



House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1 May 2019

Rt. Hon Penny Mordaunt MP

Secretary of State for International Development
Department for International Development
22 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EG

Case Ref: JR16233

Dear Penny,

We have recently been made aware that of the financial difficulties facing MEET, a highly successful coexistence programme which brings together Israeli and Palestinian young people. It is an inspiring project which we, and many colleagues from across the House, have visited on a number of occasions.

MEET has been adversely affected by the decision of the United States government to cut off all American government funding to Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people programmes following the passage of the 2018 Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act. This includes money which has already been committed and which MEET has been spending, as agreed, in order to scale up its work. Next year, it will have its largest student body ever with 300 Israeli and Palestinian students graduating from the programme.

We fully recognise the intention of the US legislation is to allow the families of those murdered in heinous terrorist acts to call to account those responsible for the deaths of their loved ones. However, it surely cannot be right that the US government has chosen to interpret this legislation in such a way as to imperil projects which foster the values of reconciliation, coexistence and peace which may prevent further death and suffering at the hands of terrorists. Indeed, the US action comes on top of previous cuts to coexistence work by the Trump administration, about which we wrote to you last summer.

We appreciate the UK government's existing investment in people-to-people programmes. We also welcome its commitment to support the establishment of an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

However, decisions about current UK spend were made before the US began to act in a manner which threatens to decimate projects such as MEET.

Last summer the government rightly increased our commitment to UNRWA in response to the US withdrawal. Coexistence work is now endangered and it is vital that the UK acts similarly. We urge you, therefore, to consider making available additional funds to help compensate MEET and, if possible, other coexistence programmes for the highly regrettable cuts made by the US.

Yours sincerely,

Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP

Member of Parliament for Enfield North
Chair, Labour Friends of Israel

Dame Louise Ellman MP

Member of Parliament for Liverpool, Riverside

Sharon Hodgson MP

Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West

Rt. Hon Pat McFadden MP

Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East

Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale

Rachel Reeves MP

Member of Parliament for Leeds West

Jonathan Reynolds MP

Member of Parliament for Stalybridge and Hyde

Rt. Hon John Spellar MP

Member of Parliament for Warley

Ian Austin MP

Member of Parliament for Dudley North