

**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

29th Meeting, 2023, Session 6

Thursday 2 November 2023

Gaza

1. The Committee is taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture.
2. Attached as an Annexe is correspondence from the First Minister to the Convener, dated 26 October 2023.
3. The letter was also sent to the Prime Minister, the First Minister of Wales, and party leaders across the UK.

Committee Clerks

October 2023

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
T: 0300 244 4000

26 October 2023

Dear Clare,

IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN GAZA AND CREATION OF A HUMANITARIAN CORRIDOR

The abhorrent terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October must be unequivocally condemned, and I will continue to join you in doing so. Hamas must release immediately and unconditionally all hostages and cease its missile attacks on Israel.

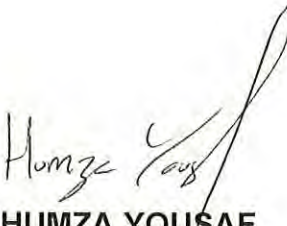
The killing of innocent civilians can never be justified, wherever it occurs. Israel, like every other country, has a right to protect itself from attack, but in doing so it must comply with international law.

Since the tragic events of that day, the loss of life has escalated. More than 1,400 Israelis and 5,700 Palestinians are reported to have been killed. More than 1.4 million Palestinians have been displaced and in excess of 600,000 people are sheltering in UN-run facilities. Many British citizens are trapped in a warzone with nowhere to go, under intense daily bombardment of the Gaza strip.

Food, water, fuel, and medicine are being restricted, with limited humanitarian supplies – nowhere near enough – being allowed in. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) – the largest humanitarian agency working in Gaza – has warned that unless fuel is allowed into Gaza immediately, the agency will be forced to halt all operations as of today.

I am, therefore, writing to ask for your support in helping to stop the staggering humanitarian disaster we are witnessing, which is set to get even worse. We should stand together and united in unequivocally calling on all parties to commit to an immediate ceasefire to allow a humanitarian corridor to be opened, so that lifesaving supplies can get into Gaza and innocent civilians who want to leave be given safe passage out.

The situation in Gaza is at the point of being cataclysmic. All of us must do everything we can to prevent that. There must be no more dithering, or delay, together we must call for an immediate ceasefire.


HUMZA YOUSAF