



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
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Tel: 020 7219 7048

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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the situation in Gaza.

The UK recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and supports a lasting solution for Israelis and Palestinians alike. However, Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people or their aspirations; it offers nothing for them other than more terror and more bloodshed. I therefore support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, deter further incursions and strengthen its long-term security.

However, the loss of every innocent life is a tragedy, and the UK Government has repeatedly stressed that Israel must take every precaution to minimise civilian casualties, in line with international humanitarian law. Ministers regularly engage with Israeli counterparts to ensure that the campaign is targeted against Hamas terrorists and military infrastructure, and call for discipline, professionalism and restraint from the Israeli military.

The rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza is deeply troubling, and I welcome the extensive efforts of British Government to ensure that vital aid reaches the Palestinian people.

During his recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Foreign Secretary announced £30 million to support trusted partners, including UN agencies on the ground, to deliver lifesaving aid to people in Gaza. It brings to £60 million the additional aid announced by the UK for Palestinian civilians since the crisis started in October.

Funding alone is not enough, and work is ongoing to increase the flow of aid into Gaza; while the opening of the Rafah border crossing is a major development, the UK has confirmed that it will continue to work with Egypt, Israel and other international partners to increase the flow of support.

I welcomed the recent pause in hostilities, which allowed for an increased flow of vital aid into Gaza and saw a number of hostages released. Ministers have made clear that the pause that took place between 24 November and 1 December should not be a one-off and should act as a confidence-building mechanism for future pauses.

The UK Government takes its export control responsibilities extremely seriously and operates one of the most robust export control regimes in the world. All export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, based on the most up-to-date information and analysis available.

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Licence decisions take account of prevailing circumstances at the time of application and include human rights and international humanitarian law considerations. Export licenses are not issued where to do so would be inconsistent with the consolidated criteria, including where there is a clear risk that the items might be used for a serious violation of international law.

As a member of the Government, as well as the reasons I have set out above, I will not be signing these EDMs.

The UK Government is working towards a long-term two-state solution to ensure this crisis never recurs, and I am following developments closely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**