

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Office for National Statistics

Marriages in England and Wales: 2016

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2016/pdf>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Reconstruction

Richard Burden (Labour) [234663] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with the (a) UN, (b) Palestinian Authority and (c) Israeli Government on the (i) 2018 review of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism and (ii) implementation of the recommendations of that review.

Harriett Baldwin: The UK values the role of the United Nations (UN) in supporting Gaza's reconstruction following widespread destruction in the 2014 conflict through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), which helps ensure that essential reconstruction materials reach civilians. Following the joint review of the GRM in 2018 the UN, Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) began implementing the report's recommendations in January this year. UK officials most recently discussed the review of the GRM and the implementation of its recommendations with the UN in January 2019.

The UK regularly raises movement and access restrictions in Gaza with both the Government of Israel and with the PA. DFID officials most recently raised the review of the GRM and the implementation of the review's recommendations with the Israeli Government in February 2019. More broadly, restrictions in Gaza were most recently raised with the PA in January 2019. The UK will continue to call on the Israeli government to ease access restrictions further and for Israel and the

Palestinian Authority to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-20/234663/>

Golan Heights

Jim Cunningham (Labour) [235734] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the future of the Golan Heights; and if he will make a statement.

Mark Field: We have not recently discussed our concerns with the US Government. In our statement on 22 March we reiterated our position that the UK views the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law, including the UN Charter. The UK did not recognise Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change our position.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-22/235734/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-statement-on-the-golan-heights>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Department for International Development

UK aid to support struggling hospitals “near breaking point” in Gaza

Struggling hospitals across Gaza will receive critical support through a new package of UK aid announced today (28 March), which will provide urgently needed medicines and surgical supplies.

The funding, confirmed by the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt, will help to keep Gaza's hospitals functioning as they face increasing demand from the number of trauma patients. ...

UK aid will support the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to deliver urgently needed surgical equipment, medicines, wound dressing kits, prosthetic limbs and post-surgery physiotherapy. It will also help to provide physical rehabilitation services for up to 3,000 disabled people.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said: “The UK is deeply concerned by the crisis in Gaza and the pressure it is putting on hospitals, which are now near breaking point. The UK aid funding announced today will help treat the growing number of emergency patients and provide urgently needed medicines, surgical supplies and rehabilitation.

Our support has consistently provided assistance to meet the basic needs of people in Gaza. UK aid has helped prevent the spread of disease, and given people access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation. It also recently provided a package of emergency food supplies for more than 62,000 Palestinian refugees at risk of going hungry.

We are also working to address some of the underlying causes of the humanitarian situation in Gaza through an economic development programme, which includes

increasing the sustainable supplies of water and electricity. The UK supports a return to negotiations to find a lasting political settlement for Palestinians and Israelis.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-support-struggling-hospitals-near-breaking-point-in-gaza>

United Nations

Security Council Members Regret Decision by United States to Recognize Israel’s Sovereignty over Occupied Syrian Golan

Rosemary Dicarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, recalled that during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Syrian Arab Army crossed the 1967 ceasefire line on the Golan — known as the Purple Line — initially gaining territory. In a swift counter-attack, she said, the Israeli Defense Forces re-captured the lost ground and advanced further, crossing the 1967 ceasefire line and occupying a salient portion of Syrian territory. ...

She went on to state that the Government of Syria re-established full control of the area known as the Bravo side in 2018, thereby re-establishing the *status quo ante*. Throughout that period, Israel has periodically stressed the critical importance of the Golan to its security, she said. On Monday, President Donald Trump of the United States signed an official proclamation recognizing Israel’s sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. ... The Organization’s position on the Golan is clear in the relevant Council and General Assembly resolutions, notably Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), she emphasized. “We hope that the recent developments will not be used as an excuse by anyone to pursue actions that could undermine the relative stability of the situation on the Golan and beyond.”

Rodney Hunter (United States) said that his country and the Council cannot accept Syrian efforts to establish a presence in the Area of Separation as the new norm and called upon the Russian Federation to use its influence over the Assad regime to compel his forces to withdraw immediately from that zone. Expressing alarm at the presence of Hizbullah in the Area of Separation, he emphasized that the Syrian authorities must ensure the freedom of movement and safety of UNDOF personnel. There can be no chance for peace between Syria and Israel with Hizbullah present, he stressed. On President Trump’s proclamation affirming his country’s recognition of the Golan Heights as a part of Israel, he said the decision does not affect the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, nor does it undermine UNDOF’s mandate. The proclamation is of critical security and strategic importance for Israel, he said, underlining that, in Syria, Israel currently has no partner for peace. ...

Karen Pierce (United Kingdom) said that her delegation’s position — that the Golan is territory occupied by Israel — remains unchanged. The decision by the United States contravenes resolution 497 (1981), she said, affirming her country’s belief in the rules-based international order. Acknowledging Israel’s right to defend itself, she urged the Assad regime as well as Iran and Hizbullah to refrain from actions that could increase insecurity and put civilians at risk, while encouraging the United States Administration to advance viable proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement through substantive peace talks leading to a two-State solution. ...

Vladimir K. Safronkov (Russian Federation) said it is unacceptable to undermine the situation in Syria by taking unilateral steps that create serious obstacles to the normalization of relationships between Israel and the Arab States. Criticizing the declaration by the United States, he said it violates Security Council resolutions, stressing that the Golan Heights remain part of the Syrian Republic. ...

Marc Pecsteen De Buytswerve (Belgium) said his country does not recognize Israeli

sovereignty over territories it has occupied since June 1967, including the Golan, nor does it consider them to be Israeli territory. ...

Christoph Heusgen (Germany) emphasized that security concerns do not justify annexation of the Golan, adding, however, that the presence of Syrian troops and an Iran-backed group must end. ...

Nichola Nakulunga Sabelo (South Africa) expressed deep concern over the recent decision “by a member of this Council to recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights”, a unilateral action that is a blatant violation of international law and numerous relevant Security Council resolutions. Israel continues to defy international law in its attempts to alter facts on the ground by constructing settlements, appropriating water resources and expelling Arab occupants from their land ...

Anne Gueguen (France), Council President for March, spoke in her national capacity, noting that the European Union affirmed today that its member States do not recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the occupied Golan, and nor do they recognize that country’s annexation of that territory in 1981. ...

Bashar Ja'afari (Syria) ... rejected the name “Golan Heights” as an Israeli term. Noting that Israel conducted bomb strikes against Aleppo as the meeting was opening, he said that his country’s Government condemned “the illegal statement” by the United States on the Golan, which belongs to Syria, and the blind, unprecedented tendency of that Administration to humiliate the United Nations. ... Emphasizing the real risk to international peace and security, he said that inaction over the occupation leaves force as the only option. The Golan will always belong to Syria, he declared, suggesting that the United States give North and South Carolina to Israel instead. ...

Danny Ben Yosef Danon (Israel) said that the United States recognized what has been true for 52 years. It also demonstrated its willingness to recognize the reality on the ground and its commitment to Israel’s security and right to self-defence, he said, urging other Member States to follow suit. He said that from the moment of Israel’s founding, the Syrian regime has maintained a policy of aggression with the goal of wiping it off the map. Since 1967, the Golan Heights have been critical to Israel’s survival, he noted, recalling that the territory proved invaluable to the country’s fate during the Yom Kippur war, enabling the Israeli army to absorb Syria’s initial act of war and to launch a counter-attack. ...

“Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights is forever,” he affirmed, emphasizing that international recognition of that will ensure regional security and stability. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13753.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>

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 4 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