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House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles St  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2AH

Via Email

30 June 2020

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We write to you concerning the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories, particularly following the coronavirus pandemic.

We have been greatly heartened by the way Israel and the Palestinian Authority have worked together to stop the spread of the pandemic in both Israel and the West Bank; cooperation which has been labelled "excellent" by the UN's Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov.

We welcome the Israeli government's decision to provide a \$230m loan to the Palestinian Authority, by agreeing to advance payments of tax revenues collected on behalf of the PA.

Like Israel, the PA acted swiftly and effectively to contain the spread of the coronavirus and minimise the loss of life but this has come at a high economic cost. The PA has lost over 50 percent of its revenue and been unable to pay the full salaries of its public sector employees. Last month, the World Bank warned that the Palestinian economy could contract by 2.5% in 2020, even if the outbreak was brought under control within four months. If not, Palestinian GDP could shrink by more than 7% this year. The situation has been exacerbated by a very sharp reduction in the number of Palestinians able to travel to their jobs in Israel.

We believe that it is imperative that there should be a comprehensive, internationally backed, programme of assistance to help stabilise the Palestinian economy, as called for by a recent UN report.

We also urge medical and humanitarian assistance to help ensure that efforts by Palestinians and Israelis to contain the spread of the virus, in the West Bank, are maintained as restrictions are lifted and Palestinian workers return to Israel.

Recent progress is welcome but international support must be coupled with a clear and unequivocal message that battling the virus requires cooperation and that it's utterly wrong for senior figures in the PA to claim Israel has played some role in deliberately spreading the virus.

The cooperation witnessed during this crisis is also an opportunity to reinforce efforts to end the conflict. Investment in civic society work, which brings Israelis and Palestinians together and builds constituencies for peace, should be encouraged. We urge the British government to recommit to investment in coexistence work and actively support development of an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.





At a political level, an end to the conflict requires a resumption of direct talks between Israel and the PA to further a two-state solution. It won't benefit from unilateral steps, such as annexation of parts of the West Bank, which will make that goal much more difficult.

We ask for your assurance that our government will do all that it can to support the Palestinian economy and encourage peace and coexistence projects and use our position at the UN Security Council, to ensure that proper international attention is focused on the needs of the Palestinian people in the wake of this awful pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

Steve McCabe MP  
Chair, Labour Friends of Israel

Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale  
House of Lords Chair, Labour Friends of Israel

Chris Bryant MP

Rt Hon Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP

Lord Beecham DL

Rosie Cooper MP

Lord Blunkett

Jon Cruddas MP

Rt Hon Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke

Bill Esterson MP

Lord Desai

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Lord Mendelsohn

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Lord Young of Norwood Green

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