Written evidence submitted by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Palestine Solidarity Campaign welcomes the opportunity to submit this evidence to the International Development Inquiry into DfID’s work in the Middle East. Our submission covers DfID’s work in occupied Palestinian territory.

The submission outlines the importance of Area C and East Jerusalem to the long term future of Palestinians, a Palestinian state and economic independence. Given this, the submission suggests it is vital that DfID support the development of healthcare and educational facilities within Area C and East Jerusalem. Furthermore, it suggests this should be done in tandem with the FCO taking further action against Israel’s programme of illegal settlement building and demolitions of Palestinian structures.

In addition, the submission outlines that humanitarian aid in Gaza will fail to meet need until the blockade is lifted, and that significant infrastructural development will be required to prevent further humanitarian catastrophes.

1. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) works for peace & justice for Palestinians, in support of human rights & against all racism. Since it was founded in 1982, PSC has become one of the largest and most active campaigning organisations in the UK on the issue of Palestine. You can find out more about our work at palestinecampaign.org
2. PSC welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence on the ‘UK’s Development Work in the Middle East’. PSC’s evidence will focus on the Inquiry’s questions of:
   a. The effectiveness of DFID’s programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
   b. Whether DFID is focusing on the right sectors and working with the right organisations;

3. It is important firstly to note that all of the Palestinian territory is under Israeli occupation, and that international law forbids Israeli settlement on occupied territory, including Area C and East Jerusalem.

4. Whilst the Palestinian Authority have some control over Areas A and B, Area C is under full Israeli control. Israel’s continued colonisation of Palestinian land is taking place in Area C and East Jerusalem.

5. DfID’s Operational Plan 2011-2015 for the Occupied Palestinian territory recognises that “the key economic feature of the OPTs is the restrictions imposed by the Israeli government on the movement of people and goods within and outside the territories, and on access to natural resources.”

6. These restrictions on movement are as a direct consequence of Israel’s colonisation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel continues to build settlements in Area C and East Jerusalem, prevents Palestinian development and demolishes Palestinian structures in flagrant breach of international law.

7. Whilst currently this is a feature of the occupation, if international efforts are not stepped up, the fragmentation of the West Bank and the physical separation of the West Bank from Jerusalem will become a permanent feature of Palestinian territory. This could become irreversible regardless of a Palestinian state.

8. If Israel’s policies of illegal settlement building, forced displacement and prevention of development of Area C and East Jerusalem continue this will continue to devastate the lives of Palestinians as well as resulting in the Palestinian economy remaining dependent on aid in the longer-term.

9. Areas C and East Jerusalem represent the Palestinian areas most coveted by the Israel State and Israeli settlers for Israeli development, including the areas around Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley.

10. Likewise, the areas with the tightest restrictions on development, most frequent structure demolitions and settlement growth are those areas most important to Palestinian wealth creation, including the Jordan Valley, and
areas close to and including East Jerusalem.

11. As reported by the UN OCHA in 2013 over 630 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in Area C and East Jerusalem, forcibly displacing 1,035 Palestinians, including 526 children. Seventy (70) per cent of Area C demolitions and nearly 80 per cent of the related displacement has occurred in Jordan Valley communities. As recently as December 2013, the UN issued a statement condemning the demolition of Palestinian structures in the Jordan Valley.\textsuperscript{i}

12. Furthermore, as B’Tselem reports, Area C is home to an estimated 180,000 Palestinians and includes the major residential and development land reserves for the entire West Bank. Israel prohibits Palestinian construction and development on some 70 percent of Area C territory.\textsuperscript{ii}

13. Despite a unanimous warning in December from the 28 Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the European Union “deploring Israel’s continuous expansion of settlements” and calling on Israel to “stop all settlement activities”, on 10 January 2014 Israel announced further settlement expansion.

14. This – the latest in a long list of diplomatic appeals followed by Israeli intransigence – further demonstrate that the current political strategy is failing. This strategy - if it remains unaltered – will most probably lead to permanent failure.

15. Therefore, in order to fulfil their DfID’s broader goal of “helping deliver stability and prosperity in the Middle East\textsuperscript{iii}” it is vital that they should alter their programme to assist with the building of structures to meet needs in Area C and East Jerusalem.

