



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. Anneliese Dodds MP
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Foreign, Commonwealth and
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Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee
House of Commons
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27 November 2024

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 18 November outlining the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and detailing the evidence and testimonies given to the International Development Committee on 12 November.

As I set out in my letter to the Committee of 12 November, this Government is profoundly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the issues around aid access. I regularly meet NGOs involved in delivering humanitarian assistance on the ground, which provides me and the wider department with vital context for our work. During my visit to Jordan in August, I toured a World Food Programme warehouse and discussed these issues with UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner General. Last week, I reiterated that the situation in Gaza is appalling and that Israel must make good on its commitment to 'flood Gaza with aid' in the Westminster Hall debate on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Since coming to office, the Government has:

- Restored funding to UNRWA, overturning the last government's suspension, providing £21 million to support its lifesaving work and implement reforms;
- Announced £5.5 million in new funding for field hospitals and medical aid in Gaza through UK-Med;
- Provided £6 million to UNICEF to support families in Gaza;
- Matched donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee Middle East Humanitarian Appeal to help provide vital supplies;
- Announced new joint funding plans with Kuwait to help UNICEF deliver lifesaving aid to almost 2.5 million people in Gaza & Yemen;
- Provided £1 million of assistance to Egyptian health authority to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza;

- Led demands for an urgent programme of vaccinations for polio and funded the Global Polio Eradication Initiative;
- Convened an emergency session of the UN Security Council to press Israel to address the humanitarian crisis in Northern Gaza;
- Used our UN Security Council Presidency to support a ceasefire.

At a bilateral level, the Foreign Secretary continues to raise our grave concerns with the Government of Israel, most recently with Foreign Minister Sa'ar. We continue to coordinate closely with international partners, including with French and German counterparts as the E3.

At a multilateral level, the UK is using its presidency of the United Nations' Security Council (UNSC), to call for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate release of all hostages, and urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis. On 12 November, Lord Collins of Highbury, Minister for Africa and the UN chaired an urgent UN Security Council meeting on the risk of famine, where he reiterated the UK's condemnation of Israel's restrictions on aid. On 18 November, the Foreign Secretary chaired a Ministerial UN Security Council meeting on "Ending the war and securing durable peace". During this session, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed that the humanitarian situation was unacceptable and there was no excuse for Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid. He called for a surge in aid entering Gaza, proper protection of civilians and respect for aid workers.

I highlighted to you and the Committee the steps both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have taken in response to the UNRWA bills that Israel's Knesset has passed, in my 12 November letter. At a ministerial meeting in the margins of the UN General Assembly High Level Week in September, I also underlined UNRWA's importance as the only agency able to deliver at scale in Gaza. We continue working with our international partners and through the UN to press Israel to ensure that UNRWA can continue its vital operations.

Like the UN and many of our partners, the Government is also concerned by Israel's commitment to and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and on his first day in office the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into this. The review raised concerns about possible breaches of IHL in the areas of humanitarian access and in the treatment of detainees. It concluded that there was a clear risk that UK export items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations IHL. As a result, on 2 September 2024 the Foreign Secretary announced the decision to suspend export licences for items that could be used in military operations in Gaza, exempting the F-35 components. There are a number of export licences which we have assessed are not for use by the IDF in military operations in Gaza and therefore do not require suspension.

The Government is not an international court and will not arbitrate on whether or not Israel or individual Ministers are responsible for breaching international humanitarian law. The UK respects the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is the primary international institution for investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes of international concern. On 21 November, the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Gallant, along with Hamas leader Al Masri (the Court has not yet confirmed the latter's death). We have confirmed that we will comply with our legal obligations.

We are in complete agreement that the present intolerable situation must be brought to an end. Finding a resolution to this conflict has been a priority since day one of this Government. We are clear that we need to see an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the protection of civilians, much more aid entering Gaza, and respect for the UN mandate (including UNRWA). We must also give the people of the West Bank and Gaza a political horizon and a credible, irreversible pathway to a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel. We continue to work with our international partners to progress and achieve these aims.

I look forward to hearing about your visit to the OPTs and your reflections, at our meeting on Thursday.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Anneliese Dodds', written in a light grey or blue ink.

THE RT HON. ANNELIESE DODDS MP
Minister of State for Development and Women and Equalities