

9 January 2009



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From the Foreign Secretary

Dear [REDACTED]

On my return from the United Nations in New York, I thought it would be helpful to be in touch about the extremely worrying situation in the Middle East. I know this will be of enormous concern to the Muslim community in Britain, as it is to the British Government.

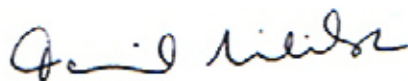
The Prime Minister and I have been clear from the first day of this crisis in arguing for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, a curb on the trafficking of weapons and their components into Gaza, and an opening of the crossings to relieve humanitarian distress. We are pleased that these are now embodied in UN Security Council Resolution 1860, although obviously as distressed as you will be by the continuing conflict with its attendant loss of life. I also think it is important that a UN Security Council Resolution with 14 votes in favour should have been so unequivocal in its condemnation of all acts of terrorism.

The Resolution was put forward by the UK. It calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, and for unimpeded distribution of humanitarian supplies; condemns all violence, hostilities against civilians and acts of terrorism; urges action on arms smuggling, opening of the Gaza crossings and Palestinian reconciliation to underpin the ceasefire; and calls for the reinvigoration of the Peace Process. While I was at UN my ministerial colleagues have met MPs, Muslim communities' representatives, and members of the Muslim Women's Advisory Group to up-date you on the progress.

As we and our EU partners have made clear, the Israeli military action has not been proportionate with currently over 700 dead. The current cycle of violence has also killed Israeli civilians, with many others living in fear from indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas, who have recently claimed that the murder of Jewish children worldwide has now been "legitimised".

The Government has taken swift action to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza, including an extra \$10m we announced last week, in addition to the £243 million we have already pledged to help all the Palestinian people over 3 years. I also pay tribute to the community's own funding-raising. It is right that, as well as pushing Israel hard on access, we do all we can to support those working in Gaza and especially the UNRWA emergency appeal that aims to feed 550,000 people, provide shelter, distribute cash assistance for up to 2,500 families and provide fuel for essential services.

We have all been shocked by what we have witnessed over the past fortnight in Gaza, particularly the death toll of innocent civilians, including large numbers of women and children. The British Government has a responsibility to keep alive the vision of a peaceful Middle East. Only a fair and lasting settlement offers hope of security and justice for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Miliband', written in a cursive style.

DAVID MILIBAND