

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 Written Answer

Religious Buildings: Security

Laura Smith (Labour) [155374] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has a timetable for reopening the Vulnerable Faith Institution Scheme to enable bids from places of worship to improve their security measures; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins: The Home Office has committed £2.4m over three years (2016 to 2019) to provide protective security measures to places of worship in England and Wales that have been subject or are vulnerable to hate crime.

The third year of the scheme opened for applications on 8 June. The Vulnerable Faith Institutions Scheme was a separate funding scheme of £1million for one year following the attack at Finsbury Park in June 2017.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-19/155374/>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Anti-Semitism

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the use of the definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, together with its guidance notes. ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth): My Lords, the Prime Minister announced the Government's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism in December 2016. Since then, we have encouraged local authorities to adopt the definition. To date, 135 local authorities across the United Kingdom have done so, as have a number of universities, the National Union of Students and the Union of Jewish Students. In addition, a number of political parties have adopted the definition and the police and CPS already use it as a guide. It is good to see in his place my noble friend Lord Pickles, who has done so much great work in this area.

Lord Leigh of Hurley: I thank the Minister and agree that all institutions and political parties should adopt this definition of anti-Semitism, which includes, of course, disproportionate attacks on Israel. Does the Minister share my concern that in this parliamentary Session there have been, according to the House of Lords Library, more than 250 Questions on Israel which, to put it in context, compares with 50 on Iran and five on anti-Semitism?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: As a Minister, I know quite a bit about answering the same question time and again, as noble Lords will be aware. Ultimately, this is a matter for individual noble Lords; it is not a matter for the Government. Obviously, noble Lords will need to declare interests, but if they do so, that is a matter for them.

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, the IHRA definition clarifies that, when it comes to anti-Semitism by way of criticism of Israel, cases should be judged taking into account the overall context and may—rather than must—be anti-Semitic; and that, “criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic”.

Does the Minister believe that this is sufficient to ensure freedom of speech?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord is right that there is obviously an important balance to be struck between freedom of speech and the definition of anti-Semitism. It is important that people bear in mind the definition of anti-Semitism, but ultimately all freedom of speech is constrained in some way. Nobody can go into a theatre and yell “Fire!”—unless there is a fire, of course—so noble Lords would be well advised when exercising the right of free speech to be aware of the parameters within which it is exercised.

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated): Does the Minister realise that one of the problems is that Government of Israel now calls itself “the Jewish State of Israel”? Could he advise us whether we are being anti-Semitic when we criticise the actions of the Government of the Jewish State of Israel?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I do not want to be drawn too much into semantics on this. I think noble Lords will in general realise what is legitimate criticism of the policy of a particular state—that is legitimate—but they will be aware of the definition of anti-Semitism which the Government, the Conservative Party and many local authorities have adopted. That is a good thing and is recognised as such internationally.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour Co-op): My Lords, does the Minister agree that anti-Semitism is a truly despicable form of abuse and that it has absolutely no place in Britain? Will he join me in congratulating the Community Security Trust for what it has done in highlighting this abuse and racism? Will he ask his ministerial colleagues in the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice to ensure that everything is in place to support the police and the CPS to bring prosecutions against the perpetrators of these evil crimes?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord’s record is unimpeachable in this regard and I join him in paying tribute to the CST. He will be aware that at the top reaches of his party in the other place, there is still an issue to address, but I certainly exempt noble Lords in this House from that charge. However, there is much work to be done on anti-Semitism in the upper reaches of the Labour Party.

Baroness Ceech (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister share my feeling that it is shameful and a stain on our reputation that we even have to discuss this and that we find that anti-Semitism is mainstreaming, especially in our universities? I cannot imagine—and I am sure the Minister cannot imagine—anyone attempting to narrow the definition of, for example, Islamophobia. There is a singling out of Jews and Israel under the guise of anti-Israelism.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, in her last phrase I think the noble Baroness is referring to university campuses. There are issues there that remain a

concern, but in all fairness considerable progress has been made. The present NUS president, Shakira Martin, deserves praise. She has been working with the Union of Jewish Students, for example. There is still work to be done, but considerable work has been done in that regard. I agree with the noble Baroness about tackling Islamophobia. That too is a challenge that we have to meet in all political parties.

Baroness Eaton (Conservative): Will the Minister explain what Her Majesty's Government are doing to deal with anti-Semitism in social media?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, my noble friend will be aware that hate crime in general on social media is something we are seeking to address; we have invested money in that fairly recently. My noble friend is correct to say that it is a very important concern, but it also has an international dimension and is very difficult to deal with. For all that, it is important that we do deal with it, and we are seeking to do so.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, anti-Semitism is absolutely reprehensible and abhorrent. It is a stain on our society, and I welcome any moves to stamp it out, but may I ask the Minister to help me? He mentioned Islamophobia as well. Some of us in this Chamber who come from a particular background are subjected to the most appalling comments by an individual in this Chamber about our faith and about people from the same faith—mainly Muslims—with very little intervention. Can he say whether the same will apply in this Chamber: that we lead by example and we stamp out such questions and comments, which make some of us feel very uncomfortable, and beyond, about coming from a Muslim background?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I am unaware of the specifics that the noble Baroness mentions, but based on what she has just said: absolutely. It is abominable that anybody should be singled out on the basis of race or religion. All discrimination is wrong, and I wholeheartedly endorse what she has said.

Lord Clarke of Hampstead (Labour): My Lords, does the Minister agree with me in welcoming the visit made yesterday by Prince William to Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem? Does he further agree that Prince William's desire to go to the other side and talk to Palestinian people to try to get some understanding can only be a good thing for the future of both states?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Entirely, my Lords; I wholeheartedly agree.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-06-26/debates/051524AE-B5FD-4FF0-BD26-75229CD2C4C8/Anti-Semitism>

Scottish Government

New Cabinet appointed

<https://news.gov.scot/news/new-cabinet-appointed>

First Minister completes her ministerial team

<https://news.gov.scot/news/first-minister-completes-her-ministerial-team>

New Scottish Government Ministerial Team

First Minister	Nicola Sturgeon
Deputy First Minister; Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills	John Swinney
Minister for Further Education, Higher Education & Science	Gillian Martin
Minister for Childcare & Early Years	Maree Todd
Cabinet Secretary for Justice	Humza Yousaf

Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	Jeane Freeman
Minister for Mental Health	Clare Haughey
Minister for Public Health, Sport & Wellbeing	Joe Fitzpatrick
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy, & Fair Work	Derek Mackay
Minister for Business, Fair Work & Skills	Jamie Hepburn
Minister for Public Finance & Digital Economy	Kate Forbes
Minister for Trade, Investment, & Innovation	Ivan McKee
Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform	Roseanna Cunningham
Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy	Fergus Ewing
Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment	Mairi Gougeon
Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands	Paul Wheelhouse
Cabinet Secretary for Government Business & Constitutional Relations	Michael Russell
Minister for Parliamentary Business & Veterans	Graeme Dey
Cabinet Secretary for Communities & Local Government	Aileen Campbell
Minister for Older People & Equalities	Christina McKelvie
Minister for Community Safety	Ash Denham
Minister for Local Government, Housing & Planning	Kevin Stewart
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism & External Affairs	Fiona Hyslop
Minister for Europe, Migration & International Development	Ben MacPherson
Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure & Connectivity	Michael Matheson
Cabinet Secretary for Social Security & Older People	Shirley-Anne Somerville
Lord Advocate	James Wolfe
Solicitor General	Alison Di Rollo

[TOP](#)

Israel

Westminster Hall Debate

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

309WH Grahame Morris (Labour): ... The situation for Gaza and its 1.7 million residents is appalling and inhumane ... there have been multiple protests along the border with Israel as part of the “Great March of Return”. The start marked the 70th anniversary of the exodus of as many as 750,000 Palestinians, many of whom were

driven from their homes during the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. According to Medical Aid for Palestinians, approximately 14,600 people have been injured by Israeli forces, and 55% of those were hospitalised. Tragically, 118 Palestinians were killed, including 14 children. Elsewhere, including in the west bank, a further 17 Palestinians were killed during the same period, including five reportedly shot at the fence or after crossing into Israel. ...

col 310WH Although it is apparent that some protesters may have engaged in some form of violence, that does not justify the use of live ammunition. International law is clear: firearms can only be used to protect against an imminent threat of death or serious injury. In some instances, Israeli forces appear to have committed wilful killings, constituting war crimes. ...

We need to have an inquiry and to hold those responsible to account, because Israeli forces were using not only live ammunition, but high-velocity weapons in particular, causing absolute maximum harm. Another issue of concern is that the UK Government have approved more than £490 million-worth of arms exports to Israel since 2014. ...

The export controls under which our Government operate clearly state that export licences should not be approved if there is a clear risk that the weapons might be used in violation of international law or for internal repression. From the Government's own figures, it is hard to see how current sales of military and security equipment to Israel are not in breach of those obligations ...

col 311WH ... certain principles apply in relation to the use of lethal force. It is clear that the Israeli security forces' response has been completely disproportionate, as demonstrated by the death toll and the huge number of Palestinians with gunshot wounds, many of whom are in a very serious condition and will have permanently disabling injuries as a result. ...

Matthew Offord (Conservative): ... Is [Grahame Morris] aware of the high committee of the "Great March of Return", which includes Hamas, posting on Facebook a request that people bring a knife or gun to the protests? Does he agree that it is a distortion of the truth to ignore the role of Hamas in this violence?

Grahame Morris: I condemn violence and I condemn those who advocate it on all sides. I have seen some appalling quotes from prominent Israeli politicians that are equally worthy of condemnation, so I condemn Hamas and I condemn those responsible on the Israeli side. ...

col 312WH Chronic needs and injustices must be addressed now. ... The people of Gaza cannot wait for a successful peace process. The blockade must be lifted and the suffering relieved. ...

Until Israel ensures effective and independent investigations that result in the criminal prosecutions of those responsible, the International Criminal Court must open a formal investigation into these killings and serious injuries as possible war crimes and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. ...

col 313WH We need to step up to the plate for the Gazans. We cannot allow the desperate situation of these innocent people to continue. Taking no action will be counterproductive. It will simply strengthen the position of those who advocate extremism. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... unless [Grahame Morris] is willing to mention that the disruption to energy supplies for Gazans has much to do with the ongoing dispute between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the west bank, that the Rafah crossing is hardly ever opened to allow humanitarian supplies in from Egypt, or that Hamas runs Gaza with an iron fist and is guilty of numerous accounts of misappropriating aid, we will not get the balanced discussion that this important issue needs. ...

Grahame Morris: ... Let us not forget that Israel has obligations under international law and under the fourth Geneva convention. It must honour those commitments, and if it does not the international community must take action. ...

col 314WH **Nicholas Soames (Conservative):** ... it has always seemed to me quite

unbelievable that a nation such as Israel—a nation that is cultured, sophisticated and democratic, that has triumphed over so much and whose people have, down the centuries, suffered so dreadfully—should even consider tolerating the grotesque situation that pertains in Gaza and the serious harm, desperate squalor and cruelty that the people there live with. It is immoral and contrary to all humanitarian norms. Israel acts with seeming impunity, imposing what is in effect a collective punishment on Gaza. Israeli actions against the Palestinians are legally and morally wrong and must be condemned, but more importantly, they must be put right. It is not enough just to express concern and to go on expressing concern. ...

col 315WH It is clear that the ongoing split between Fatah and Hamas has paralysed Palestinian politics, made it much harder to make any progress, and rendered very difficult reconstruction efforts in Gaza. However, the House should express today our unqualified and unreserved anger and our shock that Gaza should be kept as it is, with a devastated economy and desperate humanitarian needs. ...

Andy Slaughter (Labour): ... We can go back 200 or 100 years to events in our own history, such as Peterloo and Amritsar, in which the military engaged in attacking civilian populations. The idea that that is happening now in a country that says it is a democracy and is an ally of this country is just horrific. ... it relates to an illegal occupation that has gone on for 60 years. What has happened over the last 25 years—long before Hamas came on the scene—is the separation of Gaza from the west bank so that a Palestinian state becomes impossible. It is no longer possible to travel, not just for health reasons but for any reason at all, out of Gaza. In effect, the people of Gaza are being told, “You are sealed off. You will continue to be occupied. You will be subjugated and humiliated, but you will no longer have the right, just as people in East Jerusalem do not have the right, to travel to the west bank.” This is the fracturing of Palestinian integrity and society in a way that is clearly deliberate. ...

col 316WH **Damien Moore (Conservative):** ... Last Wednesday, a rocket exploded outside a nursery in southern Israel. No children were hurt, but the rocket was one of 45 fired from the Gaza strip that day. In recent weeks, dozens of balloons and kites with explosives attached to them have floated into Israel. One landed on a children’s trampoline. Fortunately, no children were hurt. We rarely hear about violence emanating from the west bank or the deprivation there. I ask hon. Members to consider why. What is the difference between the two territories? The answer is simple. Whereas the Palestinian Authority want to create a lasting peace, the regime that controls Gaza wants to wage war against the Jewish people. Such hatred informs its decisions, which worsen the lives of ordinary Gazans.

Even more worrying is the anti-Semitism of Hamas. If we want to understand the humanitarian situation in Gaza, we need to appreciate the importance of the hatred that drives Hamas to launch bombs attached to balloons in the direction of innocent children. Since its foundation, Hamas has promoted the sort of perverse anti-Semitic stereotypes that some in our own country now believe. Its original charter accused the Jews of controlling Governments and triggering wars between them. It asserted that the Jewish people needed to be broken and their dream of a Jewish state destroyed. Even its revised charter denies Israel’s right to exist.

Such unrelenting hatred causes obvious concern in Israel, but it creates only misery for Gaza. It is the reason why Hamas hides its weapons in the homes of innocent people; why it fires rockets from unprotected schools and hospitals; and why it channels tens of millions of dollars of international aid into maintaining a network of tunnels that terrorise Israel. This year I had the opportunity to see one of those tunnels. Only by seeing it can a person comprehend the true scale of the terror infrastructure that Hamas has created. It is nothing like what many anti-Semitic commentators would have us believe. The tunnels are not built to assist those who might be fleeing. They are the product of sophisticated technical engineering, built with the purpose of supporting Hamas in achieving a prescribed outcome. Concrete slabs support the walls and ceilings of the passageways,

many of which have electric wiring and lighting.

col 317WH It is right that we concern ourselves with the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, yet I ask hon. Members to keep in mind what continues to make the humanitarian situation in Gaza unfavourable. Is it a lack of support by the international community? No. Is it the chronic shortage of humanitarian funding? No. It is the anti-Semitic hatred of Hamas that keeps Gaza in its current pitiful state.

Jack Lopresti (Conservative): ... Israel has doubled the amount of water it provides to Gaza to relieve the water crisis that Gazans face. Furthermore, Israeli healthcare and charitable bodies continue to provide their services to Palestinians. Some 6,000 children have been examined in the weekly cardiology clinic run by Save a Child's Heart in the city of Holon. Each day, around 700 trucks of supplies of medication, food and building materials enter Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. In total, 10 million tonnes of construction material have been delivered to Gaza since 2014. ...

col 318WH ... there are positive signs, but clearly they have not alleviated the very serious humanitarian situation in Gaza. It could be said that Israel can and should do more, but when we ask why it does not do more, we come across the root cause of the Gazan humanitarian catastrophe. Hamas won in the 2006 Palestinian legislative election, and emboldened by that, it militarily seized the Gaza strip in 2007. Since then, Hamas has been the undeniable root cause of the suffering and devastation in Gaza. ...

col 319WH **Marsha De Cordova (Labour):** ... The illegal blockade of Gaza is entering its 12th year. That is more than a decade of occupying forces violently locking nearly 2 million people in one of the most densely populated areas in the world, in what David Cameron described as an "open-air prison". It is more than a decade of Palestinians being terrorised by an Israeli army that still effectively occupies Gaza, with Israel retaining control over Gaza's borders, air space, sea space and public utilities. It is more than a decade of the Israeli army making frequent and devastating military interventions in Gaza, and it is more than a decade of its control being used to suffocate Gaza. ...

Paul Masterton (Conservative): ... It has gone relatively unreported ... that Israel has facilitated the passage of well over 10 million tonnes of construction materials into Gaza since Operation Protective Edge in 2014. It has expanded and developed its Kerem Shalom goods crossing to increase its capacity to 800 trucks a day, which carry food, medical equipment, fuel, building materials and more. Yet on at least three occasions in recent weeks Hamas has set fire to the crossing and to the gas pipelines that serve the people of Gaza. It has refused and destroyed aid supplies, including the medicines whose severe shortage other Members have highlighted, when it has been realised that they came from Israel. That attitude is completely incomprehensible and only compounds the suffering of Gazans, who are living in the most horrifying situation. ...

col 321WH **Chris Davies (Conservative):** ... The only way to end the humanitarian crisis is to improve the prospects and life opportunities of the people of Gaza. Israel has an important role to play in that. I particularly welcome reports today that Israel and Cyprus are working together to build a sea port to facilitate Gaza's rehabilitation, while also ensuring that Hamas will not be able to exploit the port for smuggling weapons. Hamas has, for too long, taken humanitarian aid away from the most needy in Gaza, for the purpose of terrorism. I hope that with the support of the international community the sea port will be able to open up a new and more hopeful chapter for the people of Gaza. ...

The Hamas-orchestrated riot on the border and the highest levels of rocket fire into Israel in years have been a painful reminder of the volatility of the area. Less well known, however, are the new arson terror attacks being deployed in Gaza, which have devastated Israeli communities along the border. Almost 1,000 incendiary kites and helium balloons bearing inflammable materials and, occasionally, explosives have been launched from Gaza into Israel, causing more than 1,000 fires in Israeli communities.

col 322WH Make no mistake: this new form of terrorism is led and co-ordinated by the Hamas terror group. It is inexpensive and straightforward. It must stop. ...

Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour): ... What makes Gazans less deserving than anyone else in the world who Britain, as an outward-looking country, fights for day in and day out? Why should parents continue to witness their children—children like ours—dying in their arms? We have a duty to ensure that we use the honourable power bestowed on us on the political stage to protect those at risk. Britain has always been an outward-looking country that does not shy away from the challenges that face us all. Our country's response to this crisis goes to the essence of who we are as people. We must stand up and call out the human rights offences in Gaza when they are taking place. We have a duty. We cannot turn our backs on those in Gaza. ...

col 325WH **Paul Sweeney (Labour):** ... There are three main things the UK can do. The first is to demand an end to the 11-year blockade of Gaza. Not only is the blockade illegal under international law ... but it is preventing the rebuilding of infrastructure, hospitals, schools, electricity supply and sewage systems. ...

Secondly, the UK Government need to review their defence sales relationship with Israel. ...

... as the Government's review found that the UK had issued 12 licences for defence equipment that they believed were likely to have been used in the 2014 war, and as equipment sales have continued unabated ever since, serious questions remain as to whether the UK-made weapons supplied to Israel were used by the Israeli Government during the recent horrific violence in Gaza, and there needs to be a full investigation into that.

Thirdly, we must push for an independent investigation by the UN or the International Criminal Court into Israel's use of live ammunition against civilians in Gaza ...

Joanna Cherry (SNP): ... [Grahame Morris] spoke about the fatal shooting of the volunteer paramedic, Razan al-Najjar, despite the fact that she was clearly identified as a paramedic. He said that that was a war crime, and I endorse that. ...

col 326WH ... the Scottish National party ... supports a two-state solution, but recognises that that is becoming less likely because of the situation on the ground and the settlements in the occupied territories. ...

col 327WH Last month, the Israeli ambassador visited Scotland, and my colleague, the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, met him. She delivered a forceful message on the Scottish Government's behalf that the 50 years of Palestinian oppression, the illegal occupation of the west bank, the illegal expansion of settlements and the illegal siege of Gaza must end, and that there must be genuine work in good faith towards a peaceful two-state solution. The Scottish National party also supports the UN Secretary-General's call for an independent investigation following the recent massacre. ...

col 328WH **Dan Carden (Labour):** ... It is no exaggeration to say that their whole future in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is now under direct threat. If we do not act in Britain, Europe, the United States or the middle east, or through the United Nations, millions will suffer from continued violence, from a lack of the most basic public services and clean water, and from a shortage of places to live. ...

We have to begin by acknowledging that the humanitarian crisis is man-made. It is vital to resolve Gaza's catastrophic lack of clean water and electricity, as well as its health system, which is hanging by a thread, and other life-threatening problems that experts say will make the strip uninhabitable in a matter of years. The utter desperation rife in the squalid, bombed-out settlements of Gaza has in recent weeks manifested itself in huge protests and an Israeli response that has shocked and appalled. As Members have said, we condemn any acts of terror by Hamas, just as we condemn the appalling actions of the Israeli Government. ...

col 330WH **The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Alistair Burt):** ... Last month, I visited Gaza again. ... we will do what we can to assist Members of Parliament in going, because there is nothing like seeing things on both sides, but it must be for Israel to decide in terms of security. We are all subject to being cautious

about that. While I was there, I once again saw the extreme humanitarian difficulties that the people of Gaza now face. ...

Without additional support, the health system is unable to cope with the high casualty rates from the demonstrations. Between 30 March and 12 June, 14,605 people were injured and a further 135 died. Between 30 March and 3 June, two health workers were killed and 328 were injured, including by live ammunition and tear gas. An estimated 80,000 additional non-trauma patients have had limited access to emergency healthcare services. Shortages of medicines are chronic in Gaza. An estimated 1.2 million Gaza residents have no access to running water. A lack of adequate sanitation facilities poses a serious health risk. Approximately 1.45 million people in the Gaza strip are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases from the consumption of unsafe water. Gaza has three main sources of electricity supply: Israel, Egypt and the Gaza power plant. The most stable of those sources is from Israel, which supplies 120 MW of electricity through 10 feeder lines, but those are unstable, as we know. ...

col 331WH When I was in Gaza I announced £1.5 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross appeal. ...

We are also committing an extra £2 million to UNICEF to address urgent water and sanitation needs. That will help Gazans to have access to clean water to drink, cook and bathe. Our support will provide more than 1,000 roof water tanks for families to help them store scarce water, drinking water tanks, and chemicals to treat water in 280 wells and 38 desalination plants, making water safe for human use. ...

Col 332WH On the slightly longer term, we are looking hard at what we can do on a new economic development package, designed to lift the standard of living in Gaza by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water. ...

... if someone looked objectively at Gaza, they would say—whatever party they were from—that whatever is being devised by way of policy just is not working. Israel has put pressure on Hamas for 12 years or so in order to effect political change in Gaza. It has clearly not worked. Hamas is still there. Rockets are still being fired. People on the border areas are still under threat, in Sderot and other such places.

Equally, Israel has not crumbled and is not at risk from Hamas. Hamas has achieved nothing politically and has damaged the people it purports to represent. The Palestinian Authority have had no success in dealing with Gaza. Attempts at reconciliation should be encouraged and should go forward. Those who live in Gaza have seen no evidence of the success of policies purportedly put forward in their defence, including politically, to give them a right to protest against the state of Israel. The same applies to protecting those in Israel from a terrorist organisation that is clearly hell-bent on killing them if it gets the chance. ...

We get nowhere if we listen to only one side of the argument. It is no more effective to talk about Hamas's rule in Gaza and blame everything on Hamas than it is to blame everything on Israel and not understand the context of the political discussion and what is going on. My point is that none of that helps the people of Gaza. If that is what we want to do, we have to do something new.

col 333WH The only extraordinary thing in politics is that we assume that these two different sides will go on forever. This must not go on. ... The truth is that there has been a comprehensive, international and partisan failure for the people of Gaza ... If the United Kingdom is to have an impact, we first have to say very clearly that these policies have not worked, and stress the urgent need for a political settlement and for immediate attention to be given to humanitarian aid in Gaza. We also have to be very clear that those who exploit the situation politically, whether it is non-state groups or state groups, also have to bear their responsibility. We get nowhere unless we understand that. ...

col 334WH I entirely accept that it has an asymmetric element to it, with regard to Israel and Hamas, but that is a description. It gets us nowhere, because unless the two sides are engaged in finding an answer there will not be one. ...

What worries me is that the PA, who for years have accepted the state of Israel, have

been non-violent and co-operated in relation to security, must not be left out of ultimate settlement talks. It cannot all depend on Hamas and what it has been able to achieve over the years with its policy of destruction towards the state of Israel. ...

We have to do more and call out everyone, saying, "Actually, the policy is failing, so everyone needs to provide something new." ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/E5E2F66B-A729-4802-97A7-6870CEFD8BD7/GazaHumanitarianSituation>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Israel and Palestine

7. **Matthew Pennycook (Labour):** What representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the proposed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar village in the West Bank. [906041]

16. **Gavin Shuker (Labour Co-op):** What recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on prospects for the peace process in Israel and Palestine. [906050]

19. **Kevin Hollinrake (Conservative):** What the policy of the Government is on a two-state solution in the Middle East. [906053]

25. **Marsha De Cordova (Labour):** What recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. [906059]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): We support a negotiated two-state solution. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu on 16 May and reiterated the need for progress. We remain concerned by proposals to demolish Khan al-Ahmar and by new Israeli settlement plans. The Foreign Secretary urged Israel to reconsider when he met Prime Minister Netanyahu on 6 June. I visited Khan al-Ahmar in May and afterwards raised our concerns with my Israeli counterparts and with the Israeli ambassador to the UK.

Matthew Pennycook: In his discussions with his Israeli counterpart, has the Minister made it clear that the forcible transfer of communities under occupation in area C, such as Khan al-Ahmar, would constitute a breach of international humanitarian law and, furthermore, effectively end the prospect of a viable Palestinian state?

Alistair Burt: When I made a statement about that, I drew attention to the point the hon. Gentleman mentioned in the first part of his question about how it might possibly be construed. In relation to the second part, if there is further development in that area, it does indeed call into question the viability of a two-state solution.

Gavin Shuker: Does the Minister accept that the forcible transfer of Khan al-Ahmar would effectively bisect the west bank and make the price of peace that much higher? Does he also accept that the refusal of the British Government to recognise a state of Palestine makes it harder for the human rights of the Palestinians to be heard?

Alistair Burt: I am not sure about the second part because we do raise issues of human rights, particularly in relation to settlements and the like. On the first part, yes, the concern about the location of Khan al-Ahmar—its close proximity to E1 and the possibility of development there being a bar to contiguity—is indeed a concern for the whole of the international community. It is still possible for any demolition not to go ahead.

Kevin Hollinrake: There is clearly a systemic issue at the heart of this. Residents of Khan al-Ahmar are being forcibly removed and the village demolished. As the court judgment says, the homes have been built without consent, but there is no means of getting consent because permissions are systemically denied to Palestinians. It is a

Catch-22 situation that leaves families in a perpetual state of homelessness. How can such a policy be deemed fair or reasonable, and what influence can my right hon. Friend bring to bear to resolve it?

Alistair Burt: The concerns that my hon. Friend raises have been at the heart of the discussions on this. Israel has a judicial system. It is true that concerns about the possible demolition of Khan al-Ahmar have been raised in the Israeli courts for a lengthy period, and it has not gone ahead, as others demolitions have not gone ahead. We continue to appeal to the Israeli authorities that, despite their judicial system, the Government can make a decision in relation to Khan al-Ahmar, and the problem in relation to finding building permits in area C is well known.

Marsha De Cordova: So far this year, the Israeli authorities have demolished 27 donor-funded structures in east Jerusalem and on the west bank. Can the Minister comment on whether any of these structures were funded by the UK?

Alistair Burt: I am not aware of any. The EU has made some claims for compensation in relation to structures, but not the UK. Again, the hon. Lady emphasises the problem in relation to settlements and structures. These are difficult issues in relation to the context of Israel and the occupied territories and we believe this could be dealt with in a different way.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the recent attacks by Hamas from Gaza into Israel?

Alistair Burt: As always, we condemn any terrorist attack. Hamas's policy on Israel is well known. We have no contact with Hamas and, until it moves on the Quartet principles, it is unlikely to play a serious part in the future of Gaza.

Nigel Dodds (DUP): Regarding the prospects for peace, stability and good relations in the region generally, what discussions have there been with the American Administration about the forthcoming peace plan for the area, and what does the Minister make of those who would dismiss the plan even before it has got off the ground?

Alistair Burt: No one should dismiss any possibility for the peace plan. This is a first-term President who has expressed his determination through his envoys to bring something forward. There is concern that nothing has come forward yet, but it is a question of timing, and various parts of the plan have been spoken about with different entities. It is important, if it comes forward, that it be given every chance of success. The region and the world cannot wait forever for a resolution to this issue, and we would wish the prospects for a settlement well when the plan comes forward. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the landmark visit today by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, the first member of the royal family to officially visit Israel? The visit underlines the deep bond of friendship between the two countries.

Alistair Burt: Yes indeed. The Government are delighted at the visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge. It is an important opportunity for His Royal Highness to promote the strong relationships between the British, Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Louise Ellman (Labour Co-op): Does the Minister consider that Hamas organising a march of return to areas that have been part of Israel since 1948 is likely to move us any closer to a negotiated two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians?

Alistair Burt: The answer is probably not. Everyone knows that the right of return will be dealt with in the ultimate negotiations in relation to an agreement. There are legitimate reasons to protest in Gaza, and there is also illegitimate exploitation of those reasons.

Fabian Hamilton (Labour): It has been widely reported that the Foreign Secretary intends to convene an imminent summit with Jared Kushner and other interested parties to lay out the red lines that the Government will apply when evaluating the Trump Administration's Israel-Palestine peace plan. Will the Minister of State tell the House in clear terms today what those red lines are?

Alistair Burt: No, I won't. There is plenty to do in relation to this without me setting out any red lines that may or may not be extant.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/4A538922-FBAB-49B1-BA5F-98ECED60B3E0/IsraelAndPalestine>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T2. John Lamont (Conservative): In recent months, Gaza-based terrorists have not only renewed the firing of rockets into Israel, but adopted a new tactic of dispatching airborne fire-bombs, and even explosives, across the border using kites. Although that may sound crude, it poses a real risk to life and has caused extensive fire damage to agricultural fields in Israel. Will the Minister therefore join me in condemning those actions? [906061]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): Yes, my hon. Friend is right; these kites sound innocent, but they have indeed done a significant amount of damage in financial terms, to fields, and there are significant risks. It does not in any way help a resolution of issues if these projectiles continue to come from Gaza, and of course we condemn such actions.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/85589040-58BD-4E3C-A76D-53C11665AF13/TopicalQuestions#contribution-79562C52-83BE-4503-8585-98818AFBDAB3>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T6. Colin Clark (Conservative): The Hamas terrorist group continues to misappropriate international aid to rebuild its terror infrastructure, including attack tunnels into Israel. This is deeply concerning. What does the Foreign Secretary intend to do, alongside our international partners, to limit Hamas's dangerous influence in Gaza? [906065]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): There are strict controls, as there must be, on the passage and entry of goods into Gaza, to make sure that they are not used for the wrong purpose. The United Kingdom makes sure that all its aid that is delivered to Gaza goes through international partners, so that there cannot be such diversion. It is an issue and it must be dealt with, alongside a variety of issues for the people of Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/85589040-58BD-4E3C-A76D-53C11665AF13/TopicalQuestions#contribution-AAC7DFA0-2496-4AD9-B7BC-AB4E0D012964>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T10. Philippa Whitford (SNP): Last month, when the House debated the shooting of unarmed protesters on the Gaza border with high-velocity live rounds, the Minister talked about pushing for an investigation, yet three days later the UK abstained on a UN vote on an investigation. Why? [906069]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): Because both the resolutions brought forward by the Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council were biased and not likely to produce the required answer. That is why we did not support them. We still maintain that there should be an independent and transparent investigation and we have raised the issue with the Israeli authorities directly.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/85589040-58BD-4E3C-A76D-53C11665AF13/TopicalQuestions#contribution-9F146A11-B89E-4D64-B248-C9DDEEF1CFF9>

House of Commons Written Answer

Laith Abu Zeyad

Caroline Lucas (Green) [154673] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Palestinian

counterparts on the case of Amnesty International staff member, Laith Abu Zeyad; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: Whilst we have not raised the case of Laith Abu Zeyad, our Consul General in Jerusalem raised our concerns over the actions of the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces and police during the demonstration held in Ramallah on 13 June. He stressed the need for an investigation to understand what happened, to learn the lessons and to enable appropriate action to be taken.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-18/154673/>

House of Lords Oral Answers

See also the House of Lords exchange on “Anti-Semitism” in the “Home Affairs” section above.

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL8587] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the UK Ambassador to the UN Security Council on 30 May that the UK supports Israel's right to self-defence for its citizens, whether they also support the right of Palestinians to security and self-defence.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK supports the Palestinian Authority as a basis for laying the foundations for a safe and secure Palestinian state. In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) the UK has always supported the right of all parties in the region to a just and lasting peace, with secure and recognised boundaries.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-12/HL8587/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/condemning-attacks-from-gaza-into-israel-and-calling-for-direct-negotiations-for-two-state-solution>

Department for International Development

UK aid to help provide Gazans with access to clean water and sanitation

... Today's support, an allocation of £2 million to UNICEF, will help ensure that the two million Palestinians in Gaza have access to safe water to drink and cook with.

There is a dire shortage of water in Gaza, where just 4 per cent of water in the strip is fit for human consumption and many families rely on buying dirty water from unregulated vendors.

This UK aid package will help:

- install over 1,000 roof water tanks to help families store clean water
- provide over 3,000 communal water drums so that households can collect clean water
- provide chlorine to treat water in 280 wells and 38 water treatment plants. ...

In addition to today's package of support, UK aid in Gaza is already helping to repair water and wastewater pipes, provide chlorine for 70 wells and 20 desalination plants. It will also provide 1,300 water storage tanks and give 15,000 of the most vulnerable families essential hygiene items, such as soap, sanitary towels and shampoo as well as water treatment kits.

On a recent visit to Gaza Minister Burt also announced £1.5 million for the International

Committee of the Red Cross to keep hospitals open and functioning following the recent surge in violence.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-help-provide-gazans-with-access-to-clean-water-and-sanitation>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Freedom of Worship (Commonwealth)

2. **Patricia Gibson (SNP):** What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the extent of freedom of worship in Commonwealth countries. [906036]

The Minister for Africa (Harriett Baldwin): The Foreign Secretary chaired regular meetings with Cabinet colleagues on the April Commonwealth meetings objectives. The Commonwealth leaders' communiqué emphasised that full social, economic and political participation for all irrespective of religion is essential for democracy and sustainable development.

Patricia Gibson: Will the Minister tell the House what further practical steps are being taken to ensure the protection of human rights in the Commonwealth, including freedom of religion or belief? That is at the heart of UK foreign policy. Does she share the concerns of Open Doors that the persecution of religious minorities must remain high on the international agenda?

Yes, I can confirm that. Further to the very widely attended Westminster Hall debate last month, I can assure the hon. Lady that at all parts of our diplomatic network we raise these issues at the highest level.

Martin Vickers (Conservative): Religious freedom in the Commonwealth is important, but Christian communities throughout the wider world suffer from persecution. Can the Minister give an absolute assurance that the Government will do everything possible to ensure that Christians and other religious groups have freedom of worship?

Harriett Baldwin: I can assure my hon. Friend that freedom of religion and belief is one of the topics we regularly raise at the highest level throughout our diplomatic network.

David Drew (Labour Co-op): Will the Minister ensure that she talks, via the Foreign Secretary, to President Buhari of Nigeria? With the dreadful goings on in that country and the increasing pressure on the Christian community in the north, it is about time that the President stood up and did something to protect it.

Harriett Baldwin: Specifically on the situation in Nigeria, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we regularly raise these issues at the highest level with our friends in Nigeria. We are aware that these conflicts are often driven by conflict over land, grazing rights and water. They should not necessarily always be characterised by religious difference.

Steve Double (Conservative): Sadly, around the world today we are seeing a rise in the level of persecution of Christians, particularly across the middle east. Will the Minister confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office remains committed to protecting and promoting religious freedom, particularly of Christians who are persecuted around the world?

Harriett Baldwin: I can certainly confirm that, but it is wider than that. We always seek to help in specific situations relating to all freedom of religion and belief, but we also raise the issue more widely in international forums such as the United Nations.

Jim Shannon (DUP): Bearing in mind that the Commonwealth charter lists tolerance, respect and understanding as a guiding principle, will the Minister outline what diplomatic pressure her Department will use to defend against persecution those who choose Christ in India, Nigeria and Malaysia?

Harriett Baldwin: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's assiduous pursuit of this agenda. He mentions three specific countries. I can assure him that we regularly raise issues of freedom of religion and belief not just in those countries but more widely, and not only in Commonwealth countries but across the wider network.

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/1853BD10-0258-4047-9882-E184F5A23582/FreedomOfWorship\(Commonwealth\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-26/debates/1853BD10-0258-4047-9882-E184F5A23582/FreedomOfWorship(Commonwealth))

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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>

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-06-26/debates/D13B3A5F-B212-4575-90CA-92DB2C0AB3DB/RoyalAssent>

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/16/pdfs/ukpga_20180016_en.pdf

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>

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 6 days**

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