

Political Affairs Digest

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

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House of Lords Debate

Middle East (IRC Report)

The report which is the subject of the debate can be read at

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldintrel/159/159.pdf>

and the Government response to the report can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/International-Relations-Committee/170703%20Response%20to%20House%20of%20Lords%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

col 796 **Lord Howell of Guildford (Conservative):** ... We have seen the Israel-Palestine conflict harden, and the problem of Hamas remains unsolved, although some interesting talks are beginning. ...

col 799 **Lord Stone of Blackheath (Labour):** ... next month I shall be visiting a small, budding project whereby very religious Jewish ex-settlers who were told to leave Gaza and live in Eilat need someone else to grow their food in their sabbatical year. Every seven years, religious Jews are, by dint of their beliefs, not allowed to work their land and must let it rest. Across the border in Jordan, the Bedouin women whom I am visiting have offered to work the land and create a business supplying these Israeli religious Jews with food in that seventh year. However, the women can work only during the day, so Syrian refugees in southern Jordan have joined the partnership to work the night shift. ...

... a movement called Two States, One Homeland ... is asking the people on both sides to try to understand the narrative of the other and to accept, with compassion, that that is the genuine belief of those on the other side. For example, many Israelis are accepting that the Palestinians believe that the region is their homeland and they want consideration of their right to return. Palestinians, on the other hand, are accepting that Jews believe that the whole area is their homeland and that living in parts of the West Bank is precious to them. Having accepted these as differing historical contexts, they have agreed to work together on a plan called Two States, One Homeland, which comprises the state of Israel, a state of Palestine, but also a confederation across these two sovereign states. ...

Prominent Israelis, business people, ex-military and security figures, diplomats, scholars and Middle East experts are working together with Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and have recently developed a regional diplomatic proposal to resume negotiations that leverages the Arab peace initiative and the Israeli peace initiative. ...

col 807 **The Lord Bishop of Chester:** ... Israel represents—or presents itself as—a highly economically successful, militarily sophisticated and powerful western state. That is how it actually impacts when one goes there. In its own way, it testifies to the triumph of the West in the midst of Arab and Muslim cultures that can find this very difficult to accept and accommodate. Our policies in the Middle East need to take a careful and sophisticated account of these underlying cultural and, yes, religious issues. ...

col 809 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench):** ... To try to wish [the issue of Palestine] away or to behave as if it does not exist has never worked in the past and will not work in the future, particularly not while illegal settlements in Jerusalem and on the West Bank are proliferating and making matters worse. ...

col 811 **Lord Turnberg (Labour):** ... If we are to be taken notice of by either the Israelis or the Palestinians, we have to be sure to be even-handed and unbiased one way or the other. In this, I fear that the report may not be as balanced as it might be. Inevitably, that will make its recommendations less acceptable and less likely to be taken notice of in the region. ...

... in focusing heavily on the settlements and settlements alone, the report may be missing a trick. Of course the settlements are problematic. They encroach on Palestinian land and make it difficult for the Palestinians to develop their own state, and I would not downplay their importance in any way. But I fear that that is far from the whole story ...

Israel is hardly going to be convinced to withdraw from the settlements on the basis of its experience after it withdrew from Gaza and from four settlement blocks in the West Bank in 2003. That just brought out the worst that a belligerent Hamas could inflict on Israel: multiple rocket attacks and a charter that promised the annihilation of Israel and the Jews. ...

If Israel is to be encouraged to withdraw from settlements, it is unlikely to do so without something more positive from the Palestinians—but continuing incitement to terror and violence by Hamas and, I fear, by Fatah too, fails to offer any reassurance on that front. They will have to offer something that will give the Israelis confidence that their security will not be compromised if they simply withdraw. They will have to see the Palestinians be more open to the idea that Israel will not be able to accept all the refugees, now grown from the original 750,000 to about 5 million; that not all of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall of the Jewish Temple, can become the capital—they may have to be satisfied with half of Jerusalem; and they will have to accept that Israel is a Jewish state, as Balfour and the British Government proposed 100 years ago. ...

col 813 **Lord Alderdice (Liberal Democrat):** ... Going back 100 years, we have the Balfour Declaration—which, by the way, in a very short paragraph gave a national homeland, rather than a state, to Jewish people, but not only for Jewish people; it was very clear that the civil and religious liberty of those who were already there also had to be observed. ...

It is not for us to tell Israel how it should behave, but it also is not for Israel to tell us how we should behave. I do not think a two-state solution is possible any more. ... it is time for new realism; there is not going to be a two-state solution. If there is, we should recognise Palestine and get on with it. If not, and some are not prepared to do so, we must say to Israel: “You have not occupied, you have now annexed and you must govern the whole of that country with proper recognition for all the people who live there, not as a kind of apartheid state—which you yourselves would reject—but as a proper country”. ...

col 817 **Lord Polak (Conservative):** ... In Britain we have proscribed the military and not the political wing of Hezbollah. I have raised this before and I do not apologise for raising it again. Hezbollah has 150,000 Iranian rockets in south Lebanon facing Israel. Hezbollah is proscribed by so many countries in its entirety—the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League—but not us. Hezbollah does not distinguish among itself so again I call on the Government and the Minister to look again at proscribing Hezbollah in full. ...

This is totally one-sided. There is condemnation of Israel but where is the condemnation of the Palestinians' incitement, the Hamas control of Gaza, the rocket attacks and the terror tunnels? That is not in the report at all. ...

I remind your Lordships that in 1948 there were 726,000 Palestinians who became refugees but there were 856,000 Jews living in Arab lands. In reality, two refugee populations were created at that time—Palestinians and Jews displaced from Arab countries—yet since 1947 the UN's predominant focus has been on the Palestinians. Over the years there have been more than 170 resolutions on Palestinian refugees, 13 UN agencies and organisations have been mandated or created to provide protection and relief for the Palestinian refugees, and tens of billions of dollars have been disbursed by the international community to provide for the Palestinians. But during those same years there have been no UN resolutions, no support from UN agencies and no financial assistance to ameliorate the plight of Jewish or other refugees from Arab lands. ...

col 824 Lord Judd (Labour): ... I have also always admired those members of the Israeli armed services who have stood up to be counted and said that they are not prepared to be part of something which they believe is not acceptable. I also have great admiration for young Israeli lawyers who stand up and defend young people in military courts. ... I cannot think of anything guaranteed to build more insecurity into the future of Israel than to abandon the two-state solution. We want a solution in which Palestinians have confidence, self-respect and citizenship that means something in their own society. ...

col 834 Lord Grocott (Labour): ... While at least we could identify a strategy that, albeit slowly, might improve the Iranian situation, there was nothing positive whatever to report about Israel/Palestine. While virtually every international actor and, indeed, the principal parties to the dispute themselves pay lip service to a two-state solution, the prospects of it being achieved according to our witnesses are at best on hold or at worst diminishing by the hour. The central problem—and there is no way of evading this—is the continued growth of illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian land, which makes the possibility of a viable Palestinian state ever less credible. ...

The Israeli Government's public position is to support the two-state solution but, in practice, their policies are not even benign ones of inactivity; they are active ones of settlement-building, which inexorably makes their declared strategy unachievable. ...

col 836 Baroness Deech (Crossbench): ... The treatment of Israel by UN bodies has done much to undermine the reputation of such international bodies as forces for good. The large voting bloc of the Islamic states with their allies are in a position, by virtue of numbers, to push through resolutions in UN bodies containing a litany of false allegations and distortions against Israel. One cannot help but contrast this with the non-intervention policy towards, say, Pakistan and Turkey, where the most dramatic breaches of human rights and the rule of law go unpunished for strategic reasons. ...

Our failure to take sufficient action against anti-Semitism and intimidation of Israelis and Jews at universities, and British failure to prevent boycotts and inflammatory propaganda and hatred at demonstrations in our streets and campuses, does not help. It is well publicised in Israel and indeed worldwide that our universities have seen violence against Israelis giving talks there, and that hostility on campus towards Israel-supporting students goes unpunished. Neither the Charity Commission nor HEFCE has upheld the Equality Act provisions when it comes to boycotts against Israel by students and university authorities. So why, asks Israel, should that state take advice from the UK in relation to matters of peace in the region, when peace on campus is impossible to maintain? ...

It is striking that no Israeli point of view was taken in the gathering of evidence for the report. One Israeli student is listed as participating at the round-table discussion, and the witness most cited in the section on Israel is a Briton heading up an American agency. He and it have a reputation for their anti-Israel and pro-Hamas stance. Evidence was taken from many Arab sources. ...

Recognition of a state of Palestine is unrealistic because the skeleton of a state does not exist; there is no unifying political structure: it will not recognise or live in peace with its

neighbour. Indeed, recognition has already been extended by some states without making a scrap of difference to the situation. ...

col 848 The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): ... the Government's position is consistent. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, articulated it very well, saying that we need a negotiated settlement which leads to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state—and that is where our efforts will continue. I assure noble Lords that we will continue to work with France, the US and others to reinvigorate the peace process and support efforts to move towards a quick peace deal that meets the requirements of both parties and reflects our long-standing support for a two-state solution. ...

To read the full transcript see

[http://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-07-04/debates/DE5F99DB-0C7D-4A27-AB1A-D88D32775FF3/MiddleEast\(IRCRReport\)](http://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-07-04/debates/DE5F99DB-0C7D-4A27-AB1A-D88D32775FF3/MiddleEast(IRCRReport))

House of Commons Written Answers

Israeli Settlements: UN Resolutions

Martyn Day (SNP) [1098] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has to implement the provisions of the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Alistair Burt: It has long been our position that Israeli settlement activity is illegal and undermines the viability of two states for two peoples, but it is far from the only obstacle to peace. UN Security Council Resolution 2334 addresses settlements while also calling for an end to incitement and terror. The resolution was passed on 23 December and asks the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of its provisions. We continue to monitor the situation closely.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-26/1098/>

Defence: Industry

Jim Shannon (DUP) [1525] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the cooperative involvement UK defence companies and Israeli defence companies have had on mutual assistance and job creation.

Harriett Baldwin: The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship, with nearly £6 billion in bilateral trade last year. The UK is the No. 1 destination for Israeli foreign direct investment in Europe, and there are now more than 300 Israeli companies established in the UK.

We welcome co-operation which safeguards the UK's national security and promotes our prosperity. However no assessment has been made of the number of jobs that are linked to the cooperative involvement between UK and Israeli defence companies.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-27/1525/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Bashar Ghazal

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL44] Her Majesty's Government whether they have put any pressure on the government of Israel to investigate the reported abduction and torture of Bashar Ghazal, an eight year old child from Jenin

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not raised these reports with the Israeli authorities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-21/HL44/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-06591 Pauline McNeill (Labour): Israel Confiscates Solar Panels Donated by Dutch Government to Palestine – That the Parliament notes with concern reports that the Israeli Government has confiscated dozens of solar panels from the Palestinian village of Jubbet al-Dhib; understands that the panels were providing energy to a village that otherwise relies on old and noisy diesel generators for the three hours of power that it has access to each day, and that the Dutch Government, which donated the panels, has demanded their return; further understands that this incident is the most recent in a year that has seen the largest number of Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures since rights groups began records; believes that these demolitions, including over 300 structures that received funding from the EU or international NGOs, are creating an ever-worsening standard of living for Palestinians; condemns these demolitions and all other unjustified acts, which it considers are designed to negatively impact the lives of Palestinians, and urges the international community to unite to pressurise the Israeli Government into ceasing what it believes are acts of aggression on Palestine.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-06591>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

Scottish Parliament

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105269.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Caste in Great Britain and Equality Law (closing date 18 July 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/caste-in-great-britain-and-equality-law-a-public-consultation>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

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

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