



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Hezbollah: Demonstrations

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [141182] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Mayor of London has raised concerns directly with her about the support shown for Hezbollah at the annual Al Quds march in London.

Damian Hinds: Hizballah has been proscribed in its entirety in the UK since 2019. Proscription sends a strong message that the Government considers an organisation to be concerned in terrorism and makes it a criminal offence to be a member or supporter of the organisation, with a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. It is also a criminal offence for a person to display or publish an article or item of clothing in such a way or in such circumstances to arouse a reasonable suspicion that they are a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation. This could lead to up to 6 months in prison, and/or a £5000 fine. The tactics for policing public demonstrations are an operational matter for the police. It would not be appropriate for the Government to comment publicly on these. Whether an offence is committed during a public demonstration is a matter for the police to investigate.

The Home Secretary and Mayor of London routinely discuss a range of issues, including public demonstrations and the impact of these on community tensions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-16/141182>

Department of Health and Social Care and UK Health Security Agency

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated guidance for funerals and commemorative events during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

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Israel

See also Commons written answer 141182 “Hezbollah: Demonstrations”, which is included in the Home Affairs section above, and Commons Library briefing “Iran’s influence in the Middle East”, which is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Dialogue is key to improving stability for Israelis and Palestinians: UK at the UN Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council Meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question

... Let me start by once again reinforcing the need to prevent a return to the violence we witnessed in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories last year. We share concerns about the escalating tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We must all work to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions. In this regard, we welcome the announcement by the Israeli Police Commissioner that there will be a pause on demolitions in East Jerusalem during Ramadan.

We are concerned about the rise in security incidents and violence in the OPTs, including the death of nine Palestinians this month by Israeli security forces’ live fire. Where there are accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate swift, transparent investigations. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence. In exercising this right, it is vital that all actions are proportionate.

We welcome the dismantling of West Bank outposts by the Israeli authorities ... The violence from settlers against Israeli security forces during the operations is inexcusable. Outposts are illegal under international law and Israeli law, and are an obstacle to peace. ...

We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to pass the necessary legislation to protect and progress women’s rights. And we reiterate our strong support for UNRWA and their vital work to help Palestinian refugee children, including girls, fulfil their potential.

The UK remains focussed on work to improve the economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza. We welcome the beginning of the electronic-VAT pilot ... The UK encourages both parties to continue to make progress on other priority fiscal issues, and to reconvene the long-stalled Joint Economic Committee ...

Finally, as we look towards the convergence of religious holidays next month, the UK strongly discourages unilateral actions that may increase tensions. We reiterate our support for the historic Status Quo in the Old City of Jerusalem – that is the best means of preserving the right to peaceful worship for the three Abrahamic faiths. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/dialogue-is-key-to-improving-stability-for-israelis-and-palestinians-uk-at-the-un-security-council>

Liz Truss: Appalled by the terror attack in Be’er Sheva, Israel this afternoon. The UK stands in solidarity with the people of Israel and my thoughts are with the victims and their families

<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1506341750302035970>

United Nations

Settlement Expansion Fuelling Violence in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Middle East Peace Process Special Coordinator Warns Security Council

Speakers in the Security Council ... denounced Israel’s continued settlement activities, evictions and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, as the United Nations Special

Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process expressed regret that there had been “little progress” ...

Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, presenting the twenty-first report on resolution 2334 (2016), covering 10 December 2021 to 18 March 2022, said the resolution calls for the complete cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. However, “no such steps were taken”, he said. Detailing events, he noted that on 5 January, Israel published tenders for some 300 settlement housing units in the Talpiyot East neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, while on 10 and 24 January, the Jerusalem District Planning Committee advanced plans to build 800 and 400 housing units respectively in the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo. It then advanced plans for another 1,200 units in southern Jerusalem, a significant number of which are to be built in East Jerusalem. On 1 February, Israel’s Attorney-General published a legal opinion allowing authorities to declare land in the outpost of Evyatar as “State land” and authorizing accelerated planning procedures for the establishment of a settlement there.

He went on to note that demolitions of Palestinian structures continued along the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, “which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain”, 216 structures were demolished or seized by Israel or demolished by their owners to avoid costly Israeli demolition fees. These actions displaced 299 people. ...

Noting that resolution 2334 (2016) also calls for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, he said “unfortunately, daily violence continued”. ...

Describing numerous security incidents, including the death of an 80-year-old Palestinian-American man in the context of an Israeli security force operation near Ramallah and the shooting of a 13-year-old boy amid conflicting reports about whether he was throwing stones or a Molotov cocktail, he went on to stress that settler-related violence remains significant across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. ...

Recalling that resolution 2334 (2016) also calls on parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, he said that in a highly provocative move in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, a far-right member of Israel’s Knesset set up a makeshift office in the neighbourhood. Several Knesset members visited the neighbourhood, expressing support for him, while others encouraged his inflammatory actions. ...

Rounding out his observations, he said Israel’s settlement expansion continues to fuel violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, further entrenching the occupation and undermining the right of Palestinians to self-determination and independent statehood. ...

“We have regrettably seen little progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) since its adoption in December 2016,” he said. On the contrary, the absence of a meaningful peace process to end Israel’s occupation and resolve the conflict is fuelling a dangerous deterioration that is destabilizing the situation across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States) called for more participation with countries of the region through the Abraham Accords, welcoming that diplomatic opening which will build cultural ties, pave a path towards greater security and stability and build hope for people across the region. “However, let me be clear — normalization is not a substitute for serious engagement between Israelis and Palestinians,” she stressed ... She deplored continuing attacks by Israeli settlers on ordinary Palestinians, urging the authorities to condemn them and hold perpetrators to justice. As Ramadan, Passover and Easter approach, “we must aspire to peace,” and all sides must refrain from unilateral actions that could heighten tensions. ...

Martin Gallagher (Ireland) reiterated his delegation’s concern over continued reports of excessive force by Israeli security forces leading to the killing and injuring of Palestinians,

while also urging the Palestinian Authority to protect and uphold the human rights of Palestinians under its control and enhance efforts to prevent terrorism. Calling on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid escalation ahead of the upcoming religious holidays, he called on Israel to halt all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem and in Area C of the West Bank, in line with international law. ...

Nicolas de Rivière (France) endorsed the call for restraint, noting that the appeasement measures taken by Israel must be significantly expanded to stem a new cycle of violence. This requires a permanent halt to demolitions and evictions, particularly in East Jerusalem, as well as strict adherence to the status quo of holy places, the proportionate use of force by Israeli forces and the end of colonial expansion. Expressing concern over the resumption of expansion projects since October, he reiterated that France will never compromise on Israel's security, strongly condemned any rocket fire against civilians ... The two-State solution is the only path that will allow a just and lasting peace in the region, by responding to the legitimate aspirations of both peoples. He said France will not recognize any change to the 1967 lines, other than those agreed between the parties ...

Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation), voicing concern over the continued stagnation of the Middle East Peace Process as well as the recent escalation of tensions, said the situation is being further exacerbated by Israel's unilateral actions. Plans to further expand settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank are particularly concerning and could be viewed as a de facto annexation of large parts of the Palestinian territory. ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom) [[click here](#) to read this speech in more detail] said her delegation shares the concerns about tensions in the West Bank and welcomed the pause on demolitions in East Jerusalem during Ramadan. Citing the death of nine Palestinians in March by Israel Defense Forces live fire, she said that where there are accusations of excessive use of force, swift and transparent investigations are needed. ... She welcomed the dismantlement of West Bank outposts, stressing that settler violence against the Israel Defense Forces is inexcusable. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14836.doc.htm>

Resolution 2334 (2016), referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons House of Commons Library

Iran's influence in the Middle East

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9504/CBP-9504.pdf>

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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>

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>

Commons consideration of Lords amendments

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-03-22/debates/FA4FBF36-5168-4B9B-8C7E-09D2AAC33C39/NationalityAndBordersBill>

Online Safety Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

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 in 5 days**

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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