



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Northern Ireland Executive

#### Justice Minister reinforces 'no place for hate' message

... Justice Minister Naomi Long ... said: "Whether offline or online, targeting a person because of who they are or what they believe – be it their race, religion, political belief, sexuality, gender identity or disability – is wrong.

"When someone has been verbally or physically assaulted in the street, we encourage victims to report it – and this is no different when it comes to online abuse. Just because someone hides behind the perceived anonymity of a keyboard, doesn't mean they are any less culpable or should not be called to account for their actions.

"A growing awareness of the mental and physical toll online abuse can have on victims means there is now more of a tendency to 'call it out' but it is really important that these crimes – because that's what they are – are reported so victims can get the support they need and perpetrators can be caught." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/justice-minister-reinforces-no-place-hate-message>

TOP

## Israel

### House of Lords Debate

#### Israel and Palestine: United States' Proposals for Peace

*col 351* **Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated):** ... Many have dismissed the proposals as yet another plan in the decades-old series of talks which have never produced any benefit for the indigenous people of Palestine but have served as a smokescreen for the relentless expansion of Israel into Palestinian lands, against international law and against United Nations Security Council resolutions. But we have to take the plan seriously so let us look at it, while remembering that years ago, the PLO had already accepted a state on only 22% of the land designated by the original United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.

This plan consolidates a string of land islands, with more to come—many call them Bantustans—which have been created by the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank, cutting off Palestinian communities from each other. As compensation for the land taken, Israel proposes that the Palestinians should have a patch of desert land near the Egyptian border—a hugely generous gesture. They are promised that roads and bridges, underground and overground, will link these Bantustans and make sure that Israelis do not ever have to come into contact with Palestinians. Many people have described that as apartheid.

I do not apologise for mentioning the two words Bantustans and apartheid because today, as anyone who is a *Guardian* reader may have seen, there is a letter in it from 50 ex-Ministers and leaders in Europe and across the world, describing the plan as similar to South African apartheid. ...

col 352 East Jerusalem will stay in the hands of Israel, and the Palestinians are told to make their capital in Abu Dis. ... the most important part of this derogatory offer is that Israel will control all security, all Palestinian territorial waters, all airspace and all the crossings between Palestine and Israel. Palestinians will have no sovereignty.

Hamas, of course, is blamed for almost everything. ... There is an obsession with Hamas. Nothing is suggested to stop the suffering of the people of Gaza—the slow starvation, deaths, mutilations and misery of the people there, who are mostly refugees themselves—until Gaza is, in the plan’s words, “demilitarised” of the few weapons it manages to smuggle in or make. We know that cannot happen until the blockade is lifted, and the Israeli Government know that.

There is no return for refugees—ever—and no compensation. ... All over the Middle East, there are millions of people who have been living in camps for decades, waiting to go home. The plan, in effect, dissolves refugees as a problem; they are not to be considered.

... If this plan were ever implemented, there would still be—and the Israeli people need to realise this—a majority of Palestinian people living between the River Jordan and the sea. I shudder to think what will follow. ...

col 353 I am sure that someone in this Chamber—I am not looking at anyone in particular—is planning to say that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity but neither does Israel miss an opportunity to betray an agreement. It has done it many times. It simply cannot be trusted. The Palestinian leaders were not consulted about this before its publication, and neither was anyone else for that matter—we were not consulted in this country. It is just like the Balfour Declaration, in fact: we did that 100 years ago without consulting anybody. ...

There is still no recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state, and yet we are all expected to recognise Israel as a state even though we do not know what that country’s borders are. Let me be clear: I recognise the statehood and the right to exist of Israel and Palestine within agreed borders for both countries ... When will our Government recognise the state of Palestine? ...

For decades, the Palestinian people have been humiliated by the actions of Israel and its forces occupying their land. They have been humiliated by the inaction of the international community and the total disregard of UN resolutions. ...

This whole terrible injustice is the responsibility of this country. We started it; we are responsible; they are our people and we should be looking after them. We have denied them any protection and we have also humiliated them by our neglect.

I am told every week by Ministers in answer to my Questions that the Government do not approve of this or that atrocity, they have made representations and had discussions with representatives of the Israeli Government and they thoroughly decry what is going on, et cetera. So why can we not set right a wrong that has caused such misery for over 100 years? The people of Palestine are not going to surrender. They are still there, waiting for justice, and there are very many of them.

col 354 On a brighter note, does the Minister agree that now we have our freedom, our

country can resume its historic place in the world? ... We hear so much about it from the Prime Minister. If we are set free, we can now have our very own foreign policy, independent of anyone else, and with that we can bring justice to Palestine. Can the Minister assure us that we will do just that and not allow our country to fall under the shadow of the United States of America and its puppet master, Israel?

**Lord Judd (Labour):** ... formal recognition of the State of Palestine is long overdue, because, without that status, how on earth can the Palestinians feel that they have an equal place in any discussions? Secondly, our deep historical responsibilities always come home to me ...

No people paid a higher price for the creation of the State of Israel than the Palestinian people. It has therefore been a grinding experience for them over the years to be humiliated, dismissed and denied an opportunity to play a positive and creative part in building their own future and the future of the region. ...

In the formalisation of the creation of, in effect, Bantustans ... what about the status of Jerusalem as the capital for the Palestinian people? What about the vast issue of refugees? ...

*col 355* **Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat):** ... The safety and security of Israel is, in my view, critical not only for the Israeli people but for the world at large. After the horrors of the Holocaust and the centuries of prejudice, pogroms and expulsions, the ability of the people of Israel to live in security in their own democratic state is essential to the values of a liberal international order. It is something that we must defend to the end. ...

... there is no escaping the fact that while the State of Israel is a very different place from apartheid South Africa, the situation that prevails in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is very similar to that which operated in apartheid South Africa: the occupation and settlement of land; the checkpoints; the separate laws; the night raids; the destruction of homes and property; the closed roads; the ongoing humiliations; the deepening anger; the loss of hope; the spread of violence; and the steady dehumanisation of one side by the other. None of this should be the least bit surprising. Whenever one people seeks to dominate another through occupation and settlement, it is inevitable that similar methods are used and similar reactions engendered.

That is why the Trump plan represents such an unmitigated catastrophe for Israel. It is not a peace plan: it is a plan for the permanent national humiliation of the Palestinian people. ...

*col 356* The only long-term resolution of this conflict will come from an understanding that the aspirations of the Palestinian people are little different from those of the Israeli people and that a just peace can be achieved only on the basis of international law. I have heard some Israelis say, "We have tried trading land for peace and it has not worked" but that is not right. There is only one occasion on which Israel has traded land for peace, when it made its historic peace with Egypt and returned the Sinai. It has lived in peace with Egypt ever since ...

*col 357* **The Lord Bishop of Southwark:** ... The chairman of the Vatican Holy Land Co-ordination group, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton, and I, wrote to the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa on 7 February contending that the analysis of the local churches in the Holy Land is that these [proposals] are not a serious basis for peace but amount to a codification of the Government of Israel's positions. Given that previous, serious attempts at peace, when they did not succeed, were followed by prolonged periods of bitter disillusionment, it can bring us no confidence when a plan such as this is published. ...

... what peace—if peace it be—can be sustained on injustice? What agreement can there be when one party is not only absent but was not consulted substantively or proportionately in the first place? ...

There is among the Christian communities a resilient faith and hope for a better tomorrow.

But the initial imperative of security, which has created a narrative to justify intervention in more than 50 years of occupation, delivers—as all such unwanted rule does—barriers, confiscation, diversion of resources, curfews, and violence. ...

One might lament the disappearance of the ancient Jewish communities from across the Middle East and the reasons why. One too might speak of the pressure on, indeed persecution of, the ancient Christian communities of the region. ...

**col 358 Baroness Altmann (Conservative):** ... My Lords, I declare an interest in that I am Jewish and have relations who had to flee Europe as refugees or were, sadly, killed for their religion. I understand that the Palestinians are angry. They are confined and suppressed and have no country. I am sure the Palestinian people want a civilised, democratic country, but unless and until their leadership—both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas—accept and recognise Israel's right to exist, the Palestinian people are in limbo. ...

As anti-Semitism rears its ugly head again across the West, I absolutely support the need for a Jewish homeland. But the Palestinian people are languishing—their children fed hate and incitement against their Jewish neighbours—and continually reject offers of peace. They name their schools after terrorists. Their curriculum and school textbooks glorify suicide bombing and incite children to hate their neighbours. ...

Israel has shown itself willing to withdraw from settlements in the hope of peace, but the evacuation of Gaza led to an intensification of violence, incitement, rocket attacks and terror tunnels. ...

Trust in a partnership for peace needs to be rebuilt, but we also need a home for the Jewish people after millennia of prejudice, oppression and death. As we recall the liberation of concentration camp prisoners just 75 years ago—still within the lifetime of survivors who had nowhere to run to, no country they could call home—the Jewish state is absolutely vital. Every piece of this land has been fought for with huge sacrifices.

Israel's Palestinian neighbours have not shown that they want a smaller Israel; they seem to want no Israel. There were no settlements in 1948, 1967 or 1973. The problem was not where its borders lie but that it has any borders. As so often in our history, it feels as if the aim is erasing the Jewish state and its people. ... rewarding Palestinian intransigence has not brought peace. ... Are we really serving them well by encouraging unrealistic positions such as the right of return or even a return to exactly the pre-1967 borders, which proved so impossible to defend?

Israel was built by refugees. Many of those Jews were thrown out of neighbouring lands because of their religion—these were not just refugees from Europe—but they had somewhere to go. ...

**col 359 Lord Anderson of Swansea (Labour):** ... The initiative was not an unexpected bolt from the blue but the culmination of a series of one-sided initiatives, all taken without any consultation with the Palestinians, brought down like tablets of stone from the mountain. ... These included the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem; the recognition of the exclusive sovereignty of Israel over Jerusalem and the Golan Heights; the withdrawal of US aid for Palestinian refugee camps; the closure of the PLO office in Washington; and, of course, the abandonment of US support for the Iran nuclear accord. ... Can we now seriously expect any Palestinian leader to sit at the negotiating table over this deal? ...

**col 360 The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative):** ... This deal would effectively mark the end of any acceptable two-state solution. The proposed illegal land grab and the quasi-Bantustan configuration of what would be left would hardly meet the concept of a genuine Palestinian state. The proposed swap of fertile land in the Jordan Valley for dusty land east of Gaza would understandably exacerbate—and it has—Palestinian resentment. ... Over the years, I have spoken to Palestinians of all walks and politics, and I have no reason to doubt the universal intensity of their feeling. I fear violent consequences if these

proposals are acted upon. This purported peace plan will strengthen the so-called resistance, and the spread of Israeli jurisdiction into Palestinian land will further stoke the flames of hatred and despair. ...

col 361 Backing the present Trump proposals would be one further betrayal. ... The consequences could well be frightening. Violence in that part of the Middle East is never very far beneath the surface, and violence stoked by genuine grievances is a dangerous concoction. ...

**Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat):** ... the main fault in the Trump plan is keeping so many isolated Israeli settlements. These towns and villages will be surrounded by a Palestinian entity. An Israel Defense Forces presence would thus be required to defend each settlement. Sadly, they would be defending them from a belligerent Palestinian entity.

It is time for the Palestinians and their supporters to accept that the international community will not deliver all that they want. Likewise, supporters of Israel will not get all that they want and desire. ...

col 362 It is time also for supporters of the Palestinians to accept that the Jewish populations of the Arab states have fled, as the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, referred to. Can anyone name Arab states where Jews can live freely, if at all? ... A century ago ... one-third of Baghdad's 200,000-strong population was Jewish. That city has recently recorded only five Jewish people remaining, and I think that they have probably gone as well by now. This is the picture across the region. More than 800,000 Jews fled from Arab lands, mostly ending up as citizens of Israel, while in the West the Holocaust and the growth of anti-Semitism led to much-increased immigration from countries such as France. The noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, recently asked Her Majesty's Government in a Written Question "what assessment they have made of any correlation between the actions of the government of Israel and antisemitic incidents in the UK."

The truth is that anti-Semitism in the UK and elsewhere existed long before the emergence of the state of Israel. The lies about Jews and their supposed control is not new. You can go back to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a tsarist forgery published before Israel was even a tear in Theodor Herzl's eye.

So linking the two or saying that the victim is responsible is absolutely wrong. But let us all agree, hopefully, in this House, that what we aim for is a two-state solution with Israel having secure borders, not impossible borders, and the Palestinians having control over their own destiny in their own state ...

col 363 **Lord Davies of Gower (Conservative):** ... This is an opportunity for the Minister to urge our Arab allies to encourage the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table and finally accept that the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination that the Palestinians themselves demand. ...

This firm response has been lacking, however, when considering the threat posed to the Middle East peace process by officially sanctioned Palestinian incitement to violence. The practice of honouring terrorists and glorifying them as martyrs is widespread in the Palestinian Authority, with even Palestinian Authority officials praising those who have killed Israelis. The Hamas terror group, which rules Gaza, seeks Israel's destruction and subjects Gazans to endless rounds of violence. We must confront this anti-Semitism as strongly as we do here at home.

It is also crucial to note that £65.5 million of UK taxpayers' money annually goes towards the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees, which carries out important humanitarian work, including the provision of education and healthcare to Palestinians. However, Palestinian refugee status is inherited in perpetuity, including for those living in internationally designated Palestinian territories ... The number of Palestinians alive who were personally displaced during the 1948 war between Israel and its Arab neighbours is estimated to be around 30,000, yet today the UN Relief and Works Agency defines 5

million people as Palestinian refugees ... Palestinian children at UN schools in the West Bank and Gaza are taught that they are refugees, giving credence to the political position that more than 5 million Palestinians have a right of return, which would lead to the end of the Jewish state as we know it. These schools use official Palestinian Authority textbooks, which are currently under review due to their troubling content, including the promotion of martyrdom and the elimination of Israel. ...

**col 364 Lord Davies of Stamford (Labour):** ... I was very struck by the fact that nothing is said about the great injustice done to the Palestinian refugees, which was not their fault. ... Most of the refugees left in 1948 in terror, particularly after the massacre of Deir Yassin, which was a hideous war crime. I recognise that there were quite different incidents in other parts of Israel in 1948. The Jews of Haifa tried to persuade their Arab neighbours not to leave, but most of them left because they were terrified. ...

**col 365** Equally, it is not at all sensible to think in terms of a right of return. ... That would be very disruptive for Israel, but economically it would simply not be realistic. ... individuals who left in 1948—they are all by definition in their 70s, 80s or 90s—should be given a right of return. That should be recognised as a matter of law and principle. It is most unlikely that most of them would take it up because it would not apply to the younger members of their families. In return, those who do not want to take up that right could cash it in, as it were, and receive a decent amount of monetary compensation. I am thinking \$50,000 a head or something of that sort. Much smaller amounts of money would go to the second generation and smaller amounts still to the third generation. ...

**col 366 Baroness Morris of Bolton (Conservative):** ... The occupation of the Palestinian territories and the associated hardships and humiliation that brings is now the longest occupation in modern history. ...

The irony is that for the past 18 years such a solution has been available. The Arab peace initiative put forward in March 2002 by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the then Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, offered comprehensive peace between the Arab world and Israel in return for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This peace initiative was again proposed earlier this month, at a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab countries at the Arab League, as the basis for any deal between Israel and Palestine. ...

**col 367 Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench):** ... The Balfour Declaration for the creation of a Jewish homeland stated, as we have been reminded, that the rights of existing inhabitants would be fully protected. Over the years, we have seen these rights systematically eroded. The declaration, although politically understandable, was based on a conflict-perpetuating fallacy that people of different faiths are so different that they have to have separate countries to survive. It is a fallacy that perpetuates prejudice and lasting hostility, as seen in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, and partitions in many parts of the Middle East and—closer to home—in Ireland. ...

A few years ago, I visited Israel with the then Chief Rabbi, my noble friend Lord Sacks. We met Jews and Arabs from all walks of life in a beautiful country packed with history; a country that in more peaceful times could live on tourism alone—and a country holy to three of the world's great faiths. In all the people we met, there was a common yearning for peace, security, food and a decent standard of living. The American so-called peace plan seeks to perpetuate existing injustices against the Palestinian people by legitimising Israeli occupation of illegally seized Palestinian land and by giving Jerusalem to Israel. It is doomed to failure. ...

**col 368 Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative):** ... We meet for this important debate just a few weeks after Auschwitz remembrance and Holocaust Day, with “never again” ringing in our ears. There are now some 6 million Jewish people living in Israel, of whom 172,000 are survivors and witnesses to those terrible events, so I believe we have a moral duty to protect them from the existential threat that they face from some who, to this day, still call

for the Jews to be driven into the sea.

The Washington Institute polled West Bankers last month, and two-thirds said that the top Palestinian priority, in the next five years, is to regain control of all historical Palestine, from the river to the sea, rather than permanent peace with Israel. At the same time, it cannot be acceptable to witness the suffering that happens daily in the West Bank, and in particular in Gaza. ...

Since 2013, Israel has been condemned in 45 resolutions by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Since the creation of the council in 2006, it has almost resolved more resolutions condemning Israel than it has the rest of the world combined. ...

col 369 Arabs living in Israel, however, are afraid of becoming Palestinian citizens because they see how those living in the West Bank are subject to human rights violations on a daily basis. In Israel, Arab citizens participate in general elections and enjoy freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom in academia, which are unimaginable in the West Bank and Gaza. A recent poll showed that 68% of Israel's Arab citizens said that they prefer to live in Israel rather than in any other country. It is of course worth mentioning that the concept of an Israeli living in nearly any other Arab country is nil, particularly as some 800,000 Jews were summarily expelled from Arab countries, where they had lived for generations and indeed millennia, just for being Jewish. ...

col 370 **Lord Mitchell (Crossbench):** ... My wife Hannah[’s] family lived in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, and comprised 51 individuals, of whom only 15 survived the Second World War. ...

What of the millions who perished or were denied entry to other countries? When the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, sees the passion that we Jews have for Israel, it is because so many more of us would have been saved had Israel existed before the war. That is why for us Israel's safety is paramount.

But there is another side to my family ... I have a daughter who is half-Palestinian. I have been to the West Bank several times and am under no illusion that the Palestinian people are oppressed. The checkpoints are humiliating and the desire for statehood burns brightly. I understand the Nakba ...

They have had Nakba after Nakba; disaster after disaster. Now we have Donald's "deal of the century", where the Palestinians are being offered 20% of British Palestine—20%, when they could have had 45% in 1948. Barely a peep has been heard from the other Arab states. The Palestinians have become friendless even within the Middle East, and that is the biggest Nakba of all. ...

col 371 **Lord Suri (Conservative):** ... I have been delighted to see trade increase between Israel and the United Kingdom by nearly 300% over the last decade. However, the political stalemate is limiting the expansion of our economic ties with Palestine, which has a similarly entrepreneurial and dynamic population. Yet, as of 2017, UK trade with the West Bank and Gaza was a mere £17 million. ...

col 372 **Lord Warner (Crossbench):** ... The new Palestinian state would have at least 600,000 Israeli settlers in it, all protected by the Israeli military. ... The plan itself imposes on the Palestinians a large number of unrealistic obligations before they obtain a very small state with very little sovereignty. Israel would have "overriding security control", with all entry and exit from the new state controlled by Israel. ... Cyril Ramaphosa, the South African President, has likened the Trump proposals to his country's apartheid experience. ...

col 374 **Lord Young of Graffham (Conservative):** ... The biggest cause of poverty in the entire world is the corruption of rulers. If 87% of the Palestinian people believe that the Palestinian Authority is rife with corruption, who am I to doubt it? Until there is more open and transparent government for the Palestinians, I am fearful for their future. Look back over the long decades of war after war, peace offer after peace offer: every offer that they rejected was in time followed by a worse one, time after time. I am certainly not saying that

this is a good offer, but I believe it will be better than the next. ...

**col 375 Lord Stone of Blackheath (Non-affiliated):** ... In 1993, under the Oslo accords, the Palestinians finally dropped their demand for 100% of the land and agreed to accept a state alongside Israel in 22% of the land, meaning the West Bank and Gaza, subject to land swaps. There is an overwhelming international consensus on this framework. Any proposal that significantly deviates from it cannot be taken seriously, however powerful the proponents. ...

I suggest to the Minister that we form a group here in the United Kingdom that brings together the many experts that we have in this country to discuss how we might help. It would not be seeking to argue the rights or wrongs of either side but to suggest how, perhaps after a long, thoughtful, positive discussion, we might then invite the parties in the region to come here and discuss a workable plan that might be attractive to all sides. Britain was, after all, the mandatory power and the issuer of the Balfour Declaration. We have an historical responsibility that no European country—or any other country for that matter—has. We were instrumental at the start of the separation and thence discord; now, with our new place in the world, let us try to heal it for the benefit of all peoples. ...

**col 376 Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat):** ... the plan does not affirm that Palestinians have rights. Israelis have rights; Palestinians have obligations. ...

Once the plan was announced, there were immediate fears that Israel would start annexing lands which the United States, not the UN, had taken it upon itself seemingly to grant it. So how was it that the United Kingdom responded so warmly to this plan? The Foreign Secretary stated: “We welcome the release of the United States’ proposal for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. This is clearly a serious proposal, reflecting extensive time and effort.” ...

That was on the very same day that he stated: “Today, the UK and our international partners have collectively sent a message to Russia that we do not and will not accept its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. We will impose serious costs through active maintenance of sanctions on those who seek to incorporate Crimea and Sevastopol into Russia.”

Could the Government not see the irony in the two statements they made on 28 January? ...

**col 377** The international consensus for decades, rooted in international law, is that a proper, workable and sustainable basis for negotiations is a two-state solution, with a shared capital of Jerusalem, based on the 1967 lines. We cannot allow President Trump to rip up a cardinal principle of international law, the inadmissibility of acquiring territory through war. ...

... this plan is simply not in Israel’s interests. It would surely mean the end of the two-state solution ... A one-state solution has major implications for Israel, which rightly points to its history of democracy. That democracy must be based on equal rights for all its citizens. It is worth thinking through the implications for Israel. ...

**col 378 Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour):** ... this plan would give the Palestinians a state only after four years, consisting of just 75% of the West Bank, with fragmented bits of land joined by narrow corridors, plus Gaza linked by a tunnel. In place of East Jerusalem as their capital, they are offered the suburban area of Abu Dis. The plan has nothing in common with the Oslo accords and destroys any prospect of an independent, contiguous Palestinian state. It legitimises the illegal annexation of Palestinian land for settlers and puts the whole of Jerusalem under Israeli control. ...

**col 379** The Minister must make clear from the Dispatch Box today that Britain as a country still abides by all the international laws and UN resolutions which rule that the annexation of Palestinian land and the building of settlements is illegal, and that it must be condemned, not legitimised in the form of this plan. ...

**col 380** Instead, the Arab League reiterated its support for the 2002 peace initiative ...

which endorsed a Palestinian state on the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital. Does the Minister accept that any peace plan without Palestinian participation is no peace plan at all? A lasting and sustainable peace will be achieved only through direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, with compromise and concessions on both sides. ... While there is understandable anger in Palestine over this proposed plan, does the Minister agree with me that this must not and cannot be used as an excuse by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terror groups to launch more indiscriminate attacks against innocent Israeli citizens, and will he join me in condemning anyone who takes such action? If the Minister agrees that the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East is through a two-state solution with a secure and viable state of Israel living alongside a secure, viable and contiguous state of Palestine, then—as many other noble Lords have asked tonight—why will this Government not recognise the state of Palestine? ...

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):** ... The UK's position on the Middle East peace process is clear ... Our view remains, clearly, that the best way to achieve peace ... is through substantive peace talks between the parties, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps ... with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and with a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. ...

*col 381* However, we have to acknowledge that progress towards meaningful peace has stalled. I totally align myself with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Collins, that, despite the stalling and despite whatever is on the table, at no time should this be used as an excuse by those who seek to cause further division. Hamas's and Hezbollah's actions, particularly those that impact on the security of the State of Israel, have to be condemned, and rightly so.

