





Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

25 September 2017

Our reference: MIN/112299/2017

Tareq Shrourou (Director) and Angelina Nicolaou
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights
PO Box 72489
London
W9 4GP

Dear Mr Shrourou, and Ms Nicolaou,

Thank you for your letter of 1 September to the Foreign Secretary about the demolition of a school in the village of Jubbet Adh Dhib. I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East.

The UK is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and compliance with international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have a regular dialogue with the Government of Israel with regard to the implementation of their obligations under international law and regularly and robustly raise our serious concerns on issues relating to Israeli actions in the OPTs.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN, raised the UK's concerns about the demolitions of schools in Area C when he met the Israeli Ambassador on 29 August. The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued a local statement expressing strong concern over recent confiscations, by the Israeli authorities, of Palestinian school structures in Bedouin communities in the West Bank. The statement referred to confiscation of solar panels in Abu Nuwar (9 August), a kindergarten in Badu el Baba (21 August), and the dismantling of an elementary school in the village of Jubbet Adh Dhib close to Bethlehem (22 August). Officials from our Consulate-General in Jerusalem continue to monitor developments closely and intend to visit the village of Jubbet Adh Dhib in the near future.

We are gravely concerned by the continued confiscation and demolition of Palestinian property. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes and confiscation of Palestinian property cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution;



and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem and we call on them to cease the policy of demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

The British Government supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction in Area C of the West Bank through our funding to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) legal aid programme. This helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. 97 per cent of cases provided with legal representation through NRC have resulted in suspension of demolitions and evictions, allowing Palestinians to remain in their homes.

We are continuing to urge Israel to not take steps such as these, which move us away from our shared goals of peace and security. We continue to press the parties on the need to refrain from actions which make peace more difficult. We do not underestimate the challenges, but if both parties show bold leadership, peace is possible. The UK is ready to do all it can to support this goal.

Yours sincerely
Alistair Burt

THE RT HON ALISTAIR BURT MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa