



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Hamish Falconer MP**

Minister for the Middle East, North Africa,  
Afghanistan and Pakistan

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

**Email:**

**[fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk)**

Dr Beccy Cooper MP  
Chair, Global Health & Security APPG  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Our ref: MC2025/33370

16 January 2026

Dear Beccy,

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 September to the Foreign Secretary, regarding Israel and Palestine. I am replying as the Minister responsible for the Middle East. I apologise for not doing so sooner and appreciate your patience.

To your point on the findings of the UN Commission, please note that it is the UK Government's long-standing policy that any formal judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, and not for governments or non-judicial bodies. This approach ensures that any determination is above politics, lobbying, and individual or national interest.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is currently considering the case brought by South Africa against Israel under the Genocide Convention. This Government fully respects the independence of the Court and supports its role in upholding the rule of law. The recent Provisional Measures Order was an interim order, intended to preserve the rights of the parties pending consideration of the legal arguments and evidence. The case is ongoing and we await the ICJ's decision.

The UK Government continues to monitor the situation in Gaza closely and assesses all available information in line with our international legal obligations, including under the Genocide Convention 1948 and the Arms Trade Treaty 2013.

Regarding arms exports to Israel, allow me to make clear that the UK has not been 'arming' Israel's war in Gaza. We categorically do not export any bombs, ammunition or any weapons for use in operations in Gaza or the West Bank. One of our first acts in government was to review and suspend export licences that might be used by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in Gaza. We are not aware of any comparable country taking more action than we have to prevent exports to the IDF for use in Gaza. We have refused more licences to Israel in the last year than had been refused in total since 2015.

We have stopped direct exports of F-35 parts for use by Israel. The only exception is for the global programme, of which Israel is a minor customer. The way the global F-35 programme works means the only way to prevent UK-produced parts reaching Israel is to stop exports to the entire programme, which would undermine this critical defence programme and have a profound impact on international peace and security. With war on our continent, F-35s are playing a crucial role in NATO defence, keeping our airspace secure. They have intercepted Russian aircraft in Europe and North America on multiple occasions in recent months.

In a judgement handed down on 30 June 2025, the High Court upheld the UK Government's decision-making on this matter.

You also raised the issue of student visas. The Government supported the departure from Gaza of a group of Chevening Scholars and fully funded, verifiable scholarship students so that they could take up university places in the UK for the 2025/26 academic year. Full scholarship in this context means students who have their course fees and living costs fully funded by an official financial sponsor, as specified in the Immigration Rules. This process was for eligible students in Gaza with courses starting in the Autumn term before 31 December 2025 and commencing their studies prior to 31 December 2025. The Government extended this support to dependants of those students who are able to meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Further details can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-students-travelling-to-the-uk-from-gaza/scholarships-for-students-from-gaza>.

Regarding individuals whose courses commence after 31 December 2025, the Government is reviewing the impact of the policy implemented to date. Any decision on future support will depend on the evolving international situation. We will continue to keep the policy under review.

The UK is working tirelessly alongside our international partners to support the implementation of President Trump's peace plan. We will continue to do all that we can to seize this chance for a better future and to secure lasting peace and security in the region, both for the people of Israel and the people of Palestine.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hamish Falconer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**HAMISH FALCONER MP**  
**Minister for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan**