

The Rt.Hon. Jack Straw MP
Foreign Secretary
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Whitehall
London
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12 January 2004

Dear Minister

I have just returned from a week's fact-finding visit and peace mission to the Middle East and am of the view that the UK must add its voice to the campaign to stop the construction of a 'security fence' - dubbed the 'apartheid wall' by those living in its shadow - dividing Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

The terrible terrorist attacks of the past years explain why Israel is so justifiably concerned with the security of its citizens but on the basis of what I saw last week, it is clear that this Wall has very little to do with security, and much more to do with an aggressive and illegal land-grab.

The Wall will be over 450 miles long, between eight and ten metres high, and will cost almost £2 billion. The Israeli government's claim that it is being built for security reasons is undermined by the fact that it is not being built on, or in many cases near, the 1967 Green Line, but rather cuts deep into the West Bank, expanding Israel's annexation of Palestinian land and resources.

The Wall is destroying thousands of acres of farmland, uprooting hundreds of thousands of trees, demolishing homes and shops, and leaving thousands of families landless, jobless, hungry and hopeless. An increasing number of towns and villages are being encircled by an 8 metre high concrete wall, with trenches, electric fences, sensors, cameras, military patrols and armed watchtowers. Farmers are prevented from reaching their fields, children from reaching their schools, and those in need of health care from reaching clinics and hospitals.

I am writing to ask you to propose to your EU counterparts that the EU-Israel Association Agreement be suspended in response to the human rights implications of the wall's construction.

The EU, and the UK government, says it is committed to promoting human rights, and the Association Agreement explicitly provides for its own suspension if either party is found to be undermining human rights. In the light of the many documented and explicit human rights abuses associated with the construction of the Wall, it is clear that the Agreement must therefore be suspended.

Furthermore, given that the UK government has so far failed to propose its suspension I would be grateful if you would inform me of what the UK government has done to dissuade Israel from constructing the wall.

Peace can only flourish in a climate of confidence and hope. Draconian measures which go much further than what is needed to prevent terrorism will increase anger and resentment, and ultimately fuel conflict and insecurity, not reduce them.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Caroline Lucas