



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Debate

The Queen's Speech: Making Britain the Best Place to Grow Up and Grow Old

col 451 Bob Blackman (Conservative): ... I also welcome the boycotts, divestment and sanctions Bill. It is quite clear that we do not want local authorities or other public bodies in this country having their own foreign policy; that is something to be determined by the UK Government. The ongoing commitment to supporting the UK's Jewish community, and to support for Israel, is fundamental and I am delighted to see it. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk//commons/2022-05-16/debates/D9101E0E-FF5E-4AE5-B987-DB4673129252/MakingBritainTheBestPlaceToGrowUpAndGrowOld#contribution-1B24F53E-042B-47A3-9FDC-8A1AD010F178>

House of Commons Written Answer

Whetstone Synagogue: Security

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [88] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will include a grant for Whetstone Synagogue in Friern Barnet Lane in her funding for security for places of worship.

Rachel Maclean: Protective security measures for synagogues are available through the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant, which is managed on behalf of the Home Office by the Community Security Trust.

We cannot comment on whether specific places of worship receive grant funding.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-10/88>

TOP

House of Commons Oral Answers

Shireen Abu Aqla

col 409 **Bambos Charalambous (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if she will make a statement on the killing of Shireen Abu Aqla.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Vicky Ford): The United Kingdom Government was shocked to hear of the very sad death of the respected and renowned journalist Shireen Abu Aqla while working in the west bank. On 11 May, the Foreign Secretary and UK Ministers made clear our concern, and we have called for a thorough investigation into the events. On 13 May, in company with the other members of the United Nations Security Council, we strongly condemned the killing and stressed the importance of an immediate, thorough, transparent, fair and impartial investigation. We also stressed the need to ensure accountability.

The work of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected to carry out their work and defend media freedom. We were also deeply distressed by the scenes at the funeral of Shireen Abu Aqla on Friday. Her death was a tragedy and those mourning must be treated with respect and dignity. The situation on the ground makes clear the need to make progress towards a peaceful two-state solution and the UK stands ready to support.

Bambos Charalambous: Shireen Abu Aqla was a veteran correspondent of al-Jazeera's Arabic news channel and on Wednesday 11 May she was killed while covering Israeli army raids in the city of Jenin in the northern occupied west bank. Her killing has been widely condemned by world leaders, the UN and civil society, and it has shocked the world.

The killing of Shireen Abu Aqla was not only an outrageous act, but an attack on the freedom of the media and the independence of journalists working around the world, playing a crucial role in reporting conflicts, seeking truth and telling the stories of those affected. On Friday, deeply disturbing footage was released from Shireen's funeral. The scenes of violence at the funeral were appalling: Israeli police were seen firing teargas at mourners and attacking them with batons, almost causing the pallbearers to drop the coffin and send it crashing to the ground. The attacks on mourners were indefensible and only heightened demands for justice and the pain felt by Shireen's family.

The Labour party unequivocally condemns the violence by Israeli forces. International and human rights must be upheld, and we stand with all those demanding accountability for the killing of Shireen. There must be an urgent, independent and impartial inquiry to secure that. More widely, we will continue to support justice and the protection of the human rights of the Palestinian people and a sovereign Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel. Tensions in the region were already high: Israel has seen a number of deadly terrorist attacks and both Israelis and Palestinians have been killed in what has been the worst wave of violence and attacks in Israel in years. We are deeply concerned that Shireen's death and the treatment of mourners at her funeral could spark further cycles of violence.

col 410 Has the Minister made any representations to her Israeli counterparts on the killing of Shireen Abu Aqla? Will she condemn the violence at Shireen's funeral? Can she confirm that her Department will stand up for international and human rights by encouraging an independent inquiry into Shireen's killing so that we can ensure that there is accountability for her death?

Vicky Ford: I thank the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Bambos Charalambous) for his comments. He is right that Shireen's death was outrageous and shocked the world. He is also right to mention the very disturbing scenes at her funeral. It is so important that mourners are given respect and dignity, and indeed

that the deceased is shown respect and dignity. ...

The hon. Gentleman asked about the investigation and we are working with other members of the UN Security Council to give that firm statement that we want an investigation, which needs to be immediate, thorough and, crucially, impartial.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): ... Clearly there is a concern that we do not know exactly what happened on that terrible day when the journalist was killed. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority need to co-operate so that there can be a full and thorough investigation that is seen to be independent? Does she regret the fact that the Palestinian Authority are refusing to hand over the bullet that killed the journalist?

Vicky Ford: My hon. Friend, as ever, is right; it is absolutely key that the investigation happens swiftly, and that it is thorough and impartial. ...

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): We on the SNP Benches unequivocally condemn the murder of Shireen Abu Aqla, one of the Arab world's most respected journalists, who was shot dead by the Israeli army despite wearing full press coverings, body armour and a helmet. Shireen's death takes to 50 the number of journalists who have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces over the past 20 years—deaths for which no one has ever been held to account. It is therefore absolutely essential that, along with the EU, the United States and the UN, all democracies unreservedly condemn the killing, and all who support a full, impartial and transparent investigation must be supported.

Does the Minister agree that the investigation should be carried out by the International Criminal Court, so that the person responsible for this awful crime can be found, tried and, if convicted, given an appropriate sentence? What sanction against Israel does she think would be appropriate in those circumstances? Finally, will she also unreservedly condemn the disgraceful actions of the Israeli police when on Friday they attacked Shireen's cortege with batons and stun grenades, denying her even in death any sort of dignity or respect?

col 411 **Vicky Ford:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that the killing has been condemned across the world, and indeed by us in the UK. As I have said, we have called for an immediate, thorough, transparent, fair and impartial investigation. It is really important that that happens soon and that it is very thorough. I think that we were all completely shocked by the scenes at her funeral. We are deeply concerned about the rise in violent attacks in the area, and we continue to call for peace, as we always have done; working to deliver peace is our top priority. She was an incredibly respected journalist and the hon. Gentleman is right to point to the risk to journalists across the world. I believe that across the world 26 journalists have been killed so far this year, including six in Ukraine—it might even be more since the last update I received. We must stand for journalists and for media freedom.

David Jones (Conservative): My hon. Friend is entirely right to express concern about the scenes at the funeral of Shireen Abu Aqla, but given that there can be absolutely no doubt as to what happened at the funeral, when mourners and pallbearers were attacked by Israeli police officers, will she confirm that the Government have already made representations to the Israeli authorities expressing concern and indicating how deplorable those scenes were?

Vicky Ford: Yes, my right hon. Friend is absolutely right about the deplorable scenes. We have already stated that we are deeply disturbed by those scenes, and we are looking at what further measures might be taken. Most importantly, we continue to call for urgent steps to de-escalate tensions and for restraint in the use of force. It is absolutely vital that tensions are reduced and that we get parties back to dialogue and working towards peace. ...

Naz Shah (Labour): ... First, I send my condolences to the family and friends of Shireen Abu Aqla, a true Palestinian heroine who was brutally shot in the head and murdered. Let us be clear: this is not a one-off attack on journalists by Israel. We cannot forget that Israel

had a raid last May on the al-Jalaa building that hosted Al Jazeera and the Associated Press office. This is not just the story of Shireen either, but many other journalists, including the 55 Palestinian journalists killed since 2000. How can the Palestinians have any faith in Israel to hand over any bullet and with this whitewash of an idea that they are going to investigate when nobody has been held to account over lots and lots of years? ...

Vicky Ford: The UK is very concerned by the number of Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli security forces in recent weeks. We continue to urge for thorough and transparent investigations into the deaths of Palestinian civilians and call again for restraint in the use of force.

col 412 **Robert Halfon (Conservative):** Is my hon. Friend aware that 19 Israelis, not including foreign nationals, have also been killed by terrorism since 21 March, and that Jewish lives, and Israeli lives, matter as much as the life of the journalist who tragically lost her life? Is she also aware that a Hamas leader recently incited the Palestinians to act in ways of terrorism with the use of the knife and the gun? What is she doing to help the Israelis to combat terrorism and these awful murders of Israeli citizens?

Vicky Ford: This is an important point. Israel does have a legitimate right to self-defence and the right to defend its citizens from attack, but it is absolutely vital that all actions are proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law, and they must make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

Kim Johnson (Labour): ... She was unlawfully killed while doing the job she loved and was greatly respected for, while clearly identified as a journalist, in what can only be described as a targeted attack for reporting actions of Israeli forces in the occupied territory of Jenin. Does the Minister agree that an international criminal court should undertake a full independent, not just impartial, investigation, and that swift action should be taken to bring those responsible to justice?

Vicky Ford: ... We have called for an immediate investigation that does need to be fair and impartial, because it needs to have the trust of all those in the area. That is why it is so important that it happens soon.

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... this ... question about the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Aqla, almost certainly by a targeted shot coming from the forces who are in illegal occupation of a Palestinian territory, allows me to ask how long we must wait for the United Kingdom to actually do anything to enforce accountability on the state of Israel for its gross and worsening breach, over 55 years, of the fourth Geneva convention ...

Vicky Ford: My hon. Friend is right to be concerned. The UK Government are very concerned about the very fragile security situation in Jerusalem. We continue to call on all parties to de-escalate tensions. ... We have made it clear that there is a need to protect holy sites. This sort of horrific violence against civilians is truly contemptible. ...

col 413 **Steve McCabe (Labour):** ... The killing and the events at the funeral are shocking by any standards. I absolutely condemn what happened at the funeral, but as I understand it Shireen Abu Aqla was killed during a gun battle; the facts have not yet been established, and the Palestinians have rejected an offer of a joint investigation with the Israelis. Surely in this place it helps no one to state as fact what people want or feel inclined to believe. ...

Vicky Ford: We are not only calling for that investigation but working with other members of the UN Security Council on that joint statement from countries around the world strongly condemning the killing and stressing the importance of the investigation. ...

Flick Drummond (Conservative): Shireen Abu Aqla has been referred to as the voice of events in Palestine as part of a much-needed open and free press, but there are fears that her killing will spark refreshed conflict in the west bank. Can my hon. Friend assure the House that if anything can come from this tragedy, it is that it is the Government's priority to secure peace in the region?

Vicky Ford: Our priority in the region has always been to work towards peace; that

is why it is vital that tensions are de-escalated now. ...

Julie Elliott (Labour): ... Will the Minister state exactly how the Government intend to support an impartial investigation, which needs to be independent? ...

Vicky Ford: The immediate actions that we have taken have been, first, to condemn the situation and then to work with the UN Security Council on that joint statement of condemnation which also calls for the investigation. We are obviously using our own diplomatic links both in Israel and in Jerusalem, engaging with the leaderships; and, of course, we will always look at what further measures should be taken.

Andrew Percy (Conservative): The Minister is right to condemn the recent terror attacks on innocent Israelis, which are increasingly being directed from the west bank by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. She is also right to condemn this killing ...

col 414 Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): Shireen Abu Aqla was a Christian Palestinian like my family, and her death feels like we have lost a sister. The scenes from the funeral were deeply upsetting, but the Minister may be aware that the Israeli police were trying to segregate the Christians from the Muslims in their mourning. Indeed, the day before they had stormed Shireen's house. They went in, disturbed the wake and took a Palestinian flag from the room. It is disgraceful, and it is a clear provocation. ...

Vicky Ford: We have made very clear the need to restore calm, we have made it very clear that we condemn this action ...

Alun Cairns (Conservative): ... Does the Minister share my concerns about what this means to the relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli communities over the long term ...?

Vicky Ford: ... both those who mourn her and she herself should be treated with respect and dignity. Again, that is another reason why this investigation needs to be so thorough. It needs to be deep, it needs to be fair, it needs to be impartial and it needs to happen soon. We are very concerned about the escalating tensions we have seen over recent weeks and months with increased violence ...

Imran Hussain (Labour): The reality remains that every time a Palestinian child is born there is one certainty—that in life they will face persecution, oppression and humiliation at the hands of an occupying Israeli military. However, the soul-shattering scenes we saw last week, with the funeral procession of Shireen Abu Aqla brutally attacked by the Israeli security forces, now mean that they will be stripped of their dignity in death as well. ... just what are this Government waiting for, and why will they not immediately recognise the state of Palestine? What message are this Government sending to Palestinians, who have now been stripped of their dignity in life and death?

col 415 Vicky Ford: We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions of violence, and we immediately call out—and continue to do so—against all actions that undermine the viability of a two-state solution. ... We will recognise a Palestinian state at the time when it best serves the objective of peace, because achieving peace is our primary objective.

Greg Smith (Conservative): ... As has already been stated, the Palestinian Authority have so far refused to participate in a joint investigation into the tragic death of Shireen Abu Aqla. An initial autopsy has found that it is not possible to tell whether she was killed by Israeli or Palestinian gunfire. Facts matter, so does my hon. Friend agree that those who, for whatever reason, are jumping to blame Israel will only deepen division and make peace harder to achieve?

Vicky Ford: It is really important that there is a proper investigation—a thorough, fair and impartial investigation—but I repeat that we are concerned by the number of Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli security forces in recent weeks, and we urge thorough and transparent investigations into the deaths of civilians as well. ...

Joanna Cherry (SNP): A constituent of mine who went to school with Shireen Abu Aqla

has been in touch to share her sense of helplessness at what seems to be yet another state-sanctioned killing in the occupied territories. ... I fully accept that the killing has to be investigated independently, but having regard to what followed—the raiding of the home, the appalling behaviour of the Israeli authorities at the funeral—can the Minister please answer the question she was asked earlier: will she summon the Israeli ambassador? ...

Vicky Ford: We have been very clear that we have condemned this killing. ...

col 416 Michael Fabricant (Conservative): ... this was in the middle of a gun battle between Israeli forces and Palestinian forces. ... the initial autopsy—which was conducted by the Palestinian authorities, not the Israeli authorities—said that it was impossible because the bullet removed was a 5.56x45 mm NATO round used both by the Israelis and the Palestinians. ...

Vicky Ford: ... justice is really important. We absolutely condemn this killing and will continue to stress the need for the investigation to be fair, impartial, thorough and prompt.

John McDonnell (Labour): I am secretary of the National Union of Journalists parliamentary group and we have raised these issues before, but, with regard to this killing, let us put it in the context of the systematic abuse of Palestinian journalists. The International Federation of Journalists already a month ago referred these incidents to the International Criminal Court. May I therefore, in that context, and in view of the happenings subsequent to the killing, which were disgraceful, repeat the question for the third time? The minimal action any Government can take is to call the ambassador in to express the concerns of the Government about the Israeli state's behaviour ...

Vicky Ford: ... We continue to condemn this, we have called for an investigation, we have, through our ambassadors and the British consul in Israel and in Jerusalem, made very clear our position supporting the leaders to restore calm, the need to protect holy sites and the need for dialogue to move towards peace ...

Stella Creasy (Labour Co-op): The Minister will have heard Members across the House calling for not just an impartial investigation, but an independent investigation. ... independent fact checkers have been able to put together compelling, open-source evidence that points clearly to the responsibility of the Israeli forces for the murder of Shireen Abu Aqla. ...

Vicky Ford: I think that it is really important that we work with partners across the world through the UN Security Council. It is the UN Security Council's wording, agreed among all those countries, that calls for an impartial investigation. ...

col 417 Afzal Khan (Labour): I find it heartbreaking that, after decades of violence, illegal occupation, demolition of Palestinian homes and complete disregard for human rights, the UK has failed in its obligation and duty to recognise the state of Palestine. ... In the light of the history, why are the Government not pushing for a full independent inquiry? Given the close relationship between the UK and Israel, now, for the fourth time of asking, will the Minister summon the Israeli ambassador to demonstrate the outrage at the behaviour of security forces during Shireen's funeral?

Vicky Ford: Shireen's death was a true tragedy and we have condemned it. ...

Grahame Morris (Labour): ... I want the Minister and Members to imagine for a moment attending the funeral of a family member or friend. In what circumstances would what we witnessed on our TV screens happening to the pallbearers carrying the coffin be reasonable or proportionate? How can it be acceptable for the police or security services of any nation to attack pallbearers to the extent that the coffin falls on the ground? Not only do we call for the Minister's condemnation, but, for a fifth time, I call on her to summon the Israeli ambassador here to account for her actions.

Vicky Ford: I have attended many funerals in my life, from early childhood, and that is one that will always stay with me. Mourners should always be treated with respect and dignity. ...

Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru): ... The International Federation of Journalists'

complaint to the ICC about the treatment of Palestinian journalists is about not only protecting the human rights of journalists, but safeguarding the work that they do as a profession to protect collective human rights. The Secretary of State has spoken many times about the need for an independent and impartial investigation. To ensure that independence and impartiality, will she support the IFJ's complaint to the International Criminal Court to ensure those very virtues?

Vicky Ford: As I said, we have been working with our friends and other members of the UN Security Council ...

col 418 Zarah Sultana (Labour): As if the ongoing dispossession and discrimination faced by the Palestinian people was not enough cruelty, Israel continuously targets Palestinian journalists. ... Since 2000, Israel has killed an estimated 51 Palestinian journalists and an independent UN commission of inquiry found that, during the 2018 march of return, Israeli snipers intentionally shot Palestinian journalists who were clearly marked as such, killing Yasser Murtaja and Ahmed Abu Hussein. ... for the seventh time, will the Minister summon the Israeli ambassador?

Vicky Ford: We stand by journalists all across the world and it is a tragedy that so many journalists have been killed in recent years, and particularly this year. ...

Carol Monaghan (SNP): ... Many of us are puzzled by her reluctance to summon the Israeli ambassador; that seems like the first step that should have been taken. Will the Government now commit to supporting the International Criminal Court investigations into not only this incident, but the wider behaviour of the Israeli Defence Forces in the occupied territories?

Vicky Ford: Not only have we worked with other members of the UN Security Council in strongly condemning this incident and needing to have this investigation, as I have mentioned, but we have been very clear that we are very concerned about other incidents of Palestinian civilians being killed by Israeli security forces ...

Andy Slaughter (Labour): Another journalist is murdered in occupied Palestine. Next, the occupying power raids her family home, and then its forces brutally attack pallbearers and mourners at Shireen's funeral. In the light of that, the Government's response has been pathetic and inadequate. ... Will they recognise Palestine? Will they ban trade with illegal settlements? Will they sign up to the ICC inquiry? If not, her words are completely empty.

col 419 Vicky Ford: ... This is a tragic death—a really tragic death. We have led the work at the United Nations to put the pressure on to make sure, to the best extent that we can, that this investigation happens, that it is fair and transparent ... We are very clear that settlements are illegal under international law. They call into question Israel's commitment to the two-state solution. We urge Israel to halt its settlement expansion ...

Diane Abbott (Labour): Does the Minister appreciate that everyone in this House regrets the killing of men and women in Israel, whether they are Israeli or Palestinian? It is quite wrong to imply anything else. There has been talk of the necessity of establishing the facts. Does she appreciate that the facts of the terrible scenes at Shireen's funeral are beyond doubt? Millions of people around the world have seen those images. Finally, does she understand that it is no use telling us that Shireen's death is a tragedy? We know that. We will take her words seriously only when she commits this afternoon, in this House, to calling the Israeli ambassador to the Foreign Office. Otherwise, her words are just words.

Vicky Ford: ... What happened at Shireen's funeral should not have happened. I cannot give further comment at this point ...

Mohammad Yasin (Labour): ... It is not enough to condemn those actions; we must take action. When will the UK Government stop authorising arms sales to Israel, as we know they are killing innocent Palestinians?

Vicky Ford: We take the export of arms extremely seriously. ... the United Kingdom has one of the most robust arms export control regimes anywhere in the world...

Christian Matheson (Labour): ... Israel has consistently ignored any critical statements

coming out of the UN, and has even sought to undermine the legitimacy of the UN and other international institutions. Why does she think this time will be any different?

col 420 **Vicky Ford:** It is important that voices from across the world have condemned this awful deed.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour): ... Under occupation, Palestinians' human rights are abused, and as we have seen, they cannot even bury their dead with dignity. ... Does she understand that although the UK has committed to a two-state solution, we cannot have two states if only one is recognised? ...

Vicky Ford: It is clear that unilateral recognition, by itself, will not end the occupation. We need the parties to come to talks and to work towards peace.

Nadia Whittome (Labour): The killing of Shireen Abu Aqla by the Israeli military and the subsequent attack on her funeral in Jerusalem demonstrate the reality of the occupation of the west bank. Amnesty International has said that it constitutes apartheid ... Will the Minister not only condemn this act of inhumanity but commit now to summoning the Israeli ambassador? Will she take steps to ensure that the UK ceases all arms trade with Israel, and to ensure that Britain is not complicit in the illegal occupation of Palestine?

Vicky Ford: I have already stated many times the actions that we are taking. Of course Ministers consider, at all times, what further steps might be taken.

Matt Western (Labour): I have had a great many letters from my constituents since the brutal murder of Shireen Abu Aqla ... They are saddened. They are sickened by the scenes at her funeral. They are also deeply angry about the lack of reaction. ...

Vicky Ford: The most important thing about the investigation is that it be accountable and ensures that those who carried out this act be held to account. ...

col 421 **Andy McDonald (Labour):** Surely the appalling desecration of the funeral of Shireen Abu Aqla is evidence, if any more were needed, of the crime of apartheid that is being inflicted on the Palestinian people ... Instead of passing laws to ban local authorities and civil society from taking action against this brutal occupation, is it not time to accept the legal analysis of those human rights organisations, and do the right and moral thing and impose sanctions in response to this appalling criminality?

Vicky Ford: ... we do not believe that boycotts, divestment or sanctions would help to create an atmosphere conducive to peace. I note that he used the word apartheid. We do not use that terminology, and we do not agree with its use, because it is a legal term, and a judgment on whether it can be used under international law needs to come through a judicial decision ...

Steve Bonnar (SNP): The sad reality is that the horrific murder of Shireen is just another tragedy in 74 years of unaddressed ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, yet rather than sanction Israel for that behaviour, 55 years after occupation began, the UK Government are busy strengthening relations with it through new trade deals. ...

Vicky Ford: The most important thing we need to do is try to work towards peace. That is why we condemn this incident and are working for it to be condemned internationally, and why we called for the investigation. ...

col 422 **Holly Lynch (Labour):** We know that Shireen was wearing a press vest and helmet, yet in addressing the circumstances of her murder, an Israeli military spokesperson said: "They're armed with cameras, if you'll permit me to say so." Will the Minister be unequivocal in her support for journalists and transparency in Palestine, condemn any sense that to carry a camera is to be armed, and reaffirm that respect for a free press should be fundamental in any state calling itself a democracy?

Vicky Ford: The United Kingdom stands on the side of journalists all around the world ...

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... I have seen innocent bystanders killed on numerous occasions in Northern Ireland. As the Minister will know, similarities are being drawn with Lyra KcKee, a journalist reporting on the unrest in 2019 who was killed by the new IRA. Does the Minister not agree that the loss of life is truly tragic, and that all possible steps must be

taken to ensure the safety of those who seek to report the news from an unbiased position? ...

Vicky Ford: We absolutely continue to call out attacks against journalists and media internationally. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that attacks against journalists have happened in the United Kingdom in our history ...

Margaret Ferrier (SNP): ... Can the Minister confirm that, contrary to the statement of the Israeli military spokesperson, the fact that a journalist is armed with a camera does not make that journalist a target?

Vicky Ford: Journalists should never be targets.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-05-16/debates/EAB21B73-552C-40EB-8683-88C030F4EBBD/ShireenAbuAqila>

The Foreign Secretary's statement referred to above can be read at
<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1524648916012220417>

The Security Council statement referred to above can be read at
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14891.doc.htm>

House of Commons Written Answer

Shireen Abu Akleh

David Jones (Conservative) [651] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her counterpart in the Israeli Government on the death of Shireen Abu Akleh.

Amanda Milling: On 11 May, I publicly expressed my sadness upon hearing news of the tragic death of veteran Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, and called for a thorough investigation. The Foreign Secretary also made this clear in a statement on 12 May. Officials from the British Embassy Tel Aviv have reiterated the importance of an investigation with the Israeli authorities. The safety of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-11/651>

The statements referred to above can be read at
<https://twitter.com/amandamilling/status/1524396468370653184>
and
<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1524648916012220417>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN experts alarmed by Israel High Court ruling on Masafer Yatta and risk of imminent forcible transfer of Palestinians

UN human rights experts urgently called on Israel and the international community to stop the forced evictions, arbitrary displacement and forcible transfer of Palestinian communities from Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank.

“Following the judgement of the Israeli High Court of Justice earlier this month, around 1,200 Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta, including 500 children, face imminent risks of forced evictions, arbitrary displacement and forcible transfer, in serious breach of international humanitarian and human rights laws,” said the experts.

“We are monitoring with concern the latest information indicating that the Israeli forces have demolished structures in the Masafer Yatta communities of Khribet al Fakhiet and al-Markez. These demolitions place them at immediate risk of forcible transfer.”

On 4 May, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected appeals against eviction orders issued to Palestinian inhabitants of Masafer Yatta, the area designated as a closed military training site, "Firing Zone 918", south of Hebron. ...

"By upholding this policy to drive Palestinians out of Masafer Yatta, the Israeli judicial system has given *carte blanche* to the Israeli Government to perpetuate the practice of systematic oppression against Palestinians," said the experts.

"This is all the more disconcerting, as it is done to allow Israeli military trainings in the area. How can this be given priority over the rights of the Palestinian residents? ...

The experts expressed particular concern that the Court narrowly construed the definition of 'forcible transfer' prohibited under international humanitarian law and inexcusably dismissed the relevance of fundamental provisions of international law in the domestic context. ...

"A Court that does not provide justice based on international norms and that perpetuates the violations of fundamental human rights of people who have been under military occupation for 55 years, becomes itself part of the structural system of oppression." ...

"The international community must not become complicit to this serious violation of international humanitarian and humanitarian laws by remaining silent ... said the experts. The experts are in contact with the Government of Israel on the issue. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/un-experts-alarmed-israel-high-court-ruling-masafer-yatta-and-risk-imminent>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Online Safety Bill

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

Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

TOP

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>

Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament (closing date 30 June 2022)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cppp/participation-2022/>

TOP