We should not forget that this is not just an issue of one religion over the other. I never see this in the eyes of religion. Many Arabs, as I have seen myself, live very peacefully and lead very prosperous lives in places such as Haifa in the State of Israel. They are integrated into society and, as my noble friend Lord Leigh reminded us, into political society in Israel.

However, it is true that the issue has stalled. Israelis and Palestinians deserve better. ... Palestinians deserve self-determination and freedom from occupation ... Israelis equally deserve to live free of terrorist rocket fire and to enjoy fruitful co-operation with their neighbours in the region. ...

*col 382* We hope that President Abbas will return to the negotiations. ... However, if he declined to negotiate, I assure noble Lords that that would not justify unilateral action such as the annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel ...

... the UK is concerned about the reports of possible Israeli moves towards annexation. We believe that any such unilateral moves would be damaging to the renewed efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. ...

*col 383* Specific questions were raised ... on the issue of Palestinian textbooks. ... Let me assure noble Lords that the UK does not fund textbooks in the OPTs, but we are deeply concerned about allegations of incitement to violence in some of the newer textbooks. Indeed, it was following the UK's call for action ... that the EU agreed to lead an independent review of the content in Palestinian textbooks, which is currently under way. We know that the Palestinian Authority is currently revising its textbooks, collecting a range of feedback, and will update them before the start of the new school year in September. ... To conclude, Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve peace, stability and opportunity. Meaningful dialogue offers the only path towards those long-overdue goals. ... We hope that leaders on both sides will give the US peace plan genuine and fair consideration. The reasoning behind that ... is that it offers, we believe, a first step on the road back to negotiations. At the same time, we will continue to caution against annexation, which would undermine the basis for a sustainable settlement and, in so doing, strip away hope for

future generations of Israelis and Palestinians. ...

**Baroness Tonge:** ... I still think that the British Government have an overwhelming responsibility in this peace process. We really must accept that, do something about it and give it some muscle this time, before more decades of suffering pass for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-27/debates/5DABA2B1-3129-40B5-B8F3-9FFD702C9B51/IsraelAndPalestineUnitedStates%E2%80%99ProposalsForPeace>

*The Peace Proposals referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>

*The Guardian letter referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/27/grave-concern-about-us-plan-to-resolve-israel-palestine-conflict>

*Baroness Tonge's written question referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-11/HL1548/>

*The Foreign Secretary's statements referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-release-of-us-proposals-for-middle-east-peace>

*and*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-welcomes-new-eu-sanctions-against-facilitators-of-the-illegal-annexation-of-crimea-and-sevastopol>

## House of Commons Written Answer

**Tony Blair**

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [1238] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many times Rt Hon Tony Blair visited (a) Israel, (b) Gaza and (c) the West Bank during his tenure as the Middle East Peace Envoy of the Quartet.

**James Cleverly:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold this information. The issue of visits made by the Rt Hon Tony Blair to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories during his tenure as the Middle East Peace Envoy is one for the Office of the Quartet.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-12/1238/>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Israel and OPTs: UK expresses concern over announcement of new Israeli settlements**

An FCO spokesperson said: We are concerned by Israel's announcement of 1,737 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, in addition to those announced earlier this week in the E1 area. The UK's position is clear: settlements are illegal under international law and are damaging to peace efforts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/israel-and-opts-uk-expresses-concern-over-announcement-of-new-israeli-settlements>

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

### UK Parliament

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

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

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

### Scottish Parliament

#### **Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education** (closing date 27 March 2020)

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/76f6bdd3-bb14-4956-b089-cd1598323d55/consultation-on-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-in-higher-education.pdf>

#### **\*\* Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland: an independent review** (closing date 31 March 2020)

<https://www.hatecrimereviewni.org.uk/sites/hcr/files/media-files/Consultation%20Paper%20Feb%202020.pdf>

#### **Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales)** (closing date 30 April 2020)

<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

#### **Regulating Independent Educational Institutions** (closing date 8 May 2020)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

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