

HOUSE OF COMMONS LONDON, SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP Prime Minister 10 Downing Street London SW1A 2AA

6th August 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

There is a young poet in Gaza, Haia Mohammed, who has won a scholarship to Goldsmiths College, London. She and more than 80 other successful applicants to U.K. universities cannot get here because of the biometric data requirements for a student visa.

We write on behalf of Haia and all the students like her, who have secured scholarships to study in the UK against seemingly insurmountable odds.

Within the first one hundred days of the war, every single university in Gaza had been bombed, leaving over 90,000 students without access to higher education. By the middle of last year, over 80% of schools, many of which were being used as shelters, had been destroyed or severely damaged.

Yet, the devastation goes far beyond the destruction of buildings; over 5,000 students, 250 teachers, and nearly 100 university professors have tragically been killed. This is a tremendous loss; one that will be felt in Palestine for generations to come.

Even before the war, leaving Gaza to pursue higher education was a complex process. The ongoing siege and restrictions made travel extremely difficult, but in the current state of constant bombardment, shootings at aid sites, and an IPC-declared famine, this process has become all but impossible.

In order to leave Gaza and take up their studies in the U.K., these scholars require a student visa; but there is no Visa Application Centre in Gaza that can record their biometric data.

As Members of Parliament we represent many of the institutions where these young people have secured a place. We ask that you defer biometric checking to arrival in Egypt or Jordan for student visa applicants based in Gaza and open a safe passage to enable these young people to fulfil their academic dreams.

Other countries such as Ireland, Belgium, France and Italy have taken proactive steps to ensure safe evacuation routes for students bound for their countries, and we are aware that the U.K. previously made a similar exception for Ukrainian students.

You have rightly adopted Project Pure Hope's proposal to facilitate the evacuation of 30 children in need of urgent medical treatment to the UK. We ask you today to coordinate an urgent evacuation route for this group of students, who have lost everything, and yet have achieved scholarships to study, so that they may return to rebuild Palestine for the future.

We urge you to act swiftly so the necessary arrangements are in place in time for them to join their courses at the beginning of the new academic year in September.

We request a meeting with you to discuss the practicalities and we trust you will consider this request with the compassion and urgency that it deserves.

Yours sincerely,

Abtisam Mohamed MP
Co-Chair APPG International Students

Barry Gardiner MP for Brent West

Dawn Butler MP

MP for Brent West	
Grahame Morris MP	Patricia Ferguson MP
Valerie Vaz MP	Clive Lewis MP
Andy McDonald MP	Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP
Paula Barker MP	Yasmin Qureshi MP
Lorraine Beavers MP	Olivia Blake MP
Mary Glindon MP	Kate Osborne MP
Emma Lewell MP	Richard Burgon MP
Dr Allison Gardner MP	Ian Lavery MP
Naz Shah MP	Kim Johnson MP

Debbie Abrahams MP

Paul Waugh MP	Jon Trickett MP
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Andy Slaughter MP Nadia Whittome MP

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