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Attorney General, Solicitor General

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Andy Slaughter MP
Chair of the Justice Committee

Monday 20th July 2026

Dear Chair,

Following our appearance before the Committee, we write to follow up on the lines of questioning raised by the Committee, that we were unable to comment on at the time.

Collective Self Defence

After consulting with colleagues in the Foreign Office, we can confirm the following in answer to the Committee's queries.

As the UK communicated to the UN Security Council, in a letter dated 7th March, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations it was reported to the Security Council that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was taking lawful measures pursuant to the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence.

These include measures taken pursuant to requests from regional partners, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, for assistance in their self-defence.

Illegal Sale of Properties

The UK has a long-standing commitment to a negotiated two-state solution and strongly opposes any actions that undermine this goal. The Government's position is clear that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law and are an obstacle to peace.

On 9 June, this government announced further sanctions towards entities and individuals associated with settler violence. This was our fourth package of sanctions related to the

West Bank. We also updated our business guidance to strongly advise against economic and financial activity in settlements, including the purchase of property in settlements.

In relation to the event the Honourable Member refers to, we are aware of the Great Israeli Real Estate Event held in London on 14 June. Alongside Minister Murray in DCMS, Minister Falconer wrote to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to express concerns regarding reports that property in illegal settlements may have been advertised at the event. The ASA has confirmed that it is considering a complaint and assessing whether the material falls within the scope of the Advertising Codes and, if so, what action it should take.

We respect the independence of the ASA and its role as the UK's advertising regulator, and it would not be appropriate for the Government to comment further on its considerations while that process is ongoing.

Suspension of Trade

The ICJ's Advisory Opinion contains important findings on Israel's occupation of Palestine. As an Advisory Opinion, it is not legally binding, but it provides crucial guidance on Israel's policies and practices in Palestine and the appropriate responses of third party countries. We reiterate the court's call that Israel should end its occupation of Palestine as rapidly as possible, in line with our goal of a negotiated two-state solution.

In our dealings with Israel, the UK already distinguishes between the territory of the State of Israel within its 1967 borders, and the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. For example, our trade agreement with Israel does not entitle exports from illegal settlements in the West Bank to preferential trade tariffs, and we have recently changed our business guidance to advise British businesses against economic activity in settlements.

The Foreign Secretary highlighted the Government's strengthened business guidance, which advises against economic and financial activity in settlements. She also said the Government has looked further at trade with the illegal settlements and expanding our sanctions regimes. The Foreign Secretary noted that any further measures would need to be carefully considered to avoid unintended impacts on Palestinian businesses in the occupied territories, as well as legitimate Israeli businesses within Green Line Israel that have no connection to the settlements. She also noted that only a small number of countries have pursued further restrictions in this area and have encountered significant challenges.

Immigration and Asylum – Independent Tribunals

Immigration policy is rightly a matter for the Home Office, we have asked colleagues in the Home Office to assist in answering your queries regarding the conformity of the proposed independent tribunals with the rule of law, and the requirements for adjudicators. For further comment, we would recommend directing any questions to the Home Secretary.

All members of the Independent Immigration Appeals Authority (IIAA) will have the required training and decision-making expertise to make determinations on appeal cases and will possess a range of skills and experience.

The government will ensure there are strong safeguards in place to ensure high standards, that those making decisions will be entirely independent of the executive, and will be free to provide appropriately robust scrutiny of Home Office decisions.

To provide further reassurance, the UT-IAC will still determine appeals against the new Independent Immigration Appeals Authority's decisions on points of law to ensure that fairness and justice is delivered in each case.

The IIAA will be fully independent of government and staffed by professionally trained adjudicators, with safeguards in place to ensure high standards and quality decision making.

The Bill provides for senior legal and standards roles, with responsibility for training, legal support, standards, quality assurance and oversight. This broadens the pool to increase capacity, but it does not remove safeguards or lower the need for robust, legally defensible decisions.

Whilst there will be no explicit legal requirements for Executive Adjudicators, Senior adjudicators will require at least two years of legal practice experience, or to have gained experience through law-related activities, to be appointed. This is less restrictive than the current requirements for judges in the FTT-IAC today (5 years of relevant legal experience).

Further details on how the new independent body will work and on eligibility criteria for the adjudicator role will be set out by the Home Office in due course.

ULS Scheme and the Magistrates Courts

The policy for the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme sits with the Ministry of Justice and it is for them to consider the impacts to offences that will now be out of scope because of the increase in magistrates' sentencing powers.

The provision in the Courts and Tribunals Bill is a power to enable the magistrates' court sentencing powers to be toggled between six months, 12 months, 18 months or 24 months. It presently sits at 12 months. Depending on how they are set we could see no impacts to ULS referrals or some small impact.

Not all referrals to the AGO will result in a referral to the Court of Appeal – the sentence imposed must have been unduly lenient. Only where this test is met, which is a high bar, will we refer the case.

From a casework perspective we think this could marginally reduce the eligible case pool if the magistrates' courts sentencing powers are increased to 18 months or to 24 months where some specified either-way offences would be captured.

DSFO Pre-Commencement Hearing

The Director of the Serious Fraud Office is a Civil Service position. A pre-commencement hearing has never been held for the role, and it would be unusual for one to take place. We would support a hearing taking place early in the appointee's tenure, so the Committee is able to have the desired discussion. Should you wish to pursue the matter of a pre-commencement hearing, we suggest that it would be more appropriate for this to be raised with the Civil Service Commissioner.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'LH'.

**RT HON LORD HERMER KC
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ellie Reeves'.

**RT HON ELLIE REEVES KC MP
SOLICITOR GENERAL**