



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Charity Commission

#### **“No evidence of charitable activity” by mismanaged Gaza aid charity, according to critical report**

A charity set up to help people in Gaza may not have conducted any charitable activity or distributed any humanitarian aid, according to a highly critical report by the Charity Commission.

The charity regulator has published the findings of its inquiry into Viva Palestina, and has concluded that its trustees put publicly donated funds at risk as a result of their mismanagement and/or misconduct. ...

Whilst the inquiry saw some evidence that monies had been used to purchase medical supplies in line with the charity’s objects, the Commission concludes that the charity’s financial and other records were so poor that “it was difficult to establish with any certainty whether any charitable activity had taken place” and that the inquiry found “little or no evidence that humanitarian aid was distributed to those in need”.

The Commission did establish, however, that one of the charity’s former trustees had received payments from the charity and that mobile phones and radios were purchased with charity funds at “significant expenditure”. ...

Viva Palestina began in 2009 as a large scale fundraising campaign to finance aid convoys to Gaza. Its founders did not originally apply to register the organisation as a charity; the Commission formed the view that it was a charity and must therefore be registered. ...

Among the issues highlighted in the Commission’s report are:

- unauthorised payments: one former employee claimed that they had been instructed to make financial transactions by one of the founders and a former trustee of Viva Palestina, who had no authority to do so
- lack of proper control over employment: the same individual also claimed that they had been instructed by the same founder and former trustee to resign as a trustee and assume duties as a paid employee. The Commission saw no evidence that the trustees made such an appointment properly
- lack of oversight over assets ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/no-evidence-of-charitable-activity-by-mismanaged-gaza-aid-charity-according-to-critical-report>

### **Inquiry Decision: Viva Palestina**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-inquiry-viva-palestina/viva-palestina-formerly-a-registered-charity>

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## Israel

**See also ““No evidence of charitable activity” by mismanaged Gaza aid charity, according to critical report” in the “Home Affairs” section above.**

### House of Lords Oral Answers

#### **Gaza**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench):** To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to discuss with the governments of (1) Israel, and (2) Egypt, how to end the causes of recurrent violence in Gaza.

**Baroness Goldie:** My Lords, we regularly discuss the situation in Gaza with the Israeli and Egyptian Governments. This includes the Minister of State for the Middle East raising our concerns with the Israeli authorities during his visit to Israel in May, as well as discussions with the Egyptian ambassador on 16 May. We are gravely concerned about the recent escalation of violence in Gaza. We welcome the Egyptian and United Nations brokered ceasefire and urge all parties to make progress towards a long-term agreement.

**Lord Hylton:** My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness for her reply, but is it not intolerable that violence has continued for 12 years, providing an excuse for worldwide terrorism? The blockade also continues, although it has not prevented violence from both sides. Will Her Majesty's Government call for an end to the blockade and for the normalisation of all relationships? Would an independently facilitated analysis of the causes of strife be helpful in this?

**Baroness Goldie:** I reassure the noble Lord that we are deeply concerned about the recurring violence in Gaza and the surrounding region, and we regularly lobby the Israelis about the damage that their restrictions are doing to the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Palestinians. We have also raised concerns with the Egyptian authorities, but there is no excuse or justification for terrorism. We utterly condemn the violent acts of Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza. The firing of rockets towards civilian areas is unacceptable and must stop. I agree with the noble Lord that all parties should work together to agree a long-term sustainable plan to improve the situation with help from the international community, and we welcome efforts by those who are working to develop solutions that will ultimately lead to peace.

**Lord Anderson of Swansea (Labour):** My Lords, Israel is like one of those dangerous animals which, when attacked, defends itself. It would surely be more sensible to talk to Hamas and suggest that it stops rockets being launched into Israel and tunnels to Israel being built. The Israelis must know where the rockets are located and where the tunnels begin because of the quality of their intelligence operations. That would surely be the better practice.

**Baroness Goldie:** The noble Lord will be aware of the Government's long-standing position: Hamas's military wing has been proscribed in the UK since 2001 and the

UK has a policy of no contact with Hamas, including the political as well as the military wing. Our position is that it must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements.

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, we are expecting a grand American plan for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation from Mr Kushner and others. I gather that it has now been put off because of the failure of Netanyahu to form a new Government. Can the Minister assure us that the British have been fully briefed on what it will contain, that we have had a chance to provide our own input into what sounds like an immensely overoptimistic set of proposals for the Palestinians to accept, and that we are continuing to be engaged in discussions on this matter?

**Baroness Goldie:** We continue to encourage the US Administration to bring forward detailed proposals for a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. Insofar as further detail is concerned, since the state visit by President Trump is ongoing it would not be appropriate to comment on the nature of the conversations that are taking place. We discuss a wide range of topics with the US Administration, including the Middle East peace process, and we look forward to learning more about the US plans. Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary met with Mr Jared Kushner who, as your Lordships will be aware, is President Trump's son-in-law and has been placed in charge of the peace plan. They discussed a range of important topics, including the Middle East.

**Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative):** Noble Lords will be aware of the terrible state of the healthcare system in Gaza. This is partly because in Hamas-controlled Gaza much of the reconstruction material has been misused for tunnels and the like. One thing Her Majesty's Government could do—perhaps my noble friend the Minister could state whether they are minded so to do—is to keep an eye on the misappropriation of international aid and ensure that it is used for the purpose for which it is sent.

**Baroness Goldie:** I thank my noble friend for that question. As he will be aware, the UK is one of the principal donors to the Palestinian Authority in respect of Gaza; at least, we direct help through agencies there to try to alleviate the conditions. We would take very seriously any suggestion or evidence that this funding was being misdirected or misused. If any evidence were available, the United Kingdom Government would want to know about that.

**Lord Dubs (Labour):** Will the Minister confirm that the American cuts in funding to UNRWA were potentially very damaging and that the day was saved only by the British and other Governments making up the shortfall? Will the Minister confirm that, if the UNRWA money were to stop, affecting the valuable services that it provides in Gaza in both education and health, that would have a very damaging effect on the situation there and further prejudice the tensions in the region?

**Baroness Goldie:** All noble Lords will agree that it is important that everything possible is done to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The noble Lord is correct that the role of UNRWA—the United Nations Relief and Works Agency—is extremely important. I cannot speak for the United States of America, but I can confirm that the UK is a long supporter of that agency and that we intend over the next few years to provide up to £80 million to support it. The noble Lord will be aware that this is in addition to the significant funds that we are already making available, including, as announced on 29 May by the Minister of State for the Middle East, new UK money of £1.6 million being given to the World Health Organization. This will address urgent gaps in trauma and emergency care in Gaza, including by establishing a new limb reconstruction unit which will help to provide lifesaving treatment to more than 380,000 people in Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-06-05/debates/46669F94-14CA-4C81-96E4-92C7B26504E8/Gaza>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### **Palestinians: Refugees**

**Lord Pickles (Conservative)** [HL15899] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's working definition of a Palestinian refugee is in alignment with the UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK recognises the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide essential services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. The UK continues to adhere to UNRWA's definition of a Palestinian refugee: those whose 'normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict'. We are clear that the status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. Meanwhile, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UNRWA across the Middle East. This is in line with our longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process, which includes supporting a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for Palestinian refugees.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-21/HL15899/>

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## Foreign Affairs

### **UK Parliament Early Day Motion**

**Fiona Bruce (Conservative) (2453) UN International Day commemorating the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief** – That this House welcomes the establishment by the UN General Assembly of the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on 22 August each year; is deeply concerned that acts of violence based on religion or belief are increasing all over the world and often flourish with impunity; notes the concerning findings of the interim report of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians; recognises the dire situation of religious minorities in many parts of the world; calls on the Government to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief and use the initiative to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan, across Departments to address religious persecution whenever and wherever it occurs; and further calls on the Government to use all its diplomatic powers to combat religious persecution around the world and bring impunity for such atrocities to an end.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52988/un-international-day-commemorating-the-victims-of-acts-of-violence-based-on-religion-or-belief>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

#### **Conclusions on the implementation of the recommendations in respect of the United Kingdom subject to interim follow-up**

<https://rm.coe.int/interim-follow-up-conclusions-on-the-united-kingdom-5th-monitoring-cyc/168094ce06>

### European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

#### **Rising inequalities and harassment as fundamental rights protection falters**

Many people across the EU risk being left behind, as growing intolerance and attacks on people's fundamental rights continue to erode the considerable progress achieved to date, finds FRA's Fundamental Rights Report 2019. ...

This year's Fundamental Rights Report reflects on the developments and shortfalls of human rights protection in the EU over the past year. ... key issues identified include:

- Racial discrimination and harassment remain commonplace throughout the European Union. Recognising this, EU institutions adopted measures to counter antisemitism and to tackle racism towards Afro-Europeans. People because of their skin colour, religious belief or ethnicity continue to face widespread harassment, discrimination, entrenched prejudice and discriminatory ethnic profiling across the EU ... For example, 1 in 5 black people and nearly 3 in 10 Jews experience harassment. ...
- ... almost 4 in 10 Europeans consider migration as problematic and almost half overestimate the size of irregular migration. ...

The report summarises and analyses major human rights developments in the EU over 2018. It contains [proposals for action](#) covering the EU's Fundamental Rights Charter and its use by Member States; equality and non-discrimination; racism, xenophobia and related intolerance; Roma integration; asylum, borders and migration; information society, privacy and data protection; child rights; access to justice; and implementing the UN's disability convention.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2019/rising-inequalities-and-harassment-fundamental-rights-protection-falters>

#### **Fundamental Rights Report 2019**

[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf)

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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>

Stage 3: notice of amendments

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Human%20Tissue%20\(Authorisation\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill32AMLS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Human%20Tissue%20(Authorisation)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill32AMLS052019.pdf)

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**Scottish Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan** (closing date 28 June 2019)

<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1860/strategic-plan-consultation-vfinal-eh.docx>

**Online Harms White Paper** (closing date 1 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>

**Opt-out organ donation: organs and tissues excluded from the new system** (closing date 22 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opt-out-organ-donation-organs-and-tissues-excluded-from-the-new-system>

**Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans** (closing date 25 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

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