



To: Sarah Champion MP, Chair  
International Development Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
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### **International Development Committee – response by the Embassy of Israel**

On Saturday, October 7, 2023 a Jewish religious holiday, Hamas used the terrorist stronghold it had created for the last 16 years since its violence takeover of Gaza, as a launching pad for what was the greatest massacre of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust. Under the cover of thousands of rockets fired indiscriminately into Israel, thousands of Hamas and other militants breached Israel's sovereign territory by sea, land, and air, invading over twenty Israeli communities, towns and the site of a music festival. These terrorists proceeded to engage in the wholesale massacre, mutilation, sexual assault and abduction of as many citizens as they could find. Over 1,200 people were butchered that day, more than 5,500 maimed, and 253 hostages abducted, including infants, entire families, persons with disabilities and Holocaust survivors.

As is widely known, Hamas engaged in these acts of unimaginable barbarism as part of a proudly declared genocidal agenda which they have explicitly vowed to repeat again and again. And it is in the face of this unprecedented terrorist onslaught, Israel is committed to defending its territory and citizens in full compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

It is critical to appreciate that it is facing an enemy that has nothing but contempt for the law and for human life, whether Israeli or Palestinian. Indeed, Hamas and other terrorist



groups have systematically and unlawfully embedded their military operations, militants and assets throughout Gaza within and beneath densely populated civilian areas. They have stolen, hoarded and commandeered humanitarian supplies and international aid from their own people to build up their terrorist infrastructure and resources, including by constructing hundreds of miles of underground tunnels for its leaders and fighters throughout the Strip, with thousands of access points and terrorist hubs located in homes, mosques, UN facilities, schools and hospitals. These measures are not occasional or opportunistic. They are an integral part of an integrated method of warfare by Hamas to systematically use civilians as well as sensitive sites and civilian objects as human shields and ultimately, human sacrifices.

It is in light of this horrific reality, in which both Israeli and Palestinian civilians are endangered as part of Hamas reprehensible strategy, that any examination of the humanitarian situation must be viewed. And it is hoped that the Committee will address the humanitarian situation in this context.

With respect to the situation of the hostages, for the last 144 days, 134 people are still being held captive in Gaza, amongst them 2 children under the age of five, 19 women, 111 men, 10 over the age of 75. Amongst them are also those who were injured, people with disabilities and Holocaust survivors. We know from some of the testimonies of the 123 whose release has thus far been secured that many of the hostages are being held in inhumane conditions, including being subjected to torture, sexual abuse and starvation in captivity.

With respect to casualties, according to the latest official figures, amongst the murdered - 779 were civilians, 364 people were murdered at the Nova music festival, approximately 575 IDF soldiers have also lost their lives, 314 of which were killed on October 7. Israel's National Insurance Institute has documented 52,500 physically and mentally injured.



Tragically, children have not been spared, with over 3,900 injured, half of them under 9. Since October 7th more than 14,500 rockets have been fired at Israel.

Another front that Israel faces since October 8 is on our northern border, as Hezbollah and other terror organizations have launched unceasing attacks towards Israel in blatant violation of Israeli sovereignty, international law, and UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006). This has led to a displacement of approximately 60,000 Israelis from northern communities (a total of 125,500 displaced Israelis since October 7).

Israel faces a war it did not start and did not want. A war in which Israel is defending itself against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organizations whose brutality knows no bounds.

**From the very outset, Israel's most senior officials, including the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, the President as well as the Chief of Staff of the IDF, have made it clear that the war is against the Hamas terror organization and not against the Palestinian people.** This is a matter of explicit government policy, military directives and procedures. It is also an expression of Israel's core values. Israel's sole objective is to remove the terror threat emanating from Hamas and other terror organizations and it is doing so in accordance with the Laws of Armed Conflict.

Israel has taken unprecedented steps to minimize harm to civilians as it continues to face the ongoing threat of further attacks from Hamas, and humanitarian initiatives are being undertaken to enable the flow of humanitarian aid to the population (for example the implementation of humanitarian pauses for stocking necessary food and medicine, and the mitigation of temporary evacuation of Palestinians to areas with lower-intensity fighting). The IDF also sent Palestinian civilians in Gaza over 15.5 million text messages providing advance warnings; conducted over 15.8 million pre-recorded phone calls; published numerous messages on social media, radio, and television in Gaza; communicated with



international organizations on the ground in Gaza; conducted over 90,000 phone-calls alerting specific individuals to nearby danger; and airdropped over 8.7 million leaflets; The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) has also undertaken a considerable effort to map civilian shelters and convey their locations to forces on the ground).

