

Sir Michael Ellis
Member of Parliament for Northampton North
House of Commons

Andrew Percy
Member of Parliament for Brigg and Goole
House of Commons
(via email)

3 May 2024

Dear Sir Michael and Mr Percy,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March regarding the UK Government's and the Opposition's use of casualty statistics produced by the Gaza Ministry of Health related to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. You raised concerns about the accuracy of the figures produced by the Gaza Ministry of Health and the UK Government's reliance on these figures to calculate the provision of aid to Gaza.

As you will appreciate, it is beyond our remit and our capability to assess the accuracy of casualty statistics in an overseas conflict. Tracking the number of fatalities is challenging in any conflict and there are often inaccuracies and inconsistencies in real-time reporting. There is always the potential for numbers emerging from a conflict situation to be contested, and for there to be suspicions that they reflect a particular narrative.

Given these uncertainties and potential sources of bias, it would be desirable for Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other Parliamentarians to state the source of any estimates they use in the public domain and to recognise the limitations attached to them.

As regards determining aid provision, the Leader of the House of Commons explained in the [House of Commons on 21 March 2024](#) that the Government uses satellite imagery of building damage, information from humanitarian partners on the ground and data on living conditions as well as casualty estimates. Transparency around the information feeding into such judgements can help establish confidence in the robustness of the decisions taken; however, there are clearly obstacles to providing that for some sources in a conflict situation with lives at risk.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Robert Chote
Chair