



United Nations Association – UK
3 Whitehall Court
London, SW1A 2EL

Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
10 Downing St
London SW1A 2AA

Cc:

Rt Hon David Lammy MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Jonathan Powell, National Security Adviser

23 July 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as former British diplomats and international civil servants with many decades of collective service to call on you to seize this moment to recognise Palestinian statehood unconditionally.

The continuation of Palestinian life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is under an unprecedented level of threat, to the point where the risks of inaction have profound, historic and catastrophic implications. The state of Israel has also been profoundly affected by the violent and criminal actions of Hamas militants resisting the occupation and cannot be secure from threats in the future if the question of Palestine is not taken forward to a political settlement.

We welcomed your manifesto commitment to recognise Palestine alongside international partners as a contribution to a political process. That moment is now here. No bilateral “peace process” will now emerge by itself. A multilateral process is needed to set key legal and political prerequisites. These must include the right to statehood of the two peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, as the foundation of a constructive plan, coordinated with France, Saudi Arabia and other partners, giving impetus to the UN conference on a two-state solution on 28-29 July.

In parallel, we ask you to redouble your efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, end the blockade, and ensure that all hostages and those arbitrarily detained are freed. We welcome your government’s part in this week’s statement by 28 countries calling for an immediate end to the Gaza war, votes in support of a ceasefire, recent diplomatic steps - including the memorandum of understanding with the Palestinian Authority and the submission to the ICJ - and your recognition of the irreplaceable role of UN humanitarian mechanisms and renewed support for UNRWA.

We implore you, however, to go further and deliver on the promise of “concrete actions” issued with the leaders of France and Canada. Last year the International Court of Justice (ICJ) called upon Israel to end its unlawful occupation of Palestinian territories, and advised that states must not aid or assist the occupation’s activities, including those the Court concluded amounted to apartheid.

Further, the Court has ordered Israel to take all measures in its power to prevent the commission of acts of genocide by ensuring Palestinians have access to food, water, healthcare, and safety.

The UN and human rights organisations have documented Israel's failure to uphold these obligations, statements from Israeli ministers continue to espouse ethnic cleansing, and leading Israeli human rights lawyers have warned that the latest operation "Gideon's Chariots" is a blueprint for further war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moreover, settler violence and expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank continue unchecked and are accelerating while sanctioned and supported by Israeli Ministers and the Defence Forces.

Prime Minister, in the face of such horror and impunity, words are not enough. In recent months the Foreign Secretary has rightly condemned Israel's actions in the Commons as "intolerable" and "monstrous". However, he stopped short of recognising the grave violations of international law Israel continues to perpetrate – stating only there is a "risk" of such violations – despite credible and mounting evidence. Regrettably therefore, the requisite action has not followed. A partial suspension of arms sales, delays on trade talks and limited sanctions are far from the full extent of the pressure the UK can bring to bear on Israel. Over 1000 judges and lawyers based in Britain have warned that these actions are inadequate.

Given the enormity of the situation, it is time for the UK to raise its ambition and leverage its diplomatic influence at the UN and in other multilateral forums to pursue peace and defend international law. Recognising a Palestinian state would be a foundational first step towards breaking the deadly status quo. A coordinated multilateral approach is the only credible way forward, and will be supported by many countries in Europe, the Middle East, and the wider world.

By joining the 147 states that have already recognised the State of Palestine and exerting its influence as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK will reaffirm the broad international consensus that Palestinian self-determination and statehood are not only non-negotiable but essential elements in practice for any viable and just peace process.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss in more detail how this could work and what benefits could follow in terms of positive changes on the ground.

Signed,

Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, former UN Deputy Secretary-General and former UK Minister of State for Africa, Asia and the United Nations

Lord David Hannay, former UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Adrian Sindall, former Ambassador to Syria

Alan Doss, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Alexandra Hall Hall, former Ambassador to Georgia

Andrew Gilmour, former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

Andrew Whitley, former Director, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

Ann Grant, former High Commissioner to South Africa

Anthony Cary, former High Commissioner to Canada

Arthur Snell, former High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago

Sir Charles Petrie, former Executive Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Burundi
Sir David Madden, former Ambassador to Greece
Sir David Veness, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Safety & Security
Sir Derek Plumbly, former UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, former Ambassador to Egypt
Sir Dominick Chilcott, former Ambassador to Turkey
Sir Edward Clay, former High Commissioner to Kenya
Frances Guy, former Ambassador to Lebanon
Frederick Lyons, former UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Russia, Iran and Sri Lanka
Sir Harold Walker, former Ambassador to Iraq
Ian Martin, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Timor Leste, Nepal and Libya
James Watt, former Ambassador to Egypt
Jamie McGoldrick, former Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory
Sir Jeremy Greenstock, former Permanent Representative to the UN
John Buck, former Ambassador to Portugal
John Burley, former Director, United Nations Conference on Trade & Development
John Casson, former Ambassador to Egypt
Sir John Shepherd, former Ambassador to Italy
Jon Wilks, former Ambassador to Qatar
Sir Kieran Prendergast, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, former Ambassador to Turkey
Mark Bowden, former Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan
Martin Barber, former Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service
Martin Griffiths, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator
Matthew Kahane, former UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan and Nepal
Maureen Connelly, former UNHCR Inspector General
Michael Hone, former Ambassador to Iceland
Michael Keating, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia
Sir Nicholas Kay, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, former Ambassador to Afghanistan
Nicholas Morris, former UNHCR Special Envoy and Inspector General
Peter Collocott, former Ambassador to Brazil
Peter Ford, former Special Representative of the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
Peter Jenkins, former Ambassador to the UN (Vienna)
Peter Millett, former Ambassador to Jordan
Ralph Zacklin, former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
Sir Richard Dalton, former Ambassador to Iran
Richard Lyne, former High Commissioner to Solomon Islands
Richard Northern, former Ambassador to Libya
Rob Macaire, former Ambassador to Iran
Robert England, former UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand
Robin Kealy, former Ambassador to Tunisia

Robin Lamb, former Ambassador to Bahrain

Rupert Joy, former EU ambassador to Morocco

Sarah Cliffe, former UN Assistant Secretary-General of Civilian Capacities

Stuart Laing, former Ambassador to Kuwait

Thomas Reilly, former Ambassador to Morocco

Sir Vincent Fean, former Consul-General, Jerusalem

Sir William Patey, former Ambassador to Afghanistan