

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

20<sup>th</sup> March 2022

*Jean Confrontant,*

**RE: STOP BDS**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of council investment decisions. I have read your comments on this with interest.

There are strong views on this issue, and I appreciate that my position will not please everyone. The UK is a close friend of Israel and we enjoy an excellent bilateral relationship, built on decades of cooperation between our two countries across a range of fields.

The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. The UK regularly raises its concerns on this issue with the Israeli authorities and urges them to reverse their policy of settlement expansion. However, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is deeply complex: settlements are not the only obstacle to peace. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and antisemitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution.

While the UK should not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel wherever necessary, I know Ministers believe that imposing sanctions on Israel, or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts, would not support efforts to progress the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution. I agree. Imposing local level boycotts can damage integration and community cohesion within the United Kingdom, hinder Britain's export trade, and harm foreign relations to the detriment of Britain's economic and international security.

I welcome plans to bring forward legislation to ban universities and local councils from organising boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment against other countries. Foreign policy is rightly the reserve of national government. I believe that councils should prioritise securing long-term returns from their investments, rather than dividing communities and making political statements. It cannot be right for councils to have the power to make divisive decisions which set different parts of the community against each other.

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,

*With best wishes,*

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