



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon. Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
King Charles Street
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Sent by email

8 February 2021
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Dear Foreign Secretary,

We write to you with urgency because we are extremely worried about recent acceleration in attempts by Israeli settler organisations to take control of hundreds of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. This would amount to the forcible/mass eviction and dispossession of hundreds of Palestinian families. As you are well aware, the forcible transfer of an occupied population is a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as is the transfer of an occupier's population into occupied territory, which includes East Jerusalem. All this occurs in the context of Israel's illegal annexation of occupied East Jerusalem and internationally condemned practices that include the forcible transfer of Palestinian families and settlement expansion throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

Members of the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group recently heard from Palestinian writer Mohammed El-Kurd and Israeli settlement expert, and Director of Peace Now's Settlement Watch Programme, Hagit Ofran about the looming threat of dispossession that hundreds of Palestinians face in East Jerusalem, in neighbourhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan. As neighbours to these Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, the British Consulate in Jerusalem knows full well of the anxieties and trauma that exists, not least because some of our own Consulate colleagues are part of these families.

El-Kurd, whose family was dispossessed in 1948, and were robbed of part of their home in 2009, spoke movingly about living in constant fear that settler organisations backed by the Israeli government will take over their family home. In the coming weeks this fear is very likely to turn to reality. Ofran highlighted how these takeovers contradict international law.

On 9 February, the Israeli courts will hear an appeal on court cases regarding some of these homes, including the El-Kurd family. This verdict could have catastrophic consequences on the lives of many but at its essence this is not a legal issue, but a political one. Israeli settlers as well as government and municipality officials speak openly about wishing to control the demographics of the city. Any actions by the occupying power to alter Jerusalem's character, status or demographic composition are illegal under international law.

We welcome Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office statements notably the Minister of State's response to a written parliamentary question on 22 January. However, we believe that given the huge scale of this planned dispossession which would amount to the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1967, diplomatic words of concern are insufficient. After all, at the centre of such actions are hundreds of Palestinian families who are facing the imminent threat of displacement or have already endured it.

It is in the power of the state of Israel to stop this injustice. It is the UK's responsibility as a High Contracting Party to the Geneva Conventions to do its absolute most to make that happen. The UK government must urge the government of Israel to put a stop to the forcible transfer of families from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem. The British Consulate needs to ensure that regular visits are made to Palestinian families and communities under threat of mass/forcible eviction and dispossession, in East Jerusalem and across the rest of the West Bank, demonstrating full solidarity and all assistance to them within its power. Events in Jerusalem also have a history of escalating tensions rapidly in a very damaging fashion.

The UK government should make clear to its Israeli counterpart that relations cannot continue as normal in the event of such transgressions. All measures should be considered including reducing diplomatic engagement and banning trade in settlement products in full conformity with international law obligations in order to challenge the settler economy that profits from the occupation. Settlements are illegal so such a step is not a sanction but a measure designed to ensure that the UK does everything in its power to ensure it does not assist in such serious breaches of international law.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Elliott MP (Co-Chair of the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group)

Rt Hon Baroness Sayeeda Warsi (Co-Chair of the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group)

Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP

Lord John Alderdice

Rushanara Ali MP

Paula Barker MP

Apsana Begum MP

Clive Betts MP

Rt Hon Baroness Tessa Blackstone

Baroness Christine Blower

Crispin Blunt MP

Tracy Brabin MP

Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP

Alan Brown MP

Richard Burgon MP

Rt Hon Lord Menzies Campbell of
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Dan Carden MP

Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP

Lord Rupert Carrington

Joanna Cherry QC MP

Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Southwark,
Christopher Chessun

Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP

Neil Coyle MP
Rt Hon Ed Davey MP
Rt Hon Baroness Frances D'Souza
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Stephen Farry MP
Richard Graham MP
Lord Tony Greaves
Lord Andrew Green of Deddington
Rt Hon Lord Peter Hain
Lord John Hendy QC
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