



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

16th April 2021

Jew Content,

RE: UNHRC - PALESTINE AND THE OPTs

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of various issues related to Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs); your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I appreciate your concern about these issues, many of which, as you are aware, were considered at the 46th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

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 consistently calls - 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. They are also counterproductive in light of the recent normalisation agreements reached between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

Your concern for human rights in this region is one that Ministers and I share. Indeed, Israel and the OPTs are a human rights priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

UNWRA has a unique mandate to support Palestinian refugees until a lasting political settlement is reached, and until then, the UK is clear it will continue to support it, and in doing so, millions of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. The UK has also been clear, however, that a dedicated UNHRC agenda item ('Item 7') does little to advance dialogue or mutual understanding, nor the prospect of a two-state solution. As such, since the 40th session in 2019, the UK has voted against all resolutions under 'Item 7' out of principle.



At the same time, the UK will not stop raising valid concerns about Israel's actions. That's why we engaged constructively with negotiations on the 'Item 2' resolution on the human rights situation in the OPTs. Ultimately, the UK abstained, I am informed, as it judged that the final resolution text needed to address more fully the conduct of Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza, particularly Hamas' treatment of the Palestinian population of Gaza.

The UK has been a major contributor to the UN since its inception seventy-five years ago, and defends wholeheartedly its role as a forum where issues of international concern can be discussed productively and respectfully. It will continue to support scrutiny of Israel and the OPTs in the UNHRC, provided it is proportionate and not proposed under 'Item 7'.

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**