



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Scottish Parliament Motion

**John Mason (SNP) [S6M-00146] Hate Crime Security Fund** – That the Parliament welcomes the launch of the Hate Crime Security Fund; notes that £500,000 has been allocated to protect places of worship with security measures such as CCTV, security doors and alarms; acknowledges that hate crime is already significantly under-reported; reiterates that places of worship should be places of peace and sanctuary and that faith groups should feel safe to practice freely; regrets that these measures are necessary to ensure that faith communities are protected, and notes that applications for the scheme will be available until 21 July 2021.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/votes-and-motions-search/S6M-00146>

*Information about the funding referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.impactfundingpartners.com/open-applications/hate-crime-security-fund>

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## Holocaust

### House of Lords Grand Committee Debate

#### **Genocide: Bringing Perpetrators to Justice**

*col/ 166GC Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench):* To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to bring the perpetrators of genocide to justice. ...

... from Xinjiang to Burma, from Tigray to Nigeria, from Iraq to Sudan, and in many other parts of the world, the international community has fallen a long way short in saving millions of people from the hell of genocide and from atrocity crimes. While the victims suffer appalling violations, the perpetrators strut the world stage, confident of their impunity and the triumph of mercantile and other interests over our convention duties to prevent, to

protect and to prosecute those responsible for these heinous crimes.

In the post-war years, men such as Raphael Lemkin, and women such as Eleanor Roosevelt, bequeathed the institutions that emerged from the ashes of Auschwitz—notably the International Court of Justice and, later, the International Criminal Court. ...

But as became clear during our proceedings on the genocide amendment to the Trade Bill, this is simply a convenient sleight of hand, disguising the shameful inability—or perhaps unwillingness—to bring perpetrators of genocide to justice. ...

The all-party genocide amendment to the Trade Bill offered a way out of the cul-de-sac and a route to our national courts, and it was given three-figure majorities in the House but opposed by the Government. ...

*col 167GC* On 27 April, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab ... said that "... Our long-standing position is that a court should make judgments on genocide. Fundamentally, genocide creates obligation at the state level".

Yes, he is right—we have treaty obligations at the state level—but we and others repeatedly fail to meet them, and refuse to reform our domestic and international mechanisms to address this lamentable failure. ...

Mr Raab rightly warned the committee about the potential misuse of the word genocide. It is precisely because the definition is exacting that I agree with the Government that a court should evaluate the evidence and make the determination. But there is no point identifying the problem without willing the solution. ...

*col 168GC* We have clear duties to hold to account those responsible for atrocity crimes and genocide, and in meeting those obligations we must redouble our efforts. ...

*col 169GC* **Lord Thomas of Gresford (Liberal Democrat):** ... I will start with a quote: "The United States will provide no support or recognition to the International Criminal Court. As far as America is concerned the ICC has no jurisdiction, no legitimacy, and no authority."

Not surprisingly, those are the words of Donald Trump, addressing the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018. In 2020 President Trump issued a sweeping executive order authorising asset freezing and family bans against Fatou Bensouda, the ICC chief prosecutor, and took away her visa. Trump said that anybody who assists ICC investigations risks the same sanctions. Of course, this has had a broad, chilling effect on co-operation with the ICC.

Trump indicated that his policy of sanctions might extend to allies—specifically Israel—and demanded that the ICC change its course. The ICC prosecutor concluded in December 2019, after examination, that all the statutory criteria to proceed with a formal investigation in Palestine had been met, but the court is currently seeking a ruling on jurisdiction. ...

*col 170GC* **Baroness Cox (Crossbench):** My Lords, I strongly support the argument made by my noble friend Lord Alton: the failure to hold perpetrators of genocide to account gives them a green light to continue. The failure of the international community to respond to the Armenian genocide emboldened Hitler to embark on the Holocaust, with his infamous remark, "Who ... speaks today about the annihilation of the Armenians?"

*col 171GC* Will Her Majesty's Government therefore fulfil their obligations under the genocide convention to prevent, protect and punish? The longer we tolerate these massacres and atrocities, the more we embolden the perpetrators, giving them a green light to continue their genocidal policies with impunity. ...

**The Lord Bishop of Blackburn:** ... We face two problems in bringing perpetrators of genocide to justice. One is the length of time it takes for such atrocities to cease, as it is extremely difficult to stop acts while they are happening; it is only after the genocide has ended that moves to accountability seem to kick in, and then it takes years to gather evidence while the perpetrators run free. What is needed is a far more effective early warning system that triggers action much sooner to stop the genocide in its tracks before it does more damage. With modern communication, surely it is not hard to learn of and

know of these atrocities; the problem comes in preventing them continuing when access is likely to be denied, lies are told to cover the evil and attempts at intervention are resisted by claims about the sovereignty of the nation state.

I learned recently of an attempt in World War II to intervene in a totally unconventional way. Some may know the extraordinary story in a book entitled *The Volunteer* by Jack Fairweather. It tells of a Polish man, Witold Pilecki, a farmer, husband and father of two who allowed himself to be arrested in order to be sent to Auschwitz. Despite much personal suffering, he tried to persuade the outside world of the atrocities he was witnessing through sending a series of smuggled messages, but the horror was so great that many people did not believe what he was saying—even here in the UK. So nothing was done to begin with, and the genocide continued. ...

*col 172GC* An atrocity can sound so extreme or even unlikely when it is reported that it is not believed and is allowed to run on for too long while nothing is done about it; or, having learned of an evil, it seems that there is nothing anyone can do but pray and wait. While we ask the Minister to speed up the route to justice for perpetrators of genocide, may I seek an assurance that effort will also be given to finding ways to intervene and stop genocide while it is actually taking place, and so save and protect precious lives?

**Lord Polak (Conservative):** ... If we want to ensure that justice is done in future, we must ensure that evidence is not destroyed and witnesses are not pressurised into silence. ...

*col 173GC* **Lord Browne of Ladyton (Labour):** ... Regrettably, the Government's actions fall short of their own rhetoric; they are slow to bring forward Magnitsky sanctions and are avoiding reform of supply chain legislation. They are in defiance of the House of Commons recognition of genocides and your Lordships' overwhelming support for a judicial route to determination. They have prioritised their ability to enter trade negotiations with China over a process to assess the Uighur case. The Government hold an untenable position on the determination of genocide. You cannot say "genocide determination is for a court" when, with Chinese and Russian vetoes, no court will ever hear the case. Their policy is inoperable and now they must come forward with credible alternatives. ...

**Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green):** ... This night, the UK Government and the arms industry are culpable for genocides and other atrocities committed across the world. There are very few such atrocities that are committed independently of the global arms trade, of which the Government of the UK are a major component. ...

*col 174GC* **Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench):** ... Here are four suggestions. First, the UK, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, should press for the council to extend the jurisdiction of the ICC to cover countries which have not signed up to the Rome statute, but in whose territory genocide may have been committed. ... Secondly, the UK should also maintain its support for the French initiative to get the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to agree not to use the veto when the risk or actuality of genocide was involved. Thirdly, our Houses of Parliament should prepare the ground to make use of the opening in the Trade Act to consider allegations of genocide by any proposed trade partner. Fourthly, we should tighten up our own immigration and residence legislation and its enforcement so that never again, as was shamefully the case with some of those accused of genocide in Rwanda, could perpetrators find impunity in the UK. ...

**Lord Shinkwin (Conservative):** ... My Lords, who could fail to agree ... with the sentiment that the perpetrators of genocide should be brought to justice? After all, did we not sign up to that principle at Nuremberg, when the sentiment was translated into sentences?

*col 175GC* Three images come to my mind when I think of bringing perpetrators to justice. The rows of senior Nazis at Nuremberg is the first; the other two feature Radovan Karadzic. ...

Bringing perpetrators to justice is essential, but that inevitably means the crime has already been committed, as we have heard. It is far better, surely, to ensure that there are no

perpetrators to bring to justice in the first place. Unless and until we translate sentiment to sentencing for the crime, there will be no deterrence, no prevention and no justice, and yet more genocide will be perpetrated again. ...

**Baroness Falkner of Margravine (Crossbench):** ... It does not happen all of a sudden. It starts with removing human rights protections from certain groups, mainly ethnic groups; then by imposing new laws that impinge on their ability to live and work freely in society; then by using new laws to deny these peoples and groups the right to inhabit a society in security and freedom. Usually, the culmination is violence to drive them out and/or bring about their extinction. That is the course we have seen throughout the 70 years of the convention and before it, under the Nazis and the genocide of the Jewish people. So also in Darfur, in Rwanda, with the Yazidis and now with the Uighurs in China, it follows the same course. ...

*col 176GC* **Baroness Goudie (Labour):** ... Her Majesty's Government are second to none in paying eloquent lip service to bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice. The value of this question is that it focuses attention on accenting this in practice. The Government's record is lamentable. The rights of victims are valueless without effective remedies. ... There has to be effective machinery both to identify the perpetrators of genocide and to bring them before the courts, but this is not happening. ... Further, we should look at all trade deals so that we do not trade with countries that are committing genocide or about to do so. ...

*col 177GC* **The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):** ... From the outset, I express what I am sure are the sentiments of all: accountability for genocide and, indeed, all atrocities, is an important and impassioned issue. ... So it is absolutely right that the Government continue to respond to debates such as these and to calls to lead the charge for accountability for perpetrators of serious international crimes. ...

*col 178GC* The pursuit of international criminal justice and accountability remains at the heart of our foreign policy. ... The Government remain committed to the principle that there should be no impunity for those who perpetrate the most serious crimes of international concern, and we remain at the forefront of efforts to hold perpetrators of such crimes to account. ...

We should certainly lead by action. The United Kingdom has not exercised its veto and it is right that, through our actions, we now have a determination to influence others in this respect. However, as I have directly experienced as Minister for the UN, the ability of the five member nations to exercise the veto remains a real challenge ...

The UK policy remains, as has been said by a number of noble Lords, that the determination of genocide should be made by competent courts, not non-judicial bodies. This includes international courts, such as the ICC, and, indeed, national criminal courts that meet international standards. ...

It is important to stress, however, that our approach in no way undermines the UK's commitment to the principle that there should be no impunity for perpetrators of the most serious crimes ... [we] will uphold our obligations under the genocide convention. When atrocities occur, our approach is to seek an end to them and prevent further escalations, irrespective of whether they fit the definition of a specific international crime. ...

The provisions relating to trade agreements and genocide within the Trade Act will commence from 30 June 2021. ... I will write to noble Lords, in the interest of time, on what the processes will be thereafter.

We do not agree with one central premise ... that we should act only when there has been a determination of genocide. Today's debate has demonstrated the importance of early intervention. The United Kingdom, notwithstanding the challenges I have heard today, has been at the forefront of calling out crimes and, indeed, strengthening international action. ...

col 180GC The noble Lord, Lord Thomas, talked about the International Criminal Court as a read-across to certain situations, including those of Israel. We have been clear that any international court must ensure that its mandate and its jurisdiction are upheld; it is our view that the ICC does not have jurisdiction in this case. However, we of course support the independence of the ICC and its officials. The noble Lord quoted the US position, and the UK position is clear: we provide political, financial, and practical support for the International Criminal Court. ...

col 181GC ... both through our trade and, indeed, our arms export licences, we remain consistent to our obligations under international law. We remain consistent in terms of the regimes in which we operate, and certainly I, as Minister for Human Rights, remain very much committed to ensuring that the issue of human rights is at the centre of our thinking, both when it comes to issues of trade and issues of arms sales.

col 182GC I assure all noble Lords that we will continue to work with our international partners to ensure that, where we can, we end atrocities and that, where we can, we prevent atrocities and ultimately alleviate the suffering of those being impacted. We will never wait for the determinations of specific international crimes before taking action. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-27/debates/7537BE2B-5FD4-44BB-A59B-2130A42F5F96/GenocideBringingPerpetratorsToJustice>

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## Israel

**See also House of Lords General Committee debate “Genocide: Bringing Perpetrators to Justice”, which is included in the Holocaust section above.**

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [6444] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 3134 on Arms Trade: Israel, if his Department will conduct an investigation to determine whether any arms exported under a UK export licence were used in reported attacks on Palestinian civilians in (a) Gaza and (b) the West Bank during the violence of April and May 2021.

**James Cleverly:** HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-24/6444>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-19/3134>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [6437] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Palestine is durable.

**Stephen Morgan (Labour) [6438]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to use the ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Palestine as a basis for progress on wider peace talks.

**James Cleverly:** The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, 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 based on a two state solution. We continue to fully support Egyptian and UN mediation efforts.

The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to deliver Palestinian self-determination and ensure Israel's status as a Jewish, democratic state.

Ministers and Ambassadors throughout the Middle East are also engaging regional partners, including Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, while we remain in close contact with the US administration and European allies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-24/6437>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-24/6438>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Palestinians: Elections

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL220]** To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have had made (1) to representatives of the government of Palestine, and (2) to President Abbas, regarding the decree on 29 April postponing the 22 May legislative elections and the 31 July presidential elections.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are disappointed that elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been postponed. The Palestinian people should be allowed to enjoy their democratic rights - and Israel must allow voting for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, in line with the Oslo Accords. Elections are long overdue and we urge the swift setting of a new date.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-13/hl220>

### Israel: Palestinians

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL218]** To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to recent clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants, (1) what action they are taking to encourage restraint on both sides; and (2) what discussions they have had with the government of the United States on how to de-escalate the situation.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, 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 based on a two state solution. We continue to fully support Egyptian and UN mediation efforts. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to deliver Palestinian self-determination and ensure Israel's status as a Jewish, democratic state. Ministers and Ambassadors throughout the Middle East are also engaging regional partners, including Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, while we remain in close contact with the US administration.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL217]** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of concerns expressed by non-governmental and humanitarian organisations on the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, 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 based on a two state solution.

It is also important now for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. The UK will provide £3.2m of UK aid to the UN agency for Palestine refugees, UNRWA, responding to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, launched on 19 May. The funding will help provide food, water, and emergency shelter to Palestinians affected by the recent escalation in violence in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-13/hl217>

### **Jerusalem: Palestinians**

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark [240]** To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel concerning the eviction of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** On 8 May Minister Cleverly communicated 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. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-13/hl240>

*The communication referred to above can be read at*

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

## **UK Parliament Early Day Motion**

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Labour Co-op) [138]** Arms export licences for sales to the Israeli Military – That this House notes with concern the recent granting of and use of extant UK licences for the export to the Israeli military of categories of arms and arms components including military technology and components for aircrafts, helicopters, and drones, as well as grenades, bombs, missiles, armoured vehicles, tanks, ammunition, and small arms; is therefore concerned that Ministers have not disclosed whether UK-made exports were used in the recent bombardment of the Gaza Strip and repression of civilian protests in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory; reminds the Government that criteria 2, 3 and 4, of the consolidated criteria on arms exports precludes licensing where there is a clear risk that items may be used for internal repression or in the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law; notes the criteria precludes licensing for items which would provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing conflicts, and precludes licensing for items when there is a clear risk that they could be used to assert by force a territorial claim; therefore calls for an investigation to determine whether UK-made arms and components have been used in the recent violence and if they are implicated in war crimes under investigation by the International Criminal Court, including

settlement building in occupied territories; and calls for a suspension of UK arms sales to Israel until it can be demonstrated, subject to parliamentary scrutiny, that weapons and components imported from the UK are used solely in accordance with the consolidated criteria.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58577>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **Urging a longer-term political horizon in the Middle East: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East**

... The United Kingdom joins others in strongly welcoming the ceasefire. ...

We now need to be focused on ensuring the ceasefire is durable. My Foreign Secretary travelled to the region yesterday, and met Israeli and Palestinian leaders. As he made clear, the recent escalation underlines the urgent need to make progress towards a more positive future and to address the drivers of conflict.

Mr President, the United Kingdom has been clear that violence against peaceful worshippers at the Al Aqsa Mosque was unacceptable. Maintaining the historic Status Quo and the safety and sanctity of the holy sites is crucial. We support the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's important role as custodian.

We have all been deeply disturbed by scenes of violence in Sheikh Jarrah. The UK has been clear that settlement activity is illegal under international law and damages prospects for peace. The Government of Israel must end its settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions, in East Jerusalem and elsewhere on the West Bank.

Events at the holy sites and in Sheikh Jarrah do not justify the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and other militant groups. We condemn those attacks in absolute terms. We continue to call on these groups to permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. We have been clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence in responding to attacks. In exercising that right, it is vital that all actions are in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

We are gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including damage and destruction of key civilian infrastructure. Rapid and unhindered access into Gaza for humanitarian actors and essential supplies remains critical. ...

The United Kingdom has provided an initial \$4.5 million of aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, to help address immediate humanitarian needs. ...

Recent events must galvanise us all in our commitment to achieve a two-state solution that ensures a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem the shared capital of both states – the only solution that we believe can end the cycle of violence and deliver a just and sustainable peace.

***To read the full transcript see***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/urging-a-longer-term-political-horizon-in-the-middle-east>

### **Human Rights Council Special Session: UK statement on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: The UK's Ambassador to the UN and WTO in Geneva, Simon Manley, delivered this statement during the Special Session on Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem.**

The United Kingdom strongly welcomes the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza. ...

The recent conflict demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards a more positive future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

During the recent escalation in violence, the UK has unequivocally condemned

indiscriminate attacks by Hamas and other militant groups on Israel.

We are clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence. All actions taken when exercising that right must be consistent with the principles of distinction, proportionality, humanity and necessity, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and avoid civilian casualties.

We are gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. ...

As we work to rebuild calm, the UK will continue to call on all actors to adhere to International Humanitarian Law.

We consistently oppose settlements, demolitions and evictions across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Settlements are illegal under international law and damage the prospects for peace. ...

We continue to believe that the only sustainable solution is a two state solution, leading to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/human-rights-council-special-session-uk-statement-on-the-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory>

## United Nations

### **Lack of Political Horizon on Palestinian, Israeli Conflict ‘Kills Hope’, Gives Room for Those Not Interested in Peace, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, briefed the Council that the cessation of hostilities is holding between Palestinian militants in Gaza and Israel following “eleven days of the most intense hostilities we have witnessed in years”. Noting that these events have demonstrated “the costs of perpetual conflict and lost hope”, he detailed escalating tensions between Palestinians and Israelis in the lead-up up to this conflict — including clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces on 10 May, in which 650 of the former were reportedly shot and injured with rubber-coated metal bullets and 32 of the latter were injured. Subsequently, from 10 May to 21 May during hostilities between Israel and armed groups in Gaza, 253 Palestinians were killed by 1,500-plus Israeli air strikes, including at least 66 children, 38 women and three persons with disabilities. Over the same period, nine Israelis and three foreign nationals were killed by the 4,000-plus rockets launched by Hamas and other militants from Gaza.

Further, he said that Israeli air strikes reportedly damaged or destroyed nearly 2,000 housing and commercial units in at least 258 buildings, injured 1,948 Palestinians and displaced 112,000 of the same, with some 77,000 sheltering in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with little to no access to water, food and health care. The humanitarian impact of this fighting has been devastating but, following the cessation of hostilities on 21 May, 40 truckloads of humanitarian supplies were permitted to enter into Gaza and, on 25 May, Israel announced the opening of crossings for certain humanitarian goods and personnel, including vaccines from the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) mechanism. Israel also reinstated the fishing zone off the coast of Gaza on 25 May and repair to some damaged sewage and water infrastructure has commenced. ...

Further complicating matters, he said, is a sharp rise in the number of clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, settler-related violence, Palestinian attacks against Israelis in the occupied West Bank and an apparent increase in Israeli security forces’ use of live ammunition against Palestinian demonstrators. Potential evictions in occupied East Jerusalem continue to be a major concern, and he urged Israel to exercise maximum restraint and cease demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property. ...

**Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works**

**Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East** ... said: "I met parents who every night asked themselves whether to have all their children sleep near them or to spread them around the house," because they were trying to decide if they should all die together or if they should try to save some by scattering them.

This last conflict, he noted, is the fourth conflict in 13 years to take place during an enduring blockade, which has crippled the economy, led to skyrocketing unemployment and brought the Gaza health-care system to its knees. He also voiced concern about the trauma and psychosocial impact that relentless air strikes and rockets attacks have inflicted on civilians, especially children. ...

Despair, he added, is spreading in Palestinian refugee camps beyond the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially among the youth. ... UNRWA education is an antidote to the widespread hatred and intolerance spreading in the region. ...

Calling on the international community to break the Sisyphean approach of post-conflict response in Gaza, he said that the recovery phase needs to be accompanied by a genuine political track aimed at lifting the blockade on people, goods and trade ... Perpetrators of violations of international law on all sides must be held accountable, he said, adding: "No one has asked to remain a refugee seven decades later". ...

**Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, said "Israel has failed in defeating Palestinian consciousness". It has adopted policies and devoted tremendous resources to forcibly change the historic, geographic and demographic reality of the Palestinian homeland, but 70 years since the Nakbah, a new Palestinian generation is more rooted in the land than ever before, he said. Israel calls for a right of return for Jews that spans over 5,000 years while denying the right of return of Palestinians to their land and homes after 73 years, he added. Stressing that Israel vandalizes Christian and Muslim holy sites while claiming that its colonization is a "divine right", he recalled various United Nations reports that warned that the Gaza Strip was on the verge of collapse and cautioned that violence will resume.

The deterioration of the situation in the occupied State of Palestine, he added, is Israel's making. The Council determined a vision for peace decades ago and adopted resolutions and set out the obligations of the parties and of third parties. Calling on the Council to implement these resolutions, he added: "Please, don't ask us to be patient." The battle for existence in Palestine is taking place on the ground, house by house, and in the alleys of the Old City, and on every hilltop and neighbourhood and village and refugee camp, he stressed. While the reconstruction of the besieged Gaza Strip must be a top priority right now, what is required is addressing the root cause of occupation, lifting the blockade and ensuring freedom of movement of people and goods. "We resemble our land and belong to it," he said, "whether we live in it or it lives in us, one rebellious generation after the other."

**Noa Furman (Israel)**, stressing that the conflict is not between Israel and either the people of Gaza or Palestine — "who are not our enemy" — but between her country and Hamas, said that the full responsibility for the recent escalation lies with Hamas, who fired 4,300 rockets at civilians in Israeli cities. Further, Hamas's actions have little to do with Israel, but instead with that organization attempting to assert itself over the Palestinian Authority. In response, Israel targeted over 1,500 terror assets in Gaza and "did everything in our power" to limit civilian casualties. Hamas, on the other hand, committed war crimes both by firing at Israeli civilians and by hiding behind Palestinian ones. Israel strictly adheres to the laws of armed conflict, including the principles of distinction and proportionality.

She said that ignoring Hamas's actions "will not make them go away", calling on the international community to condemn Hamas and support Israel's right to defend its civilians. ... Every statement that lacks this condemnation puts the lives of Jews all around the world at risk. ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)** said her country will continue the “quiet, relentless and intensive diplomacy” that brought an end to the recent violence. ... she noted that the United States recently announced that it is giving \$38 million towards recovery efforts, of which \$33 million will be for UNRWA. This life-saving aid will provide food, health care, psychosocial support and emergency shelters to those displaced by recent violence, she said. ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)**, highlighting the loss of life and damage to civilian infrastructure, underscored the importance of UNRWA’s provision of necessary humanitarian assistance ... The fact that fighting has ceased in Palestine and Israel does not mean that the international community can delay resolving the Palestinian question, which is a key issue for the entire Middle East and the world as a whole. Pointing out the Muslim ummah’s sensitivity to events occurring in East Jerusalem around Al-Aqsa Mosque, he stressed that all issues must be resolved to have lasting peace in the Middle East and, to this end, talks between Israel and Palestine must be based on the principle of two States adhering to the 1967 borders. ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)**, welcoming the ceasefire, called on the international community to focus on making it durable. ... Underscoring that violence against peaceful worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque is unacceptable, she voiced support for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan’s custodian role. *[see above for the full transcript]*

**Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland)** ... said the weakness of the Council’s response has put into perspective the scale of the challenge in charting a political path towards peace. “We must support the parties to meet that challenge and help to end the cycle of violence and bloodshed,” she asserted. ... She renewed the call on Israel to end the blockade of Gaza, pressing both sides to launch investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14535.doc.htm>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Human Rights Council Opens Special Session on “the Grave Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”, Speakers Urge it to Establish an International Commission of Inquiry**

The Human Rights Council ... opened its special session on “the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”. It heard calls from speakers for the Council to establish an independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021. ...

**Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, stated that appalling events in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territory, the most significant escalation of hostilities since 2014, had forced the Council into special session. Two hundred and forty-two Palestinians had been killed by the Israeli Security Forces in air strikes on Gaza, including 63 children, with over 74,000 Palestinians displaced. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 28 Palestinians, including five children, were killed as of 24 May. At the same time, rockets launched by Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups killed 10 Israeli citizens and residents, including two children, and forced thousands into shelters. Two main issues had led to the rise in tensions: the imminent evictions of Palestinian families and their forced displacement in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem to make way for settlers, and the Israeli Security Forces’ deployment at the Al Aqsa compound, restricting access to thousands of worshippers

during the last days of Ramadan, using force against peaceful protesters and worshippers inside Al Aqsa Mosque.

As a result, Hamas and other armed groups had launched a heavy rocket barrage towards Israel, indiscriminately failing to distinguish between military and civilian objects. In response, Israel had conducted an intense airstrike campaign on Gaza, reportedly targeting members of armed groups but resulting in extensive civilian deaths and injuries. Government buildings, residential homes and apartments, humanitarian organizations, medical and media facilities were totally or partially destroyed, despite Israel's precautions - these attacks may constitute war crimes. Locating military assets in densely populated civilian areas, and launching attacks from them, was also a violation of international humanitarian law - but the actions of one party did not absolve the other from its obligations. Palestinian civilians had virtually no protection against airstrikes, living in one of the most densely populated areas of the world. Both sides had rights to defend their citizens, and Palestinians had the right to live safely and freely in their homes, something that they were unable to experience due to the Israeli blockade.

The risk of evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and other neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem remained high, while the situation in the West Bank was alarming, with Israeli Security Forces killing 10 Palestinians on 14 May - the highest number in one day since the collection of these figures by the United Nations began in 2008. The situation inside Israel was concerning: mob attacks took place on individuals in mixed cities of Bat-Yam, Jaffa and Acra, as well as attacks on places of worship instigated by both sides, with Israeli police failing to protect Palestinian citizens. Despite the welcome news of the ceasefire, Ms. Bachelet emphasised that the root causes of violence must be addressed. Only when human rights were fully respected and protected could trust start being built between the various communities and a durable, lasting and just peace be achieved. ...

**Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967** ... said the events over the past month in Gaza, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and also across Israel, were a calamitous repetition of what all had previously witnessed in 2018, 2014, 2012, 2008-09, 2000, 1987 and further and deeper into the tragic history of the Palestinians. The United Nations had demanded repeatedly over the years that Israel comply with its international legal obligations and remove its settlements, stop its evictions, end the unlawful annexation, and halt the demolitions and forced removal of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem. Defiance by the occupying power had been the answer. Now that the last missiles and rockets had been fired, and the tears from the last funerals were slowly drying, accountability must rise to the top of the international agenda ...

The various peace initiatives over the past three decades – from the 1993 Declaration of Principles to the 2020 Trump Peace for Prosperity Plan – had all been conducted largely or entirely outside of the framework of international law and human rights. This had allowed Israel to make the core issues of self-determination, annexation and settlements negotiable issues, rather than issues of profound illegality from which Israel must completely desist. The simple reality was that the occupation had become as entrenched and as sustainable as it had because the international community had never imposed a meaningful cost on Israel for acting as an acquisitive and defiant occupying power. Accordingly, Mr. Lynk urged that the Council's future work on the Israeli occupation must be guided by three principles. First, the diplomatic framework for fully ending the occupation was to be found within the framework of international law and human rights, not in Realpolitik. Second, Israel had been a bad-faith occupier, and it was magical thinking to believe that its occupation would not end unless and until meaningful accountability measures had been imposed. And, third, because of the vastly asymmetrical differences in power between Israel and the Palestinians, active international intervention was indispensable.

**Issam Younis, Director for Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights in Gaza and the Head**

**of the Independent Commission for Human Rights of Palestine** ... said the governments of those present had granted systematic impunity to Israel, which had used its power to deliberately attack civilians ... Israel's unlawful closure of Gaza, 14 years of collective punishment, had been tightened. ... Recent events were a mere symptom: for 73 years, there had been systematic, institutionalised efforts to impose a settler-colonial regime of racial domination and oppression on both sides of the Green Line. The apartheid regime also affected Palestinian refugees and Palestinians living abroad.

**Mohammad Barakeh, Former Member of the Knesset and Chairman of the Arab Higher Committee in Israel**, speaking on behalf of the committee that represented all Palestinians inside Israel, noted that they had been spared displacement in 1948. Over the past decades, they had faced different forms of discrimination - confiscation of land, imposition of emergency laws, restriction of job opportunities and more. In July 2018 the Knesset had approved the Jewish nation-state law stipulating that the land of Palestine was the historical home of the Jews, who had the exclusive right to self-determination. With this, democratic principles were dismissed by Netanyahu and the Israeli State. During the past few weeks, the world had seen soldiers storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque and attacking peaceful worshippers, and Palestinians had taken to the streets to protest the escalation of Israeli aggression ...

**Muna El Kurd, Journalist and resident of Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem**, said the Israeli occupation forces refused to properly examine the property rights of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and East Jerusalem while the Israeli Government and colonial businesses were separating Palestinians from the land. There was an apartheid regime: settlers could move around freely unlike Palestinians. Sheikh Jarrah was illegally sealed off; residents could only go out with their papers but nobody - nor their friends nor their loved ones- could come into this area. The colonial violence suffered by residents and people who took part in peaceful protest was extreme and barbaric. ...

**Meirav Eilon Shahr, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva**, noted that Hamas was a genocidal terrorist organization that used women and children as human shields. Calling for all Muslims to fight Jews and kill them, Hamas fired rockets at Israeli civilians - this constituted a war crime. How would Member States respond if their cities were under attack? Israel was a democracy that sought peace, respected international law and had a moral duty to protect innocent lives. Hamas, on the other hand, had a complete disregard for Palestinian lives, building terrorist infrastructure under schools and hospitals, resulting in the death of innocents. Hamas had initiated this conflict while Israel had done everything it could to reduce the tension, taking extraordinary steps. Thirty per cent of all Human Rights Council special sessions targeted Israel - this ignored facts on the ground and a failure to condemn Hamas in this session would be unacceptable. ...

**Riyad Al-Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine**, stated that a new barbarism against the people of Palestine was being incited by Israel in full view of the world. More than 66 children and 39 women were killed, and thousands of buildings were destroyed, all in order to expand Israel's colonisation of Palestinian land, and establish an apartheid regime based on the oppression of the Palestinian people from the river to the sea. ... In the absence of any accountability for Israel, Palestinians had responded to defend their land and their right to life, but like any colonial regime, Israel had responded with the killing, destruction and execution of entire families. ...

While welcoming the decision of the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes within its material scope that might have been committed on the territory of Palestine, speakers urged the Court to include the crime against humanity of apartheid in its investigations. ... Urging the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, speakers condemned Israel's continued attacks against the Gaza Strip, and urged the international community to put an end to the massacres committed by Israel. ...

Reiterating condemnation of the indiscriminate launching of rockets by Hamas and other terrorist groups, speakers recognised Israel's right to self-defence, and emphasised that such a right must be exercised in a proportionate manner and in full respect of international humanitarian law. The status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and the right to worship upheld. All acts of aggression and incitement by the occupying power, as well as its attempts at changing the demography, character and legal status of the occupied Palestinian territory must stop. The establishment of an international independent commission of inquiry was necessary and would contribute to putting an end to impunity. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27117&LangID=E>

### **Human Rights Council Establishes International Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel**

... In the resolution (A/HRC/S-30/L.1), adopted by a vote of 24 in favour, 9 against and 14 abstentions, the Council decides to urgently establish an ongoing independent, international commission of inquiry, to be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council, to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021, and all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.

The Council also calls upon all relevant parties to cooperate fully with the commission of inquiry and to facilitate its access. It urges all States to refrain from transferring arms when they assess, in accordance with applicable national procedures and international obligations and standards, that there is a clear risk that such arms might be used in the commission or facilitation of serious violations or abuses of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law. ...

Speakers said they were profoundly preoccupied by the new cycle of violence between Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian organizations, which was spiralling out of control. ... Further bloodshed must be avoided, speakers emphasised. One speaker said the objective of the military and civil leaders of Israel had been precisely to kill children and destroy mosques, schools and civilian infrastructure under the false, immoral pretence of self-defence. ... The international community could not put on an equal footing the occupying power and those subjected to it. Speakers underlined that the expansion of illegal settlements; forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem, including in Sheikh Jarrah, as well as other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory; and the demolition of Palestinian property were grave human rights violations that undermined prospects for peace and reconciliation.

People in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank needed their leaders to make courageous steps towards peace. Some speakers said that the indiscriminate barrage of rockets fired by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad into Israel were completely unacceptable. Silence in the face of acts perpetrated by terrorist groups amounted to granting them an impunity licence; such behaviour was inadmissible, as it threatened human rights. Expressing their full solidarity with Israel, speakers said they refused to support any investigation or mechanism that victimised and exonerated Hamas and other violent organizations. There had been an explosion of anti-Semitism in past weeks, the result of the anti-Semitic vilification of Israel, to which the Council provided cover. ... Some speakers said this meeting and the new commission of inquiry were an assault on Jewish self-determination and the existence of a Jewish homeland.

Some said that today's one-sided session, and the predetermined investigation it proposed would foster war, and play into the hands of Haman and Iran. Others said it was unconscionable that States including the United States, Germany and Italy still supplied weapons and other military assistance to the Israeli Government, despite the clear risk of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. ... Drawing attention to the situation of Palestinian citizens of Israel, speakers said they were subject to organised violence by extremist ultra-right-wing Israeli Jewish groups, with police protection and collusion, in the context of the 2018 Jewish Nation-State Basic Law, which enshrined the decades' long systematic discrimination against, and domination over, Palestinians. ...

In the resolution ... the Council decides to urgently establish an ongoing independent, international commission of inquiry, to be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council, to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021, and all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity. The Council also decides that the commission of inquiry shall, inter alia, establish the facts and circumstances that may amount to such violations and abuses and of crimes perpetrated; collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and abuses and of crimes perpetrated, and systematically record and preserve all information, documentation and evidence, including interviews, witness testimony and forensic material, in accordance with international law standards, in order to maximize the possibility of its admissibility in legal proceedings; have the capacity to document and verify relevant information and evidence, including through field engagement and by cooperating with judicial and other entities, as appropriate; and identify, where possible, those responsible, with a view to ensuring that perpetrators of violations are held accountable. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27119&LangID=E>

**Ensuring respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel (A/HRC/S-30/L.1)**

[https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/SpecialSessions/30session/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_S-30\\_L\\_1%20ORAL%20REVISION%20as%20received.docx](https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/SpecialSessions/30session/Documents/A_HRC_S-30_L_1%20ORAL%20REVISION%20as%20received.docx)

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

### **UK Parliament**

#### **\*\* Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill**

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

House of Lords Library Briefing

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/animal-welfare-sentience-bill-hl/>

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

## Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

## \*\* Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41684/documents/326>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-27/debates/F1E0AFE5-681C-4851-881A-DA1C5D5CEA8D/Education\(Assemblies\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-27/debates/F1E0AFE5-681C-4851-881A-DA1C5D5CEA8D/Education(Assemblies)Bill(HL))

## Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

## Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales** (closing date 17 June 2021)

<https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales>

**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](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