



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

30<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Kevin Herniman Esq.,  
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Dear Mr Herniman,

Thank you for your email yesterday about Israel's recent actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs).

The recent violence in Israel and the OPTs is deeply concerning. Ministers have made clear to all parties at every opportunity that a dangerous escalation is in no one's interest, and is harmful to prospects for the Middle East Peace Process.

It is vital that all security operations are conducted with due care and proportionate use of force. There are hundreds of thousands of extremely vulnerable civilians in Gaza who bear no responsibility for the rocket fire and are suffering acutely from this crisis; and the Israeli defence forces estimate that 5 million Israeli civilians live within range of rockets fired from Gaza. Israel has a right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks, but it is vital that Gaza's civilian population is protected. International humanitarian law requires both sides to distinguish between military and civilian targets and enable unhindered humanitarian access.

The UK is working with international partners to achieve three important goals. Firstly, Ministers will push for a ceasefire agreed by both sides that ends both the rocket fire and the Israeli operations against Gaza, based on the ceasefire agreement that ended the conflict in November 2012. This will require cooperation from all parties in Israel and the OPTs, as well as assistance from regional partners such as Egypt.

Secondly, the Government has committed to do all it can to help alleviate humanitarian suffering in Gaza. Tens of thousands of Gazans are seeking shelter with the UN and hundreds of thousands are suffering shortages of water, sanitation, electricity, fuel and medical supplies. The Government is already the third biggest donor to the UN Relief and Works Fund, providing much needed healthcare, fuel and water and I am pleased that Ministers have committed to doing more as required.

Finally, it is again important to re-iterate that a negotiated two-state solution remains the only

way to resolve the conflict once and for all and to achieve a sustainable peace so that Israeli and Palestinian families can live without fear of violence. No other option exists which guarantees peace and security for both peoples. I can assure you the UK will work with all parties to make progress towards this goal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rosemary Fisher".

**James Gray MP**

*Dictated by James Gray and signed in his absence*