



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Downing Street

PM call with President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas

The Prime Minister received a call of congratulation from the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas on his appointment.

The two leaders discussed bilateral cooperation and the Prime Minister reiterated that the UK remains committed to a two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-of-the-palestinian-authority-mahmoud-abbas-15-august-2019>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Calling for full respect of international law and dialogue in the Middle East: Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce at the Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East

... Mr President, last year we commemorated the centenary of the end of the First World War that did much to shape the modern Middle East. ... The end of the First World War also led to the establishment of the League of Nations. This, in turn, laid the foundation for the United Nations and many of the conflicts that have wrought so much destruction in the region; from Syria to Yemen, Libya to Gaza, continue to feature heavily on this Council's agenda. ... And while our efforts at multilateral solutions have not always worked out as well as we might have hoped, the alternative looks decidedly worse. Experience tells us that however imperfect, de-escalation and dialogue, political processes and support for the rules-based international system are the best means to address tensions that risk undermining our collective interests in security, stability and prosperity. ...

For the United Kingdom, our position on the two-state solution remains unchanged. We urge the US administration to bring forward its detailed proposals for a viable peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties.

US efforts to support the development of the Palestinian economy are very welcome and it's essential that political progress is made in order to unlock economic opportunities. But as we've said in the Council before, until there is political progress, steps do need to be taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli

occupation. We want to see increasing trade opportunities for the Palestinians' external trade and we want to see the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority realised. Mr President, only a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a shared capital of both states, can bring a lasting solution. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/calling-for-full-respect-of-international-law-and-dialogue-in-the-middle-east>

United Nations

United States, Iran Trade Accusations during Security Council Debate on Causes of Conflicts, Instability in Middle East

... **Danny Danon (Israel)** recalled his country's signing of the peace agreement with Egypt 40 years ago, saying it set the foundation for blossoming relations. However, the Palestinian leadership keeps trying to prevent fruitful relations between Israel and other States in the Middle East. In addition, Iran foreshadows the climate of today's relationship-building through its violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as well as numerous Security Council resolutions and through its support for terrorism, he said, adding that it funnels more than \$7 billion in annual contributions to terrorist groups such as Hizbullah, which is destabilizing Lebanon. Meanwhile, Israel and the Arab countries can come together to collaborate, with a growing number of countries forging ties with Tel Aviv, he said. Indeed, many speakers today have said Iran is the main threat in the Middle East, he noted. Despite the continued incitement of hatred against the Jewish people and their country, Israel can be a partner and is interested in dialogue, even though the Palestinian authorities refuse to talk, he emphasized, calling upon regional actors that do not see Israel as an enemy to join his country in forging towards peace. Addressing Arab Member States, he offered to conduct direct dialogue with them, saying: "Israel is not your enemy." ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said it is impossible to examine, understand and remedy the root causes of the situation in the Middle East without addressing the Palestinian question. Attempts to sidestep or downplay the ruinous impact of the uprooting of the Palestinian people 70 years ago, or the more than half-century of Israeli military occupation, or the denial and violation of Palestinian rights do a disservice to the goal of regional peace and security. "Absent Palestinian-Israeli peace, that goal will remain elusive." Meanwhile, confidence in the Council to halt violence, uphold international humanitarian law and resolve conflicts is in freefall, he said, with Israel's defiance of Council resolutions being the most glaring example. He also warned that Israel's reckless provocations in occupied East Jerusalem, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, risk sparking a dangerous religious conflict. ... The Council's authority has been met with flagrant contempt by Israel, the occupying Power, with a permanent Council member's use of the veto further exacerbating the situation. ...

Responding to the statement by Israel's delegate, he denounced allegations that Palestinians do not want a resolution to the conflict, saying the "extremist" Israeli Government reduces any prospect of peace. He described Israel's representative as a "liar" who chooses not to heed international law or to listen to promises by Arab countries to work for peace. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13923.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Anti-semitism and situation of Roma and people of African descent raised by experts as the Committee on Racial Discrimination examines the report of the State of Palestine

... **Ammar Hijazi, Assistant Minister of the Multilateral Affairs Sector of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine**, said that the report [see below] gave an account of the main achievements as well as of the challenges faced in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in the State of Palestine. ...

Palestine's land was under Israel's prolonged colonial and racist occupation, which disregarded international humanity and its commitments as the occupying power in accordance to international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Many attempts had been made to obliterate the Palestinian identity in the past 72 years. Millions of refugees were still prevented from returning to their homes, from which they had been uprooted. The dialogue today did not exempt Israel, the continuing occupying power, from assuming its legal responsibilities in accordance with international law, including the Convention, nor did it extinguish its responsibility and accountability for the violations perpetrated against the Palestinian people. ...

The declaration of independence of the State of Palestine, adopted by the National Council in 1988, was a legislative starting point for Palestine, stipulating that Palestine was for Palestinians wherever they may be. In the State of Palestine, the Constitution guaranteed the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. The State of Palestine was fully committed to the principles and objectives of the United Nations. The Government had cemented the rights contained in international instruments based on a vision that the Palestinians had the right to enjoy them all, despite having been deprived of them for decades. ...

Mr. Hijazi said that the report had been prepared by a governmental committee comprised of relevant governmental entities in cooperation with relevant representatives of civil society and ethnic and racial minority groups. Consultations had been organized by video conference with representatives of civil society in the Gaza Strip, who had been denied passage by Israeli occupation forces to the West Bank. There was an organic relationship between foreign occupation and discrimination and apartheid. The occupation was in total contravention of the United Nations, its Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two Covenants, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, amongst others. This occupation was also in complete contravention of resolutions of the Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Furthermore, the fact that Israel had built a wall of separation seriously hampered the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination -- a right which was *erga omnes* according the International Court of Justice.

Despite the fact that the State of Palestine was committed to international law, the human rights situation had been deteriorating, as Israel disregarded international humanitarian law and the Convention. This was most visible in the colonial expansionist system based on religious and racial superiority, which included the expansion of settlements, the wall of separation, the forced displacement of Palestinians, and Israel's domination of natural resources through a series of illegal practices. ... The laws implemented by the occupying power led to apartheid, discrimination and oppression of the Palestinian people. Israel aimed at imposing colonial occupation and punishment to push Palestinians to leave by force. Israeli authorities continued to adopt racist legislation against the Palestinian people ...

Israel, the occupying power, refused to implement the Convention in the occupied territories. The actions of Israel flouted the provisions of the Convention. The State of Palestine had submitted a report on the crimes committed by the occupying power to the

International Criminal Court. ...

The Commission for Human Rights of the State of Palestine said the systematic obliteration of justice was occurring in the country, as it had been for decades. ... The occupation led to the implementation of discriminatory policies amounting to apartheid. It was important to take note of the pace of the creation of settlements, the blockade against Gaza and the destruction of homes. It was important for people in the State of Palestine to have access to justice and be able to file complaints. It was concerning that the High Constitutional Court had handed down a decision imposing restrictions on the implementation of international conventions on human rights. ... It was outrageous that Israel continued to occupy such a large part of the country. Despite all the obstacles thrown up by the occupying force, there was a clear political will and intention by the State of Palestine to comply with treaties and conventions that had been acceded to. ...

Ammar Hijazi [said] ... the State of Palestine as a whole was under occupation. The Government had limited control over the city centres. It did not control its borders, natural resources or the connections between cities. ...

The Palestinians' fundamental rights to access healthcare, sufficient drinking water, technology, and other basic services were subjected to the whims and policies of the Israeli occupation regime, which went as far as granting itself the right to decide on the calorie consumption of each Gazan. ...

On hate speech, Mr. Hijazi said in the context which he had described, dissent and protest were the normal response. The unbearable conditions under which the Palestinians lived were the main source of violence and created an environment conducive to perpetual conflict. Talking about Palestinian history did not amount to incitement to hatred. The State of Palestine had taken all measures possible to ensure that the soul and character of the Palestinian society was preserved and not tarnished by the daily and systematic violence. Palestinians were determined not to let the cruelty of occupation strip them from humanity. ...

Turning to the issue of anti-Semitism, he stated that some individuals were trying to conflate legitimate criticism of Israel and its occupation, and anti-Semitism. As a point of principle, the State of Palestine rejected and combatted all forms of racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism. Palestine did not accept Israel's claim that it represented all Jews around the world, and did not believe that Jews around the world, or all Israelis, could be held responsible for the actions of the Israeli Government. The weaponized accusation of anti-Semitism was a ruse devised to silence dissent and should be unequivocally rejected. ...

Regarding the allegation that the Palestinian curricula included discriminatory elements, the delegation said that, quite to the contrary, the textbooks promoted respect, and 96 per cent of the Palestinian school curricula were in line with United Nations and international standards. Programmes also talked about the presence of Jews and Judaism, as well as the Jews that were present in Palestine before 1947. On the map of Israel that was allegedly missing from the curricula, how could the curricula include a map from the 1930s and 1940s for a country that did not exist at the time? ...

Regarding the situation "", the delegation said that the right of return of Palestinian refugees was inalienable as General Assembly resolution 194 had confirmed. The Refugee Department provided, mobilized and coordinated assistance to refugees, including projects that developed infrastructure in refugee camps. The State of Palestine rejected attempts to deprive refugees of their rights, notably the right of return. ...

... Hamas' actions in the Gaza Strip amounted to a coup d'état. As a result, there was a differentiated application of laws, but the State of Palestine continued to provide services in Gaza. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24892&LangID=E>

Initial and second periodic reports submitted by the State of Palestine under article 9 of the Convention, due in 2017

<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsv2JEvWC18ZqwBqDVHTHiCg2VhFbz8L72oQg%2bxC2yrx1jARDloiBOXo07MHehRtNARNp7zbs5J5uFRIDBsH2ZK6wkqA8W1ACa13IHof0CKth>

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Other Relevant Information

Council of Europe

Statement by Thorbjørn Jagland on the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief

... “No-one should ever suffer violence due of their faith or beliefs. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a human right enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. Governments across Europe have a legal duty to uphold it.

The Council of Europe’s monitoring bodies, notably the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, carry out essential work to strengthen member states’ ability both to prevent hate speech and hate crime and to provide redress where these occur. This includes abuse on the grounds of religion or belief. ECRI has provided guidance to member states on how to deal with specific forms of religious intolerance and on combating racism while fighting terrorism, which so often has its roots in religious extremism.

In addition, our work to promote inclusion, intercultural and interreligious understanding helps governments to shape societies where every individual can feel safe and secure in their beliefs, and where diversity is seen rightly as a virtue.

August 22nd is the day on which to remember the tragic victims of hate in Europe and around the world. Just as important, it is also an opportunity for all of us to demand an end to such violence with societies based on peace through dignity and mutual respect.”

To read the full press release see

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/statement-by-thorbj-rn-jagland-on-the-international-day-commemorating-the-victims-of-acts-of-violence-based-on-religion-or-belief>

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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

**** closes in 4 days**

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>

**** closes in 5 days**

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 26 August 2019)

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

**** closes in 10 days**

Human rights: Freedom of religion and belief, and human rights defenders inquiry
(closing date 31 August 2019)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/inquiries1/parliament-2017/freedom-of-religion-and-belief-inquiry-17-19/>

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