



**Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office**

**The Rt Hon. David Lammy MP**  
Secretary of State for Foreign,  
Commonwealth and Development Affairs

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

The Rt Hon. Emily Thornberry MP  
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

28 July 2025

Dear Emily,

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence on 8 July. During the session, I promised to follow up on the following issues.

**China capability**

You asked the PUS and I about bolstering the Government's China capability, including the number of Mandarin speakers. In my statement to Parliament on the China Audit, I highlighted the importance of boosting capability on China across the Civil Service. There are already deep pockets of China expertise across Government. I am committed to ensuring our diplomats and civil servants have the expertise to engage and adapt to the increasing challenge posed by China, and China's growing role in world affairs.

Last year, the FCDO trained over 1,000 civil servants from 35 departments and arms-length bodies in China-related skills and knowledge, of which over 120 received training in Mandarin at all levels of ability. Over the past five years alone, over 50 civil servants have passed the advanced C1 qualification in Mandarin. The total number of fluent speakers is considerably higher but difficult to verify, since many officials will have reached proficiency through formal training prior to this period or acquired language skills through a combination of previous careers and education, formal training, self-study and exposure through overseas jobs.

My officials are finalising plans to enhance the talent pipeline of China experts by creating a China pathway within the FCDO Fast Stream programmes and increasing China related content in wider Civil Service Fast Streams. The FCDO plans to incorporate the first cohort into our 2026 Fast Stream intake.

**China Audit**

On the China Audit, I would like to ensure the Committee can discuss the Government's Audit in greater detail in support of its role in holding the Government to account. I would

be pleased to offer the Committee a private briefing at the FCDO with my senior officials who were involved in the Audit.

### **Arms exports to Israel and F35 parts**

Richard Foord MP asked about the procurement of F-35A and the global spares pool.

The Government's procurement of the F-35A and the decision to exclude F-35 exports from the September decision are completely separate matters. Facing a critical moment for European security and war on our continent, the Government has a duty to consider the full implications of our decisions. The F-35 partnership is the largest defence programme in the world with over 1,000 F-35 aircraft in service globally. Undermining the programme would significantly disrupt international peace and security, NATO deterrence and European defence. Russian aggression in Ukraine demonstrates the value in maintaining NATO deterrence and European defence.

F-35s play a critical role in NATO defence, keeping allied airspace secure. Allied F-35s are regularly deployed in missions across NATO's flanks – from Iceland to the Baltic and Black Sea regions. UK F-35s are also part of the current Carrier Strike Group deployment to the Indo-Pacific. The way the global F-35 programme works means the only way to prevent UK-produced parts reaching Israel is to stop exports to the entire programme. It was therefore necessary to exclude exports to the F-35 programme from the suspension, as previously set out to Parliament. Furthermore, we have suspended direct exports of F-35 components for use by Israel. We categorically do not provide any bombs, bullets or ammunition and have suspended all relevant licenses that might be used in Israel's military operation in Gaza.

In the judgment handed down on 30 June, the High Court agreed that it is not possible for the UK to unilaterally act to prevent Israel receiving UK-made F-35 components through the global programme. The Court has upheld the Government's decision-making on this matter. These are difficult issues, but the Government will always act in line with domestic and international law.

### **Funding for the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab**

Aphra Brandreth MP asked about the future funding of the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab which has been tracking abducted Ukrainian children.

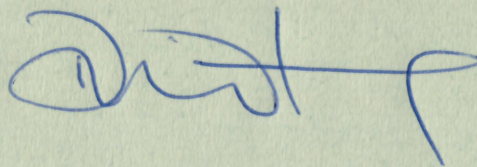
The UK condemns Russia's deportation of Ukrainian children. The Yale Humanitarian Research Lab ran a wide-ranging accountability project called 'Investigation of Mass Atrocities in Ukraine.' A small part of that project involved passing data on deported Ukrainian children to the Government of Ukraine. We are now working closely with the Government of Ukraine to identify which Open-Source Intelligence providers will best meet their needs to track down the children Russia has forcibly deported. In addition, the UK-led multi-donor Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine (PFRU) is providing more than £5.7m of funding for support to the return and reintegration of children – of which the

UK contributes a third. Through this fund, we have supported Bring Kids Back, Save Ukraine, and other leading child protection civil society organisations.

**Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Ukraine**

I would also like to use this opportunity to thank you for drawing attention to the horrific scale of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Ukraine. The UK is committed to ensuring justice for survivors of CRSV. In Ukraine, we are providing capacity building support to tackle CRSV through the PSVI Team of Experts, to help embed international guidance and best practice, including on survivor-centred approaches, into the work of Ukrainian investigators and prosecutors. This is part of a broader package of more than £11m to support projects aimed at building the domestic capacity of war crimes investigations, including through projects under the UK-US-EU Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DL', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**THE RT HON. DAVID LAMMY MP**  
**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs**