



**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**  
King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH

*From the Permanent Under-Secretaries*

**SIGNATORIES TO 16 MAY LETTER**

cc: PPS/Foreign Secretary  
PS/Mr Falconer  
Executive Committee

**LETTER TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ON GAZA**

We have seen the letter to the Foreign Secretary of 16 May, commenting on HM Government's Middle East policy.

2. The FCDO wants to see healthy challenge as part of the policy-making process. It is a defence against group-think and highlighted as important in the Chilcott principles. Accordingly, in this particular policy area the Department set up additional mechanisms including a bespoke Challenge Board and regular listening sessions. But, while members of staff are absolutely entitled to their personal views on Government policy, on reading this letter we thought it might be helpful to remind staff of the mechanisms available to those who are uncomfortable with policy for different reasons.

- If you work on any policy, you should of course give your advice without fear or favour through your line management chain. It is important to acknowledge that the advice that goes to Ministers will balance a series of factors and perspectives, and the decisions are for them.
- If you are unsure about how the FCDO incorporates a range of perspectives and equities, you should familiarise yourself with the ways in which challenge is built into policy-making. FCDO policy is also developed with the benefit of legal advice, including in-house, and when appropriate with external counsel and ultimately with the Attorney General.
- If you work on an area in respect of which the direction of Government policy causes you direct difficulty thanks to personal or family circumstances, you should consult HR or your line manager who will consider any reasonable adjustment to your deployment.
- If you wish to raise ethical or legal concerns with Government policy outside the line management chain, the Department provides Staff Counsellors as a safe and confidential sounding board for such worries.
- If you are being directed by Ministers or more senior officials in a way you do not believe is consonant with the Civil Service Code, you should say so to line management or ultimately raise such concerns to us. If you find our response unsatisfactory you may appeal to the Civil Service Commission.
- Whether or not you work directly on the policy area in question, if your disagreement with any aspect of Government policy or action is profound your ultimate recourse is to resign from the Civil Service. This is an honourable course.

3. Full guidance on these mechanisms, including the role of Staff Counsellors and the FCDO's raising a concern and whistleblowing policy, is kept regularly updated on the intranet; please do familiarise yourself with that guidance.

4. There is no problem with having critical views of aspects of Government policy as a serving civil servant. But the bargain at the heart of the British Civil Service is that we sign up to deliver the policies of the Government of the day wholeheartedly, within the limits imposed by the law and the Civil Service Code. We are proud that this Department is doing so professionally, even where those policies are the subject of substantial and legitimate public scrutiny and debate.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "O. Robbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large "O" and a long, sweeping underline.

**OLIVER ROBBINS**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Dyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

**NICK DYER**

**29 May 2025**