

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 Lords Written Answer

School Meals: Meat

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Conservative) [HL8818] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether meat from animals slaughtered without first being stunned is being served as part of school meals in local authority maintained schools.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: We do not collect this information.

The Government sets out required minimum standards for school food in the School Food Standards to ensure that children are served healthy, nutritious meals at school. The standards do not specify food requirements in terms of cultural and religious needs.

Head teachers, governors and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies. We expect schools to act reasonably and to provide choices that take account of cultural, religious and special dietary needs. We also expect schools to work with parents in making appropriate arrangements. In particular, schools should consult with parents when making changes to school food provision and ensure that parents have access to information on the food provided. If parents are not happy with the food provided by the school, they can discuss this with the school and may consider using the schools complaints policy. We would expect any significant changes to school food to be discussed with parents.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-20/HL8818/>

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Government plans renewed action to tackle hate crime

Police call handlers will be offered specialist training on how to give hate crime victims the vital support they need when reporting an incident.

The programme will help call handlers to effectively identify if a hate crime has been committed and provide a professional and empathetic response for people who may have suffered personal abuse.

Money provided by the Home Office will allow for the distribution of training resources to police forces, which will be delivered by the National Police Chiefs' Council in partnership with Facing All The Facts, which tackles hate crime and hate speech across Europe.

It is part of the government's crucial work to tackle all forms of hate crime, support victims and protect the vulnerable from this horrific abuse. Later this year the government will be updating its Hate Crime Action Plan to provide further measures to tackle the five hate crime strands – race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identities. ... Home Secretary Sajid Javid said: Hate crimes are totally unacceptable and have no place in British society. I understand the fear, anguish and anger they can cause.

Those who have the courage to report these vile crimes deserve as much support as possible. That is why we have provided funding to give police call handlers expert training to spot the signs and respond compassionately.

I will also be asking my Anti-Muslim hate crime and Antisemitism roundtables to identify what more we can do to stamp out hate crime.

Secretary of State for Communities Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said: ... Hate crimes have a devastating effect on both the victim and a wider impact on society as a whole. We are clear that hate crime of any form is completely unacceptable and we are working to ensure the police and our justice system responds effectively to hold perpetrators to account. ...

Minister for Counter Extremism Baroness Williams said: No one should feel the only way to deal with hateful comments is to develop a thick skin. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-plans-renewed-action-to-tackle-hate-crime>

Labour Party

The Labour Party is reported to have published a new Code of Conduct relating to antisemitism that includes only 7 of the 11 examples of antisemitism contained in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition that has been adopted by, amongst others, both the UK and Scottish Governments.

The examples omitted from the Labour Code of Conduct are:

- Accusing Jewish people of being more loyal to Israel than their home country;
- Claiming that Israel's existence as a state is a racist endeavour;
- Requiring higher standards of behaviour from Israel than other nations; and
- Comparing contemporary Israeli policies to those of the Nazis.

The Code of Conduct has not yet been made public by the Labour Party but has been published on twitter by LBC Political Editor Theo Usherwood at

<https://twitter.com/theousherwood/status/1014771043381235712>

The Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), which is affiliated to the Labour Party, has criticised the new Code of Conduct, writing that:

“We cannot give antisemites a get out of jail free card.”

and

“The perception from the new definition will be that the Labour Party are seeking to overturn the longheld view and definition of the Jewish community. The Party should abandon this definition, without haste, and make clear that it has already adopted and actively using IHRA.”

To read the full JLM letter from Luciana Berger MP and National Chair Ivor Caplin, see

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/jewishlabour/pages/704/attachments/original/1530727097/0727097/JF_4.7.18.pub.pdf?1530727097

The Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council have responded to the new Code of Conduct:

“It is for Jews to determine for themselves what antisemitism is. The UK Jewish community has adopted in full the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Definition of Antisemitism, as have the British Government, Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament, 124 local authorities across the country and numerous governments around the world. It is impossible to understand why Labour refuses to align itself with this universal definition. Its actions only dilute the definition and further erode the existing lack of confidence that British Jews have in their sincerity to tackle antisemitism within the Labour movement.”

<https://www.bod.org.uk/board-of-deputies-and-jewish-leadership-council-react-to-labours-refusal-to-adopt-antisemitism-definition-in-full/>

and

https://www.thejlc.org/jlc_and_board_of_deputies_respond_to_new_labour_antisemitism_guidelines

The IHRA definition of antisemitism can be read at

https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_anti_semitism.pdf

TOP

Israel

Westminster Hall Debate

Palestinian Education System

col 165WH **Joan Ryan (Labour):** ... The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians provokes strong passions and much disagreement on all sides of the debate. Wherever we stand, I hope we can all agree that to bring that tragic conflict to a close, it is vital that old hatreds and prejudices are not passed on to new generations of children and young people. ...

unreservedly support a two-state solution and I believe that a strong and competent Palestinian Authority have an important part to play in achieving that goal. ...

John Howell (Conservative): ... Has [Joan Ryan] noticed ... that textbooks for Palestinian children contain the phrase that cities in Israel such as Tel Aviv are in occupied Palestine? That goes completely against the two-state solution.

Joan Ryan: I cannot but agree with the hon. Gentleman. ...

Louise Ellman (Labour Co-op): Is my right hon. Friend concerned that the textbooks she talks about call on children to “annihilate the remnants of the foreigners”, as well as talking about sacrificing blood? They call on young children to believe that “death is a privilege”. Does she believe that that kind of teaching to very young children is compatible with seeking co-existence?

Joan Ryan: I do not believe it is compatible with seeking co-existence; to warp the minds of young children is a serious form of child abuse. ...

col 166WH It is completely indefensible that officially sanctioned textbooks used in school and sanctioned by the Palestinian Authority contain material that is really harmful to children. ...

There are many instances where the PA have clearly and repeatedly flouted the principles I referred to. Perhaps most egregious is its payment of salaries to those who commit terrorist attacks—a truly grotesque policy that further incentivises violence by rewarding those who are serving the longest sentences, and thus have committed the most heinous acts, with the highest payments. The official PA media are also saturated with vile anti-Semitism and the glorification of those who commit acts of violence against Jews.

I fail, for instance, to see how children’s television programmes in which poems are recited that refer to Jews as “barbaric monkeys”, “wretched pigs” and the “most evil

among creations” do anything to advance the cause of peace, reconciliation and co-existence. Neither do I view the naming of summer camps and sports tournaments after so-called martyrs who murder Israeli schoolchildren as in any way conducive to furthering a two-state solution. ...

col 167WH In 2016 and 2017, the PA published a reformed curriculum covering both primary and secondary school students. ... As the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education outlined in a series of reports, the new curriculum represents a significant step backwards. Based on standards for peace and tolerance derived from UNESCO and UN declarations, it found that the new curriculum “exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence in a more extensive and sophisticated manner” and has expanded its focus “from demonization of Israel to providing a rationale for war.” It is “more radical than ever, purposefully and strategically encouraging Palestinian children to sacrifice themselves to martyrdom.” ...

... martyrs such as Dalal Mughrabi—who led the infamous 1978 coastal road massacre in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were brutally murdered—are held up as role models. ...

The curriculum offers no education for peacemaking with Israel or any suggestion that the path of peace is preferred to the path of violence. It implicitly argues that Palestinians will return to a pre-1967 Israel through violence. ...

col 168WH **Richard Burden (Labour):** ... “Building a house is like killing 100 Arabs. Building a whole settlement is like killing 10,000 non-Jews.” Those are the words of settler leader Moshe Zar, not at an unofficial gathering but at an official Israeli Ministry of Education event, and reported in Ynetnews. Does that not indicate that incitement exists on both sides and has to be tackled on both sides? ...

Joan Ryan: I am not making an argument for the Israeli Government. ...

This is not some unfortunate tale about events in the middle east, for which Britain has no responsibility. British aid to the PA helps fund the salaries of 33,000 teachers and Ministry of Education and Higher Education civil servants. As the Minister clearly stated in answers to parliamentary questions I tabled in March: “According to the Palestinian Authority...Ministry of Education and Higher Education, all of their schools in the West Bank are using the revised 2017 PA curriculum.”

