



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office



**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon  
Minister of State (Middle East,  
North Africa, South Asia,  
Commonwealth and the UN)**

**Prime Minister's Special  
Representative on Preventing  
Sexual Violence in Conflict**

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

**Tel: 020 7008 5000**

**Email:  
[fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk)**

**[www.gov.uk/fcdo](http://www.gov.uk/fcdo)**

Our ref: MC2024/08177

19 April 2024

Harry Catherall  
Chief Executive  
Oldham MBC  
Level 3, Civic Centre  
West Street, Oldham  
OL1 1UG

*Dear Harry,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 March to the Foreign Secretary about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Middle East.

Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history at the hands of Hamas and Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. We want to see an immediate end to the fighting in Gaza to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. On 25 March, the international community took a significant step towards achieving that. We welcome United Nations Security Council resolution 2728, which reflected widespread international support for Britain's position and considerable efforts by our diplomats to secure a consensus.

All parties must act within International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which is why we continue to call for IHL to be respected and civilians to be protected. A shocking number of civilians have been killed and we want to see Israel protecting civilians and their property. Israel is the occupying power in Gaza, it is responsible and that has consequences, including when we look at if Israel is compliant with IHL, which is why we keep advice on Israel's adherence to IHL under review. We continue to have grave concerns around humanitarian relief in Gaza but have also seen a welcome public commitment from Israel to 'flood' Gaza with aid – this must be turned into a reality. This is not happening. We need an immediate stop in fighting to allow humanitarian actors and Palestinians in Gaza to operate and move safely and enable all hostages to be released. We have set out very clearly five steps that Israel needs to take, including: An immediate stop in fighting to get

more aid in and the hostages out; increased capacity inside Gaza to fully enable the UN's operating requirements; increased access for aid through land routes and to fully open Ashdod Port; an expansion of the types of aid allowed into Gaza; and, the provision of electricity, water and telecommunications, to both the north and the south of Gaza.

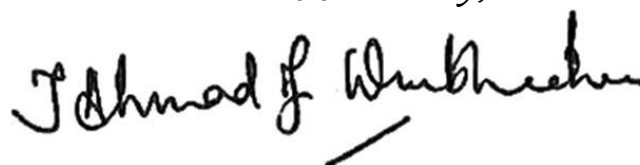
Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian catastrophe. The UK is playing a key role in alleviating that suffering. For example, we trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air. On 25 March, the Royal Air Force airdropped 10 tonnes of food aid – including water, rice and baby food – directly to civilians in Gaza. 150 further tonnes of UK aid arrived in Gaza on 13 March, including 840 family tents, 13,440 blankets, almost 3,000 shelter kits, and shelter-fixing kits, 6,000 sleeping mats and more than 3,000 dignity kits. A field hospital, provided by UK Aid funding to UK-Med, has arrived in Gaza. This facility, staffed by UK and local medics, is treating over 100 patients a day, ensuring those with health issues have access to vital aid. The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson, is also working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

The recent news that three British Nationals were amongst the aid workers killed in an airstrike on World Central Kitchen's humanitarian efforts in Gaza was shocking and unacceptable. We are providing support for their families and the Foreign Secretary has spoken with his Israeli counterpart to underline that the deaths of these aid workers is completely unacceptable. Israel must provide a full, transparent explanation of what happened and make major changes to ensure the safety of aid workers on the ground. As the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have both said, we have grave and serious concerns about the prospect of a military offensive in Rafah where over half of Gaza's population are sheltering in the area, and the Rafah crossing is vital to ensure aid can reach the people who so desperately need it. We urge Israel to stop and think very seriously before it takes any further action, as it will have dire humanitarian consequences.

Five vital elements are required for a lasting peace: the release of all hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; and a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution, of Israel and Palestine living in peace and security.

The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and I have reiterated these messages in contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, as well as leaders in Qatar, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt and UAE in recent weeks. Throughout these discussions, as I have outlined, the immediate priority must be a stop in the fighting, which is the best route to secure the safe release of hostages and significantly step up the aid reaching Gaza. We want to see this cessation lead to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to further fighting and that remains the primary focus of all our diplomatic efforts.

*Yours sincerely,*



**LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON**  
Minister of State

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict