

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair, Business and Trade Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

T: +44 (0) 020 4551 0011

E: Alexander.Correspondence@businessandtrade.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/dbt

13 January 2025

Dear Liam,

I am writing following the Business and Trade Committee's public oral evidence session on the licensing of exports to Israel, which took place on 10 December 2024, and your request for a further evidence session in the coming months.

At the session on 10 December, Lord Coaker, Minister Doughty and I, alongside officials, sought to outline the Government's position on the matter of export licensing in relation to Israel, and in particular the Government's decision to suspend certain licences in September 2024, where these might be used in military operations in Gaza.

Following that session, I noted your letter requesting further information as to the matter of compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) – this being under discussion when the division bell rang, bringing an end to the session. I note that Minister Doughty has now responded to that letter with an explanation of the Government's position.

I am aware that the Business and Trade Committee is considering an additional public oral evidence session on the same topic in February. I understand and respect the focus of the Committee on this important issue and am committed to full and constructive engagement regarding the Government's decisions and actions. Ahead of any further oral evidence sessions with the Committee, I would be grateful to understand which areas you and Committee members are interested to explore further to look at how the Government can best provide this detail, including what might be possible to cover in correspondence.

I note that, as above, the key outstanding matter, namely compliance with the ATT, has now been addressed by FCDO Ministers. Other items noted for discussion include the background to and previous application of the 'without prejudice' provision of the Parliamentary statement which introduced the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, and the ECJU Annual Report. Whilst we can certainly provide further detail on these topics, I fear it may not materially take us beyond our previous discussion. I understand there may also be further questions on the FCDO's assessment of compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and how this process informs our decisions under the SELC, building on discussion on this issue in December (which would of course require FCDO input).

On each of these issues, as well the most recent data on our export licences to Israel that my department published ahead of the Committee, I would be happy to provide answers to any other specific questions Members may have.

As previously noted, in December, the respectively-responsible Ministers appeared before the Committee to ensure the full range of cross-departmental issues related to this topic could be addressed. If, in light of this reply, you consider a need for a further such wide-reaching session, this could be arranged to ensure sufficient expertise is present in the room, and on a timescale that allows the Committee to best undertake its work. In the meantime, I of course stand ready to provide answers in correspondence to any particularly urgent questions related to my Department's responsibilities and powers.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Business and Trade Committee for their continued hard work scrutinising this important area. This Government is committed to transparency and greatly values the role of Parliament in raising these questions, and I look forward to continuing to work with Committee Members on this and other issues in the coming years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Douglas Alexander'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Douglas' and the last name 'Alexander' clearly legible.

THE RT HON DOUGLAS ALEXANDER MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security
Department for Business and Trade