



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Jeff Smith MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: MC130068

8 January 2026

Dear Jeff,

PALESTINE ACTION PROTESTORS

Thank you for your letter of 12 December on behalf of your constituents about individuals who are remanded in prison for alleged offences relating to Palestine Action. I am responding as the Minister responsible.

I understand that your constituents are concerned for their welfare, and they can be assured that the safety of those who live and work in our prisons remains our paramount concern. As I am sure you will understand, the requirements of data protection legislation mean that I am unable to comment on the circumstances of individual prisoners.

Food refusal and hunger strikes are very concerning, and we encourage all prisoners to eat the food they are offered and accept healthcare and treatment. But unfortunately this is not a new issue. Food refusal is a weekly occurrence in our prisons with hundreds of cases each year. We have longstanding procedures in place to deal with it and ensure prison safety.

I have had assurances from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) that all cases of prisoner food refusal are being managed in accordance with the relevant policy, and with appropriate medical assessment and support, consistent with prisoner rights. If prisoners make complaints, they are processed through well established, long-standing processes under Rule 11 of the Prison Rules 1999.

When a prisoner refuses food, prison staff act immediately in accordance with Prison Safety Policy Framework which outlines HMPPS's policy for managing prisoners who refuse food and/or fluids. This includes notifying healthcare professionals, conducting regular welfare checks, and for healthcare staff to monitor the individual's health closely. Prison healthcare teams provide ongoing assessments and support, and Chaplaincy services are available where appropriate. Prison staff work to engage the individual to understand their concerns and seek resolution wherever possible. All actions are documented and reviewed to ensure compliance with HMPPS policy and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The current policy on food refusals is set out in the Safety Policy Framework which came into effect in January 2025. The framework strengthened the previous Prison Service Instruction which was in place from 2012 and included the policy on the management of prisoners who refuse food and/or fluid. The new framework strengthens the policy including emphasising the

importance of the early identification of food and/or fluid refusal to help identify and, if possible, alleviate the precipitating factor(s) and staff are required to make every effort to try and find out why the prisoner is refusing food and/or fluids and address the reasons for their refusal.

Healthcare in prisons is the responsibility of the NHS, with HMPPS working in partnership with health and social care partners. In accordance with Rule 20 of the Prison Rules 1999, Governors are required to work in partnership with local health care providers to secure the provision of access to the same quality and range of services as the general public receives from the NHS.

All prisoners are entitled to fair and equal treatment, regardless of background. Governors must prevent *unauthorised items* (those not approved locally) and *illicit items* (illegal to possess) from entering prisons, any article that threatens safety, order, or security may be confiscated. This extends to written, symbolic, or visual material associated with proscribed groups, which can be restricted on a case-by-case basis.

Ministers cannot comment on ongoing criminal proceedings. This principle applies to all criminal investigations and trials and helps ensure the integrity of those processes. The police, the CPS and the courts are all independent of the government; it is vital that these institutions are able to carry out their duties, and make decisions, free from political influence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Timpson

Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending