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The Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP,
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Wednesday 1st February 2012

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

We write to thank and commend you for your remarks at the joint press conference with President Mahmoud Abbas on January 16th at which you described Israel's continued building of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as *"an act of deliberate vandalism to the basic premise upon which negotiations have taken place for years and years."*

We have for some time now written to successive British Foreign Secretaries urging the British Government to take a firmer line on the construction of illegal settlements in the OPTs for the very reasons you set out so eloquently at the press conference.

The creation by Israel of "facts on the ground" which obviate the prospect of two states materialising undermines the dignity and freedom from occupation that Palestinians have patiently sought for over forty years, and threatens Israel's long-term desire for security.

Your condemnation "in the strongest possible terms" of the illegal settlements is greatly welcomed and is a fitting addendum to the Foreign Secretary's statement last November censuring the announcement by Israel of further settlement building as *"provocative and unhelpful"*.

We wrote to the Foreign Secretary in February 2011 to congratulate the Government on its stance at the 6484th meeting of the UN Security Council in support of the motion calling upon Israel *"as the occupying power, [to] immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and that it fully respect its legal obligations in this regard."*

The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, has previously stated that "decisive leadership" is needed in ending this long-running conflict and delivering on the commitment to establish two states in the region, a free and sovereign Palestine alongside a secure Israel.

We thank you for showing decisive leadership in condemning resolutely the illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and the persisting danger they pose to our efforts over many years, bilateral and as part of the Quartet, to unequivocally support the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders and with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

We hope that your remarks will duly translate into effective action by the British Government. No doubt you will agree that words that are not followed through with requisite action are empty rhetoric. Indeed, while we have seen the Government talk and act tough on Iran, supporting sanctions to urge compliance with the IAEA and obligations under the non-proliferation treaty, it has been remarkably

unwilling to do so against Israel for its non-compliance with international law. A situation which leaves us, quite rightly, open to charges of double standards and hypocrisy.

Yours sincerely,

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Head of Research