Former Israeli Minister Tzipi Livni to Visit UK After Change in Arrest Law

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By Ben Quinn

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<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/04/tzipi-livni-arrest-warrant>

The former Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, will meet the foreign secretary,[William Hague](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/williamhague), in Britain on Thursday in the first test of a new law governing arrest warrants for war crimes.

Westminster magistrates court issued an unprecedented arrest warrant for Livni in 2009 – a move that led to an review of the issuing of such warrants.

The warrant, which was issued at the request of lawyers acting for Palestinian victims of Israel's operations in [Gaza](http://www.theguardian.com/world/gaza), was withdrawn amid embarrassment in the Foreign Office.

Israel's foreign ministry condemned it at the time, describing it as a "cynical" move.

Livni, who is the current Israeli opposition leader, had been due to attend a conference in London in 2009 but cancelled two weeks before the warrant was issued. Palestinian sources claimed to have seen her at the event and alerted lawyers.

Legislation has now brought a new requirement aimed at preventing the courts from being used for political purposes. The justice secretary, Ken Clarke, outlined how changes would give the DPP veto power over arrest warrants.

The move, which critics claimed was motivated by political pressure from [Israel](http://www.theguardian.com/world/israel), has paved the way for Livni's visit, which was announced on Monday at a Conservative Party conference fringe event.

At a Conservative Friends of Israel meeting, director Stuart Polak said Livni always planned to come to the UK once there had been a change in the law to prevent her being arrested for political purposes.

The police reform and social responsibility bill received royal assent a couple of weeks ago, meaning she is now able to visit the UK, he said.

Polak added: "It has been a blot on the landscape of the relations of the UK and Israel which is why David Cameron and William Hague said in opposition that it should be rectified which is what they have done.

The arrest warrant followed Livni's role as foreign minister during Israel's three-week military campaign in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009. A Foreign Office spokesman said last night: "We can confirm [Tzipi Livni](http://www.theguardian.com/world/tzipi-livni) intends to visit the UK this week. As leader of the Israeli opposition she will have a number of meetings, including with the Foreign Secretary to discuss UK Israel relations and recent events in the region."