

John Whitby MP



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House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Roger Clarke  
Friends Meeting House, Chapel Row  
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Dear Roger Clarke,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me regarding the war in Gaza.

I appreciate the issues you raise and, like many of my constituents, I am concerned by the ongoing situation in Gaza and the restriction of humanitarian aid.

Whilst I fully support the right of Israel to defend itself, I remain deeply alarmed by the scale and nature of Israel's response in Gaza, with more than 50,000 Palestinians having been killed, and over 100,000 injured. I am appalled by the continuing attacks on both civilians and civilian infrastructure and by reports that 91% of population of Gaza face acute food insecurity. Hunger should never be weaponised – especially when targeted at women and children.

The renewed ground offensive is not only worsening the humanitarian crisis but also placing the remaining Israeli hostages in even greater danger. Negotiation, not military escalation, offers the best chance of their safe return.

I welcome the diplomatic efforts the Government is making in pursuit of an immediate ceasefire and the release of the hostages. These measures, alongside restoring and increasing funding to UNRWA, the UN agency that is responsible for delivering humanitarian relief to Gaza, are vital to ensure that the civilian population of Gaza experiences as little additional suffering as possible. The Government has also condemned settlements and settler violence in the West Bank and has placed sanctions on settler groups.

Furthermore, the Government has been clear that Israel must adhere to international humanitarian law (IHL). Immediately upon taking office, this Labour Government commissioned a review of UK arms exports licensing to Israel. Last year, the Government announced the outcome of this review. Following a rigorous process in line with the UK's legal obligations, it concluded that there was a clear risk that military exports to Israel, where used for military operations in Gaza, might be used in serious violations of IHL. As a result, it has suspended approximately 30 licences for exports to Israel for items which could be used in the current conflict. This includes components for fighter aircraft, parts for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, naval systems and targeting equipment.

This is not a blanket ban on arms exports to Israel. Given the ongoing threats that Israel faces from Iran and other hostile actors, the Government has permitted the export of weapons used

for defensive purposes. However, the current ban does effectively cover all arms exports for use in the current conflict in Gaza, except for key components of the F-35 fighter jet, which is part of an international collaborative programme that plays an important role in NATO. For this reason, it is not possible to suspend all F-35 licences without undermining the global F-35 supply chain that is crucial for the security of the UK and our allies.

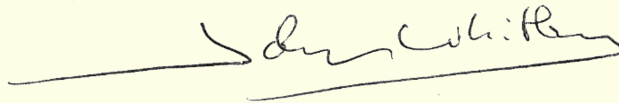
On 20 May 2025, David Lammy, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Foreign Secretary) announced further sanctions against individuals and organisations supporting violence against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The Government also announced a formal pause on free trade agreement negotiations with Israel and summoned the Israeli ambassador. I echo the Foreign Secretary's words that Israel's plan for a renewed offensive is "morally unjustifiable, wholly disproportionate and utterly counterproductive".

However, I feel that the Government should take further action in light of the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza. I have, therefore, written to the Foreign Secretary asking him to use the June Conference (hosted by France and Saudi Arabia) as an opportunity to recognise the state of Palestine. I also asked him to implement further sanctions on settlers, particularly those engaged in violence against Palestinians and to sanction extremist far-right Israeli government ministers including Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich.

I will keep urging the Government to use every available opportunity to push for a lasting ceasefire, full humanitarian access, the return of hostages, and real movement toward a two-state solution.

I would like to thank you once again for taking the time to write to me about such an important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Whitby', is written over a horizontal line.

**John Whitby MP**