



**Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP**

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Richard Burden MP  
House of Commons  
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Dear Richard,

I am just getting in touch regarding your letter to Alistair Burt on Gaza.

I understand and share your concern for the humanitarian situation in the Gaza strip and the recent deterioration in living conditions is unacceptable.

I must, however, add further context to the reasons behind Gaza's humanitarian crisis that your letter omitted and point out a couple of errors. I am sure you agree that accuracy on such a vital matter is of huge importance, and we must ensure that policy we demand is based on truth, rather than anti-Israel sentiment.

As you know, Gaza's electricity crisis since April 2017 is the product of a decision by the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas to refuse to pay for Gaza's electricity, in order to induce the current crisis to weaken popular support for Hamas. The letter's omission of this fact is intended to imply, of course, that the electricity crisis is Israel's fault. However any sincere desire to end the electricity crisis must deal directly with Palestinian internal politics, rather than to spuriously deflect responsibility back on to Israel, as the letter does.

The letter claims that "Israel continues to be the occupying power in Gaza". This is untrue. Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, and following its 2007 coup, the strip has been controlled by Hamas. Furthermore, though Israel, through the UN mechanism established after the 2014 war, does maintain restrictions on items entering Gaza – to prevent the smuggling of rockets and dual-use materials which can be turned into weaponry or used to construct tunnels – it has not imposed "a closure" on the Gaza strip. Nearly 10,000 trucks of supplies entered the strip through Israeli-controlled border crossings in September alone. Another key fact you omit is that Gaza also has a border with Egypt, which is controlled even more tightly than Israel's border crossings.

It is remarkable, more broadly, that the letter does not once mention Hamas, which governs Gaza and is responsible for the strip's humanitarian crisis. Hamas is a terrorist group that funnels all resources to itself and its ideological jihad against Israel. One example – on the water crisis that the letter mentions – demonstrates the point. A UNICEF team completed the construction of a water desalination plant in Gaza this January, with the capacity to provide enough water for 75,000 Gazans. Hamas, however, refused to connect the plant to the electricity grid, leaving it on back-up generators, preferring instead to supply power to its terror tunnels and the homes of its leaders.

Furthermore, since its 2014 conflict with Israel, Hamas has spent \$150m on its terror tunnels, the equivalent cost of 1800 homes or 14 months of electricity for the coastal enclave. It is thus a total misrepresentation for the letter to say that "Israel holds primary responsibility for addressing the humanitarian needs of the population of Gaza", when Hamas chooses to obstruct Israel and international agencies from helping Gaza's population.

The fundamental reason behind the humanitarian crisis is that Gaza is governed by a terrorist group determined to wipe Israel from the map, and it is willing to sacrifice its own citizens to that end. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 provided the Palestinians with the opportunity to implement democratic self-government and to develop the Gazan economy. Hamas, however, is intent on pursuing the opposite. The way out of the current crisis could involve demilitarisation for development and the Palestinian Authority's resumption of full control in Gaza, but by ignoring internal Palestinian politics we are not fully addressing the issue in all its complexity.

I hope you appreciate that we both share a concern for the situation in Gaza. However, in failing to acknowledge these crucial points, most notably by failing to even mention Hamas by name, it leaves the strong impression that your letter prioritises attacking Israel rather than finding the solutions that will help the people of Gaza.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joan Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Enfield North**  
**Chair, Labour Friends of Israel**