UK-funded public servants and teachers under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education are therefore involved in the implementation process. ...

col 169WH I urge the Government to take action. First, they should suspend all aid to the PA that directly or indirectly finances those teaching and implementing this curriculum until the PA commit to wholesale and urgent revisions of it. Secondly, I have suggested previously that Britain cut its aid to the PA by 14%—double the percentage of the PA budget that is used to pay terrorist salaries—and invest that money in a Palestinian peace fund aimed at young people. It would support education projects in Palestine not tarnished by the PA’s anti-Semitism. While money that would have paid the salaries of teachers and Education Ministry public servants remains suspended, it can be redirected into that fund. I am suggesting not a cut in the funding but a change in where it goes. ...

Finally, given that the UK is so heavily invested in education, we must ensure that we monitor far more closely what is going on in Palestinian classrooms. ...

col 170WH **The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** ... The UK strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to avoid engaging in or encouraging any type of action and language that makes a culture of peaceful co-existence and a negotiated solution to the conflict more difficult to achieve. ...

It was perfectly right and proper for the right hon. Lady to cite a series of examples. None of them was justifiable, and the United Kingdom would not seek to justify them in any way, but we have discussed such matters too many times in this place, and too many attitudes are born out of the conflict’s history and context, making them difficult to escape. ...

col 171WH Our continued support will come with a continued strong challenge to the Palestinian Authority on education sector incitement. Let me be very clear: education has no place for materials or practices that incite young minds towards violence. I have seen the reports expressing concern about the content of new Palestinian textbooks, and I take the findings of those reports seriously. ...

That is why we are in the final stages of discussions to establish an independent textbook review jointly with other donors. The plan at the moment is for the review to be completed by September 2019. ...

col 172WH Our ambition for inclusive education must be much greater than simply to ensure that textbooks do not incite violence. To contribute towards a just and lasting peace, we must promote positive portrayals of others to instil the values of peace and tolerance in the minds of young people. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-04/debates/427DEF14-43F1-4090-98D6-742499164690/PalestinianEducationSystem>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: International Development

T6. **Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat):** Ministers will be aware that as we speak the bulldozers are moving into the Palestinian settlement of Khan al-Ahmar. That will lead to the forced displacement of the residents there, in a clear breach of international law. Will the Minister assure me that we are on the ground now, gathering evidence of these breaches of law, so that those who are responsible will later be legally accountable? [906259]

Alistair Burt: I will be answering an urgent question on this matter shortly. We have taken a great deal of interest over many years in the affairs of those Bedouins at Khan al-Ahmar. I visited them just a few weeks ago and this remains a matter of great concern to the UK.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-04/debates/93991AE4-827C-4E68-8D38-EB00EA34F018/TopicalQuestions#contribution-5FC5738E-9E2A-4CA3-B226-9560FE0262EE>

Topical Questions: International Development

T8. **Carol Monaghan (SNP):** Healthcare workers tending wounded in Gaza are coming under fire from the Israeli defence force. What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the Israeli Government about this unacceptable and barbaric practice? [906261]

Alistair Burt: We have many discussions with the Government and state of Israel about the issues recently in Gaza. Although it is right for Israel to protect itself, aid workers and medical workers should never be a target for attack.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-04/debates/93991AE4-827C-4E68-8D38-EB00EA34F018/TopicalQuestions#contribution-6B313350-34E2-4520-841E-D1F884D9B001>

House of Commons Urgent Question

Demolition of Khan al-Ahmar

col 323 **Richard Burden (Labour):** I had hoped to ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the imminent demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar and the threat of the forcible transfer of its residents, but in the light of developments this morning, I must instead ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the demolition that has commenced at Khan al-Ahmar and the village of Abu Nuwar and on the actual forcible transfer of the residents of those villages.

