



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Race Disparity Unit

**Results and actions from the Ethnicity facts and figures website reform consultation**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnicity-facts-and-figures-website-reform/outcome/results-and-actions-from-the-ethnicity-facts-and-figures-website-reform-consultation>

### UK Labour Party (BBC report)

#### **Diane Abbott suspended as Labour MP after racism letter**

Diane Abbott has been suspended as a Labour MP pending an investigation into a letter she wrote about racism for the Observer, the party has said.

The politician said "many types of white people with points of difference" can experience prejudice, in a letter published on Sunday.

But they are not subject to racism "all their lives", she said. ...

Labour said the comments were "deeply offensive and wrong". ...

In her apology, Ms Abbott said "errors" arose in an initial draft that was sent.

She continued: "But there is no excuse, and I wish to apologise for any anguish caused.

"Racism takes many forms, and it is completely undeniable that Jewish people have suffered its monstrous effects, as have Irish people, Travellers and many others." ...

**To read the full report see**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-65365978>

#### **Diane Abbot's letter to the Observer: Racism is black and white**

Tomiwa Owolade claims that Irish, Jewish and Traveller people all suffer from "racism" ("[Racism in Britain is not a black and white issue. It's far more complicated](#)", Comment).

They undoubtedly experience prejudice. This is similar to racism and the two words are often used as if they are interchangeable.

It is true that many types of white people with points of difference, such as redheads, can experience this prejudice. But they are not all their lives subject to racism. In pre-civil rights America, Irish people, Jewish people and Travellers were not required to sit at the back of the bus. In apartheid South Africa, these groups were allowed to vote. And at the height of slavery, there were no white-seeming people manacled on the slave ships.

Diane Abbott

House of Commons, London SW1

**second letter down at**

<https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2023/apr/23/success-for-women-not-same-as-for-men-letters>

## House of Commons Library Briefings

**Humanist marriage ceremonies in England and Wales**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05864/SN05864.pdf>

**Sharia-compliant alternative student finance**

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9774/>

## Scottish Parliament Motion

**Foysool Choudhury (Labour) [S6M-08517] Eid Mubarak** – That the Parliament notes the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, beginning on the evening of 21 April 2023 depending on the moon sighting; understands that this marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the breaking of the Ramadan fast; further understands that in this period Muslims give thanks to God for helping them complete their fasting, prayers, charity and zakat - giving alms to the poor - during Ramadan; notes that the holiday is celebrated with friends and relatives and involves the giving of gifts and the preparation of special food; expresses its hope that Muslims worldwide are able to celebrate this occasion in peace and security, and wishes the Muslim community in Scotland, and around the world, Eid Mubarak.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08517>

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## Holocaust

### Holocaust Memorial Bill

#### **Examination for compliance with Standing Orders (morning session)**

*para 3* **Tom Healey [Clerk of Bills, House of Commons]:** ... Our role as Examiners today is twofold. First, it is to decide whether, in the case of the Bill that has been referred to us, it should be considered hybrid. ... If the Bill is considered hybrid, certain private business Standing Orders may apply in relation to it. In that case, our second duty will be to ascertain whether any Standing Orders that are applicable have been complied with. ...

*para 14* ... this is quite an unusual proceeding. ... It is worth emphasising that it is not the purpose of today's proceedings to consider the merits of the Bill, of the memorial itself or of the proposed location, nor is it our purpose to repeat or reopen previous proceedings that have taken place in other forums. Our concern today is strictly and narrowly with the technical procedural question of hybridity ... The decisions that we will make will be based

purely on the strength of argument and the application of the relevant parliamentary rules and precedent. ...

**para 20 Robbie Owen [Pinsent Masons LLP, appeared on behalf of the Bill's promoter]:** ... [The Bill] consists of three clauses. I understand that it is accepted that Clauses 1 and 3 do not present any questions, arguable or otherwise, of hybridity. ... I wanted to deal with an issue raised by some of the Memorialists that Clause 1 of the Bill is "to provide a hook on which to hang an argument that the Bill is a matter of public policy". ... This is not the case. Clause 1 is, in fact, a necessary provision to allow the Secretary of State to incur continuing expenditure associated with the Holocaust memorial. ...

**para 21** ... paragraph 6 of the Explanatory Notes accompanying the Bill reads as follows: "Some expenditure has been incurred to date in connection with the development of the proposed memorial and learning centre, including on the preparation of an application for planning consent. The Secretary of State has relied on common law powers. More significant expenditure will need to be incurred in order to construct, maintain and operate the memorial and learning centre, and as set out in chapter 2 of HM Treasury's document *Managing Public Money*, Ministers must normally seek parliamentary authority for specific legislation to authorise expenditure on significant new commitments likely to persist". ...

**para 22** ... the focus of this Examination, which all would more or less appear to agree with, must be Clause 2 of the Bill ...

**para 23** The clause does not permit the carrying out of any works or any other form of development to deliver the Holocaust memorial, but simply deals, in effect by disapplication, with the existing local legislation in force affecting Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

**para 25** ... the Secretary of State's case for the Bill not being hybrid rests on three main interlinked points. First, the Bill does not affect the private interests of any person. Secondly, in any event, the Bill does not single out a person or body from a defined class for special or differential treatment. Thirdly, the Bill is implementing public policy. ...

**para 29** The Secretary of State acknowledges that a private interest has been held to include a local interest in particular circumstances ...

**para 33** The Secretary of State respectfully submits that no private or, indeed, local interests would be affected by the Bill. ... the rights protected by Sections 8(1) and 8(8) of the 1900 Act are for members of the public to use Victoria Tower Gardens. ... on no reasonable interpretation can these be described as private rights. ...

**para 37** It is worth pausing here for a moment to consider briefly the Festival of Britain (Supplementary Provisions) Act, which is prayed in aid by a number of Memorialists as being a helpful precedent ... The Secretary of State submits that the Festival of Britain Bill is clearly distinguishable for a number of reasons, not least that it authorised the construction of works; it authorised the body to take possession of land; it provided a regime by which persons affected in nuisance could claim compensation; and it conferred new functions on London County Council and the Port of London Authority. The Secretary of State acknowledges that, if the Holocaust Memorial Bill sought to make provision for similar matters, it could indicate that it was hybrid in nature. However, it does not. ...

**para 38** ... a number of Memorialists assert that local residents have private interests affected by the Bill, in effect because they live close to Victoria Tower Gardens. ... the Secretary of State maintains that the 1900 Act does not confer special rights to use Victoria Tower Gardens on local residents. They are open to all. ...

**para 40** ... It is submitted by the Buxton family that they have a private interest in the Bill arising from, in summary, the existence of the Buxton memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens ...

**para 41** ... [but] that could not be said to extend to a private interest affected by the Bill, particularly by reference to the effect of the 1900 Act ... given that it was only located to the gardens from Parliament Square several decades later. ...

*para 42* Baroness Deech and other survivors of the Holocaust assert that victims and survivors of the Holocaust, and their descendants, have a special interest affected by the Bill, as it is their experiences specifically that will be encapsulated for future generations as part of the Holocaust memorial. With all due respect to Baroness Deech and others, although the Secretary of State, of course, recognises the unique experiences and insight that they can offer, these would not extend to qualifying as private interests affected by the Bill ...

*para 44* The submissions made focus on Westminster's functions as local planning authority ...

*para 45* Of key importance here is that Westminster City Council does not own Victoria Tower Gardens, nor is it in any way responsible for their ongoing running and maintenance. Instead, Victoria Tower Gardens are owned by the Secretary of State and administered on their behalf by the Royal Parks. ...

*para 47* ... all the Memorialists make similar points about Westminster having an affected private interest as a result of the events leading up to and ultimately resulting in the 1900 Act. ...

*para 49* The Secretary of State submits that ... [the 1900 Act] does not constitute an agreement between the parties ...

*para 52* Finally in relation to this first point of private interest, I would like to address the position of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport as successor to the Commissioners of Works. ...

*para 53* ... the Secretary of State has acknowledged this point ... and submits that the Secretary of State's interests affected by the Bill would not make it hybrid. ...

*para 56* I turn now to address the second key point, which is that, in any event, the Bill does not single out a person or body from a defined class for special or differential treatment. ...

*para 57* This concept of differential treatment is central to the concept of hybridity, its purpose being to provide that any individual who is singled out by a public Bill for adverse treatment should be allowed to plead their cause to a Select Committee on a petition against the Bill or against those provisions of the Bill that will affect them. ...

