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Monday 21st February 2011

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing to commend your decision to support and vote in favour of the UN resolution tabled on 18th February condemning Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem as illegal and a serious obstacle to peace.

We are greatly disappointed with the decision of the US to veto the resolution which, in our view, was correct to call 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.”

As the British government has already made clear in its statements on the issue, the Middle East conflict requires “decisive leadership” and immediate action if the two-state solution is to be realized in the near future. Years of intransigence and an unwillingness to take bold decisions have already contributed to the impasse the peace process is currently mired in, and it has put in serious jeopardy the very realization of a viable Palestinian state.

If we fail to act soon and use all the diplomatic and economic leverage at our disposal, as recommended by the European Former Leaders Group in their letter to the President of the European Commission, Herman van Rompuy, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, we will indeed be left with “decades of potential conflict and even deeper difficulties in the Middle East.”

We would point out that economic leverage at our disposal, such as sanctions, have not been considered or employed. We ought to match our verbal criticism on the continuation of building of new illegal settlements by Israel with decisive actions. Unless and until we act to convey to Israel that non-compliance on the immediate cessation of current settlement building and the dismantling of existing illegal settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territories carries severe consequences, we will make little progress on this urgent matter. We have already observed continued settlement activity in clear defiance of international law and it is high time we took a much firmer line against Israel’s refusal to comply with UN resolutions condemning the settlements and their threat to peace.

We would further add that the UN resolution’s call for “international and regional diplomatic efforts to support and invigorate the peace process towards achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace,” also raises questions of the British Government’s policy of not engaging with Hamas.

We have written on numerous occasions to the Foreign Office on the recommendation contained in the select committee reports on 'Global Security: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories' on engaging with Hamas in the interests of a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace."

We hope the Government will reflect on the recommendations of the select committee reports and change its policy to directly engage with Hamas in order to realise sustainable advancements on peace in the Middle East.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif
CEO