



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

13<sup>th</sup> February 2024

*Dear Constance,*

**RE: UK AIR STRIKES AGAINST HOUTHI MILITARY TARGETS**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the strikes against Houthi military targets. I have read your comments carefully and with interest.

Since the 19th November, Iranian-backed Houthis have launched over 30 illegal and unacceptable attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, and on the 9th January they mounted a direct attack against British and American warships. This was the biggest attack on the Royal Navy for decades.

In response to these continued attacks against vessels transiting the Red Sea, the UK and the USA, with support from the Netherlands, Canada, Bahrain, and Australia, conducted joint strikes in accordance with the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence, consistent with the 'UN Charter', against a number of targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen on the 11th January, 22nd January, and most recently on the 3rd February.

These strikes were carefully targeted at launch sites for drones and ballistic missiles to degrade the Houthis' capacity to make further attacks on international shipping. Strikes have targeted a Houthi underground storage site and locations associated with the Houthis' missile and air surveillance capabilities, as well as a ground control station inside a defensive position, and targets at Bani.

This action was limited, and not escalatory. It was a necessary and proportionate response to a direct threat to UK vessels, and therefore to the UK itself.

The Red Sea is one of the major arteries of international trade: some 15 percent of the world's shipping passes through the narrow strait dividing Africa from Asia. If the Houthis deny this passage to ships, vital supply chains are threatened and prices will go up in Britain and across the globe.

The Houthis' malign narrative that this is about Israel and Gaza should not be believed; they target ships from around the world. The UK continues to work towards a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza and to get more aid to civilians, and continues to support a negotiated settlement to Yemen's civil war. I want to make clear that the UK's strikes against Houthi targets were unrelated to these issues.

Nobody wants to see the conflict in Israel and Gaza last a moment longer than is necessary. This means achieving a sustainable ceasefire - one that will last and prevent another generation of children living under the constant threat of war.




There is no perfect formula for peace. Clearly, however, leaving Hamas in power in Gaza would be a permanent roadblock to a two-state solution. A ceasefire would also not last if hostages are still being held. A sustainable ceasefire must mean that Hamas is no longer there, able to threaten Israel with rocket attacks and other forms of terrorism. Ahead of a permanent ceasefire, the UK wants to see immediate and sustained humanitarian pauses. This will allow a window for the hostages to leave and more aid to enter Gaza.

Indeed, there is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. The UK has trebled its aid commitment for this financial year and I know the UK Government is working closely with our partners in international agencies and in the region to get aid to where it is desperately needed.

Finally, it is also important to stress that for a peaceful solution, there are four things that must happen – there must be a Palestinian-led government in Gaza and the West Bank, a concrete plan to help reform and support the Palestinian Authority, a massive reconstruction plan for Gaza, and a political horizon towards a two-state solution.

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 PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**