



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Radicalism

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [155222] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings on far-right extremism in Hope Not Hate's report entitled State of Hate 2023; and if she will make a statement.

**Tom Tugendhat:** The Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

The important role of the Commission for Countering Extremism continues. The Home Secretary appointed Robin Simcox as Commissioner for the Commission for Countering Extremism in July 2022 for a three-year term to ensure vital continuity in the work of the Commission.

We continue to work with law enforcement agencies to deliver against the national intelligence picture and increase understanding of new and emerging radicalising threats to society. The Government's assessment of the threat from terrorism is under continual review. This includes the national threat level, which is set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and the Security Service. The current level is substantial, which means an attack is likely. It covers all forms of terrorism, including extreme right-wing terrorism, and is based on a wide range of information. This also includes our threat agnostic counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. In October 2022, we announced that CONTEST being updated to protect the public from new and emerging threats to our way of life.

Hope Not Hate's State of Hate 2023 report is welcome, and will be considered alongside other evidence as part of the Government's ongoing review process. We do not believe a Ministerial Statement is required at this time.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-28/155222>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>

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## House of Lords Written Answer

### Israel: Palestinians

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative)** [HL5852] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the raid by the Israeli military in Nablus on 22 February to arrest three wanted militants, which reportedly resulted in the killing of 10 Palestinians and the injuring of over 100.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon] set out the UK's consistent position in a statement 23 February. Israel has a right to self-defence but its security operations must also be in line with international law. Where security measures are required, we encourage Israel to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and uses only appropriate force. When there are accusations of excessive force, we advocate for swift, transparent investigations. The Israeli security forces must provide adequate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and show restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-23/hl5852>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1628673138673287168>

and

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1628673237235249152>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### Joint statement on Israel and the OPTs

A joint statement with France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs):

France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom, express their grave concern in the face of the continuing, growing violence in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We strongly condemn recent terrorist attacks that killed Israeli citizens. Terrorism can under no circumstance be justified.

We also strongly condemn indiscriminate violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including destruction of homes and properties.

We are saddened by all loss of life. These acts can lead nowhere, except to more violence. Those responsible must face full accountability and legal prosecution. All unilateral actions that threaten peace and incitement to violence must cease.

There has been a spark of hope coming from the recent meeting in Aqaba, where Israelis and Palestinians both affirmed reciprocal commitments, including on efforts to de-escalate and work towards a just and lasting peace. Such a result is a first in many years, and we thank the United States of America and Kingdom of Jordan for making it possible. We urge all parties to refrain from making this fragile process derail, and call on all parties to make good on the commitments they made in the Aqaba meeting by de-escalating in words and deeds and to restore calm, in order for those efforts to blossom and to make the next meeting in Egypt a success.

There can be no desirable outcome other than a just and lasting peace for all. In this regard, we also reiterate our strong opposition to all unilateral measures that undermine the Two-state solution, including expansion of settlements which are illegal under international law. We urge the Israeli government to reverse its recent decision to advance the construction of more than 7,000 settlement building units across the occupied West

Bank and to legalize settlement outposts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-israel-and-palestine>

## British Consulate General Jerusalem

### **Diplomatic missions visit the Palestinian community of Huwara**

Representatives from Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK visited today the Palestinian community of Huwara to express their deepest condolences to the victims of the attacks on 26 February and condemn in the strongest terms settler violence.

In Huwara, diplomats were briefed by the community about the extreme violence unleashed on Sunday when hundreds of Israeli settlers attacked the village and the nearby communities of Za'tara, Beita and Burin, resulting in the killing of one Palestinian and injuring at least 409 others, including 90 children and 136 women. The community members also testified to the horror they experienced as settlers went on a rampage and set their homes and property on fire. Visiting diplomats expressed their deepest condolences to the victims.

The abovementioned representatives condemn in the strongest terms the heinous and violent acts committed by settlers. The representatives call on Israel, as the occupying power, to take all necessary measures to protect Palestinians from settler violence and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account. Israel's failure to protect Palestinians and prosecute violent settlers is particularly worrying at a point in time when settler violence has reached unprecedented levels.

Settler violence is a result of Israel's continued settlement activities. Settlements are illegal under international law, fuel tensions and undermine the viability of the two-state solution and the prospect for a lasting peace in the region.

The abovementioned representatives condemn the killing of Palestinians and Israelis alike, reject all incitement to violence and urge all parties to exercise restraint.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/diplomatic-missions-visit-the-palestinian-community-of-huwara>

## United Nations

### **Musicians promote 'empathy, fraternity, solidarity' between Israelis and Palestinians**

A UN-supported ensemble is creating a "discourse of music, harmony, reconciliation, empathy, fraternity, and solidarity" in the hope of bridging historical divides between the Israeli and Arab people ...

The West-Eastern Divan Ensemble, led by the orchestra's concertmaster Michael Barenboim, draws upon players of Arab and Israeli heritage.

Founded in 1999, the orchestra's origins lie in the conversations between its creators, Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim. Over the course of their friendship, the Palestinian author-scholar and Israeli conductor-pianist discussed ideas on music, culture and humanity.

In their exchanges, they realized the urgent need for an alternative way to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The opportunity to do so came when Barenboim and Said initiated a workshop for young musicians using their experience as a model.

"We have musicians that come from countries that are in conflict with each other in one way or another. We show that by cooperating in a project such as this one, it's possible to bring together people from states which are in conflict so that they're able to work together

towards a common goal," said Michael Barenboim.

"I think that's showing an alternative model and alternative way of thinking for the Middle East region. Which is not based on arms, bombs, war, blood and conflict, but based on understanding, dialogue and listening to each other. When you play music, you play, but you also have to listen to others," he added. ...

Sindy Faisal Abdel Wahab from Egypt plays violin in the ensemble.

"I started playing with the West-Eastern Divan Ensemble in 2013, and it was the first time for me to meet musicians from other Arab countries and Israel. It was a surprise to me, and I was curious about how we would deal with each other, how we would play together and understand each other," he said, adding that "I discovered that Israelis have a similar culture to us, but politics is what separates people. When we play together, we forget everything."

David Strongin, who is from Israel, also plays the violin; he believes that the mission of the orchestra is for musicians from different backgrounds to play music together.

"Through music, one can do everything. You don't need words, and don't need any text. You play together, you learn to listen to each other. And this is actually a great help also for life for us as human beings, because we learn how to listen to each other." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134107>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Statement by High Commissioner on report on the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

... The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a tragedy.

A tragedy, above all, for the Palestinian people. Over half a century of occupation has led to widening dispossession, deepening deprivation and recurring and severe violations of their rights, including the right to life. Nobody could wish to live this way – or imagine that forcing people into conditions of such desperation can lead to an enduring solution.

The people of Israel also suffer from this situation: insecurity, pain, loss and fear. They have a right to live in peace, in their State – just as Palestinians do, in a State that is, finally, recognised and viable. ...

2022 saw both the highest number of Palestinians killed by Israeli Security Forces in the past 17 years, and the highest number of Israelis killed since 2016. ...

On Sunday night, two Israeli brothers, aged 19 and 21 years old, were killed by a Palestinian in the West Bank town of Huwwara.

Hours later, hundreds of Israeli settlers rioted across the area. One Palestinian man was shot dead and two others were shot and wounded. A third person was stabbed, and a fourth badly beaten. Palestinian homes, shops and dozens of vehicles were set on fire or damaged. The Palestinian Red Crescent said 390 people were wounded in the rampage; three ambulances were attacked.

The attack was strongly condemned by the President of Israel, who called it "criminal violence against innocents," which "harms us as a moral society and a lawful country."

Yet, the Finance Minister publicly called for the town of Huwwara to be "wiped out", an unfathomable statement of incitement to violence and hostility. ...

My report A/HRC/52/75 finds that over the reporting period, lethal force has been frequently employed by the Israeli Security Forces, regardless of the level of threat – and, at times, even as an initial measure, rather than as last resort. My Office has also documented several cases of apparent extrajudicial, targeted killings by members of the ISF.

The report finds that 131 Palestinians were killed by ISF personnel over the past year in a context of law enforcement – that is, outside any context of hostilities. This includes 65 people who we understand were not armed, nor engaged in any attacks or clashes. Since

2017, fewer than 15% of such killings have been investigated, and fewer than 1% led to an indictment. ...

Collective punishments, which are prohibited by international law, are increasingly imposed on Palestinians by Israel. The blockade of Gaza, which restricts 2 million people to that territory, has been in effect for 16 years.

Currently, 967 Palestinians are being held in what is termed administrative detention, in which people are arbitrarily detained for often lengthy periods without charge or trial. ...

Unlawful killings, use of force, and torture and ill-treatment by the Palestinian Security Forces also meet with impunity. The same is true of the Gaza de facto authorities.

More than 270 Israeli settlements encroach on and fragment Palestine. The Separation Wall divides thousands of Palestinians from each other and their lands. ...

I would like to highlight some of the recurring recommendations from the human rights system that would make an immediate difference.

Take steps to ensure that ISF actions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, operate within the boundaries set by international human rights law for law enforcement operations.

Treat all cases of violence equally. The law is not law if it applies only to one side. ...

All sides should adhere completely to the spirit and wording of the [agreement](#) reached at the Summit in Aqaba on 26 February ...

Prevent or, when they occur, investigate and prosecute abuses at checkpoints. End the blockade of Gaza. ...

And tug young people – indeed, people of every age and political opinion – away from further violence and extremism and the illusion that this represents any solution. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/03/statement-high-commissioner-report-occupied-palestinian-territory>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/advance-version/A\\_HRC\\_52\\_75\\_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/advance-version/A_HRC_52_75_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx)

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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>

#### **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

#### **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

**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