

Oifig an Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Aire Cosanta
Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence



Mr. John Kelpie
Chief Executive
Derry City and Strabane District Council
98 Strand Road
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BT48 7N



18 September 2020

Reference No: DFA-MCO-00564-2020

Dear John,

I would like to thank you for your correspondence of 10 July 2020 which was forwarded to me from the Taoiseach's Correspondence Office.

The pursuance of a two-state solution with an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, comprising Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem, living in peace alongside Israel, has been Ireland's and the EU's long-standing position on the Middle East Peace Process.

Your correspondence raises the matter of recognition. I addressed this issue in the Dáil, most recently in response to a parliamentary question on 28 July 2020. The answer is included below and is also available at the following link: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2020-07-28/408/#pq_408

'The Programme for Government states that the Government will "Honour our commitment to recognise the State of Palestine as part of a lasting settlement of the conflict, or in advance of that, when we believe doing so will progress efforts to reach a two-state solution or protect the integrity of Palestinian territory".'

In recognition of the lack of progress towards a two-state solution, I have been clear that I would be prepared to recommend to the Government early recognition by Ireland of a State of Palestine, if and when it might be helpful. This is an issue where there could be benefits to moving in step with EU partners, and it is a matter that I discuss regularly with EU colleagues.

However, recognition by Ireland outside the context of an overall peace agreement would also undoubtedly affect Ireland's influence on the Israel-Palestine conflict at EU and international level. Timing and context would affect whether this loss of influence would be matched by delivering a commensurate benefit for the Palestinian people and a positive impact on the peace process. I am continuing to monitor the situation closely.'

Your correspondence also raises the Occupied Territories Bill. This Bill would not be compatible with EU law, and would not be implementable. The Government will not be taking it forward.

Settlements are illegal under international law, notably being contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention, and actively undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. Ireland has consistently and strongly opposed settlements, and has spoken out against new construction and on demolitions, and will continue to do so.

I would like to reiterate that the overall human rights situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory remains a priority for me, and Ireland will continue to take every opportunity to raise this with all appropriate interlocutors. Ireland will also continue to work with EU partners to promote coherent and effective EU action to push for an end to settlement expansion, uphold humanitarian principles and work towards a lasting and peaceful two-state solution.

Yours sincerely



Simon Coveney, T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Minister for Defence