



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Rt Hon. Sir Julian Smith MP
House of Commons
London
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20 January 2025

Dear Sir Julian,

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 January to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of several of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister responsible for the Middle East.

The announcement of an agreement to end the fighting in Gaza and ensure the release of all hostages is a moment of hope after a year of agony, following Hamas's appalling attack on 7 October 2023. With this agreement, we hope and pray that hostages and their families will be reunited, and violence will stop. This agreement offers hope to innocent civilians in Gaza, who can finally begin to rebuild their lives after enduring over a year of suffering, marked with death and destruction. Palestinians must be free to return to their homes and begin to re-build their communities. The UK thanks Qatar, Egypt and the US for their tireless efforts in negotiating this agreement over recent months.

This is a crucial time for the region. Much remains to be done – to implement all phases of the deal in full and establish a pathway to lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

From our first day in office, this Government has pressed for an immediate ceasefire, to free the hostages and to bring relief, reconstruction and hope to civilians who have suffered so much. We are closely monitoring the situation and will continue to engage with international partners to ensure the delivery of the agreement. We are doing all we can to get more aid into Gaza as quickly as possible and have announced £112 million in aid, so far this financial year, for the OPTs and to Palestinian refugees across the region.

Our attention must turn to how we can secure a permanently better future for the Israeli and Palestinian people – grounded in a two-state solution that will guarantee security and stability for Israel, alongside a sovereign and stable Palestinian state. The Foreign Secretary and his entire Ministerial team will continue to do all they can to seize this chance for a better future and secure lasting peace in the region.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hamish Falconer', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

HAMISH FALCONER MP
Minister for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan