



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Department for Health and Social Care

Improved system of organ use to save lives

... Patients waiting for organs will benefit from changes to organ transplant services designed to better match donated organs with recipients, increase the number of transplants and improve the patient experience.

The Organ Utilisation Group has produced the report, Honouring the gift of donation: utilising organs for transplant, which includes a number of recommendations - accepted by the government - designed to make sure as many donated organs as possible are used to save the lives of patients on the waiting list.

These recommendations include placing the patient at the centre of the service, developing better systems so more organs are used and sharing best practice to raise standards across transplant centres. ...

Recommendations to improve patient care include:

- patients and clinicians to work together on how they can communicate more throughout the process. This will include better evaluation of the whole experience, including the emotional and psychological pressures of waiting for an organ, rather than just the clinical outcome
- regular feedback from transplant centres to help those on the transplant list to better understand the clinical options available to them and make informed and evidence-based decisions
- more timely reviews if donated organs are declined and the sharing of best practice between centres to raise standards across the country

... Minister for Health Neil O'Brien said: ... We are taking forward recommendations which will ensure as many organs as possible are matched with the recipients who need them as well as improving the experience of waiting for a life saving organ. ...

Too often organs were not properly utilised and there were varying standards of performance and patient care. ...

Professor Sir Stephen Powis, co-chair of the Organ Utilisation Group said: ... Organ donation is a precious gift of life, helping to save or improve the lives of thousands of people each year. The recommendations in this report will drive improvements to the

transplantation service, ensuring that as many donated organs can be successfully transplanted as possible, and deliver real improvements for patients and their families, enabling them to have the best experience and outcomes possible. ...

Chief Executive Officer at NHS Blood and Transplant Wendy Clark said: Organ donation is a precious gift and we need to ensure that every organ that is safe to transplant is used to save lives. ...

Welsh Government Health Minister Eluned Morgan said: The Welsh Government ... welcome this report and will consider all the relevant recommendations as we deliver our Welsh donation and transplantation action plan.

Permanent Secretary for the Department of Health in Northern Ireland Peter May said: ... Organ donation is a key priority for my department and I look forward to working with colleagues across the UK to increase the number of organs available for those in need of a transplant and to improve the whole donation and transplantation journey. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improved-system-of-organ-use-to-save-lives>

Honouring the gift of donation: utilising organs for transplant – Report of the Organ Utilisation Group

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136967/Honouring-the-gift-of-donation-utilising-organs-for-transport-OUG-report-web-accessible.pdf

Supporting evidence

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/honouring-the-gift-of-donation-utilising-organs-for-transplant/supporting-evidence>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Politics and Government

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [142716] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the situation in Jenin.

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [142717] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the situation in Jenin.

David Rutley: The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out on 26 January 2023 that Israel has a right to self-defence but security operations must be in line with international law. Where security measures are required, we encourage Israel to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and the use of appropriate force. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate for swift, transparent investigations. We will 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/2023-02-08/142716>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-08/142717>

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon's comments, referred to above, can be read at <https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1618710372353208321>

The following two questions both received the same answer

UNRWA: Finance

Brendan O'Hara (SNP) [141549] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding provided by his Department to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Brendan O'Hara (SNP) [141550] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to increase his Department's funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

David Rutley: We are longstanding supporters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise that UNRWA needs to be on a more secure financial footing to ensure that Palestinian refugees' basic needs are met. To that end, the UK is working with UNRWA and other donors to help ensure its sustainability. In the financial year 2022/2023, the UK provided UNRWA with £18.7 million, including £13 million for UNRWA's programme budget for spend in OPTs, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; £2 million for work in Gaza and £3.7 million for food assistance - both under UNRWA's OPTs emergency appeal. Decisions on funding for FY 23/24 have not yet been finalised.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-07/141549>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-07/141550>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Politics and Government

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL5404] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the report by the International Crisis Group Managing Palestine's Looming Leadership Transition, published on 1 February; and what steps, if any, they have taken with international partners to call for a democratic election process for President Abbas' successor.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly remind the Palestinian leadership of the need for democratic renewal through free and fair national elections held across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, as set out in the Oslo Accords. The report from International Crisis Group is well-researched and raises important questions about the ability of the Palestinian people's ability to enjoy their democratic rights. We do not necessarily agree with every recommendation in the report but we share the view that those who come to power through elections "enjoy the greatest possible degree of popular legitimacy".

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-03/hl5404>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/238-palestines-looming-leadership-transition_0.pdf

Israel: Palestinians

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL5405] To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Foreign Secretary spoke to the US Secretary of State immediately before or after his visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah on 30–31 January; what discussions they have had with the government of the United States regarding initiatives to promote (1) peace in the region, and (2) a two-state solution; and what discussions, if any, they have had with

the government of Israel to express opposition to (a) further settlement expansion, (b) moves towards annexation, (c) demolitions and evictions, and (d) changes to the status quo at holy sites.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain in close contact with international partners, including the US, to promote peace in the region and to de-escalate current tensions. We have a regular dialogue with the Israeli authorities on issues relating to the occupation, and regularly raise our clear opposition to settlement, evictions, demolitions and annexation. We want to see a contiguous West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as part of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on pre-1967 lines. The UK is also committed to working with all parties to uphold the Status Quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem to ensure the safety and the security of all who visit and worship there. I reinforced these messages in my meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during my visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January. Furthermore, the Foreign Secretary discussed the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the US Secretary of State during a call on 12 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-03/hl5405>

Russia: Ukraine

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL5403] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with international partners about the Prime Minister of Israel acting as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is playing a leading role driving the international response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, regularly meeting and speaking with international partners, including Israel. It is for Ukraine to determine its position in any negotiations, just as it is for Ukraine to determine its democratic future. The UK, together with our partners, will continue to provide enduring diplomatic, military and economic support to Ukraine to ensure that it is in the best possible position to deliver a sustainable and just peace.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-03/hl5403>

House of Commons Library

The Middle East in 2023

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9702/CBP-9702.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK stands ready to facilitate discussions and dialogue between Israelis and the Palestinians: UK Statement at the UN Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the Security Council briefing on the Middle East

... This statement sets out the international community's continued commitment to a two-state solution based on 1967 lines, and urges an end to Israeli settlement activities, and the prevention of terrorism. All parties must desist from unilateral measures that further undermine peace, stability and the two-state solution.

President, violence and instability in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has led to further loss of life. Ten Israelis have been killed in two abhorrent terror attacks in 2023. The UK condemns all forms of terror, for which there is no justification. Since the start of the year, 44 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces. This includes 11 children. Israel must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire, and the

Palestinian Authority must urgently resume full security cooperation, and renounce and confront terror. We also condemn the indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza on 11 and 12 February towards civilian populations. This escalating cycle of violence must be brought to an end as swiftly as possible, particularly ahead of upcoming religious festivals.

Second, the UK condemns Israel's announcement to legalise ten outposts and advance up to 10,000 units in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As set out by the British Foreign Secretary and our partners in the quint statement, the UK strongly opposes these unilateral actions which exacerbate tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Settlements and outposts are not only contrary to international law, but they also undermine the prospects for peace. The UK calls on Israel to reverse these decisions. I also condemn increasing settler violence, including the killing of Mithqal Rayyan on 11 February. Perpetrators of violence must face justice.

Thirdly, the UK urges Israel to avoid measures that could amount to collective punishment against Palestinians, particularly punitive demolitions. These cause unnecessary suffering and contribute to the cycle of violence; four Palestinians have been killed during punitive demolition operations so far this year.

In conclusion, President, restoring stability and securing peace is still possible but will require effort from all sides. The UK stands ready to facilitate discussions and dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians, and remains firm in its belief that a negotiated two state solution, based on 1967 lines with Jerusalem as a shared capital, is the only way to ensure a lasting peace, security and prosperity between the parties. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-stands-ready-to-facilitate-discussions-and-dialogue-between-israelis-and-the-palestinians-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

United Nations

Security Council Expresses 'Concern', 'Dismay' over Israeli Settlement Expansions, Adopting First Presidential Statement on Question of Palestine in Years

The Security Council today adopted a presidential statement [S/PRST/2023/1] expressing its deep concern and dismay over Israel's recent announcement of further construction and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as the "legalization" of settlement outposts, as United Nations senior officials briefed members on the latest developments on the ground. ...

Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said there has been a surge in violence, including some of the deadliest incidents in nearly 20 years. "I am concerned that developments on the ground are continuing their negative trajectory, gaining in both pace and intensity," he said, adding that unilateral actions are moving the parties further apart, exacerbating tensions and driving the conflict. The United Nations, along with regional and international partners, are working with all parties to de-escalate the situation. Responsible leadership is urgently needed, he said, calling on the parties to match security efforts with political steps that can halt the negative slide, bring hope and restore prospects for a viable two-State solution. Since his last briefing, there have alarming numbers of fatalities, including 40 Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank. In the same period, 10 Israelis — including one woman, three children and one security personnel — as well as one foreign national, were killed.

Amid the mounting violence, he said there has also been a concerning deterioration in relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Following a 26 January Israeli search-and-arrest operation in the Jenin refugee camp, the Palestinian Authority announced that security coordination with Israel "no longer exists". Then, on the heels of a 27 January terrorist attack in Jerusalem, the Israeli Security Cabinet announced a series of measures, including steps to reinforce security, strengthen Israeli settlements, and put

punitive measures on the perpetrators of attacks and their families. In addition, the financial implications of other decisions by the Israeli Government — such as an increase in monthly deductions from clearance revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority — clearly contribute to undermining the Authority's stability, he said. Over the reporting period, he said, the Government of Israel also announced significant decisions related to settlement advancements and settlement outposts. ...

Turning briefly to the situation in the Golan, he said the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has been generally maintained despite continued violations by both parties of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces. He urged a halt to settlement-expansion, as well as demolitions and evictions, which fuel tensions. "With the holy month of Ramadan once again coinciding with the Passover and Easter holidays this year, joint efforts are needed to ensure that this period passes safely and peacefully for all," ...

Leni Stenseth, Deputy Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), told Council members that, while competing global priorities and shifting regional dynamics have "almost annihilated" any remaining attention to the plight of Palestine refugees, the political, socioeconomic and security conditions surrounding them continue to deteriorate. Violence in the West Bank hampers UNRWA's operations and puts a heavy burden on the Palestine refugees the Agency serves, she stressed ... Turning to the situation in the Gaza Strip, she said years of blockade and conflicts have isolated the population from the rest of the world, "creating a human tragedy hard to describe". ...

She went on to say that, in Syria, the recent devastating earthquake is adding to the hardship and despair ... Some 62,000 Palestine refugees living in four camps were affected, with 90 per cent of them in need of emergency assistance even before the earthquake. ... Across all fields, Palestine refugees feel abandoned by the international community," she stressed. ...

By providing public-like services — including education, health and social services — the Agency has contributed to the human development of Palestine refugees and helps maintain a relatively stable environment around them. ... She called on all Member States to continue supporting UNRWA politically and financially, stressing that there can be neither peace nor security in the region without the fulfilment of all people's basic rights, including those of Palestinian refugees. ...

Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States), voicing deep concern over spiralling violence across Israel, the West Bank and Jerusalem, strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Israel, including an attack outside a synagogue in East Jerusalem on 27 January and an attack on civilians in Jerusalem on 10 February. The deliberate targeting of innocent civilians is unconscionable, she asserted, supporting Israel's right to self-defence. Rockets launched against civilian areas and other forms of violence create a cycle of increasingly dangerous escalations, she warned, calling on all parties to restore calm, break the cycle of violence and refrain from any unilateral or divisive actions. She strongly opposed Israel's announcement that it will advance thousands of settlement units, noting that these unilateral measures exacerbate tensions between both parties, undermine the prospect of a two-State solution and are detrimental to Israel's long-term stability. She also called for predictable funding to UNRWA. ...

Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) voiced support for today's presidential statement, while also condemning Israeli strikes on Syria as another serious destabilizing factor in the Middle East. The lack of political prospects and ongoing unilateral steps by Israel undermine not only the prospects for a solution, but trust in the peace process itself, which leads to radicalization on both sides. ... Urging international donors to respond to UNRWA's emergency appeal for \$2.7 million to assist refugee victims of the recent earthquake, he also underscored the need to revive the Middle East peace process with a central focus on a two-State solution. ... He added that it is also dangerous to push for Arab-Israeli normalization while circumventing a fair solution to the Palestinian question ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom) ... said 10 Israelis have been killed in two abhorrent terror attacks in 2023. Since the start of the year, 44 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces, including 11 children. ... Condemning increasing settler violence ... she stressed that perpetrators of violence must face justice. Against this backdrop, she called on Israel to avoid measures that could amount to collective punishment against Palestinians ... [\[click here to read this statement in full\]](#)

Nicolas De Rivière (France) ... [said] France will never recognize the illegal annexation of territories ... He strongly condemned the terrorist attacks over the past several weeks, noting that Israelis and Palestinians should have the right to live in peace and security. ...

Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland) ... echo[ed] concern about Israel's announcement that it will build nearly 10,000 new housing units in settlements and retroactively legalize 10 outposts in the Occupied Palestinian Territory — unilateral measures which risk further exacerbating tensions and endanger a negotiated two-State solution. ... Calling on Israel to respect its obligations under international humanitarian law, including issuing building permits to the Palestinian population, she condemned attacks on civilians and emphasized the need for adequate and predictable financial support for UNRWA ... she also called for elections throughout the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and urged all parties to adhere strictly to the historic status quo on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem. ...

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, stated: “While the killing, the pain, the displacement, the demolitions are the same, we are fast approaching a breaking point, that no one should care to explore.” Despair is mounting with every child killed, with every house demolished and with every family displaced ... Warning of an approaching “point of no return”, he said every action and decision matters. ... “Do not become numb,” he told the Council, noting that Palestinians will not accept coexistence with oppression and occupation.

He went on to stress that Israel continues to pursue colonization and annexation — with predictable implications of gross human rights abuses, human suffering and violence. Condemning its colonial and discriminatory policies, he called for amplified international mobilization. ... The Palestinian people deserve freedom, as well as an end to the historic injustice they endured 75 years ago and which is still ongoing today. “All peoples in our region and beyond deserve to live in peace,” he stressed, calling for freedom instead of occupation, coexistence in lieu of supremacy and peace in the place of apartheid.

Gilad Erdan (Israel) said the Palestinian Authority teaches generations that violently murdering Jews yields infinite glory, that Israel has no right to exist and that martyrdom “is the only way”. While Council members can see this with their own eyes, none of the dismay or concern expressed in today's joint statement is directed at this incitement. Describing the Palestinian Authority as a terrorist entity that, in 2022 alone, rewarded killers of Israelis and their families with \$175 million, he said the UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General should take note of this if the Agency needs money. The world is familiar with the Palestinian “pay-for-slay” system, but is willing to let it continue without condemnation. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority incentivizes the murder of innocent Israelis while rejecting every peace agreement brought to the table.

Describing that incentivization of terror as a fundamental breach of international law and the main roadblock to peace, he stressed that, until Palestinian children are no longer brainwashed to hate and murder Israelis, “blood will still spill needlessly in our region”. ... The Palestinians' main goal remains to prevent the existence of a Jewish State, he said, asking what Israel is expected to do when faced with a terrorist authority that “constantly strives for our delegitimization”. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15203.doc.htm>

The presidential statement referred to above is not yet available online.

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel: UN human rights chief expresses concern over proposed legislative changes, urges pause

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk today expressed concern that several sets of proposed legislative changes currently being considered in Israel's parliament - the Knesset - would, taken together, pose serious risks to the effectiveness of the judiciary to defend the rule of law, human rights and judicial independence.

The proposals in their current form would, through a variety of measures, limit the Supreme Court's ability to subject legislation to judicial review and would require either a super majority of judges, or even unanimity, for the top court to strike down legislation. They would also allow the Knesset to reinstate, by simple majority, any legislation the Supreme Court struck down, and limit the bases upon which laws could be reviewed.

"Breaking from decades of settled practice, such a law would drastically undermine the ability of the judiciary to vindicate individual rights and to uphold the rule of law as an effective institutional check on executive and legislative power," said Türk. "Experience in Israel, and around the world, has shown the enduring value of a judiciary that can independently hold the other branches of Government to the fundamental legal standards of a society set out in its basic laws."

The current proposals would also change the judicial selection process by altering the composition of the judicial selection committee and changing the process of appointment of Supreme Court judges. While currently independent judges and lawyers comprise the majority of the selection committee, the proposals would move towards much greater political influence over this process. The proposed changes would allow a simple majority of five out of nine members of the committee to confirm appointments of Supreme Court judges - rather than the current seven out of nine - further deepening governmental influence in the appointments process.

"I am concerned that, if passed, these changes risk weakening human rights protections for all, but especially the most vulnerable communities and groups less able to vindicate their rights through representation in the executive and legislative branches of Government," said the High Commissioner. These include, among others, Arab Israelis, asylum seekers and LGBTI+ people.

Vast demonstrations of tens of thousands of people in recent weeks against the proposed changes, including in Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem, illustrate the extent of public disquiet with the proposed changes.

"Changes going to the heart of a country's long-standing constitutional structure, and which affect well-established institutional safeguards, should only be undertaken following extensive consultation and with broad political and public consensus," urged the High Commissioner.

"Given the degree of public and political concern, I call on the Government of Israel to pause the proposed legislative changes and open them up for wider debate and reflection. Such issues at the heart of rule of law deserve the fullest consideration in order to ensure that any changes promote, rather than diminish, the ability of the judiciary - and other branches of Government - to protect the rights of all people in Israel," he added.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/israel-un-human-rights-chief-expresses-concern-over-proposed-legislative>

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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>

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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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 8 days**

Equality and Human Rights Commission Statutory Review (closing date 1 March 2023)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-statutory-review>

Draft guidance: charities use of social media (closing date 14 March 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media>

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