

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Welsh Assembly Oral Answers

Non-stun slaughter

Neil Hamilton (UKIP): ... Last July, I raised with the Minister the subject of non-stun slaughter and in particular, representations that had been made to her by the British Veterinary Association, to which she said that she'd had a discussion with them a couple of weeks ago and asked officials to look at the information they brought forward in detail. It's now nine months since those meetings took place. I wonder if the Minister could bring us up to date and ask if she's reached any conclusions.

Lesley Griffiths: I had a meeting with the Food Standards Agency not too long ago ... to discuss the recent slaughter method report that they'd carried out to identify what the current position was between the industry and providing consumers with information that they would need to make informed choices through voluntary arrangements. At the current time, the position is still the same; there are no red meat slaughterhouses undertaking non-stun slaughter in Wales.

Neil Hamilton: I accept that point that the Minister's just made, but I recently had a disturbing experience of watching some film footage from a supposedly non-stun slaughterhouse in England, where there were horrific images of animals being maltreated—kicked, stabbed and taunted—before finally being slaughtered in a most barbaric way without stunning. Now, that was caught on CCTV, so we were able to find out about it. And although we're told that there are no non-stun slaughterhouses in Wales, we don't have CCTV in all slaughterhouses and it is possible that such scenes could take place in Wales. Will the Minister now take steps to ensure that CCTV is installed in all slaughterhouses in Wales?

Lesley Griffiths: Obviously, you referred to a slaughterhouse in England. We've got some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world in Wales. We have very strict regulations. There are a number of controls in all our slaughterhouses and there's a vet present in every slaughterhouse. The majority, certainly, all the large slaughterhouses in Wales have got CCTV. I am looking and I have provided funding to some of the smaller ones that haven't that do wish to do so. I visited a small abattoir in the constituency of the Llywydd last summer to see for myself the standards, and I reiterate: we have some of the highest animal welfare standards

in Wales. And I can assure you, with the other checks, you don't need CCTV to know that that's not happening in Wales.

Neil Hamilton: I'm not making accusations against any operators of slaughterhouses in Wales, but I'm just saying that, as a precautionary measure, it would be wise to move towards a situation where we do have CCTV and there is, therefore, incontrovertible evidence if mistreatment of animals does take place. And that's an elementary precaution. The Minister frequently says to me when I'm asking her about global warming issues that she wants Wales to lead the world, even though nobody, really, is following. And although we may take the view that, currently in Wales, we don't have a problem with the mistreatment of animals in slaughterhouses, it would be wise for us to compel and provide the means to comply with such a compulsion to slaughterhouses to provide a record of what goes on in those places, so that the public at large, which is very concerned about the animal welfare issues involved in non-stun slaughter, can be reassured that for the foreseeable future—indeed, forever—we will not develop and cannot develop such a problem in Wales.

Lesley Griffiths: As I say, there are very few slaughterhouses in Wales that don't have CCTV. I did make funding available. We're certainly looking to see if we should make it mandatory; that's something we are considering at the moment. The industry itself, I think, has really led in this area, and they do publish extensive guidance on good practice, on protecting animal welfare at the time of killing. That information is available online, so should any member of the public wish to see it, it is available online.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5572#C181348>

Protection for places of religion

Mohammad Asghar (Conservative): ... The mosques in Wales are well protected, but I think places of religion are used for religion and not for any other use, yet people are making some serious, offensive terrorist attacks on these religious places. I think it's totally unacceptable. I'd rather have a statement from the Minister to make sure that religious places in Wales are protected, and also communities are given assurance that we are here to help them, to make sure they are living in a peaceful and helpful and loving country of the world. ...

Rebecca Evans: I hope, again, that the statement that my colleague the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip issued following the terrible terrorist attack in New Zealand did provide communities and individuals with some reassurance of the level of work that is ongoing all year round between Welsh Government and all of our partners to ensure that we give as much protection to communities as possible, and to ensure that, as you say, Wales is an open and tolerant and, as you say, a loving place for everybody in our country.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5571#C180903>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-response-wales-terrorist-attack-new-zealand>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Textbooks

Richard Burden (Labour) [234656] To ask the Secretary of State for International

Development, which international partners will take part in the review of books included in the Palestinian Authority's curriculum.

Harriett Baldwin: We cannot yet provide further public information on which international partners have joined the independent review. Our international partners are currently concluding their contracting with the service provider, and do not wish to publicise their involvement at this time. Work commissioned by the UK on the inception report has already begun; our timeline for the textbook review remains unchanged and we will publish findings by September 2019. We will inform interested parliamentarians of further details as soon as possible.

The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in the Palestinian Authority's (PA) new curriculum and it has been a priority for the Secretary of State for the Department for International Development to commission an independent, impartial and rigorous review of the PA's textbooks. We are pleased that after calls by the UK government for international action, a group of international partners - including the UK - will lead a review into the books included in the PA's pilot curriculum. The PA Minister for Education Sabri Saidam has confirmed that he will engage constructively with the findings of the review, and listen to recommendations.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-20/234656/>

Gaza: Death

Richard Burden (Labour) [235241] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what progress he has made in ensuring Israel's investigations into deaths at the Gaza border in 2018 are (a) independent, (b) transparent, (c) balanced, (d) inclusive of international members and (e) published in a timely manner.

Mark Field: The UK fully supports the need for an independent and transparent investigation which establishes the facts about the violence last year in Gaza. We have repeatedly called for such an investigation at the highest levels, as well as in multiple forums including in Parliament in an urgent question on 22 March, and at the UN Security Council. The Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary raised the issue directly with Prime Minister Netanyahu, stressing the need for an independent investigation, and encouraging urgent action to improve the situation in Gaza. Earlier this week British Embassy officials raised Gaza with the Israeli authorities, highlighting the importance of proportionality, and raising concerns about the volume of live fire against unarmed women, children and medics. We welcome that the Israeli Military Advocate General has recently ordered five criminal investigations which relate to 11 separate instances of Palestinian fatalities during the Gaza border protests. These investigations are ongoing. We will continue to make clear to the Israeli authorities that it is vital their investigations are independent and transparent and that their findings are made public, and importantly, if wrongdoing is found, those that are responsible are held to account.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-21/235241/>

The urgent question referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-03-22/debates/44C1497E-59CA-42A7-97F3-3B6A2F054B86/GazaBorderDeathsUNHRCInquiry>

Gaza: Human Rights

Jim Cunningham (Labour) [235236] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Palestinian Authority on human rights in Gaza, and if he will make a statement.

Mark Field: We regularly raise our concerns about the situation in Gaza with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, pressing them on the need for a long-term strategy to improve humanitarian and economic conditions. We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Gaza and support the Palestinian Authority returning to administer Gaza. The UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety. The Foreign Secretary discussed Gaza with new Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 20 March. The former Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa raised Gaza with the Palestinian Foreign Minister on 4 February.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-21/235236/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14498] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 March (HL14022), what steps they will take to protect the right of Palestinian communities to farm their own land and have access to water.

Baroness Goldie: We continue to raise with our Israeli counterparts our concerns about the humanitarian and environmental impact of the damage to water sources and the destruction of Palestinian agricultural land that has been caused by settlement-related activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-12/HL14498/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-25/HL14022/>

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14499] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 March (HL14024), what measures are in place to protect Palestinian students from attacks by settlers supported by Israeli forces.

Baroness Goldie: We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians and continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the importance of providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, including students.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-12/HL14499/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-25/HL14024/>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Touhig (Labour) [HL14500] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the practice of trying Palestinian young offenders, engaged in acts of provocation, in military courts.

Baroness Goldie: The Government continues to have concerns about Israel's military court system for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have advocated to the Israeli authorities the importance of fulfilling the

internationally recognised standards for a fair trial. We are particularly concerned about continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention, which we regularly lobby the Israeli authorities on.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-12/HL14500/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Latest rocket attacks in Israel, humanitarian situation in Gaza and the status of the Golan Heights

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council Briefing on the Middle East Peace Process ...

I think, Special Co-ordinator, you asked us to be very clear about the condemnation of the recent rocket attacks. Dual British-Israeli citizens were [injured] in the latest rocket attacks so we have no hesitation in joining you and others in condemning unreservedly what has happened and in condemning such acts of terrorism and violence wherever they occur. And I'll note that there was another attack near the Ariel settlement on 17 March. We along with others support the Egyptian and UN efforts to broker a ceasefire and restore the situation to calm.

Violence not only creates fear and a cycle of violence among the Israeli and Palestinian populations, it also undermines the humanitarian situation in Gaza. And we have been concerned by the number of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank over the last few weeks. A number of colleagues mentioned the heightened tensions at Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. We urge all parties to work together to restore calm and to support the status quo under the custodianship of the King of Jordan.

The protests at the Gaza perimeter fence continue and we remain concerned about the volume of live fire that's been used. And this is resulting in horrific injuries and it is also resulting in fatalities. This is not to take away one iota from Israel's right to self-defence. And it's not to undermine or gainsay the fact that Hamas operatives cynically exploit these protests but it is worth repeating that this perpetual cycle of violence serves no one's interests. ...

And I just want to join others who referred to the March of Return - that anniversary will be with us shortly. We urge all parties to demonstrate restraint and avoid future violence. We continue to support the need for an independent and transparent investigation into last year's events in Gaza. And we welcome the recent decision by the Israeli Military Advocate General to order five criminal investigations relating to 11 separate instances of Palestinian fatalities during the Gaza protests. ...

Our views on settlements remain well-known. Suffice it to say that we share the Secretary-General's views on the expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem. We also remain gravely concerned by the threatened evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank. ...

Mr President, a number of Council members have referred to the issue of the Golan Heights. For the United Kingdom, we view the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law and that includes the UN Charter. The United Kingdom does not recognise Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change that position. ...

To read the full press release

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/latest-rocket-attacks-in-israel-humanitarian-situation-in-gaza-and-the-status-of-the-golan-heights>

European Council

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Golan Heights

The position of the European Union as regards the status of the Golan Heights has not changed. In line with the international law and UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 497, the European Union does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/03/27/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-golan-heights/>

United Nations

Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Warns Security Council of Potential Catastrophe as Renewed Violence Flares in Gaza Strip

... **Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, presented the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) ... He said that a fragile calm seems to have taken hold in the Gaza Strip, recalling that on 25 March, a rocket launched from the enclave hit a house in central Israel and injured seven family members, including three children. Over the next 24 hours, at least 103 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza into Israel, he said, adding that the country's air force conducted 42 strikes against various locations in Gaza, while ground and naval forces fired 16 shells towards Gaza, injuring seven Palestinians. ...

He requested that Council members join the United Nations in condemning the continued indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hamas towards Israel, cautioning that such acts of provocation dramatically increase the risk of escalation and ultimately damage collective efforts to support Gaza's people and intra-Palestinian reconciliation. "We must also call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint as the situation remains very tense," he stressed. ...

... he said Israel has taken no steps to cease settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as per the terms of resolution 2334 (2016). ... Meanwhile, violence has escalated, he added, noting that on 14 and 15 March, Hamas security personnel violently dispersed a demonstration by thousands of Palestinians protesting Gaza's dire socioeconomic circumstances. Protests at the Gaza fence have resumed, he said, with incendiary devices launched from Gaza into Israel and the Israeli military conducting air strikes and shelling. ...

Meanwhile, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric have continued, with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad praising the attack near Ariel as heroic and Israeli political leaders calling for targeted assassinations of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials. ...

He called upon all Council members to join the United Nations in condemning terrorism unequivocally. "I am concerned that we may once again be facing another dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza with potentially catastrophic consequences," he warned ...

He concluded by expressing his deep concern at the lack of progress on the two-State track, declaring: "There is no viable alternative to the two-State solution." ...

Jonathan R. Cohen (United States) said his delegation strongly condemns the latest rocket attacks against Israel from Gaza and reaffirms Israel's right to defend itself. Everyone can agree that Israelis and Palestinians must work together, with support from the international community, to improve conditions in Gaza, but malicious and insidious violence by Hamas contravenes that goal. ... Yesterday, the President of the United States signed a proclamation recognizing the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, he recalled, describing that decision as one of critical security importance. To allow the Golan Heights to be controlled by the likes of Syria and Iran would be to turn a blind eye to the

atrocities of the Assad regime as well as Iran's destabilizing presence in the region, he said, stressing that there can be no agreement that fails to address Israel's security concerns in a satisfactory manner. ...

Harshana Bhaskar Goolab (South Africa) condemned the Hamas rocket attacks against Israel, saying they undermine the legitimate cause of the Palestinians. Pressing the Council to act on the lifting of Israel's illegal Gaza blockade, she also cited the Secretary-General's report noting that Israel continues to expand settlements in addition to demolishing and seizing property in the occupied territories — “unabated and with impunity”. These actions undermine the prospects for peace and alter conditions on the ground, she emphasized, noting that they also place the chances for a two-State solution in jeopardy by eroding the possibility of a contiguous Palestinian State while contravening the Council's own decisions. ...

Marc Pecsteen De Buytsverwe (Belgium) said Israel's continuing settlement activities and demolition of Palestinian structures are deeply worrying and illegal under international law. ... Noting the approach of the anniversary of the Great March of Return, he emphasized that the use of lethal force must only be allowed as a last resort, adding that protests must remain non-violent. It is not acceptable that extremists hijack protests, he said, stressing that Hamas must respect the rights to peaceful protest. ...

Vladimir K. Safronkov (Russian Federation) said recent events confirm the fragility and explosiveness of the situation. Describing the launching of rockets into Israel as unacceptable, he called upon all sides to refrain from unilateral actions and the use of force. ... He went on to underline that any steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation will only be effective if they are taken in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas. As for the Golan Heights, he said unilateral steps cannot change the territory's status, which has been determined by Council resolutions. ...

Christoph Heusgen (Germany) said ... that the United States is now violating Council resolutions, he advised Israel and the State of Palestine to avoid exchanging accusations in their statements. ...

Karen Pierce (United Kingdom) said her delegation shares the dismay of other members that the Council must meet repeatedly to condemn the violence on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians. ... The cycle of violence undermines the humanitarian situation in Gaza, she said, while also expressing concern about Palestinian deaths in the West Bank. ... Regarding holy sites, she said they must remain under the custody of the King of Jordan. ... Furthermore, Israel occupied the Golan by force, she recalled, emphasizing that the United Kingdom does not, therefore, recognize its sovereignty over that territory, and its Government has no plan to change that position.

François Delattre (France) ... said, cautioning: “A return to a ceasefire should not blind us” about the incidents in the past several months because the conflict is complex. On the political front, there should be no further delays in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process ... However, there can be no solution to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza without Israel lifting its blockade, he said, also cautioning against Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank. ... The fate of Israelis and Palestinians is intertwined, he said. Any attempt to sidestep internationally agreed parameters are doomed to fail, he predicted, warning against unilateral measures, including the installation of embassies in Jerusalem. He underlined that France does not recognize the Golan since its occupation by Israel is in breach of international law.

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, responded to the remarks by Germany's representative by stating that occupying Power “on the other side of the table” is, under the protection of a Council member, failing to implement relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). ... He said that his delegation has alerted the Council week after week to the increase in Israel's violations against Palestinians, calling upon it to protect civilians and implement its own resolutions — all to no avail, due to obstruction by a permanent member. Today, Palestinians are again

fearing for their lives as Israel takes to the skies, dropping bombs and missiles on civilians while terrorizing them in blatant acts of aggression and collective punishment, in grave breach of international law. ...

Ahead of the first anniversary of the Great March of Return, he said, the Council cannot ignore the Commission of Inquiry finding that — besides the incidents of 14 May and 12 October — there are reasonable grounds to believe that Israel's use of live ammunition against demonstrators was unlawful. The idea that the security of one must be achieved at the expense of the other is as offensive as it is illegitimate, he stressed, noting that such actions are part of a long-running campaign of violence waged against Palestinians by Israel's military forces and extremist settlers. Palestinian leaders have unequivocally condemned violence against civilians and "we reject any libellous claims otherwise" ...

Danny Ben Yosef Danon (Israel) said it is easy to talk about both sides showing restraint, but rockets are flying into Israel, including the one that fell 150 feet from his own home on 25 March. Israel is comfortable discussing implementation of Council resolutions, he added, but when rockets are flying, it will defend its people, and then it will talk. He proposed that the Council hold a closed session during next month's German presidency to discuss the matter further. The launch of the long-range rocket fired on 25 March, which injured seven people, was an act of terror for which Hamas is responsible, he continued. It was fired from a Palestinian civilian area into an Israeli civilian area, putting innocent people in the line of fire and making Hamas guilty of a double war crime. More than 130 more rockets were subsequently fired into Israel, which responded forcefully and will continue to do so as long as such attacks persist, he emphasized.

He went on to recall that Hamas has fired more than 12,000 rockets and mortars into Israel over the past 12 years. Its stated goal is to destroy Israel, but its other goal is to distract world attention from its oppressive rule of Gaza, where, in the past week, it arrested, beat up and shot Palestinians protesting against its terrorist regime, with no comment from UNRWA or the so-called Human Rights Council. ... Israel expects the Security Council to clearly condemn Hamas and designate it as a terrorist organization, he said, stressing: "Twelve thousand rockets and mortars should be enough evidence to warrant such designation." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13745.doc.htm>

Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016): Report of the Secretary-General

<https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/251>

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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>

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 5 days**

Scottish charity law (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438