranean Region at World Health Organisation (WHO); **Matthew Hollingworth**, Country Director Palestine at World Food Programme

[Q90–115](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

HSG numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1 Embassy of Israel ([HSG0001](#))

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

## Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	The FCDO's approach to sexual and reproductive health	HC 108
2nd Report	Scrutiny of Strategic Export Controls	HC 436
1st Special Report	Investment for development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions: Government response to the Committee's Ninth Report	HC 367

## Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Racism in the aid sector	HC 150
2nd Report	Food insecurity	HC 504
3rd Report	From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world	HC 149
4th Report	(Fourth Report of the International Development Committee) - Developments in UK Strategic Export Controls	HC 282
5th Report	Extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals	HC 147
6th Report	Aid spending in the UK	HC 898
7th Report	Debt relief in low-income countries	HC 146
8th Report	UK aid for refugee host countries	HC 426
9th Report	Investment for development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions	HC 884
1st Special Report	Afghanistan: UK support for aid workers and the Afghan people: Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 152
2nd Special Report	Food insecurity: Government response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 767
3rd Special Report	UK aid to Pakistan: Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Committee	HC 829
4th Special Report	From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world: Government response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 992
5th Special Report	Racism in the aid sector: Government response to the Committee's First Report	HC 956

Number	Title	Reference
6th Special Report	Extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 1177
7th Special Report	Aid spending in the UK: Government response to the Committee's Sixth Report	HC 1367
8th Special Report	Debt relief in low-income countries: Government response to the Committee's Seventh Report	HC 1393
9th Special Report	UK aid for refugee host countries: Government response to the Committee's Eighth Report	HC 1917

### Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Assessing DFID's results in nutrition Review: report from the Sub-Committee on the Work of ICAI	HC 103
2nd Report	Global Britain in demand: UK climate action and international development around COP26	HC 99
3rd Report	The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme: report from the Sub-Committee on the Work of ICAI	HC 104
4th Report	International climate finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: report from the Sub-Committee on the Work of ICAI	HC 730
5th Report	Afghanistan: UK support for aid workers and the Afghan people	HC 919
6th Report	UK aid to Pakistan	HC 102
1st Special Report	The humanitarian situation in Tigray: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 554
2nd Special Report	The UK's Support to the African Development Bank Group: report from the Sub-Committee on the work of ICAI: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report	HC 555
3rd Special Report	DFID's results in nutrition Review: report from the Sub-Committee on the work of ICAI: Government response to the Committee's First Report	HC 780
4th Special Report	Global Britain in demand: UK climate action and international development around COP26: Government response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1008
5th Special Report	The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme: report from the Sub-Committee on the Work of ICAI: Government response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1021

**Session 2019–21**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st Report	Humanitarian crises monitoring: the Rohingya	HC 259
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3rd Report	The Newton Fund review: report of the Sub-Committee on the work of ICAI	HC 260
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