

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0134/CDP-2018-0134.pdf>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Gaza

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL7986] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other relevant parties to set up an independent, transparent investigation into all cases of death and injury in Gaza since 30 March; and what action they will urge to be taken at the United Nations if all parties do not comply with such an investigation.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK fully supports, and recognises, the need for an independent and transparent investigation into the events that have taken place since 30 March, including the extent to which Israeli security forces' rules of engagement are in line with international law and the role Hamas played in events. The UK has called directly on Israel to carry out a transparent inquiry into the Israeli Defence Forces' conduct at the border fence and to demonstrate how this will achieve a sufficient level of independence. This investigation should include international members and the findings of such an investigation should be made public.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-05-17/HL7986/>

Israel: Palestinians

The Marquess of Wimbledon (Conservative) [HL7987] To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Prime Minister last discussed the future of the two-state solution with (1) the President of the United States, and (2) the Israeli Prime Minister.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump on 19

December 2017, and discussed the different positions of the UK and US on the recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. They agreed on the importance of the US bringing forward new proposals for peace and the international community supporting these efforts. When the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Netanyahu on 2 November 2017, she reiterated our firm commitment to a two-state solution as the best way to bring about stability and peace in the region. Most recently the Foreign Secretary spoke to Prime Minister Netanyahu on 16 May and reiterated the need for progress towards peace.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-05-17/HL7987/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Secretary statement on Khan al-Ahmar

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson said: I am deeply concerned by the proposed demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar. Palestinians have found it virtually impossible to obtain building permits in Area C of the West Bank, an unacceptable situation that leaves them with little option except to build without permission.

About 180 people, including some who have lived in Khan al-Ahmar for over 60 years, face the prospect of losing their homes and livelihoods. I am particularly concerned by the pending demolition of the village's school, which serves 170 children including from neighbouring communities. The UN has said that the proposed demolitions could amount to "forcible transfer", in violation of International Humanitarian Law. The British Government has consistently urged Israel not to proceed and I repeat that call today.

I am also gravely concerned by plans to construct over 3,100 new settlement units. Many are located deep within the West Bank; one is a site beside Khan al-Ahmar. Settlement activity is contrary to international law, promotes the de facto annexation of the West Bank, and takes us further away from a negotiated two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-khan-al-ahmar>

Alistair Burt: Circumstances of dreadful death of young Palestinian medic yesterday require urgent clarification. This emphasises urgency of military restraint, ensuring protests are safe and peaceful, and finding a better future for Gaza - political and humanitarian

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/1002944866589007874>

Abstention of resolutions on long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people: Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council session on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

... the United Kingdom remains extremely concerned by the situation in Gaza. We condemn the violent activities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organisations and we condemn them unreservedly. We have witnessed recently, unacceptable mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Such acts of terror are destructive to peace efforts and they need to stop. And in the past weeks, we have seen violence, Hamas' exploitation of peaceful protests and a disturbing volume of live fire. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organization by the UK since 2001 and the United Kingdom has sanctions in place against senior Hamas officials. ...

The United Kingdom has long supported UN action on Israeli-Palestinian issues. It is therefore regrettable, Mr President, that today's resolutions contain elements that are either imbalanced or too vague to be viable. For example, the Kuwaiti text fails to name terrorist actors including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And its suggestion of an international protection mechanism risks raising unrealistic expectations. We condemn Hamas, but at the same time, we regret that the American text does not adequately

reference Israel's responsibilities and obligations with regard to Gaza. Therefore Mr President, the United Kingdom will abstain on both resolutions today. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/abstention-of-resolutions-on-long-standing-issues-between-israel-and-the-palestinian-people>

United Nations

Amid Middle East Violence, Security Council Fails to Adopt Competing Resolutions on Israeli Force, Hamas Role in Conflict

... The Security Council ... failed to adopt two competing draft resolutions on the recent spate of violence in the Middle East — put forward by the delegations of the United States and Kuwait on behalf of the Arab Group, respectively — capping a month of protests and escalating tension on the ground and within the 15-member organ itself.

By the terms of the draft put forward by the delegation of Kuwait — which was rejected by a vote of 10 in favour to 1 against (United States), with 4 abstentions (Ethiopia, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom), owing to a veto by one permanent member — the Council would have deplored Israel's use of "excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force" against Palestinian civilians. Condemning the use by Israel Defense Forces of live ammunition against civilian protesters, it would have affirmed the Council's willingness to respond to situations of armed conflict where civilians were targeted or where humanitarian assistance was being deliberately obstructed, including by considering appropriate measures in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Meanwhile, a separate draft resolution submitted by the United States was also rejected by a vote of 1 in favour (United States) to 3 against (Bolivia, Kuwait, Russian Federation) with 11 abstentions, owing to an insufficient number of affirmative votes. By the terms of that text — containing various amendments to Kuwait's draft — the Council would have described Hamas, the organization currently in power in Gaza, as a terrorist group. It would also have condemned in the strongest terms the indiscriminate firing of rockets by Palestinian militants in Gaza towards Israel on 29 May; demanded that Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militant groups cease all provocative actions; and condemned the diversion of resources by those groups to construct military infrastructure intended to infiltrate Israel and launch rockets. ...

The representative of Kuwait, speaking after his delegation's text was vetoed, expressed regret that today the Council had sent a message that the occupying Power could enjoy full immunity from international law as well as the Council's own resolutions. ...

The representative of the United States said the Kuwaiti resolution represented a grossly one-sided view of the situation on the ground. It was Hamas that bore the primary responsibility for the atrocious living conditions in Gaza, she said, noting that it had diverted humanitarian resources for military purpose and fired at least 70 rockets into Israel this week alone. Yet the Kuwaiti resolution sought to place all the blame on Israel and perpetuate the United Nations anti-Israeli bias. ...

François Delattre (France) expressed regret that the Council had not been able to unite on a text. He asked: "If the Council today abdicates its responsibility, who will take on this responsibility? ... This silence has been neither acceptable nor understandable," ...

Joanna Wronecka (Poland), expressing support for Kuwait's transparent negotiations, said her delegation had unfortunately not been able to support its draft resolution because it lacked balance. It was Hamas' responsibility to ensure the protection of civilians in the territory it controlled, she said, describing any attacks against civilians — by any party — as unacceptable. While Israel had the right to self-defence, it must respect the Palestinians' right to peaceful protest and the principle of proportionality. ...

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said ... Israel continued to kill and injure Palestinian civilians. "The Palestinian people are entitled to

protection,” he stressed. Immediate steps must be taken to end the closure of Gaza to allow the normal movement of persons and goods. “Your votes today refute the premise that the Palestinian people are the exception to the rules of principles of international law,” he said. “You have rejected the might over right strategy,” ...

He rejected attempts to delay action on today’s initiative, further rebuffing any attempt to classify the Palestinian situation as one of terrorism. “It is not,” he stressed. ...

Danny Danon (Israel) recalled that, on 15 May, the Council had opened its meeting by standing for a moment of respect for those who had been killed in violence the previous day in Gaza. “On that day, the members of the Security Council stood in solidarity with the terrorists of Hamas,” he said, noting that Hamas had openly bragged that most of those killed had not been civilians but terrorist martyrs. ... the Council had once again been given a chance to place blame where it belonged — on Hamas — and to recognize that group’s role in the root of the conflict. ... he said the text had attempted to absolve Hamas from all responsibility, mentioning Israel five times but failing to mention Hamas even once. Such a resolution would have given that terrorist group the Council’s stamp of approval, even as Hamas deprived the people of Gaza of their most basic rights and continued to kidnap and kill Israelis. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13362.doc.htm>

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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

**** closes in 2 days**

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

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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