

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Rt Hon David Milliband MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles St  
London  
SW1A 2AH

January 29<sup>th</sup> 2008

Dear Foreign Secretary,

At a special meeting of the UN's Human Rights Council on January 24th, the European Union and the UK abstained from voting on a resolution from Pakistan and Syria on the human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions into Palestine, particularly the occupied Gaza Strip. The resolution referred to the Israeli siege of Gaza and the resulting humanitarian and environmental crisis. It called for international action and on Israel to lift the siege imposed on Gaza, reopening the border crossings and restoring continued supplies of fuel food and medicine.

The EU also recognises that escalating violence in Gaza poses an increased humanitarian threat and Commissioner Ferrero Waldner has herself described recent events using the term 'collective punishment' of the Palestinian people. I am, therefore, horrified at the cowardice exhibited by the EU in voting against the UN resolution last week. In a statement explaining its position the EU claims that the resolution does not 'call on all parties to the conflict to take a constructive stand towards peace'. Yet the text proposed by the Pakistani and Syrian representatives very clearly urges 'all parties to respect the rules of human rights law and international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population'.

The UK's similar lack of courage and moral authority in abstaining from the vote is incomprehensible. Please can the Foreign Secretary advise why the onus is on occupied Palestine to do more than Israel to end this conflict and why calling on both sides to respect human rights and international humanitarian law is unacceptable? Further, does the UK agree that the borders with Gaza should be reopened and the siege ended?

According to the European Commission, the UK had serious reservations about both the wording of the resolution, as well as the Human Rights Council even convening to discuss the immediate crisis in Gaza. The British government appears to have resisted moves by France, Finland and other EU member states to actively negotiate the text of the resolution and were instrumental in the EU's decision to abstain. I understand that a particularly controversial issue was Israel's right to self-defence, with the UK pressing for this to be recognised in the resolution. I would like the Foreign Secretary to clarify whether the UK also recognises Palestine's right to defend itself against an occupying force that has been found in breach of international and human rights law and whether the British government made the case for words to this effect this to be included in the resolution?

The EU talks about the need for a 'constructive stand towards peace'. How exactly does the Foreign Secretary imagine that failing to condemn Israel's disproportionate response to the Qassam attacks will bring peace to the region?

I trust you will appreciate the strong feelings I have on this matter and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.