16. If Palestinians are to be able to build a successful economy and life, it is absolutely vital that they are able to maintain living, working, their education and receiving healthcare in Area C and East Jerusalem.

17. DfID must therefore ensure they work with partners to develop educational and healthcare structures that can deliver this. This includes the building of healthcare and educational facilities, which are rightly at the heart of the DfID programme.

18. DfID must ensure they do not inadvertently – by providing healthcare and education facilities in Areas A and B to meet the needs of those in Area C and East Jerusalem– support disinvestment of Palestinian life there.
19. Whilst this may appear to be easier as it avoids short term confrontation with an Israeli Government unwilling to allow Palestinian development of most of Area C and East Jerusalem, the consequences for the long term sustainability of Palestinian life will be catastrophic.

20. DfID inadvertent support for disinvestment from Area C would also run counter to the FCO’s policy which opposes Israeli home demolitions and settlements in Palestinian territory.

21. This developmental assistance should work in tandem with further measures by the FCO, including a new policy of an exclusion of settlement goods from UK markets, to prevent further UK economic support for Israel’s settlements.

22. These joint measures will send a powerful message of UK support for Palestinian steadfastness, in the face of great suffering due largely to Israeli policy.

23. Conversely, if DfID allows Israeli demolitions to discourage a positive policy of development in Area C and East Jerusalem it would send a very negative signal to the most vulnerable Palestinians living in these areas. After all, if a European State is unwilling to challenge Israel’s illegal policies of demolitions, what hope do Palestinians have?

24. DfID may be reluctant to invest in Area C and East Jerusalem structures as a result of the experience of the EU. Since May 2013, the EU has initiated a monthly incident-tracking system for EU-funded projects in Area C and East Jerusalem. According to this report, compiled by UN OCHA, 79 EU or EU Member State structures were demolished in 2012. As of June 2013, 54 such structures were demolished in 2013.iii

25. Whilst it appears that the EU has made representations to the Israeli Authorities about these demolitions, no effort has been made to seek compensation from the Israeli State for the loss.

26. DfID should have a clear and public policy of tracking Israel’s demolitions of structures built with the support of UK funding, and seeking compensation for any losses due to Israeli demolitions or other interference with UK development work.

27. In coordination with this approach, the FCO should encourage the EU and other member states to seek compensation for the losses they have incurred due to Israeli action.
Gaza

28. Whilst we welcome humanitarian aid to the Gaza strip it remains the case that the only permanent political, economic, humanitarian and just solution to the catastrophic situation in the Gaza strip is the complete lifting of the blockade on Gaza.

29. It should be shocking to the committee that this collective punishment against an estimated 1.8 million people is allowed to continue.

30. One of the results of this blockade is the ongoing power shortages, which are currently resulting in electricity outages on average of 12 hours a day.\textsuperscript{v}

31. However, the legacy of the blockade, exacerbated by the overcrowded conditions in Gaza – the result of having to absorb refugees from forced displacement and military action by Israel - mean that life in Gaza will continue to be difficult and precarious.

32. Reconstruction of essential infrastructure, destroyed during the Israeli offensive 2008/09, Operation Cast Lead, has been hampered by the ongoing restrictions on the import of building materials. These restrictions continue to force the suspension of humanitarian reconstruction and rehabilitation projects.\textsuperscript{vi}

33. Forecasts from the UN of the situation that Gaza will face in 2020\textsuperscript{vii} are deeply troubling and make clear that radical infrastructure improvements, including electricity, water and sanitation provision, can no longer be delayed without serious consequences to life.

34. From the same report, the UN conclude that “without such action, the daily lives of Gazans in 2020 will be worse than they are now. There will be virtually no reliable access to sources of safe drinking water, standards of healthcare and education will have continued to decline, and the vision of affordable and reliable electricity for all will have become a distant memory for most. The already high number of poor, marginalized and food-insecure people depending on assistance will not have changed, and in all likelihood will have increased. To ensure that Gaza in 2020 will be “a liveable place,” on-going Herculean efforts by Palestinians and partners in such sectors as energy, education, health, water and sanitation, need to be accelerated and intensified in the face of all difficulties.”

35. We will leave it to other organisations working directly on delivering aid, to outline how best DfID can best provide for these needs.