



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Debate

Recognition of the State of Palestine

col 534 Julie Elliott (Labour): ... The time for recognising the state of Palestine was many years ago. With every year that has passed, the actions of the Israeli Government in creating facts on the ground, building and expanding illegal settlements and taking land and resources from Palestinians have only made it harder to bring this about: a viable, independent, sovereign state of Palestine, based on the 1967 lines, with a capital in Jerusalem.

The UK should make it clear that any future state must include both the west bank and the Gaza Strip. We do not at this stage have to specify precise borders; there may be agreed equal land swaps. Let us remember that when Britain recognised Israel in 1950, it did so without defining borders or its capital. For too long, in fact for over 40 years, successive British Governments of all parties have claimed to support a two-state solution. This claim for Palestinians rings hollow. We recognise only one state, Israel, and refuse to recognise the other. The Government's position remains "not now", but I ask the Government, "If not now, when?" ...

We have acknowledged that Palestine has obtained the hallmarks of statehood. The refusal to recognise its statehood sends a dangerous message: it reinforces the view that we support and uphold rights for one people—we rightly recognise the state of Israel—but do not recognise the rights of the other, the Palestinians. ...

Some argue that Palestinian statehood should be the outcome of negotiations. ... If that is the case, why did we recognise Israel? ... It is essential that Israel knows that statehood for Palestinians is not something to be bartered over, but something that has to happen. ...

col 535 An Israeli soldier at a checkpoint can prevent President Mahmoud Abbas from leaving Ramallah. Palestinians have no say in the control of their land, water, maritime area or airspace, or even their population registry. ...

There are those who will inevitably say, "Well, what about Hamas?" Hamas wants a one-state solution, something we all disagree with. The longer we dither about recognising Palestine, the more potent Hamas's argument that there will be no two-state solution becomes. ...

The moment anyone enters occupied Palestinian territory, they are confronted with the

terrifying infrastructure of military occupation, defined by walls, barriers, checkpoints, earth mounds, firing zones and military zones. These are all designed to control Palestinian civilians who live under Israeli military law, as they have done for the past 54 years. In a parallel universe, they now have over 650,000 Israeli settler neighbours living in illegal settlements. This is a violation of the fourth Geneva convention and UN Security Council resolutions. These settlers live under Israeli civilian law. Two peoples living under two different legal systems in the same territory. ...

The settlers, with the collaboration of the Israeli military, harass and intimidate Palestinians to push them off Palestinian land. ... Violence and the dispossession of Palestinians from their homes are systemic across the occupied Palestinian territory. Israeli soldiers act with impunity ... These are not isolated incidents but day in, day out realities for Palestinians, whose lives and livelihoods are targeted by Israeli settlers, backed up by the Israeli state. ...

col 536 Such is the level of systematic discrimination, is it any wonder that there is mounting consensus among Palestinians and the human rights community that it amounts to the crime of apartheid? Who are we, as British politicians, to dismiss and gaslight the lived experience of Palestinians who speak of apartheid and systematic discrimination?

Why are we shocked when international human rights organisation such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch come to the same or similar conclusions as many Palestinians long before, that their situation amounts to apartheid? ...

col 537 The international community has to hold Israel accountable, as it has held Palestinian groups accountable. ...

It is crucial that our Government support and encourage a healthy, prosperous and uninhibited Palestinian civil society that is free from interference by the occupying power, Israel, and from the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. ... We rightly pledge our support for human rights defenders elsewhere, but throw those in Palestine to the wolves. ...

Five years ago, [the Prime Minister] said that “you have to have a two-state solution or else you have a kind of apartheid system.”

Sadly, five years on, we are far closer to the latter than the former. ...

col 538 Matthew Offord (Conservative): ... It is unfortunate that instead of promoting the resumption of direct peace talks without preconditions, the motion we are debating seeks to undermine the agreed framework for talks by premeditating the outcome of negotiations. The only route to a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is through such talks, and I share the UK Government’s stated view that recognition of a Palestinian state should only come about at a time that best serves the objective of peace. ...

Philippa Whitford (SNP): Does the hon. Gentleman not think that such negotiations have a greater chance of success if both of those communities enter as equals, with a common aim for peace, rather than entering when one can outshine and outvote the other?

Matthew Offord: ... The problem is that it is impossible to bring Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to the negotiating table. They refuse to negotiate without any preconditions. ...

Some hon. Members have in these debates evoked the apartheid in South Africa, which is a distortion that we must call out and condemn. Senior Israeli Arabs themselves have rejected the apartheid smear, with the leader of the Islamist Ra’am party, Mansour Abbas, stating that he “would not call it apartheid” and pointing out that he leads an Israeli-Arab party that is a member of the Israeli coalition Government. Another Israeli Government official, Esawi Frej, responded to the Amnesty report by stating: “Israel has many problems that must be solved, both within the Green Line and especially in the Occupied Territories, but Israel is not an apartheid state”.

It should go without saying that Israel is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy, where Arab, Druze and other minorities are guaranteed equal rights. The Israeli occupation of the west bank has continued for more than 50 years, not because Israel wants to rule over the territory but because peace talks have thus far failed, despite countless efforts by Israelis

and others to achieve peace by negotiations. ...

... let us not forget that the Palestinian leadership has rejected all peace proposals and failed to fulfil its commitments of promoting peace and renouncing violent incitement. ...

col 539 It is crucial to ensure that our aid promotes peace, so I urge the Minister to reconsider our strategy on aid to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which continues to use the official Palestinian Authority curriculum in its schools despite clear evidence of incitement and antisemitism. ...

Andy McDonald (Labour): ... In May 2021 alone, during the violence sparked by the racist eviction of Palestinian families from the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, the UN reported that 256 Palestinians were killed, of whom at least 129 were civilians, including 66 children, as were 10 Israelis, plus three foreign nationals, including two children.

The killing has not let up. Just this week, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy, Mohammed Shehadeh, was killed by Israeli forces gunfire at al-Khader, near Bethlehem. This followed the killing of 19-year-old Nehad Amin Barghouti, who was shot in the abdomen last week by Israeli troops in a village near Ramallah. Over the past year, the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem recorded 77 Palestinian deaths at the hands of Israeli forces in the west bank, with half those killed not being implicated in any attacks. ...

The Palestinian people are subjected to yet more intolerable brutality and oppression, with Israeli forces standing idly by or even protecting settlers while they attack Palestinian civilians. B'Tselem has documented that there have been more than 450 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians over the past two years, with Israeli forces failing to intervene to stop the attacks in two thirds of cases. ...

col 540 Another Israeli human rights group, Yesh Din, summarising 15 years of monitoring investigations into settler violence, found that, of more than 1,200 investigation files, indictments were served in only 100 of those cases. There is no other way to look at this than as a state-sanctioned project of colonisation and ethnic cleansing.

As the Human Rights Watch report, published in April last year, concluded: "the Israeli government has demonstrated an intent to maintain the domination of...Israelis over Palestinians across Israel and the OPT. In the OPT, including East Jerusalem, that intent has been coupled with systematic oppression of Palestinians and inhumane acts committed against them. When these three elements occur together, they amount to the crime of apartheid." ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... I chair the Conservative Friends of Israel here in the House of Commons. ... I have met many Palestinians over the years, most regularly with the late Dr Saeb Erekat, who, until his death in November 2020, still held the position of chief negotiator for the Palestine Liberation Organisation. On each of those visits to the west bank, I came away having learnt and understood more about the Palestinian perspective and the situation that they face.

There is a real challenge there. I hope there is a cross-party desire in this House—I hope there is unity—on the aspiration of seeing a Palestinian state. ... But it is 22 years now since Bill Clinton tried to bring the different parties together at Camp David and it is almost 30 years since the Oslo accords were outlined that set the framework for peace. ...

col 541 I believe that it is premature to put recognition of statehood ahead of a peace process. ... but it requires a commitment from both parties to sit down and work it out. ... it is complicated on the Palestinian side because who would the Israeli Government be talking to? Is it the Palestinian Authority, the old men in Ramallah, or is it the young extremists of Hamas in Gaza, who will claim to be the legitimate voice of the Palestinians? ...

Peace is not just the absence of violence and hostility; it implies engagement, warmth and co-operation. ...

I believe I have had a glimpse of the future. ... peace is happening in the region. I recently visited the United Arab Emirates with the cross-party UK Abraham Accords Group ...

There I met Arabs who spoke about the need for peace: not only a high-level agreement between Government leaders, but the peace that comes through people-to-people contact, the peace and prosperity that come through trading together and building those close links.

If the United Arab Emirates can do it, if Bahrain can do it and if Morocco and other nations in the region are on a journey, surely that is the future. ...

There has to be a different approach, and I believe the Abraham accords set out that different approach. My appeal to the Palestinians would be to look at the opportunities for their own people that would come about through peace, co-operation, trade and people-to-people contact, and to pursue those. ...

col 542 Philippa Whitford: ... In addition to almost 55 years of occupation, the people of Gaza have suffered from 15 years of intense blockade and repeated military attacks every few years, which have degraded their civil infrastructure. ... the tap water there is now undrinkable, raw sewage pollutes coastal fishing waters and, due to the destruction of the power plant in 2014, there is only intermittent electricity—including to hospitals. ...

Many modern therapies are simply not available in Gaza, yet it is difficult for patients to get permission to travel to east Jerusalem to access treatment. ...

On annual training visits prior to the pandemic, I have seen the impact of the occupation and fragmentation in the west bank, with communities separated from each other, their farmland and particularly their water sources. Palestinians face constant harassment and obstruction. Their homes are demolished while settlements are relentlessly expanded in what is de facto annexation and conquest by concrete. ...

... the 1917 Balfour declaration promised “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine, but that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities”.

For over 70 years, the UK has recognised the state of Israel and honoured that promise to the Jewish people but broken it to the Palestinians. ...

col 543 John Howell (Conservative): ... The Palestinian Authority’s unilateral efforts to achieve statehood outside the agreed framework of negotiations directly contravenes the 1993 Oslo accords and undermines the peace process. Those who support such attempts are regrettably sending the Palestinian leadership the message that it does not need to make the necessary compromises for a lasting peace or to establish stability. ...

In the Palestinian Authority, removing hate-filled material inciting violence against Israel and Jews in official PA school textbooks would be a welcome start. Young, impressionable Palestinian children are being indoctrinated to hate their neighbours and told that killing Israelis is an honourable act. ... In Gaza, the Hamas terror group recruits child soldiers who are taught to practice sniper shooting and how to launch anti-tank missiles. Video footage of children expressing their hope to die as martyrs, marching with weapons and burning Israeli flags, has been widely published online. Both sides will need to make the necessary compromises, but let us not forget that Israel has a track record of removing settlements and making land swaps in the interests of peace. Land borders can be negotiated, but hatred cannot be unlearned. ...

Just as our friends in the UAE, Bahrain and elsewhere have understood that peace with Israel will lead to shared prosperity and security, so too should we help the Palestinian leadership to boldly follow suit. It is deeply regrettable that the Palestinian Authority has opposed these landmark peace agreements ...

col 544 Jeremy Corbyn (Independent): ... It is simply not tenable to continue with the narrative that somehow or other we can continue not recognising Palestine because the Palestinian leadership has not passed threshold X, Y or Z or jumped over this fence, that fence, that hurdle or the other, while all the time accepting the recognition of Israel. ...

We need to have a sense of reality about what an occupation means. It means soldiers driving past your house every day. It means checkpoints. It means a young person on a

demonstration being taken into military custody. It means being in a prison in Israel. It means an inability to get the medical treatment that people need, because there is a checkpoint that will stop them going anywhere. ... I have watched the behaviour of soldiers at checkpoints and the humiliation of building workers waiting to go through a checkpoint to work, being told to wait for hours and being abused. ...

Then there is the continuation not just of settlements, but of house demolitions ... I remember very well how the late, wonderful Tom Hurndall was shot dead in Rafah when he was trying to save children's lives as a house demolition went on. ...

If we go up on to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and look out on what should be pristine beauty all the way down to the Dead sea, what do we see but settlement after settlement after settlement? Roads are constructed between the settlements that Palestinians cannot go on, which is why the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu described it as an apartheid state ...

... we should understand their lives and those of the refugees and, I believe, support the immediate and unconditional recognition of the state of Palestine.

col 545 Scott Benton (Conservative): ... A peaceful Palestinian state is in Israel's best interests and is important for its long-term security, but we must be clear that the biggest obstacle to peace is Hamas, the stated aim of which is to wipe Israel and the Jewish people off the face of the earth. ...

We are all aware that Israel has offered, on multiple occasions, to withdraw from almost all the west bank, reaching a negotiated land swap deal with the Palestinians to cover the land along the green line that Israel would retain. No matter the offer on the table, however, the Palestinian leadership continues to reject all possible outcomes. ...

Israel has shown that it is driven by the policy of land for peace. In 1979 with Egypt, and in 1994 with Jordan, it made land swaps and compromises in the interests of peace and its good-will gestures were reciprocated. It withdrew from Gaza in 2005, including uprooting settlements. ...

When Israel withdrew from Palestinian territories in an effort to jump start the peace process, it was met with tens of thousands of rocket attacks, as well as suicide terror attacks and violent border incursions emanating from the Gaza strip. ...

col 546 ... premature recognition of a Palestinian state before the conclusion of direct peace talks will not help the Palestinian people. It is only by making difficult compromises and resolving final status issues that peace can be achieved and a lasting two-state solution can finally be agreed.

Khalid Mahmood (Labour): ... To have a two-state solution, we need two states. That is exactly the point of this debate. It is not a prerequisite for negotiation but a duty on the United Nations, which has ensured by a huge amount of votes that Palestine has been recognised as an observer member in its proceedings. Yet we are unable to follow the vote that was taken here in 2014 to recognise the state of Palestine, where we voted 274 to 12—a majority of 262—in favour of recognition. ...

There is no threat from any Muslim country to Israel. Therefore, it is time now for us to recognise Palestine, to recognise our responsibility and to recognise what is important, and the most important thing we have to do today is to recognise that peace can be made only when we have two people of equal status sitting at the same table.

col 547 Steve Baker (Conservative): ... In 2014, I voted to recognise the state of Palestine, and I would do so again today. However ... Every one of us in this House needs to remember that there are those who say, even in the United Kingdom, that they would wish to eliminate that state, which cannot ever be allowed to happen. We must remember that Jewish people in the UK, as one said to me recently, remember the holocaust every day, not just on Holocaust Memorial Day, and they fear a holocaust in the future. We must understand that the existence of Israel is absolutely to be insisted upon, but I would vote again today to recognise Palestine. ...

Wayne David (Labour): The vote in the House in October 2014, which Members have referred to, was important, but as we know, it was not binding on the Government. ... The difficulty we find ourselves in is that, since 2014, the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians has in effect been moribund. ... a meaningful initiative will be needed to break the logjam. One such initiative is recognition of the state of Palestine. ...

col 548 Some people say it is a mere gesture to recognise a Palestinian state, but the importance of symbolism should never be underestimated. ... it is surely inappropriate for recognition to be seen as a prize waiting for the Palestinians at the end of negotiations. If that were allowed to happen, negotiators from Palestine would be in an inferior position, with one hand tied behind their back when the negotiations take place with the Israelis. ... At a time when international law is being so blatantly transgressed, recognising the state of Palestine would be an important signal to the international community. ...

Imran Hussain (Labour): ... Eight years ago, this House voted to recognise the state of Palestine. ... In reality, eight years later, rather than marking the recognition of an independent state of Palestine, we are reading yet more reports about the persecution, oppression and injustice that Palestinians face at the hands of the Israeli Government ...

We have more reports that prove that Palestinian children are still being put in military detention as their parents are put on trial in unfair military courts; more reports of indiscriminate attacks, leaving Palestinians in constant fear of military raids on their home in the dead of night, or of airstrikes that demolish their homes, schools, and hospitals; more reports of villages bulldozed to make way for illegal settlements; and more reports that a continued siege has left Gaza in a state of abject poverty, as the largest open-air prison in the world. ...

col 549 The violence that took place last summer was shocking for the silence and lack of action that it elicited from the international community. Instead of demanding sanctions for violations of international law, an immediate overhaul of all arms used indiscriminately to kill civilians and commit war crimes, and the immediate recognition of the state of Palestine, the international community stood by and did nothing. ...

Kim Leadbeater (Labour): ... The treatment of the Palestinians is a stain on the conscience of the world. They have every right to conclude that, for decades, they have been subjected to a relentless campaign of oppression, subjugation of their human rights and illegal occupation of their lands. ...

Do I believe that recognition of the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel would end their suffering overnight? No, of course not, but is it an essential and overdue step on the road to a peaceful settlement that would start to put these historic injustices right? Yes, it is. ...

col 550 **Liam Byrne (Labour):** ... on trial today is the complete incoherence in the Government's approach to Palestine. ...

First, do we believe that we have a moral responsibility to recognise the state of Palestine? Yes, we do. When we held the mandate between 1923 and 1948, we acknowledged a sacred trust of civilisation to prepare Palestinians for an independent country, thereby recognising the right to self-determination.

Secondly, is there now a legal responsibility and imperative to crack on with recognition? Yes, there is. In November 2011, Lord Hague said that Palestine met the criteria for statehood. In 2014, the House voted for recognition by 274 votes to 12. In October 2014, the Foreign Office said again that there should be a two-state solution on 1967 boundaries with East Jerusalem as a shared capital. ...

Do we now think that peace and a two-state solution is in jeopardy? Yes, we do. There are now 650,000 settlers breaking up the occupied territories. ...

Despite that moral responsibility, despite the legal urgency and despite the threat to peace, what are the Government doing? They are refusing to recognise the state of Palestine. They are pursuing a free trade agreement with Israel. ...

I have stood in Palestine and seen how the route taken by Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem is now impossible to take, because it is broken up by walls. I have heard children talk about the post-traumatic stress disorder they now suffer. I have listened to shepherds whose lives have been destroyed because they have no legal right to build a home of their own. I have listened to farmers whose water has been stolen.

Like everybody here, I deplore the attacks on Israel. I deplore the viciousness and madness of the madmen of Hamas, but ... we have to intervene now ...

col 551 Tahir Ali (Labour): ... How can we be serious about a two-state solution if we will not even recognise the state of Palestine? Without such a commitment from our Government, any talk of a commitment to peace in the region is, to put it bluntly, a load of hot air. ...

col 552 Patrick Grady (SNP): ... We must and can be clear that just as condemnation of certain actions by the Israeli Government is in no way questioning the right of the state of Israel to exist and defend itself, so too acceptance and recognition of the state of Palestine is in no way an endorsement of violence or terrorism perpetrated by certain Palestinian factions or militias.

Last month, I took part in a briefing organised by Yachad, a British Jewish movement that advocates for a political resolution to the conflict. We heard from Esawi Frej, the Israeli Minister of regional co-operation, who is only the second Arab Muslim Minister in the history of Israel. ... he could not have been clearer that a two-state solution is his preference. That is not necessarily the language that we hear from some of his Government or ministerial colleagues at present, but that demonstrates the desire for peace and negotiation among many communities in Israel and Palestine. The belligerence and rhetoric of leaders on both sides are not necessarily as representative as they claim. ... the UK Government ... signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Israel last year that makes no mention of a two-state solution or even a road to peace, so will the road map that is to come out of that do so? ... What criteria will the Government use to determine when the time is right to join the 139 member states of the United Nations, and, indeed, Scotland's Government and Scotland's Parliament, in recognising the state of Palestine?

col 553 Afzal Khan (Labour): ... The UK Government ... even abstained in the UN General Assembly vote that granted Palestine non-member observer status. ...

The inaction 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. ...

UK recognition would be more than symbolic. It would be the first step to signifying the UK's parity of esteem for two peoples: Israelis and Palestinians. ...

Hilary Benn (Labour): ... The painful truth is that there is no peace process to speak of. Those who yearn for Palestinian statehood are increasingly in despair ... The truth is that despair breeds hopelessness. ...

col 554 ... recognition of a Palestinian state, given the justified desperation of the Palestinian people, is the very least we can do. ...

Recognising a Palestinian state will not, on its own, solve the problem. It will not end the stalemate, which requires courageous political leadership, but it would offer a glimmer of hope and respect. ...

Andy Slaughter (Labour): ... Of course Israel and Palestine will not sit down as equals, because one is a regional superpower while the other has been impoverished by occupation ... But this is also tied heavily to the idea of occupation, and a recognition exposing what occupation is about. It is about displacement of a population, and it is about settlement and occupied land. Both those are war crimes. ...

The Government's own "Human rights priority countries" report on Israel and the Occupied Palestine Territories, published three months ago, refers to settler violence, settlement growth, evictions and demolitions, child detention, an "apartheid" regime, a Gaza blockade

and terrible incursions into Gaza and the massacre of civilians there, and the classing of respectable non-governmental organisations as terrorist organisations. ...

col 555 Statehood would benefit Palestine, but it would also benefit Israel to have a secure state alongside it, with the responsibilities of a state. ...

Naz Shah (Labour): ... Let us call a spade a spade, and be honest with ourselves and the House: any recognition of Palestine would not cut across any peace negotiations because the fact remains that none exist, and there is no realistic prospect of any existing because successive Israeli Administrations lurch further to the right and continue to build illegal settlements at a rapid pace, thus changing the geographical reality on the ground and making the possibility of a viable Palestinian state increasingly unlikely. ...

We often talk about the right of Israel to exist, but Palestine also has a right to exist. Not recognising the state of Palestine is denying Palestine's right to exist. ...

Let me put this in simple terms. Indians come from India, Americans from America, the English from England, the Scottish from Scotland, the Welsh from Wales and the Irish from Ireland, so it is surely not a leap of faith to understand that Palestinians come from Palestine—a country, a state. In the light of that fact, I urge the Minister to stop using the phrase “occupied territories” and start using the phrase “Palestine”. These are not territories; they are a country, a state. ...

col 556 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour):** ... the UN Commissioner on Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has raised particular concern about the recurring incidents of excessive use of force leading to the death and injury of Palestinian children. The International Criminal Court is holding an inquiry into abuses committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 2014, and the blockade of Gaza continues.

The UK really needs to be part of international pressure and we should immediately ensure that no UK funds are supplied and that no arms are bought or sold that can be used to violate the human rights of Palestinians. ... The Government cannot continue to claim that they are committed to a two-state solution while only recognising one state. ...

Christian Wakeford (Labour): ... The history of this tragic conflict teaches us very clearly that the best route to sustainable progress lies through direct negotiation between the two sides. Compare, for instance, the results of Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 with the 1978 Camp David accords or the 1994 peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. While the peace treaty with Egypt that came about via the Camp David accords still stands, it has largely led to that border being quiet and free from hostilities. However, following the unilateral withdrawal in 2005, Israel got an internationally proscribed terrorist organisation on its border. ...

col 557 For us to recognise Palestinian statehood outside a wider peace process would make little or no impact in the real world. We need to take concrete steps that will advance and recognise both peoples' right to self-determination, peace and security, and steps that will make a real difference to the lives of ordinary Israelis and Palestinians, rather than the kind of gestures that seek to demonise one side or the other. The territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state must be preserved. Continued Israeli settlement building, especially that which occurs beyond the security barrier, represents an obstacle to a two-state solution, but we should acknowledge that while such settlement building is an obstacle to a viable Palestinian state, it is hardly an insurmountable one. Nine out of 10 Palestinians live outside the security barrier, while some 85% of Israelis who have settled beyond the 1967 lines live within that security barrier, including Israeli Jews residing in East Jerusalem. ...

Margaret Ferrier (Independent): ... In Hebron I saw Palestinian workers making their way home, walking along a convoluted route. When we asked why they were taking that route, we were told that Palestinians were only allowed to travel down certain roads. Tired and hungry, having just put in a hard day's work, they were not even allowed to take the short route home for arbitrary reasons.

I then visited Ramallah, a fascinating and bustling city where I was able to get a taste of what normality might look like if peace were made. ...

col 558 The Government have said that they will recognise a Palestinian state at the time of their choosing that is most conducive to the objective of peace. As the saying goes, it feels like tomorrow never comes. ...

Alyn Smith (SNP): ... Israel has a right to exist and a right to security within its borders, and it is an important partner of the UK and Scotland in many significant ways. Equally, the Palestinian people have a right to statehood, dignity and security, and they have been let down by the international community for decades. ...

The SNP supports the recognition of Palestine as a state, for the simple reason: how can we have a two-state solution without two states? Statehood is not a bauble or a prize to be given to the Palestinian people at the end of the process; statehood is the entry ticket to the talks. ...

But what talks? ... despair will be bred of violence, and that frustration can only build at the lack of progress because the rights of the Palestinian people and the prospect of a durable, viable Palestinian state are being infringed and undermined on a daily basis. ...

col 559 A two- state solution is possible only if both states are viable. ... in many significant ways—be it watercourses, access to farmland, security barriers, security walls, checkpoints, settlements, archaeological sites and many other ways—the viability and contiguity of Palestinian territory is being undermined on a daily basis. ...

Bambos Charalambous (Labour): ... I strongly wish to see progress towards the establishment of a viable, sovereign and flourishing Palestinian state. I strongly wish to see a safe, secure and thriving Israeli state alongside it. ...

This House has already voted, in 2014, to recognise Palestine's statehood and now is the time for the British Government to confirm that recognition. ...

A recognition of Palestine is an inherent recognition of Israel too, within its sovereign borders. The UK Government's endorsement of Palestinians' aspirations would contribute to a peace process that is vital to safeguarding Israel and her citizens. ...

col 560 The peace process needs both impetus and international support, and the UK Government should be showing leadership on this, rather than remaining silent. ...

We know that many Palestinians and Israelis want peace more than anything else, and we know that extremists on both sides do not speak for them. International recognition of a Palestinian state, including recognition by the UK, would be a step towards undermining the stranglehold of extremists. ...

On the wider political context, it is true, of course, that some progress has been made towards peace in the region with the Abraham accords. But we have to be realistic: this progress on its own is not enough to help the current political stalemate between Israel and Palestine. ...

To remain silent on these issues is not an option. It is time for the Government to demonstrate that they are committed to active peacemaking rather than merely to conflict management ...

col 561 **The Minister for Asia and the Middle East (Amanda Milling):** ... The UK's position on the middle east peace process is clear and well known: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. We firmly believe that a just and lasting solution that delivers peace for both the Israelis and the Palestinians is long overdue ...

We also believe the best way to make progress towards such a solution is through negotiations between both sides that take account of their legitimate concerns. To that end, a two-state solution is the only way to protect Israel's Jewish and democratic character and realise Palestinian national aspirations. ...

The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot deliver peace or end the occupation. Without a

negotiated settlement, the conflict and the problems that come with it will continue. ...

The UK remains resolute in its commitment to Israel's security. 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 Israel's actions are in line with international humanitarian law and every effort is made to avoid civilian casualties. The UK unequivocally condemns Hamas's inflammatory action and indiscriminate attacks against Israel. ...

col/ 562 We remain committed to the objective of a sovereign, prosperous Palestinian state living side by side with a safe and secure Israel. ...

Economic progress can never be a substitute for a political settlement, but it is vital that, in the interim, Palestinians see tangible improvements in their daily lives. ... We call on the Palestinian Authority and Israel to resume dialogue on economic issues, to reconvene the Joint Economic Committee and to address the financial crisis together. ...

Matthew Offord: ... Is she aware of the comment by the EU's middle east peace envoy that the application by President Abbas for recognition at the UN was a confrontational act? Was he wrong?

Amanda Milling: ... As I have said, our position is clear. We have urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work together to meet their obligations under the Oslo accords. We also call on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law to promote peace, stability and security. Peace will not be achieved by symbolic measures. It will be achieved only by real movement towards renewed dialogue between parties that leads to a viable Palestinian state, living in peace and security side by side with Israel. The UK stands ready to support this in every way we can.

col/ 563 **Julie Elliott:** ... We have heard much today on the issue of international law and respecting it. Unfortunately, the Minister did not address that in her response. The issue remains that the Palestinian people have fulfilled what is needed to fulfil statehood to get recognition. The Government are saying, "At some point, when the time is right." The time is right now. There has been broad consensus in this House for many years and the Government are simply not acting on it. ... We need no more warm words; we need action. We have the ability as a country and the Government have the ability as our Government to recognise Palestine today. We do not have to wait—let us just act and not wait.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-02-24/debates/6514F660-56BE-4975-82FF-4785AFA7E131/RecognitionOfTheStateOfPalestine>

House of Commons Written Answers

Cybercrime

Emily Thornberry (Labour) [126599] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the value of online fraud committed in the UK by perpetrators based in (a) the EU, (b) the United States, (c) member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, (d) Israel, (e) India, (f) Australia and New Zealand, (g) Canada, (h) Mexico, (i) Singapore and (j) other member states of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership besides those already mentioned, in 2021.

Reply from Damian Hinds: Fraud emanating from countries abroad affecting UK citizens is a key concern for this government and we are committed to combatting it. The Home Secretary regularly engages with her international counterparts to build collaboration against this and other crime types. International collaboration on fraud includes the work of the City of London Police, which is the national lead force for fraud, partnering with law enforcement and industry to combat fraud from overseas jurisdictions. UK authorities continue to work with their international

counterparts on a case-by-case basis to target criminals responsible for defrauding members of the public and businesses.

We do not currently hold data on online fraud emanating from overseas. This is why we continue to make a concerted effort to strengthen our evidence base and improve information sharing both as set out in the Economic Crime Plan and the 2021 Statement of Progress

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-plan-2019-to-2022>

Alongside this we are developing a new approach to disrupt, deter and drive down the number of fraud incidents, including working with international partners. This approach is now being developed and will commit key partners in the public sector and industry to do more to tackle fraud, focus on key areas to restrict criminals' opportunities to commit fraud and increase public awareness.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/126599>

Israel: Palestinians

Sam Tarry (Labour) [121954] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the compatibility of recent engagements between Israel and Palestine with international law.

Amanda Milling: We support direct engagement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We welcome recent engagement that includes discussions between the Ministries of Finance aimed at improving the economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-09/121954>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Sam Tarry (Labour) [121955] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has had discussions with her counterpart in Israel on the findings of the research study by Amnesty International entitled Israel's apartheid against Palestinians.

Sam Tarry (Labour) [121956] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the findings of the research study by Amnesty International entitled Israel's apartheid against Palestinians.

Sam Tarry (Labour) [121957] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to accept the recommendations of Amnesty International's report entitled Israel's apartheid against Palestinians.

Amanda Milling: We do not agree with the use of this terminology. Any judgment on whether serious crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue on human rights. This includes encouraging the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-09/121955>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-09/121956>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-09/121957>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MDE1551412022ENGLISH.pdf>

Palestinians: Schools

Steve McCabe (Labour) [122584] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 25 March 2020 to Question 31567 on Palestinians: Schools, what representations the Government made to the Palestinian Authority on concerns over school naming; and what assessment she has made of the impact of those representations on the decision not to rename those schools.

Amanda Milling: The UK Government is clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties and should have no place in education. Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle any language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to avoid engaging in, or encouraging, any type of action and language that makes it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-10/122584>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-03-18/31567>

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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>

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-02-24/debates/DD1628E3-91E9-4093-B27F-69DA3336A6CB/RoyalAssent>

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

**** closes today**

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Draft Corporate Plan 2022-2025

(closing date 25 February 2022)

<https://www.equalityni.org/CorporatePlanConsultation#gsc.tab=0>

Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights (closing date 8 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights>

Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland (closing date 28 March 2022)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-hate-crime-legislation-northern-ireland>

Trade with Israel (closing date 30 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-israel-call-for-input>

CPS: Public interest guidance for suicide pact and 'mercy killing' type cases

(closing date 9 April 2022)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/consultation-public-interest-guidance-suicide-pact-and-mercy-killing-type-cases-0>

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