



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Chapman of
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House of Commons
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Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 15 May, in follow up to the oral evidence session of 13 May on Humanitarian Access and adherence to International Humanitarian Law.

Your letter raises five questions which I will address in turn. I am grateful to the Committee for raising the profile of these critical issues and look forward to engaging with your final report.

1. What process does the Government use to decide which tools it will apply in holding to account suspected perpetrators of IHL breaches, such as unlawfully prohibiting or restricting humanitarian aid, or attacks on aid workers?

The Government will assess which tools to use in any given situation according to what will have most impact in holding suspected perpetrators to account.

Where possible, the UK supports other governments in building their own investigative and judicial capabilities so that they are able to hold perpetrators to account. We believe that international crimes are best investigated and prosecuted close to where they are perpetrated. By way of example, in Syria, the UK is supporting Syrian-led transitional justice work, supporting the interim authorities to ensure accountability for crimes committed under the Asad regime, and that social justice is embedded in a future governance structure for Syria. In Ukraine, we are supporting the work of the Office of the Prosecutor General and the International Criminal Court to ensure allegations of war crimes are fully and fairly investigated by independent, effective and robust legal mechanisms. Ukrainian courts have found that war crimes have been committed by Russian soldiers, and the Office of the

Prosecutor General of Ukraine has recorded over 165,000 incidents of alleged war crimes committed during the conflict.

The International Criminal Court is a court of last resort, which is complementary to national legal systems. The UK is a strong supporter of an effective ICC as the primary international institution responsible for investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the most egregious crimes, holding perpetrators to account and achieving justice for victims.

2. How does the Government ensure that its response to any given suspected IHL breach by one actor is consistent with its response to another?

The UK is committed to securing accountability for those responsible for alleged serious violations of IHL, wherever they take place. We encourage action to be taken to bring such individuals to justice wherever possible, within the rule of law and depending upon the evidence available. We apply this approach consistently. HMG's position is that it is generally best for domestic courts where these alleged crimes are committed to investigate and prosecute wherever possible, given their ability to access relevant evidence and investigate the crimes fully. Allegations of serious violations of IHL should be thoroughly and independently investigated by a competent court, and individuals charged with the most serious crimes prosecuted, holding perpetrators to account and achieving justice for victims.

3. What material support is being given to the Palestinian Red Crescent by the UK following the attacks on their medical convoys?

The UK has called for investigations into the tragic deaths of Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) staff and called on Israel to support the search for a missing staff member. We raised the issue at the UN Security Council on 3 April, calling for a full and transparent investigation and for accountability. Minister Falconer described the killing of the Palestinian Red Crescent paramedics as an "outrage" in parliament on 7 April and made clear that we must see this incident investigated transparently and those responsible held to account. The UK has also conveyed its condolences directly to the PRCS and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (IFRC).

The UK supported the IFRC / PRCS Appeal in 23/24 FY, providing £2.75 million and a further £4 million of UK funding to the British Red Cross to deliver humanitarian relief in Gaza through the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has just been approved. This support will include essential medicines and medical supplies for up to 32,000 people, safe drinking water for up to 60,000, and food parcels for up to 14,000. This contribution has been allocated from the £101 million set aside for the Occupied Palestinian Territories in financial year 2025-26, announced¹ during the official visit of Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa to the UK.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-prime-minister-mustafa-of-the-palestinian-authority-28-april-2025>

4. In what circumstances would the Government use its powers under section 1(2)(g) of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act sanctions to promote compliance with IHL? Given the Government's assessment that there is a "clear risk" that Israel is in breach of IHL, why has the Government not used its sanctions' powers to promote compliance?

We keep options for sanctions under review according to the evidence, the objectives of the relevant regime and how sanctions could complement the use of other tools. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact. The UK has raised compliance with IHL with Israel at the most senior levels. Our position remains that Israel's actions in Gaza are at clear risk of breaching international humanitarian law, and we continue to call the government of Israel to abide by its international obligations.

5. What legal obligations do UK arms manufacturers have to investigate the use of their components in attacks on humanitarian infrastructure and aid workers?

The government assess every export licence application on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (the Criteria) - a regime that is among the most rigorous and transparent in the world and which provides a thorough risk assessment framework. We will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria, including respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. This is subject to specific measures as announced to Parliament.

UK arms manufacturers do not have a legal obligation to investigate the use of their components in attacks on humanitarian infrastructure and aid workers. However, it is a criminal offence for an exporter to provide any false information in support of a licence application. If this is discovered, the exporter risks criminal sanction and having the licence rendered invalid.

I would like to thank the Committee once again for your ongoing engagement on this issue and reiterate the Government's commitment to upholding IHL and protecting civilians in conflict.

Yours ever,



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Minister for International Development, Latin America and the Caribbean**