



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

21 October 2008

Our reference: 63507

Daniel Machover  
Chair  
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights  
Garden Court Chambers  
57-60 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London  
WC2A 3LS

London SW1A 2AH

*From The Minister of State*

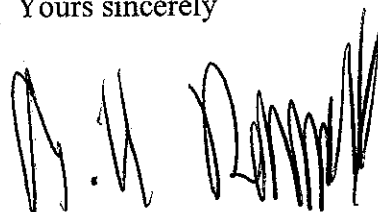
Dear Daniel

Thank you for your letter of 24 September to the Foreign Secretary, in which you raised concerns regarding the four Palestinian lawyers being denied permits to leave the Gaza Strip and West Bank to attend a human rights conference in Brussels. I am replying as the Minister responsible for the Middle East.

I share your concerns about freedom of movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). Along with the UN and others, the UK is gravely concerned about the growing humanitarian impact of restrictions on Gaza, particularly on the most vulnerable sections of the population. The continued Israeli closure regime of roadblocks and checkpoints and the imposition of curfews, has a severe impact on almost every Palestinian in the OPTs. This restriction of freedom of movement cannot always be justified on security grounds.

With regard to Gaza, we welcome the ceasefire. It is a crucial first step. We urge Israel, in line with its own commitments, to re-open the Gaza crossings and welcome the recent progress which has been made on this. We have made very clear that Israel must act in accordance with its obligations under international law. We look to Israel to ensure that its actions do not result in a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Our efforts are focussed on working on ways to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Gaza and achieve the common goal of a two state solution.

Yours sincerely



BILL RAMMELL