



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Antisemitism

Andrew Rosindell (Conversatvie) 10195] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the recent increase in antisemitic attacks.

Luke Hall: There is no place in our society for antisemitism and we condemn it whole-heartedly. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government have published a joint letter in the Jewish Chronicle reassuring the Jewish Community of the Governments steadfast commitment to combatting antisemitism. This was accompanied by a visit to Golders Green and Finchley Road, with police and community representatives and we remain in dialogue with leaders of the Jewish community.

We are providing £14 million this year to the protective security grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings. We were also the first country to take the important step of adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism in 2016; and, following our encouragement, over three quarters of local councils have adopted the definition.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-04/10195>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thejc.com/comment/opinion/an-open-letter-to-the-jewish-community-1.516805>

Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Finance

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [10631] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has received representations on the adequacy of funding for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Department has received a copy of a report produced by the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE). The report presents a summary of responses received from local authorities to Freedom of Information requests relating to funding of Standing

Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).

Local authorities are allocated funding through the central school services block (CSSB) for a range of duties that they must meet for all pupils in maintained schools and academies, such as establishing and maintaining a SACRE. In financial year 2021/22, the total funding for ongoing responsibilities in the CSSB is £257 million, a 3.8% increase compared to 2020/21, to keep up with inflation and pupil numbers. The Department does not specify what proportion of this money should be attributed to different services or duties. It is up to each local authority to decide this for itself. We expect that a SACRE should be sufficiently resourced to meet its statutory duties. If a SACRE is unable to do this, it should first raise a complaint locally about the issue. If it has done this unsuccessfully, the issue can be escalated to the Department's School Complaints Unit.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-04/10631>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-376-nasacre-report-on-sacre-funding-in-england-2021.pdf>

Cabinet Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Updated Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations>

Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): How to safely plan a wedding or civil partnership, or funeral, wake or commemoration

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-safely-plan-a-wedding-or-civil-partnership-or-funeral-wake-or-commemoration>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Racism in Schools

Alexander Stewart (Conservative): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to a recent survey, which records that more than 2,000 incidents of racism have been reported in schools over the last three years. (S6T-00075)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):

The Scottish Government is clear that there is no place for racism in our schools and is committed to addressing and tackling all forms of bullying, including on the grounds of race. In 2019, in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, local authorities and teaching unions, we developed and implemented a national approach to the recording and monitoring of bullying in Scottish schools. That national approach enables schools and local authorities to monitor all reported incidents of racist bullying and take all appropriate actions. Diversity and equality are at the heart of the policies that underpin education in Scotland and we are working with key anti-racist organisations to address how schools can be further supported. The race equality and anti-racism in education programme is leading work to strengthen support for schools in tackling racist incidents and racist bullying while enhancing professional learning and leadership, diversifying the education workforce and reforming the curriculum.

Alexander Stewart: Data from Show Racism the Red Card's consultation shows that 48 per cent of teachers are aware of a pupil or pupils expressing negative attitudes relating to skin colour, 38 per cent relating to religion and 37 per cent relating to nationality. Although 61 per cent of teachers expressed a lack of confidence about educating pupils on anti-racism, only 24 per cent have received training on the subject.

Those are serious and worrying statistics. Given that 85 per cent of respondents said that tailored anti-racism workshops would be beneficial for all concerned, what urgent action can the Government take to ensure that that happens?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: That is a very important issue, and the Government takes it very seriously. As I mentioned, the race equality and anti-racism in education programme is leading that work, which includes school leadership and professional learning as one of its four strands. It aims to ensure that Scotland's professional educators are confident and empowered to promote equality and foster good relations and, importantly, to identify, prevent and proactively deal with racism if they see examples of it.

It is important that we ensure that school leadership and professional learning is further developed and that we also increase the diversity in the teaching profession so that it further reflects the Scottish population, just as we wish to see in the Parliament.

Alexander Stewart: Show Racism the Red Card's chair wrote to the Scottish Government to call for anti-racism to be included in the national curriculum following announcements about a similar move in Wales earlier this year. Given that 93 per cent of respondents to Show Racism the Red Card's consultation said that "anti-racism must be included within the curriculum", will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government will seriously consider that request in order to further protect children from harm?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I go back to the work of the race equality and anti-racism in education programme, because one of its other strands is curriculum reform. That is being looked at very closely to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive, that it recognises, for example, Scotland's colonial past, and that it respects the identities of young people and supports them on their journey through school. Work is on-going to ensure that our curriculum gives confidence to our learners—in my original answer I spoke about giving confidence to teachers—so that they can discuss the issue and tackle it when they see it, and so that everyone in our schools can reach their potential without being blighted by any racist activity towards them or anyone else in their classroom settings.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Labour): The Government has previously backed and agreed to implement the incredible work of the Time for Inclusive Education initiative, which aims to combat homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender inclusive education. In addition to what the cabinet secretary has already outlined, will the Scottish Government back a similar programme to tackle racism and disability in schools?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Government is looking closely at racism and all forms of bullying develop the right solutions. We take that approach with any type of bullying or harassment in schools.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13237&i=119969#ScotParlOR>

Information about data from the consultation referred to above can be read at

<https://www.theredcard.org/news/overwhelming-pleas-anti-racism-education-scotland>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Universities: IHRA working definition of antisemitism

Monica Lennon (Labour) [S6W-00480] To ask the Scottish Government which universities have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism

Jamie Hepburn: The Scottish Government, Universities Scotland, College Development Network and Colleges Scotland are clear that there is no place for any form of hatred or prejudice, including antisemitism, in further and higher education.

Universities, as autonomous institutions, are aware of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Many are actively and presently consulting within their diverse communities and stakeholder interests on the definition, with three (University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh and Abertay University) having adopted it to date. Universities UK is working with the Union of Jewish Students to raise awareness and understanding of antisemitism and to share best practice in tackling and eliminating it.

Universities and colleges are also addressing antisemitism through their ongoing engagement with the Scottish Funding Council to address discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race.

The SFC, in response to the recommendations of the EHRC report, Universities Challenged, published in October 2019, has developed resources to support challenging conversations on all aspects of racial discrimination, including antisemitism. These were developed with input of staff and students and were launched on 16 March 2021.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/written-questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-00480>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged.pdf>

The resources referred to above can be read at

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/access-inclusion/equality-diversity/race/race-equality.aspx>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

John Hayes (Conservative) [12063] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is Government policy that work will not begin on constructing the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre until the required £25 million of private funding has been raised in full.

Luke Hall: Funding arrangements will be in place before main construction begins.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12063>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

John Hayes (Conservative) [12064] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the evidential basis was for the Government's assessment that Victoria Tower Gardens was a cost-effective site for the proposed

Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what value was attributed to (a) Victoria Tower Gardens and (b) its existing uses in that calculation.

Luke Hall: Details of the Government's assessment of Victoria Tower Gardens were published with the planning application and remain available on Westminster City Council's website.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12064>

The planning application and associated documents referred to above can be read at

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/planning-building-and-environmental-regulations/find-appeal-or-comment-planning-application/holocaust-memorial-inquiry-information/inquiry-documents>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

John Hayes (Conservative) [12065] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) consultation about and (b) comparative assessment with alternative sites for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre was undertaken by the Government between the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation's recommendation on 13 January 2016 on the location and the Prime Minister's announcement on 27 January 2016 that the chosen location was Victoria Tower Gardens.

Luke Hall: The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation conducted a very extensive comparison of possible sites before recommending Victoria Tower Gardens. The Government agreed with the Foundation that Victoria Tower Gardens is the most fitting site. Public consultations were held once designs for the proposed Memorial were available: initially on ten shortlisted designs, and then on the detailed proposals which were put forward for planning consent.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12065>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-holocaust-memorial-will-stand-beside-parliament-as-permanent-statement-of-our-british-values>

TOP

Israel

Westminster Hall Debate

Israel and Palestine

[Petitions Committee debate on e-petitions 585309, 585313, and 585314, which can be read at

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/585309>

and

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/585313>

and

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/585314>]

col 2WH Catherine McKinnell (Labour): ... Before I begin, I draw hon. Members' attention to something that will be depressingly familiar from previous conflicts in the middle east. According to the Community Security Trust, there has been a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents in the UK in the past month, since the violence began. That is totally unacceptable and should serve as a reminder to everyone in public life that words have consequences and that we must always avoid the kind of inflammatory language that fans the flames of hate and racism, and puts the security and safety of Jewish communities at risk.

We were all shocked and horrified to see the tragic and heartbreaking violence in Gaza and Israel last month. I know this issue provokes strong emotions, both in the country and in the House, and the roots of that conflict are deep, complex and highly contested. ... The loss of life, including so many children, is heartbreaking and my thoughts are with all those who have lost loved ones. ...

... the desire of the Palestinians to live in dignity and peace in a state of their own is unmistakable. Their aspiration for self-determination is one that we should wholeheartedly support; it is right for the Palestinian people, and it is right for the Israeli people.

I do not believe, however, that sweeping sanctions of the kind proposed by the second petition would bring the prospect of a two-state solution any closer. ... sanctions threaten to drive the two sides further apart, increase polarisation and extremism, and weaken the voices of Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers. Blocking all trade between the UK and Israel would destroy our relations with Israel and reduce our influence in the middle east. The only long-term sustainable solution to the conflict, and the only way that we can end the sporadic and sickening outbursts of violence, is for the two peoples of that beautiful land to have states of their own, with Israel safe, secure, and recognised within its borders, living alongside an independent Palestinian state. ...

col 3WH For too long it felt as though Palestinian groups did not really want a peace process, while the Netanyahu Government felt that they did not need a peace process. The latest eruption of violence shows how unsustainable such notions are. ...

It will require painful compromises and concessions by both sides and the kind of leadership, imagination and generosity that has rarely been evident on the part of the Netanyahu Government or Palestinian representatives in past negotiations. ...

The example of the International Fund for Ireland shows the transformative impact that civic society peacebuilding work can play in helping to end seemingly intractable conflicts. ...

col 4WH The middle east need be no different. Indeed, there is now a robust body of academic research and evidence to suggest that the peacebuilding projects already operating on the ground significantly improve Israeli and Palestinian participants' attitudes to one other and lead to higher levels of trust and co-operation, more conflict resolution values, and less aggression and loneliness. ...

John Howell (Conservative): ... I begin by congratulating the new Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, and Yair Lapid on forming a new Government in Israel. This is the first time in half a century that an Israeli Arab party has sat in a coalition Government, and it is a very welcome development. ...

It is regrettable that the petitions being debated today do not reflect the reality that Israel is a beacon of hope in a region of instability, and an important ally of the United Kingdom. ...

col 5WH It is a simple fact that boycotts of Israel harm Palestinians, tens of thousands of whom work for Israeli companies on higher wages than they could earn elsewhere. The implications of blocking all trade and sanctioning Israel, as the petitions call for, are grave, not only for Israelis and Palestinians but for the British people. More than 500 Israeli companies operate in the UK, employing thousands of British workers. Before covid, UK-Israel trade reached more than £5 billion a year, and it continued to grow despite the pandemic.

Generic medicines produced by the Israeli company Teva save the NHS billions of pounds every year ... no one provides more medicines to the NHS than Teva. British scientists work with Israeli scientists on groundbreaking medical research, and our two countries are working closely in the fight against covid-19.

I welcome the Government's firm opposition to Israeli boycotts ... The petitions were signed during the latest violence between Israel and Hamas, when Hamas targeted Israeli civilians and put Palestinians in harm's way. Israel's strikes in response to those indiscriminate attacks were, by contrast, precise, targeting only militants and terrorist

infrastructure. Every civilian casualty is regrettable—a view also held, incidentally, by the Israel defence forces, but not, it would seem, by Hamas. ...

Shabana Mahmood (Labour): ... Like many thousands of my constituents, I watched in absolute horror a few weeks ago when violence was used against worshippers gathering during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan at the al-Aqsa mosque. ...

... it is essential that all holy sites in that holiest of cities—holy to so many people of many different faiths—are protected and respected. ...

The goal of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel remains the shared objective of so many in this House and all over the world, but in truth, it has rarely seemed further away. ...

col 6WH Some may try to argue that formal annexation has been stopped—that we no longer need be concerned. It is impossible to articulate adequately how dangerous and misguided such counsel is. The truth is that illegal settlement expansion has continued, and Palestinians are still being evicted from their homes. ...

Afzal Khan (Labour): ... I find it heartbreaking that after decades of violence, illegal occupation, the demolition of Palestinians' homes and complete disregard for their lives, we are still debating the very basics. This Government have a policy of a two-state solution, but paradoxically they are yet to even recognise the state of Palestine. This lip service has cost lives and entrenched the de facto annexation of Palestinian land, and it sends a loud and clear message that Palestine is not equal.

Of the 193 member states of the United Nations, 138 have recognised the state of Palestine. ...

A two-state solution and equality cannot be discussed without talking about the occupation, which is the root cause of so many of the issues at hand, from evictions to inequality. ...

col 7WH Will the Minister openly condemn illegal annexations and evictions, and urge the Israeli authorities to end their impunity? These shocking scenes during the holy month of Ramadan—far-right Israeli groups chanting “Death to Arabs”, the storming of the holy al-Aqsa mosque and the bombing of the media building in Gaza—are beyond contemptible, and yet there is zero accountability for Israeli actions. ...

Steve Baker (Conservative): ... there is a real problem that on the issues of Kashmir and Palestine British Muslims feel that people are being persecuted, and that that persecution is being neglected—a blind eye is being turned—because they are Muslims. ...

col 8WH **Naz Shah (Labour):** ... Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has previously stated: “I will do everything in my power, forever, to fight against a Palestinian state”.

