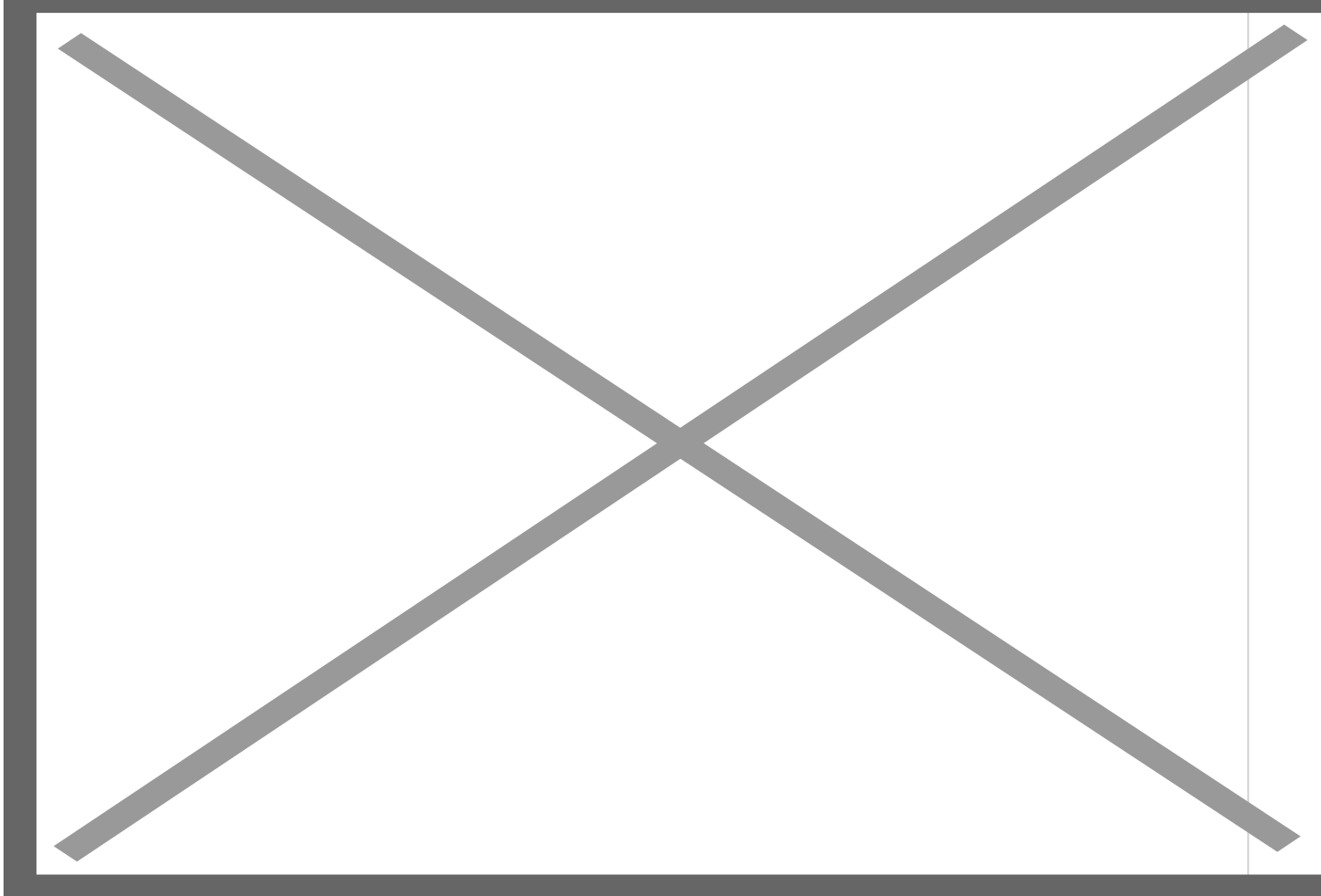


# *UK lawmakers urge Foreign Secretary Lammy to recognize Palestinian state*

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British Foreign Secretary David Lammy is under pressure from dozens of lawmakers from his own party to immediately recognise Palestine as a state [File: Fazry Ismail/Pool via Reuters]

Letter demands that London act now to halt 'erasure and annexation' of Palestinian land before

it's too late.

London, July 14 (RHC)-- Nearly 60 lawmakers in the United Kingdom have written to Foreign Secretary David Lammy this week, calling out Israel's plans for the "ethnic cleansing" of Gaza and demanding the country immediately recognize Palestine as a state.

The 59 lawmakers, all from the governing Labour Party, criticized Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz's plans to force Gaza's 2.1 million Palestinians into a so-called "humanitarian city" – likened by some analysts to a concentration camp – built on the ruins of Rafah.

The letter, sent to Lammy on Thursday and made public over the weekend, cited Israeli human rights lawyer Michael Sfard as saying Palestinians were being pushed to the southern tip of Gaza "in preparation for deportation outside the strip", slamming the move as "ethnic cleansing."

They urged the foreign secretary to stop Israel's "operational plan for crimes against humanity." It also called on London to follow the lead of French President Emmanuel Macron, who recently announced an intent to recognise a Palestinian state, so as not to undermine its own policy in support of a two-state solution.

Reporting from London, Al Jazeera's Sonia Gallego said Macron had given calls to formally recognize Palestine as a state "extra heft" during his three-day state visit to the UK this week.

In an address on Tuesday to the UK's Parliament, he had said the move was a matter of "absolute urgency" and the "only path to peace", calling on the country to help create the "political momentum" for a two-state solution.

Gallego pointed out that Lammy had on Tuesday criticised the controversial US-backed GHF sites at Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. "It's not doing a good job. Too many people are close to starvation. Too many people have lost their lives," Lammy had said.

Three out of the enclave's four GHF sites, which have sidelined Gaza's vast UN-led aid delivery network, are located in southern Gaza, effectively forcing starving Palestinians towards Israel's new "humanitarian city" in Rafah.

On Friday, the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that 819 Palestinians have been killed while waiting for food – 634 in the vicinity of GHF sites, which have been operational since late May. On Saturday, 34 more were killed near a GHF site in Rafah.

Lammy had also said that the UK could take further action against Israel if a ceasefire deal to end the war in the Palestinian territory does not materialise. But he stressed that London wants to recognize Palestine as part of a concrete move towards the two-state solution, not just as a symbolic gesture.

The lawmakers welcomed the Labour government's calls for a ceasefire, its suspension of arms licenses to Israel, and its sanctioning of hardline Israeli ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, but said the "desperation and seriousness" of the situation in Gaza required more action.

"We cannot leave actions in our back pocket while the situation facing Palestinian civilians reaches critical and existential levels," said the letter, which was organised by Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East, co-chaired by lawmakers Sarah Owen and Andrew Pakes.

"By not recognising [Palestine] as a state, we ... set an expectation that the status quo can continue and see the effective erasure and annexation of Palestinian territory," it added.

The Times of Israel reported this week that an international conference aiming to resuscitate the two-state solution was postponed to July 28-29 after plans to hold it last month were derailed by the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

[ SOURCE: AL JAZEERA ]

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