

# 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 Commons Oral Answers

#### Schools That Work For Everyone

*col 40* **The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds):** ... We are retaining the 50% cap on faith-based admissions in free schools. I recognise the positive role that faith providers play and that some have felt unable to establish new schools through the free schools programme. ...

*col 42* **Edward Leigh (Conservative):** What justification is there for the Secretary of State reneging on a solemn Conservative manifesto commitment, on which we all stood, to drop the totally ineffective 50% cap on faith schools? He has reneged on that commitment. He knows perfectly well that the only new free schools that will not now open are Catholic schools. Catholic schools are the most diverse, the most inclusive and the most prone to operate in deprived areas, so why has he reneged on the cap? ... He knows there will now be faith free schools all over the country, except for Catholic schools. ... This is a disgraceful announcement.

*col 43* **Damian Hinds:** I join my hon. Friend in recognising the value of faith schools as part of our overall diverse school system. There are thousands of faith schools across the country, and they do get slightly above-average results at both primary and secondary. He specifically mentioned Catholic schools—it is true, again, that they get a slightly better set of results than the faith school average, and I totally value their contribution. I also acknowledge, as I think I did earlier, that some groups—the Catholic Education Service is chief among them—have not felt able to take part in the free schools programme because of the admissions criteria. We are very conscious of the sensitivities and the need to make sure that we promote societal inclusion, including in narrowly defined local areas. Having published the integration strategy, we have taken the decision to retain the 50% faith cap on new free schools, but it will also be possible to open voluntary-aided schools ...

*col 44* **Desmond Swayne (Conservative):** What argument persuaded the Secretary of State to drop the manifesto commitment on the cap for free schools?

**Damian Hinds:** ... We have just published our integration strategy, and it is right that in that context we retain the 50% faith cap on new free schools. However, there has always been a model of school—always, it never went away; it has been there since the Education Act 1944—to enable faith groups and others to do the admissions for a school if they contribute part of its capital funding. The amount used to be higher, but it is now about 10%. To be clear, never in the history of our

country has there been a general route by which to open a school that is 100% state funded but for which a church group has 100% control over admissions. ...  
**col 49 Michelle Donelan (Conservative):** Will the Secretary of State confirm that he will keep under review the removal of the cap on faith schools? I appreciate the point about integration, but was a drop to 25% considered as a compromise?

**Damien Hinds:** We keep all policies under review. As I said earlier, having published the integration strategy we thought very carefully about this issue and determined that the best approach was to retain the 50% cap. There are of course various other requirements on new free schools to demonstrate their inclusivity, but there are also thousands of faith schools in this country not subject to a cap, and through the voluntary aided route it will be possible to open them. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-05-14/debates/973171D6-BE82-4BF5-8587-980BF8F72EBA/SchoolsThatWorkForEveryone>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Roger Godsiff (Labour)** [142324] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 April 2018 to Question 135976, on Israel: Palestinians, what assessment he has made of the (a) independence and (b) impartiality of Israel's investigation into the shooting of Palestinian protesters in Gaza by Israeli forces.

**Alistair Burt:** We have not made an assessment of this matter. We certainly urge that any investigation should be independent and transparent, its findings are made public, and if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-05-09/142324/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

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

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Palestinians: Refugees

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL7488] To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the statement by UNRWA on 26 April, what action they will take to protect and provide for Palestinian refugees in the Palestine refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus and surrounding areas.

**Lord Bates:** Yarmouk camp has been besieged for several years. Humanitarian access remains restricted due to ongoing military activity and the presence of Daesh. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), supported by DFID, has had no direct access to the camp since April 2015.

We continue to call on all parties to protect civilians, and to allow humanitarian agencies unfettered access to provide aid to those most in need, including at the UN Security Council and the International Syria Support Group. The Secretary of

State for International Development and Minister of State for the Middle East focused on these messages at the 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region' Conference in Brussels on 24 and 25 April.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-05-01/HL7488/>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-deeply-concerned-about-escalation-fighting-and-fate-thousands>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### **Violence in Gaza on 14 May 2018: UK response**

The UK's Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt issued a statement after numerous Palestinians were killed and injured in Gaza and the West Bank in protests that erupted after the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem.

Alistair Burt said: The violence today in Gaza and the West Bank has been shocking. The loss of life and the large number of injured Palestinians is tragic, and it is extremely worrying that the number of those killed continues to rise.

Such violence is destructive to peace efforts. We have been clear that the UK supports the Palestinians' right to protest, but these protests must be peaceful.

It is deplorable that extremist elements may have been seeking to exploit these protests for their own violent purposes. We will not waver from our support for Israel's right to defend its borders. But the large volume of live fire is extremely concerning. We continue to implore Israel to show greater restraint.

The UK remains committed to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital. All sides now need to show real leadership and courage, promote calm, refrain from inflaming tensions further, and show with renewed urgency that the path to a two-state solution is through negotiation and peace.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-response-to-violence-in-gaza>

### **In a statement made by the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson after meeting his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian, he expressed concern over the violence and casualties in Gaza**

"Obviously we are extremely saddened by the loss of life that has taken place and we understand that some have been provoking that violence but on the other hand there has got to be restraint in the use of live rounds.

The UK position is that we don't agree with the US decision to move the embassy and we continue to believe that is playing the wrong card at the wrong time. But we remain absolutely committed to a two state solution.

<https://twitter.com/foreignoffice/status/996322408503107584>

## European Union

### **Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on violence in Gaza and latest developments**

Dozens of Palestinians, including children, have been killed and hundreds injured from Israeli fire today, during ongoing mass protests near the Gaza fence. We expect all to act with utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life. Israel must respect the right to peaceful protest and the principle of proportionality in the use of force. Hamas and those leading the demonstrations in Gaza must ensure that they remain strictly non-violent and must not exploit them for other means.

During these days, both Israelis and Palestinians are commemorating defining moments for their nations. Each side in this conflict has legitimate claims and aspirations which

need to be mutually acknowledged.

Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Muslims and Christians. The ties of the Jewish people to Jerusalem are irrefutable, and must not be denied. And the same is true for the ties of the Palestinian people to the city.

Any further escalation of an already extremely tense and complex situation would cause again further unspeakable sufferings to both peoples, and will make the perspective of peace and security even more remote. In this moment, wisdom and courage would be needed to go back to negotiations for a political solution, for the sake both of the Israeli and the Palestinian people, and the entire region. Only a two state solution will realistically allow both sides to fulfil their aspirations, put an end to the conflict, and achieve the just and lasting peace that Israelis and Palestinians long for and deserve.

The EU remains firmly committed to continue working with both parties and with its partners in the international community towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations aimed at a two-state solution, based on the 4 June 1967 lines and with Jerusalem as capital of both.

The European Union has a clear, consolidated position on Jerusalem, which was reaffirmed in numerous Foreign Affairs Council conclusions. The EU will continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem embodied in, inter alia, UN Security Council Resolution 478, including on the location of diplomatic representations until the final status of Jerusalem is resolved.

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/44510/statement-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-violence-gaza-and-latest\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/44510/statement-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-violence-gaza-and-latest_en)

## United Nations

### **‘Profoundly Alarmed’ by Escalation of Violence in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Secretary-General Stresses Maximum Restraint to Avoid Further Loss of Life**

... The Secretary-General is profoundly alarmed by the sharp escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the high number of Palestinians killed and injured in the Gaza protests.

Israel security forces must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire. Hamas and the leaders of the demonstrations have a responsibility to prevent all violent actions and provocations.

With tensions high and more demonstrations expected in the coming days, it is imperative that everyone show the utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life, including ensuring that all civilians and particularly children are not put in harm’s way.

Hospitals report that essential medical supplies, drugs and equipment have already been exhausted. Humanitarian funding and improved access is urgently needed to meet these and other existing or emerging needs.

The ongoing violence underscores the urgent need for a political solution. The Secretary-General reiterates that there is no viable alternative to the two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace, each with its capital in Jerusalem.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19034.doc.htm>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **UN human rights expert condemns horrific violence in Gaza**

A UN human rights expert has called on the Israeli Government to immediately cease its lethal assault against protesters at the Gaza fence, who appear to pose no credible threat to Israeli military forces on the Israeli side of the fence.

Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian

territory occupied since 1967, condemned Israel's excessive use of force towards largely unarmed demonstrators at the Gaza fence on Monday, which has left 58 Palestinians dead, and almost 2,800 wounded. He expressed grave fears this figure could rise sharply in coming days unless Israeli authorities uphold their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

"This blatant excessive use of force by Israel – an eye for an eyelash – must end, and there must be true accountability for those in military and political command who have ordered or allowed this force to be once again employed at the Gaza fence," he said.

"I must reiterate that international human rights law sets strict prohibitions on the use of force by law enforcement officials. Lethal force against demonstrators is prohibited unless strictly unavoidable in the case of an imminent threat to life or threat of serious injury. The killing of demonstrators in violation of these rules, and within the context of occupation, may amount to willful killing, a grave breach of the *Fourth Geneva Convention*, as well as a war crime."

The Rapporteur also expressed deep concern at the apparent disregard by Israeli forces for the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. "These fundamental rights belong to all peoples, and they must be permitted to exercise them within reasonable bounds. There appears to be no persuasive evidence that the use of flammable kites, throwing of stones or Molotov cocktails, or other actions reportedly taken by a small number of the demonstrators presented a deadly threat that justified the force used by the Israeli military."

Tens of thousands of Gazans have gathered along the fence and continue to demonstrate to protest the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem, as well as to continue to call for the right to return to their homes, and to demand an end to the unliveable humanitarian situation in Gaza brought on by Israel's 11-year blockade. The latest reports say that 112 Palestinians have been killed and more than 12,000 wounded since the demonstrations began on 30 March.

Lynk repeated his calls to the international community, through the United Nations, to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into these killings, as well as those that have occurred in the context of these demonstrations since 30 March. "Impunity for these actions is not an option. Justice for the victims must become a priority for the international community," he said.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23087&LangID=E>

### **Press briefing notes on Gaza**

We condemn the appalling, deadly violence in Gaza yesterday during which 58 Palestinians were killed and almost 1,360 demonstrators were injured with live ammunition by Israeli security forces. Of those injured, 155 are in critical condition. Six children and a health worker were among those who lost their lives, and 10 journalists suffered injuries from gunshot wounds. The already crumbling health care system in Gaza has been placed under incredible strain and those suffering life-threatening injuries face a nightmarish scenario in the absence of adequate hospital beds and medical services. We are still witnessing cases in which injured demonstrators are effectively prevented by Israel from exiting Gaza for treatment.

The rules on the use of force under international law have been repeated many times but appear to have been ignored again and again. It seems anyone is liable to be shot dead or injured: women, children, press personnel, first responders, bystanders, and at almost any point up to 700m from the fence.

A number of the demonstrators approached the fence, threw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces personnel, and flew kites laden with petrol soaked material. Some tried to damage the fence that separates Gaza from Israel. Others burnt tires. Israeli forces responded with tear gas, plastic bullets and various types of live ammunition, some causing horrific wounds and lifelong disability. We stress, again, that lethal force may only be used as a measure of last – not first – resort, and only when there is an immediate threat to life or serious injury. An attempt to approach or crossing

or damaging the fence do not amount to a threat to life or serious injury and are not sufficient grounds for the use of live ammunition. This is also the case with regards to stones and molotov cocktails being thrown from a distance at well-protected security forces located behind defensive positions.

Again, we call for independent, transparent investigations in all cases of death and injury since 30 March. Since 30 March, 112 Palestinians, including 14 children, have lost their lives at the fence and thousands have been injured.

We are extremely worried about what may happen today – an emotional day on all sides – and in the weeks ahead. We urge maximum restraint. Enough is enough.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23086&LangID=E>

## United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### Statement: Israel

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, meeting in Geneva at its ninety-fifth session, from 23 April to 11 May 2018,

Acting under its Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures;

Alarmed by the disproportionate use of force displayed by the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) against Palestinian demonstrators who have been taking part, since 30 March, in the so called 'the Great March of Return' in Gaza, which has resulted in the death of at least 40 people, among them five children and in thousands of persons being injured;

Gravely concerned that many of the persons who died or were injured were reportedly posing no imminent threat at the time they were shot;

Alarmed also by the many reports according to which Israeli authorities have denied and continue to deny access to urgent medical treatment to injured Palestinians;

Highly concerned that these incidents are taking place in a context marked by the 50 year occupation of the Palestinian territory, the blockade imposed since 2007 on the Gaza strip and a rise of racist hate speech and incitement to racist violence against Palestinians by Israeli governmental officials and members of the ISF;

Deeply worried about persisting discriminatory practices against Palestinians by Israel as well as the absence of adequate accountability mechanisms, which would permit Palestinians to seek justice for the human rights violations to which they are subjected and the failure to hold members of the ISF accountable;

Concerned that while the State party publicly announced the conduct of an investigation into these events, an independent and impartial investigation has not yet taken place;

Recalling the provisions enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which Israel has been a party since 1979 and in particular the obligations contained in articles 2 1), 4 and 5 b) and d) as well as the concluding observations on Israel issued by the Committee in 2012 (CERD/C/ISR/CO/14-16), especially paragraphs 10, 23, 24 and 26;

The Committee urges the State party to:

1. Put an immediate end to the disproportionate use of force against Palestinian demonstrators in the Gaza strip, refrain from any act that could lead to further casualties and ensure prompt and unimpeded access to medical treatment to injured Palestinian;
2. Initiate an impartial and independent investigation into the use of force against Palestinian demonstrators in compliance with international standards and hold those responsible accountable;
3. Ensure that all Palestinians under its effective control enjoy full rights under the Convention without discrimination especially, their right to life and security of person, freedom of opinion and expression, as well as their right to medical care;
4. Take all the necessary measures to fully implement the recommendations made by the Committee in 2012 and in particular:
  - a) To fully respect the norms of humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory and to lift the blockade of the Gaza strip;

b) To counter the tide of racism and xenophobia in public discourse, in particular by strongly condemning all racist and xenophobic statements by public officials and political and religious leaders, and by implementing appropriate measures to combat the proliferation of racist acts and manifestations of racist hate speech that particularly target Palestinians in the territories under the State party's effective control.

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/ISR/INT\\_CERD\\_STA\\_I\\_SR\\_8680\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/ISR/INT_CERD_STA_I_SR_8680_E.pdf)

## Amnesty

### **Israel/OPT: Use of excessive force in Gaza an abhorrent violation of international law**

Responding to reports that dozens of Palestinians have been killed and hundreds injured by the Israeli military during protests along the fence that separates Gaza and Israel today, Philip Luther, Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, said:

“This is another horrific example of the Israeli military using excessive force and live ammunition in a totally deplorable way. This is a violation of international standards, in some instances committing what appear to be wilful killings constituting war crimes.

“Today’s footage from Gaza is extremely troubling, and as violence continues to spiral out of control, the Israeli authorities must immediately rein in the military to prevent the further loss of life and serious injuries.

“Only last month, Amnesty International called on the [international community to stop the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel](#). The rising toll of deaths and injuries today only serves to highlight the urgent need for an arms embargo.

“While some protestors may have engaged in some form of violence, this still does not justify the use of live ammunition.

“Under international law, firearms can only be used to protect against an imminent threat of death or serious injury.”

Early medical reports from Gaza today indicate that dozens of people have been shot in the head or chest. Amnesty International last month [documented research from the Gaza Strip](#) that showed the Israeli military were killing and maiming demonstrators who pose no imminent threat to them.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/israelopt-use-of-excessive-force-in-gaza-an-abhorrent-violation-of-international-law/>

## Church of Scotland

### **Church of Scotland urges end to violence on Israel’s border with Gaza**

Yesterday, as Israel celebrated the birth of a nation 70 years ago, we witnessed heart rending scenes of killing and violence on the border between Gaza and Israel.

It is very likely that today, when the Palestinians mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the forced removal of more 700,000 people from their homes at that time, more violence will ensue. Many of those protesting are the children and grandchildren of people removed from their homes at that time.

Rev Dr Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland states:

“The killing of civilians is a matter of international concern and the whole world should stand together in calling for an end to violence and seeking a settlement of this conflict that has continued for 70 years.

“Unilateral actions by states, such as the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem only serve to fuel the despair that Palestinians feel that their rights have been overlooked.

“Yesterday’s violence is shocking, shameful and is to be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

“We know from our partners in Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine, as well as from members of the Church of Scotland who have visited the region in recent weeks and months, that life in Gaza is becoming more precarious and the violence being perpetrated against the Palestinian people is getting worse.

“The world cannot stand by and allow this to continue. For 70 years, Palestinians have been forced to be refugees in their own land. As in so many conflicts, the shocking and needless loss of life should be a spur to the international community to reaffirm the universality of human rights and human dignity.”

The UN has stated that 'Gaza may be uninhabitable by 2020' unless serious measures are taken to end the structural injustice that has driven the already desperate people of Gaza into further despair in what has been described by many as 'an open air prison', the ongoing blockade of Gaza by Israel has led to serious privations for the two million people living there.

The Church of Scotland reaffirms its firm belief that Christian theology should never be used to justify or perpetuate a situation of injustice.

The Church of Scotland stands in solidarity with both Palestinians and Israelis who are working to bring an end to the unbearable suffering that has escalated in the lead up to this 70th anniversary of Independence for Israel and dispossession for Palestinians. We encourage people to pray for peace and work hard on the costly road of being peace makers.

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/news/2018/church\\_of\\_scotland\\_urges\\_end\\_to\\_violence\\_on\\_israel\\_border\\_with\\_gaza](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/2018/church_of_scotland_urges_end_to_violence_on_israel_border_with_gaza)

## Muslim Council of Britain

Gaza Massacre: Muslim Council of Britain condemns mass killing of protestors

... The Muslim Council of Britain today condemned the massacre of Palestinian civilians protesting the move of the United States embassy to Jerusalem, and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes 70 years ago.

Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain said: “Civilians took to the streets to protest against the moved by the US government of their embassy to Jerusalem. 55 were picked off by Israeli snipers with 2700 injured. I hope our government condemns these actions in the strongest possible terms. That this massacre took place on the anniversary of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homes 70 years ago only underscores the realities of this apartheid.

<http://www.mcb.org.uk/gaza-massacre-muslim-council-of-britain-condemns-mass-killing-of-protestors/>

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## 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>

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## **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>

### **Measures to further improve the effectiveness of the fight against illegal content online** (closing date 25 June 2018)

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-measures-further-improve-effectiveness-fight-against-illegal-content-online\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-measures-further-improve-effectiveness-fight-against-illegal-content-online_en)

### **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>

### **Antisemitism: Survey of European Jews** (closing date not stated)

<http://www.eurojews.eu/>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438