

# 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

### Downing Street

#### **PM's speech at the United Jewish Israel Appeal dinner: 17 September 2018**

I have come here tonight as Prime Minister of our country to say that I stand with you.

I stand with the UJIA. I stand with Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. And I stand with the entire Jewish community in Britain.

In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo and K kosher shop attacks in Paris I came to a Board of Deputies meeting and joined you in defiance of that horror to say "Je suis Juif."

And in the face of any kind of hatred against the Jewish people – in any form and anywhere, whether overseas or right here in our own country – I say with that same defiance: "Je suis Juif." ...

I know some in our Jewish community say they are fearful of the future. I saw that poll on the front page of the Jewish Chronicle and it sickens me that anyone should feel like that in our country. I do not underestimate the threat posed by those who promote antisemitism, or hatred in any form. Nor the pernicious nature of what those people say and what they stand for.

But I do not believe those voices speak for the vast, overwhelming majority of people in our country. ...

And most importantly, I do not believe that those voices will ever win.

For the sake of our children and grandchildren, they cannot win.

And – together – we will not let them win. ...

Together, we will defeat the scourge of antisemitism and hatred in all its forms.

And together, we will proudly support Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people. ...

If we are to stand up for the values that we share - then one of the things we need to do is give young Jewish people the confidence to be proud of their identity – as British, Jewish and Zionist too.

There is no contradiction between these identities - and we must never let anyone try to suggest that there should be.

Indeed one of the most sickening aspects of the antisemitism that tries, abhorrently, to suggest Israel is a racist endeavour – is that those voices seek to separate the Jewish diaspora in our country from their connection with Israel.

We must never let that happen.

So UJIA's work here is absolutely vital, because it gives young Jewish people in Britain the confidence to develop their connection with Israel. ...

But UJIA does not stop there. It also does important work to strengthen communities within Israel itself and to build social cohesion. ...

We deeply value our connections with Israeli civil society as part of the fabric that binds two democracies together.

And it was great to see another example of the strong bonds which extend beyond the Jewish communities in our two countries - with the Tel Aviv in London Festival last year, showcasing the rich culture of Tel Aviv and its citizens of all religious and ethnic backgrounds. And we look forward to plans for a London in Tel Aviv Festival to showcase London's cultural diversity to all Israelis.

The last year has also seen us mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration.

I will never forget standing with Prime Minister Netanyahu to view the original version of that historic letter. It was very special moment and it encapsulates for me how I feel about Israel.

For I am not just proud to support Israel; I am proud of our role in the creation of Israel. And I want to build the strongest and deepest possible relationship between our two countries. ...

The UK is already Israel's second largest trading partner and its number one destination for investment in Europe with more than 340 Israeli companies already operating here. ...

And as I have said to Prime Minister Netanyahu I want to build on this – deepening our links in particular in sectors like agriculture, health, science, technology and innovation.

But my support for Israel goes beyond economics.

You can also count on my commitment to Israel's security.

I understand Israel's vulnerability because I have been there and seen it for myself. ...

So I am clear that we will always support Israel's right to defend itself.

And in a world where Britain and Israel increasingly face the same shared challenges and threats, I am just as clear that our security services will continue to deepen their already excellent co-operation to keep all our people safe.

You can also count on me to defend Israel's values – because Israel is a country like ours that believes in liberty, democracy and the rule of law. ...

But none of this means, of course, that we don't also have some disagreements with the government of Israel.

And like everyone here tonight, I want to see progress towards a lasting peace – a peace that must be based on a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. ...

The UK has – and will - also stand by Israel whenever it is treated unfairly at the United Nations – as we have shown at the Human Rights Council.

And as we work together towards what was Balfour's vision of a peaceful co-existence - we must be equally clear that there can never be any excuses for boycotts, divestment or sanctions: they are unacceptable and this government will have no truck with those who subscribe to them.

Under my leadership the UK will always be a real and trusted partner for Israel, supporting Israel's security and prosperity, not just through our words but also through our actions.

So too, will I act to stand with our Jewish community by rooting out the scourge of antisemitism here in our own country - just as I will stand with every community in Britain to fight racial and religious hatred in any form.

Let me be clear: you cannot claim to be tackling racism, if you are not tackling antisemitism.

And that mission begins by being clear about what antisemitism is.

That is why the government I lead was the first in the world to adopt the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Because of this definition, no-one can plead ignorance or hide behind any kind of excuse.

Let me say it very clearly.

Criticising the actions of Israel is never – and can never be – an excuse for questioning Israel's right to exist; any more than criticising Britain's actions could be an excuse for questioning our right to exist.

And criticising the government of Israel is never – and can never be – an excuse for hatred against the Jewish people ...

There are no excuses for any kind of hatred towards the Jewish people. Just as there are no excuses for hatred towards any community of any race or religion. ...

My government will also continue to back Gerald Ronson and the brave volunteers from the Community Security Trust who are out there tonight, working with the police, to keep us safe at this dinner. And to keep people across the Jewish community safe every day and every night. ...

But ultimately if we are to defeat the scourge of antisemitism and all forms of hatred in our country, we need to go further than calling out and acting against the voices of hatred.

We need to learn the lessons of the past and create an environment that builds empathy for others and prevents hatred from happening in the first place.

That is one reason why it is absolutely right that there will be a National Holocaust Memorial next to our Parliament in Victoria Tower Gardens.

And why it is right that this Memorial will have an accompanying education centre – which working in partnership with organisations across the whole country – will lead a national effort to fight hatred and prejudice in all its forms. ...

... in the face of hatred and prejudice, I believe there are signs of hope.

I see it in the inspirational work of the Holocaust Educational Trust and their world-leading Lessons From Auschwitz programme. ...

I see it in innovative new projects like Echo Eternal in Birmingham where schools from every background are working with the CORE Education Trust and the Centre for Holocaust Education at University College London to create their own responses to the testimonies of survivors. ...

And yes, I see it in the work of UJIA - not just here in Britain but in your work to unite communities in Israel too.

So as we approach the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, your Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur - a time of reflection ...

my answer to the voices of antisemitism is that we will defeat you ...

my answer to those who say they are fearful, is to say I will always stand with you. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-the-united-jewish-israel-appeal-dinner-17-september-2018>

TOP

## Israel

**See also the “PM’s speech at the United Jewish Israel Appeal dinner” which has been included in the “Home Affairs” section above.**

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Overseas Trade: Israel

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [170761] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure that the benefits accrued by the UK in trade liberalisation between the EU and Israel are not lost when the UK leaves the EU.

### Israel: Overseas Trade

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [170762] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps his Department is taking to achieve future trade liberalisation between Israel and the UK after the UK leaves the EU.

**George Hollingbery:** As we leave the European Union, we are seeking to replicate our existing EU free trade agreements and other EU preferential arrangements, to ensure continuity in our trade and investment relationships with third countries.

The Prime Minister and Israeli Prime Minister established a joint trade working group in February 2017. In March 2017, my noble friend, the then Minister of State for Trade Policy (Lord Price CVO), visited Israel to chair the first meeting of the working group, which is continuing to make positive progress towards ensuring a smooth transition.

Securing continuity will be a strong foundation to build upon our already successful trading relationships after we leave the EU, and we are making good progress.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-22/170761/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-05/170762/>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israel: Gaza

**Lord Ahmed (Non-affiliated)** [HL9902] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding its access to, and development of, Gaza's oil and gas reserves.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK strongly supports the development of the Gazan gas fields. Over recent years, we have had extensive discussions with the Palestinian authorities on the development of the gas fields for the benefit of the Palestinian economy. The UK is not backing Israeli control of the gas fields. We have, however, been in discussions with the Israeli authorities to encourage them to enable the exploitation of these fields.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-09-04/HL9902/>

### Israel: Gaza

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL9972] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel (1) for the release of the vessels Al-Awda and Freedom, which were seized in July and August, (2) for the release into Gaza of the medical supplies carried on the vessels, and (3) for the return of the personal belongings of the individuals on the vessels who have been released.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not made specific representations to the Israeli authorities about the release of the vessels, Al-Awda and Freedom, officials in London and at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv discussed the flotilla with the Israeli authorities. The Deputy Head of Mission raised the issue of personal belongings with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories informed Embassy officials that supplies carried on the vessels were delivered into the Gaza Strip via the Erez crossing. We continue to call on the Israeli Government to ease restrictions on Gaza and for Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-09-04/HL9972/>

### Israel: Druze

**Lord Patten (Conservative)** [HL9997] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the religious and civic freedoms of the Druze minority in Israel.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Freedom of religion and belief continues to be a priority for this Government. We are pleased that the Israeli Government, including Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Rivlin, have publicly highlighted their commitment to ensuring freedom of religion and belief in Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-09-04/HL9997/>

### Palestinians: Christianity

**Lord Patten (Conservative)** [HL9998] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the religious and civic freedoms of Maronites in Palestine.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Our Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly meets a variety of religious leaders in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and has stressed to the Palestinian Authority the importance of protecting freedom of religion and belief. Freedom of religion and belief remains a human rights priority for this Government. It is a fundamental freedom which underpins many other human rights.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-09-04/HL9998/>

## European Council

### Middle East Peace Process: EU appoints a new Special Representative

Today, the Council appointed Susanna Terstal as EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process.

The tasks of the Special Representative are to contribute to actions and initiatives leading to a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution. She will facilitate and maintain close contacts with all parties to the peace process, political actors, other countries, as well as the UN and other international organisations, in order to work with them on strengthening the peace process.

Susanna Terstal was Ambassador of the Netherlands to Iran. She has also been the Dutch Ambassador to Angola. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in 1994. She held a number of positions in the ministry's legal department and was deputy Permanent Representative in Geneva. She studied in the Netherlands, the United States and Italy.

Ms Terstal will take up her duties immediately and has initially been appointed until 29 February 2020.

[Susanna Terstal's biography](#)

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/09/18/middle-east-peace-process-eu-appoints-a-new-special-representative/>

## United Nations

### Senior UN official calls on Israel to stop demolition of Palestinian village in the West Bank

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, [expressed concern](#) on Monday "at the intention of the Israeli authorities to demolish the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu" in the West Bank, where

181 Palestinians currently live, more than half of whom are children.

“I call on the authorities not to proceed with the demolition and to cease efforts to relocate Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank”, said Mr. Mladenov, denouncing such actions as “contrary to international law” and warning that they “could undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.”

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu, located in the outskirts of East Jerusalem, is one of 18 communities located in - or next to - an area slated in part for an Israeli settlement reorganization plan that would reportedly create a continuous built-up area, between the Ma’ale Adummim settlement and East Jerusalem. ...

On 1 June, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jamie McGoldrick, issued a [statement](#) noting that “Israel’s obligations as an occupying power to protect the residents of Khan al Ahmar are clear”.

“Should the Israeli authorities choose to implement the outstanding demolition orders in the community and force the people to leave, they would not only generate significant humanitarian hardship but also commit one of the grave breaches of international humanitarian law,” stated Mr. McGoldrick. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1019492>

TOP

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

### UK Parliament

#### **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>

#### **Online Forums Bill**

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

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

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

### Scottish Parliament

#### **Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

TOP

## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **Reform of the legal requirements for divorce** (closing date 10 December 2018)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/reform-of-the-legal-requirements-for-divorce/>

TOP