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): This morning, officials from our

embassy in Tel Aviv and from our consulate general in Jerusalem visited Khan al-Ahmar to express our concern and demonstrate the international community's support for that community. Once there, they did indeed observe a bulldozer, which began levelling the ground. While we have not yet witnessed any demolition of structures, it would appear that demolition is imminent. We deeply regret this turn of events. The United Nations has said that this would not only constitute forcible transfer, but pave the way for settlement building in E1. In accordance with our long-standing policy, we therefore condemn such a move, which would strike a major blow to prospects for a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

The United Kingdom has repeatedly raised its concerns with the Israeli authorities and others, for instance during my visit to Khan al-Ahmar on 30 May. On 12 June I issued a video message emphasising the United Kingdom's concern at the village's imminent demolition, and I reiterated that concern to the Israeli ambassador to the UK on 20 June. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has also expressed his concern, most recently during his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in London on 6 June. The Foreign Secretary's statement on 1 June also made it clear that the UK was deeply concerned by the proposed demolition, which the UN has said could amount to "forcible transfer", in violation of international humanitarian law. As recently as Monday, the British ambassador to Israel raised the issue with the Israeli national security adviser. Later today, the British ambassador will join a *démarche* alongside European partners to request as a matter of urgency that the Israeli authorities halt demolition plans.

Israel believes that, under its independent court system and rule of law, it has the right to take the action that it is beginning today, but it is not compelled to do so, and need not do so. A change of plan would be welcomed around the world, and would assist the prospects of a two-state solution and an end to this long-standing issue.

col/ 324 Richard Burden: ... People who live in these villages threaten no one. Their crime is to have homes on land that Israel wants, in order to expand the illegal settlements of Kfar Adumim and Ma'ale Adumim. To speak plainly, this is state-sponsored theft: a theft that will cut the west bank in two, making a contiguous Palestinian state near-impossible and the prospects of a two-state solution still more remote. More importantly, as the Minister said, the forcible transfer of the villagers of Khan al-Ahmar and Abu Nuwar contravenes international humanitarian law. It is a war crime.

As the Minister also said, he ... has repeatedly urged the Government of Israel not to go ahead with the demolitions. Now that they have ignored those calls, the question is whether the commission of this war crime will have any consequence. If not, why will Mr Netanyahu believe other than that war crimes can continue with impunity? What practical action do the UK Government propose to take to hold those responsible for this war crime to account, and is it not time finally to outlaw commercial dealings by UK firms with illegal settlements in the west bank?

Alistair Burt: This is a community that was moved before and moved to settle where they are, unable to get planning permission under Israeli planning law and therefore they built the settlement they did. ... the overwhelming sense of many of us is that this should not be happening and need not be happening. The damage it proposes to do, at a time when many of us are looking to a move on the middle east peace process in which this piece of land might play a significant part, rather pulls the rug away from those of us who want to see a two-state solution—which, as many say, is perhaps why this has been done. ...

Nicholas Soames (Conservative): ... it is beyond comprehension that a remarkable country like Israel, cultured, sophisticated and democratic—whose people down the centuries have themselves known such terrible suffering—can countenance such wicked behaviour, which is contrary to all international laws and humanitarian conventions, as she continues to bulldoze Palestinian villages like Khan al-Ahmar, whose residents' houses are, I understand, at this moment being flattened. What other country would dare

to behave in this barbaric way? Will the Government condemn these actions in the strongest possible terms?

Alistair Burt: The short answer to the last part of my right hon. Friend's question is yes. The wider issue that he raised ... was the contrast between an Israel for which many of us feel very deeply, and which we believe has many admirable qualities, and some of its actions which seem to go against that history and culture, and about which we have a sense of deep concern and sometimes bemusement. ...

col 325 **Emily Thornberry (Labour):** ... We are all tired of asking what can be done to cajole or compel the Netanyahu Government to start listening to their international allies, to start complying with UN resolutions on settlements, or to start acting with some basic fairness and justice on the issue of building permits. ...

Does the Minister share my concerns that we are fast approaching a dangerous place where even some respected Palestinian figures are moving away from the idea of a two-state solution towards seeking democratic control over a single state, with all the implications that that would have for the potential Israeli minority? ...

col 326 **Alistair Burt:** ... No one quite knows what the boundaries of a future state might be, but we all have a sense of what the parameters would be. That is why the concerns about the E1 area outside Jerusalem have been so important and have perhaps led to some restraint over the years. But if that is to go, what is left and what is next? ...

Stephen Gethins (SNP): ... Does [the Minister] agree with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that the demolition violates international law? ... Is it time for a global response? Finally, may I join others in this House, the Scottish Government and other states in calling on this Government to recognise Palestine as an independent state? ...

Alistair Burt: ... it is difficult to see what steps can be taken next, after what will be seen as a provocative gesture, that would make it still viable to keep working on the solution we want to see, but that still remains a possibility. ...

col 327 **Hilary Benn (Labour):** ... as well as destroying people's homes, as we have heard today, the Government of Israel are in the process of severely damaging their international reputation when it comes to respect for the rule of law. ...

Alistair Burt: ... We remain clearly very attached to Israel as an ally in many respects in terms of defence and security particularly in what is a difficult region, but, as is sometimes the case even with the closest friends, there are areas where we are not only not certain of their course of action but believe it to be fundamentally wrong, and this is one of those. ...

Desmond Swayne (Conservative): ... by our refusal to act, we make ourselves complicit ...

col 328 **Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat):** ... I am also ... perplexed and dismayed that Israel appears not to comprehend or to be prepared to take note of the outrage and the damage done to its reputation by this forcible transfer of communities, which is regarded as a breach of international law. ...

David Jones (Conservative): Article 53 of the Geneva convention expressly prohibits the destruction of property in occupied territory other than for military purposes. Given that there can be no possible military purpose in destroying the residential community of Khan al-Ahmar, does my right hon. Friend agree with my assessment that, even as we speak, the state of Israel is committing a war crime?

Alistair Burt: I am not sure if the UK is in a position to make that judgment, but certainly, as has been made clear, the United Nations has already said that it could constitute forcible transfer and clearly now that things have actually begun that matter becomes a much sharper one for consideration. ...

Andy Slaughter (Labour): ... There are 46 Bedouin villages and their future may well hang on whether the Israeli authorities get away with the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar. This allows for the splitting of the west bank and for the annexation, which is now openly talked about, of the west bank by Israel to take place. If not now, when are the

Government going to act? When are they going to act against illegal settlements and end trade? When are they going to recognise Palestine and when are they going to recognise their historical obligations and take a lead internationally, rather than wringing their hands? ...

Alistair Burt: ... it is my view—and, I think, the view of the Government—that we want to keep the opportunity of the two-state solution open and viable. That requires remaining in contact with the Government of the state of Israel. ...

col 329 ... The settlements in the area are deemed illegal, but between 2014 and the summer of 2016 just 1.3% of building permits requested by Palestinians in area C were granted, and between 2010 and 2015 only 8% of all building permits in Jerusalem were given in Palestinian neighbourhoods. Practically, this leaves Palestinians with little option but to build without permission, placing their homes at risk of demolition on the grounds that they do not have a permit. While recognising Israel's judicial system and recognising the rights that it believes it has in relation to this, other circumstances have to come into consideration, which is why the United Kingdom takes the view that it does about this demolition. ...

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... Does my right hon. Friend see the link between this urgent question and the debate later today in Westminster Hall ... about incitement in the Palestinian education system? These cruel and illegal actions form part of an unshakeable Palestinian perception of Israeli policy over five decades in the occupied territories that breeds the anger and despair that contribute to an environment of historic hatred that is going to become almost impossible to reverse.

col 330 **Alistair Burt:** ... Whereas there are older people in Palestinian areas and in Israel who can talk about living in each other's villages and about times past, that now seems impossible for some younger people. ...

col 331 **Ross Thomson (Conservative):** Strong concerns have been expressed this afternoon, and I join those calls for the demolitions to be halted. Israel has provided welfare for the rapidly growing Bedouin communities and proposed solutions to improve their quality of life. Does the Minister recognise that Israel is trying to work with those communities to resolve this undeniably sensitive situation?

Alistair Burt: ... Proposals have been put forward, including by Benny Begin some years ago, and a lot of work has been done with the Bedouin community from the Negev and in the area. However, there is a fundamental point at which people's rights, feelings and desires have to be taken into account. In this particular instance, it is not deniable that Israel has indeed come forward with alternative accommodation, but the question is, as it would be for any of us: if someone offers you something, you have a choice as to whether to accept it, but if that choice is taken away, the circumstances are rather different. ...

col 332 **Joanna Cherry (SNP):** There is clearly a strong feeling today that we need more than just condemnation. Given that Israel's settlements, the demolitions and the forcible transfer of people are illegal under international law, the British Government could tell UK businesses that they should not collude with illegality in their commercial dealings with the settlements any more than they should collude with illegality in the UK. ...

Alistair Burt: ... that has not been our policy in the past. We have left the choice to people who know the background and the circumstances that relate to settlements and their produce. However, as I said earlier, the UK reserves all its actions while it considers what it might do. ...

Wes Streeting (Labour): ... What is happening is a deliberate policy intention of the present Israeli Government, who have no regard or concern for a two-state solution and simply want to expand illegal settlements, which will ultimately undermine the security and legitimacy of the Israelis and grossly infringe the human rights of Palestinians. ...

Julie Elliott (Labour): We are now hearing of dozens of Palestinians being hospitalised as a result of the tragedy of the start of the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar this morning.

That demolition is a war crime, so how will the British Government ensure that Israeli decision makers are held to account for what has happened today? ...

col 333 **Alistair Burt:** ... I said earlier that the British ambassador would be joining a démarche of Israel this afternoon in response to the actions that have been taken. ... It is not the lack of making a case that is the concern; it is the lack of listening to the case. ...

Paula Sherriff (Labour): I have just heard that 35 people have been injured so far today as a direct result of the demolition. I know the Minister to be a very decent man, so will he pledge specifically to investigate why JCB bulldozers were used in the demolition of homes, given that it is certainly a serious breach of international law, if not a war crime?

Alistair Burt: I ... will indeed ensure that that investigation is carried out. ...

Grahame Morris (Labour): ... Palestinian settlements are being demolished in order to make way for illegal Israeli settlements, which is a breach of international law, so are we going to call the Israeli ambassador in? Are we going to tell him that we will no longer trade with those illegal settlements? ...

col 334 **Alistair Burt:** ... We will of course be in contact with the Israeli ambassador, but I cannot anticipate the actions of the British Government at this stage. ...

col 335 **Alex Cunningham (Labour):** We are kidding ourselves if we think we can stop this illegal work with diplomacy. Diplomacy has always failed in the past, so something else needs to be done. The Minister has responded four times on the issue of banning the import of Israeli goods produced in illegal settlements, but he says such a ban has not been British policy in the past. Does that mean he is considering a change? If not, why not? ...

Alistair Burt: ... I am accurate in saying that that is the current policy, but I also indicated, without any suggestion of a change in policy, that the United Kingdom's response to today's activities has not yet been fully considered. We are talking through with other partners what that response might be. ...

Matthew Pennycook (Labour): The demolition of Khan al-Ahmar and the forcible transfer of its population represents a step change in the nature of the occupation. The Minister has recognised that it could well deal a fatal blow to a two-state solution. As he has said, representations making the case to his Israeli counterparts clearly have not worked. Does he accept that this is the moment for a fundamental reappraisal of the Government's approach?

Alistair Burt: The short answer is probably no, because the fundamental determination of the Government's approach is to do everything we can to keep the option of a two-state solution alive and to work with all parties, including the state of Israel, towards that end. ...

At what stage do I – that is less relevant – and the British Government give up on the two-state solution? There are plenty of voices out there telling us to do so: “It is just not going to happen. It is fantasy. It has all gone.” I do not believe that, and I do not want it to be the case, for the reason I gave earlier—I do not see a viable alternative. ...

col 336 **Christian Matheson (Labour):** Israel will rightly face international condemnation and obloquy for these actions, but the demolitions will go ahead anyway. Aside from the Trump regime in America, which is part of the problem, is there anybody out there to whom Israel might listen? The impression it gives at the moment is of a state going rogue that does not actually want to be part of the international community.

Alistair Burt: ... This has to be a relationship built not only on what Israel is but on what Israel is to become. Accordingly, such actions raise question marks that friends do not wish to see. Let us see where the influence can be, and let us try to work together so that the Israel we see today, and the Israel we want to see, is the Israel that will be staunch in defence of rights, secure in its own existence and supported by its neighbours, but that works for a just settlement with those who live in the Palestinian areas and in Gaza. ...

col 337 **Tommy Sheppard (SNP):** ... If the Government themselves are not prepared to take action in the field of economic sanctions to try to put pressure on Israel, will he give

a commitment that this Government will not oppose such measures if they are proposed by other Governments in international forums?

Alistair Burt: ... this needs a considered response, which we are undertaking in company with others. I am sorry that is not as neat as a swift, immediate response, but I think it is the right response. ...

I have listened very carefully to the House, and I hope others have listened to the feeling the House has expressed and take due note of the deep concerns that Members have rightly expressed, whatever position they have taken in the past, about the actions that have taken place today. I hope those concerns will go loudly around the world.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-04/debates/B11012E4-6183-4928-8DE6-A1192AB77665/DemolitionOfKhanAl-Ahmar>

House of Commons Written Answer

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Faisal Rashid (Labour) [906251] What recent assessment her Department has made of the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Alistair Burt: Gaza's humanitarian situation is deeply concerning, as I saw during my visit in May. Hospitals are facing drug shortages, electricity availability is 4-5 hours a day, and water is polluted. UK funding is supporting 11 hospitals by providing medicines and equipment, and helping the 2 million Gazans access clean, safe water.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-04/906251/>

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Khan al Ahmar

Baroness Goldie repeated the Minister's Answer to the Urgent Question. To read the Answer see the "House of Commons Urgent Question" section above.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): ... In listening to Alistair Burt's response to the general debate in the other place, I was absolutely behind his condemnation of the action. He said that, in terms of action, the Government would speak to their EU partners. Will the Minister say whether the Government will undertake, in talking with our EU partners, that high up on the agenda for immediate urgent action will be recognition of the state of Palestine, as this action will clearly threaten the role of the two-state solution?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Lord will not be surprised to hear that the United Kingdom Government do not hold that position. We feel that a distance has to be travelled and that there has to be much greater progress made in relation to the negotiation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We need to see an end to provocative behaviour and violence. The United Kingdom considers that at this stage such a course of action, as requested by the noble Lord, would be premature.

Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement, which is actually slightly stronger than the one we have in the Printed Paper Office. Are the Government calling in the Israeli ambassador over these actions? Does she fully recognise that these demolitions and forcible removals may spell the end of a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine, as the noble Lord indicated? Does she note the use of JCB bulldozers in what may count as a war crime by an occupying power? Will the UK now review the granting of relevant export licences?

Baroness Goldie: As the noble Baroness is aware, there is a regular diplomatic exchange between the United Kingdom and Israel—indeed, in the repeat of the Answer that was made crystal clear. What is beyond doubt is that demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and, frankly, call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution. That is profoundly regrettable, because everyone desires to see progress made, but both entities have to be committed to taking forward that process.

I would also point out that these demolitions and evictions, in all but the most exceptional cases, are contrary to international humanitarian law. The United Kingdom, as I indicated, will consider these matters further with our European partners as they progress. We think that a threat of demolition is imminent but, as I speak, there is no evidence that the demolition has happened. We will respond to events as they take place, in concert with our European partners.

Baroness Morris of Bolton (Conservative): ... I applaud the Government's stand on this and the very strong stand taken by our ambassador to Israel, David Quarrey, and our consul-general to Jerusalem, Philip Hall. The people of Khan al Ahmar, where I have been, are delightful people. They have been plagued by settlers trespassing on their land, lighting fires and trying to take away the small livelihood that they eke from some rather meagre land. I very much hope that the Government will be able to stop this demolition—but, if they are not, these lovely people are going to be moved next to the municipal rubbish dump. I hope that we can do something to ensure that, if their village is demolished, they can go somewhere far better than that.

Baroness Goldie: I think that there will be a lot of sympathy with the sentiments expressed by my noble friend. No one can view these events with anything but a very heavy heart and profound concern about what the implications will be—for the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, correctly pointed out—for the negotiation of a peace process. We expect people to be treated humanely, we expect them to be treated with compassion and, above all, we expect law to be observed and human rights to be respected.

Lord Hylton (Crossbench): Does the noble Baroness agree that the Khan al Ahmar school represents an amazing example of community self-help and shows how the Bedouin community values education? Will the Government consider, and act urgently towards, a supranational court to decide legal issues of this kind that occur in long-occupied territories?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Lord raises an interesting suggestion. As he is aware, there is already a global framework of legal fora for determining issues where there are either transgressions of human rights or breaches of acceptable state activity. I am not aware of any recent discussions by the United Kingdom Government on the point that he raises, but I will certainly undertake to make further inquiry and, if there is information that I can share with him, I will do so.

