

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*  
**Scottish Council of Jewish Communities**  
**SCoJeC**

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Library

**Briefing paper: Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017**

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7920/CBP-7920.pdf>

**Datasheet: Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: 2017**

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7920/CBP7920-Data.xlsx>

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## Israel

### House of Lords International Relations Committee inquiry into Transformation of power in the Middle East and implications for UK policy

#### Oral evidence session: morning

Q172 **Daniel Levy:** ... In response to President Trump saying, “Two states, one state. I thought two states would be easier, but I’ll go with whatever the parties prefer, whatever Israelis and Palestinians can agree to”, most of the commentariat has suggested that that was rookie unfamiliarity with the complexities of the conflict, which may well be the case. There is another way of interpreting it ... There are not many ways to grab the Israelis’ attention and drive a different debate in Israel. ... if they feel they have the possibility of a one-state outcome, having made it so difficult to achieve two states, for many Israelis that victory would also be a defeat, because they do not want to have one shared democratic space with the Palestinians. ...

Paradoxically for Prime Minister Netanyahu, the fact is that if you see an Administration who appear to run to his right and almost to align with his more hard-line coalition allies, that could be a headache for him ...

I think Netanyahu’s tactic is to continue to suggest that they are ready for peace while making the conditions impossible and making the realities on the ground ever less amenable to two states. ... In a way, if the Trump Administration stick to this line and say,

“You guys decide. Do you want two states or one?”, it could lead to that argument coming to the fore in Israel and for those who believe in one state to further lose their restraint in making that case. It could lead the two-state camp to have a bit of a re-emergence. You do not have an opposition owning the two-state alternative in an assertive way. ...

The idea that is talked about more now than in the past is that, with the shared antipathy to Iran ... and with Israel having closer albeit still quiet relations with key Gulf states for instance, perhaps by building this outer envelope of relations you can create the reassurances that allow the Palestinians to be part of a larger package deal. ...

Of course, the original Palestinian national movement had as its position a secular, democratic state in all historical Palestine. The PLO formalised the adoption of two states only in 1988, and it accepted a Palestinian state on 22% of historical Palestine along the 1967 lines. That has now taken root as very much the unshakeable position of this generation of Palestinian leadership. ...

One has to appreciate that there is a deep nationalism on both sides of this equation. The Israelis are deeply nationalist about the idea of a Jewish state. For the Palestinians to have gone on this journey and never to realise a moment of Palestinian self-determination is a problematic leap of faith for them to make. However, if one speaks to the younger generation of Palestinians, there is an increasing almost giving up on the idea that much is to be gained by continuing to pursue a state. ...

If I look some years beyond the horizon, I think we will reach a moment when the Palestinian national position tips over into equal rights in one state, because two states will seem so impossible to achieve on the ground. The kinds of conditionalities that the Israelis would build into it would be so unattractive. ...

Just under 20% of the population of Israel as recognised on the 1967 lines is Palestinian Arab. One of the leading Palestinian-Arab members of the Knesset, Ahmad Tibi, has this very acute phrase: “If you continue to stay there and if one implements the plans of the far right of one greater Israel, it will be Tibi, not Bibi, who is Prime Minister, because I’ll have the votes”. By the way, the Israeli President, President Rivlin, is on record supporting one democratic state. For him it will still be a Jewish state. He has not yet wrapped his head around what it means if the numbers are equal. ...

In the last election, following a change in electoral law ... the electoral threshold for getting into Parliament was raised in such a way that it looked as though three different Arab parties represented in the previous Knesset would not make it. In fact, many people attributed the whole rationale behind raising the threshold as trying to keep those parties out ... They came together in what was a very politically tricky move, but they formed something called the Joint List. This made quite an impact on the Israeli scene, but also beyond on the Palestinian scene because it meant that Islamists, communists, nationalists and democrats were all in one party bloc. ...

[Israeli Arabs] have become a more important player in the overall Palestinian political mix. They are largely ignored. The other thing that is important to note is that, like the rest of the Palestinian community, they are divided on this question. ...

Traditionally, the Jewish American community has overwhelmingly voted Democrat, which did not change this past November. ... But President Trump is far more of an anathema to a large swathe of the American Jewish community than previous Presidents. When Prime Minister Netanyahu endorsed Trump and his team as the greatest friends of the Jewish people and the Jewish state, that played incredibly badly with a large cross-section of American Jewry, for whom the alt-right phenomenon and Steve Bannon are a real problem. The closer Trump and Netanyahu appear to be, the greater the potential fissure between that community and Israel. ...

**Q173 Daniel Levy:** ... One of the fascinating tensions in Israel today is between the political leadership and the security establishment. ... as the political leadership is seen to go ever more in the direction of doing things that appeal to an ever narrower cohort of primary voters and doing things that are ever more out there on the pro-settlement side

... the security establishment is worried. It knows that unless you give the Palestinians some breathing space, some political horizon, including in Gaza, that makes its job of providing security for Israelis that much more difficult. ...

... while the rhetoric escalated, the practical upshot of that international opprobrium was almost zero. Israel saw in its global relations that those who condemned settlements on Mondays and Wednesdays were expanding their trade, scientific, military intelligence, technology and sport co-operation with Israel on Tuesdays and Fridays. So it began to wear a bit thin on the Israeli public. Perhaps the exaggerated self-confidence and the overreach of the hardliners has now gone too far the other way and they now feel that the evidence is on their side and that it does not matter, because the world has a bark but not a bite. ...

The other thing that has happened at the same time ... is that Israel has expanded its world of connections. In Asia, Israel has good relations with Russia. ...

... Britain has a unique responsibility when it comes to this issue. Much as other issues have dominated the headlines in the Middle East for the last half-decade at least, it would be a mistake to dismiss the notion that Palestine is still a rallying cry, still has an iconic meaning and is still pointed to as a very important and legitimate grievance in how the Middle East is treated by the West. Britain should not volunteering to put itself front and centre of a more problematic policy that takes its lead from Washington, even if it has the support of some of the regimes in the Middle East. ...

One thing I would draw to the Committee's attention that I think will be an early test case for where Britain aligns itself was highlighted in the reports and official statements of the visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu to this country just two or three weeks ago. If indeed Britain is going to negotiate a new trade arrangement with Israel quickly post Brexit, will that adhere to the existing European position, which is that when one trades with Israel one trades with the Israel that is recognised internationally, not beyond the green line? In other words, no settlements, settlement products or anything that can legally benefit from free trade arrangements. Or is one going to do what the Americans are trying to push? ...

... Britain decided to take a very degrading, dismissive attitude to the Paris conference earlier this year. It was not going to bring peace, but I do not think there was a need for Britain to do that. Apparently that was at the behest of Washington. I am not sure that it earns us any greater respect in Washington when we prostrate ourselves in that way. ...

There is a European centre of gravity in the E3—the Germans, the Brits and the French—which, if acting in concert, can convey a message that can matter. This year especially, I do not think that the question will be asked ... whether the anniversary of Balfour is the correct occasion for recognising a Palestinian state. ...

There was a period under the last two or three Governments in which Britain took occasional steps that were not game-changing but which helped push the envelope. Britain was a leader in settlement product labelling, in putting out business advisory guidelines regarding corporate social responsibility and the risks of doing business with Israel in territories not recognised as Israeli and in business activities that were a violation of international law. Others have followed suit. So there are things that Britain could do to keep the notion of two states more salient. ...

Right now, the impression is that Britain is beginning to realign itself as a country that is basically saying to the Israelis, "Do what you like. You won't have any problems with us, no matter how far you go in this relentless emaciation of the two-state option". ...

