

Dear .....

Children across the UK are now settling into their new school year. This is the time of year when young people start to build their future through learning and make new friends. But for far too many Palestinian children it has been a time when their future educational opportunities have been damaged and their lives made considerably harder through the demolition and damage to school buildings and equipment by the Israeli Civil Administration. These incidents have taken place in areas under full Israeli administrative and security control in the West Bank (known as Area C) and East Jerusalem.

Here are some of the demolitions that have taken place:

9 August – solar panels essential for providing a school's power was seized and destroyed in village called Abu a-Nuwar.

21 August 2017 – in Jabal al-Baba, east Jerusalem, a kindergarten was dismantled and essential equipment – including desks and chairs – was seized. This has affected around 25 children. This community has been identified by the UN as at high risk of forcible transfer.

22 August 2017 – a new school in Jub a-Dhib was demolished the day before the term started. The EU had funded the structures so that around 60 children didn't have to walk an hour to the nearest schools.

And not to forget Gaza, on 9 August two schools there sustained damage as a result of Israeli air strikes.

Details of all these incidents can be found via the UN:  
<https://www.ochaopt.org/reports/protection-of-civilians>

The Israeli military have admitted that in 2016 they destroyed at least 300 structures in the occupied West Bank part funded by the EU or international NGOs. 2016 saw the highest number of demolitions since records began – the situation is escalating.

Israel says that the structures did not have permissions needed to be built. But of course what they don't say is that it is virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain those permissions – either in Area C or in East Jerusalem where they must apply to the Israeli authorities. That's why the EU has funded structures without. There are 55 schools scheduled for demolition. Without essential facilities such as schools and medical facilities Palestinians' lives become virtually impossible, and they are forced to move to the areas where Palestinians are concentrated, called areas 'A' and 'B'. This then leaves the area free for further illegal Israeli expansion. Without the support of the EU through humanitarian projects, the lives of Palestinians living in these areas are untenable. Without stronger political support from the UK and other European states their future remains bleak.

The Netherlands Government have led the way by lodging an official complaint with the Israeli authorities, and have declared that they will continue to fund humanitarian projects in area C with or without permission from the Israeli Government.

This is leadership that I would urge the UK to follow and develop.

In particular, please ask the Foreign Secretary to:

- Urge the EU to seek compensation from Israel authorities for the damage and destruction of EU funded projects
- Lodge official complaints against ongoing demolitions in East Jerusalem and other areas under full Israeli control
- Work with the Department for International trade to remind UK based companies that may be involved in these demolitions or settlement building, of the 'potential reputational implications of getting involved in economic and financial activities in settlements, as well as possible abuses of the rights of individuals'. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-israel/overseas-business-risk-israel--3>)
- Consider what further sanctions will be taken if Israeli authorities continue to destroy Palestinian places of learning.

I do hope that you will take this matter very seriously and raise the important issue of Palestinian educational buildings urgently.

Yours truly,