

The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a two state solution – a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps. When the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Netanyahu on 6 February 2017 she reiterated the UK's firm commitment to a two-state solution as the best way to bring about stability and peace to the region, and our continued opposition to settlement activity. But the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is deeply complex - settlements are not the only obstacle to peace. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution.

It is vital that the civilian Palestinian population is protected but we are also clear that Israel has a right to defend itself from indiscriminate attacks. Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and present an obstacle to peace and take us further away from a two-state solution. We have strongly urged the Israeli Government to reverse recent announcements on proposed settlements, which damage Israel's standing in the international community.

You will be pleased to learn that the UK will continue to provide funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in order to maintain stability, provide vital services and build and strengthen the institutions needed for a viable two-state solution. However, certain key changes will be made to ensure this funding delivers the best value for money and maximum impact for Palestinians. The decision forms part of an ongoing examination of UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, carried out by DFID, in close collaboration with the FCO, to ensure that support is reaching those it is meant to help. UK support will now focus solely on vital health and education services, in order to meet the immediate needs of the Palestinian people.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Quin