

Minister for Asia and the Middle East visits Israel, the OPTs and Jordan

- Minister Milling made her first visit to Israel, focused on deepening science and tech ties.
- In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Minister visited communities at risk of eviction and displacement in Sheikh Jarrah and Masafer Yatta.
- The Minister also announced £95m in new aid funding to support vulnerable Jordanian households and refugee children living in the country.

On 22 June in Israel, the Minister visited the Peres Centre to learn how Israel became the Start-Up Nation and discussed how the Centre's peace-building projects are bringing young people together. She also met participants from one of the UK's peacebuilding projects, Search for Common Ground, who work to promote peace and help bridge divides between different communities.

The Minister covered how the UK and Israel can deepen science, technology and innovation ties with a visit to the Hebrew University's Nanotechnology Centre to see examples of leading Research and Development. In her meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll, they discussed the ambitious UK-Israel Bilateral Roadmap, which will define the next decade of UK-Israeli cooperation across a range of sectors, including defence and security, trade, cyber and science and tech. They also discussed regional issues of mutual concern and the Minister encouraged efforts to promote the Two State Solution.

The Minister then travelled to the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 23 to 24 June. She held a series of meetings with the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, Foreign Minister Riyad al Malki and Secretary General of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation Hussein Al Sheikh, reiterating the UK's support for the Palestinian people and a Two State Solution.

The Minister visited Palestinians at risk of eviction and displacement in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and Masafer Yatta in the South Hebron Hills. The UK continues to oppose evictions and demolitions, which are illegal under international law in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

The Minister also discussed the UK's support to the Palestinian economy with prominent business leaders, before a discussion on the pressures on civic space in the OPTs with journalists, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society organisations.

The Minister then travelled to Jordan. During her meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister HE Ayman Safadi she reiterated the importance of the UK-

Jordan strategic partnership and the UK's commitment to sustaining cooperation with Jordan across diplomatic, development, economic and security files.

She also met the Ministers of Finance and Planning and welcomed Jordan's Vision for Economic Modernisation 2033, taking forward vital economic reforms and building on the 2019 London Initiative conference. The Minister reiterated the UK's commitment to help Jordan's economic development and prosperity, which are key to the country's stability.

The Minister also visited Al Azraq refugee camp to see first-hand UK-funded humanitarian programmes in support of Syrian refugees and spoke to representatives from UN agencies and the Syrian Refugees Affairs Directorate. She also saw a World Food Programme-contracted supermarket, where refugees can exchange food vouchers to buy food.

On completing the visit, Minister Milling said:

I was delighted to make my first official visit to Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Jordan as Minister for the Middle East.

I covered a lot of ground in a short space of time in Israel where the relationship has never been stronger. From fascinating examples of Israeli tech and innovation, to the upcoming UK-Israel Bilateral Roadmap, to peacebuilding projects and efforts to promote the two-state solution.

Visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territories was a fantastic opportunity to meet a whole range of Palestinians to discuss the UK-Palestinian bilateral relationship and understand the impact of the occupation. I was particularly pleased to meet with Palestinian civil society to reassure them of the UK's unwavering support for media freedom and human rights defenders.

Last year we celebrated 100 years of friendship between the UK and Jordan, a friendship that the UK is fully committed to sustaining and developing into its second century. I expressed my gratitude for the Kingdom's extraordinary and generous role in supporting refugees from regional conflicts, and announced two major new UK-funded programmes totalling £95m designed to support both vulnerable Jordanians and refugees.

I look forward to visiting the region again soon.