



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

The Rt Hon Lord Benyon  
Minister of State for Climate,  
Environment and Energy

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

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

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

10 January 2024

Dear Anne,

I am writing further to the Urgent Question repeat on the on-going situation in Israel and Gaza on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

You asked a question as to whether the Government will look at the conflict in the Red Sea, on which I would like to provide further information.

In December, the Royal Navy Destroyer HMS Diamond joined Operation Prosperity Guardian, an international task force to ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. It came as Houthi attacks against commercial vessels were rising, threatening freedom of navigation and international trade. Prosperity Guardian, and our wider operations in the Gulf, are intended to improve regional stability and deter further escalation. Since then, the UK has joined 11 countries in delivering a statement warning against further attacks. We will continue to work with allies and partners to pursue all diplomatic routes to end this threat – this includes taking action to deter threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. The Foreign Secretary has also been clear that Iran shares responsibility for preventing these attacks, given their long-standing support to the Houthis.

In relation to the broader issue, the Government is doing all it can to increase the amount of lifesaving aid in to Gaza to help alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. At the time of the Urgent Question repeat, the UK had, since 7<sup>th</sup> October, provided £60 million of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and delivered 74 tonnes of aid to Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has also appointed a UK humanitarian coordinator to drive this vital work forward. Since then, the first UK maritime shipment of aid for Gaza has arrived into Egypt, carrying 87 tonnes of life-saving UK and Cypriot aid, and we have supported the United Nations World Food Programme to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza, with 750 tonnes of life-saving food aid arriving in the first delivery.

The Government is also clear that Israel has a right to defend itself whilst complying with international humanitarian law. In doing so, it is vital that all parties ensure that their actions are proportionate, necessary, and minimise harm to civilians.

Particular care must be taken in relation to hospitals and other locations such as places of worship. We have pressed Israel to ensure its campaign is targeted against Hamas fighters and military objectives.

I am copying this letter to Lord Collins of Highbury, Baroness Smith of Newnham, Lord Swire, Lord Austin of Dudley, and the Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham. I am also placing a copy of this letter in the House of Lords library.

**Yours sincerely**

*Richard Benyon.*

**THE RT HON LORD BENYON**