

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

7th March 2018

Dear Constituent

RE: PALESTINE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the detention of Palestinian children (EDM 563) and the demolition of Palestinian villages (EDM 616).

As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am not able to sign Early Day Motions, as doing so would likely be in breach of the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility. However, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I have attached a copy of an excellent article written by my colleague, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, which I feel succinctly sets out those concerns. I hope that this will be of interest to you, and essentially, I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs

I agree with you that the detention of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons is extremely worrying and I know that my colleagues in Government share your concerns. Foreign Office Minister, the Rt. Hon Alistair Burt MP, raised the UK's concerns during his visit to Israel last summer, and our ambassador in Tel Aviv raised the issue with the Israeli Justice Minister as recently as December.

Israel has made some progress on this issue. It has reduced the number of detainees aged between 12 and 14, increased the age of maturity from 16 to 18, established separate juvenile courts and enacted a special statute of limitations for minors. However, the UK assessment is that Israel is still falling short and needs to do more to safeguard vulnerable people in its care.

In 2012, an independent report on Children in Military Custody was funded and facilitated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Since its publication, Ministers and our Ambassador to Israel have strongly urged the recommendations of the report to be implemented. To my knowledge, Israel has only implemented one of 40 recommendations.

The UK is committed to helping the Israeli authorities to make the necessary changes. Last year, I understand the UK invited them to attend expert discussions with the Metropolitan Police to share more than 30 years of UK experience of implementing regulations designed specifically to protect the rights of minors in detention. Unfortunately, the invitation was declined.

I am gravely concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause



unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution; and, in all but the most exceptional cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

I know that the Government shares the concerns on this issue. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv, along with European partners, raised the UK's grave concerns about demolitions with the Israeli authorities in a joint demarche on the 2nd November 2017. Israel can be in no doubt of the concerns about demolitions and the damage that they do for the prospects of a peaceful settlement.

I continue to take an active interest in this human rights issue and hope that progress can be made.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Chris Heaton-Harris: Why Early Day Motions are politically impotent

Writing exclusively for PoliticsHome, Conservative MP Chris Heaton-Harris describes Early Day Motions as 'politically impotent', and warns he is 'not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs'.

Since being elected last year, a number of my constituents have asked me to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs). I'm afraid I haven't signed any yet and don't plan on changing that in the future as I think they are pretty much politically impotent and too costly in their current form.

I'm not alone either, quite a number of the 2010 intake all independently decided to do the same thing and I would imagine that if the rules around EDMs don't change at the next election, even more MPs will join the "just say no" bandwagon.

Supposedly EDMs cost around £500 a go and we have already had 2423 tabled in this Parliament. Looking through the titles of the EDMs you'll see many a worthy political cause being lauded, people recently passed away remembered and an abundant amount of motherhood and apple pie. Yet even the most benign EDM rarely gets more than 50 signatories; indeed, many barely scrape into double figures.

I really do think that we need to change how EDMs can be sponsored before too many MPs decide to call it a day on them. Surely a sensible solution would be to say that an individual Member should not be allowed to table an EDM? We should at least try to separate the more popular ones by asking that there be at least ten MPs proposing for it to be accepted as being tabled and thus, opened up for others to sign.

Considering there are MPs out there who tend to sign a large number of EDMs (Sir Peter Bottomley and Alan Meale, please take a bow) surely setting an entry point of ten signatures is not an oppressive barrier if you really do care about a subject?

One of the main reasons (if not the main reason) why so few people sign EDMs is that in the last few years they have turned into the tool of the crap lobbyist. Sitting in a meeting room trying to work out how to justify their Client's retainer, many believe that if they can get a few signatures on an EDM he has done his or her job. Even better if you can persuade your client to run a campaign to get more MPs to sign up; more money for you to set up pointless meetings to talk about a pointless campaign to try and get more than a dozen signatures for a pointless motion that will be ignored by Government and just about everyone else too.

If you are a business, charity or NGO and your Public Affairs outfit recommends an EDM - fire them immediately! Few people take any notice of them and so they are really no more than political graffiti.

So, to my Constituents I say if you are writing to me, please don't ask me to sign an EDM. I'll happily raise subjects with Ministers, ask questions in the House or try to have a Westminster Hall debate - in other words, do things that actually count - but I'm not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs.