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The Rt. Hon David Lammy  
House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

23 July 2025

**Re: Urgent request to enable UK visa access for students and scholars from Gaza**

Dear Foreign Secretary

As President of the Development Studies Association, the UK's membership association for those who teach, research and study global development, I am writing to raise deep concerns about the continued exclusion of Palestinian students and academics from Gaza from accessing UK visas, and to request your support in facilitating urgent and humane solutions.

As you know, the closure of the Visa Application Centre in Gaza since October 2023 and the lack of viable alternatives has effectively barred Gaza-based individuals from fulfilling the UK's biometric enrolment requirement. The requirement to travel to Jerusalem or Ramallah is not only unfeasible under current Israeli restrictions, but in many cases, life-threatening. For those with offers from UK universities or scholarly institutions, this policy amounts to a de facto ban.

This situation is not merely a bureaucratic issue; it is an abdication of the UK's stated commitment to international education, diplomatic leadership, and the rule of law. While other countries - including France and Ireland - have shown moral and practical leadership by enabling biometric deferral and facilitating safe passage for scholars, the UK's inaction is conspicuous and damaging.

Several UK universities are now at risk of losing students who hold fully funded places but are unable to travel, undermining both institutional commitments and the UK's broader reputation as a global leader in higher education. These are not hypothetical cases - they are real individuals with the qualifications, offers, and support required, but who are blocked by bureaucratic inflexibility at a moment of humanitarian crisis.

The DSA, along with the Gaza Scholarship Initiative and many higher education institutions across the UK, urges your office to take leadership in calling for immediate action. Specifically, we call on the Government to:

1. **Allow biometric deferral at the point of application**, enabling applicants to complete this step upon arrival in the UK, in line with international precedent.
2. **Extend or waive the validity of CAS and CoS documentation**, permitting institutions to issue letters of support as alternatives where needed.
3. **Implement transitional arrangements for individuals with expired or non-renewable passports**, given the cessation of passport services for Gaza residents.

4. **Engage with Israeli authorities to secure safe exit pathways** for eligible individuals, drawing on the examples of diplomatic coordination already achieved by EU allies.

If this situation is allowed to persist, the UK risks being seen not only as indifferent to the humanitarian crisis, but also as hostile to academic freedom and international collaboration. The reputational damage to our higher education sector - long recognised as a global leader - will be profound and lasting.

This is both a moral and pragmatic imperative. We therefore urge you to act swiftly and decisively.

We welcome the opportunity to engage further with your office on this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Uma Kambhampati  
President, Development Studies Association (UK)