

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Hate Crime: Sikhs

**Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [277247]** To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what funding he has allocated to help tackle hate crime reported by the Sikh community in each of the last 10 years.

**Heather Wheeler:** The Department does not hold this data but the Government takes the view that all forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable. In October 2018 the Government refreshed the Hate Crime Action Plan, and committed additional funding to continue to protect places of worship - since 2016 Government's Places of Worship scheme has approved 17 grants to Gurdwaras. Additionally, we have committed just over £1.5 million for projects to tackle all forms of racially and religiously motivated hatred. The Government has an extensive engagement programme with all faith communities, including the Sikh community through the MHCLG-led Sikh roundtable. Membership of the roundtable is currently being refreshed to broaden the representation.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-15/277247/>

*The Action Plan referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748175/Hate\\_crime\\_refresh\\_2018\\_FINAL\\_WEB.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF)

*Information about the Places of Worship Scheme, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

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### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Gaza: Health Services**

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op)** [277644] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that medical workers in Gaza can provide humanitarian assistance without the risk of attack.

#### **Gaza: Health Professions**

**Virendra Sharma (Labour)** [278454] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that medical workers in Gaza can perform their humanitarian functions without risk of attack.

**Andrew Murrison:** We are deeply concerned by the report of attacks on health workers in Gaza. The UK is clear that no health workers or aid workers should be at risk of violence, and that they must have the protection they need from the responsible authorities to allow them to do their jobs in safety. While we recognise Israel's right to security, we have repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the way Israel Defence Forces (IDF) police protests and the border areas in Gaza, including our concerns about the use of live ammunition and excessive force by the IDF. We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the urgent need to ease all access and movement restrictions on Gaza, including for health workers.

The UK continues to strongly support the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. In 2019, the UK is supporting urgent medical needs through the International Committee for the Red Cross and the World Health Organisation. We are also providing support to the UN Access Coordination Unit, which works to facilitate humanitarian access for UN and NGO workers into Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-16/277644/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-17/278454/>

#### **Occupied Territories: Health Services**

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op)** [277646] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government is taking to tackle impunity for attacks against health workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Andrew Murrison:** The UK is clear that no health workers or aid workers should be at risk of violence, that they must have the protection they need from the responsible authorities to allow them to do their jobs in safety, and that the rule of law must prevail to deal with perpetrators.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-16/277646/>

#### **Dalal Mughrabi and Omar Abu Laila**

**Joan Ryan (The Independent Group for Change)** [277622] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to her Department's Memorandum of Understanding with the Palestinian Authority (PA) what discussions her Department has had with the PA on reports of the naming of a Palestinian youth summer camps after Dalal Mughrabi and Omar Abu Laila.

**Andrew Murrison:** The UK strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement on both sides of the conflict. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian

leadership to avoid engaging in or encouraging any type of action and language that makes it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

We have an active dialogue with the Palestinian Authority (PA) on their commitment to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle language and avoid actions that could incite violence or hatred, including an annual assessment of the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding that DFID holds with the PA. We have specifically raised our concerns over the naming of education institutions and will continue to do so.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-16/277622/>

*The current version of the Memorandum of Understanding referred to above is not available online.*

### **Hezbollah and Islamic Resistance Support Organization**

**John Spellar (Labour)** [277639] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the relationship between Hezbollah and the Islamic Resistance Support Organisation.

**Andrew Murrison:** We do not comment on intelligence matters.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-16/277639/>

## **UK Parliament Early Day Motion**

**Wes Streeting (Labour) (2640) Demolitions in East Jerusalem** – That this House condemns the demolition of Palestinian buildings in the Sur Baher neighbourhood in East Jerusalem; notes that this is an area under the control of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords; further notes that these demolitions have been condemned by the EU, UN and both Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations; believes that such demolitions set back the prospects for peace and a two-state solution; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to condemn these demolitions and make representations to the Government of Israel to cease these demolitions immediately.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/53184/demolitions-in-east-jerusalem>

## **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**Political and economic progress in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East**

... US efforts to support the development of Palestinian economy are very welcome. It's crucial that we improve the daily life and prospects for Palestinians across East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. For the United Kingdom, Mr President, we are doubling UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories between 2018 and 2023. We are helping to address restrictions on movement and access and improving water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza. ...

it is, of course, essential that political progress is made in order to unlock economic opportunities. And we encourage the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to engage and work with the international community to foster solutions that actively improve the situation on the ground. ...

... the United Kingdom's position on the two-state solution remains unchanged. But I wanted just to stress that in the interim, until there is political progress, steps need to be

taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli occupation. ...

... we urge the Palestinian Authority to address allegations of incitement, including in the education curriculum, and to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring these are needs-based, transparent and affordable. We remain deeply concerned, as other speakers have noted today, by ongoing Israeli settlement advancements, including over 200 units in Gilo on 10 July and by the retroactive approvals of unauthorised settlement outposts. Settlements are illegal and they undermine the physical viability of a future Palestinian state. Settler violence, the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes should be opposed and condemned wholeheartedly. ...

We remain deeply concerned by suggestions that any parts, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, should be annexed. Such a move would be contrary to international law, destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged. ...

Let me be clear about our views on terrorism: we equally condemn in the strongest terms Hamas terrorism and that of other militant groups in Gaza. Since the Great March of Return began in 2018, there have been nearly 2000 rockets and mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. This is completely unacceptable and we call on Hamas and other militant groups to cease such attacks immediately. We recognise Israel's legitimate security need. However, we do have concerns about excessive use of force by the Israel Defense Forces. Measures used need to be appropriate and in line with international law. ...

... we believe that it's essential that the international community continue work to support Palestinian refugees. Status of Palestinian refugees needs to be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. But until that time, the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and refugees across the Middle East. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/political-progress-and-economic-opportunities-in-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

## United Nations

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 'Locked in a Dangerous Paralysis', Under-Secretary-General Warns Security Council, Urging Political Will, Leadership to Change Course**

... **Rosemary Dicarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs**, said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains locked in a dangerous paralysis that is fuelling extremism and exacerbating tensions in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. There is a growing risk of more unilateral actions and the loss of hope that peace can be achieved through negotiations. ...

With no prospect of viable negotiations on the horizon, facts on the ground continue to undermine the chances of a two-State solution, she said, emphasizing that Israeli settlements remain a substantial obstacle to peace and a violation of international law. ... Israel's policy of destroying Palestinian property is incompatible with its obligations under international humanitarian law and contributes to the risk of forcible transfer faced by many Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, she said ...

She reported a reduction of violence in Gaza in the past month, while protests at the perimeter fence have continued, with one Palestinian killed by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and 736 injured. Fewer incendiary balloons and kites have been launched by Hamas and other Palestinian militants, while only two rockets were fired during the reporting period... However, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violent incidents have continued, she said, citing clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, as well as settler-related violence and the ramming of a Palestinian-driven vehicle into a group of IDF personnel on 6 July. ...

Returning to the situation in Gaza, she said the United Nations is working closely with

Egypt to mediate and de-escalate tensions. While those joint efforts are starting to bear fruit, she said she remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian, economic and political situation. ...

On the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, she said no solution has yet been found. For the fifth straight month, the Palestinian Government has refused to receive Israel's partial transfer of tax revenues owed to it. ...

**Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, said that, time and again, his delegation has implored the Council to salvage peace prospects, convinced that such action, in line with international law, is the only way to end the suffering. ... After more than 52 years, it is "past high time" to redress a colonial foreign occupation that is rapidly mutating into apartheid, he said ...

Israel must be held accountable, both for the crimes and the reparations, and the State of Palestine will explore every avenue to end impunity for them, including the illegal land grab. ...

The Palestinian people will remain, he said. The global consensus on their right to self-determination and on the parameters of a just solution is strong. ... There must be accountability. All political and legal tools, including court prosecutions and sanctions, must be pursued. The Council must compel a halt to the occupation's crimes, protect civilians and salvage the chances for a just peace. States must also act, individually and collectively, adhering to relevant resolutions and not recognizing or rendering aid to this illegal situation.

**Danny Danon (Israel)** said that, 40 years ago, in 1979, the world witnessed two historic events: one was when Israeli, Palestinian and United States leaders shook hands and agreed on a peace agreement; and the other in Iran where a radical revolution took place. Israel's peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt have lasted decades. Meanwhile, Iran's regime is jeopardizing the region and beyond. That regime is financing terrorism in the region, bolstering its proxies to commit vicious crimes and is pursuing nuclear weapons with the sole goal of destroying Israel. ...

Iran's regime has continued to pursue nuclear weapons, threatening the entire Western Hemisphere, he said. ... After years of war, Israel and its Arab neighbours have found something to agree upon: both sides are committed to fighting the Iranian threat and confronting the forces of chaos, terrorism and extremism. ...

**Jason D. Greenblatt (United States)**, describing the recent "Peace for Prosperity" workshop in Bahrain as very successful, acknowledged that many Council members are frustrated that President Donald J. Trump's Administration has not yet detailed its vision for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hopefully, the President will decide soon when to release it, but in the meantime, it is time to put tired rhetoric aside. ... in the case of this conflict, there is no consensus, and those that keep calling for consensus are doing nothing to encourage the parties to negotiate and make hard compromises. ...

Only direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine can resolve the issue of Jerusalem, "if it can be resolved", he said, adding that those who weaponize the term "occupation" to criticize Israel are undermining the chances for peace. ... He called on the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority to put aside blanket rejections of a plan they have not even seen and to demonstrate a willingness to engage in good faith in dialogue with Israel. ...

**Karen Pierce (United Kingdom)** said that it is crucial to improve the daily life of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza ... *[see above for an abstract of this speech]*

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13895.doc.htm>

## **Economic and Social Council Adopts Texts on Harmful Impact of Israeli Occupation ...**

... the Council adopted a resolution titled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan”. By its terms, the Council called for the full opening of the border crossings of the Gaza Strip ... to ensure humanitarian access, as well as the sustained, regular flow of person of goods, the lifting of movement restrictions on Palestinians and other urgent steps to alleviate the serious humanitarian situation in the Territory. The Council demanded that Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations it signed with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1994 and called upon Israel to restore and replace civilian property, vital infrastructure, agricultural lands and government institutions that have been damaged or destroyed due to its military operations.

Further, the Council reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, calling upon Israel to immediately cease its exploitation of natural resources and its dumping of waste materials in the occupied areas. ...

The representative of Israel ... said the ESCWA [United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia] report is critically flawed and intended to hide real, on-the-ground facts. Underlining its reliance on hearsay and lack of context, she said it paints the so-called “Great March of Return” in May 2018 as a sort of Palestinian family picnic at the border fence with Israel. In reality, it was a demonstration intended to create a human shield behind which violent attacks were launched against her country.

Noting that a Hamas spokesperson admitted that the vast number of casualties on that occasion were in fact Hamas militants, and not civilians, she added that the report omits a single reference to the more than 600 rockets launched into Israel from Gaza over the reporting period. ...

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, speaking after the vote, said the dire economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people are man-made and due to the occupation. ...

The Council also adopted the related draft resolution “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women” ... By its terms, the Council called for urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and urged the international community to continue giving special attention to promote and protect the rights of Palestinian women and girls, including by, among other things, intensifying steps to improve their difficult living conditions. ...

***To read the full press release see***

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ecosoc7010.doc.htm>

### **Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/2019/L.25)**

<https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/L.25>

### **Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2019/L.26)**

<https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/L.26>

### **ESCWA report: Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women and Girls (July 2016 – June 2018)**

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/social-and-economic-situation-of-palestinian-women-and-girls-july-2016-june-2018-escwa-report/>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill**

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

#### **Domestic Abuse Bill**

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

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **Civil Partnerships: Next Steps Conversion** (closing date 20 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/civil-partnerships-next-steps-and-consultation-on-conversion>

#### **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>

#### **Islamophobia in Scotland** (closing date 26 August 2019)

<https://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=13027>

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