



**International
Development
Committee**

Thursday, 30 July 2026

Stephen Doughty MP
Minister of State
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
By email

Subject: Palestine and International Humanitarian Law

Dear Minister,

First, let me welcome you to your new role within the Department. I look forward to our continued engagement on shared interests in the years ahead. I am writing in response to the letter sent on 13 July by your predecessor, Hamish Falconer MP.

I am pleased to hear that the Department continues to engage with the Foreign Affairs Committee on matters relating to Palestine. Given that the remit of my Committee includes scrutiny of the Government's approach to international humanitarian law, civilian protection and humanitarian crises, and given that Palestine is a named priority recipient for UK Official Development Assistance, I would also appreciate continued engagement on these matters. Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza are generating, and will likely continue to generate, significant humanitarian need through displacement, restrictions on humanitarian access and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Understanding how the Government is responding to these developments, both legally and from a development and humanitarian perspective, is therefore central to my Committee's work.

While the 13 July letter restated existing Government positions, I am disappointed that it did not engage with the principal questions raised in my original correspondence sent on 18 June. Most significantly, the Government once again did not set out its assessment of the International Court of Justice's July 2024 Advisory Opinion. My original letter noted that the Government has consistently recognised that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law; that settlement expansion threatens the viability of a two-state solution; that Palestinians are being displaced from their homes in the West Bank; and that Israel should bring its occupation to an end as rapidly as possible. Against that background, I asked why the Government has still not explained its position on the Court's findings, despite repeated requests from across the House. The response reiterated recent sanctions against individuals and entities associated with settler violence but did not address the central point made in my letter.



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My concern was not principally whether further individual sanctions are under consideration, but whether the Government accepts that settlement expansion, forcible displacement and projects such as E1 are implemented through policies authorised, financed and protected by the Israeli state.

I also asked how the Government intends to ensure compliance with the obligations set out in the Advisory Opinion—namely, not to recognise as lawful Israel's continued unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; not to render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation; and to distinguish in their dealings between the territory of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The response referred to the UK's trade arrangements with Israel and the revised business guidance on settlements. However, it did not explain the broader framework through which the Government satisfies itself that UK policy, financial assistance, trade, procurement, investment and other forms of engagement do not risk contributing to, or assisting, internationally unlawful acts.

I must therefore once again ask that you:

- Set out the Government's assessment of the ICJ's July 2024 Advisory Opinion;
- Identify how the Government will ensure compliance with the UK's obligations not to aid or assist Israel's unlawful practices;
- Explain how the Government will ensure the effectiveness of the recently implemented sanctions;
- Explain what additional measures the Government is prepared to take in response to the continued expansion of settlements and the displacement of Palestinians, including through the E1 project;
- Clarify whether the Government considers existing sanctions against settler organisations are sufficient, or whether it is prepared to consider measures against those responsible for authorising and implementing policies that facilitate such displacement;
- Set out what threshold would trigger further UK action should settlement expansion and Palestinians' displacement continue.

I noted Minister Falconer's reference to the Prime Minister's statement on E1. However, this does not address the humanitarian consequences highlighted in my original letter. If the Government accepts that projects such as E1 will result in the displacement of Palestinian communities, what assessment has it made of where those displaced populations are expected to go, and what impact this would have on neighbouring countries, including Jordan, that already host substantial Palestinian refugee populations?



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My letter also asked about consistency in the Government's application of international law. The United Kingdom has responded to serious violations of international law in Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere through a combination of sanctions, accountability mechanisms and sustained diplomatic pressure. What assessment has the Government made of whether its response to the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory is commensurate with the scale and severity of the violations it has itself acknowledged, and how does it ensure that broader political, diplomatic or commercial considerations do not undermine the UK's stated commitment to upholding international law and protecting civilians? Minister Falconer's response did not address these questions.

I also sought clarification regarding the Government's approach to sanctions policy more broadly. In Sudan, the UK has recognised the importance of understanding the networks, financing and institutional structures that enable abuses, rather than focusing solely on individual actors. I asked whether the same analytical approach is being applied in relation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and whether the FCDO retains sufficient capacity to undertake the network analysis and strategic assessment necessary to ensure that sanctions effectively influence behaviour and protect civilians. I should be grateful for a response to these questions.

Finally, I noted Minister Falconer's comments regarding reporting in *The Guardian* about the FCDO's monitoring of possible violations of international humanitarian law. However, my letter did not simply ask whether the reporting was accurate. Rather, I sought clarification on the Department's current arrangements. I would therefore welcome responses to the following outstanding questions:

- How does the FCDO monitor and analyse possible breaches of international humanitarian law in relation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory?
- What mechanisms exist for bringing potential violations of international humanitarian law to Ministers' attention?
- What arrangements facilitate parliamentary scrutiny of this analysis?
- What are the latest conclusions reached via this monitoring and assessment?
- What is the current size, structure and remit of the team responsible?
- Has departmental restructuring affected the Department's capacity to monitor patterns of violence, undertake legal analysis or advise Ministers on appropriate diplomatic, policy or legal responses?

These important questions relate to the Government's approach to international humanitarian law, civilian protection and humanitarian policy, so I will be grateful if you



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can provide substantive responses to the outstanding issues identified.

I would welcome your response by Friday 21 August 2026. In line with our usual practice relating to Committee correspondence, we will publish this letter and your response.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee