Written Evidence submitted by Rosemary Hollis, Professor of Middle East Policy Studies and Director of the Olive Tree Scholarship Programme (for Israelis and Palestinians) at City University London

1. The evidence I offer is based on 25 years of research; regular visits (at least once per year) to Israel and the Occupied Territories, and latterly my work with scholarship students from both communities (since 2008).

2. I observe an increased estrangement and animosity between Israelis and Palestinians since the failure of successive attempts to resolve the conflict, the erection of the barrier around the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza.

3. Among the Israelis, therefore, an attitude toward the Palestinians of ‘out of sight, out of mind’ prevails. Apart from those born into and/or living in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and those serving in the Israeli armed and security services inside the West Bank, most Israelis are totally unaware of what life is like for ordinary Palestinians in the West Bank. About those living in East Jerusalem there is a perception that they should count themselves lucky to be benefitting from some of the freedoms and services that are not available to Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza. However, see http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/un-report-highlights-humanitarian-concerns-east-jerusalem . Israelis are therefore oblivious to the fact that the East Jerusalem Palestinians experience daily provocations from settlers in their midst, and have no citizenship rights. As for the Gaza Strip, Israelis prefer not to think about their deteriorating economic and environmental circumstances, blaming the Hamas administration in Gaza for whatever conditions prevail.

4. However, as documented by the UN and various humanitarian organisations, if present trends continue, life for the 1.5 million or more Palestinians in the Gaza Strip will effectively become untenable by 2020 (see http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/gaza-2020-liveable-place?id=1423 ). By 2017 there will be no more potable water available in the Gaza aquifer. Is there an international or indeed an Israeli contingency plan for what to do when this occurs?

5. In the West Bank Palestinian life for the 2.4 million is endurable (see http://www.undp.ps/en/index.html ), but only because of international aid to the Palestinian Authority, with which they pay public sector salaries; some business ventures; and the activities of various humanitarian organisations on the ground. Yet, as documented by the World Bank and others, the Palestinian economy cannot develop its potential and generate more employment, unless and until the security measures imposed by the Israelis are alleviated.

6. At present all hopes rest on the renewed peace process initiated by US Secretary of State John Kerry. According to chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat the talks have now ceased and the parties are awaiting a statement of principles from the Americans. If both the Israelis and Palestinians sign up to this, more time will be bought for resuming final status negotiations. However, this is not a resolution of the conflict or a firm prospect of conflict resolution – simply a pledge to keep talking. If further talks fail to achieve conflict resolution, the international community will face the necessity of coming up with an alternative plan to sustain life for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and in refugee camps around the region.

16 February 2014