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Caroline Lucas  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

by email: caroline.lucas.mp@parliament.uk

*Dear Caroline,*

Thank you for your email of 11 May on behalf of yourself and your constituent, [REDACTED] regarding Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution, and, in all but the most exceptional cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

The British Government remains gravely concerned by proposals to demolish villages in the Jordan Valley, including Al Maleh. Officials from our Consulate General in Jerusalem visited some of the communities in the Jordan Valley at risk of demolition in November 2017.

As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement of 1 June, the UK is also deeply concerned by the proposed demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar, which the UN has said could amount to 'forcible transfer' in violation of International Humanitarian Law. The Foreign Secretary called on Prime Minister Netanyahu to reconsider plans to demolish the community when they met in London on 6 June.

I have repeatedly raised our concerns about plans to transfer the community of Khan al-Ahmar. I visited the community on 30 May to stress concerns about the impact of the court case. In my meetings with the Israeli Government I urged reconsideration of



options so the community does not have to move, and pressed for more Palestinian planning applications to be approved.

On 29 May, I also visited the East Jerusalem home of a Palestinian woman at imminent risk of eviction under Israeli laws enabling Jews, but not Arabs, to recover property lost in 1948. I expressed the UK's support for the family and those at risk of eviction, emphasising that we support Palestinians facing demolition or eviction in Area C of the West Bank through our legal aid programme. This helps residents to challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. Of those cases provided with legal representation through British funding to the legal aid programme, 97% have resulted in suspension of demolitions and evictions, allowing Palestinians to remain in their homes.

We are also gravely concerned that Palestinians continue to face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure in East Jerusalem and Area C. Practically, this leaves Palestinians with little option but to build without permission, placing their homes at risk of demolition on the grounds that they do not have a permit.

We continue to urge the Israeli Government to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

Additionally, the UK has also allocated £1.1 million to support essential infrastructure for vulnerable Palestinians in Area C. We are supporting four communities comprising nearly 500 Palestinian families living in Area C to remain on their land. Our work focuses on improved infrastructure and access to community services, including education and health, in areas that have an outline plan in the Israeli approval process.

We press the parties to the Middle East Peace Process to refrain from actions which make peace more difficult. Settlement construction is a significant barrier to achieving this goal, as are terrorism, incitement to violence, and the refusal by some to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. We do not underestimate the challenges, but if both parties show bold leadership, peace is possible.

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**THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**