



UNA-UK

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Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing to you on behalf of the United Nations Association of the UK to express our strong and mounting concern about the hostilities in and around Gaza, and about the failure so far of the international community to bring about a ceasefire. We believe that neither the firing of rockets and other missiles by Hamas and Islamic Jihad into Israel nor the disproportionate military response by Israel, which has already inflicted heavy casualties on the innocent civilian population of Gaza, can possibly be justified or defended. It is surely important to remind Israel of its obligations under the Geneva Conventions, in particular those relating to collective punishment and the denial of rights to food, water, energy and medical services.

We welcome the attempts which the government has been making to achieve a ceasefire and urge you to re-double those efforts. In particular we hope that you will bring it home to the US administration how unacceptable it is that it should apparently be preventing the UN Security Council from taking up a firm and clear position in support of a ceasefire. The key issue, surely, is not to apportion blame for what has happened but to do something effective to deal with an increasing humanitarian crisis.

We hope that the government will do its best to ensure that any eventual ceasefire is properly monitored and enforced so that it is not at the mercy of either side; and that it makes clear provision for the unfettered access by the UN's humanitarian agencies to the civilian population of Gaza.

These recent developments in Gaza underline the urgent importance of re-starting a comprehensive effort to find solutions to the whole range of issues in dispute between Israel and its Arab neighbours. For any such process to stand a chance of succeeding we believe it will need to be an inclusive one, including all elements of the Palestinian population who are prepared to work on the basis of the Arab peace initiative. We very much hope that the government will do everything in its power, both as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and as a member of the European Union, to encourage the incoming administration of President-elect Obama to give the highest priority to getting such a process under way.

David Hannay

Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Chair, UNA-UK