



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and
Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

28 January 2025

Dear David,

Government actions to enable UNRWA to fulfil its mission

We write as Parliamentary members of the Palestine Israel Coordination Network to request that our Government should submit written observations to the International Court of Justice with regard to the question asked by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2024:

"What are the obligations of Israel, as an occupying Power and as a member of the UN, in relation to the presence and activities of the UN, including its agencies and bodies, other international organisations and third states, in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including to ensure and facilitate the unhindered provision of urgently needed supplies essential to the survival of the Palestinian civilian population as well as of basic services and humanitarian and development assistance, for the benefit of the Palestinian civilian population and in support of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination?"

We welcome your decision to vote in favour of the UNGA Resolution presented by Norway on 19 December. The Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister was right to say "Under no circumstances can we tolerate that any state imposes obstructions and impediments to organisations and states which provide humanitarian and development assistance to civilians. Yet, this is exactly what is happening".

When you announced the suspension of 30 arms licences to Israel on 2 September 2024, you said "It is the assessment of HM Government that Israel could reasonably do more to ensure that lifesaving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza, in the light of the appalling humanitarian situation". Since then the catastrophic conditions in which 2.2 million Gazans try to survive have only worsened, as UN OCHA have documented. In our view, this is deliberate Israeli Government policy. We are glad that HM Government agrees. We note the statement by the Middle East Minister on 7 January: "The UK condemns Israel's restrictions on aid in the strongest terms".

Your remarks in the House on 16 January demonstrate that you share our concern for the future operations of UNRWA in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank if the Government of Israel implements the Acts adopted by the Knesset last October. We believe that those Acts contravene the UN Charter and show contempt for Israel's responsibility for the wellbeing of Palestinian civilians across the OPT - a duty which the unlawful Occupation of 1967 fails daily. An Israeli ban on UNRWA operations would be disastrous for humanitarian aid in Gaza, would stop essential education and health services to refugees in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, and risk destabilising Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It must not happen. But we have seen nothing in the Israel/Hamas ceasefire deal offering reassurance on this point.

For these reasons we ask you to instruct officials to present the Government's observations to the ICJ as a matter of urgency, and to do all you can to prevent an Israeli Government ban on UNRWA operations.

Separately, we look forward to meeting Middle East Minister Hamish Falconer soon to discuss UK policy on Palestine/Israel, including how best to uphold International Humanitarian Law and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

A copy of this letter goes to Hamish Falconer and to the Attorney General.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Slaughter MP
Rt Hon Lord Soames of Fletching
Andrew George MP
Rt Hon Baroness Blackstone
Rt Hon Lord Dubs
Bambos Charalambous MP
Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP
Brendan O'Hara MP