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The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Secretary of State
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

18 December 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Israel's 'ban' on UNRWA

On 11 December, the International Relations and Defence Committee had the privilege of meeting with Mr Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General. During the session, we discussed the legislation recently passed by the Israeli Knesset which, if implemented, will effectively prevent UNRWA from carrying out its mandate.

We are concerned that, should the legislation be implemented, there is no other agency at the moment that is capable of providing the health, education and other essential services to Palestinians in the way that UNRWA does. We heard that NGOs are heavily reliant on UNRWA staff and warehouses to deliver aid to Gazans, and that there is no credible plan by Israel to provide or facilitate the necessary support should the Agency cease to operate. It is clear to us that should Israel's 'ban' on UNRWA be implemented, this would have devastating consequences for civilians in Gaza. Similarly, it is difficult to see how other organisations could match the role of UNRWA in providing essential services to Palestinians in the West Bank.

We welcome the UK voting in favour of the resolution in support of UNRWA at the UN General Assembly last week. We would be grateful if you could set out what other steps the UK is taking in support of UNRWA. In addition, please provide information on what contingencies the UK Government is putting in place, including in collaboration with others, should the Israeli government decide to implement the legislation as it comes into force on 28 January.

We would welcome a response to this letter within the usual 10 working days.

Yours sincerely,

Lord de Mauley

Chairman, International Relations and Defence Committee