

Thank you for your email regarding the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. I have answered the questions below. However, I would also like to outline the work and parliamentary action that I have taken on this issue, to give you some more background as to support for Palestine and the rights of people in the Palestinian territories.

I raised the blockade of Gaza in my maiden speech in Parliament and I have also spoken up for the UK to support Palestinian statehood at the United Nations. I visited the West Bank in 2011 and during my visit I met with a number of respected humanitarian and human rights organisations such as Oxfam, ICAHD and Breaking the Silence. I am sympathetic to their concerns and have raised a number of them in Parliament. I also met with the then Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

During and in the aftermath of the 2014 conflict, I wrote to the Foreign Office on numerous occasions to encourage Ministers to do everything they could to secure an immediate end to the violence in Gaza and I publicly urged the Prime Minister at the time to use "every tool in the diplomatic box" to push for peace. I also encouraged the Foreign Office to put pressure on other countries - including Israel - to sign up to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, as we in the UK already do.

I want to see a two-state solution brought about through negotiated agreement. This solution should lead to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 borders. This will include agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair and agreed solution for refugees. I continue to take up the concerns of my constituents regarding Palestine with Ministerial colleagues on a regular basis, and pledge to continue to do so in future should I be re-elected.

*1. Do you think the UK should ban the import of settlement goods into the UK?*

We need to ensure that labelling is accurate so that people can make their own decisions about goods. I do not support an outright boycott of Israel but I do think that people should be properly informed on whether goods labelled as being from the Palestinian territories are actually from legal Palestinian farms and towns or from illegal settlements and I support the right of people to organise their own protests or boycotts of the latter.

*2. Do you agree that Israel's blockade of Gaza imposed since 2007 should be lifted immediately? Yes, as I have stated publicly on several occasions.*

*3. Do you agree that the government should enforce its own arms export licensing criteria and stop supplying arms to Israel until it ceases its violations of international law?*

Having served on the Committee for Arms Exports Controls for a brief period during my time on the BIS Select Committee I am aware that there are already substantial restrictions in place on what can be sold to Israel and the security forces. We have rightly sought to restrict supplies of lethal arms and restricted our exports to non-lethal security equipment such as we also supply to the Palestinian Authority.

The Government takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust licensing systems in the world. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, taking into account all relevant factors at the application. A license would not be issued for any country if to do so would be inconsistent with any provision of the mandatory criteria, including where it is assessed that there is a clear risk that it might be used in the commission of a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law. The Government continues to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and takes into account the latest circumstances when assessing licence applications. However, I do not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo on Israel would promote progress in the Middle East Peace Process.

*4. Do you agree that any child prisoner should be treated in accordance with international law and not Israeli military law?*

Yes, and while it is not for the UK Government to intervene in the justice system of another sovereign state, I know that the UK Government is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as compliance with international humanitarian law.

*5. Do you agree that future UK trade deals should include a strong human rights clause, and that any trade agreement with Israel should be conditional upon the respect of international law and human rights?*

Yes, a commercial relationship does not prevent us from speaking frankly to Governments about issues of concern, such as human rights. In fact, our close political and security relationships can help enhance our scope to positively influence Governments helping to promote democratic reform and raise human rights standards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Walker', on a light blue background.

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