



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Business of the House

Thangam Debonnaire (Labour): ... We all share the horror at the reports of antisemitic hate speech and attacks this week, yet some people are falsely defending antisemitic hate speech on university campuses under the guise of free speech, which the Government plan to make into some sort of law. Can I ask the Leader of the House, genuinely, if he will ask the Secretary of State for Education to consider working with, rather than against, universities on how to respond to antisemitism? The priorities of free speech and protecting people from incitement to racial hatred are both important, and his Government will need to exercise care, not a blunt instrument, if our universities are able to call out antisemitism “at every stage”, as the Prime Minister rightly said we should do yesterday. ...

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I entirely agree that this Government and this country must root out antisemitic hate speech. It has no place in a civilised society. It is the most wrong and wicked of all the unpleasant and wrong prejudices that people have, bearing in mind the history of Europe over the past 100 years. There is absolutely no place for it. Incitement to racial hatred is illegal, and that is not in contradiction to the right to freedom of speech.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-20/debates/93FD20B5-3BCE-444C-9F88-174A4B3EB41C/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-27A9B519-2CF7-4E72-BD8D-73F010C99CDA>

Prosecution of Hate Crime

Ian Levy (Conservative): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the CPS’s work to improve community confidence in its prosecution of hate crime. (900282)

The Attorney General (Michael Ellis): ... I have been appalled by recent examples of hate crime, which are an utter disgrace. I warn racists and antisemites alike that the Crown Prosecution Service recognises the devastating impact that hate crime has on victims and communities, and it is committed to bringing offenders to justice. That is evidenced by the continued rise in sentence uplifts. This year, increases in sentences for hate crime reached the highest rate yet of nearly 80%. Outreach has

continued throughout the pandemic with a range of community organisations to increase community confidence and improve the prosecution response to hate crime.

Ian Levy: ... Recently in my constituency, the owner of the Delaval Tandoori was physically and verbally assaulted by two men. The wonderful community of Seaton Delaval has rallied around to support that family-run business in the wake of the attack, but I know they will join me in looking to my right hon. and learned Friend for his assurance that the CPS will do all it can to bring those responsible for hate crime before our courts.

The Attorney General: ... The Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute cases referred to it by the police and other law enforcement agencies, and where the test set out is met, it will prosecute those offences. Those who commit such offences must understand that their sentences have an 80% likelihood of being uplifted as a consequence of the hate element of their crime. According to one media report, we have recently seen a 600% increase in antisemitic crimes. We recognise that any form of hate crime against any group is obnoxious and antithetical to the interests of this country, and cannot be tolerated. The CPS recognises the devastating impact. Everything will be done and continues to be done to check those offences.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-20/debates/7DDB226E-1F79-4C49-87BC-22E6A79B6860/ProsecutionOfHateCrime>

House of Commons Written Answer

Hospitals: Food

Elliot Colburn (Conservative) [3174] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure hospital patients from the Jewish community are being served fresh Kosher foods that allow a comparable choice at mealtimes, without compromising on the strict dietary laws that they must follow.

Edward Argar: The independent review of National Health Service hospital food was published on the 20 October 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-nhs-hospital-food>

It includes recommendations to improve hospital food for patients, staff and visitors, including the religious requirements of patients, visitors and staff. An expert group is being assembled to implement the recommendations of this report, with a sub-group to look at how food is best provided to patients given their medical conditions, personal or cultural preferences and religious requirements. This sub-group will include representatives from religious organisations. While Kosher foods are not mentioned specifically, it is part of wider cultural and diversity work.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-18/3174>

Downing Street

Boris Johnson: This morning I met with Jewish community leaders. I want to thank Britain's Jews for the huge contribution they have made in responding to the pandemic. I stand with them against the shameful antisemitism we've seen in the past few days. It has no place whatsoever in the UK.

<https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1395364428372193287>

The Charity Commission

Charity regulator launches inquiry into financial concerns at The Knightland Foundation

[The objectives of the charity include the relief of financial hardship, in particular within the Jewish Community, to advance the Orthodox Jewish Religion for the benefit of the public through the holding of prayer meetings, study sessions, lectures, public celebration of religious festivals in accordance with the tenets of the Orthodox Jewish Religion, and to advance the education of Jewish pupils according to the tenets of the Orthodox Jewish Religion.]

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry and appointed two interim managers to a London-based grant-making charity, due to serious concerns surrounding the charity's governance and finances.

The Commission has engaged with the Knightland Foundation since 2016, when its proactive review of the charity's accounts revealed a number of concerns, including around insufficiently documented loan agreements and transactions to connected companies. In March 2017, the Commission issued the charity's trustees with an action plan to address these matters. The Commission continued to monitor the charity and due to unresolved concerns, it escalated its engagement to a statutory inquiry ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-regulator-launches-inquiry-into-financial-concerns-at-the-knightland-foundation>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Arms Trade: Israel

Claire Hanna (SDLP) [2478] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what arms have been exported from the UK to Israel in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021 to date.

Claire Hanna (SDLP) [2479] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what risk assessment measures are used in the Government's ongoing monitoring of arms exports to Israel.

Ranil Jayawardena: HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK containing detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and the most recent publication was on 13th April 2021, covering the period 1st October – 31st December 2020. Information covering 1st January – 31st March 2021 will be published on 13th July 2021.

HM Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel. We have procedures in place to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require.

HM Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-17/2478>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-17/2479>

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Afzal Khan (Labour) [2438] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the peace process of the attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshippers by Israeli forces during the holy month of Ramadan; and what steps he is taking to recognise the state of Palestine.

James Cleverly: The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque was unacceptable. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important. We encourage all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif / Temple Mount and all who worship there.

The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. We continue to work closely with international partners to strongly advocate for a two-state solution and encourage a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-17/2438>

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Jessica Morden (Labour) [2246] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on halting forced evictions of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly: The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 and 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London, to urge them to de-escalate, restore calm and to reiterate our position on this issue. On May 8 I [Mr Cleverly] publicised our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-17/2246>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1391028309618839557>

Israel: Palestinians

Sarah Champion (Labour) [2303] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of (a) the implications for his policies of the escalations in violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, (b) humanitarian needs and access in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and (c) the implications for UK ODA

James Cleverly: The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories must stop. The UK is urging the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire, to prevent further humanitarian impact. We are supporting the continued UN, Egyptian and Qatari efforts to that end, as well as working closely with the US.

The UK is deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure. We remain in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground and will monitor the situation closely.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-17/2303>

Israel and Gaza

The answer to Wednesday's Urgent Question in the Commons (included in [Political Affairs Digest 2,124](#)) was read in the Lords.

col 697 Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): My Lords, last week we called for concerted action at the United Nations Security Council to halt the violence, so it is welcome that France has put forward proposals, with the support of Egypt and Jordan, together with yesterday's news that President Biden is encouraging the Israeli Government to facilitate a ceasefire. Such a move will not only allow moderate voices on all sides to be heard but will address the urgent need for humanitarian access to Gaza. Can the Minister detail what steps our representatives at the UN are taking to support the ceasefire initiative, and what steps the Government are taking to help facilitate urgent humanitarian support into Gaza?

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): ... I have been engaging directly with our ambassador to the United Nations and we are working with other key colleagues to ensure first and foremost that a ceasefire is guaranteed, both through the UN and bilaterally. ... the Foreign Secretary has engaged directly with both the Israeli Foreign Minister and the Palestinian Prime Minister over the last few days to ensure that there is an immediate ceasefire, and on the important point the noble Lord made about guaranteeing access for humanitarian relief, particularly into Gaza.

Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat): ... does the Minister accept that the international community failed to address the underlying causes and grievances following earlier wars on Gaza, and this time a simple ceasefire—though absolutely necessary—is just not sufficient for the benefit of Israelis and Palestinians? ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... we all know what the ultimate sustainable solution is: a secure, safe Israel next door to a sustainable Palestinian state. I assure the noble Baroness of my good offices in ensuring that we do not lose the momentum behind this challenge. ...

Baroness Redfern (Conservative): My Lords, the longer this cycle of violence continues, the more challenging it will be to reach the objective of two states living side by side in peace. Does my noble friend the Minister not agree that, unless this conflict is soon brought to a close, it could result in increased radicalisation and extremism for the whole region? ...

col 698 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, we must engage directly with all initiatives which seek to bring peace to the region. ... On the issue of extremism and radicalisation ... we have to ensure that the whole ideological base and the hijacking of the agenda by extremist and terrorist organisations are put to rest. ...

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench): ... Could [the Minister] say whether, in the meetings of the Security Council between 16 and 19 May, our representative gave full support to the call by the UN Secretary-General for an early ceasefire? If the answer is not unambiguously "yes", why not? ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... both at the Security Council and in the Statement yesterday we called for an immediate ceasefire.

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: Some of your Lordships may be aware that I returned from Jerusalem yesterday evening, where I attended the very joyful installation of the new Anglican archbishop there. ... until the underlying causes that gave rise to the clashes on Temple Mount, in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood where I was staying, and the conflict between Hamas and Israel, are addressed, Israelis and Palestinians will not enjoy security, experience justice or build a relationship of mutual respect and regard ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... speaking as a Muslim who has visited Israel—Jerusalem and other holy sites—I say that we have been enriched by the essence of faith, the Abrahamic faiths, which bring people together. The faith community has

had an important role to play in the healing, reconciliation and building through progressive steps towards the two-state solution.

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): ... This conflict was completely unprovoked and started by Hamas terrorists for pure political expediency at a horrific and terrible cost, not least to their own people. Does my noble friend agree with me that the issue now is that we ensure that Hamas cannot and does not call this conflict a win in any way, and that it does not get access to more lethal and dangerous arms, as it will undoubtedly seek to, from countries such as Iran?

col 699 **Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** ... Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people. We have seen interview upon interview with innocent residents of Gaza who have been impacted by the actions of Hamas and the missiles and rockets that have been seen over Israel. ... Hamas is an organisation that does not believe in peace. What we need is progressive voices on both sides to build to the ultimate sustainable solution of two viable states. ...

Lord Sheikh (Conservative): ... I have been to Gaza as well as Israel, and I ask that we actively pursue securing the ceasefire immediately. ... Like many Muslims in the world, I was very disturbed by the Israeli attacks on the al-Aqsa mosque; to us Muslims, it is the third holiest place in the world. I have visited and prayed there three times. It is sacred, and I believe that what has happened is sacrilege. ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... I too have worshipped at the al-Aqsa mosque; it is a sacred site for Muslims. Equally, as we have heard from the right reverend Prelate, the whole essence of Jerusalem is important to all three Abrahamic faiths. Respect for the historic status quo in the holy sites in Jerusalem is also valid. Any violent action, particularly that which was taken on the eve of Laylat al-Qadr, is extremely tragic to see unfolding in a mosque, which is a place of peace. We need to ensure that the sanctity of places of worship is sustained.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-20/debates/99B03AE7-4175-4053-9019-4DD57B399878/IsraelAndGaza>

Downing Street

Boris Johnson: I welcome news of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza. Leaders in the region must now work to find a durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence and delivers a sustainable and just peace.

<https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1395624211931176962>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Israel-Gaza ceasefire: Foreign Secretary's statement

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said: The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza, an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life.

Hamas must end all attacks on Israel. It is also now important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-israelgaza-ceasefire>

UK aid package to help provide emergency relief for civilians in Gaza

The UK will provide new funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA to help provide food, water, and emergency shelter to Palestinians affected by the recent escalation in violence in Gaza ...

The UK support comes as UNRWA launches an emergency appeal calling for urgent support to meet immediate humanitarian needs. ...

The humanitarian situation in Gaza was already concerning, with the percentage of the population living in poverty expected to increase this year from 53 per cent to 64 per cent. COVID is still spreading in Gaza and 2 million Palestinians have been living under severe movement and access restrictions.

Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, said: Palestinian and Israeli civilians should not face the brunt of this conflict, and no child or family should go without food, water or shelter. Today's UK support will help UNRWA deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to those that need it most. ...

The escalation of violence and loss of life in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has shocked all of us. Both sides must work towards an immediate ceasefire, to prevent the further loss of life and a worsening humanitarian situation. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-package-to-help-provide-emergency-relief-for-civilians-in-gaza--2>

Dominic Raab: Welcome news of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza. All sides must work to make the ceasefire durable and end the unacceptable cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. UK continues to support efforts to bring about peace.

<https://twitter.com/DominicRaab/status/1395504452233273348>

James Cleverly: Ceasefire in Israel and Gaza is good news. Now essential that Hamas cease all attacks on Israel and that Israel facilitates rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. UK strongly believes the only just resolution is a two state solution.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1395653801672118274>

James Cleverly: Palestinian and Israeli civilians should not face the brunt of this conflict, and no child or family should go without food, water or shelter. Today's UK support will help @UNRWA deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to those that need it most.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1395448278192373768>

Violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories must stop: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East

... The United Kingdom calls for an immediate ceasefire, to prevent the further loss of life and a worsening humanitarian situation. We continue to support the ongoing UN, Egyptian and Qatari mediation efforts.

The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns the firing of rockets at civilian populations. These acts of terrorism and incitement from Hamas and other terrorist groups must permanently end.

Madam President, Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that Israel makes every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest. We are also concerned by reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as cover for military operations.

We are gravely concerned, Madam President, by UN reports that medical installations, schools and hundreds of homes in Gaza have been destroyed or seriously damaged. ...

The United Kingdom also urges unimpeded entry and exit of vital humanitarian supplies and personnel, and that Hamas cease their mortar attacks on these crossings.

Madam President, I reiterate the importance of maintaining the historic Status Quo in Jerusalem. The United Kingdom strongly supports the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's

important role as custodian of the holy sites.

As my Foreign Secretary reiterated this week, the United Kingdom firmly opposes settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

Madam President, recent events highlight the urgent need to make progress towards a two-state solution: a safe and secure Israel, alongside a viable Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the shared capital. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/violence-across-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories-must-stop>

United Nations

Secretary-General's press stakeout following the ceasefire announcement between Gaza and Israel

I welcome the ceasefire between Gaza and Israel, after 11 days of deadly hostilities. I extend my deepest condolences to the victims of the violence and their loved ones. ...

I appeal to the international community to work with the United Nations on developing an integrated, robust package of support for a swift, sustainable reconstruction and recovery that supports the Palestinian people and strengthens their institutions. I stress that Israeli and Palestinian leaders have a responsibility beyond the restoration of calm to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict. Gaza is an integral part of the future Palestinian state and no effort should be spared to bring about real national reconciliation that ends the division.

I underscore the United Nations' deep commitment to working with Israelis and Palestinians, and with our international and regional partners, including through the Middle East Quartet, to return to the path of meaningful negotiations ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-05-20/secretary-general's-press-stakeout-following-the-ceasefire-announcement-between-gaza-and-israel>

Amid Indiscriminate Attacks, 'Hell on Earth' Conditions, Secretary-General Demands Ceasefire to Avoid Uncontainable Crisis in, beyond Occupied Palestinian Territory

Following are UN Secretary-General António Guterres' remarks to the General Assembly meeting on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine ...

The past 10 days have witnessed a dangerous and horrific surge in deadly violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly Gaza, and in Israel. I am deeply shocked by the continued air and artillery bombardment by the Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza. ...

The continued indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hamas and other militant groups towards population centres in Israel ... is also unacceptable. ...

The hostilities have caused serious damage to vital civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including roads and electricity lines, contributing to a humanitarian emergency. Crossings into Gaza have been closed and power shortages are affecting water supplies. Hundreds of buildings and homes have been destroyed, damaged or rendered uninhabitable. Air strikes have damaged several hospitals, which were already short of supplies due to years of debilitating closures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fighting has left thousands of Palestinians homeless, and forced over 50,000 people to leave their homes and seek shelter ...

If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza today.

The destruction of media offices and the killing of a journalist in Gaza are extremely concerning. Journalists ... must be protected and respected. ...

Attacks by militant groups on areas surrounding crossing points are unacceptable. At the same time, Israel has a duty to allow and facilitate rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian aid – including food, fuel and medical supplies – into Gaza.

Meanwhile, rockets fired by militants in Gaza have reached as far as Tel Aviv and its suburbs and Ben Gurion airport, claiming civilian lives, causing hundreds of injuries and damaging residential and commercial property.

Even wars have rules. First and foremost, civilians must be protected. Indiscriminate attacks, and attacks against civilians and civilian property, are violations of the laws of war. So are attacks against military objectives that cause disproportionate loss of civilian life and injury to civilians.

There is no justification, including counterterrorism or self-defence, for the abdication by the parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

I urge the Israeli authorities to abide by the laws governing armed conflict, including the proportionate use of force. I call on them to exercise maximum restraint in the conduct of military operations.

I likewise urge Hamas and other militant groups to stop the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods into civilian population centres in Israel, also in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Densely populated civilian areas must not be used for military purposes. ...

I urge Israel to cease demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem ... All settlement activities, including evictions and demolitions, are illegal under international law.

Jerusalem is a holy city for three world religions. I underscore that the status quo at the holy sites must be upheld and respected. ...

The United Nations is deeply committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians, and with our international and regional partners, including through the Middle East Quartet, to realize a lasting and just peace. Only through renewing our commitment and redoubling our efforts towards a negotiated solution can we bring this cruel violence and hatred to a definitive end.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20732.doc.htm>

General Assembly: Situation in the Middle East

Volkan Bozkir (Turkey), President of the General Assembly, condemning the attacks against civilians and religious sites, called it heart-breaking that the escalation of violence began at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Urging respect for all places of worship, including the Aqsa Mosque compound, he noted that the fatalities in Gaza include 63 children and 35 women. The situation in the occupied West Bank is also dire, he said, noting that civilians in Israel are likewise impacted, with fatalities and hundreds of injuries. ... Israel, as an occupying Power, must ensure compliance with its international human rights law obligations, including proportionate use of force. ...

The Palestine question, he continued, is the longest-standing issue on the United Nations agenda ... Coupled with the political impasse and lack of negotiations, such a sustained occupation has led to widespread feelings of hopelessness among Palestinians. ... “We have to show the Palestinians and Israelis that there is light at the end of the tunnel.” ...

Riyad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Observer State of Palestine, said that the current meeting is a clear message to Israel to end the massacre. Families are being targeted as they sleep, he said, and Israel is not even pretending it was a mistake. Instead of apologizing, Israel is asserting that it has a right to kill innocent people and then blame

the victims. ... Israel also displaced Palestinians during the pandemic, despite clear calls against such actions from the United Nations. To those who say that Israel has the right to defend itself, he raised the question: "What right? Israel asks, 'What would you have done if missiles were targeting your cities?', but Israel forgets that the occupation is the root cause," he asserted. "How can an occupying Power have the right to defend itself when the people under occupation are deprived of the same right?" ...

The Palestinian people are facing many disasters and *nakbas*, he said, adding that they have never let go of their struggle. ... Pointing to the obliteration of the Islamic and Christian identities of Jerusalem, he condemned Israel's decision to break into one of the holiest places during the holiest month of Ramadan, during the holiest of nights of Al-Qadr. ...

Israel's current Government does not believe in the two-State solution. Dealing with Israel as if it is above the law only encourages it to act as such, he warned ... Every country in the world has a responsibility to hold Israel accountable, he said, calling on the international community to not just "watch and idle". ... Israel's criminal occupation has caused so much pain that the situation cannot be solved by a ceasefire ...

Ayman Safadi (Jordan) said ... Israel's practices push the region towards conflict, ... stressing that the occupation has turned the Aqsa Mosque compound into a centre for injustice, provoking millions of Muslims around the world. Furthermore, Israel attempts to alter the demographic character of East Jerusalem with evictions, where Palestinians have a clear right to live in their homes and the occupation has no authority. ...

If left unchecked, he said Israel's aggression will lead to more serious escalations. ... There will be no peace and security in a one-State apartheid regime, he insisted. ...

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Almohammed Al-Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait, praising Palestinians for their tenacity in defending their rights, said the ...acts of hate perpetrated by Israel and Israeli settlers against innocent Palestinian civilians, within sight of the international community, are a blatant affront to the Charter of the United Nations. ... East Jerusalem has been and is an integral part of Palestine, he stressed, noting the special importance of the Aqsa Mosque compound. ...

Linda Thomas Greenfield (United States) [condemned] rocket attacks by Hamas [and] she said the United States will champion every diplomatic effort towards peace. She urged the international community to step up contributions to meet the immense needs of Gazans, and more broadly ensure that aid delivery serves the Palestinian people, rather than Hamas. ...

Björn Olof Skoog, Head of Delegation of the European Union, ... condemning the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on Israeli territory, expressed support for Israel's right to self-defence, but warned that it must be carried out in a proportionate manner. He went on to reiterate the bloc's strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and said it will be important not to proceed with the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah. ...

Gilad Erdan (Israel), stressing that Hamas is an internationally designated jihadi terrorist organization, quoted passages from its charter, contrasting its stated aims with those of the United Nations. In the current Assembly debate, there is no defence of the United Nations goals, but, rather, a defence of Hamas's charter, which is committed to the genocide of the Jewish people. ... Every speaker who fails to condemn Hamas, who does not distinguish between its war crimes and Israel's legitimate right to defend itself is emboldening terrorist organizations all over the world to use human shields and undermine peace and security.

While the United Nations usually works slowly, he pointed out that it took the General Assembly just 11 days to call a meeting to condemn Israel's right to defend itself. "What a disgrace," he said. "Hamas targets civilians; Israel targets terrorists." Hamas rockets

are indiscriminate by design and have killed Jewish and Muslim Israelis, as well as citizens from India and Thailand and numerous Gazan children. ... By contrast, Israel's strikes are precise and surgical, going "above and beyond international law" to protect civilians, with warning phone calls and text messages sent to Palestinians before strikes. ...

"This is a war between Israel and Hamas, not Israel and Palestine," he stressed. Furthermore, the unprovoked Hamas assault had nothing to do with Sheikh Jarrah or the Aqsa Mosque compound conflicts, but was instead a result of Hamas frustration over President Mahmoud Abbas's decision to cancel elections in the West Bank. ...

Nathalie Broadhurst Estival (France), condemning the firing of rockets by Hamas, reaffirmed her country's support for Israel's security. ... The current escalation must be placed in context, she said, adding that the cycles of violence will continue if there's no movement towards the establishment of two States living in peace and security, each of them with Jerusalem as the capital. ...

Also expressing concern about the evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, she said that settlements are illegal and reaffirmed the special status of holy sites ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom) ... voiced support for the ongoing mediation efforts ... Unequivocally condemning the firing of rockets at civilian populations by Hamas, she said Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself. ... *[see above for the full transcript]*

Guenter Sautter (Germany) ... warned that the recent escalation of violence has resulted in high levels of civilian casualties and condemned the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel. ... Germany remains highly concerned over the eviction of Palestinian families in Jerusalem, he said, urging Israel to end settlement-expansion. ...

Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) ... [said] that Israel, as the occupying Power, is duty-bound to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip, whose 2 million inhabitants have nowhere else to go. For their part, Palestinian armed groups must allow the United Nations and humanitarian partners to bring in fuel, food and other supplies. ...

Jamal Fares Alrowaiei (Bahrain) [rejected] attempts by Israeli settlers to evict Palestinian families from their homes ... Moreover, Israel must not change the legal or historic status of holy sites ... "Peace cannot be achieved without recognizing the right of Palestinians to establish an independent State," he stressed. ...

Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees (Egypt) ... said that efforts by his country and others have borne fruit in the form of a ceasefire. "We hope it will last," he said, adding that any life saved warrants all the efforts being made. ... the first step is to bring an end to military action and to prevent any provocations in Jerusalem. Once a ceasefire is in place, a series of measures must be taken to restore calm and allow for the reconstruction of Gaza, while also enabling all parties to consider the resumption of peace talks. ...

Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) said ... there is no alternative to a political solution and both sides must assume their responsibilities and engage in dialogue. ... The normalization of relations between Israel and Arab States, while important, cannot lead to Middle East stability. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12325.doc.htm>

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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>

**** Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance** (closing date 16 July 2021)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-curriculum-for-wales-religion-values-and-ethics-guidance.pdf>

**** Curriculum for Wales Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Statutory Guidance and Code** (closing date 16 July 2021)

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-and-code_0.pdf

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