



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Jews

Ruth Jones (Labour) [153983] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has taken recent steps with the Welsh Government to raise awareness of the contribution made by the Jewish community in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

Muslims

Ruth Jones (Labour) [153982] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has taken recent steps with the Welsh Government to raise awareness of the contribution made by the Muslim community in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) UK.

Sikhs

Ruth Jones (Labour) [153984] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps he has taken, including with the Welsh Government, to raise awareness of the role of the Sikh Community in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

Dehenna Davison: Faith and Belief is a devolved matter. This department engages regularly with the Welsh Government on a variety of matters
Nationally, we recognise the contribution our faith and belief groups make. We remain committed to celebrating and promoting their contribution across the whole of the UK. ...

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153983>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153982>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153984>

Discrimination

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [153942] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle (a) discrimination on the basis of (i) race and (ii) religion and (b) the impact of that discrimination on victims.

Tom Tugendhat: The Government is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination, including that based on race and religion, which has no place in our society. We can achieve this by tackling discriminatory behaviour where it might exist and adopting policies that build trust and promote fairness.

We have one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect communities from hostility, violence, and bigotry, and to deal with the perpetrators of hate crime.

Inclusive Britain was published by the Cabinet Office, in response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in March 2022. It sets out their action plan to tackle negative disparities, promote unity and build a fairer Britain for all.

The Government Equalities Office lead on discrimination policy, including the Equalities Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153942>

Inclusive Britain, Referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report, referred to above, can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

Education: Ethnic Groups

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [152296] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to adopt the 18-plus-one ethnic data recording system used in the census across all education (a) services and (b) providers.

Nick Gibb: The Department follows the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and Government Statistical Service harmonised standards for collecting and/or presenting statistics. Detail on these codes and information on how the codes were chosen is available at:

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups>

The ONS lead cross government work to harmonise data, including on ethnicity. The Department continues to be part of that work and will look to introduce any recommendations. Information on harmonisation of data is available at:

<https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/gss-harmonisation-team-workplan/#ethnicity>

The Department publishes the data code sets that are accepted in data that must be returned to the Department as part of the Common Basic Data Set (CBDS). This is accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database>

The CBDS is used by developers of school management information systems and incorporated into their products. The CBDS lists what are now the 19-plus-one ethnic code sets along with a more granular list of options. These options allow data subjects to select an ethnicity that most closely matches their ethnicity. Guidance instructs schools and Local Authorities that they should not ascribe ethnicity to an individual. Instead, it must come from the parent, guardian, or person themselves.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-24/152296>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Jackson Carlaw (Conservative) [S6M-08107] Jewish Blind Society (Scotland) – That the Parliament praises the outstanding work of the Jewish Blind Society (Scotland); understands that the key objective of the society is to enhance the quality of life for individuals who have a visual, physical or age-related impairment and people who are living with a chronic illness; notes that the Jewish Blind Society (Scotland) was initially set up to provide care, entertainment and outings for members of the Jewish Community who are living with a visual impairment; understands that its range of activities has expanded over time because healthcare improvements with eye surgery and treatments mean that there is a reduced number of people for the group to support directly, with the society now raising funds for organisations such as Jewish Care Scotland and Chai Cancer Care to help them deliver services to people in need; further understands that, as part of the joint working with Jewish Care Scotland, the Jewish Blind Society (Scotland) is playing an important role in making individuals aware of financial support grants, where they meet the eligibility criteria, and establishing strong referral pathways for people to submit applications, and believes that the Jewish Blind Society (Scotland) has been providing vital support for more than half a century and is based at the Walton Community Care Centre in Giffnock.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08107>

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Holocaust

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Unveiling a plaque from the Association of Jewish Refugees at the British Embassy Vienna: Ambassador to Austria and UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Vienna, Lindsay Skoll CMG

In 1938/9, a team led by Thomas Kendrick and George Berry, as well as Reverends Hugh Grimes and Frederick Collard, worked in defiance of their instructions and in danger to their lives to provide travel documents and baptismal certificates for Jews desperate to cross Austria's borders to safety. ...

As we reflect on the 85th anniversary of the Anschluss this year and the horrors that followed for Jewish people in Austria, I just wanted to share a little more of the largely forgotten story we are remembering today and which I believe exemplified hope, and faith in life. It's a remarkable true account illustrating the best of the human spirit at the worst of times. It's about how a British diplomatic team fuelled by moral bravery and unwillingness to simply standby made an incredible and enduring difference.

From March 1938 onwards, as the British Embassy was downgraded first to a Legation and then Consulate-General under Nazi occupation, a dedicated team of diplomats, consular and church officials converted their horror at the persecution of Jews into decisive action. The passport team led by Thomas Kendrick and then which became 25 strong under George Berry - as well as Reverend Hugh Grimes and then Reverend Frederick Collard of the Anglican Christ Church in Vienna - worked together in defiance of their instructions and in danger to their own lives to provide travel documents and baptismal certificates for Jews desperate to cross Austria's borders to safety. While Grimes and Collard carried out hundreds of baptisms per day in order to make it easier for Jews to be allowed to leave the country, the diplomatic team worked around the clock to exploit all possible loopholes for issuing travel permits and emergency passports, even going as far

as issuing fake documents. ...

I have read through a number of our staff records from the time – they talk of the terrible Nazi harassment of those Jewish people queuing outside forced to scrub pavements or wash Nazi vehicles in the pouring rain. The deluge of applicants was huge and those who could not be seen that day were given a numbered and dated ticket for the next. ... The “Schuld”, the guilt not to be able to do more, pervaded everything. Every day they heard stories of Jewish sons, daughters, husbands who had been picked up and bundled into trucks and then nothing. It was the hearing nothing that was the worst.” Both Collard and Kendrick were separately interrogated and beaten in the Nazi headquarters at the Hotel Metropole, whilst the Jewish-born verger of Christ Church was imprisoned and sent to Auschwitz where he died.

By the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the team had saved thousands of lives ...

For many today, I know it will be an emotional moment. As the granddaughter of a German Kind, no less for me. The celebration of life saved, when so many countless others could not be. An event of collective memory and thanksgiving so appropriately on the Jewish festival day of Purim, which is all about the survival of Jews marked for death in the 5th century, and symbolising triumph over adversity. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/unveiling-a-plaque-from-the-association-of-jewish-refugees-at-the-british-embassy-vienna>

TOP

Israel

House of Lords Debate

Israel and Palestine

col 767 Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty’s Government what steps they are taking, with international partners, to calm the violence and build a lasting peace between the government of Israel and the Palestinian people.

My Lords, in 1962 I had the great privilege of spending a term studying in Jerusalem. Signs of conflict were everywhere; there was barbed wire across the streets and pockmarks in the walls made by bullets from recent fighting. The time was tense and difficult. But now, more than 60 years later, the situation is even worse—the tension greater, the violence more bitter. ...

It is understandable that the eyes of the world have been elsewhere this year ... but during this time tension in Israel has risen and violence has increased. In January, a Palestinian boy throwing stones in the West Bank was killed. Then in a raid by security forces, nine Palestinians were killed in Jenin. On the same day, a 13 year-old boy shot seven Israelis outside a synagogue in east Jerusalem. The following day, rockets were fired by Hamas from the Gaza Strip and there was a further exchange of fire. A few days later, there was a major raid in Nablus, in which 10 Palestinians were killed and more than 100 injured. A few days after that, a Palestinian killed two Israeli settlers. This was followed by settlers running amok, torching homes and cars, with the IDF apparently unwilling or unable to stop it. Once again, families are left bereaved, young Palestinians are left even more desperate, and more Israeli peace-lovers are left in despair at the present Government.

After that outbreak of violence, Israeli and Palestinian delegates made a joint commitment to take immediate steps to end it. This followed talks in Aqaba between the parties, alongside the United States and Egyptian officials. The announcement said that Palestinian and Israeli sides “affirmed their commitment to all previous agreements

between them, and to work towards just and lasting peace”. ...

... what role are our own Government playing in this process? ...

col 768 Studies of those who survived harsh imprisonment during World War Two showed that the people most likely to survive were those who had something to live for ...

The idea of a single state, once dismissed by most people, has surfaced again. Is this a serious idea—a single state with equality for all its citizens? ...

I recently asked a friend living in Jerusalem if he could find any hope in the present situation. He wrote that he looked to the individuals committed to peace and reconciliation, “the mother of an Israeli soldier killed at a checkpoint in the Second Intifada joining a group of bereaved from both sides of conflict and becoming best friends with a Palestinian man whose daughter was killed at a checkpoint by an Israeli soldier, or the man at the Tent of Nations who is in the longest-running legal dispute to keep the family olive farm despite beatings, intimidation and Kafkaesque legal dealings”. His mantra was: “We refuse to be enemies”. These are people who belong to the Parents Circle-Families Forum—PCFF ...
col 769 However, apparently even the PCFF is being threatened with tough new restrictions on its activities by Israel’s recently elected coalition Government. They are planning to curtail the organisation’s access to high schools where, for years, bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families have been allowed to meet groups of teenagers before they are called up for any service. ...

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): ... Lord Harries of Pentregarth ... will be aware that one of the core prayers we recite in the Jewish religion, which some people recite three times a day, has the words: “He who makes peace in his high places, may he make peace upon us and upon all Israel”. ...

I am also grateful to the authorities for moving it from yesterday, when I believe it was originally scheduled to take place, because yesterday was the Jewish festival of Purim, where, incidentally, and most unusually, a requirement is to drink a lot of alcohol. So it would not have been a great day for me to be standing up in your Lordships’ House. As with many Jewish festivals, we celebrated the fact that evil people did not overthrow and kill the local Jewish population, as they sought to do. We were saved by a clever bit of manoeuvring by Esther, a Jewess who achieved favour in high places. It is a longer story, but we will leave it at that.

None the less, Jewish people have always been on the defensive and, not surprisingly, concerned for their own survival. When I was in Manchester city centre recently with my youngest daughter, we passed a demonstration with a red, green, black and white flag. They were chanting, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”. My daughter asked me, “What does that mean?” I had to explain to her that this was a group of people on UK soil seeking to wipe out the Jewish state of Israel. Israel faces similar threats now, some organised and promoted by Hamas and PFLP, and some random, such as the killing last month of the brothers, Hillel and Yagael Yaniv. ...

col 770 I am not convinced that the UK Government, or any Government, can do as much as we would like in the cause of peace. It is the people, the individuals, who can do so much. ...

We continue to abhor the fact that at least 31 Palestinian schools are named after terrorists and, likewise, that an Israeli Minister seems to call for the wipeout of a Palestinian village. This was rightly condemned by the head of the IDF and others in Israel. ...

Lord Turnberg (Labour): ... Once again, the vicious cycle of violence has rapidly spun out of control: there have been 550 terrorist attacks, and too many Israeli and Palestinian deaths, in the last 12 months alone. ...

Israel agreed to stop all West Bank settlement activity for six months at the recent meeting of security officials in Aqaba. Of course, that was immediately derided by Hamas and right-wingers in the Israeli Government. But that should not detract from what was a remarkable step for the first time in many years. ...

col 771 However, we seem to have ignored one resource, which should be called upon

now: the Arab citizens of Israel, who make up over 20% of the population. We have heard a little about them. They overwhelmingly want to see a two-state solution, according to all of the polls, but they live uncomfortably between the two sides. ...

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat): ... Israel today has the most extreme Government in its history. *Haaretz* calls it a “Government of darkness”, as right-wing politicians from parties that are overtly Jewish supremacist, anti-Arab, anti-women and homophobic dominate it. ... These extremist Ministers now have major powers over the Occupied Territories, as authority has been transferred from military to civilian rule, contravening international law on occupation. ...

... I was impressed by those on both sides who were working together for solutions and peace. For example, there were the heroic doctors working in the underresourced Palestinian hospital in Jerusalem. There was the courage of relief and grass-roots support agencies, many of which are now banned organisations—and many of them actually Israeli—which were also working for peace. ... There was the determination of a family in the Hebron hills living in a cave, their previous homes having been demolished so many times that they believed that that was the only way they could remain living in their current home.

But in spite of this, a massive expansion of settlements is planned, even though there is increased settler violence, which we were told has certainly been ignored by the authorities. ...

col 772 Humanitarian support and medical supplies are urgently needed. Funding for the relief agencies and grass-roots organisations which deliver the aid and support is also needed. ... I know much good work of this kind that goes on, but it is ruined when we get the provocative statements and the ambitions, particularly of the Ministers, Gvir and Smotrich. ...

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench): ... It is easy to despair, but the hard fact is that there will be no stability and security in that region on the present basis—no number of Abraham accords, no amount of crackdowns by Israeli forces in the Occupied Territories, no expansion of illegal settlements will bring that security and stability about.

What should Britain with its historic responsibilities for the state of the region be doing in these unpromising circumstances? Faced with Israeli intransigence to even talking about a two-state solution, we should make it clear that we will legitimise nothing less than that. We should do so by recognising a Palestinian state. Plenty of others have already done so.

col 773 Our policy of endless prevarication over recognition is a bankrupt one. It was defensible while negotiations were under way ... but no longer even faintly credible. ...

We should engage at every level with the Government of Israel and with its people to demonstrate that we continue to value their state and their democracy, however much we may disagree with some of their present policies. That is no easy path to tread, but it is still worth while in my view.

Lord Stone of Blackheath (Non-affiliated): ... I have three questions for the Minister. First, will the UK Government recognise the state of Palestine? This would then mean that rather than a recognised state—Israel—trying to negotiate with a disparate people, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, you would have two states negotiating about their borders and citizenship et cetera, and it would make it more fair and viable. ...

Secondly, will the UK make good on its commitment as the first country on earth to endorse the concept of creating an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, which can engage a new generation, at scale, in the project of peacebuilding rather than allowing them to fall into their current despair and enmity ...

Thirdly, will the UK signal its strong opposition to any legislation that taxes, chills or delegitimises the work of Israeli-Palestinian civil society, which this Israeli Government are threatening to do? ...

col 774 Lord Polak (Conservative): ... I am concerned about comments in a recent letter from the Foreign Secretary effectively boycotting an Israeli Minister. It is not about whether one agrees with Minister Ben-Gvir. We work with all elected Israeli politicians, and we must be very careful not to go down a route of suggesting that our support for Israel is somehow conditional on any individual politician.

Could we be holding Israel to a different standard from other countries? It seems that we are fine working with Prime Minister Meloni's extreme right-wing Italian Government and with some kleptocracies and dictatorships, but working with elected officials who could be tried and found guilty in democratic Israel is somehow not fine. ...

There is a peace train that has left the station and is making its way across the region. The Abraham Accords train has visited Manama in Bahrain. It has travelled through Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the UAE and meandered through the hills of Jerusalem in Israel. It has reached Rabat in Morocco, and the journey has continued to Khartoum in Sudan. It is possible that the train is making its way to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

I urge my noble friend the Minister to ensure that His Majesty's Government will join the Negev Forum for regional co-operation, as has been suggested by my friend the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, who I met only last Friday. Can my noble friend tell me what we are doing to get that train to visit Ramallah? What are the Government doing to ensure that the Palestinians purchase a ticket to join this remarkable and exciting initiative? ...

col 775 Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale (Labour): ... Does the Minister agree that the recent upsurge in violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories is a tragic reminder to us all of the need for a political process leading to a two-state solution? ...

Does he agree that there are barriers to peace outside the control of Israel or the Palestinians? First and foremost is Iran, a state sponsor, supplier and facilitator of terrorism, from Hezbollah in Lebanon to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and cells in the West Bank. ...

Given the UK's deep and historic ties in the Middle East, it is disappointing that it was not even at the table in 2020 in negotiations on the normalisation of relations between Israel and four Arab states. What plans do the Government have, if any, to support further normalisation between Israel and the Arab world? ...

Baroness Ludford (Liberal Democrat): ... What attracted me and kept me engaged were the values of the State of Israel and its right, which I very strongly support, not only to exist but to exist in security, without its neighbours and others wishing and trying to wipe it off the map ... There is certainly inequality and discrimination within Israel against the Arab minority, but it is emphatically not an apartheid state. Israel is entitled to take military action by the IDF to defend itself and its citizens from attack and, although there have been excesses and wrongdoing by the IDF, the motivation for its action is qualitatively different from the terrorist attacks on civilians by Palestinian militants and the glorification of terror, including by the Palestinian Authority. ...

col 776 The present coalition Government Mr Netanyahu leads go way beyond even the tolerable, containing far-right extremists and racists, and they are perpetrating or being apologists for some utterly disgraceful actions and rhetoric about Palestinians and Arab Israelis. The Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel are appalled at the violent attacks by settlers on Palestinians in Hawara, and indeed any settler violence.

Israelis opposed to this far-right Government give me hope about rescuing the soul of their country, with thousands of protesters on the street every week. ...

The route to peace and any hope of two states has to lie partly through economic and cultural co-operation and engagement, which is why I fervently oppose any boycott of Israel. ...

The Earl of Sandwich (Crossbench): ... My wife chairs a charity that helps young Palestinian musicians, called PalMusic. Music provides a vital part in keeping hope and joy alive, even during these adverse conditions—first, by ensuring that the unique culture

of Palestine continues to thrive; secondly, by giving young people the satisfaction of learning and acquiring other skills, such as working in teams and showing leadership; and thirdly, and not least, by bringing happiness to the community, not only to the young musicians but to others through their music. ...

col 777 This is the 10th anniversary of PaMusic, which was set up to support the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Ramallah. ... However, the difficulties of running a music school in an occupied territory are ever present and growing. For example, Israel has now made it nearly impossible for Palestinian institutions to secure visas for visiting teaching staff. ...

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative): ... Earlier today, I googled one word: “Israel”. What came up filled me with dismay: “Israel’s elite fighter pilots escalate judicial reform protest”; “Huwara attacked by settlers during Purim”; “Israeli attack wounds citizens as settlers and soldiers dance”. I am commenting not on the individual stories but on the direction of travel. It is the wrong direction—wrong for Israel and wrong for the world. At a time when Iran poses an existential threat to its very existence and, indeed, to world peace, we need Israel as never before to be united and strong, not weakened by extremism, whether on settlements or so-called “reforms” to the judiciary. ...

col 778 **Lord Watson of Wyre Forest (Labour):** ... Almost every attack is obviously a personal tragedy for the families who have lost loved ones or have seen loved ones injured. They also represent a national tragedy for the State of Israel. ... It is a tragedy because, amidst the violence, Israel is potentially entering the most exciting stage in its history. ... As a new generation of Arab leaders no longer regards Israel as an enemy, and as those Arab leaders seek partnership and co-operation and mutual support in the economic growth of the region, surely it is the role of leadership and statecraft to nurture that kind of behaviour. ...

Of course Israel is right to stand up to domestic terrorism; every state has to protect its people. Ultimately, however ... we know that statecraft and leadership are the only way we are going to find peace. ...

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat): ... I am, like many Israelis, appalled at the violent attacks by settlers on Palestinians in Hawara. These actions go against Jewish values—and I speak as a Jew—teachings and the founding principles of the State of Israel. It is not all one-sided. There have been significant Israeli casualties of Palestinian terrorism in 2022 and 2023, including the two young Israeli men, referred to by earlier speakers, murdered just before the Hawara riots. ...

col 779 The UK Government must make it clear to the Palestinian Authority and the current Israeli Government that we expect an urgent de-escalation, which requires the PA and the Israeli Government to take strong action against any perpetrators of violence. The UK, through the Minister, should offer itself as an unbiased interlocutor for the peace talks. We are still the unbiased interlocutor, which the US is no longer. ...

We must not lose sight of the fact that Israel is a democratic state, for Jew and non- Jew, where there is a free media and plenty—plenty—of internal critics who are against the current Government. ... The President of the Palestinian Authority has not faced an election for many, many years. ...

My noble friend Lady Janke gave the example of *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper. The important thing to me is that, in Israel, you can have a paper criticising the Government. ...

Lord McInnes of Kilwinning (Conservative): ... as a friendly nation and ally, it is incumbent upon us, not least because of our historical responsibility, to use our influence to ensure that the Israel that we support is upholding its international obligations ...

col 780 I ask the Minister that we continue to raise in our discussions with Israel—as part of our commitment to international law, to Articles 55, 56 and 59 of the Geneva convention and to the Oslo accords—our opposition to the building of illegal settlements; our commitment to ensuring that the Palestinian people in areas B and C of the Occupied

Territories have full access to education and health services; importantly, that we follow international law; and, as we witnessed did not happen in Huwara, that the IDF is fully empowered, and has the responsibility, to protect all civilians from violent attack or disruption. ...

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated): ... the Abraham accords are a remarkable achievement and a stunning breakthrough that would have been impossible to imagine just before they were announced. They show us that, even in the Middle East, positive change can happen very quickly ...

The protests in Israel, now in their third month with hundreds of thousands taking part, remind us that Israel is the only country in the Middle East where not just protests like these but even the basic traditions of liberal democracy—pluralism, elections, equality and the rule of law—are even conceivable, let alone the very foundations and values of the state itself.

We have seen a terrible rise in violence over the last year, with civilians killed on both sides, starting with four Israeli civilians killed in Beersheba by a Palestinian supporter of ISIS. There have now been 13 fatal attacks by Palestinian terrorists, including seven people killed in a synagogue on Holocaust Memorial Day, one of them just a child. These attacks are not a reaction to the election of this new Government; they began under the previous left/right unity Government, which included for the first time an Israeli Arab party, and, sadly, as we have seen, they have continued under today's very different Government.

col 781 We must be clear that there is never any justification for terrorism. Those responsible are the terrorists themselves. We should be clear that the deaths of any innocent Palestinian civilians in Israel's counterterror operations are terrible and must be investigated. We must also recognise that there is no equivalence between indiscriminate terror attacks against civilians and attempts to arrest the terrorists responsible. ...

I do not agree that a Palestinian state can just be recognised or imposed unilaterally from outside—and it is counterproductive to suggest that it can be, because it suggests to Palestinians that there is a route to statehood which does not involve the hard work of negotiation, compromise and concessions. ...

Lord Moynihan (Conservative): ... The landscape against which the Arab-Israeli conflict is viewed appears increasingly volatile and turbulent, contoured by myriad examples of violence and escalating conflicts which, over the past year, are no longer headline news here. ...

col 782 While the eyes of the world are elsewhere, it is welcome that Israel has altered its settlement programme with a temporary cessation. At the same time, regrettably, more extremists are moving into Gaza and the West Bank, stoking tensions and trouble for the future. ...

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): ... it was just a number of months [ago] that I watched all of the address to the UN General Assembly by Yair Lapid, the former Israeli Prime Minister. There was a degree of hope that the Prime Minister then would put on the table again a two-state solution and reopen some of the discussions that this House has called for. However ... Israel is a democracy and democracies do not always yield the results that you want. ...

Equally, over 60 years ago is a very long time for those who have been within Palestine, and I noted that less than 3% of the population of the occupied territory are over 65 years old. ... The median age in that area is 19. None of the population has experienced a democratic election process, so it means that it is quite hard to see the areas where we can start to see practical ways forward. ...

... contrary to commitments from the Israeli Government to pause and slow down settlements, there is the recent decision of nearly 7,000 settlement units and 35 settlement areas to be approved imminently. ...

col 783 I would be grateful if the Minister could say what practical steps the UK Government are taking to seek the arrest and removal of such blocks, and the development of road and route infrastructure in the affected zones. ... Is the Secretary of State going to meet Bezalel Smotrich, the Finance Minister, and is it the case that the Government will continue not to engage with the National Security Minister, as has been referred to?

We have to recognise ... that a viable state of Palestine is in many ways harder to see. But it is not impossible, and a decision may have to be made that we, in effect, recognise a quasi-failed state at its inception. This is not new; we have done this with many other countries. ...

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): ... Last month's joint statement by the UK, the US, France, Germany and Italy, in reaction to Israeli plans to expand settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, was a really important move ...

Peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians will be achieved only through direct negotiations between those parties. ...

Building peace also means improving lives. I do not think we should underestimate the importance of civil society and intercommunity activity. ...

col 784 **The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park):** ... Too many lives have been lost to violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and we need to accelerate progress towards peace. ...

To respond to questions by a number of speakers ... we will recognise a Palestinian state when it best serves the prospects of peace. ...

The security situation remains fragile. Last year, large numbers of Palestinians and Israelis were killed by acts of violence, and this year has started the same way, with further violence and instability. The UK is working intensely with all parties and international partners to end this deadly cycle. ...

We were all appalled by the recent terror attacks near Jerusalem that have been mentioned by almost everyone who has spoken today ... We condemn these attacks in the strongest terms possible and stand with Israel in the face of terrorism and violence. Our thoughts remain with the victims and their families. Similarly, we condemn recent indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza towards civilian populations. Any attacks targeted against civilians are unlawful, unjustifiable and utterly repugnant.

col 785 We are also concerned by the high number of Palestinian civilians who have been killed and injured. It should go without saying that Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself. However, it is also important that Israeli forces exercise maximum restraint, especially in the use of live fire, when protecting its legitimate security interest. We have watched with concern the numbers of people killed during incursions by Israeli security forces into places such as Jenin, Jericho and Nablus. When there are accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate swift and transparent investigations. We also strongly condemn indiscriminate violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians ... those responsible must face full accountability and legal prosecution.

As we approach the religious festivals of Ramadan, Easter and Passover next month, it is important to underline our support for the historic status quo at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem. Sadly, there is a high risk of violence breaking out during this period. ...

The UK has always firmly opposed any incitement to violence. We are engaging closely with international partners to end the deadly cycle of violence. We will carry on talking with the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to support co-operation, stability and economic development for the benefit of both parties. ...

The UK fully supports the Abraham Accords. We see the treaty as a unique opportunity to enhance the peace process and raise the prospects of peace right across the Middle East. ...

col 786 My noble friend Lord Polak also makes a point about the importance of not applying different standards to Israel, as compared with other countries. That is something that

happens frequently, and we need to guard against it. But I reassure him and the noble Lord, Lord Purvis ... that there is no boycott of any Ministers. That is not something that is being pursued by the UK. ...

The UK's direct efforts take many forms: we help to improve Palestinian security through the work of the British support team in Ramallah, and our diplomatic teams in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are active on the ground, speaking to and working with their hosts. ...

col 787 A number of speakers have made the point that a spark of hope has come from the recent meeting in Aqaba, where both Israelis and Palestinians affirmed reciprocal commitments. The meeting is the first in many years and an expression of intent on both sides to engage constructively to de-escalate tensions. We urge all parties to refrain from jeopardising this fragile process, as some have attempted to do, and we call on all parties to make good on the commitments made in Aqaba. ...

We look to the Palestinian Authority to resume full security co-operation with Israel as a matter of urgency and to renounce and confront terror. We urge the Government of Israel to cease and to rethink its policies on settlements, evictions and demolitions with immediate effect ...

col 788 The Prime Minister has made it clear that the UK will continue to oppose all actions that make peace harder to achieve, whether taken by the Palestinian or the Israeli side. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate through both word and deed a genuine commitment to peace and security and agree a two-state solution. That is the only way to end the conflict, preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity, eliminate the existential threat that Israel has faced at all times, and to realise Palestinian national aspirations. ...

... Lord Austin is right to point to the protest in Israel as evidence, if evidence were needed, that Israel is the only country in the region where it is possible to disagree with the state of the day. ...

To conclude, a just and lasting resolution, one that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, is long overdue. It is possible to restore stability and to secure peace, but that requires efforts from all sides. The UK stands ready to support them. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-03-07/debates/4D8A8A9C-2123-40A2-ABA7-CF717B55ACA3/IsraelAndPalestine>

The Foreign Secretary's letter referred to above can be read at

<https://caabu.org/news/news/british-politicians-demand-foreign-secretary-introduces-consequences-new-israeli>

The articles of the Geneva Convention referred to above can be read at

https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf

The Oslo Accords, referred to above, can be read at

https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS_930913_DeclarationPrinciplesInterimSelf-Government%28Oslo%20Accords%29.pdf

The joint statement referred to above can be read at

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

House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Promotion: Israel

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Labour) [155171] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Israel was appointed; and how many times they have visited that country since their appointment.

Nigel Huddleston: The Prime Minister's Trade Envoys support the UK

Government's overall strategy to drive economic growth, promote UK trade and encourage inward investment. In addition to visiting their respective markets, Trade Envoys undertake a variety of activities including meeting UK companies, hosting inward delegations, and speaking engagements. Due to travel restrictions arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic, many visits to markets were disrupted and Trade Envoys had to work virtually or through other means, strengthening the relationships to support the Government's trade and investment agenda.

Trade Envoy	Country	Appointment Date	Number of Visits
Daniel Kawczynski MP	Mongolia	Oct-20	2
Greg Clark MP	Japan	May-22	0
Helen Grant MP	Nigeria	Nov-20	3
Lord Austin of Dudley	Israel	Oct-20	3
Lord Botham of Ravensworth	Australia	Aug-21	2

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-28/155171>

West Bank: Health Services

Sarah Champion (Labour) [153776] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to increase UK aid to healthcare providers in the West Bank in response to increases in violence by Israeli (a) forces and (b) settlers in that region.

David Rutley: Although the UK no longer provides direct funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) to support healthcare or healthcare workers, the UK recognises the importance of building the capability of Palestinian institutions to continue to provide essential services. We continue to work with the PA to improve its financial management and revenue collection. This will provide increased revenue to support service delivery, including for healthcare services. We are also working with the UN Development Programme to enhance transparency and accountability within the Palestinian healthcare sector. The UK is also a key donor to UNRWA, which helps 3.5 million Palestinian refugees across the region to access quality primary health services.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153776>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Iran: Hezbollah

Fabian Hamilton (Labour) [156927] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Iranian counterpart on that country's financing of Hezbollah.

David Rutley: The Government condemns Iran's financial support to militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah which compromises the region's security and escalates already high tensions, with consequences for the international community. In 2019, the UK made its position clear by proscribing Hizballah in its entirety and put an asset freeze in place due to Hizballah's terrorist activity. We support the enforcement of UN prohibitions on Iranian weapons proliferation to non-state actors, including to Hizballah (UNSCR 1701). Our assessment remains that

a sovereign Lebanon with strong institutions is the best way to tackle Hizballah's influence in Lebanon.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-02/156927>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above, can be read at

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1701>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49991/documents/3078>

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 6 days**

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