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## Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

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

Sent: 15 March 2016 13:36:22

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

Our reference: EMOP/180/2016

15 March 2016

*Dear Mr Shrourou,*

Thank you for your email of 16 February 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 UK Government is concerned about the proposals to demolish Bedouin villages in Israel. Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv are following the situation closely. They have been in contact with the Adalah Legal Centre which has continued to provide updates on the legal situation. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv has raised the issue of Bedouin relocations with senior contacts in the Israeli Knesset. We have also raised the risk of demolition of the villages of Um-il-Hiran and Ateer with the Ministry of Justice and with the Arab Affairs Officer at the Prime Minister's office. During my recent visit to Israel I discussed the issue with the leader of the Joint List, MK Ayman Odeh.

We continue to encourage the Israeli authorities and Bedouin communities to engage in dialogue to agree a satisfactory solution to the issue, respecting the equality of all of Israel's citizens in a way which avoids forced relocations, and is consistent with Israel's commitments under international law.

The Government is also deeply concerned by Israel's proposals to relocate Bedouin population from the E1 area. We have continued to raise our concerns over the proposals with the Israeli authorities.

We regularly make clear, publicly and privately, to Israel our serious concerns about the actual or threatened demolition of Palestinian homes and infrastructure in the West Bank, and the need for a planning process that adequately addresses the needs of Palestinian

communities. 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 continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes. The UK is also providing technical assistance to support Palestinian villages currently threatened with demolition action to meet the requirements of the Israeli planning system.

I can also assure you 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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