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated): My Lords, I welcome very much the Government's condemnation of the actions of the Government of Israel and all the representations that they make, but, sadly, it never amounts to very much action. Can they, in this case, look at getting together with our European partners—while we still have European partners—to discuss suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement on trade until Israel complies with international law?

Baroness Goldie: As I said, the United Kingdom Government are monitoring events as they unfold and, should demolition take place, we are in conversation with like-minded European partners about possible next steps.

Viscount Hailsham (Conservative): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that the decision of the American Government to put their embassy in Jerusalem has encouraged the Israeli Government to conduct actions that are both illegal and profoundly unwise, and would my noble friend ask the Prime Minister to raise this subject and make that comment to President Trump when we have the pleasure of welcoming him to the UK?

Baroness Goldie: ... It is the case that the United Kingdom did not consider the decision of the United States in relation to its embassy helpful—certainly the United Kingdom Government have no intention of moving their embassy from Tel Aviv. As to what may or may not be discussed during the forthcoming visit by President Trump to this country, between him and the Prime Minister, is for them to determine. I imagine that the Prime Minister will have a list of things that she is keen to raise.

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, is the Minister aware that a further 46 communities across the West Bank face the same fate of demolition and forcible transfer, according to the UN? This is far more widespread than Khan al Ahmar, amounting to a systematic policy to prevent a Palestinian state of any meaning.

Baroness Goldie: As I made clear, the history of demolitions is profoundly regrettable. According to the information I have, which is provided by the United Nations, from January to May 2018 Israel has demolished 175 structures, displacing 161 people; and during 2017 Israel demolished 423 structures on the West Bank, displacing 664 people. Although we have considered at an earlier stage what this means for the peace process and the possibility of agreement ever being reached between the two entities, we must never forget that these figures depict families in distress, communities being torn apart and the complete disruption of a peaceful section of society. That is, in human terms, greatly to be regretted.

Lord Cormack (Conservative): My Lords, it will be some little time before the Prime Minister meets President Trump, but could she be persuaded to speak today to Mr Netanyahu and tell him what enormous concern there is in this country among those who count themselves friends of Israel—as I do—at the actions of the Israeli Government?

Baroness Goldie: ... As I have already indicated, this situation is being monitored and there is already extensive diplomatic exchange—but I have no doubt that my noble friend's request will have been noted.

Lord Cashman (Labour): My Lords, the Minister makes a very good point in relation to the Israel-EU free trade agreement. Could I ask her to discuss with the Government whether we can talk with other EU partners about the potential suspension of the agreement if Article 2, referring to human rights and the rule of law, is not upheld?

Baroness Goldie: The United Kingdom Government will assess and then respond to events as they unfold. As I said earlier, we are in conversation with like-minded European partners about possible next steps. I cannot pre-empt what these will be, but there is universal concern and, if matters intensify, I have no doubt that there will be a raft of suggestions that we and our EU partners will want to consider.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-07-04/debates/B7609FEB-E59E-4AE3-B9D5-8C7E77BE2ED8/KhanAlAhmar>

House of Lords Written Answer

Gaza: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL8941] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 18 June (HL8332), how many medical permits have been issued in the last three months; when they expect electricity to be restored in Gaza; and what action they will take to promote a resolution to the situation in Gaza.

Lord Bates: Between February and April 2018, a total of 3,341 permits for patients to receive medical treatment outside Gaza were approved. DFID does not have confirmed numbers for months since April.

According to OCHA, Gaza is currently receiving an average of 3-5 hours electricity a day. The UK will be supporting the Palestinian electricity institutional system to increase collection of electricity tariffs to make the supply of electricity more

sustainable and affordable. We continue to urge all parties to work together to sustainably improve the situation in Gaza, including restoring full electricity. Ultimately, a political settlement is the only way to ensure lasting peace for the people of Gaza, Palestinians and Israelis alike: the UK supports the Egyptian led-reconciliation process and the return of the Palestinian Authority to full administration of the Gaza strip and a negotiated two state-solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-25/HL8941/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-04/HL8332/>

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