

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Rt Hon David Miliband MP
Foreign Secretary
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

January 5th 2009

Dear Secretary of State,

Israel's continuing assault on Gaza underlines the urgent need for international action, both to ease the humanitarian situation in Gaza and to promote a political solution to the crisis. The aerial bombardment and ground attacks on innocent civilians is not only disproportionate, as described by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is also deeply counter-productive. The population of Gaza is already suffering the devastating consequences of the Israeli blockade, which has accelerated their decline into even greater hunger and poverty. Casualties among the civilian population only serve to make people angrier and more disillusioned, sowing the seeds for further conflict.

I welcome the EU and UK's commitment to providing additional humanitarian aid and the Council of Europe's calls for a temporary ceasefire in order to allow aid to be delivered. However, Israel's control of fuel supplies and of the borders with Gaza had effectively disabled distribution networks before Christmas and the situation on the ground is now even worse. Moreover, the Palestinian people do not only need aid - they need freedom and justice. The UK has a responsibility to work with other members of the Quartet towards this goal and to secure an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine. Britain must also back up its words with concrete actions that hold Israel to account for the continued flouting of international law.

In particular, proposals to upgrade EU relations with Israel, reaffirmed by foreign ministers just a few weeks ago (against the advice of the majority in the European Parliament), must be revoked. The decision, in December, to support this upgrade ignores the fact that Israel is in breach of an "essential element" of the earlier agreement, which requires States to respect "human rights and democratic principles, and which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement." To endorse an upgrade of relations at this time would be viewed by Israel (and indeed the world as a whole) as an endorsement of Israel's gross and repeated breaches of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

The EU should go further, and suspend the current EU Israel Association Agreement, in order to send a strong message to the Israeli authorities about the EU's refusal to tolerate persistent human rights breaches. There must also be no new agreements made with Israel until it meets commitments to human rights and democratic principles as enshrined in the current Association Agreement.

Violence can never be justified or condoned on either side. But the longer the deadly blockade and occupation continue, the further away the conditions for peace will get. I urge you to give this matter your urgent attention and commit the UK to an immediate suspension of the EU Israel Association Agreement. I also call on you to apply pressure on the US to end its support for military action in Gaza and to condemn the latest Israeli attacks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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.