



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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UK Parliament Ministerial Statements

The Government's Legislative Programme 2021

The Leader of the House of Commons (Jacob Rees-Mogg) [HCWS6] Following the state opening of Parliament, and for the convenience of the House, I am listing the bills which were announced:

Animals Abroad Bill

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

Advance Research and Invention Agency Bill

Armed Forces Bill

Borders Bill

Building Safety Bill

Counter-State Threats Bill

Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill

Dormant Assets Bill

Electoral Integrity Bill

Environment Bill

Health and Care Bill

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill

Judicial Review Bill

Kept Animals Bill

Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill Legacy Bill

National Insurance Contributions Bill

Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill

Planning Bill

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill

Professional Qualifications Bill

Procurement Bill

Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

Subsidy Control Bill

Telecommunications (Security) Bill

The programme will also include Finance Bills to implement budget policy decisions. This list does not include draft bills or Law Commission bills.

Detailed information about each of these bills can be accessed from the Gov.uk website at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985029/Queen s Speech 2021 - Background Briefing Notes..pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985029/Queen_s_Speech_2021_-_Background_Briefing_Notes..pdf)

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000024/TheGovernmentSLegislativeProgramme2021>

The Government's Legislative Programme (Scotland) 2021-22

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000026/TheGovernment%E2%80%99SLegislativeProgramme\(Scotland\)2021-22](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000026/TheGovernment%E2%80%99SLegislativeProgramme(Scotland)2021-22)

The Government's Legislative Programme (Wales) 2021-22

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000029/TheGovernmentSLegislativeProgramme\(Wales\)2021-22](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000029/TheGovernmentSLegislativeProgramme(Wales)2021-22)

The Government's Legislative Programme (Northern Ireland) 2021-22

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000025/TheGovernmentSLegislativeProgramme\(NorthernIreland\)2021-22](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/21051242000025/TheGovernmentSLegislativeProgramme(NorthernIreland)2021-22)

Department of Health and Social Care

Demonstrating your COVID-19 vaccination status when travelling abroad

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-vaccination-status-when-travelling-abroad>

Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England

COVID-19: updated guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Animals to be formally recognised as sentient beings in domestic law

Vertebrate animals will be recognised as sentient beings for the first time in UK law thanks to the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill ...

The legislation will also ensure that animal sentience is taken into account when developing policy across Government through the creation of a Animal Sentience Committee which will be made up of animal experts from within the field.

By enshrining sentience in domestic law in this way, any new legislation will have to take into account the fact that animals can experience feelings such as pain or joy. The Bill will underpin the Government's [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), which launched yesterday and

sets out the government's plans to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices for animals both domestically and internationally. ...

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill will:

- formally recognise animals as sentient beings in domestic law
- establish an Animal Sentience Committee made up of experts to ensure cross departmental government policy considers animal sentience
- ensure Government Ministers update parliament on recommendations made by the Animal Sentience Committee ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/animals-to-be-formally-recognised-as-sentient-beings-in-domestic-law>

Welsh Government

Updated guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus

<https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus-html>

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Israel

House of Lords Debate

Queen's Speech

col 136 **Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated):** ... I ask our Government to be fair and just to the plight of Palestinians who have suffered enough from the brutal occupation and repression of the Israeli Government. None of us can feel safe and secure anywhere unless we are safe in all corners of our world. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-12/debates/CE8995D6-667A-4BE1-B065-03817AF8CD75/Queen'SSpeech#contribution-7F9F873A-9CC9-4892-85DB-1642614384A5>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Covid-19 Update

Afzal Khan (Labour): The Israeli Government made the decision not to vaccinate more than 4.5 million Palestinian citizens in Gaza and the west bank, leaving this responsibility to the occupied territories' under-resourced healthcare system. Only several thousand Palestinians have been vaccinated, in contrast to the 4.2 million Israelis. In the light of the shocking and appalling scenes in Jerusalem, where Israeli forces attacked worshippers, the holy al-Aqsa mosque and the healthcare units, will the Prime Minister outline what steps the Government are taking to provide assistance to the Palestinians at this difficult time, and will he condemn the actions of the Israeli forces and accept that the only way forward is a two-state solution to ensure peace, health equality and protection of human rights?

Mr Speaker: That is not in the statement that the Prime Minister made, but I am sure that he would like to answer the question.

The Prime Minister; Yes, Mr Speaker. The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the situation in Israel. I am deeply concerned by the scenes we are seeing, as is everyone in this House. We all want to see urgent de-escalation by both sides.

Let me tell him that the position of this Government is firmly behind his in that we continue to believe that a two-state solution is the best way forward.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/208947E3-6883-4425-AF8A-1AB661422CC8/Covid-19Update#contribution-21556A27-0458-4DD7-9952-78722895CEA2>

Violence in Israel and Palestine

col 124 **Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat):** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on the violence in Israel and Palestine.

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The recent escalation in violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is deeply concerning. It is the worst violence seen there for several years. As the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop and every effort must be made to avoid the loss of life, especially that of children. The UK offers our deepest condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Civilian deaths, both in Israel and Gaza, are a tragedy.

We urge all sides to refrain from any kind of provocation so that calm is restored as quickly as possible. As we enter the final days of the holy month of Ramadan, restoration of peace and security is in everyone's interest. The UK will continue to support that goal. The UK unequivocally condemns the firing of rockets at Jerusalem and other locations in Israel. We strongly condemn these acts of terrorism from Hamas and other terrorist groups, who must permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. There is no justification for any targeting of civilians. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence and to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, are in line with international humanitarian law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. Violence against peaceful worshippers of any faith is unacceptable. The UK has been clear that the attacks on worshippers must stop. The status quo in Jerusalem is important at all times, but especially so during religious festivals such as Ramadan. Our priority now must be an immediate de-escalation on all sides and an end to civilian deaths.

As I made clear over the weekend, we are concerned about tensions in Jerusalem linked to threatened evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. That threat is allayed for now, but we urge Israel to cease such actions, which in most cases are contrary to international humanitarian law. The UK continues to support international efforts to reduce the tension. The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in a call to the Israeli Foreign Minister yesterday and will speak to the Palestinian Prime Minister shortly. I have spoken to the Israeli ambassador and the Palestinian head of mission in the UK to urge them to de-escalate and to restore calm. The UK has also engaged at the UN Security Council, calling for all sides to take measures to reduce further violence and making clear our deep concern at the violence at the holy sites in Jerusalem. I am sure that the Security Council will continue to monitor the situation closely, and it is due to reconvene. UK embassies throughout the middle east are engaging with regional partners, and we remain in close contact with the US Administration and our European allies.

col 125 The situation on the ground over the last few days demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region. I repeat: we urge all sides to show maximum restraint and refrain from taking actions that endanger civilians and make a sustainable peace more difficult.

Layla Moran: Ibrahim al-Masri, 11; Marwan al-Masri, six; Rahaf al-Masri, 10; and Yazan

al-Masri, aged just two—those are some of the names of the children killed this week, and last night an Israeli child was added to their numbers. My heart breaks for them, and my heart bleeds for Palestine, for Jerusalem, the city of my family, for the worshippers attacked by extremists at the al-Aqsa mosque on the holiest night of Ramadan and for all innocent civilians, Israeli and Palestinian.

We cannot allow this to escalate any further. The Israeli Government pursuing evictions in Sheikh Jarrah that would be illegal under international humanitarian law, including the fourth Geneva convention, and the subsequent overly aggressive reaction of the Israeli authorities, which injured hundreds, has ignited a tinderbox. Hamas then retaliated, and those strikes must be condemned too, because violence only begets more violence. ...

Will the UK back Security Council resolutions condemning these attacks, regardless of what the US does? Should that fail, will the Minister work with international partners such as the European Union to issue a statement on de-escalation in the strongest possible terms today? What steps is the UK taking to stop the attempted illegal evictions in Sheikh Jarrah? Will the Government commit to supporting a new round of peace negotiations and, indeed, new elections in Palestine?

Finally, if this is not the time to recognise the state of Palestine, then when is? ...

James Cleverly: I recognise the passion with which the hon. Lady speaks and her personal connection to both Jerusalem and the region. I can assure her that the United Kingdom will work with international partners, both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions, to encourage an end to the violence and conflict, which does nobody any good.

We all mourn; we all feel the deepest sympathy and condolences for those who have lost children and loved ones, whether they be in Gaza or in Israel. It is in everybody's interests to de-escalate, and we will work with our regional partners, as well as the leadership of the Palestinian Authority and Israel, towards de-escalation. The rocket attacks coming from Gaza cannot be justified, and we call for them to cease immediately as part of that de-escalation.

col 126 **James Sunderland (Conservative):** Over the past week, Hamas is alleged to have fired over 1,000 rockets at indiscriminate targets inside Israel. By the same token, Israeli aggression has also escalated. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we must press in this place for both sides to return to direct peace talks and that the targeting of civilians, against international law, is abhorrent?

James Cleverly: We have spoken with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work with them to de-escalate and bring about peace. My hon. Friend mentions the avoidance of civilian casualties, and we press for that as a priority in all instances. We will continue to work with parties both in the region and in multilateral forums—with the United States and the European Union perhaps most closely—to push for peace so that we do not have to hear of any more fatalities in either Gaza or Israel.

Wayne David (Labour): Like everyone else in this House, I have been appalled by what we have seen in Jerusalem, Gaza and Israel. The loss of life has been terrible, and my heart goes out to the families who have lost loved ones. The Labour party strongly condemns the indiscriminate firing of over 1,000 rockets by Hamas, and I also strongly condemn the Israeli actions that have killed Palestinian civilians. Israel and the Palestinians generally must do everything possible to de-escalate the situation, and I would urge the Government to do all they can to prevent further conflict. The violence must stop now. Once this terrible violence has ended, we must ensure that the root causes of the violence are recognised and addressed. The eviction of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem must end. International law must be upheld, and all religious sites must be respected. At the same time, Britain and the international community must recognise the commitment to a two-state solution. Will the Government commit to doing this?

James Cleverly: ... The UK Government will continue to work towards peace—in the immediate instance to bring about the end to this particular violence, but in the

longer term to secure meaningful, peaceful and prosperous two states. ...

Richard Graham (Conservative): The Minister will know how deeply shocked many of my constituents in Gloucester and across the land are by the extraordinary images this week, during Ramadan, of the Israeli defence force effectively attacking the al-Aqsa mosque, the centre of Islamic worship in Jerusalem for hundreds of years. Although the rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza are completely indefensible, it is clear that a major cause of the increased discontent is the number of illegal evictions from Sheikh Jarrah. Will my right hon. Friend confirm today that the Government will ask Israel to cease immediately any further illegal evictions from East Jerusalem and to respect the sanctity of mosques, for without both of these steps surely an already fragile situation can only deteriorate further?

col 127 **James Cleverly:** On the holy sites in Jerusalem, which is the home of some of the holiest sites for all three Abrahamic religions, our position is that the status quo must be maintained and those religious sites must be respected. ... We will continue to speak directly with our contacts in the Israeli Government about evictions and settlements. ... We call upon Hamas to immediately cease its indiscriminate rocket attacks into Israel, and we call upon all actors in this to bring about peace so that we do not see any more fatalities and casualties.

Alyn Smith (SNP): ... The SNP condemns all violence whoever perpetrates it and whoever it is perpetrated against. We send our deepest condolences to the innocents who have been caught up in this dreadful conflict. We are a friend of Palestine, we are a friend of Israel also, but above all else we stand four-square behind international law, and it is through that prism that we need to look at this latest flashover of a long-simmering injustice.

... surely now is the time to recognise Palestine. That would give an impetus to the two-state solution. Secondly, settler goods by their very definition are illegal. The UK should not be trading in them, and if we will not ban them from our presence, can we not at least label them as such so that consumers can make a choice?

We do have influence within the state of Israel, which is a deeply complex place. The Israeli Government are not entirely in charge of events, and we do have influence. Warm words, however sincere, will not cut it. Now is the time for action.

James Cleverly: ... I understand his point on the timing of recognition and the long-standing conversations about goods coming from Israel. While those issues are well worthy of debate, our priority at the moment is to bring about peace. ...

Mike Wood (Conservative): ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that a lasting two-state solution requires both sides to feel secure, and that means a stop to the stream of rocket attacks from Hamas, restraint from Israeli forces and the wider population, and a reconsideration of the evictions and settlements policy by the Israeli Government and courts?

col 128 **James Cleverly:** The policing of Jerusalem and the holy sites within Jerusalem is always a sensitive issue, particularly during religious festivals such as Ramadan, and we have called and will continue to call for restraint in the policing of those areas. ...

Lilian Greenwood (Labour): My constituents have watched with growing anxiety, anger and, frankly, horror the spiralling events in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The threat of forcible evictions and demolitions, restrictions on Palestinians entering the city of Jerusalem, and violence against worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque have all inflamed tensions, and we now see a terrifying escalation, with Hamas rocket attacks and Israeli airstrikes killing and injuring innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Both are unacceptable and both must end, but does the Minister agree that, if proper accountability and the rule of law had been followed in the past, we might not be where we are today, and what steps will he take now to ensure that the Israeli Government adhere to international law, end the evictions, end the discriminatory planning laws and end the

construction of illegal settlements?

James Cleverly: ... our priority at the moment is to do everything we can, both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions, to bring about an end to this conflict so that the terrible and distressing images that the hon. Member and others in this Chamber have spoken about come to an end, and then we can work on a long-term, sustainable, peaceful solution for the region.

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): If my right hon. Friend examines his statements today and compares them with those made by the Foreign Office 25 years ago in respect of illegal settlements at Har Homa, he will find a remarkable similarity. What has changed is the end of any hope for the Oslo peace process, built out of existence by illegal settlements, and the dominance of factions in both communities of those least committed to justice, security and reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. When will the United Kingdom work to achieve real accountability for those breaching international and humanitarian law, including those indiscriminately mortaring the innocent, the disproportionate response by the occupiers to violence by the occupied, and decades of the violation of the fourth Geneva convention that has made a practical mockery of the British policy commitment to a two-state solution?

col 129 **James Cleverly:** As I have said, the UK's position on settlements is of long standing, it is clear and has been communicated here and elsewhere. There is no justification for the violence that we are seeing coming out of Gaza and the targeting of civilians. As I have said, Israel absolutely has the right to defend itself. We call on it to act with caution and care in discharging that defence, but ultimately, we are seeking to bring about a speedy conclusion to the current violence that we are seeing, and then we will continue to work ... to bring about a peaceful two-state solution so that we have a sustainable, peaceful resolution in this region.

Jessica Morden (Labour): ... The murder and maiming of children and civilians cannot be the solution to the ongoing tragedy of this conflict.

James Cleverly: ... we will use our considerable diplomatic might to work both with the Government in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through the Palestinian Authority, and with regional partners and through multilateral forums, to bring about a speedy resolution to this terrible conflict, which does no good for anyone.

John Howell (Conservative): ... My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said: "Our commitment to Israeli security is unwavering".—[[Official Report, 16 March 2021; Vol. 691, c. 172.](#)]

Of the thousand rockets that have been fired towards Israel, many have fallen short and caused damage and death in Gaza. Will the Minister confirm that we are doing everything possible to support our close ally against what amount to nothing more than terrorist groups out to seek Israel's destruction?

James Cleverly: ... the rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza do harm, not only indirectly but directly, to the Palestinian people. We call on them to cease immediately. As I have said, Israel does have the right to defend itself. We urge it, in doing so, to act with caution and to do everything in its power to minimise civilian casualties.

Deidre Brock (SNP): The covid-19 pandemic has hit Palestinian communities disproportionately hard, but despite Israel's having the world's highest covid-19 vaccination rate, it remains the case that fewer than 150,000 Palestinians have been vaccinated in the occupied west bank and Gaza. What are FCDO Ministers and their representatives there doing to rectify that injustice?

James Cleverly: ... the UK has been one of the most generous donors to the COVAX vaccination programme, which has helped communities across the globe have a route out of this pandemic through the vaccination process. ...

col 130 **Rehman Chishti (Conservative):** ... Does the Minister agree that the force used

against the worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque on the 27th of Ramadan, the night of Laylat al-Qadr, one of the most important nights in the Islamic calendar, was completely and utterly unacceptable? In the light of the United Kingdom's commitment to human rights and freedom of religion or belief for all, I know that the Minister has raised these matters with the Israeli authorities, but can he assure the House that he will continue to do so, to ensure that all individuals can practise their faith freely and openly in the holy city of Jerusalem? ...

James Cleverly: ... violence against worshippers of whatever faith is unacceptable. As I have said, it is important that policing is particularly sensitive around religious holy sites in Jerusalem, and particularly so during religious festivals like the holy month of Ramadan. We have made that position clear with the Israeli authorities, and we will continue to make that argument in our bilateral conversations with them.

Imran Hussain (Labour): After years of persecution and oppression, indiscriminate attacks, a brutal siege of Gaza, the expansion of illegal settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes, unfair trials, arbitrary detention and restrictions on the freedom of movement, and now the attack on worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque, tensions in the region are the highest they have ever been. ... yet the silence of the international community is deafening, even as the Palestinians scream out for help. ...

James Cleverly: I do not recognise at all the scenario the hon. Gentleman paints. This is an issue that I have spoken about from the Dispatch Box. The Prime Minister has made a statement on this issue. The Foreign Secretary has made a statement on this issue. We are speaking with the United Nations Security Council. The United Nations regularly makes statements on this issue. ...

col 131 **Richard Holden (Conservative):** ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that continuing down the path of normalisation, rather than that of violence and escalation as we have seen recently, is the only way to secure long-term peace for the region? ...

James Cleverly: ... The UK Government, at both ministerial and official level, encourage greater co-operation between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. ...

Andy Slaughter (Labour): If the Foreign Secretary will take action on ethnic cleansing in Xinjiang, why not in Sheikh Jarrah? If the UK Government will impose sanctions for the occupation of Crimea, why do they allow trade with illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories? The Minister rightly condemns the killing of children in Gaza and Israel. Does he recognise that these war crimes spring from an unlawful occupation, and will he now give his full support to the investigation of the International Criminal Court?

James Cleverly: I do not think it is at all helpful to try to imply there is a commonality between the examples he gave and the situation we see in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. ...

Antony Higginbotham (Conservative): ... Will the Minister reassure them, me and the whole House that the Government will use the full power of their diplomatic network to de-escalate the immediate issue and then bring both sides back to peace talks ...?

James Cleverly: The al-Aqsa mosque is one of the most holy sites in Islam, and Jerusalem has the privilege of being the home of a number of the holiest sites in the Abrahamic religions. Therefore, the policing of Jerusalem needs at all times to be sensitive, as I say, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. ...

col 132 **Julie Elliott (Labour)** ... There have been four wars in Gaza since 2000 and no one has been held to account from any side, so bringing an end to the current hostilities is not enough. The underlying problem of nobody being held to account, the demolition orders in Sheikh Jarrah—these are only the tip of the iceberg. The status quo is not really the status quo. According to the UN, a third of Palestinian homes are probably under threat of demolition orders in the Jerusalem area. These issues need addressing before we can move to a two-state solution. Does the Minister agree that those engaged in violence from

any side should know that there will be a day of reckoning and consequences for their actions? ...

James Cleverly: ... As I said, the rocket attacks from Gaza are unacceptable, unjustified and completely illegitimate. Israel does have a right to defend itself and we have made it clear that, in doing so, it must abide by international humanitarian law and make every effort to minimise civilian casualties. ...

Jack Brereton (Conservative): ... What discussions have my right hon. Friend and the Foreign Secretary had with Israeli and Gulf counterparts on how the current tensions can be de-escalated?

James Cleverly: ... the Foreign Secretary has spoken with his Israeli counterpart and will shortly be speaking with the Palestinian Prime Minister ... We will use our significant diplomatic strength to be a passionate and powerful voice for de-escalation and peace ...

Paula Barker (Labour): ... what is the British Government's position on forced evictions and displacement of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, and has the position been relayed to the Israeli Government? Does the Minister believe that Mr Netanyahu's Government are sincerely committed to a viable, two-state solution ...

col 133 **James Cleverly:** ... We do, of course, outline directly to the Israeli Government our position on such matters, and also do so from the Dispatch Box. We will work with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and their regional friends and neighbours, to work towards a sustainable two-state solution, which remains a priority UK foreign policy.

Jane Hunt (Conservative): ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that this violence is completely unacceptable and that all sides must now come together to de-escalate tensions and achieve a peaceful resolution?

James Cleverly: ... Ultimately, peace has to be something that is delivered by both sides, and we call upon everybody to step back from the situation and not allow it to escalate further, and indeed to de-escalate so that we can see an end to this conflict. ...

Gavin Newlands (SNP): The Government's response to this and every other episode in Palestine is completely inadequate. The Palestinians have lived under brutal oppression and apartheid from Israel with the tacit consent of the west for too long, and we have heard the "plague on both your houses" song too many times. Of course we must condemn all violence on both sides, so in that spirit can the Minister tell me whether he thinks it appropriate that the UK grants arms licences that see UK weapons being used in these indiscriminate Israeli attacks on civilians, including children?

James Cleverly: The Government take their arms export responsibilities very seriously, and we aim to operate one of the most robust arms export licences in the world. We consider all our export applications against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard.

Andrew Selous (Conservative): While there is never any excuse for firing rockets on civilians, would not the Israelis sleep more soundly at night if access to all the holy sites was maintained as agreed in 1967, if free Palestinian elections were allowed in East Jerusalem, and if Palestinians were not being evicted from their homes in Jerusalem?

James Cleverly: ... the UK's position on evictions is well known. It is incredibly important that worshippers have access to those very holy sites in Jerusalem. We have been supportive of Palestinian Authority elections and we pushed for them to go ahead, including in East Jerusalem.

col 134 **Janet Daby (Labour):** ... As the occupying power, the Israeli Government have legal obligations that they are not meeting. What are the UK Government doing to ensure that Israel adheres to international law?

James Cleverly: ... violence against peaceful worshippers of any faith is unacceptable, and as I have said, we condemn the rocket attacks from Gaza. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... is it not the case that, right under the noses of the international community, Hamas has been allowed to build a terrorist city state in Gaza? It has diverted humanitarian resources into stockpiling missiles behind civilian buildings. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wrong to draw some kind of phoney equivalence between the actions and the aggression of terrorists and the sovereign right of a legitimate democratic Government to defend their citizens? ...

James Cleverly: ... The military wing of Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation, and we have a policy of no contact with Hamas in its entirety. We completely condemn the rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel, and they are the actions of a terrorist organisation. As I said, Israel has the right to defend itself, but we have said ... in doing so, it must abide by international humanitarian law and must do everything it can to minimise civilian casualties.

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour): The extent of the expansion of illegal settlements in East Jerusalem, the forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, the brutality against worshippers at the third most holy site in Islam and during Ramadan—this is not a clash between two equal sides. Until we discuss the root issue, we will miss the entire context and fail to recognise that one side is an occupier and the other side is occupied.

Will the Minister demand that the Israelis end all the discriminatory and illegal practices that have actually provoked these current tensions? ...

James Cleverly: As I say, the UK's position on the settlements and evictions is clear. ... However, there is no legitimacy and no justification for indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel.

col 135 **Rob Butler (Conservative):** ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is, in fact, the only way to deliver Palestinian self-determination, to permanently end the Arab-Israeli conflict and to preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity and, therefore, that his Department remains committed to achieving a solution based on 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps?

James Cleverly: I think that Members in every part of this House, and our constituents, will have been deeply distressed by the images we have seen from some of the most holy sites not only in Islam but in Christianity and Judaism. It is in everybody's interest to de-escalate, to bring this current period of violence to a conclusion ...

Steve Baker (Conservative): ... as we approach Eid, what will the Government do specifically to encourage Israel to guarantee freedom of worship for Muslims at the al-Aqsa mosque?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point about the importance, during this holy month of Ramadan, of worshippers having access to one of the most holy sites in Islam, which is something we have communicated to the Israeli Government. ...

Ian Paisley (DUP): In 2018, I stood in Mefalsim, in the Southern District of Israel, just on the edge of the Gaza strip, and held in my hands the remains of a Hamas-engineered rocket that had been fired into a playground of schoolchildren with one intention only: to murder mothers and children who were doing what we have the freedom in this nation to do, which is raise our kids in peace.

... is it not the case that Hamas will not negotiate with Israel because it wants to murder Israelis and to obliterate the state of Israel off the map of the world? ... The Palestinian people need to free themselves from being used as human shields by a terrorist and political organisation that wishes to continue to launch rocket attacks into Israel. ...

col 136 **James Cleverly:** The rocket attacks by Hamas, whose military wing has, as I say, been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK Government, are completely counterproductive to the effort for peace and do harm to the Palestinian people. ...

Imran Ahmad Khan (Conservative): ... Given that the missile technology employed in attacking Israeli heartlands could have come only from Iran, does my right hon. Friend agree that now is not the time to do a deal with Iran that rewards it for instigating further instability in the region ...?

James Cleverly: I am not able to speak on the point my hon. Friend has made about the potential relationship between Iran and Hamas at this point. ...

Christian Wakeford (Conservative): The events in Jerusalem have triggered emotive responses here in the UK, and we need only look at the protests last night to see that. My constituents and others have seen in the past that, when conflict erupts in the middle east, the UK Jewish community is targeted by those wishing to import this complex situation on to our streets and university campuses, and online. What does my right hon. Friend say to those who seek divisions between communities here in the UK? Will he join me in thanking the Community Security Trust for all the work it is doing to keep the Jewish community safe?

James Cleverly: Antisemitic acts and violence against the Jewish community, wherever they may be, are unacceptable. I pay tribute to the CST and others who seek to keep communities safe. In the UK we enjoy, for the most part, very good community relations. We should be proud of that and seek to reinforce it. It is important for us to demonstrate that we are good friends with Israel and with the Palestinian people, and that we are seeking a peaceful two-state solution that can see people of all faiths enjoying the peace and security they deserve.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-12/debates/5CB9BFF2-D70C-44FB-988B-425CDC0FEA6B/ViolenceInIsraelAndPalestine>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [25] East Jerusalem and Gaza – That this House condemns unreservedly the Israeli brutality in East Jerusalem and Gaza; refutes entirely that there is any equivalence with actions by Palestinian demonstrators or militants; notes that there is no comparison between state orchestrated violence perpetrated by a military and civil power with legitimate protest by civilians or even retaliatory attacks by militant organisations; reaffirms its calls for peace in the area; and calls on the Government to unequivocally condemn Israeli actions and push for the upholding of international law.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58451>

House of Commons Library

Recent fighting in Israel and Palestine

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/recent-fighting-in-israel-and-palestine/>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

James Cleverly: Offered my condolences to @TzipiHotovely following the deeply sad news that Israeli civilians have been killed in the last 24 hours. Indiscriminate rocket fire by Hamas is unacceptable and must end. I urged Israel to take steps to deescalate. Civilian life must be protected.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1392486594167328771>

James Cleverly: Expressed deep sadness to @hzmot at the loss of civilian life in Gaza, particularly the killing of children. I reiterated the need to end further violence and protect civilians from harm.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1392486763101368320>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) (closing date 30 June 2021)

<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

Protect Duty (closing date 2 July 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19 (closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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