



# Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Consultative  
Status with  
United Nations  
ECOSOC,  
UNCTAD and  
UNESCO

Special  
Consultative  
Relations  
with FAO,  
ILO and  
UNICEF

Dear Secretary of State

## **British action in response to the kidnapping of British citizens in international waters**

Earlier this month, several UK-flagged vessels were detained in international waters and more than a dozen British citizens were kidnapped by a foreign government through an act of piracy in the Mediterranean Sea. Along with many others, these citizens were then detained in Israel, in poor conditions, before deportation to their home countries. Their mission, as part of the Global Sumud Flotilla, was to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid to the besieged people of Gaza.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK Section joins those calling on the British government to clarify what action has been taken in response to this incident. Specifically, we ask:

*Has the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office summoned the Israeli Ambassador or made formal representations to your counterpart in Israel?*

*Has the Prime Minister raised the matter directly with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel?*

Last month, the United Nations confirmed that Gaza is suffering from famine as a direct result of Israel's systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid. The flotilla sought to alleviate this suffering by bringing food and medical supplies to civilians who have endured months of siege and hunger.

The United Kingdom has both a moral and historical responsibility to act – arising especially from its role in the former British Mandate, its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and its continuing trade and defence relationships with Israel. We therefore urge the government to take the following immediate measures:

- impose further sanctions on Israel and its officials
- suspend all arms sales and military assistance
- intensify diplomatic efforts to secure a lasting ceasefire, ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, and support a just and lasting peace

Justice for Palestine is indispensable to peace in the Middle East. Without it, the cycle of violence and insecurity will persist, to the detriment of all peoples of the region.

Yours in peace

Fiona McOwan, National Secretary, for WILPF UK Executive Committee

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs  
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