My welcome message to Mr Bennett, and those who support him in the Knesset, is that the mood music is changing. The world is waking up to Israel's actions, and all those who want to see lasting peace in the region know that to achieve such peace we must end the occupation, injustice and oppression, and that starts with recognising a viable Palestinian state.

In the past, Prime Minister Bennett has ruled out the transfer of even a centimetre of land to the Arabs and boasted: “I've killed lots of Arabs in my life—and there's no problem with that.”

The unwelcome news to him is that those of us around the world who condemn the killing of all civilians, be they Israeli or Palestinian, will not remain silent if even a centimetre more of Palestinian land is illegally annexed, and we will not be silent in pushing for Israel to be tried in the International Criminal Court for war crimes if any more Palestinian blood is unjustly spilled under a perverted interpretation of a right to self-defence, while completely ignoring the crucial principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality. ...

Human Rights Watch has declared the situation in Israel as “apartheid”. Amnesty International has stated that Israel's “systematic discrimination, dispossession and displacement” of Palestinians is “at the root of the ongoing violence we see today.” ...

The Government cannot meet their word about a two-state solution while they recognise

only a single state—it will not work. ...

In the recent siege, for every Israeli killed, more than 21 Palestinians were killed. For every Israeli child killed, 33 Palestinian children were killed. While all the parties condemn aggression and illegality on either side, the only party that turns a blind eye to Israel's actions and questions of violation of international law is the Conservative Government. The blinkers have been taken off the eyes of the world. The reality of Israel's actions is clear. The Palestinians have suffered for too long. The time for empty words is over. The Government must act or the electorate will.

col 9WH Andrew Selous (Conservative): The desire of Jewish people to have their own homeland existed for a long time before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. I want to see Israel exist as a secure state, at peace with all its neighbours and free from the appalling rocket attacks that its people suffered recently at the hands of Hamas terrorists. It is vital that Jewish people all over the world can live in safety and complete security, and free from fear. I have been struck by the heightened sense of fear that my Jewish constituents have expressed to me in recent days. Our commitment to the safety, security and wellbeing of Jewish people in this country must be complete and absolute.

Palestinians on the west bank and in Gaza and the occupied territories all share that same desire for self-determination and a state of their own. ...

col 10WH Steve McCabe (Labour): I want a viable and democratic Palestinian state, but I doubt the wisdom of willing it as a unilateralist gesture. I remind those who are keen to use international law in such debates that conditions for statehood in international law include an independent Government who exercise control over a defined territory. Those conditions are not met. The reality is that there are now two Palestines—one under weak Palestinian Authority control, and the other under Hamas military occupation.

What exactly are we being asked to recognise? Hamas has already taken advantage of the weakness of Abbas. What is the incentive for a negotiated outcome, if we capitulate to them now? Are those who push for sanctions saying that they oppose Israel's right to defend itself? Is it okay to live each day with the threat of an air raid siren? How would we feel if a bomb shelter was part of everyday planning requirements for a new home? How would we feel about going to bed with the threat of a tunnel attack occurring in the night? Those who deny the threat from Hamas and the existence of its propaganda, and who fail to acknowledge the actions that it engages in, are making excuses for it. They are too willing to condemn Israel, and too ready to turn a blind eye to Hamas atrocities. ...

Steve Double (Conservative): ... I long for us to be able to recognise the state of Palestine, as one of the petitions calls for, but we have to be absolutely clear about the main roadblock to being able to achieve that: Hamas. For as long as the Palestinian territories are in the grip of a proscribed terrorist organisation whose the stated aim is to wipe Israel and the Jewish people off the face of the earth, Hamas is the biggest roadblock to our being able to recognise the state of Palestine and move forward with a peace process. ...

col 11WH I do not believe that Hamas are friends to the genuine, decent people of Palestine. Let us remember that in the recent attacks, one in seven rockets launched by Hamas were actually misfired or landed on Palestinian territory. In that conflict, more Palestinians were killed by Hamas rockets than by any action by the Israelis. I do not say that the Israelis are blameless; sometimes what they do is provocative and disproportionate, and they do have to take some responsibility, but I will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself against those terrorist attacks, which are the key block to peace. ...

Israel is a beacon of democracy and freedom in the middle east, and we should stand up for the rights of all religious minorities in that place. No one other than Israel in the middle east is doing that, so I believe that we need to stand up for Israel's right to defend itself and be clear about what the main roadblock to peace is.

Rushanara Ali (Labour): ... a total of 256 Palestinians, including 66 children and six people with disabilities, were killed during the 11-day military assault on Gaza, while nearly 2,000 were injured between 10 May and the ceasefire announcement on 21 May. Since 7 May, 35 Palestinians have been killed in the west bank and occupied East Jerusalem, and, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, 7,056 have been injured. In Israel, 13 people were killed by rockets fired by Palestinian armed factions.

We need to ensure that the international community, led by the US with our Government and others, works together to ensure a negotiated settlement to secure peace in that region, otherwise the cycle of conflict and violence will continue. That is why it is so important that our Government listens to the many, in Parliament and across the country, who have campaigned for the recognition of Palestinian statehood. ...

col 12WH Christian Wakeford (Conservative): ... As we have seen in recent weeks, divisive language has directly fuelled antisemitism in the UK, leading to attacks on our Jewish communities ... The Community Security Trust recorded more antisemitic incidents in May than in any month since records began. I pay tribute to CST for its important and fantastic work in protecting the community, but it should not be necessary. We should not need security guards at our schools and places of worship. ...

We have seen vehicle convoys intimidate Jewish people and mezuzahs removed from Jewish homes and desecrated. In my constituency, Jewish people have told me that they were afraid to even walk to synagogue. ... Openly antisemitic banners were held at last weekend's rally in central London, with Israel described as a Nazi state. It is shameful that British politicians were present and did not condemn the overt antisemitism on display.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is deeply complex, and it is reckless to make oversimplifications by suggesting that Israeli actions are disproportionate or that Israel is persecuting Palestinians, as these petitions do. We are talking about a liberal democracy, the world's only Jewish state, being attacked by an internationally proscribed terror group committed to its destruction. There cannot be any justification for these attacks, which have targeted communities, homes, schools and even nurseries. ...

The overdue EU study of the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum has reportedly found evidence of antisemitism and incitement to violence. Will the Minister ensure that that report is published as a matter of urgency? It is a troubling prospect that teachers supported by UK taxpayers' money use textbooks that normalise violence.

col 13WH Julie Elliott (Labour): ... We recently passed the 54th anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territory, one of the longest occupations in history. The daily lives of Palestinians are worse than ever. This is a disgrace, and the British Government, who have an historic responsibility in this area, should work with the international community to take action now to end the deterioration of the situation and improve the lives of Palestinian people as well as of Israeli citizens.

I condemn violence whoever perpetrates it ... The reality of the recent violence is that since 7 May, during the 10-day military assault on Gaza, 256 Palestinian people have been killed, including 66 children and six people with disabilities, with almost 2,000 injured. In Israel, 13 people were killed by rockets. This is the disproportionate nature of the violence. This is not self-defence by Israel—this is aggression. ...

col 14WH Tommy Sheppard (SNP): ... the root cause of the conflict is the fact that Israel is in military occupation of the Palestinian territories that were designated for a future state of Palestine.

From an Israeli point of view, it makes sense to continue that occupation. Not only do the Israeli Government not set any policy to end that occupation, but with every day and week that passes, through the process of settlement building, evictions and other measures, that occupation is entrenched ...

Within that one-state reality, people's life chances and how they are treated are fundamentally different depending on whether they are Palestinian or Israeli. ...

If people say that a boycott of Israel will not work, the question that the Government have to answer is, "What sanctions should be applied to try to make the Israeli Government behave in a manner consistent with international law?" ...

col 15WH Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat): ... Looking around Palestine, we see that the settlement-building programme on the west bank makes the achievement of a two-state solution manifestly less likely, and it should be condemned by our Government accordingly. It is also beyond peradventure that Britain should recognise Palestine as a state. To those who have suggested that that is not possible because it is not quite the right time, I gently say that the reason that Palestine does not control her own territory goes back to the circumstances that pertained in 1967 and subsequently. ...

In the context of the recent conflict in Palestine, I hope that the Minister and our Government will look very closely at the deployment of arms that would have come from this country. Like others, I bow to no one in my acceptance of Israel's right to defend herself, but we all know that self-defence in law, wherever we find it, must always be commensurate, appropriate and proportionate, and what we saw was none of those things. ...

Sam Tarry (Labour): ... Israel's illegal occupations, annexations and bombardment of the Palestinian people and those trying simply to exist in Gaza can no longer be ignored. Indeed, there is an enormous sense of anger and injustice ...

col 16WH Although people are rightly concerned about events in the middle east, I want to be clear that it is never acceptable for members of the Jewish community ... to be subject to criticism, abuse and attacks because of the actions of the Israeli Government. ...

Alyn Smith (SNP): ... Scottish National party foreign policy is based on principles. It is human-centred, feminist, egalitarian, ecological, multilateral and, above all, about the promotion of international law. We are not an aspiring international rights non-governmental organisation; we are an aspiring state, from my party's perspective. Small countries need international law in a way that big countries do not, so international law is at the heart of everything that we do. We view Israel and Palestine, and everything else, through those prisms. ...

We condemn all violence, whoever it is perpetrated by and whoever is a victim of it. We utterly reject false equivalence. There is hurt and heartbreak on all sides of this dispute, and it is not just between two sides; it is far more complex than that. Israel has a right to exist and to security within its borders, and the Palestinians have a right to live in dignity and peace in a state of their own.

col 17WH We believe that we should indeed recognise Palestine. We recognise the flaws, which we have heard about, in the Palestinian Authority, and that Palestinian unity is not where it needs to be, but we believe that recognition would level the discussion and give it an impetus that is, sadly, sorely lacking. ...

On sanctions, we have a rather more delicate call to make, because we need to consider the effect of any policy change on the ground. I said that Israel has a right to exist and to security, and I will defend that. It does not have a right to annex other people's land and then to claim victimhood when there are consequences to that illegality. Settlements are, on a daily basis and in fundamental ways, making a viable, just peace less achievable. They are illegal. Their products are illegal. We should not deal in them. The UN agrees. UN Security Council resolution 2334 is clear on their legal status; we should not deal in settler goods, but ban them. ...

On the petition's call to implement wider sanctions on the state of Israel itself, however, we disagree for the moment. We do not think that that would help the situation. ...

col 18WH Wayne David (Labour): ... The Labour party strongly condemns the firing of rockets by Hamas, and we strongly condemn the air attacks by Israel that led to such a large loss of life. ... The immediate issue that led to the conflict was the appalling violation and desecration of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. That was disgraceful, and the

international community must do all it can to ensure that such scenes never happen again. Religious sects must be respected at all times.

The second immediate reason for the conflict was the prospect of the forced eviction of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, and in particular from the community of Sheikh Jarrah. Labour believes that the occupation of East Jerusalem by Israel is completely wrong, and we do not recognise the annexation of East Jerusalem by the state of Israel. ...

At the same time, we have seen the totally unacceptable treatment of Palestinians throughout the occupied territories. ... The military court system operates in a cruel and unacceptable way: young people are denied basic rights, frequently denied contact with their parents, and incarcerated in a way that inevitably leads them to be psychologically scarred for the rest of their lives. ...

Whatever the profound disagreements that the Israeli Government have with Hamas, there is no justification for the present blockade, which exacerbates the humanitarian suffering of the people of Gaza.

col 19WH **Christian Wakeford:** ... how can we recognise something when we cannot define it? What borders would it have, and without any real borders, is it really a state?

Wayne David: ... if the goal of negotiations is a two-state solution, it would seem sensible for the UK to join 139 other countries across the world to recognise the state of Palestine now. ...

col 20WH **The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly):** ... The UK offers its deepest condolences to the families of all those who have lost their lives. We echo the condemnation of the antisemitic actions that, unfortunately, we saw on the streets of the United Kingdom ...

Christian Wakeford: The tone of the debate has been incredibly helpful in condemning the antisemitism on our streets. Does the Minister agree that every single Member in the House has a duty to do so, and when we see banners calling for Palestine to be free from the river to the sea—which is actively calling for the ethnic cleansing of Israel—we need to condemn that wholeheartedly? ...

James Cleverly: ... there is widespread condemnation of those acts and where there are small pockets of resistance against condemning those actions, I think that those individuals stand out with the mass of the viewpoint in the House. ...

While the ceasefire holds, we must make sure that every effort focuses on making it not just durable but permanent. ...

It is important now for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access to Gaza, and we urge the continued opening of all crossings. ...

The UK continues its diplomatic efforts to build confidence between the parties and to find a political way forward. We welcome and echo calls for equality of safety, security, freedom, peace and dignity, both for Palestinians and for Israelis. ...

col 21WH There have, of course, been many calls over the years for recognition of Palestinian statehood. The UK Government position is clear: the UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the object of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot, and will not, end the occupation. The UK Government continue to believe that without a negotiated peace agreement, the occupation, and the problems that come with it, will continue. We are committed to the objective of a sovereign, prosperous and peaceful Palestinian state, living side by side with a safe and secure Israel. ...

... we condemn in the strongest terms the firing of rockets at Jerusalem and other locations in Israel by Hamas and other terrorist groups. All countries, including Israel of course, have a legitimate right to self-defence and a right to defend their citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with international humanitarian law and calibrated to avoid civilian casualties.

On the second petition, the Government have made their position on sanctions clear. Although we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it

necessary, we are firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions against Israel. ... The Government take their export control responsibilities very seriously, and operate one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. ... We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. ...

... the UK position on evictions, demolitions and settlements is long-standing, public and has been communicated directly to the Government of Israel. That position is that we oppose those activities. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, evictions are contrary to international humanitarian law. ...

col 22WH We continue to call on all parties to show real leadership, including the willingness to make tough compromises and to refrain from unilateral steps that move us further from our shared goal of sustainable peace. We will continue our intense diplomatic efforts in the region, focused on creating the conditions for a sustainable peace, and we will work with our international partners towards that goal.

Catherine McKinnell: ... The current lack of a peace process has created a vacuum, and we have seen too often around the world that vacuums are filled by violence.

The Government should examine what more they can do to disrupt the flow of rockets into Gaza, while ensuring the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-14/debates/1DA741DA-7D79-4FB1-A769-6B81320154BC/IsraelAndPalestine>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Middle East: Two-state Solution

Hilary Benn (Labour): What recent assessment he has made of the prospects for a two-state solution in the Middle East. (901234)

Diana Johnson (Labour): If he will support the creation of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. (901240)

Peter Gibson (Conservative): What diplomatic steps he is taking to support peace between Israel and the Palestinians. (901244)

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK remains fully committed to a two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver Palestinian self-determination and ensure Israel's Jewish and democratic identity. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders to reaffirm this commitment. We welcome the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza, and we are working with partners in the region to find a durable solution to the conflict. We also look forward to hearing more from the Alliance for Middle East Peace and the US Government about the international fund's objectives and the projects it will support. Once more information is available, we will consider options for UK involvement.

Hilary Benn: As the Minister has said, for many years there has been widespread international support for a two-state solution, but he will know that a growing number of voices now say that the window on this is closing rapidly, and that if it does, Israel will have to accept full and equal civil rights for all Palestinians. In the light of this, what policy would he encourage the new Government formed this week to pursue?

James Cleverly: We congratulate the new Government on their formation and look forward to working with them in pursuit of the almost universally held goal in this House and across the international community of having a secure, sovereign, prosperous Palestinian state alongside a secure and stable and safe Israeli state. Ultimately it is for the Government of Israel to make decisions about these policies,

but, as has been the long-standing position of the UK Government, we will work to support any and all actions which are complementary to or part of the process towards making that sustainable two-state solution through political negotiations a reality.

Diana Johnson: Despite hosting the G7 in Cornwall this weekend, the Government have yet again missed the opportunity to make global Britain a reality in the middle east by not seizing the initiative for UK leadership of the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Why did the Government pass over that opportunity, and is there any prospect of the UK stepping up and leading that exciting new project with the United States?

James Cleverly: I pay tribute to the right hon. Lady for her passion for finding a peaceful resolution to this situation; it is our shared goal. As I said in my answer, we will look at the detail of what this programme seeks to deliver, and as yet all the details are not available to us. We have always looked favourably on programmes that bring about peace but we want to make sure that they are effective and, as I have said, once we have more details we will assess our contribution or collaboration.

Peter Gibson: Over the last few weeks I have been contacted by many constituents who are distraught at the loss of civilian life on both sides. Will my right hon. Friend reassure them that the UK continues to work with both sides to avoid future conflict?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary travelled to both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories shortly after the most recent scenes of violence. We enjoy good relations with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, and we will of course be working with the new members of the Israeli Government to pursue the long-standing UK policy of finding a sustainable, peaceful two-state solution. I have no doubt that I speak on behalf of my right hon. Friend when I say that our efforts in this area are undiminished.

Wayne David (Labour): ... The British consul in Jerusalem recently visited his neighbours in Sheikh Jarrah. In support of the Palestinians he said that the threat to the community “grows more acute by the day”.

He correctly stated that, “Settlement activity & associated evictions & demolitions” in East Jerusalem “are illegal and undermine prospects for peace.”

Those are powerful words but what is needed is action, so what do the Government propose to do to ensure that Palestinians in East Jerusalem can live in peace and security, and that the rule of law prevails in East Jerusalem?

James Cleverly: The UK Government’s position on demolitions, settlement expansion and annexation is clear and long-standing. As I have said, we enjoy good bilateral relations with the Government of Israel and are able to speak with them frankly and firmly when we believe that their actions are counterproductive to a peaceful two-state solution. We will continue to do so, but ultimately the resolution to this long-standing challenge will be through negotiations between the Government of Israel and the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, supported—perhaps even facilitated—by their friends in the international community, such as the United Kingdom.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-15/debates/6A0C456B-BEAF-47E7-882C-A0DBBB36BA9/MiddleEastTwo-StateSolution>

House of Commons Written Answers

Defence Equipment: Israel

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [900776] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether British arms exported to Israel were used in recent air strikes on Gaza.

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 and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. 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/2021-05-27/900776>

Occupied Territories: Overseas Trade

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [901260] What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of advising UK businesses against trading with illegal settlements as a disincentive to Israeli settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly: The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions. But we do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the settlements, as part of Israel.

We urge Israel to halt settlement expansion immediately.

Ultimately it will be the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the British Government would neither encourage nor offer support to such activity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-15/901260>

Gaza: Israel

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [11711] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the recent reported Israeli military offensive on healthcare (a) workers and (b) infrastructure in Gaza.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK priority now is ensuring timely humanitarian access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

The United Kingdom is also providing an initial £3.2 million of UK aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, which launched on 19 May 2021. This appeal will address the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11711>

Israel: Palestinians

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [11712] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterparts on the reported use of force by that country's security forces against Palestinian demonstrators.

James Cleverly: The UK continues to urge the Israeli Government to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of peaceful, legal protestors.

In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigations are transparent, swift and comprehensive. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Israel: Palestinians

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [12308] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Exercise Falcon Strike 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policy on joint training with the Israeli air force of that air force's recent bombing of the Associated Press office in Gaza.

James Heapey: Ex Falcon Strike is a joint multinational exercise with participants from the United States working with Italy, Israel and the United Kingdom. Cooperation of this kind helps significantly to prepare our armed forces to tackle threats to the UK.

The UK military does not engage with the Israeli Defence Force in matters relating to public order and internal security activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The UK is a staunch defender of media freedom and proponent that journalists must be able to operate safely. We are concerned by reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as cover for its military operations. All Israeli military action taken must be necessary, proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12308>

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

Judith Cummins (Labour) [901246] What recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

James Cleverly: We continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by recent escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

We are in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground to assess the situation and will monitor closely.

I announced funding of £3.2 million to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal on 20 May. This will address the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza.

Humanitarian access remains critical. We continue to urge Israel to ensure access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-15/901246>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

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

Occupied Territories: Bilateral Aid

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [14027] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2021-22.

James Cleverly: As the Foreign Secretary set out at the International Development Committee, budgets would not normally be set out this early in the year. We will publish full budgets per country in due course, including on the Statistics on International Development website and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-10/14027>

Gaza: Israel

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [12188] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of reports that Israel has prevented cancer patients from exiting Gaza for treatment since the

beginning of recent hostilities; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. The UK priority now is ensuring timely humanitarian access in to and out of Gaza, including for people to leave Gaza for critical health services. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. The wounded and critically ill should be able to access the urgent medical care they need. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 1 June.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12188>

Gaza: Israel

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [12189] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the joint communication issued by nine UN Special Rapporteurs on the recent hostilities in Gaza which found that potential war crimes had been committed in that conflict, what steps he is taking to ensure accountability for violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: The UK is a steadfast supporter of international justice and does not hold back from voicing or raising concern about Israel's actions when warranted. However, Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12189>

The communication referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27108&LangID=E>

Israel: Violence

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [10204] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential correlation between the Turkish Government's support for terrorist groups in Palestine and the recent violence in Israel.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear Israel, the Palestinians and leaders in the region must now work together 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. The UK continues to work with the parties and regional partners, including Turkey, to urge de-escalation and efforts to tackle the drivers of conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-04/10204>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Jim Shannon (DUP) [199] **Appointment of Naftali Bennet as Israeli Prime Minister** – That this House notes the appointment of Naftali Bennett to serve as the 13th Prime Minister of Israel; extends the best wishes of this House for a prosperous term as Prime Minister; acknowledges the difficult political situation that Israel has historically found herself in; and takes this opportunity to reaffirm our support for Israel as we reach out the hand of friendship to this new administration in the hope of a peaceful and prosperous

future for Israel and the Middle East..

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58642>

Northern Ireland Assembly Written Answer

Gerry Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance) [AQW 19319/17-22] To ask the Minister of Justice following recent events in East Jerusalem and Gaza, for her assessment of the PSNI working with the Israeli Ministry of Public Security through the ROXANNE, Real time network, text, and speaker analytics for combating organized crime programme.

Reply from the Minister of Justice: I refer to my answer to AWQ 19318/17-22.

The participation of the PSNI in a funded research project which involves a consortium of 24 partners across 16 countries, including law enforcement agencies and representatives from industry and academia, is an operational matter for the police. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=338974>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=338973>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

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

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>

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

**** closes tomorrow**

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>

Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life in the EU (closing date 5 July 2021)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13068-Strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-Jewish-life-in-the-EU_en

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>

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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