

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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### Westminster Hall Debate

#### Iran's Influence in the Middle East

*col 335WH Matthew Offord:* ... I believe that Iran is a leading sponsor of state terrorism, providing financial and material support to extremist Islamist terrorist groups across the middle east, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq. Iran actively sponsors international terror groups committed to the destruction of Israel, which act as proxies for the Islamic Republic. ...

*col 342WH Joan Ryan:* ... Iran's intentions towards Israel are utterly malign and unchanging. A decade ago Mahmoud Ahmadinejad described it as a "disgraceful blot" that should be "wiped off the face of the earth".

His supposedly reformist successor, Hassan Rouhani, called it "a wound on the body of the Islamic world" that "should be removed." The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, vowed that Israel would not live to see the end of "these 25 years". Such repeated threats to annihilate a fellow member of the United Nations again show Iran's refusal to live by the rules that govern international relations.

Those are not merely idle threats. Only last week, one of the deputy heads of the Iranian revolutionary guard boasted that it had established underground rocket factories in Lebanon that are under the full control of Hezbollah. Days before, Iran's Defence Minister said that Hezbollah is now capable of producing rockets that can hit any part of Israel. Hezbollah is already estimated to have between 100,000 and 120,000 rockets hidden among the civilian population of southern Lebanon.

Iran's belligerence and expansionism is not simply a threat to our friends in the region, but a direct threat to Europe. Europe should therefore stand up for itself and stand by Israel. It should ensure that the international repudiation of Iran's repeated threats against Israel is unequivocal. ...

*col 344WH Louise Ellman:* ... Under the mullahs, Iran has a long record of linked anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Last year, the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei posed a holocaust denying video on his official website, and at a military parade last September, a banner proclaimed: "Step by step we are nearing the destruction of Israel and the salvation of al-Quds." This very week, we heard from Iran a condemnation of so-called Zionist "plots to destroy human community." ...

*col 345WH David Amess:* ... The hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman) was absolutely spot on about the way Israel has been treated. Talking about wiping the state of Israel out of existence is absolutely disgraceful. ...

col 346WH **Jim Shannon:** ... The hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman) mentioned the persecution of Baha'is, which is rampant, as is the persecution of those of the Jewish faith. As to Christians, 193 were arrested in Iran in 2016. ...

col 351WH **Caroline Ansell:** ... However, there is one welcome, unexpected side development. Iran's hegemonic influence in the middle east, allied to the threat of Daesh, has undoubtedly brought neighbouring countries closer together, perhaps most intriguingly leading to the alignment of interests between Israel and its Gulf neighbours. In recent months, unprecedented lines of communication have been opened with countries with which Israel shares no diplomatic ties, including some that refuse to recognise Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state but still recognise the importance of co-operation in the face of existential threat.

Reports emerged earlier this month that a US-organised summit took place between Israel, Jordan and Egypt. The parties discussed an Israeli-Palestinian peace process and a strategy to encourage the Palestinians to return to direct peace talks. ... At a time when Israel faces greater threats than ever before on both its northern and southern borders, from Iranian proxies Hezbollah and Hamas, the support of its neighbours is paramount. Allies such as the UK and the United States must stand firmly by our friend Israel in these turbulent times and do all we can to continue to support and facilitate regional dialogue, which may finally counter Iran's influence in the middle east. ...

col 356WH **Fabian Hamilton:** ... There is also still a small Jewish population in Iran, frightened that they might inadvertently mention the terrible word that is forbidden—Israel. ...

Zvi Magen, of the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies, said just last year: "The Israeli security establishment believes that the main threat Israel is facing in Syria is in fact Iran and its local proxies like Hezbollah", which are being funded by the Iranian state. Israel feels threatened by a Shi'a axis within its neighbours. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-22/debates/24FA7FE4-F51F-4C67-A42F-A24F319BA3EB/Iran%E2%80%99SInfluenceInTheMiddleEast>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Palestinians: Politics and Government

**Joan Ryan** [68425] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will place a copy of the Business Case and Operational Plan for the new Support to Palestinian Authority to Deliver Basic Services, Build Stability and Promote Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories programme in the Library.

**Rory Stewart:** The Business Case for the UK's new support to the Palestinian Authority is in the process of publication and will appear on Development Tracker (<https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/>) by June.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-17/68425/>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

### **Lobbying (Transparency) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>)

### **\*\* Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

This Bill has been withdrawn and will not progress any further.

### **Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/promotionofisraelipalestinianpeaceunitedkingdomparticipation.html>

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## **Consultations** \*\* new or updated today

### **\*\* closes today**

**Reforming GCSEs, AS and A levels in biblical Hebrew** (closing date 23 March 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-biblical-hebrew>

**The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process** (closing date 30 March 2017)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

**Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill** (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

**Workplace Diversity (Wales)** (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wtucdiversity>

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