



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Mr Alan M. Smith  
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30 July 2025

Dear Mr Smith,

**Re: Gaza**

Thank you for contacting me about the conflict in the Middle East.

The events which have unfolded in the Middle East since 7 October 2023 have been unbearable to witness. Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history at the hands of Hamas where innocent civilians were brutally murdered and hundreds taken hostage. As a direct consequence of the actions of Hamas on 7 October and their use of civilian infrastructure to undertake terrorist operations, Palestinian civilians continue to face a devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. My thoughts are with both the families of those still held hostage, and every innocent life which has been lost or impacted by this conflict.

The release of the remaining 54 hostages held by Hamas since the atrocities of 7 October is key to a sustainable end to the conflict in Gaza and to building a better future. Hamas could agree to release those hostages now and avert an escalation. The incredibly brave families of those held hostage remain firmly in my thoughts.

I share your concern about humanitarian aid access into Gaza, and I urge the UK Government to work to unblock the situation. My colleagues on the Shadow Front Bench have pressed the Government on its practical response on aid access, how it is working to unblock this situation, and what is happening to the British aid that is already in the region or en route. Unfortunately, the Government has not been able to provide clear details on the steps it will take to support getting aid into Gaza to help those who are most in need.

I do not support calls to suspend the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement, to suspend negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Israel or to end

diplomatic ties with Israel. Israel has the right to defend itself in line with International Humanitarian Law. Given that Iran has called for the death of the West, including the United Kingdom, and it is not guaranteed that their nuclear capacity is completely wiped out, ending all intelligence cooperation would be an extremely unwise decision.

I am aware that the Government has suspended 30 of the UK's 350 arms export licences to Israel. While I note your concerns about arms exports, I fear that the Government's action could potentially send the wrong signal, leaving Israel exposed at a time of grave threats to its security and undermining transatlantic unity in the face of terrorist threats. Decisions like this also have important broader geopolitical implications, and we must be clear that there is no moral equivalence between Hamas and the democratically elected Government of Israel. Moreover, with Iran being responsible for funding and supporting terrorism and instability in the region, and their attacks on Israel, it is important that we do not weaken the ability of Israel to defend itself from these threats to their safety and to the interests of the West.

I support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. Our long-standing position has been that we will recognise a Palestinian State at a time that is most conducive to the peace process. We are not at that point now. And as Conservatives, we are clear that recognition cannot be the start of the process. Israeli hostages remain in captivity and every single one must be released. Ensuring Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel are also essential and unavoidable steps on the road to lasting peace.

The UK Government's immediate focus must be on getting the hostages out and aid in. In doing this, they would be focussing on bringing the current conflict to a sustainable end.

I recognise that the situation in Gaza is desperate. The rumours of the deaths of civilians waiting in line for aid are indeed very concerning. However, with all war-time reporting, the details of the facts can be blurred. I am aware that some sources portray Israel as shooting or bombing innocent civilians, whereas others state that Hamas are shooting their own people for accepting foreign aid, blame Israel for atrocities they themselves carried out, or hiding behind civilian infrastructure and using Gazans as human shields to prevent their own elimination. Hamas, which provides all of the data coming from Gaza, is backed by Iran and a terrorist organisation in control of Gaza. It is worth keeping all of this in mind when examining the situation and reading source material critically.

Throughout the conflict, the UK has supported NGO and UN partners to deliver medical aid and care in Gaza. The previous Conservative Government rightly did everything it could to get more aid into Gaza as quickly as possible by land, sea and air, and took important steps including trebling the UK's aid commitment and setting up a field hospital, provided by UK funding to UK-Med, which has now treated thousands of patients. I sincerely hope we will see essential relief brought to communities across Gaza.

With specific regard to the UK's military support, I have partially addressed this in regard to your request for an arms embargo. I would also like to add that since the terrorist attacks against Israel of 7 October 2023, the UK Government has worked with partners across the region to secure the release of hostages, including British nationals. In support of the ongoing hostage rescue activity, the UK Ministry of Defence has conducted surveillance flights over the eastern Mediterranean, including operating in airspace over Israel and Gaza.

Surveillance aircraft are unarmed; they do not have a combat role and they have been solely tasked with locating hostages. Only information relating to hostage rescue is passed to the relevant authorities responsible for hostage rescue.

The Royal Navy task group, RAF operations and wider military support show the UK's work to avoid any further spread of conflict in the Middle East. I am proud that the RAF played its part in an international effort to intercept missiles Iran and its proxies launched at Israel overnight on 13 April 2024. By successfully preventing almost all of these missiles from reaching their target, the RAF's efforts saved lives. I will always be thankful for that.

The UK Government should be directly involved in efforts to find a way through this difficult moment. The international community must also reiterate that there can be no role for Hamas in Gaza's future and action needs to be taken to put an end to the malign influence of Iran, which is the cause of so much of the bloodshed and conflict in the region. The UK Government needs to do more and the Opposition has been pressing ministers to develop a clear plan to bring about these changes.

My colleagues and I continue to urge the Government to work with our international partners to support the release of all Israeli hostages held in barbaric conditions by the Iran-backed Hamas terrorists, the provision of aid into Gaza, and press for a lasting and sustainable end to this conflict. In the longer term, I continue to support a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security for both nations and the wider region.

Thanks once again for raising this with me, and please do let me know if I can be of any future assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Wood', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mike Wood  
Member of Parliament for Kingswinford and South Staffordshire