



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Preventing further escalation of violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the Security Council briefing on the Middle East

... Let me start by once again reinforcing the need to prevent a further escalation in violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to restore calm. We share concerns about the recent tensions in Gaza and call on all parties to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions and to maintain the cessation of hostilities. The United Kingdom condemns unequivocally Hamas' indiscriminate attacks against Israel, including the use of incendiary balloons. We call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their rocket fire against Israel.

Our attention must remain on the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the impact on Palestinians living there. It remains vital that Israel ensures regularised access into and out of Gaza, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, especially for humanitarian actors and goods, reconstruction materials, and for medical purposes.

In the West Bank, we should all be troubled by the high number of Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli Forces in recent weeks. Since our most recent debate on 28 July, 9 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including two children. We urge the Israeli authorities to conduct transparent and comprehensive investigations, and to hold those responsible to account.

In regards to the handling of recent protests, we call on the Palestinian Authority to adhere to international standards on freedom of expression, association and assembly and urge respect for human rights. The use of violence against peaceful human rights defenders, activists and protesters, and the mistreatment of those detained is unacceptable.

In Jerusalem, we remain concerned by the high number of evictions and demolitions, including in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and al Walaja. Unfortunately, in 2021 we have seen the pace of these unilateral Israeli actions increase across the West Bank. We urge Israel to refrain from actions which displace Palestinians from their homes, act as a driver for conflict and are, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, illegal under international law. It is also vital to maintain calm on Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and to uphold the historic Status Quo.

Mr President, against this fragile backdrop, we continue to see signs of hope. We were pleased to see Palestinian and Israeli firefighters working together to extinguish fires in Jerusalem. We want to see greater coordination and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly on economic initiatives, to help pave a pathway toward peace. The first anniversary of the signing of the Abraham Accords this month is a reminder that the advancement of peace is possible.

We welcome and urge continued engagement between the new Israeli Government and the Palestinian leadership and call on both parties to work together to tackle immediate and long-term threats to peace and stability. Our collective goal remains a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines.

The United Kingdom stands ready to support.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/preventing-further-escalation-of-violence-in-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

United Nations

Security Council: Middle East

Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, noted that three months since the deadly escalation between Israel and militants in Gaza, the situation remains tense. ... Tensions along the Gaza perimeter reached a peak on 21 August, when hundreds of Palestinians attended a rally, he said, noting the throwing of stones and reportedly improvised explosive devices towards Israeli security personnel. Israeli forces fired on Palestinian protestors, injuring 51 Palestinians, including 25 children. Reiterating that children must never be targeted, he called on all sides to show restraint, avoid provocations at the fence and keep the protests peaceful.

Drawing attention to a number of Palestinian deaths in July and August, he highlighted the killing of an 11-year-old Palestinian boy in Beit Ummar on 28 July, after Israeli security forces fired at the car he was travelling in with his father and siblings. While Israeli authorities have opened an investigation, he added that the next day the forces killed a 20-year-old Palestinian man amid clashes during the boy's funeral. ... Security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life, he stressed. ...

... he called on the Palestinian Authority to immediately stop arrests of human rights defenders on charges that impinge upon the exercise of freedom of expression. Pointing to Israeli demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem, he urged that country to cease such activities. Noting a gradual and partial easing of the access restrictions in Gaza by Israeli authorities, he said that for the first time in 18 months, permits will be given to 2,000 Palestinian traders and 350 businesspeople to cross from Gaza into Israel. However, the volume of trade still remains below pre-escalation levels ... Noting the Hamas takeover of a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school, he said the Agency condemned the potential use of its structures. ... Also noting meetings between Israeli Ministers and their Palestinian counterparts, as well as a meeting between Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and President Abbas, he described the latter as "the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the formation of the current Israeli Government." ...

Richard M. Mills, Jr. (United States) expressed concern over the risk of escalation in the region, including recent provocations along the Gaza border. Such incitements make it more difficult to deliver humanitarian relief to the territory, he said. Both sides must refrain from actions and rhetoric that inflame tensions, including compensating individuals who are in prison for acts of terrorism, settlement activity and evictions. ... He commended efforts by Israel to normalize relations with its neighbours throughout the region. ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom), voicing concerns about the recent tensions in Gaza, called on all parties to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions and to maintain the cessation of hostilities. ... *[see full transcript immediately above]*

Nathalie Broadhurst Estival (France) ... stressed the importance of avoiding a new spiral of violence. The firing of incendiary balloons must stop, she said ... Highlighting encouraging signs, she noted the dialogue and the first cooperation measures undertaken between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian authorities. ...

Anna M. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) noted escalating clashes in the West Bank and along the Gaza border and warned that they can turn into full-blown hostilities. The August decision by Israel's supreme court to postpone its examination of eviction cases could further inflame tensions. ... The escalation of violence in May reminds the international community of the risks and threats to regional stability, she said, expressing support for the relaunch of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14619.doc.htm>

State of Palestine Calls for 'Responsible and Serious' General Assembly Action to End Occupation, as Palestinian Rights Committee Approves its Annual Report

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People approved its annual report today, as the State of Palestine made a powerful call for the General Assembly to take "responsible and serious" action to end Israel's occupation, nearly 74 years after its historic passage of resolution 181, partitioning Palestine and leaving its people to an unjust fate.

"Only accountability can alter the downward trajectory of the situation on the ground" towards support for Palestinian rights, including to self-determination, emphasized Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, Deputy Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, noting that recent events have highlighted the seriousness of the situation. ...

She said that ... her delegation has reflected the escalating intensity of crimes being committed by Israel and extremist settlers - attacks, arrests, detentions and imprisonment, among them. The killing of children, in particular, has become a routine practice of the occupation forces, emboldened by impunity and right-wing rhetoric, she added.

Meanwhile, Palestinian homes, land and property continue to be seized and destroyed and the Palestinian people displaced, she said. ...

Moreover, Israel continues to defy resolution 2334 (2016) and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, in contempt of international demands, she stressed, noting that, meanwhile, Palestinian civilians protesting the annexation of their lands are attacked with lethal force. ...

She went on to underline the persistence of incitement and incursions at holy sites, notably at the Aqsa Mosque compound, endangering its sanctity. ...

While for some that behaviour may have become normalized, it is "absolutely abnormal, inhumane and immoral", and in breach of international law, she insisted. It is time to implement United Nations resolutions and give meaning to the important principles and decisions therein, she said, stressing that it is also time to support an International Criminal Court investigation into crimes perpetrated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a crucial step towards justice for the innocent victims. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/gapal1440.doc.htm>

The annual report referred to above is not yet available online.

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Charities Bill

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

Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance (closing date 14 September 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (closing date not stated, but no later than 23 September 2021)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/july/have-your-say-on-the-higher-education-freedom-of-speech-bill/>

Dispute Resolution in England and Wales (closing date 30 September 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008174/dispute-resolution-call-for-evidence.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 (closing date 30 September 2021)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/our-strategic-plan-2022-2025-have-your-say>

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