

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH



Britain Yearly Meeting  
of the Religious  
Society of Friends

13 August 2018

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Foreign Secretary at this pivotal moment. Now more than ever, the task of forging new relationships across the world is central to our nation's future.

As Quakers, we believe there is that of God in everyone, whatever their nationality or wherever they call home. That faith informs our position on many issues that form part of your brief.

For us, a commitment to human rights – the right to work and learn, to housing, medical care and security – should be a golden thread running throughout the UK's foreign policy. We believe that strong action is needed to tackle social inequality and climate change, two of the root causes of migration. As a developed nation, we have played our part in creating these conditions, and it is incumbent upon us to take the necessary steps to address the injustices that have arisen as a result.

Multilateral institutions have a valuable role to play in helping to achieve this. At a time when economic stress and social divisions are increasingly seeing nations turn inwards, the UN and other institutions are needed more than ever as fora where governments can work collaboratively to address the global challenges of climate change, inequality, violence, exclusion and injustice.

One such challenge is the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Quakers' regard for the sanctity of all life means that we oppose such weapons, and the Government too has pledged its support for a world free of them. To date, however, it has refused to engage with the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. There is a powerful opportunity for the UK, as a nuclear-armed state, to show moral leadership by changing this position and signing up to its provisions. Above all, the UK must uphold its commitment to multilateral disarmament.

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ  
Telephone 020 7663 1000  
Internet [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) Email [enquiries@quaker.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@quaker.org.uk)  
Registered charity number 1127633

I would also like to draw your attention to the work of Quakers in Britain in managing the British and Irish section of EAPPI, an international human rights organisation working in Palestine and Israel. Our international monitors see at first hand the situation of people living in Palestine and Israel, and we meet regularly with the Minister for the Middle East along with other members of the UK's Palestine Platform to discuss our concerns.

We believe it is essential that the UK Government recognises that the military occupation of Palestine, including the blockade of Gaza, is a root cause of the violence and suffering in the region. The Government has previously decided not to support a UN inquiry into the killing of peaceful Palestinian protesters in Gaza. We urge you to reconsider this, and to publicly reaffirm the rights of all those, including Palestinians and Israelis, who are working nonviolently to end the occupation in the face of increasing and violent crackdowns by the Israeli government.

We further ask you to stand firm in challenging recent US policy developments towards Israel-Palestine, and defending the primacy of international humanitarian and human rights law – including the obligation of all states to bring those who violate it to account. The absence of a viable peace process must not be exploited to shift the situation on the ground. Israeli government policies such as the demolition of Palestinian property and settlement expansion are examples of grave violations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention. We urge the UK to demonstrate its commitment to a two-state solution, and uphold its chances of realisation, by immediately and unconditionally recognising the state of Palestine as it does the state of Israel.

I wish you well in your role, and hope that you will feel able to seize the opportunities that undoubtedly exist for a fresh and constructive approach to these issues.

In Friendship

Paul Parker  
Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain