

60 Parliamentarians Urge UK Government Action on Gaza Emergency

By [Medical Aid for Palestinians](#) and [Richard Burden](#)
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A group of 60 British MPs and Peers have this week written to Minister Alistair Burt (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development) to call on the UK Government to take urgent action to address Gaza's continuing humanitarian emergency.

In August, [Medical Aid for Palestinians \(MAP\) warned of Gaza's humanitarian emergency](#), amid a deepening electricity crisis, medical shortages, and increased restrictions on exit for treatment faced by patients. In 2012, the UN warned that Gaza could be unliveable by 2020. For patients now unable to access the care they need inside or get out for treatment elsewhere, Gaza is already unliveable.

In the letter sent this week, parliamentarians – many of them members of the Britain-Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group – urged the UK Government to provide additional humanitarian funding to Gaza, and to “use all diplomatic means – including multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council and bilateral relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority – to pursue accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory and bring an end to the closure of Gaza.”

You can read the letter in full below and [here](#).

Dear Alistair

Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

As a group of cross-party MPs and Peers, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the current and worsening humanitarian emergency in Gaza, and to urge the government to take urgent action to address this situation.

As you are aware, Gaza's already-dire humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by an electricity crisis since April 2017, which has resulted in daily blackouts of up to 20 hours. This has, in turn, seriously affected livelihoods and caused cuts to the provision of healthcare. A chronic lack of infrastructure development to meet the needs of Gaza's growing population, as well as lack of power for water treatment, has now resulted in two thirds of Gaza's shoreline being polluted by untreated sewage.

In 2012, the UN warned that Gaza would be 'unliveable' by 2020, though the seriousness of

the current crisis has caused Save the Children to declare Gaza unliveable now. Likewise, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently stated that Gaza is experiencing “*one of the most dramatic humanitarian crises that [he has] seen in many years working as a humanitarian in the United Nations.*”

Nevertheless, UN OCHA’s appeal for US\$25 million urgent humanitarian funding appeal to stabilise Gaza, announced this summer, remains largely unmet. US\$14 million is still urgently needed for non-fuel related requirements within the water and sanitation, health and food security sectors. As winter approaches, needs are expected to increase as demand for electricity increases and further stretches Gaza’s already-overloaded water, sanitation and health service systems.

Israel continues to be the occupying power in Gaza, as it has been now for 50 years, and as such holds primary responsibility for addressing the humanitarian needs of the population of Gaza. Israel has furthermore imposed a closure on Gaza since 2007 which the International Committee of the Red Cross has termed a “*collective punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law*”. People in Gaza cannot wait for the resolution of a decades-long peace process to release them from this violation and the humanitarian crisis they face.

Similarly, though greater political integration between the West Bank and Gaza would be a welcome forward step, a reconciliation between Fatah and the de-facto authorities in Gaza cannot alone address the humanitarian needs of Gaza’s beleaguered residents.

We therefore urge you to use your joint FCO-DfID brief to help bring relief to Gaza in two ways:

- Provide urgent relief to the people of Gaza, by both supporting UN OCHA’s US\$25 million urgent humanitarian funding appeal for Gaza, and ensure that the UK’s aid funding to the occupied Palestinian territory invests in the long-term development of essential infrastructure and services such as water treatment, education, and healthcare; and
- Use all diplomatic means - including multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council and bilateral relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority - to pursue accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory and bring an end to the closure of Gaza.

Furthermore, though the UK already provides some support to the people of Gaza through DfID-funded projects and initiatives, as parliamentarians we face challenges to accessing Gaza to visit these and provide necessary democratic oversight of this aid spending and assess the situation for ourselves as you have recently done. We also therefore ask that you make representations to the Government of Israel to ask them to facilitate the unhindered entry of British parliamentarians to Gaza, and remove any unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to entry through the Erez crossing. It is vital that British parliamentarians bear witness to the current humanitarian disaster in Gaza and how UK taxpayers’ money is being used in terms of aid.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Burden MP (Chair, Britain-Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group)

Co-signed by:

Grahame Morris MP (Chair, Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East)
Rt Hon Hugo Swire, KCMG, MP (Chairman, Conservative Middle East Council)
Debbie Abrahams MP
Lord Ahmed
Rushanara Ali MP
Hilary Benn MP
Clive Betts MP
Baroness Blackstone
Crispin Blunt MP
Sir Peter Bottomley MP
Ben Bradshaw MP
Tom Brake MP
Alan Brown MP
Karen Buck MP
Liam Byrne MP
Alistair Carmichael MP
Sarah Champion MP
Joanna Cherry MP
Ann Clywd MP
Julie Cooper MP
Alex Cunningham MP
Lord Dubs
Julie Elliott MP
Lilian Greenwood MP
Louise Haigh MP
David Hanson MP
Mark Hendrick MP
Kate Hollern MP
Lord Hylton
Dan Jarvis MP
Lord Kilclooney
Stephen Kinnock MP
Afzal Khan MP
Jeremy Lefroy MP
Baroness Lister of Burtersett
Tony Lloyd MP
Caroline Lucas MP
Gordon Marsden MP
Kerry McCarthy MP
Baroness Meacher
Ian Murray MP
Lisa Nandy MP
Yasmin Qureshi MP
Faisal Rashid MP
The Earl of Sandwich
Tommy Sheppard MP
Baroness Sheehan
Paula Sherriff MP

Andy Slaughter MP
Cat Smith MP
Sir Nicholas Soames MP
Wes Streeting MP
Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne MP
Stephen Timms MP
Kelly Tolhurst MP
Stephen Twigg MP
Lord Tyler
Lord Warner
Philippa Whitford MP

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