



Mr. Michael McAdam
A/Senior Executive Officer
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24

23 June 2021

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Dear Mr. McAdam,

On behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, Mr. Simon Coveney T.D., I would like to thank you for your correspondence of 20 May 2021, following a meeting of the Clondalkin Area Committee and regarding Ireland's actions in response to the recent violence in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.

Minister Coveney welcomed the 21 May ceasefire and has stressed that the immediate focus must be on getting vital humanitarian assistance to those who need it. On 19 May Minister Coveney announced an additional €1.5m in emergency support to UNRWA and UNICEF in response to emergency appeals. Further information on this announcement can be found at the following link: <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2021/may/min-coveney-announces-15-million-in-humanitarian-funding-for-people-in-gaza.php>

The recent intensification of violence has been terrifying for Israelis and Palestinians and tragic for the families of those who have lost their lives or been injured. The protection of all civilians, in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, is of paramount importance and is an obligation under international humanitarian law. The number of child casualties is shocking.

Ireland has been active on this issue in the UN Security Council, which discussed the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel five times in the month of May. Of these meetings, three were emergency sessions called with Ireland's support. On 16 May Minister Coveney addressed the Council and called for the cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and humanitarian access, and emphasised obligations that all sides have under international humanitarian law. Minister Coveney called on the UN Security Council to speak with one voice in clearly demanding an immediate end to violence. Ireland has since welcomed the UN Security Council press statement of 22 May.

Minister Coveney's 16 May statement to the UN Security Council can be consulted at the following link: <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2021/may/min-coveney-statement-to-uns-council-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east.php>.

The UN Security Council press statement of 22 May can be consulted at the following link: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14527.doc.htm>

Minister Coveney raised the situation and unacceptable violence with EU counterparts at an extraordinary meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers on 18 May where there was a clear call for an immediate ceasefire. Press remarks made by EU High Representative / Vice President Josep Borrell following the meeting can be found at the following link: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/98670/informal-videoconference-foreign-affairs-ministers-israelpalestine-press-remarks-high_en

Ireland's position was also communicated to the Israeli authorities directly. On 11 May Minister Coveney called in the Israeli Ambassador and underlined that Israel's actions in Gaza which caused significant civilian casualties are unacceptable. Minister Coveney stressed that Israel must act responsibly and comply with international humanitarian law. Ireland's position was also conveyed to the Israeli authorities in Tel Aviv by Ireland's Ambassador to Israel.

During the escalation Minister Coveney was in contact with counterparts across the Middle East Region to underline the need to protect civilians, bring an end to the violence and to move to political engagement. Minister Coveney also discussed the situation with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Tony Blinken in Shannon on 24 May.

The events of the past month have not happened in isolation. They are taking place in the context of unabated settlement expansion and ongoing threats of evictions and violence against Palestinians. Ireland remains firmly committed to a negotiated two-State solution based on international law, relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and agreed parameters. These are messages Minister Coveney has reiterated in the Dáil and Seanad in recent weeks.

It is also in this context that the Dáil adopted a motion which declares that the scale, pace and nature of Israel's settlement policy amounts to unlawful de facto annexation. The Government put down an amendment to the motion to condemn the actions of Hamas in their attacks on Israel, the unacceptable lack of proportionality by Israel in its response and to underline the need for all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law. This amendment was passed. As the Minister noted in his speech to the Dáil on 25 May, Ireland is the first EU member state to call out Israel's actions as de facto annexation, but it is not done lightly. It reflects the huge concern Ireland has about the intent of their actions and, of course, their impact. It is a clear signal of the depth of feeling on this issue—both in respect of the escalation of violence and conflict we have seen in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel itself, and on the root causes of the situation.

The Minister remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation on the ground. On 27 May Ireland co-sponsored the holding of a special session at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on the grave human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Ireland also supports an independent international commission of inquiry on the matter.

The Minister would like to reiterate that the overall human rights situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory remains a priority for him, and Ireland will continue to take every opportunity to raise this with all appropriate interlocutors. Ireland will also continue to work with EU partners to promote coherent and effective EU action to work towards a lasting and peaceful two-state solution.

Yours sincerely,



Nora Delaney
Private Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

ENVIRONMENT WATER
AND CLIMATE CHANGE

01 JUL 2021

SOUTH DUBLIN
COUNTY COUNCIL