



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP  
Minister of State  
Department for International Development  
22 Whitehall  
London  
SW1E 2EG

17<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza**

As a group of cross-party MPs and Peers, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the current and worsening humanitarian emergency in Gaza, and to urge the Government to take urgent action to address this situation.

As you are aware, Gaza's already-dire humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by an electricity crisis since April 2017, which has resulted in daily blackouts of up to 20 hours. This has, in turn, seriously affected livelihoods and caused cuts to the provision of healthcare. A chronic lack of infrastructure development to meet the needs of Gaza's growing population, as well as lack of power for water treatment, has now resulted in two thirds of Gaza's shoreline being polluted by untreated sewage.

In 2012, the UN warned that Gaza would be 'unliveable' by 2020, though the seriousness of the current crisis has caused Save the Children to declare Gaza unliveable now. Likewise, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently stated that Gaza is experiencing "one of the most dramatic humanitarian crises that [he has] seen in many years working as a humanitarian in the United Nations."

Nevertheless, UN OCHA's appeal for US\$25 million urgent humanitarian funding appeal to stabilise Gaza, announced this summer, remains largely unmet. US\$14 million is still urgently needed for non-fuel related requirements within the water and sanitation, health and food security sectors. As winter approaches, needs are expected to increase as demand for electricity increases and further stretches Gaza's already-overloaded water, sanitation and health service systems. Israel continues to be the occupying power in Gaza, as it has been now for 50 years, and as such holds primary responsibility for addressing the humanitarian needs of the population of Gaza. Israel has furthermore imposed a closure on Gaza since 2007, which the International Committee of the Red Cross has termed a "collective



punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law". People in Gaza cannot wait for the resolution of a decades-long peace process to release them from this violation and the humanitarian crisis they face.

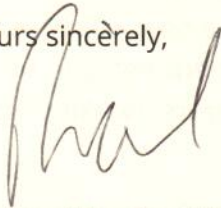
Similarly, though greater political integration between the West Bank and Gaza would be a welcome forward step, a reconciliation between Fatah and the de-facto authorities in Gaza cannot alone address the humanitarian needs of Gaza's beleaguered residents.

We therefore urge you to use your joint FCO-DfID brief to help bring relief to Gaza in two ways:

- 1) Provide urgent relief to the people of Gaza, by both supporting UN OCHA's US\$25 million urgent humanitarian funding appeal for Gaza, and ensure that the UK's aid funding to the occupied Palestinian territory invests in the long-term development of essential infrastructure and services such as water treatment, education, and healthcare; and
- 2) Use all diplomatic means - including multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council and bilateral relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority - to pursue accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory and bring an end to the closure of Gaza.

Furthermore, though the UK already provides some support to the people of Gaza through DfID-funded projects and initiatives, as parliamentarians we face challenges to accessing Gaza to visit these and provide necessary democratic oversight of this aid spending and assess the situation for ourselves as you have recently done. We also therefore ask that you make representations to the Government of Israel to ask them to facilitate the unhindered entry of British parliamentarians to Gaza, and remove any unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to entry through the Erez crossing. It is vital that British parliamentarians bear witness to the current humanitarian disaster in Gaza and how UK taxpayers' money is being used in terms of aid.

Yours sincerely,



**Richard Burden MP**

Chair, Britain-Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group

**Co-Signed by:**

Grahame Morris MP - Chair, Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East	
Rt Hon Sir Hugo Swire, KCMG, MP - Chairman, Conservative Middle East Council	
Debbie Abrahams MP	Hilary Benn MP
Lord Ahmed	Clive Betts MP
Rushanara Ali MP	Baroness Blackstone



Crispin Blunt MP  
Sir Peter Bottomley MP  
Ben Bradshaw MP  
Tom Brake MP  
Alan Brown MP  
Karen Buck MP  
Liam Byrne MP  
Alistair Carmichael MP  
Sarah Champion MP  
Joanna Cherry MP  
Ann Clwyd MP  
Julie Cooper MP  
Alex Cunningham MP  
Lord Dubs  
Julie Elliott MP  
Kate Green MP  
Lilian Greenwood MP  
Louise Haigh MP  
David Hanson MP  
Mark Hendrick MP  
Kate Hollern MP  
Lord Hylton  
Dan Jarvis MP  
Lord Kilclooney  
Stephen Kinnock MP  
Afzal Khan MP

Jeremy Lefroy MP  
Baroness Lister of Burtersett  
Tony Lloyd MP  
Caroline Lucas MP  
Gordon Marsden MP  
Kerry McCarthy MP  
Baroness Meacher  
Ian Murray MP  
Lisa Nandy MP  
Yasmin Qureshi MP  
Faisal Rashid MP  
The Earl of Sandwich  
Tommy Sheppard MP  
Baroness Sheehan  
Paula Sherriff MP  
Andy Slaughter MP  
Cat Smith MP  
Sir Nicholas Soames MP  
Wes Streeting MP  
Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne MP  
Stephen Timms MP  
Kelly Tolhurst MP  
Stephen Twigg MP  
Lord Tyler  
Lord Warner  
Philippa Whitford MP