

10 MAY 2012



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

30 April 2012

Your reference: MD/cr/0504  
Our reference: MIN/30422/2012

Mark Durkan MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

*Dear Mark,*

Thank you for your letter of 5 April to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East.

I share your constituents' concerns about the threatened demolition of Palestinian homes in the South Hebron Hills. UK officials have visited the village of Susiya and are leading a delegation of EU diplomats there on 3 May. In addition, the UK has funded equipment for a children's nursery in the village this year.

We have repeatedly made clear to the Israelis our serious concern at the 40 per cent increase last year, as recorded by the UN, in demolitions of Palestinian properties in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We view such demolitions and evictions as causing unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, as harmful to the peace process, and, in all but the most limited circumstances, as contrary to international humanitarian law. I visited several buildings, including a school, subject to demolition orders in my visit to the West Bank in January, and subsequently discussed this issue with the Deputy Israeli Foreign Minister on 9 January and the Israeli Ambassador on 23 February.

In addition, we continue to support Palestinians facing demolition or eviction through our funding of the Norwegian Refugee Council legal aid programme which helps individuals to challenge these decisions in the Israeli legal system.

*In caw*  
*AL*

ALISTAIR BURT