



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office



Department  
for International  
Development

3 July 2018

Our reference: MIN-6418-2018

Tareq Shrourou  
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights

by email: [lpshr@live.co.uk](mailto:lpshr@live.co.uk)

*Tareq Shrourou,*

Thank you for your letter of 7 June about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The UK abstained on the vote in the UN Human Rights Council on 18 May. The UK's Representative made clear that the UK fully supports, and recognises the need for, an independent and transparent investigation that includes the extent to which Israeli security forces' rules of engagement are in line with international law, and the role Hamas played in events. The loss of life, casualties and volume of live fire present a depressingly familiar and unacceptable pattern. This cannot be ignored.

Regrettably, the resolution at the Human Rights Council was not impartial, and was unhelpfully unbalanced. We could not support an international investigation that is mandated to look at Israel's actions alone. This would not provide a comprehensive assessment of accountability. It would risk hardening positions on both sides and move us further away from a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is why we abstained.

We call directly on Israel to carry out a transparent investigation into the Israel Defence Forces' conduct at the border fence and to demonstrate how this will achieve a sufficient level of independence. We call for this investigation to include international members. The death toll alone warrants such a comprehensive enquiry. The Foreign Secretary stressed the importance of Israel conducting an independent investigation when he spoke to Prime Minister Netanyahu on 16 May. The Prime Minister stressed the need for Israel to carry out a transparent, independent inquiry into recent protests in Gaza when she met Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in London on 6 June.

The UK is not required formally to take any further action or positions until the final Human Rights Council report is published. As a supporter of Commissions of Inquiry in general, we will encourage parties to engage constructively with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. At the same time we will work to ensure that the Commission of Inquiry is as independent, transparent and balanced as possible in its approach.

The death of the young Palestinian medic, Razan al Najjar, on 1 June in Gaza was dreadful. The circumstances of her death require urgent clarification. This case underlines why the UK is supportive of an investigation.

These events prove that the situation in Gaza cannot simply be managed over time. We need all sides now to show real leadership and courage, promote calm, and recognise that a negotiated political settlement is the only chance of securing a meaningful and lasting peace.

As you know, the UK remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. When I was in Gaza in May, I was able to announce that the British Government is providing a new package of lifesaving support. The funding will support work by the International Committee of the Red Cross to keep hospitals in Gaza open and functioning at a time when the healthcare system is under huge strain.

1/2 eve  
A. Burt

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