



Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs

MC24-008272

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Dear Dr Wareham

Thank you for your correspondence regarding access to Gaza for international medical assistance teams.

The Australian Government shares your grave concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Palestinian civilians cannot pay the price for defeating Hamas.

I have been unequivocal; nowhere near enough humanitarian assistance is entering Gaza. It is not good enough. We have repeatedly pressed Israel to facilitate the rapid, safe and unimpeded flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza. We have made this clear publicly and at the highest levels of the Israeli Government. We continually remind Israel of its obligations under international law and the need for it to comply with the International Court of Justice's rulings on provisional measures, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.

We recognise the essential work of the United Nations, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), to support the provision of lifesaving medical care to Palestinian civilians. Australia's Ambassador to Israel has made representations to Israeli authorities on the need to allow access to Gaza for Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) registered under the WHO/EMT Coordination Cell so that lifesaving medical and trauma care continues.

Since 7 October 2023, the Australian Government have committed \$94.5 million in humanitarian assistance to support civilians impacted by conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon and to respond to the refugee crisis in the region worsened by those conflicts. The Albanese Government also doubled funding to UNRWA – the only organisation with the mandate and the infrastructure to receive and distribute aid on the scale needed right now in Gaza.

Along with the majority of the international community, the Australian Government has condemned Israeli Defence Force attacks on civilians or aid workers. As you would be keenly aware, most of the time aid workers are local Palestinians working with international humanitarian organisations.


Australia is building a coalition for the safety of humanitarian personnel, including local aid workers, who provide the food, water and medicine civilians need to survive. I am leading an influential group of countries to create a global Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, increasing pressure for countries to abide by international humanitarian law.

The ceasefire and hostage agreement is a constructive step towards peace and stability in the region. It must mark the beginning of a new chapter for the Israeli and Palestinian people. We are urging all parties to respect its terms and safeguard a lasting peace, including ensuring the immediate release of all hostages and unimpeded and sustained increases in humanitarian assistance to all parts of Gaza.

Australia will continue working with the international community towards a two-state solution - a Palestinian state and the State of Israel, living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognised borders.

I appreciate you taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely



PENNY WONG

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