Israel has been undertaking ongoing efforts to allow and facilitate the passage of essential humanitarian relief for the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and to constantly monitor the humanitarian situation. **It is important to emphasize that Israel does not place any limit on the quantity of aid allowed into Gaza.** Since the start of the war, over 14,150 trucks have entered Gaza through the Rafah (Egypt) and Kerem Shalom (Israel) crossings. This has included 173,370 tons of food, 24,600 tons of water, 29,500 tons of shelter equipment and 17,930 tons of medical supplies. As past experience shows, the transfer of humanitarian aid was manipulated and used for building tunnels, missiles and military capabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor the entrance of certain items with dual-use capabilities. COGAT is liaising with international organizations to enable the entrance of controlled dual-use items. Only around 1% of trucks have been denied for various security and other reasons (such as drivers refusing inspection, trucks containing military equipment, and trucks that did not carry humanitarian items), and the majority of trucks that were initially denied entry were able to enter the Gaza Strip once the infractions were rectified.

Through their coordination work with the UN, COGAT has established de-confliction processes that have enabled over 3,000 movements for humanitarian purposes.

**The humanitarian situation in Gaza requires a collaborative effort with all relevant players, including international organizations and regional partners. It is important to note that the current "bottleneck" for the total amount of humanitarian aid entering the Strip is on the Gazan side of the crossings - the ability, pace and**



capacity of U.N agencies and NGOs to collect and distribute the aid throughout Gaza - rather than on the Israeli side. These days, hundreds of trucks, after undergoing Israeli inspection and cleared for entry, await on the Gazan side of the crossings, at times for several days, to be collected by U.N agencies and distributed throughout the Strip.

Nevertheless, Israel is working relentlessly, in coordination with U.N agencies as well as other third parties, trying to resolve and mitigate some of these challenges.

As stated previously, Israel does not place any limitations on the quantity of aid allowed into Gaza. Food, water and medical supplies enter Gaza on a regular basis. Other items must be coordinated in advance to mitigate any security concerns.

To further support humanitarian efforts, Israel has reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing for screening and transfer of aid into Gaza. Recently, Israel's cabinet has also approved the operationalization of Ashdod Seaport and facilitated another humanitarian aid route from Jordan through the Allenby bridge (both go into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing). It's important to highlight – Israel has increased its screening capacity at the Kerem Shalom and Nitzana crossings, in the midst of war, and will further do so as required. Israel does not set any cap on how many trucks, carrying essential humanitarian aid, it could process.

Israel is also continuing to advance a joint initiative with Cyprus to establish a Cyprus Maritime Corridor (“CMC”) as an additional means of enhancing humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Israel also assists the UN and specialized agencies inside the Gaza Strip in improving their capabilities. For example, Israel authorized the delivery of additional new forklifts and trucks, and assisted in providing satellite phones and protective gear.



With regards to solar panels and water purification systems - any request by the international community to deliver such goods into the Gaza Strip is reviewed in order to mitigate security concerns and to ensure it is intended for humanitarian purposes (hospitals, shelters etc.) and will not be abused to facilitate and sustain Hamas' militant and terrorist activities. To date, the majority of requests to enter solar panels and water purification systems to Gaza (mostly by WHO and ICRC) have been approved.

With regards to ambulances - So far, over **80** ambulances have been approved for entry to Gaza during the war. There is no limitation on the number of ambulances (as well as other medical aid equipment) that can be approved to enter the Gaza Strip. Every request undergoes review for security considerations, as mentioned above, to make sure it is actually intended for hospitals or other medical uses (given that Hamas has been and is known to be using ambulances to transfer militants and munitions within the Gaza Strip).

Israel is also actively working to improve the level of medical capacity in the Gaza Strip, as can be seen by the opening of 6 field hospitals, the coordination of several medical airdrops, and facilitated the entrance of hundreds of medical personnel into the Gaza Strip and over 2 million vaccines in addition to examination equipment – all of which have increased the capacity of medical treatment inside Gaza.

Israel has also undertaken efforts to ensure that hospitals in Gaza have remained open and operational – even when being used by Hamas for military purposes. For example, over 20 oxygen tanks and additional medical equipment were transferred to the al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis, and fuel was distributed to the Shifa Hospital.

With regards to water supply - Israel is providing drinking water from two water lines from its territory into Gaza and facilitating the fueling of essential water facilities, including water and sewage pumps. Throughout the war, Israel has coordinated over 160 repairs, reconstruction and reactivation of infrastructure, including expanding of water lines, water



treatment facilities and essential facilities. Israel also facilitated the erection of two United Arab Emirates-funded water pipelines from Egypt to Gaza.

With regards to Rafah, it is a major terror hub and a stronghold of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Rafah is the base of Hamas's Rafah Brigade, which entails four Hamas battalions and has extensive terror capabilities that pose a threat to Israel. Importantly, as was also evident by the operation on the night of 11 February 2024, which was directed at military targets and enabled the release of two Israeli hostages – Fernando Simon Marman and Louis Har from captivity – Israeli hostages are most likely being held in Rafah.

As was evident in the recent months of the war, Israel makes sure in each area of operation that there are designated areas, safe passages and shelters for the civilian population, to ensure that civilians are kept out from harm's way.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tzipi Hotovely in blue ink.  
Tzipi Hotovely

**Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's**