



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Coroners: West Midlands**

**Steve McCabe (Labour)** [150981] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of waiting times for investigations to be made by the Birmingham and Solihull Coroner Service.

**Steve McCabe (Labour)** [150982] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact waiting times for investigations to be made by the Birmingham and Solihull Coroner Service on people with religious obligations to conduct burials within a particular timeframe.

**Tom Pursglove:** The [Coroner Statistics](#) for the Birmingham and Solihull coroner area show that, in 2020, the average time from a death being reported to the conclusion of the inquest was 10 weeks. This was a decrease from 14 weeks in 2019 and 12 weeks in 2018, and below the 2020 average of 27 weeks in England and Wales. Statistics for 2021 will be published next month.

We recognise that delays in the inquest process may cause additional anguish and distress for the relatives and friends of the deceased. It is a matter for coroners, as independent judicial office holders, to determine how their investigations are carried out. However, we expect that they will continue to work sensitively with bereaved families to address any faith-based concerns.

The Chief Coroner has issued practical [Guidance](#) for coroners on situations where a bereaved family has requested urgent consideration of the death of a loved one, which may also include a request for early release of the body; or where the coroner or coroner's officers become aware that a particular death may have aspects which justify especially urgent consideration. This may include consideration on the basis of religious obligations. The guidance says that coroners should pay appropriate respect to those wishes, within the framework of their legal duties and in the context of their other responsibilities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-31/150981>

and

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

**Religion: Education**

**Janet Daby (Labour)** [154374] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his recently published Schools White Paper, what steps he is taking to ensure all children receive high-quality provision of religious education.

**Janet Daby (Labour)** [154375] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Schools White Paper published on 28 March 2022, what plans he has to ensure that religious education remains a critical part of the school curriculum despite not being an EBacc subject.

**Janet Daby (Labour)** [154376] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Schools White Paper published on 28 March 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposals in that White Paper on Standard Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences as the existing bodies used to determine the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

**Robin Walker:** The Schools White Paper, Opportunity for All, sets out the department's long-term vision for the school system. Religious education (RE) remains a core part. The government believes that RE is an important subject, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society, as well as serving to inform their own values and behaviour. RE can also contribute to pupils' personal development and well-being by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society.

RE will continue to form an essential part of a school's curriculum following the publication of the Schools White Paper. It remains a compulsory subject that must be taught in all state funded schools, including academies, to all pupils up to the age of 18.

In the Schools White Paper, the department committed to establishing a new arms-length curriculum body. It will work with teachers to co-design, create, and continually improve packages of optional, free, and adaptable digital curriculum resources and video lessons for all subjects, including RE at key stages 1-4. This will help teachers deliver a high-quality curriculum informed by the best available evidence. This sector-led approach will draw on expertise and inputs from across the country, involving teachers, schools, trusts, subject associations, national centres of excellence, and educational publishers.

The Schools White Paper sets out the department's long-term vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential. However, there is still more technical work to be done along the way to realise this vision. The department recognises the important role that Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACRE) play in supporting the provision of RE in maintained schools. The department is aware that the ambition for a fully trust-led system will have an impact on SACREs. This is something that will be considered as we move towards greater academisation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-14/154374>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-14/154375>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-14/154376>

*The White Paper referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1063602/Opportunity\\_for\\_all\\_strong\\_schools\\_with\\_great\\_teachers\\_for\\_your\\_c  
hild\\_print\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063602/Opportunity_for_all_strong_schools_with_great_teachers_for_your_child_print_version.pdf)

## House of Lords Oral Answers

### Humanist Marriages

**Baroness Burt of Solihull (Liberal Democrat):** To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice on 15 March (HCWS682) and the Written Answer on 24 March (142529), why they have legislated to permit religious and civil marriage ceremonies to take place outdoors, but not similarly legislated for humanist marriages.

**The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Stewart of Dirleton):** My Lords, legislating to allow outdoor civil weddings on existing approved premises was a long-standing commitment, accelerated to respond to the highly exceptional circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Following public consultation, this was made permanent in April. Humanists seek fundamental changes to marriage law, which requires more detailed consideration. The Law Commission is reviewing the matter and is due to report in July. The Government are awaiting the results of that consultation before deciding how to proceed.

**Baroness Burt of Solihull:** My Lords, it is very important to humanists that they marry in a place that is meaningful to them. Not only can Quakers, Jews, Church of England and Church of Wales couples have their own religious celebrant, they can marry wherever they want. In 2020 the High Court ruled that when the Law Commission has reported, the Government must carry out the High Court ruling to legally recognise humanist marriage. Can the Minister confirm that when the Government implement this ruling, humanists will join the groups able to marry in a location of their choice?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, at present in England and Wales, other groups—faith groups or secular people—cannot marry where they want: it is a matter of the venue, as opposed to the celebrant, and that, at present, restricts choice in that area. To establish where we go from here, we will, as I say, await the report of the Law Commission.

**Baroness Whitaker (Labour):** My Lords, the judge in the High Court also ruled that “the present law gives rise to ... discrimination.” For how much longer are the Government prepared to allow this apparent breach of the law without any guarantee that it will be resolved?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, the High Court in its decision found that the Government were entitled to proceed by way of clarifying the law as it relates to all bodies, religious, secular or otherwise; albeit that there was a measure of discrimination against humanists, the Government's course was appropriate.

**Lord Pickles (Conservative):** My Lords, obviously we anticipate the advice of the Law Commission, but ultimately this is going to be a political decision made by the Government. Given the importance of humanism, in terms of both western civilisation and the British character, it would make enormous sense to end this rather silly discrimination and give humanists the right to get married in a ceremony and location of their choice.

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, I repeat the answer I gave to the previous question.

**Baroness Meacher (Crossbench):** My Lords, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 made provision for the Government to introduce legal recognition of humanist marriages by statutory instrument—as Quakers and Jews already have, in fact, despite the Minister's earlier answer. Later this year, I understand, the Government are likely to give legal recognition to outdoor religious marriages by changing primary legislation, a vastly more complex process. Will the Minister please meet me to discuss how this very simple objective can be achieved for humanist marriages without further delay, there already being nine years since the primary legislation was passed?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, I am perfectly happy to arrange that someone from the relevant department should meet the noble Baroness—as, indeed, my

colleague in the other place, Tom Pursglove MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, has met representatives from Humanists UK, and Crispin Blunt MP. That took place on 24 March.

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede (Labour):** My Lords, the Liberal Democrats clearly support this change; the Labour Party supports this change; the Government in Wales support this change; the Government in Scotland support this change; and, as we have heard from the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, it is ultimately going to be a political decision, so why are the Government waiting for the Law Commission's report?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** Because, my Lords, the question of marriage is a complex one and the Government do not wish to act prematurely where to do so may be to the prejudice of one group at the expense of others.

**Baroness Featherstone (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, will the Government give an estimate of the timescale for reform after the Law Commission has reported favourably?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, that would again be premature until we see what the Law Commission recommends.

**Lord Desai (Non-affiliated):** My Lords, what is it about the humanists that obstructs the Government from doing them justice? Scotland allows it; Northern Ireland allows it; the Channel Islands allow it. What is it about the humanists that means they are discriminated against in England and Wales? It is because they are not Christians?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, precisely not. The situation is that in Scotland the rules of marriage are, as I said in an answer to another question, based on the identity of the celebrant. In England and Wales, they are based on the venue where the wedding ceremony is to take place. That is a complex matter that will take time to unpick; it is not a matter of prejudice against one group—and specifically not a matter of their not being Christians.

**Baroness Blackston (Independent Labour):** My Lords, nothing the Minister has said so far explains why humanists should be denied the right to a legal marriage while other religious groups have that right. Please could he explain to the House why that is the case?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, humanists advance a position as a belief system, as opposed to the simple negation of religious faith. We are advised that establishing a further category of wedding based on a belief system would be a profound change to the laws that bear on weddings. As a result, we are obliged to wait until the Law Commission has reported.

**Lord Cashman (Labour):** My Lords, I ... ask the Minister a simple question: does he believe that the lack of legally recognised humanist marriages is unfair and discriminatory? If he does not agree that it is unfair and discriminatory, why not?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, if the question is directed to the department that I represent from the Dispatch Box today, there is no question of consideration of a belief that any such discrimination is unfair. If it is directed to me, I decline to answer.

On the former point, as I said in answer to previous questions, there is an outstanding Law Commission report. There is a High Court decision which considered that the Government were correct and acting appropriately in awaiting the position from which a more fundamental reform could be properly considered.

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Labour):** My Lords, I feel for the Minister: he is struggling and I think he would just like to be able to say yes. The Minister is talking about a profound change. It is not a profound change for those of us with different beliefs who take marriage very seriously and want to be able to have our humanist views expressed. This is not profound; this is a human right. How about—just as with Covid, when outdoor marriages were allowed on an interim basis—we do this on an interim basis and then we can sort out the details after the Law Commission reports?

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, the Government consulted in 2014 on making provision for non-religious belief marriages, including a choice of location, using an

order-making power. The consultation concluded that the matter raised a number of complex issues, including that by allowing humanists to solemnise marriages in unrestricted locations, the Government would create a provision for humanists that would not be available to all groups. Therefore, it was necessary to consider carefully the legal and technical requirements of marriage ceremonies before or at the same time as making a decision on whether to take forward the specific proposal to permit non-religious belief marriages. The loosening of restrictions on marriages taking place outdoors applied to venues within the existing provisions. Applying this to a humanist belief system could not be done within the existing framework; it would require innovation, which cannot be made.

**Lord Cormack (Conservative):** My Lords, I speak as a Christian, but my noble and learned friend seems to be making a proverbial mountain out of a molehill here. Surely, if two people wish to commit themselves for life to each other and do not have religious beliefs, they ought to have the opportunity to do so in a solemn and seemly way.

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** My Lords, they do. My noble friend refers to the conduct of marriage in a solemn and seemly way. That is, of course, available outdoors, whether in a religious or civil setting. What is called for by reforming the law towards humanist weddings is a profound difference from that. Civil or religious marriages conducted indoors or outdoors can be as seemly as my noble friend wishes.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-04-25/debates/DDF21BC9-C6EC-4340-92D9-56C79F6EC896/HumanistMarriages>

*The written statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-03-15/hcws682>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-18/142529>

*The judgement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2020/2096.html>

*Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/>

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## Holocaust

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Construction**

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op)** [150077] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is conducted sustainably.

**Kemi Badenoch:** Our intention is to achieve an 'excellent' rating against the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) as was stated at the public inquiry in 2020.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-30/150077>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Construction**

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op)** [150078] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions the Sponsor Body has had with (a) experts and (b) industry leaders in (i) haulage and (ii) construction to ensure that the River Thames

is effectively utilised during the construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

#### **River Thames: Freight**

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op)** [150079] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of transporting construction materials and debris via the River Thames during the (a) construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and (b) restoration of the parliamentary estate.

**Kemi Badenoch:** The UK Holocaust Memorial project team has held preliminary discussions with representatives from the R&R programme to discuss potential efficiencies in using the River Thames for both construction projects. The different timetables of each project may limit opportunities for cost-effective co-operation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-30/150078>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-30/150079>

TOP

## Israel

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **Gaza: Israel**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7832] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about its reasons for (1) refusing, and (2) delaying, permits for medical treatment for children in Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to monitor closely the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides core services, including healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Gaza and across the wider region. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv recently raised the importance of access to healthcare, including for children, with the Israeli authorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-07/hl7832>

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7833] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the restrictions imposed by the government of Israel on (1) the movement of Palestinians within Palestinian territories, and (2) Palestinians seeking to travel abroad.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK regularly raises the issue of freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities. We recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures and we encourage them to deploy these in a way that minimises tension.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-07/hl7833>

#### **Mohammad Shehadeh**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7834] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 15 March (HL6555), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what representations they have made, if any, to the government of Israel regarding the killing of 13-year-old Mohammad Rezaq Shehadeh Salah by Israeli forces near Bethlehem.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-07/hl7834>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-01/hl6555>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7835] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 15 March (HL6555), what assessment they have made of the findings by the Defence for Children in Palestine report on 31 March, which found that (1) five Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli forces this year, and (2) that 2021 was the deadliest year for Palestinian children since 2014 with 78 children killed by Israeli forces and armed Israeli civilians.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-07/hl7835>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-01/hl6555>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.dci-palestine.org/israeli-forces-shoot-kill-16-year-old-palestinian-boy-in-jenin>

## **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**Calling on all parties to take urgent steps to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation in Jerusalem: UK Statement at the UN Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East**

... Jerusalem is a holy city to so many, and the UK remains firmly of the belief that maintaining the historic Status Quo is the only means of ensuring freedom of worship. Amid rising tensions on the Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount, we urge the parties to engage and deescalate the situation, particularly in terms of ensuring sensitive policing. All religious sites must be treated with utmost respect.

We condemn recent terror attacks in Israel, resulting in the deaths of 14 people. Our hearts go out to the families of those killed. We fully support Israel's right to ensure its security. And we unequivocally condemn rocket attacks against Israel by militants in Gaza.

The UK is also concerned by the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli Security Forces in recent weeks, including minors. We continue to urge thorough and transparent investigations into the deaths of Palestinian civilians, and call for restraint in the use of force. Israeli security forces have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the Palestinian population.

In closing, let me stress that it is not too late to reverse these trends. We must do all we can to prevent a return to the violence we witnessed last May, to rebuild trust and work towards a sustainable and comprehensive peace. The UK remains fully committed to a two-state solution, and to playing its part in efforts to that end.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/calling-on-all-parties-to-take-urgent-steps-to-reduce-tensions-and-avoid-further-escalation-in-jerusalem-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

## Department for International Trade

**Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1070152/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-04-25.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1070152/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-04-25.pdf)

**Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1070219/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-04-25.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1070219/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-04-25.pdf)

## United Nations

**Status Quo of Jerusalem's Holy Sites Must Be Upheld, Special Middle East Coordinator Tells Security Council, as Speakers Express Alarm over Recent Violent Clashes**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process:** ... All sides must do their part to reduce tensions, uphold the status quo at the holy sites, and ensure their sanctity is respected by all ... "At this sensitive and volatile moment, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have made some commendable efforts to ease tensions, condemn attacks and rein in violence," ...

Reporting on the sharp rise in daily violence, he said that, in the occupied West Bank and Israel, 23 Palestinians, including three women and four children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, search-and-arrest operations, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis and other incidents. Also, 541 Palestinians, including 30 women and 80 children were injured. Over two weeks, four terrorist attacks took place inside Israel – the deadliest such attacks in years. Afterwards, the presence of Israeli security forces was significantly reinforced along the separation barrier and military operations were bolstered inside the occupied West Bank. On 15 April, as many Palestinians gathered at the Aqsa Mosque compound, some threw stones, fireworks and other heavy objects towards Israeli security forces, who responded with stun grenades, sponge-tipped bullets and batons, including against bystanders.

Amid these clashes, several dozen Palestinians entered a mosque in the compound, with some continuing to throw stones and fireworks towards Israeli security forces, he said. After a standoff with those inside, Israeli police entered and arrested those barricaded inside. During the clashes, some damage was caused to the structure of the mosque; some 160 Palestinians were injured and 400 were arrested, most of whom were released later that day. According to the Israeli security forces, three policemen were injured. "The conduct of Israeli forces has raised concerns about possible excessive use of force," he said. ...

On 19 April, Israeli authorities announced, in line with past practice, that non-Muslims would not be allowed to visit the Holy Esplanade between Friday, 22 April, and the end of the month of Ramadan. Despite the tensions, overall, hundreds of thousands of Muslims, Jews and Christians have been able to celebrate the holy days in and around the Old City in relative peace and without further escalation, he said ...

On 10 April, dozens of Palestinians vandalized and set fire to a Jewish holy site located in Area A in the West Bank city of Nablus before being dispersed by Palestinian Security Forces. ...

After several months with no rocket fire, militants in Gaza launched five rockets towards Israel, with one landing in the Israeli town of Sderot and causing property damage. ...

... the ceasefire between Israel and Syria is being maintained in a volatile security situation characterized by violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria by the parties, he said. These include the firing on 23 April of missiles from the Israeli-occupied Golan (Alpha side) across the ceasefire line, the crossing on several occasions of Israel Defense Forces tanks into the area of separation, the firing of projectiles from the Bravo side, and the continued presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. ...

He also expressed a concern over the firing of a rocket across the Blue Line into Israel on 25 April, for which no group has claimed responsibility. The Israeli Defense Forces responded with artillery fire into Lebanon, with no casualties reported. ...

**Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine**, noting that every stone on every street of Jerusalem is a witness to the unique pluralism of the Holy Lands, said that, each year, thousands of Christian Orthodox pilgrims float to the Holy Sepulchre, to witness the Holy Fire, the symbol of the resurrection of Christ. By restricting the number of believers allowed to reach the site, Israel has decided to disrupt this millennia-old religious tradition, he said, adding that, a few days ago, Israeli occupying forces stormed the Aqsa Mosque compound/Haram al-Sharif, shooting at worshippers and desecrating the Mosque with military boots and violence. He pointed out that 200 Palestinians, including women and children were wounded and 400 arrested, yet Israel claims it is upholding the historic status quo, and resorted to its favourite one-size-fits-all justification: security.

Not only does Israel use security to justify killing Palestinian children on their way to school, it labels Palestinian worshippers as terrorists, he continued. Jewish extremists and settlers are not merely visiting Haram al-Sharif, he said, they are seeking a takeover. ... Israel has no authority over Haram al-Sharif where the historic and legal status quo must be upheld, and the authority of the Islamic Waqf and the custodianship of Jordan must be respected, he stressed. "Make no mistake, Israel is not only attacking a Muslim holy site or a Christian holy site," he said, adding that it is also targeting the Palestinian identity of the city.

Stressing that there can be no equation between a colonial power and a colonized people, he added that a rules-based multilateral order does not mean that one party gets to set the rules while others must observe them. "The Palestinian people ask you: how come Israel gets away with murder, in broad daylight, while everyone is watching?", he said. ...

**Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel)**, noting the convergence of Passover, Easter and Ramadan in 2022, said that what could have been an opportunity for peaceful coexistence was instead used by Palestinian extremists to incite violence. ... Recalling the international community's call for "calm on both sides", he stressed that this request is "completely detached from reality" and only serves to fan the flames of violence, promote radicalization and "reward the thugs inciting chaos". It is ludicrous to place mobs of violent rioters on the same moral scale as a law-abiding democracy making every effort to keep the peace, and such a comparison plays directly into the web of lies spun by terror groups.

He went on to underscore that Israel always has and always will ensure the freedom of worship for all religions and is committed to protecting holy sites and the status quo. When violence endangers innocents and prevents the exercise of rights, however, Israel will not remain idle, and its police will act. ...

Further, he pointed out that, while the Council continues to discuss Hamas' lies, the true threat to regional security is growing. Hizbullah — the Iranian terror proxy — has grown into a terror army as a result of global carelessness. Since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), which calls for the establishment of an area free of armed personnel other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL, Hizbullah has multiplied its arsenal in Lebanon tenfold and conducts attacks on Israeli civilians. ...

Hizbullah is one of six terror-proxy armies that Iran uses to spread death and chaos throughout the region, and he called on those present to imagine what the Middle East will look like when such armies can operate under a nuclear umbrella. Against this backdrop, Israel will not stand on the side lines, as it possesses the full freedom to act to defend its security and existence. ...

**Richard Mills, Jr. (United States)** expressed concern over recent violence in Jerusalem on Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount ... Appealing to all sides to exercise maximum restraint, avoid provocative actions and rhetoric, and preserve the historic status quo, he urged Palestinian and Israeli officials to work cooperatively to lower tensions and ensure everyone's safety. ... He condemned the rocket launches from Gaza and Lebanon by militant groups that are seeking to exploit the situation in Jerusalem to advance their narrow interests ... During the historic Negev Summit, leaders involved in normalization discussed how they can support Palestinians in concrete ways and have a positive impact on the daily lives of Palestinians. ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)** ... noted the need for restraint to prevent a repetition of the days of violence that took place in May 2021. Stressing that any actions that affect the historical and legal status quo of Jerusalem's holy sites are unacceptable, he expressed support for the stabilizing role of Jordan. Condemning Israel's aggressive settlement policy, he pointed to the construction of 1,270 settler housing units in 2021 in the West Bank and the settlement plans for the occupied Syrian Golan. ...

**Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland)** ... reiterated that the status quo at the holy sites must be upheld and respected, with full respect for Jordan's custodial role. Also voicing concern about the civilian deaths and injuries in recent weeks across the West Bank, she condemned terrorism and all attacks against innocent Israelis and Palestinians. ... Unresolved conflicts are also inconsistent with and undermine international law, she noted, calling the Security Council's attention to illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. ...

**Sheraz Gasri (France)**, expressing concern over recent violence in Jerusalem, condemned terrorist attacks that claimed 14 lives in Israel and called for restraint and the avoidance of all forms of provocation. ... Respect for the status quo of holy sites is essential and any allegations of the disproportionate use of force must be investigated, but the root causes of conflict must also be addressed. France has warned since October 2021 that the resumption of settlement activities and evictions is exacerbating a difficult situation, and she called on Israel to end such activities. ...

**Mohamed Issa Abushahab (United Arab Emirates)** condemned the repeated incursions by Israeli forces into the Aqsa Mosque compound, as well as the assaults carried out by settlers in the courtyards of Haram al-Sharif. Acknowledging recent steps taken by the Israeli Government to reduce tensions, he urged that similar steps be taken to create a stable and sustainable political environment and revive the Middle East peace process. ... The Israeli authorities must respect the right of Palestinians to practise their religious rites and to have free access to holy places, including the Aqsa Mosque and Ibrahimi Mosque. The existing legal and historical status quo of the city of Jerusalem and its sanctities, in line with international law, must be preserved ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)**, Council President for April, spotlighted the fragile conditions in Jerusalem, stressing it is crucial that all parties take urgent steps to reduce tensions. ... She expressed full support for Israel's right to ensure its security, unequivocally condemning rocket attacks against Israel by militants in Gaza. Likewise, she expressed concern over the number of Palestinians killed by Israel's security forces in recent weeks ... [\[click here to read this speech in greater detail\]](#)

**Sudqi Atallah Abd Alkadetr Al Omoush (Jordan)**, calling for international coordination to prevent alterations to the historic character of Jerusalem, added that the storming of the Aqsa Mosque compound by the Israeli army threatens to explode the brewing tensions. Israel must respect the legal and historical status quo of the site, he stressed,

highlighting its historical Hashemite custodianship. The Jordanian Administration is the only entity authorized to manage the affairs of the Aqsa Mosque compound in its entirety, he said, calling for a genuine political solution that will fulfil the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. ...

**Silvio Gonzato, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union**, in its capacity as observer, expressed concern over the increasingly high number of casualties ... Urging both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to a two-State solution through concrete action and avoid unilateral acts that threaten the same, he also called on all parties to take necessary steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. ...

**Majid Takht Ravanchi (Iran)** said that the United Nations reports indicate that, in the first three months of 2022, the Israeli regime continued its oppressive and expansionist policies and unlawful criminal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, killing innocent people including women and children, requisitioning Palestinian people's properties, seizure and demolition and forcible eviction of their homes. In addition, as a collective punishment against the innocent people of Gaza, the inhumane blockade continues. This is a crime against humanity, a violation of all international laws and norms, he said, stressing that any sacrilege and desecration of Muslim holy sites, and hurting the feelings of Muslims around the world, is repulsive and should not be tolerated. ...

**Jamal Fares Alrowaiei (Bahrain)** called for an increase in collective efforts to lay the basis for peace, stability and security; to combat terrorism and its financing; and to bolster development cooperation in the region. ... Condemning incursions by the Israeli police into the Aqsa Mosque compound, he stressed the importance of avoiding escalation, respecting holy sites and ensuring the freedom of worship for all religions. He also called on the international community to assume its responsibility to de-escalate the situation and open new horizons for peace based on a two-State solution. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14869.doc.htm>

**Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process: Briefing to the Security Council of the situation in the Middle East, 25 April 2022**

[https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security\\_council\\_briefing - 25 april 2022.pdf](https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_25_april_2022.pdf)

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Israel/Palestine: UN experts call on governments to resume funding for six Palestinian CSOs designated by Israel as 'terrorist organisations'**

UN human rights experts today called on the international community to take immediate and effective steps to protect and sustain the six Palestinian civil society groups that were designated as 'terrorist organisations' by the Government of Israel in October 2021.

"Israel's disturbing designation of these organisations as 'terrorist organisations' has not been accompanied by any public concrete and credible evidence," said the human rights experts. "We note that the information presented by Israel has also failed to convince a number of governments and international organisations that have traditionally provided funding for the indispensable work of these six organisations."

In October 2021, the UN experts [denounced](#) Israel's designation of six Palestinian civil society organisations – Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Al-Haq, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International – Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees and the Union of Palestinian Women Committees – as terrorist organizations. Israel's designation enables it to close the organisations, seize their assets, end their work and charge their leadership and staff with

terrorist offences.

“Israel has had six months to substantiate its accusations and it has failed to deliver,” the experts said. “We call on the funding governments and international organisations to swiftly conclude that Israel has not established its allegations and to announce that they will continue to financially and politically support these organisations and the communities and groups they serve.” ...

“We are deeply disturbed by Israel’s apparent misuse of anti-terrorism legislation to attack some of the leading civil society organisations in Palestine. Such misuse must be rejected and countered,” the experts said.

“The United Nations has been very clear that the drafting and application of anti-terrorism laws have to be rigorously consistent with international law and human rights protections, including the principles of legal certainty, necessity, proportionality, the rule of law and non-discrimination.”

Against this background, the experts welcomed the statement issued on 23 March 2022 by the Belgium Minister of Development Cooperation, Meryame Kitir, who stated that: “My administration has conducted an internal investigation into the allegations. This did not reveal any evidence that would confirm the allegations. I have therefore decided not to take any action against the Palestinian organizations in question. Nor is the evidence provided by the Israeli authorities such as to reconsider my decision.” ...

“Applying anti-terrorism laws to well-regarded human rights defenders and civil society organisations – without persuasive evidence to substantiate these claims – seems to indicate a politically-motivated attempt by Israel to silence some of its most effective critics in violation of their rights to freedom of association and of expression,” they said.

“If the international community is serious about its support for Palestinian self-determination and an end to the 55-year-old Israeli occupation, it must become more vocal and assertive in defending the work of these organisations, and reminding Israel of its international human rights obligations.” ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/israelpalestine-un-experts-call-governments-resume-funding-six-palestinian>

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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>

Carry-over Motion

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-04-25/debates/F83D5247-70E7-4F4D-B6C2-D72F8E9A4030/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill\(Carry-Over\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-04-25/debates/F83D5247-70E7-4F4D-B6C2-D72F8E9A4030/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill(Carry-Over))

## **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**

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

## **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

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

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience** (closing date 2 June 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence>

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