



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Department for International Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1117775/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-11-18.pdf

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1117836/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-11-18.pdf

United Nations

Concluding Its Session, Third Committee Approves 12 Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Occupied Palestinian Territory, Racism, World Drug Problem

... The Committee next took up the draft resolution titled “The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination” (document A/C.3/77/L.50) ...

Introducing the draft, **the representative of Egypt** ... said the international community still falls short in operationalizing the basic right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, as they “continue to suffer under occupation”. She said her group supports realization of this right through establishment of the Palestinian State based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Further, it reaffirms the internationally recognized terms of reference of the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and calls for an end to the Israeli occupation and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The draft aims to reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and support the preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity, and integrity of all the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, she said, urging States to support the text. ...

... **the observer of Palestine** said the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people is inalienable and its fulfillment the only path towards achieving peace in the Middle East. The Israeli occupation severely impedes the Palestinian people’s exercise of their right to self-determination, she said. Human rights violations committed by Israel include

settlement activities, annexation of Jerusalem, blockade of Gaza, forcible displacement of the Palestinian people, property and land confiscation, exploitation of natural resources, and arbitrary arrests. These are “grave breaches” of international law, she said, underscoring the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, adding that “these violations must end for peace to begin”. ...

The representative of Israel said his country does not dispute the right of people to self-determination, stressing that every year it joins consensus on the parallel resolution on the universal realization of this right. However, she disputed the political motive behind this resolution. She noted a pattern that begins with adoption of non-selective resolutions by consensus, then moves to Palestinians abusing these topics to push their agenda through political resolutions. Imagine if the United Nations gave all those seeking self-determination even a tenth of the attention it gives the Palestinians? she asked. The draft is about the United Nations acting as a partner for peace, not about “allowing authoritarian regimes such as those in Damascus and Tehran to pose as defenders of Palestinian rights, while violating the same rights of their own populations back home”, she said. This resolution represents “a relic of the past, when Israel stood alone in the Middle East”, and “when the United Nations was simply used as a tool to undermine Israel’s very existence”, she added. ...

The representative of the United States opposed one-sided language in the text unfairly targeting Israel. This draft does not create conditions that promote negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians towards the two-State solution ...

The Committee then approved draft resolution “L.50” by a recorded vote of 167 in favour to 5 against ...

By its terms, the Assembly would stress the urgency of ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 as well as a just, lasting peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, based on relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Madrid terms of reference, including the Arab Peace Initiative and Quartet Road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It would also stress the need to respect the territorial integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Further, the Assembly would urge all States and the United Nations to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination. ...

The representative of Australia ... recognized the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a future State. The two-State solution can only be achieved through a negotiated outcome between the parties, she said, adding that Australia will continue to oppose anti-Israel bias.

The representative of South Africa underscored that this issue has been established through numerous resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council. His country recognizes the reality as it stands: Palestinians are being denied their right to self-determination by Israel. The continued colonial occupation is a violation of international law, he asserted, adding that Israel’s actions are amounting to annexation. He stressed that the international community continues to fail to take concrete action against this crime of colonial apartheid. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/gashc4370.doc.htm>

The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (A/C.3/77/L.50)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/C.3/77/L.50>

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Westminster Hall Debate

Persecution of Christians

col 359WH Jim Shannon (DUP): ... I am regularly edified and encouraged by seeing all faiths and beliefs work together to advance FORB issues. Whether it is Christians advocating for humanists, humanists advocating for Muslims, or Muslims advocating for Sikhs, cross-belief support is a remarkable driver of change and solidarity in the face of persecution. I believe that human rights and religious belief walk hand in hand ...

Against a backdrop of deteriorating conditions for many faiths and beliefs, we must not and will not dilute the grave challenges Christians face worldwide. In 2015, the largest religious group was those of a Christian faith, who numbered 2.3 billion, or 31% of the global population. In 2022, 360 million Christians experienced high levels of persecution and discrimination, an increase of some 20 million on 2021. In 2019, religious groups—especially Christians—were persecuted in 190 out of 198 countries. ...

col 360WH Alexander Stafford (Conservative): ... Does he agree that, as a Christian country with an established Church, we need to do more to protect Christians in the UK and across the world, and use our global influence, especially in the Commonwealth, to help Christians and people of all faiths so that no one has to die in such horrific ways?

Jim Shannon: I certainly do. ...

col 361WH According to the Institute of Development Studies: “In a significant amount of the nations which have encountered outbreaks of the novel coronavirus, politicians and opinion leaders have openly condemned religious minority populations under the guise of epidemiological containment”.

In other words, it is saying that those of the Christian faith are the subject, in this case, of “hateful messages on social media, public speeches and official policies.” ...

The deteriorating conditions accelerated by the pandemic have not been fleeting or vaccinated away. Instead, the pandemic facilitated the creeping curtailment of Christians’ exercise of their faith. That is now the new normal ...

col 365WH I know the Government are committed to freedom of religion and belief, but we need to perhaps take a more focused approach in relation to aid on where the difficulties are and what we can do to help. What can we do to stem the flow of violence, persecution, oppression and even genocide against Christians? ... the FCDO must continue to affirm FORB issues as a priority concern within its human rights agenda ...

... asylum seekers who are fleeing due to being persecuted for their religion or belief must be prioritised ...

The work of the Prime Minister’s special envoy for freedom of religion or belief ... must be adequately resourced and fully integrated into the FCDO’s work. ...

col 366WH Fiona Bruce (Conservative): ... My mandate, as stated on the Foreign Office website, is threefold: to bring together UK efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief; to work with the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance to raise awareness of cases of persecuted individuals; and to support the implementation of the Bishop of Truro’s recommendations, which support not just Christians persecuted for their faith, but freedom of religion or belief for all. ...

col 368WH We cannot start too young. The alliance that I chair is taking forward a project from the London ministerial conference to produce materials for primary schools to help teachers to educate the very youngest children that it is just as important not to discriminate against someone on account of their beliefs as it is if they are disabled. ... Our alliance’s aim is to roll out these teaching materials, once they have been piloted, across the 42 countries in our alliance ... We cannot start too young to help people across the world to understand how critical it is to live peaceably with others of different beliefs ...

col 369WH As required under the Truro review, an independent review of progress of the Truro work was carried out this year, commissioned by the FCDO. ... Its recommendations were fully accepted by the then Foreign Secretary ...

col 370WH **Patrick Grady (Independent):** ... Christians remain one of the most persecuted—in fact, probably the most persecuted and discriminated against—religious group in the world. Perhaps that is to some extent because Christians remain the largest community group in the world, but the statistics demonstrate the significance of their persecution. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that the vast majority of human beings in the world adhere to some kind of religion and profess a belief in a creator god. The majority of them believe in the God revealed to the patriarch Abraham, and most believe in the same God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. ...

col 371WH The Government must continue to work to tackle those issues in different countries around the world, as they have committed to. They also have to ensure that they are doing what they can on a domestic level to protect freedom of religion and belief and promote tolerance at home. In my part of world, Glasgow and the west of Scotland, we are not immune to religious intolerance. Sectarianism is still a real challenge. ...

col 372WH I am still aware of ongoing challenges for very simple things, such as access to visas for supply ministers and religious leaders when they want to come to the United Kingdom in the summer to supply for Christian parishes or other faith communities. ...

col 373WH **Edward Leigh (Conservative):** ... What is so sad is the decline of Christianity in the middle east, the home—or first home—of Christianity. It is most marked in Syria where, within a decade, numbers of Christians have plummeted from 1.5 million—10% of the population in 2011 before the war began—to 300,000, which is less than 2% of the population. In the aftermath of the 4 August 2020 Beirut explosions, where the greatest impact was felt in the Christian quarter, Lebanon's church leaders questioned the community's long-term survival. In Iraq, the rate of exodus is much slower, with the community down from some 300,000 before the 2014 Daesh invasion to as few as 150,000 today in 2022.

It is so sad that the original home of Christianity is seeing a mass exodus of Christians. The situation is not much better in the west bank of Palestine, Israel. Nearly 75 years on from the creation of the state of Israel, Christians in the west bank have declined from 18% to less than 1% of the population today. ...

col 374WH **Patricia Gibson (SNP):** ... It is a fundamental, basic freedom to worship your God, however you perceive Him or Her to be. The freedom to choose who you worship and how you worship is a fundamental human right. We have to remember that those nations that persecute Christians and anyone else who follows a religion to which their leaders are hostile—nations that turn a blind eye to the persecution of a number of their citizens based on their faith—also tend to impose and sanction other breaches of human rights. ...

col 379WH **the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Andrew Mitchell):** ... Like this House, the Government believe that violence against any person because of their religion or belief is wholly unacceptable. Although this debate particularly highlights the plight of persecuted Christians, we do not forget or in any way diminish the experience of those persecuted for holding other religions, beliefs or no religious beliefs at all. The Government are committed to championing freedom of religion or belief for everyone ...

We demonstrated the depth of our commitment this summer by hosting an international ministerial conference that brought together more than 800 faith and belief leaders and human rights actors and 100 Government delegations to agree action to promote and protect these fundamental rights. As a result of the conference, 47 Governments, international organisations and other entities made pledges to take action in support of freedom of religion or belief.

In addition, we are pursuing three broad strands to advance freedom of religion or belief and tackle the associated human rights concerns: first, working through multilateral bodies; secondly, working with states directly to encourage and support them to uphold their human rights obligations; and thirdly, through our continuing work to implement the recommendations of the Bishop of Truro's 2019 review. ...

col 382WH To conclude, as a long-standing champion of human rights and freedoms, the United Kingdom has not only a duty but a deep desire to promote and defend our values of equality, inclusion and respect at home and abroad. I assure Members here today that the Government will do just that. We will continue to raise awareness of all persecution and we will defend the right to freedom of religion or belief for everyone, everywhere.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-11-17/debates/161A4B34-BD92-45B6-B3EE-0DD4AC69D62A/PersecutionOfChristians>

The Institute of Development Studies comment referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/scapegoating-of-religious-minorities-during-covid-19-is-history-repeating-itself/>

The Bishop of Truro's report and recommendations, referred to above, can be read at

<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/report/>

The review of progress on the Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085231/Assessment_of_the_implementation_of_recommendations_of_Bishop_of_Truro_s_independent_review_of_FCDO_support_for_persecuted_Christians.pdf

Information about the ministerial conference referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/international-ministerial-conference-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-london-2022/about>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Bill of Rights Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227>

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

**** Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

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

House of Commons Library Briefing: Progress of the Bill

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9295/CBP-9295.pdf>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

Online Safety Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

Schools Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-bill>

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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