
Foreign Secretary statement on Gaza and southern Israel

Foreign Secretary William Hague: "I utterly condemn rocket attacks from Gaza into southern Israel by Hamas and other armed groups."

Speaking today, the Foreign Secretary said:

"I am gravely concerned by the situation in Gaza and southern Israel and deeply regret the loss of civilian life on both sides. I call on all those involved to avoid any action which risks civilian casualties or escalates the crisis.

"Hamas bears principal responsibility for the current crisis. I utterly condemn rocket attacks from Gaza into southern Israel by Hamas and other armed groups. This creates an intolerable situation for Israeli civilians in southern Israel, who have the right to live without fear of attack from Gaza. The rocket attacks also risk worsening the plight of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, which is already precarious.

"Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza should cease attacks against Israel immediately. I call on those in the region with influence over Hamas to use that influence to bring about an end to the attacks.

"I also strongly urge Israel to do their utmost to reduce tension, avoid civilian casualties and increase the prospects for both sides to live in peace. It is imperative to avoid the risk of a spiral of violence. The escalation of the conflict would be in no one's interest, particularly at a time of instability in the region.

"These events underline once again the fragility of the situation and the urgent need for progress toward a two state solution which allows Israelis and Palestinians to live alongside each other in peace and security. Britain will do all it can to support such progress and an urgent resumption of negotiations."