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Dear Shaun Macdonald,

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 July about the need to uphold international law and your concern about the reports of escalating violence and humanitarian crises across parts of the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

The UK Government is proud of its firm commitment to international law and takes seriously its role as a High Contracting Party to the Geneva Convention (1949). International Humanitarian Law (IHL) serves as a critical tool in seeking to limit the effects of armed conflict to protect people who are not, or who are no longer participating in hostilities, and to limit the methods and means of warfare. Where we see signs that violations of IHL may occur, the Government raises the alarm - directly with the countries involved, with nearby nations, and through international organisations

The UK Government consistently stands up for humanitarian principles and the need for humanitarian agencies to be able to operate on the basis of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. In the context of the Middle East, for example, which you indicate is of particular concern, the Government has called on the Israeli government to immediately lift restrictions on the flow of aid and urgently allow the United Nations (UN) and humanitarian non-governmental organisations to carry out their work in order to tackle starvation. What's more, the UK Government is determined to protect the viability of the two-state solution, and so will recognise the state of Palestine in September before UNGA, unless the Israeli government takes the steps the Foreign Secretary has set out.

International justice and accountability are fundamental elements of the Government's foreign policy: it is committed to securing accountability for those responsible for atrocity crimes and strongly believes that any allegations must be thoroughly investigated. This is evidenced in the UK Government's continued position as a strong supporter of an effective International Criminal Court as the primary international institution responsible for investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the most egregious crimes, holding perpetrators to account and achieving justice for victims. Moreover, as a permanent Member at the UN Security

Council, the UK Government will continue to use its position to protect aid workers, champion compliance with IHL and seek accountability for violations.

Yours sincerely,

Parliamentary Correspondence Team

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