

31st May 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about Israeli settlement building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the displacement of the Bedouin community.

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the issue of the demolition of the villages of Um-il-Hiran and Ateer with the Ministry of Justice and the Arab Affairs Officer at the Prime Minister's office. The Embassy continues to monitor the situation closely. The UK also makes clear its concerns about Susiya and is a supporter of the community in Susiya, with regular visits to see the situation on the ground.

The UK is deeply concerned by Israeli proposals to relocate the Bedouin population across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, action that the UN has said could constitute forcible transfer. These plans could have a devastating impact on the communities concerned and could open the way for further settlement expansion – endangering the viability of a two-state solution.

The Government's position is clear: demolitions cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, are harmful to the peace process, and are, in all but the most exceptional of cases, contrary to international humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that the destruction of any real or personal property in Occupied Territory is not justified unless it is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.

The UK continues to encourage the Israeli authorities and Bedouin communities to engage in dialogue to agree a satisfactory solution to the issue, respecting the equality of all of Israel's citizens in a way which avoids forced relocations and is consistent with Israel's commitments under international law.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP