



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon
Minister of State (Middle East,
North Africa, South Asia,
Commonwealth and The UN)**

**Prime Minister's Special
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Stephen Doughty MP
House of Commons
London
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28 February 2024

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for raising the important matter of consular support for British nationals and eligible persons in Gaza with the Leader of the House on 22 February. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Middle East.

The safety of British nationals is a top priority. To date, we have helped over 300 British nationals and their dependents to leave Gaza. We will continue to work closely with the Israeli and Egyptian authorities to support any remaining eligible people in Gaza. There are a number of ways individuals can request support from the FCDO, I would urge colleagues to refer to our Travel Advice for the which sets out our latest advice and on the first page provides details for whom we can support, and how to contact us (+44 176 766 7600 (UK number); +972 (0)3 725 1222; or +972 (0)2 541 4100 (local calls)).

Support for British Nationals

We have worked hard to support British nationals seeking to leave Gaza. We work closely with Israeli and Egyptian authorities by submitting the names of those who wish to leave Gaza via the Rafah crossing. We continue to liaise with both Governments until those individuals are cleared to leave. The British Government though does not control the timing of this process, nor the final decisions taken. Once cleared the names are published and we liaise with families to facilitate their crossing. We continue to support people until they reach Cairo and can plan their onward travel. Consular staff at the British Embassy in Cairo are available to provide further consular assistance to those who need it.

Other Eligible Persons

We have extended our offer of support on this occasion to people in Gaza who hold UK visas to reunite with family in the UK. This is also set out in our Travel Advice. In brief the offer is relevant to those who meet both criteria below:

- They have a spouse/partner or child aged 17 or under currently living in the UK, and
- They hold valid permission to enter and remain in the UK for longer than 6 months.

If eligible, we can submit their names for clearance to leave, as set out above.

Citizens of other countries

Individuals or families with other nationalities should contact the relevant Embassy in Egypt or Israel to check what support they can offer, or alternatively check with the relevant Embassy or High Commission in London. Where Commonwealth countries do not have a local Embassy in the region, we have been supporting them by facilitating exit for their nationals.

We will keep these arrangements under review as the situation changes to ensure we are providing the right amount of support for British nationals, eligible persons and citizens of unrepresented Commonwealth countries.

Safe and Legal Routes

Since 2015, we have offered over half a million people safe and legal routes into the UK. This includes over 28,700 individuals resettled to the UK under our global resettlement schemes, which include the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement scheme. Roughly half of those resettled were under the age of 18.

At present, we understand the Home Office are not considering establishing a bespoke immigration route for Palestinians. We are continuing to monitor developments closely to ensure that the Government responds appropriately.

It is important to note that resettlement is just one strand of our international efforts and is complemented by the UK's significant humanitarian and diplomatic efforts.

While we have clear guidance as to who we can assist in this crisis it is important to remember that decisions relating to visa status are matters for the Home Office. Additionally, it is for the Egyptian and Israeli authorities to determine who is permitted to cross, and when. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will contact embassies to let them know when their foreign nationals can cross. Should we receive notification from the Israeli and Egyptian authorities that individuals are permitted to cross, we will notify those people individually. We will continue to work closely with the regional authorities on this.

I share your concern about the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As the Foreign Secretary said in his recent [Written Ministerial Statement](#), there is an urgent need to significantly scale up the flow of aid getting in. We have called on all parties to take immediate steps to ensure unhindered humanitarian access, ease restrictions on humanitarian supplies and ensure the UN and aid agencies can reach civilians in need throughout Gaza. We have tripled our own aid commitment, including the provision of health services and medicines to 123,800 people through WHO, UNRWA, UNICEF, Red Cross/Crescent and OCHA, supporting trauma and emergency care services and an additional £4.25 million to UNFPA to reach 110,000 women and children with sexual and reproductive health support. Last week the UK and Jordan air-dropped life-saving aid to a hospital in northern Gaza, providing four tonnes of vital supplies including medicines and food for hospital patients and staff.

Ultimately the most effective way to protect civilians in Gaza will be to secure a sustainable ceasefire. That is why the UK has been consistent in calling for an immediate pause, that then progresses towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. This remains the focus of all our diplomatic effort.

This letter will be placed in the Houses of Parliament library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

Minister of State

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict