



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

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To all MPs  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

10 October 2023

*Dear Colleagues,*

## **RESPONSE TO TERRORIST ATTACKS IN ISRAEL**

We have all been horrified by the terrorist attacks in Israel. I wanted to provide an update on the latest events and on our actions to support British nationals.

At dawn on 7 October, Hamas launched thousands of rockets at targets across Israel. Covered by this sudden and lethal bombardment, terrorists broke out of Gaza and entered towns across southern Israel, killing or abducting anyone they found.

Over 900 Israelis are believed to have been murdered so far, with 2,741 injured. Meanwhile, between 100 and 150 Israeli civilians are understood to have been kidnapped and taken to Gaza, where they are now captives of Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Never before in Israel's 75-year history as an independent state has the country been forced to endure tragedy on this scale.

Israel has retaliated with air strikes in Gaza and at least 687 Palestinians are reported to have been killed, with 3,800 injured.

I want to say without equivocation that the UK utterly condemns the heinous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. We support Israel's right of self-defence, as guaranteed by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

## **Ministerial engagement**

On Saturday I spoke to Israel's Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen, to express my condolences and emphasise Britain's backing for Israel. The Prime Minister has also spoken to Benjamin Netanyahu. Yesterday I visited the Israeli embassy in London to join a vigil with the Israeli ambassador, Tzipi Hotovely. I, and my officials, will continue to engage closely with Israel.

Yesterday the Prime Minister spoke to President Biden, Chancellor Scholz, President Macron and Prime Minister Meloni. Every leader expressed their steadfast and united support for Israel and their abhorrence of Hamas terrorism.

I have spoken to key partners in the Middle East and elsewhere. On Saturday evening, I spoke to US Secretary of State and the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany. I have spoken to the

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Türkiye, Oman, and Qatar to encourage them to help reduce tensions. Yesterday I also met the Foreign Minister of the UAE in London.

In my call with the Palestinian Prime Minister, I urged the Palestinian Authority to condemn the terrorist attacks and cooperate with the Israeli security forces to prevent any further violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, has spoken to the Palestinian Foreign Minister, the Head of the Palestinian Mission to the UK, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain. We will continue dialogue with regional counterparts as the situation unfolds.

### **Consular – Israel and the Occupied Territories**

Our Travel Advice was updated to advise against all travel to Gaza and to nearby areas of Israel and to advise against all but essential travel to Israel.

([www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel)). We will keep this under close review. We are telling any British nationals in any areas affected by the fighting that they should follow the instructions of the Israeli Home Front Command.

My officials are working around the clock to support affected British nationals as our utmost priority. Our consular assistance must also include support for the families of British nationals reported dead or missing. We are also supporting those who require

new passports, or Emergency Travel Documents, or other assistance with leaving Israel and, where possible, facilitation for the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. We are also asking affected British nationals to register their presence via

(<https://www.register.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/israel-20231009/tell-the-uk-government-youre-in-israel-or-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>) so that they can receive FCDO travel updates. We are aware that commercial airline capacity out of Israel is constrained and that some British nationals are having to delay their departure. As mentioned above, any constituents who remain in Israel should follow the instructions of the Israeli Home Front Command. We are working with the Department for Transport and the Israeli government to keep commercial flights running.

We are available 24/7 should any British nationals need to contact us, including to update their contact details or location. Our Crisis Response Centre is fully operational and we have embedded Police and other government liaison teams. British nationals in Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories requiring consular assistance should call the following numbers: +972 (0)3 725 1222 or +972 (2) 5414100. If they experience technical difficulties or if they are in the UK, call +44 20 7008 5000. FCDO consular staff also provide a dedicated hotline for Parliamentarians for urgent consular and emergency travel document constituency cases: +44 20 7008 0999. Please continue to send letters and constituent enquiries which do not relate to urgent or

consular assistance  
to [FCDO.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:FCDO.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk).

## **Consular – Lebanon**

We have today (10 October) changed our Travel Advice for Lebanon ( <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/lebanon>) to advise against all but essential travel to Lebanon, and against all travel to locations south of the Litani River, following mortar and artillery exchanges in South Lebanon. We are not currently advising British nationals to leave Lebanon. However, tensions are high and events could escalate with little warning, which could disrupt or limit exit routes out of Lebanon. If you have constituents in Lebanon, we encourage them to review their need to stay in the country, to monitor our travel advice by subscribing to updates and other media, and to ensure their travel documents are in order as the situation is changing fast.

## **Humanitarian situation**

Hamas's actions will lead to an increase in humanitarian needs in Gaza. We understand the Rafah crossing to Egypt to be closed currently, and it cannot be relied upon as a route for humanitarian assistance. The main border crossing from Israel to Gaza has also been closed.

The UN has activated a contingency plan for Gaza and is working with all parties to secure humanitarian access and scale up the response. My officials are closely engaged with this effort, and in my calls with the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, I

urged both to take decisive action to help mitigate the unfolding crisis.

Aid funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories from the UK is focused on essential basic services and life-saving humanitarian assistance, mostly (74% this year) through dedicated UN programmes. We ended direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 2021.

We maintain a strict and longstanding non-contact policy with Hamas, as a proscribed terrorist organisation. We have strong safeguards against aid diversion in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This includes review of indirect recipients. Minister of State for Development Andrew Mitchell is overseeing our approach to UK aid in the crisis and is reviewing our spend, as is regular practice.

We also remain in close touch with the Israeli government to assess what more support we can provide to alleviate suffering on its territory.

I will keep you updated on further developments.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes. The signature is positioned above the typed name of the sender.

**THE RT HON. JAMES CLEVERLY MP**  
**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development**  
**Secretary**

