



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

16 October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Re: Israel, Bahrain and UAE.

Thank you for contacting me about the normalisation of relations between Israel and both Bahrain and the UAE which I believe is a very positive step for the region overall.

It has been clear for a long time that the only way to secure lasting peace is for the parties to get around the table and for a negotiated settlement to be arrived at. That must lead to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. The UK Government consistently calls for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution and in this they have my support.

I spoke about this in the Commons in June of this year where I asked the Foreign Secretary what steps we are taking to bring both Palestine and Israel around the table so that we can secure lasting peace.

You can watch my contribution here:

<https://www.antonyhig.co.uk/news/antony-speaks-about-securing-peace-israel-and-west-bank>

The normalisation of the relations between Israel, Bahrain and the UAE, who are all great friends of the UK is, as I said at the beginning of this letter, a historic and welcome step. And something that we should all support.

It was also encouraging to see that the normalisation between Israel and UAE in August resulted in the suspension of Israel's plans to annex the West Bank, further contributing to a stable Middle East. The UK has consistently opposed these plans, which would have been counterproductive to securing peace in the region.

I'm clear that any unilateral move towards annexation would be damaging to the renewed efforts to restart peace negotiations, and contrary to international law. Changes to the status quo cannot be made without an agreement negotiated by the parties themselves and I join my colleagues in Government in calling for a meaningful return to negotiations by all concerned parties.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the work of the US in brokering these agreements, which are a much-needed boost for peace in the region.

Ultimately, however, there is no substitute for direct talks between the Palestinians and Israel, which is the only way to reach a two state solution and a lasting peace. I encourage both sides to resume direct talks.

I also note that there are some encouraging sanctions against Israel and / or a boycott of trade. On this I am afraid we reach a fundamental disagreement. It is possible to

criticise some of Israel's policies whilst also wanting to see strong and growing trade and I am firmly of this view. It also remains a beacon of hope and democracy in a region that would otherwise be without it.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley