



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Commons Library

**Constituency data: Ethnic groups, 2021 census**

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-statistics-ethnicity/>

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## Israel

### Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**The Status Quo governing Jerusalem's holy sites preserves peace: UK statement at the Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on situation in the Middle East**

... Firstly, the UK recognises that Jerusalem's holy sites including Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount hold particular significance for many around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In that context, the visit was made by the Israeli minister for National Security has the potential to increase tensions. The United Kingdom strongly supports the historic Status Quo governing Jerusalem's holy sites, which protects the sites and those who worship there, and preserves peace.

The UK also recognises and values Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites and urges the importance of cooperation with the Jordanian authorities in this regard. The UK is committed to working with all parties to uphold this Status Quo in Jerusalem. All parties must avoid actions which inflame tensions, undermine the cause of peace, or unilaterally seek to alter the Status Quo.

Second, our position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, ensuring that Jerusalem is the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, with access and religious rights of all peoples fully respected.

Third, the UK reaffirms its support for a Two State Solution, based on 1967 lines and

Jerusalem as the shared capital, as the only way to ensure a lasting peace between the parties. We are concerned by levels of violence in the OPTs and Israel. I encourage all parties to avoid actions that undermine the prospects of peace. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-status-quo-governing-jerusalem-s-holy-sites-preserves-peace-uk-statement-at-the-security-council>

## United Nations

**Leaders on All Sides of Palestinian Question Must Help Alleviate Tensions, Maintain Status Quo at Jerusalem's Holy Sites, Senior Peace Official Tells Security Council ... Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations ...**

expressed concern about events this past week in Jerusalem and the ongoing violence in the occupied West Bank. On 3 January, he said, Israel's new Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir conducted a visit, accompanied by heavy security detail, to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The first visit to the site by an Israeli minister since 2017, it is seen as particularly inflammatory given his past advocacy for changes to the status quo ... The visit was sharply condemned by the Palestinian Authority, many others across the region and the international community as a provocation that risked sparking further bloodshed ... Noting that the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and other senior Israeli officials have since emphasized the Government's commitment to upholding the status quo, he drew attention to the fragility of the situation at the holy sites. Any incident or tension there can spill over and cause violence throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in Israel, and elsewhere in the region, he cautioned. Reiterating the Secretary-General's call for all parties to refrain from steps that could escalate tensions in and around those sites, and for all to uphold the status quo, in line with the special role of Jordan, he said the United Nations has remained in close contact with relevant parties. ... "Leaders on all sides have a responsibility to lower the flame and create the conditions for calm," he stressed.

**Mohamed Issa Abushahab (United Arab Emirates)** condemned the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard by an Israeli minister under the protection of Israeli forces and the vandalization of the Christian cemetery on Mount Zion, underscoring that those responsible for trampling the graves and desecrating the sanctity of this important historical and religious landmark must be held accountable. ... He emphasized the need to respect Jordan's custodial role over the holy sites ...

**Zhang Jun (China)** ... said Israel should stop all incitements and provocations and refrain from any unilateral actions that could cause the situation to deteriorate. Moreover, the parties concerned should earnestly maintain the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem and respect Jordan's custodianship of them. ... Voicing support for the establishment of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, he said China will continue to work with the international community for durable peace and common security in the Middle East.

**Robert A. Wood (United States)** said that President Joseph Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken underscored that the United States supports preservation of the historic status quo with respect to the holy sites in Jerusalem. He urged all sides to exercise restraint and refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and other holy sites, both in word and in practice. In this spirit, he opposed unilateral actions that depart from the historic status quo, noting that Israel President Benjamin Netanyahu's governmental platform calls for its preservation, and encouraged the Government of Israel to follow with that commitment. ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)** said the recent events in Jerusalem that have provoked this meeting once again demonstrate the unacceptability of violating the historic status of Jerusalem, which is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions. In this connection, he strongly urged both sides to show restraint and refrain from provocative or

unilateral steps threatening to destabilize the situation and lead to fully-fledged military clashes. He warned against creating irreversible realities on the ground, including the destruction of Palestinian homes and confiscation of their property. ...

**Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland)**, stressing her country's commitment to the two-State solution, underscored the need to preserve the historical status quo on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, including respecting Jordan's role as custodian over the holy sites. Welcoming Prime Minister Netanyahu's affirmation of this commitment on 3 January, she noted that given the record number of Palestinian civilian deaths in 2022 and the deadly attacks in Israel, the visit of the new Israeli Minister of National Security to the Esplanade of the Mosques is cause for concern. ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)**, highlighting the significance of the holy sites, including Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, for the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, said that the visit made by the Israeli Minister for National Security has the potential to increase tensions. ... "Our position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, ensuring that Jerusalem is the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian States, with access and religious rights of all peoples fully respected," she emphasized. ...

[\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

**Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, asked what red line Israel needs to cross for the Council to finally say enough is enough and to act accordingly. "It has displayed utter disregard for the sanctity of Palestinian life, the sanctity of international law and the sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif," he said, adding that Minister Ben-Gvir came to the Mosque to pursue the same extremist agenda and end the historic status quo, regardless of consequences. The Israeli Government endorsed his actions even after worldwide outrage and condemnation. People who pursue the temporal and spatial division of Al-Haram, or plan to take it over, do not comprehend its meaning for Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims around the world. It is the responsibility of the Council and all States to uphold international law and the historic status quo. Another critical factor is that Al-Haram Al-Sharif is in occupied East Jerusalem, an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory — a fact that has been repeatedly affirmed by the Council and the General Assembly, among other authoritative determinations. Israel has no claim or right to sovereignty over the Territory, including East Jerusalem, nor a rightful claim over Al-Haram Al-Sharif. ...

Noting that today the Council was unanimously opposed to illegal actions, provocations and unilateral measures aimed at jeopardizing the historic status quo, he said its next actions are critical. "You understand that Israel will keep pushing, it might adapt its rhythm, but it will not change course. ... "How many Governments today brag about the relations they had with apartheid South Africa? None. Not even Israel, its closest ally at the time. Who among you can justify standing for supremacists instead of standing up to them?" ...

Speaking in his role as Chairman of the Arab Group for January, he condemned Israel's actions and violations at Haram al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque ... This is a flagrant aggression against Palestinians and Arabs and the 2 billion Muslims around the world, as well as a flagrant violation of international law, he said, calling for international action to halt these violations. Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the historic status quo of the Mosque and uphold that of Haram al-Sharif, including the full area of 144,000 square metres, which is for the exclusive worship of Muslims. ...

**Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel)**, noting the peaceful 13-minute visit of a Jewish minister to the holiest Jewish site, said the Council's meeting sadly creates a sense of urgency over a non-event. Pointing out that the Western Wall — the most focal point of Jewish prayer — is the only surviving structure from the second Jewish temple compound, he said that for years, the Palestinians have orchestrated a poisonous campaign to obliterate any trace or connection between the Jewish people and the Temple Mount. At the United Nations,

they advance libelous resolutions just like the one adopted in the General Assembly last week, deliberately erasing the Jewish name of the compound by referring to it only by its Muslim name, Haram al-Sharif, he said. That insidious plot comes directly from the top of Palestinian leadership, he added, noting that the personal threats of the Palestinian representative, which should not be acceptable in the Council, demonstrate the Palestinian violence. Describing the significance of Temple Mount to the Jewish people and their history, he said it is the exact point to which every Jew is commanded to pray towards three times a day and is the holiest site to his people.

From 1948 after Jordan occupied East Jerusalem during Israel's war of independence, he said the Jordanians decimated Jewish life in Jerusalem and, despite their commitment, forbid Jews from accessing their holy site. They also destroyed synagogues and desecrated Jewish cemeteries, he added. ... Minister Ben-Gvir's recent visit to the Temple Mount was not an intrusion into al-Aqsa and was in line with the status quo ... "Who is truly changing the status quo," he asked, pointing out that the Palestinians, rather than protecting the sanctity of the site, have turned the Temple Mount into a battleground where mosques are used as arsenals with rocks and explosives to attack Jewish visitors and security forces. ...

**Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud (Jordan)** condemned the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, stressing that violating the sanctity of the Mosque is provocative and deplorable. ... he stressed the importance of restoring the pre-2000 situation, which guarantees that Al-Aqsa Mosque and Haram Al-Sharif in its area of 144,000 square metres is an exclusive place of worship for Muslims, with Jerusalem Awqaf and the Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Administration being the sole authorities empowered to manage Al-Haram Al-Sharif and regulate entry thereto. ... He noted that the storming by Minister Ben-Gvir took place without the agreement of the Awqaf Administration, which stands in violation of the historic status quo acknowledged by Israel. He warned against the repercussions emanating from unilateral Israeli measures, aiming to impose new realities on the ground, and stressed the importance of relaunching negotiations between the parties, underscoring that the Palestinian question will continue to be the first central Arab question and the two-State solution is the only path for a comprehensive and just peace. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15167.doc.htm>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Iran: Guided Weapons

**Tom Randall (Conservative)** [112202] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent reports he has received on Hezbollah's reported acquisition of precision-guided missiles from Iran.

**David Rutley:** It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters. Iran's political, financial and military support to a number of militant groups, including Hizballah in Lebanon is unacceptable. We work closely with our partners to deter destabilising Iranian activity in the region, including through a range of sanctions designations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-12-16/112202>

### **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>

##### **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>

## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

**Assisted dying/assisted suicide** (closing date 20 January 2023)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/news/174845/mps-launch-new-inquiry-on-assisted-dyingassisted-suicide/>

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