



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answer

Lord Janner of Braunstone

Lord Campbell-Savours (Labour) [HL12649] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse about the disclosure of material held in social services and criminal records relating to the case of Greville Janner.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is a matter for the inquiry which is independent, to disclose where appropriate and in line with security and data protection protocols, any documents which are considered relevant as part of the inquiry.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12649/>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Library

Debate Pack: General debate on Holocaust Memorial Day 2019

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2019-0011/CDP-2019-0011.pdf>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2019: Foreign Secretary's Speech

Jeremy Hunt delivered the keynote speech at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2019, where the statue of Major Frank Foley was unveiled. ...

Seventy-four years ago, almost to the day, Soviet soldiers advanced into Poland and liberated Auschwitz.

There, amid heaps of corpses, they discovered about 7,000 men, women and children, emaciated, starving, stricken by disease.

These broken human beings were among the handful of survivors of the 1.3 million people who had passed through the gates of Auschwitz.

One of them, of course, was Primo Levi, who was found by Russian soldiers lying incapacitated with scarlet fever, indelibly tattooed with an identity number that he would bear for the rest of his life: "174517".

In his classic, *If This Is a Man*, he struggled to describe the essence of the crime wrought by the Holocaust. He said, "Language lacks words to express this offence, the demolition of a man. ..."

Primo Levi and other remarkable people summoned enough strength to preserve their dignity in defiance of relentless efforts to extinguish the last embers of their humanity.

In 2006, I had the life-changing experience of visiting Auschwitz myself with Holocaust Education Trust. The trip was led by the inspirational Rabbi Barry Marcus, who many of you will know.

Before going into the concentration camp, we visited a museum to commemorate the Poles who had sheltered Jews. The penalty, of course, was death, not just for the individual, but for every member of that individual's family.

More than 5,000 Poles took that risk. Many others across Europe looked away. What would each of us do if history repeated itself? ...

And a question that troubled me as I tried to take all this in is, would I have looked away? Would I have done the right thing?

With three young children that I have now whose lives are just beginning, what would I have done?

So today as Foreign Secretary, it is an incredible privilege to honour some of those who did not look away, and who worked for the Foreign Office, or our sister organisation, the Secret Intelligence Service.

One of them was Captain Frank Foley, whose bust we shall shortly be unveiling.

Frank Foley fought in the trenches during World War One before being recruited by the British Government and dispatched to our Consulate in Berlin.

Ostensibly, he was in charge of passport control; in fact, he was an SIS officer - something that the Government has taken the exceptional step of publicly confirming.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Foley used his official position to issue visas to thousands of Jews trying to escape Germany.

He applied the rules with what might be called sympathetic flexibility.

British visas could only be given to people with financial guarantees, a requirement that ruled out many Jewish applicants. So Foley invented a variety of ways to get around bureaucracy. ...

A few months before the outbreak of war in 1939, Foley arranged visas for a 24-year-old Jew called Gunter Powitzer and his infant son, Walter.

Yet, by the time the documents were ready, Powitzer had already been interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

So Foley went to the camp himself and demanded the prisoner's release, explaining that since Powitzer now held a British visa and was entitled to British protection.

Powitzer, who had recently been flogged, remembered how he was "bandaged, cleaned up and shaved" and presented to a "small man wearing glasses".

"My name is Foley," said the visitor. "I am from the British Consulate in Berlin." ...

Had Foley not acted, Powitzer would have stayed in the camp where 30,000 inmates would be murdered by 1945. ...

... the bleak truth is that not everyone in the British Government of the day possessed the same moral clarity or the will to confront the realities of Hitlerism. The policy of appeasement, no matter how well intentioned, was futile and morally bankrupt.

We should reflect that it was not the state as a whole, but remarkable individuals like Frank

Foley who did the right thing, made the correct moral choice, often in defiance of the rules. So here I ask: what would each of us have done if we had been in his place? ...

In 1999, Yad Vashem decided to honour Foley as one of the Righteous Among Nations. One of the Jews he saved happens to be the father-in-law of my cabinet colleague, James Brokenshire. ...

But even as we take pride in the memory of Frank Foley, we should never lose sight of the hard truth that when the crucial moment came and the moral test was posed, there were too few people like him.

So today, we draw inspiration from his example, and we hope that those inspired will thus never be the next people to look away in the face of atrocity. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/international-holocaust-remembrance-day-2019-foreign-secretarys-speech>

Council of Europe

Holocaust memorial ceremony

The President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland has attended a ceremony in front of the Council of Europe's headquarters in Strasbourg, to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

In his address Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland underlined the importance of remembering the victims, in order to prevent a repetition of the atrocities that claimed the lives of six million people.

Eli Lev, Ambassador of Israel to the international institutions in France, paid tribute to the work of the Council of Europe, including its European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which fights anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and the separate programme to preserve and promote Holocaust remembrance.

Miranda Vuolasranta, President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, referring to the rise of extreme right parties across Europe, warned that the ceremony was not just a commemoration what she described as "the worst crime in history", but also a wake-up call for what could await us if we do not act to prevent the resurgence of Fascism in Europe.

PACE President Liliane Maury Pasquier pledged that Holocaust remembrance would continue to guide the Council of Europe's actions ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/holocaust-memorial-ceremony>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Israel and Palestine

9. **Nigel Huddleston (Conservative):** What recent assessment he has made of the effect of renewed rocket fire from Gaza into Israel on the political and security situation in that region. [908702]

16. **Julie Elliott (Labour):** What recent steps he has taken to help secure a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. [908709]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): Rocket fire and attacks on Israel from Gaza remain unacceptable and damaging to any prospect of eventual peace. We continue to urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume direct

negotiations towards a two-state solution, and we remain in regular contact with many parties on this important issue.

Nigel Huddleston: Last year more than 800 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza into communities in Israel. Does the Minister agree that we must not forget that Gaza is run by Hamas, who are not our friends but an internationally proscribed terrorist organisation? Will he update the House on what help we are providing to Israel in its fight against terrorism?

Alistair Burt: We never forget that Gaza is under the control of Hamas, and that other military groups operate there. As long as there are terrorist attacks on Israel from Gaza, the situation will remain impossible to resolve. We will continue to support very strongly the right of Israel to defend itself.

Julie Elliott: What is the Government's assessment of the report by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs about the rise in Israeli attempts to delegitimise human rights organisations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly humanitarian non-governmental organisations, and the negative impact that that has on their ability to represent Palestinian rights and organisations?

Alistair Burt: Israel, as a democracy in the middle east, has always prided itself on ensuring that those groups have the freedom to operate there, even if they challenge the Israeli Government. It is very important to the United Kingdom that that tradition is maintained, particularly at a time of crisis. The west bank needs those who are able to interpret the situation and speak honestly, both to the Palestinian Authority and to the state of Israel, and the more political space there is to do that, the better it will be all round for the prospects of peace.

Andrea Jankyns (Conservative): What assessment has the Minister made of the effect of the tunnel construction into Israel by Hamas?

Alistair Burt: The recent discovery of tunnels from Lebanon into Israel has caused much concern. It is important that they are dealt with on both sides of the border. There is no reason for that work to continue, either by Hamas in the south in Gaza or by Hezbollah in the north in Lebanon.

Joan Ryan (Labour): Does the Minister agree that Malaysia's decision to ban Israeli athletes from participating in Malaysian sporting events is shameful and that such attempts to single out the world's only Jewish state come from a place of deep prejudice does nothing to advance the cause of peace?

Alistair Burt: The United Kingdom does not agree with this decision of the Malaysian Government. It does nothing to assist the worldwide recognition of Paralympians. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Asia and the Pacific will take that up directly.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) on materials that are sent to Gaza for building homes, but are being diverted to build terror tunnels, what action is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that our aid is used to build homes for people in Gaza rather than terror tunnels?

Alistair Burt: The principal control of materials flowing into Gaza is of course exercised by the Israelis, with their concerns about dual-use material. We are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to make every attempt to ensure that such materials are not diverted. Ultimately, there is no future for Hamas and for Gaza unless they stop the terror tactics and the diversion of materials, and respond to the Quartet principles and make peace.

Andy Slaughter (Labour): In the past year, 186 Palestinian civilians have been killed on the Gaza border and no Israelis. More than 23,000 Palestinian civilians and 16 Israelis have been injured. Should not the focus be on ending the blockade of Gaza and, indeed, the occupation that has gone on since 1987?

Alistair Burt: Virtually every statistic from the area cries out for the need to resolve

this issue. We have spoken about it in this House for decades. There are arguments and counter-arguments, but in the main, the misery continues, either for those who feel under attack from terrorist sources or for those who feel the humanitarian impact of political decisions made elsewhere. That is why the United Kingdom is so wedded to—and determined to see—a middle east peace process for all.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-22/debates/B91CC8C8-6022-44DD-9F70-649DA2BDEC29/IsraelAndPalestine>

UN Aid to Palestinian Refugees

11. **Marsha De Cordova (Labour):** What steps he is taking to help ensure the long-term sustainability of UN aid to Palestinian refugees. [908704]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): The UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, is a necessary humanitarian and stabilising presence in the region, providing vital services to millions of Palestinian refugees every day. We have increased our funding to UNRWA, providing £65.5 million in 2018.

Marsha De Cordova: On 9 January, the Minister said: “Work is going on to ensure that, in the long term, UNRWA is sustainable.”—[[Official Report, 9 January 2019; Vol. 652, c. 349.](#)]

However, UNRWA is already closing health centres, and doubling and trebling up, and shifting schools to cut costs. If it closes down, what will happen to the 526,000 children in UNRWA schools and the 3.1 million patients of UNRWA health services? Will the Minister set out exactly what is going on?

Alistair Burt: We sought to increase our funding, as I mentioned to the hon. Lady, but we also talk to other donors. It is impossible for the United Kingdom to fill the gap created, but the point she makes is extremely pertinent: if the education of those in Gaza and children of Palestinian refugees stops, I wonder what organisation in the region would like to take over the education of impressionable youngsters.

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): Ongoing humanitarian support for Palestinians is vital but, given the track record of Hamas in seeking to abuse and exploit UNRWA, what assurances will the Minister give about protecting the independence and integrity of UNRWA and ensuring that taxpayers’ money is used to good effect?

Alistair Burt: I hear my right hon. Friend, but it is really important for the House to be clear that UNRWA is an independent organisation run by the UN. Of course practical pressures are caused in Gaza, because Gaza is run by Hamas, but it is wrong to suggest that UNRWA is in hock to anyone else but those who contribute as donors. It does vital work—health, education and services—and it is essential that that continues, because if UNRWA does not do it—I ask the House—who would step in to provide support, where would the finances come from and what would be done with them?

Richard Burden (Labour): Does the Minister agree that the announcement by the Israeli authorities that they plan to close UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem is a direct attack on the welfare of Palestinian refugees in two refugee camps there, including 3,000 students? I welcome the Minister’s increased funding for UNRWA, but will he commit to support the renewal of UNRWA’s mandate later this year?

Alistair Burt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question; he knows the area very well. Of course we will continue to support UNRWA, and look hard at the mandate renewal. It is important that it continues its work there because, as I have said, there is concern about what the impact would be if that work is not done. As I said earlier, all this tells us that such disputes and concerns will not change unless there is overall agreement on a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Unless that is done, these problems will continue to occur, much to the misery of all involved.

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Alan Brown (SNP): Gaza has been described as the biggest open-air prison in the world. Israel continues to plan settlement expansion and demolitions with impunity, and clearly US foreign policy is making things worse. When will the UK set a realistic timeframe to step up and recognise the state of Palestine?

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Jeremy Hunt): We have always said that we will recognise the state of Palestine when the time is right—we support a two-state solution—but we want to do it at the moment it will have the most impact on the peace process.

T2. Tom Pursglove (Conservative): Further to the question from the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan), at a time when relations are improving greatly between Israel and many countries around the world, particularly its Gulf neighbours, will my right hon. Friend stress that not allowing Israeli swimmers to participate in the Paralympic qualifiers would be a retrograde step? [908720]

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): We also have strong relations with the Malaysian Government, and I am very disappointed that they have made what I feel is a fundamentally wrong decision. As my hon. Friend has rightly pointed out, those Israeli Paralympic athletes should not be banned from competing. I shall be seeing the Malaysian Education Minister this afternoon—with, I think, a senior representative of the high commission—and I promise to ask for an assurance that this will be dealt with properly, as a matter of urgency.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-22/debates/F7CFB3DD-5089-44EB-8EB2-E291EA9BC8C9/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EC4AA493-F208-4520-864F-6398A19E4E8E>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T3. Damien Moore (Conservative): Recently, six underground tunnels built by the Iran-funded Hezbollah terror group were discovered leading into Israel from Lebanon. The deepest tunnel had electricity and a rail system. Does my right hon. Friend share my fear that Hezbollah was building those highly advanced tunnels in order to launch a large-scale invasion of northern Israel, on the watch of the United Nations and the peace-keeping United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon? [R][908721]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): My hon. Friend is right. The discovery of those tunnels has highlighted concerns about a re-armed Hezbollah in Lebanon, and it is essential for them to be dealt with by both UNIFIL and the Lebanese armed forces. They constitute a clear breach of UN Security Council regulation 1701.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-22/debates/F7CFB3DD-5089-44EB-8EB2-E291EA9BC8C9/TopicalQuestions#contribution-A936FF2B-0883-4D9C-9419-50AD37BCF152>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ruth Cadbury (Labour): Given the Minister for the Middle East's earlier expression of support for UNRWA and the concern about the alternative education that Palestinian children might receive if UNRWA pulls out, will the UK Government consider filling the vacuum resulting from the withdrawal of US leadership in this important service?

Alistair Burt: ... we support UNRWA's work and work hard with the organisation in case reform is needed. In the long term, UNRWA's future will be about the future of refugees and their final settlement status. In the meantime, we cannot completely plug the financial gap left by the United States, which is why we are working with others, but leadership is vital, as is trying to get it across to the world that UNRWA is doing important work, and the UK will remain a champion.

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Gaza

Ian Paisley (DUP) [208834] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of effect of renewed rocket fire from Gaza into Israel on the political situation in that region.

Alistair Burt: The UK fully supports Israel's right to self-defence. Indiscriminate rocket attacks against civilians are unacceptable and unjustifiable. The perpetual cycle of violence does not serve anyone's interests, and must end. Ultimately, the ongoing decision by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gaza situation. We need a durable agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict and transforms the situation in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-15/208834/>

Israel: Gaza

Ian Paisley (DUP) [208835] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of tunnel construction into Israel by Hamas in Gaza on the political situation in that region.

Alistair Burt: We remain deeply concerned by Hamas's attempts to re-arm and rebuild militant infrastructure, including the tunnel network, in Gaza. Such actions undermine efforts to improve the situation in Gaza and harm the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-15/208835/>

Palestinians: Politics and Government

Ian Paisley (DUP) [208836] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of adequacy of democratic processes in the Palestinian Authority.

Alistair Burt: Inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions and processes, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights, are important goals. Along with EU partners, we have encouraged the Palestinian leadership to continue their work towards genuine and democratic elections for Palestinians.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-15/208836/>

UNRWA

Ian Paisley (DUP) [208837] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the long-term viability of the UN Relief and Works Agency.

Alistair Burt: Last year the UK led international efforts to help ensure UNRWA's essential services were maintained, by almost doubling our original core support of £33.5 million to £65.5 million, including £5 million for Gaza, and lobbying other donors to step up to ensure the funding burden is shared more evenly across the international community. Both the UK and UNRWA recognise the need for UNRWA to reform to ensure its sustainability, and UNRWA has undertaken significant cost-cutting measures to respond to budget cuts and growing need. We welcome UNRWA's efforts to broaden its donor base and are encouraging partners to step

up with more funding and more predictable disbursements.

The UK has a multi-year commitment to support UNRWA and we plan to continue to fund the Agency in line with that agreement. This will provide basic services such as health and education to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and the region. A long-term solution requires a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for Palestinian refugees. Until that happens the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-16/208837/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Durable peace in the Middle East

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East. ...

Israel's security shouldn't be put in doubt. We condemn unreservedly the rocket launches from Syria and Gaza into Israel. ...

... the last three months of 2018 saw a dreadful increase in violence in the West Bank. Three Israelis - including a baby - were killed in Palestinian terror attacks, for which Hamas has claimed responsibility. And there is no justification for such acts of violence.

During the same time in the West Bank and Gaza, 70 Palestinians were killed. On 14 January, a 14 year old Palestinian boy died as a result of injuries sustained from live fire following a protest at the Gaza fence. Mr President, we fully support Israel's right to defend herself but Israeli security forces should refrain from the use of excessive force against unarmed civilians. Lethal use of force should be exercised with maximum restraint and only as a last resort to protect life.

Turning to Gaza, the situation on security remains precarious. Sporadic rocket attacks by militants continue and a miscalculation could easily lead to renewed confrontation. We need to do everything we can to avoid another devastating war which would compound the already dire humanitarian and security conditions in Gaza and would threaten the security of Israeli border communities.

I wanted to draw the Council's attention to Gaza's health sector which remains under significant strain and to the problems with shortage of essential drugs and limited access to clean water. And Israel's movement restrictions, we believe, continue to affect the health of the population. In the longer term, renewed political resolve is required to improve the situation. ...

On the West Bank, recent developments continue to undermine the achievements of the Oslo Accords and they jeopardize the prospects for a two-state solution. Following the violent attacks in the West Bank there have been a large number of incursions by Israeli security forces into Area A and Palestinian movement in the West Bank has been significantly restricted and disrupted. ...

I wanted to express our disappointment, Mr President, that on 27 December – just days after the Council discussed the implementation of Resolution 2324 – Israel advanced plans for the construction of nearly 2,800 illegal settlement housing units.

And it is doubly disappointing that over half of these units located east of the separation barrier in areas deep into the West Bank. ...

For too long, Mr President, we have witnessed Hizbollah blatantly disregard UN resolutions. Their continued possession of weapons outside of Lebanese state control and their reported attempts to acquire dangerous new missile capabilities remain deeply alarming, as do their statements which threaten Israel. Without an end to these illegal activities by Hezbollah in Lebanon and the region, we will continue to see regional stability threatened. We condemn Hezbollah's aggressive activities and we are clear that we

should not allow them to go unchecked.

In conclusion, Mr President, the prospects for peace may seem bleak ... We should not give up on the two-state solution. It remains the only viable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For this reason, the United Kingdom remains committed to the internationally agreed parameters for a durable peace in the Middle East. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/durable-peace-in-the-middle-east>

United Nations

Prospects for Viable State of Palestine Dwindling as Settlements Expand amid Continuing Violence, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council

Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said that as 2019 begins, no one should have any illusions about the dangerous dynamics of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Over time, the possibility of establishing a viable, contiguous Palestinian State has been systematically eroded by facts on the ground, he said, noting that Israeli authorities have advanced, approved or tendered more than 3,100 housing units planned in Area C settlements. ...

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with 25 structures seized or demolished for lack of Israeli-issued building permits, he said, noting that the documents are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. ...

He went on to report growing pressures on the foundations of a future Palestinian State, many of them imposed by decades of occupation and internal divisions. In addition, despite the tireless efforts of Egypt and the United Nations, hopes for genuine intra-Palestinian reconciliation are fading by the day as each side blames the other for the lack of progress. ...

On the security front, a dangerous dynamic has been unfolding in the West Bank over recent months, with a series of deadly terrorist attacks increasing the risk of destabilization, he said. The reporting period also witnessed an increasing number of Israeli military operations in Areas A and B of the West Bank. ...

He went on to report that Israeli security forces killed eight Palestinians during the reporting period, while stressing that Hamas must stop the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel. With recent cuts in donor funding, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza continued, noting that the World Food Programme (WFP) had to suspend food assistance to 27,000 people and reduce the rations of a further 166,000. ...

Turning to Lebanon, he said the situation in the south and along the "Blue Line" remained calm but tense during the reporting period. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was able to confirm that two of the tunnels discovered by the Israeli Defense Forces crossed the Blue Line, thereby violating Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). On 9 January, the Israeli Defense Forces initiated construction of a wall south of the Blue Line and close to the Lebanese reservation area near Misgav Am, he said.

As for the occupied Golan, he reported that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has been maintained in relative calm and low levels of military activity in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said ... In the last year, Israel's illegal occupation has become more entrenched and caused deep suffering and loss, even as the political process remains deadlocked and a horizon absent. However, he said, among those marked setbacks there have also been glimpses of hope and inspiring stories of Palestinian resilience and achievement. ...

In that vein, he said, 2018 also highlighted a shared determination between the Palestinian

people and their leadership — as well as by the international community — to preserve the foundations of a just and peaceful solution and protect Palestinian rights. The year saw the near-consensus rejection of actions aimed to legitimize Israeli measures in East Jerusalem and renewed support for a two-State solution both in the Council and at the General Assembly. ...

“Day by day, this occupation is destroying the two-State solution and sowing deep despair among our people,” he stressed ... In the last year, Israel deliberately advanced the illegal construction of more than 5,600 settlement units, a wall, checkpoints, Israeli-only roads and other occupation infrastructure. It demolished Palestinian homes and forcibly transferred civilians in an effort to alter the demography, character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Calling for the explicit condemnation of those actions, he said acts of violence and hatred against Palestinian civilians were incited by a barrage of inflammatory rhetoric, with 295 Palestinians killed and some 29,000 injured in 2018. ...

Danny Danon (Israel) expressed hope that, in the course of 2019, the Council will engage in “factual, constructive dialogue” on the situation in the Middle East. Two days ago, he recalled, Iranian Quds forces fired a missile from Syria into Israel, which the latter successfully intercepted. Israel then responded by targeting Iranian military infrastructure in Syria and continues to hold the Iranian regime responsible for the missile attack. ... While wishing no aggression, Israel stands ready to hold accountable anyone who wishes to wipe it off the map, he stressed.

Urging the Council to “follow the money” supporting terrorism — as it did with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) — he said the trail today leads back to one common supplier — Iran, “the source of modern terrorism”. ...

He went on to state that covert “terror tunnels” discovered in December 2018 stretched from private homes in Lebanon into Israel, recalling that his delegation subsequently provided the Council with proof of Hizbullah’s responsibility for their construction, in clear violation of Israel’s sovereignty, as well as resolution 1701 (2006). ... Having taken swift actions to close the illegal tunnels, Israel will continue to neutralize all such threats against its people, he emphasized ...

Meanwhile, Iranian money directly supports Hamas and the group known as Islamic Jihad, he continued. Recalling that Hamas led a delegation to Iran in 22 December 2018, he rejected denials by that group’s officials of previous statements underlining its wish to see Israel’s destruction. ...

Jonathan R. Cohen (United States) pointed out that the Security Council spends far too much time on the question of Palestine instead of devoting that time to addressing the other situations in the wider Middle East. ... He went on to note that the tunnels discovered by UNIFIL are in violation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and that Iran conducted the launch of missiles from Syria into Israel. ...

Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) ... emphasized that the status quo is, in fact, in jeopardy with parties expanding their unilateral activities and exacerbating existing problems amid reports of increasing violence. Condemning all terrorist acts, as well as the arbitrary use of force and the targeting of civilians, he called for the resumption of peace talks in accordance with the Middle East Quartet’s road map and similar initiatives. ...

Christoph Heusgen (Germany) said his country is steadfast in its commitment to Israel’s security as a Jewish and democratic State. “We will not remain silent when Israel’s right to exist is questioned or compromised,” he said. ... Israeli settlement policies must cease as these actions are illegal under international law. Germany strongly condemns all attacks, including the firing of rockets and use of incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza. The humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza is a matter of grave concern. ...

Karen Pierce (United Kingdom) [*See “Foreign and Commonwealth Office” above for an abstract of Karen Pierce’s speech, and a link to the full transcript*]

François Delattre (France) agreed with other delegates that the “illusion of a status quo” obscures a daily deterioration of the situation on the ground. Twenty-five years after the Oslo Accords, less than half of Israelis and Palestinians still believe in the prospect of a two-State solution. Recalling the alarming statement delivered by the President of the Palestinian Authority before the Council earlier this month, he warned that the risk of escalation on the ground — including in the Gaza Strip — has not receded. ...

Amal Mudallali (Lebanon), expressing hope that Palestine will obtain the status of full United Nations membership, said Palestinians today face a war against their lands, territory and rights. Two days ago, an Arab development summit ended in Beirut, with members united against Israeli aggression, as well as on such issues as the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinians right to self-determination and to an independent State, and the right of Palestine refugees to return. ... Emphasizing that Israel continually violates Lebanon’s sovereignty, she cited 13 air violations, 4 maritime violations and 4 land-based violations against her country in the first week of January alone. The most recent violation, this week, resulted in the building of a wall and other structures within Lebanese territory around the “Blue Line”. ...

Bashar Ja'afari (Syria) said that Israel has continued its aggression in the occupied territories, in gross violation of international law and relevant Council resolutions. “Such aggressions would not have been committed had the Security Council not failed to implement relevant resolutions,” he stressed. Support from other countries continues to encourage Israel to act aggressively. ... Israel’s attempt to alter the situation, including its aggressive statements and criminal acts, is “doomed to failure”. ...

Sima Sami Bahous (Jordan) recalled her country’s close links with Palestinians and support for their cause since they were displaced from their lands. Jordan has made every effort to advance peace so as to restore all their lands and meet their aspirations. The two-State formula, which guarantees a viable Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, could foster an end to the conflict, she said. However, Israel’s unilateral measures and settlement-building in Jerusalem — the holy city for half of the world’s Christian, Muslim and Jewish peoples — must end. ...

Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer for the Holy See [said] the Holy See seeks international guarantees for Jerusalem ... cautioning against transforming a territorial and political conflict into one about religion and identity, and pressing political office holders to use their authority responsibly. ...

Gustavo Martin Prada of the European Union called on the Israeli authorities to adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in their use of force and to take steps to stop the increasing violence by settlers. The risk of further escalation of tensions is compounded by the advancement last month of Israel’s plans for more than 2,000 settlement units. All settlement activity is strictly illegal under international law, he stressed. In Gaza, the political and security situation remains volatile, and the dire humanitarian situation a matter of grave concern. ...

The representative of Israel, taking the floor a second time, responded to the statement delivered by Iran’s delegate by noting that the firing of surface-to surface-missiles from Syria is evidence of Iran’s entrenchment in the latter country. Those missiles bear the slogan “death to Israel”, he said, stressing that threatening the existence of another United Nations Member State is a violation of the Organization’s Charter.

Responding to the statement delivered by the representative of Lebanon, he said Iran’s transnational network of terror reaches deep into Lebanon. Israel does not wish to trigger an escalation of tensions, but it must respond to Hizbullah’s recent actions, he said, noting that all activities have been carried out on Israel’s side of the Blue Line.

In response to the statement delivered by Syria’s delegate, he said that country is now offering itself up as a platform for Iranian terror and urged the international community to combat that threat.

To read the full press release see
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13674.doc.htm>

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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>

International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill

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

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.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 8 days**

Extremism in England and Wales (closing date 31 January 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/extremism-in-england-and-wales-call-for-evidence>

Racial harassment in higher education (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here (closing date 24 February 2019)
<https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/consultation-on-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22
(closing date 15 March 2019)
<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

Scottish charity law (closing date 1 April 2019)
<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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