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Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

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

Sent: 10 May 2016 13:44:16

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

Our reference: EMOP/296/2016

10 May 2016

Dear Mr Shourou,

Thank you for your email of 12 April 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 Government has not raised the issue of the airstrike with the Government of Israel, although the UK is deeply concerned by the terrible human cost, to both sides, of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since the start of the current violence we have spoken regularly to both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government, urging them to use their influence to de-escalate the tensions. Israel, like all countries, has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are in line with International Humanitarian Law.

The Government remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. There is an urgent need for all the parties to reach an agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict in Gaza and to take the necessary steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. Any agreement should ensure that Hamas and other militant groups permanently end rocket and other attacks against Israel; the Palestinian Authority resumes control of Gaza and restores effective governance; and that Israel lifts its restrictions to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians. We continue to press for an end to movement and access restrictions into and out of Gaza and for urgent measures to relieve the humanitarian suffering of those in Gaza. On 18 February during his visit to Israel Tobias Ellwood, the FCO Minister with responsibility for our relations with the Middle East, stressed to Prime Minister Netanyahu the need for Israel to take practical steps to improve the daily life of the people of Gaza.

Of course the context of all this is the enduring tragedy of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The UK will continue to press for a two state solution. Only a negotiated two-state solution

will resolve the conflict and end the occupation. We believe there is no better alternative that can deliver peace and a Palestinian state. We continue to press Israel and the Palestinians on the need to refrain from actions which make peace more difficult.

On behalf of the

Near East Department

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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