**Q174 Daniel Levy:** ... The quartet is one of those creatures that has always had a lot more going for it in theory than in practice. On the very first occasion the quartet road map was introduced in 2003 or 2004, or even 2002, the Israelis refused to meet with the quartet as the quartet. It received the road map from the Americans. The Americans have seen the quartet as, "When it's useful, we'll be at it, but normally we do our thing, and if the quartet wants to endorse it ..." So I am not sure that we lose that much by not being part of the quartet. ...

**To read the full evidence session see**

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-relations-committee/transformation-of-power-in-the-middle-east-and-implications-for-uk-policy/oral/48207.html>

### **Oral evidence session: afternoon**

**Q187 The Chairman:** This morning, the Committee heard evidence on Israel-Palestine and the possible impact of President Trump's new remarks and thoughts on this issue. The question that arose was whether the Israeli authorities, and even Mr Netanyahu, might be revising the Israeli view on Iran and the deal, which hitherto they have been totally opposed to. Might they now see that, if the deal goes wrong and Iran weaponises, Israel is in a worse position than before?

**Mark Fitzpatrick:** ... I would differentiate between the views of security specialists in Israel and Netanyahu. The security specialists and those who really know the situation well—former Mossad chiefs and other military chiefs—pretty much all recognise that this deal did Israel a service in removing the immediate threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. It does not remove it for ever. Maybe in 15 years they will have to think about it again, but for now it is a pretty good deal for Israel. I see that consistently in what former Israeli defence and intelligence officials say. Netanyahu seems to have a different view. He continues to speak negatively about the deal and that worries me.

**To read the full evidence session see**

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-relations-committee/transformation-of-power-in-the-middle-east-and-implications-for-uk-policy/oral/48208.html>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### **Israel: Bedouin**

**Kevin Brennan** [66478] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent communications he has had with the Israeli Government on the topic of Khan al-Ahmar.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The Government is gravely concerned about demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities, including plans to demolish the Bedouin village of Khan al Ahmar. I raised this issue with the Israeli Ambassador to London on 1 March. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised our concerns with the Israeli authorities on 28 February.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-03/66478/>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### **Gaza: Foot and Mouth Disease**

**Baroness Tonge** [HL5664] To ask Her Majesty's Government what aid they have given, and what action they intend to take, following reports that there is an outbreak of Foot and Mouth with consequent loss of animals and restrictions on movement in Gaza.

**Lord Bates:** The Ministry of Agriculture in Ramallah and the veterinary services in the Gaza Strip are managing the outbreak and have not asked for assistance from the UK. The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture sent 30,000 vaccine doses, enough for 10,000 cattle, to Gaza and vaccination of cattle in Gaza is ongoing. Restrictions on animal movement within, from and to Gaza have been imposed to limit further spread of the disease.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-27/HL5664/>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Paul Monaghan (1032) Fourth anniversary of the UNICEF report on Children in Military Detention in Israel** – That this House notes 6 March 2017 as the fourth anniversary since the publication of the UNICEF report, Children in Israeli Military Detention; further notes that following the review of the application of martial law in the West Bank, including analysis of over 400 affidavits collected from detained children, UNICEF concluded that the ill-treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalised; recognises UNICEF framed 38 recommendations to implement Israel's legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Israeli military and civilian law, and accepted international norms relevant to the treatment of children in custody; acknowledges that following the release of UNICEF's report in 2013, Israel implemented a number of positive legal, procedural and administrative developments to the system of martial law but regrets that UNICEF has observed a 98 per cent increase in child detention during the intervening four years, with 61 per cent of parents not being notified of the reasons for arrest, or place of detention in cases where children were arrested from home; and observes the practice of detaining children without charge or trial in administrative detention has been re-introduced following a four-year hiatus with 50 per cent of children continuing to be transferred out of the West Bank to detention facilities inside Israel contrary to Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; and encourages the Israeli Government to review the system of martial law applied in the West Bank to address the recommendations promulgated by UNICEF in 2013.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2016-17/1032>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Council of Europe

**Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: Fourth Opinion on the United Kingdom**

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806fb9ab>

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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>

## **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 in 5 days**

### **Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland)** (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-gcse-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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