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Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

From: **AINAGCorrespondence@fco.gov.uk**

Sent: 28 August 2015 11:38:48

To: **lphr@live.co.uk**

Our reference: EMOP/393/2015

28 August 2015

Dear Mr Shourou,

Thank you for your email of 19 August to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), enclosing a letter for the Foreign Secretary, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Near East Department in the FCO has been asked to reply.

The British Government makes clear our concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem on a regular basis, both bilaterally and in co-operation with EU partners. On 19 August our Ambassador to Tel Aviv raised the subject of demolitions and planning issues in Area C with the Israeli Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development who is responsible for housing in the West Bank.

We also agreed the EU Statement issued on 19 August, which outline our deep concern at the demolitions referred to in your letter and Israel's illegal settlements, the building of the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, evictions and forced transfers.

The UK's position is clear; demolitions cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; are harmful to the peace process; and are, in all but the most exceptional of cases, contrary to international humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that the destruction of any real or personal property in Occupied Territory is not justified unless it is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. We also make clear to Israel that forcible transfer would be a breach of international humanitarian law and would have serious ramifications on Israel's international standing.

We are concerned that certain demolitions are influenced by security concerns of nearby settlements and ongoing settlement construction. The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns over settlements with the Israeli Government on 16 July, during his visit to Israel.

He made it clear to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that actions that diminish trust and make the prospect of peace more remote need to be avoided and settlement announcements do real harm. We also frequently make statements that make clear our opposition to settlements. Tobias Ellwood's, the FCO Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East, most recent statement on this subject was on 28 July. Following a meeting with the Israeli Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Interior on 30 July Baroness Anelay made a similar statement about Israeli settlement announcements.

I can also assure you that we will continue to support Bedouin communities and Palestinians in Area C facing demolition or eviction through our support to Rabbis for Human Rights and the Norwegian Refugee Council legal aid programme. This helps individuals challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. We are also funding the International Peace and Cooperation Centre, an independent Palestinian non-profit organisation, to support long-term planning for Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

On behalf of the

Near East Department

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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