

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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European Commission

The European Union proposes additional €40 million for Palestine Refugees to keep schools and health clinics open

... the European Commission proposed additional support for UNRWA to allow the agency to keep providing access to education for 500,000 Palestine refugee children, primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients and assistance to over 250,000 vulnerable Palestine refugees. ...

... Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, stated: "Keeping schools open for Palestine refugees is a key priority for all of us. With this additional funding we reaffirm the European Union's clear and firm commitment to UNRWA and Palestine refugees. This is an exceptional response to an exceptional crisis. UNRWA needs now to focus on core services to the most vulnerable and to urgently align its activities to available funding. We stand ready to help UNRWA and to work with host governments to manage the process."

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides added: "Our additional humanitarian assistance will help UNRWA respond to health needs which have increased significantly over the past six months in Gaza. This will strengthen the healthcare system and help UNRWA-run primary healthcare centres in Gaza meet increased demands. We remain committed to assisting the most vulnerable people in Gaza and to strengthening the resilience of the most affected communities."

The European Union has long been the largest and most reliable donor to the agency. This additional support for 2018 brings the overall European Commission contribution to UNRWA's activities in 2018 to €146 million. For the past three years (2016, 2017 and 2018) the total contribution of the EU and its Member States combined has reached approximately €1.2 billion. ...

To read the full press release see

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5911_en.htm

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert condemns killing of more Palestinian protesters

The killing and wounding of more Palestinian protesters at the Gaza fence by the Israeli security forces is an ongoing affront to human rights and human dignity, said a UN human rights expert.

“The deaths of seven more participants in the Gaza demonstrations, and the wounding of more than 200 others, this past Friday indicates that the Israeli security forces are not heeding the international criticism of their use of lethal fire against Palestinian demonstrators, who appear to pose no credible threat to Israeli security forces,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Two of the Palestinians killed on Friday were boys aged 11 and 14. One Gaza-based human rights group, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, estimates that 163 of the injured demonstrators were shot with live fire.

Since the start of the Great March of Return on 30 March, more than 150 Palestinians have been killed during demonstrations near the Gaza fence by the Israeli security forces. More than 10,000 demonstrators have been wounded during this period, more than half of them by live fire. A number of the wounded have suffered devastating and life-long injuries.

“International human rights law imposes strict obligations on the use of force by law enforcement officials,” said Lynk. “Lethal force against demonstrators is absolutely forbidden unless strictly unavoidable in the case of an imminent threat to life or threat of serious injury. Many of those killed and wounded appear to have presented no such imminent threat.

“As I have said in previous statements regarding the recent violence at the Gaza fence, the killing and wounding of demonstrators, in the absence of any strictly-measured justification, and within the context of occupation, may amount to willful killing, which is both a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a war crime. It is also a serious violation of international human rights law and its protections for the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23673&LangID=E>

United Nations

On day three, of UN Assembly debate, Israel and Palestine put sharp focus on complexities thwarting peace

As the United Nations General Assembly’s annual general debate reached its halfway mark on Thursday, one of the world’s longest-running and most intractable crises, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, almost as old as the UN itself, came into stark relief under the same roof with the two sides laying out diametrically opposed positions that have bedeviled peace efforts for over 70 years. ...

Within a couple of hours of each other, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas propounded opposing narratives on indigenous origins, the holy city of Jerusalem and the very nature of a Jewish State, which have divided two peoples claiming the same strip of land as their nation’s homes, putting in high relief the monumental problems that the UN faces here and in other peace mediation efforts across the world. ...

President Abbas [said](#) of the Palestinians: “We are an indigenous people and our roots are deep across five thousand years.”

Mr. Netanyahu [declared](#): “Ever since Abraham and Sarah made their journey to the Promised Land nearly 4,000 years ago, the Land of Israel has been our homeland. It’s the place where Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel carried on their eternal covenant with God.”

Mr. Abbas took particular umbrage at a recent Israeli law declaring Israel the Nation-State of the Jewish People.

“[This is] a racist law that crossed all the red lines,” he said. “This law denies the connection of the Palestinian people to their historic homeland and dismisses their right

to self-determination and their history and heritage,” he added, warning that it will inevitably lead to the creation of one racist State, an apartheid state, and nullifies the two-state solution.

Mr. Netanyahu, who had the good fortune to be scheduled to speak second, took this up directly. “Moments ago, President Abbas outrageously said that Israel’s Nation State Law proves that Israel is a racist, apartheid state,” he said.

“President Abbas, you should know better. You wrote a dissertation denying the Holocaust. Your Palestinian Authority imposes death sentences on Palestinians for selling land to Jews. Did you hear that? If a Jew buys an apartment, a piece of land anywhere in the Palestinian territories, the Palestinian who sold him that land is executed. That’s what the law says,” he added, pointing to what he saw as racism on the other side. ...

President Abbas ... reaffirmed his commitment to peace and the two-state solution and the path of negotiations to achieve them.

And Prime Minister Netanyahu said Israel hoped the day would soon arrive when Israel “will be able to expand peace, a formal peace, beyond Egypt and Jordan to other Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1021292>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

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

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Online Forums Bill

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

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations ** new or updated today

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

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

**** The future of civil partnership in Scotland** (closing date 21 December 2018)

<https://consult.gov.scot/family-law/the-future-of-civil-partnership-in-scotland/>

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