



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

12th March 2021

Jean Comfrent,

RE: DEMOLITIONS AND SETTLEMENTS IN OPTs - EDM 1140

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the demolition of Palestinian homes and Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and Early Day Motion (EDM) 1140; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

Notwithstanding the fact that as a Government Minister I am unable to sign EDMs, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs. That said, I do appreciate your concerns about the situation in the region.

The UK's position, which I support, is clear and longstanding. There should be a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a fair and realistic settlement for refugees. The UK Government consistently calls – both bilaterally and via the UN – for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution.

This includes the demolition of Palestinian homes and Israeli settlements in the OPTs. Indeed, the UK is clear that these actions 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 of cases, are contrary to International Law. Settlement expansion is also counterproductive in light of the recent normalisation agreements reached between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. I join my ministerial colleagues and officials from the UK Embassy in Tel Aviv in calling for both of these actions to cease with immediate effect.

Finally, the UK Government neither encourages nor offers support to individuals or companies who operate in the OPTs and that being so, I would be happy to raise with the Foreign Secretary your concerns surrounding the reports of JCB machinery being used in demolitions on your behalf.

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
Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE