

Political Affairs Digest

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

Contents

Home Affairs
Israel

Relevant Legislation
Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

col 467 Valerie Vaz (Labour): ... I recently had to take part in a rally in opposition to the English Defence League. ... In the evening, I heard the testimony of Janine Webber, a child of the holocaust. She told us that her grandmother, father and mother were murdered, and she said that when they took her brother away, she wondered why they let her go. She would have been saddened by what happened, but proud at the debate—at the dignity of all our colleagues who took part and at how they have opposed anti-Semitism. I hope that the time comes when we judge each other not on the colour of our skin, not on our religion and not on our gender, but just on who we are. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-04-19/debates/A4267F19-AE44-4357-9CBD-35BB1694CA97/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-52A65B19-5CEA-41BD-B786-7824055F909C>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): ... we send our best wishes to another place with which we have strong ties: Israel marks the 70th anniversary of its independence day today. This week's hugely important debate on anti-Semitism has shown that we must continue to uphold the British tradition of freedom of religion. To all those celebrating, I wish them a very happy day. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-04-19/debates/A4267F19-AE44-4357-9CBD-35BB1694CA97/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-A9C8B847-C059-41BF-8A39-160333D6A558>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Bedouin

Richard Burden (Labour) [135955] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to Israeli counterparts in advance of the high court hearing on the demolition of school buildings in Khan al-Ahmar which is due to take place on 25 April 2018.

Alistair Burt: The UK remains concerned by proposals to demolish the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar. We have repeatedly called on the Israeli authorities to halt proposals to demolish this community, and we will continue to make representations including in discussions with the Israeli Ambassador this week. An official from our Consulate General in Jerusalem attended an event on 18 April in Khan al-Ahmar to show our support for the community.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-16/135955/>

Israel: Palestinians

Dan Carden (Labour) [135976] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department has made representations for an independent investigation as called for by the UN Secretary General into the shooting of Palestinian protestors in Gaza by Israeli forces; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: The UK is deeply concerned by the high number of deaths and injuries suffered by Palestinians during protests on Gaza's borders. There is an urgent need to establish the facts of what happened, including why such a volume of live fire was used and what role Hamas played in the events. We are supportive of accountability and transparency, and welcome Israel's commitment to investigate the conduct of operations. We urge that the findings of this investigation be made public, and that, if wrongdoing is found, those responsible be held to account.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-16/135976/>

European Parliament Resolution

... **A.** whereas the Great March of Return, a six-week weekly mass protest, began on 30 March 2018 in the Gaza Strip, organised by civil society groups; whereas Hamas and other Palestinian factions called for the population to join the march; whereas the Israeli authorities reported that stones and firebombs had been thrown against their defence forces and that some protestors had attempted to damage and cross the fence into Israel;

B. whereas the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) opened fire on the protestors using live ammunition on 30 March, 6 April and 13 April 2018; whereas close to 30 Palestinians have been killed and more than 2 000 have been wounded, including many children and women;

C. whereas UN Secretary-General António Guterres, VP/HR Federica Mogherini and a number of other international actors have called for independent and transparent investigations into these violent events, with special regard to the use of live ammunition;

D. whereas the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials allow the intentional lethal use of firearms only in the circumstances provided for under Principle 9 thereof;

E. whereas Hamas is on the EU list of terrorist organisations and calls for the destruction of Israel; whereas the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory continues; whereas over the past few weeks there has been an increase in terrorist attacks against Israel with the escalation of military incidents in and around Gaza;

F. whereas, according to UN data, 1,3 million people in Gaza are in need of humanitarian assistance, 47 % of households suffer from severe or moderate food insecurity, 97 % of piped water is unfit for human consumption, 80 % of energy needs

are not met, and more than 40 % of the population in the area are unemployed;

G. whereas Hamas continues to keep the population under its control and pressure in the Gaza Strip, which remains a hub of internationally recognised terrorist organisations; whereas basic freedoms, including freedom of association and expression, are heavily curtailed by the Hamas-led authorities; whereas, beyond the blockade, the intra-Palestinian divide further reduces the capacity of local institutions in Gaza to deliver basic services; whereas the recent attempted assassination of Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah during his visit to the area has further deepened the deadlock in the process of Palestinian reconciliation;

H. whereas Avera Mengistu, who emigrated to Israel from Ethiopia, and Hisham al-Sayed, a Palestinian Bedouin from Israel, both of whom have psychosocial disabilities, are believed to be held in unlawful, incommunicado detention in the Gaza Strip; whereas the remains of Israeli soldiers Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul continue to be held by Hamas in Gaza;

1. Calls for utmost restraint and underlines that the priority must be to avoid any further escalation of violence and loss of life;
2. Expresses its regret at the loss of lives; condemns the killings and injury of innocent Palestinian demonstrators in the Gaza Strip over the past three weeks, and urges the IDF to refrain from using lethal force against unarmed protestors; expresses its condolences to the families of the victims; reiterates the need to enable the quick delivery of medical equipment to those who need it, and to allow medical referrals to hospitals outside Gaza for humanitarian reasons;
3. Recognises Israel's security challenges and the need to protect its territory and borders while using proportionate means; condemns the terror attacks by Hamas and other militant groups against Israel from the Gaza Strip, including the firing of rockets, infiltration into Israeli territory and the building of tunnels; expresses its concern that Hamas seems to be aiming at escalating tensions; strongly condemns the persistent tactic of Hamas of using civilians for the purpose of shielding terrorist activities;
4. Stresses the right of Palestinians to peaceful protest as a legitimate exercise of their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association; calls on those leading the protests in the Gaza Strip to avoid any incitement to violence, and to ensure that any protests, demonstrations and assemblies remain strictly non-violent and cannot be exploited for other means; calls on Israel to respect this fundamental right to peaceful protest;
5. Supports the calls for independent and transparent investigations into these violent events; takes note of the Fact-Finding Assessment Mechanism established by the Israel Defence Forces to review IDF actions and specific incidents that have taken place on the Israeli-Gaza border since 30 March 2018; recalls the importance of accountability and that the intentional use of lethal force against protesters who do not pose an imminent threat to life or serious injury violates international human rights law and in the context of occupation is a serious breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention;
6. Notes with deep concern the warning in various UN reports that the Gaza Strip may become unliveable by 2020; deplores in particular that the health sector is close to collapse, with hospitals facing severe shortages of medicine, equipment and electricity; calls for an immediate and meaningful international effort for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Gaza, with the aim of easing the humanitarian crisis; applauds the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) providing food assistance, access to education and healthcare, and other vital services to the 1,3 million Palestine refugee population in the area;
7. Calls for an immediate and unconditional end to the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in a deteriorating, unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the area;
8. Calls again for the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip in order that it can assume its government functions, which must be a priority; calls on all Palestinian

factions to resume efforts towards reconciliation, which is crucial also for improving the situation of the people in Gaza; stresses that Palestinian reconciliation, including the long-overdue presidential and parliamentary elections, is important for reaching the two-state solution and should continue to be supported by the EU through innovative action; calls for the disarmament of all militant groups in the Gaza Strip;

9. Calls for Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed to be freed and returned to Israel; calls for the remains of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul to be returned and offers its condolences to their families; calls for the remains of killed Palestinians to be returned;

10. Calls again on all parties involved in the conflict to fully respect the rights of detainees and prisoners;

11. Recalls that the situation in the Gaza Strip has to be seen within the broader context of the Middle East peace process; reiterates that the EU's main objective is to achieve the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, with the secure State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the right of self-determination and full respect for international law;

12. Stresses that non-violent means and respect for human rights and humanitarian law, by both state and non-state actors, are the only way to achieve a sustainable solution and a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians; believes also that continuing violence, acts of terrorism and incitement to violence are fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-state solution; notes that upholding the commitment to act effectively against violence, terrorism, hate speech and incitement is critical to rebuilding confidence and to avoiding escalation that will further undermine the prospects for peace;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Knesset, the President and the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Legislative Council, and the President of the Palestinian Authority.

To read the full text see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0176+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

Integrated Communities Strategy green paper (closing date 5 June 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

Home Education (closing date 2 July 2018)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/home-education-call-for-evidence-and-revised-dfe-a/>

Ecclesiastical exemption and guidance on scheduled monuments (closing date 13 July 2018)

<https://beta.gov.wales/ecclesiastical-exemption-and-guidance-scheduled-monuments>

TOP

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