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The Rt. Hon. William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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14th June 2010

Dear Foreign Secretary,

It is with some interest that I read your comment piece in The Times newspaper on Friday, '*The clock is ticking. Iran must come to the table*', (The Times, 11th June 2010) on the UN decision of Wednesday 9th June to impose a new set of sanctions on Iran.

I was struck particularly by your argument on the inevitability of fresh sanctions given the perception among members states, you mention 'Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda', that Iran has not done enough, despite the Turco-Brazilian brokered deal, to convince the international community of its benign, non-nuclear weapons, intentions with respect to its uranium enriching plants.

You wrote:

'Tehran knew that new sanctions would follow if it did not comply with United Nations resolutions and for it to assert otherwise is a distortion,' and 'Reinforcing UN sanctions will be an important test of European resolve and a positive example of how the EU's collective political and economic weight in the world could be harnessed to telling effect.'

Foreign Secretary, the statement is one that is not without the obvious, and contradictory, parallel on the UK government's consistent refusal to broach the issue of economic sanctions against Israel in relation to its persistent and long-standing non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, for example 242 (1967); 298 (1971) 338 (1973) 446 (1979) 1322 (2000); 1397 (2002) and in particular, UN Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009), which '*Calls on member states to support international efforts to alleviate the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza...*'.

The issue of applying economic sanctions and other diplomatic pressure to Israel in response to the raiding of the Mavi Marmara and the deaths of 9 innocent aid activists by Israeli commandos, and injuries sustained by many others, on the morning of May 31st was brought up during the debate on the Gaza Flotilla on the floor of the House on Wednesday 2nd June. Questions by Caroline Lucas MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Robert Walton MP and Sir Gerald Kaufman MP, to name a few, all raised the issue of sanctions against Israel, robust responses from the Quartet in face of yet another breach of international law by Israel, and firmer action by the EU to reprimand Israel's breach of the democracy and human rights conditions included in the EU-Israel Association Agreement by suspending the agreement until such a time that such conditions were actually observed by Israel.

All such questions were met by your statement that "*...I do not think that the right policy is to impose sanctions.*"

In response to Israel's brutal incursion into the Gaza Strip in December 2008 – January 2009, we heard from the then foreign secretary, David Miliband, similar words in not dissimilar circumstance, when MPs called for the imposition of sanctions against Israel for its disproportionate use of force.

Mr Miliband said at the time, *"We do not believe that economic sanctions on Israel are the way to engage or to influence Israel. We do not believe that the isolation of Israel is the way to achieve influence with it."*

Foreign Secretary, as we recoil from Israel's act of piracy on the high seas, the killing of aid activists by its commandos, and latterly, its attempts to negotiate diluted terms of reference on any investigation into the conduct of its naval commandos on that fateful day, your strong assertions in support of sanctions against Iran for its non-compliance with UN Security Council decisions on the ceasing of any nuclear enrichment activities sit rather uncomfortably with your insistence that sanctions against Israel 'is not the right policy'.

As ENGAGE wrote to the former foreign secretary, there is a strong perception among British Muslims, and Muslims around the world, that our policy on issues pertaining to the Middle East and Iran are biased in favour of Israel. A perception that will only likely be reinforced by the comments made in your article in The Times last Friday, and further emboldened by your claims that the EU act to reinforce the sanctions against Iran in demonstration of the benign effects of the Union's collective political and economic weight. A benign effect that appears to be wholly neglected in any reappraisal of the EU Association Agreement with Israel.

Foreign Secretary, we are moved to ask why such double standards are being entertained and whether the British government acknowledges that such a situation is untenable and contrary to our national interests.

Foreign Secretary, you rightly argue that the current impasse in Iran's uranium enrichment programme and the concerns of the international community *'does [not] serve the interests of millions of young Iranians who find themselves left behind on the international stage, unable to use their energy and skills to their full potential or to enjoy the rights and freedoms that all peoples are entitled to.'*

And in similar vein, we ask whether the UK government's refusal to back a suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and economic sanctions against Israel does not also deny millions of young Palestinians of the freedom *'to use their energy and skills to their full potential or to enjoy the rights and freedoms that all peoples are entitled to'*.

I would further add that while the impasse with Iran rests on that country being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and concerns, yet unproven, of its harbouring intent to develop nuclear weapons, Israel is already a nuclear power in the region and one which has thus far refused to sign the non-proliferation treaty.

I would welcome your reflection on this and the other points raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif
CEO