

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS, JONATHAN ARKUSH, WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY

BACKGROUND

1. **Arkush** has been President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews since May 2015. He issued a statement on Christmas Day to express his deep disappointment at the UK's support for UNSCR 2334, referring to the resolution as "biased and unbalanced". On 9 January, he addressed a pro-Israel rally on Whitehall and condemned the UNSCR as a "disgrace".
2. **Terrorism:** On 8 January, four Israeli soldiers were killed in a truck ramming incident in East Jerusalem. You issued a statement to condemn the attack. PM Netanyahu has claimed the attack was inspired by Da'esh. The Israeli authorities have detained relatives of the attacker and indicated they will carry out a punitive demolition of his home.
3. **Settlements:** All settlements are illegal under international law; by changing the facts on the ground, they threaten the viability of a two-state solution. From 2009-15, the settlement population living east of the separation barrier increased 30% to over 90,000. Inside the blocs (near the Green Line) the settlements grew at the same rate of 30%. This is double the population growth of Green Line Israel and calls into question the commitment of the Israeli government to the two-state solution.
4. **UNSC 2334:** On 23 December, UNSC adopted resolution 2334: the first on the MEPP since 2009. The UNSCR called on Israel to cease illegal settlement activity, underlined the international community's commitment to support an agreement based on pre 1967 borders, called on parties to prevent violence against civilians, refrain from provocation and incitement, condemned acts of terrorism and called for a return to credible negotiations. The text received 14 votes in favour. The US abstained rather than veto the resolution.
5. Israel and President-elect Trump have condemned the resolution. Israel has expressed outrage at the resolution's language describing the Western Wall (as part of East Jerusalem) as Occupied Territory. Israel has recalled their Ambassadors to New Zealand and Senegal (who put forward the resolution) and cut aid to Senegal. On Christmas Day, UK Chargé in Tel Aviv was summoned to the MFA, along with other SC members; Israel criticised the vote and claimed there was an 'increasingly unbalanced' approach in the SC which placed all responsibility for the conflict on Israel. Israel has (wrongly) claimed the UK was instrumental in the drafting and tabling of 2334. The UK engaged with the draft text as we would other draft resolutions, and only to include balancing language on incitement/terror. We expect Israel will take further measures in response to 2334, including settlement announcements and demolitions.
6. **Kerry's Speech:** Following US abstention on UNSC 2334, SoS Kerry delivered a speech on 28 December taking stock of the MEPP. He set out his experience of the peace process over the past four years, addressed criticism of the US decision to abstain on UNSCR 2334, set out why the two-state solution was the

only credible path and laid out six core parameters. The speech was criticised by Israel and US Congress/US media as harsh on Israel, but was welcomed by German and French FMs. No10 issued a statement stating that it was important not to only focus on illegal settlement activity and that it was not appropriate to attack the composition of the democratically-elected government of an ally. Obama administration has expressed its "surprise" at the UK's comments, which have been interpreted as distancing ourselves from the outgoing administration.

From: [Near East Dept]
Sent: 11 January 2017 16:35
To: [Name redacted]

Subject: RE: Meeting with Jonathan Arkush

[Name redacted]

The statement below has just been cleared by No10 and will issue shortly.

Thanks,
[Near East Dept]

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said:

"I am extremely grateful to the President of the Board of Deputies for the opportunity to meet and hear the concerns of the Jewish community. This Government understands and appreciates these concerns.

"While I reiterated the Government's continued belief that settlement building is illegal, I was clear that it is far from the only obstacle to peace and the international community must not forget this. The Government is unwavering in its commitment to Israel's security and we will continue to call out the scourge of Palestinian incitement and terrorism that blights the lives of ordinary Israelis.

"We will also urge Palestinians and Israelis alike to get back to the negotiating table, so that they can bring about the peace that is so urgently needed. I was also very pleased to discuss the strong bilateral relations between Israel and the UK, including our growing trade relationship and in-depth cooperation in the fields of education, science and technology and the opportunities to build on that as Britain begins the process of exiting the European Union."

From: [Near East Dept]
Sent: 06 January 2017 14:20
To: [Mr Ellwood's office]
Cc:
Subject: Meeting with the Board of Deputies OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE
Importance: High

[Mr Ellwood's office]

As you know, there has been a considerable rhetorical backlash from Israel, and elements of the British Jewish community, following the UK's vote in favour of UNSCR 2334. On 25 December, Jonathan Arkush (President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) issued a statement to criticise the UNSCR and the UK's vote. He has argued that this is destructive to peace and unfairly singles out Israel. This message will be reiterated when he addresses a pro-Israel rally outside the FCO on Sunday.

Thanks,
[Near East Dept]

Board of Deputies President meets Middle East Minister to convey community's concerns over UN vote

Board of Deputies President Jonathan Arkush met with Middle East Minister Tobias Ellwood to convey the community's concerns about the UK voting for UN resolution 2334 and wider UK-Israel ties.

Middle East Minister Tobias Ellwood said:

"I thank the President of the Board of Deputies for coming in and sharing the Jewish community's concerns. They are heard and understood by this Government. While I reiterated the Government's continued belief that continued settlement building is one of the obstacles to peace, I was clear that it is not the only obstacle, and that the international community must not forget this. The Government is absolutely committed to Israel's security and we will continue to call out Palestinian incitement and terrorism. We will also urge Palestinians and Israelis alike to get back to the negotiating table, so that they can bring about the peace that both Israelis and Palestinians so urgently need. I was also pleased to discuss the strong bilateral relations between Israel and the UK – including the growing trade relationship between the two countries – and the opportunities to build on that further as Britain begins the process of exiting the European Union."

From: [Near East Dept]

Sent: 10 January 2017 13:22

To: [Near East Dept]

Cc:

Subject: FS update to clear OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE
OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE

Importance: High

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