*para 60* Should the Bill pass into law, it would only impact the provision securing maintenance of Victoria Tower Gardens as a public garden and, therefore, access to that garden by the general public. If we take the general public as the relevant class for the purposes of applying the hybridity tests, no person's private rights or local interests, including any special interest groups and local residents, would be specially affected. ...

*para 67* The third key area is that the Bill is implementing public policy. ... Ultimately, if the Examiners find that no private interests are affected by the Bill, or, if there are private interests, that they are not affected differentially from other persons in the same class or category, the question of whether the Bill is implementing public policy becomes redundant. ...

*para 70* The Holocaust memorial would commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and encourage reflection on the implications of the Holocaust for British government and society. It is, therefore, of national importance and significance. Its location is incidental to this policy aim. Although the Secretary of State acknowledges that the Bill relates to a specific area of land, the policy drivers behind that are of a more general overarching nature that can properly be characterised as public policy. ...

*para 84* **Christine Salmon Percival [Clerk of Private Bills, House of Lords]:** Whether it is a public Bill or a hybrid Bill, when a Bill receives a Second Reading, the principle of that Bill has, therefore, been established. What do you think the principle of this Bill is? If this Bill receives a Second Reading, what principle would you say had been established?

*para 85* **Robbie Owen:** ... This is not something that I have agreed with those instructing me, but I would say that the principle would be that there should be a Holocaust memorial, that it should be located in Victoria Tower Gardens—that is, in effect, the combination of

Clauses 1 and 2—and that money per Clause 1 should be allowed to be spent for that purpose. ...

*para 106* **Justin Leslie [Counsel for Domestic Legislation, House of Commons]:** ... were you telling us that, because the Bill is implementing a public policy, that is a further argument about why it cannot be hybrid, or was your point in addition to your points that private interests are not affected by the Bill?

*para 107* **Robbie Owen:** ... it is a settled position that, where a Bill is implementing public policy and affects a whole class, although not necessarily equally, that is conventionally not seen as being hybrid. ... we think it is a point that we can make, following on from the fact that we say there are no private or local interests differentially affected. The public as a whole are affected and, because the Bill is implementing public policy and thereby having that effect, in accordance with convention that means the Bill should not be seen as being hybrid. ...

*para 109* **Chè Diamond [Assistant Counsel to Chairman of Committees, House of Lords]:** ... You focused on ... addressing the point about whether this Bill affects particular private interests in a manner different from the private interests of other persons or bodies of the same category or class. ... Why have you not focused on how it affects people in fact? Some people might say that you have therefore been putting a form over substance argument.

*para 110* **Robbie Owen:** This goes back to the well-understood definition of hybridity, which is that you have to have differential treatment of private interests within the same category or class. That is not the same as saying that everyone is affected equally, ... Indeed, any general legislation will probably affect different people to different degrees. That is not relevant to how Parliament has conventionally dealt with hybridity.

*para 111* Hybridity turns on whether there is a singling out by the Bill of particular private interests within the same category or class for differential treatment. Differential treatment is different from the concept of some people being affected differently than others. ...

*para 112* **Chè Diamond:** You are saying that it is treatment, not effect, so the effect does not matter. ...

*para 137* **Alastair Lewis [Sharpe Pritchard LLP, on behalf of the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, the Thorney Island Society and Residents of Westminster]:** ... the Bill is what I will call ... a local purposes Bill. ... all that needs to be demonstrated in the case of such Bills is that private interests are affected, not necessarily that private interests have to be affected in a manner that is different from other private interests in the same class. ...

*para 139* ... the description in Erskine May of the local purposes category can be broken down ... into these three elements. First, the Bill must have been brought in by the Government. Secondly, the Bill must deal with Crown property or with national and other works in different localities ... Thirdly, the Bill must affect private interests. There is no doubt, in my submission, that the first two elements of that description are satisfied. ...

*para 141* The only question at issue then is whether the Bill affects private interests ...

*para 152* ... organisations whose private—for which I also read “local”—interests are affected are the [London Historic Parks and Gardens] trust and the [Thorney Island] society ...

*para 155* ... both the trust and the society would be entitled to petition against this Bill if it were to proceed as a hybrid Bill. This is because the class of person in which they fall is the class of society, association or other body representing amenity or recreational—among other—interests mentioned in House of Commons Standing Order 95(2) and House of Lords Standing Order 117(2). Had Parliament not considered that the interests of an amenity society could be a private interest—I include “local interest” in that expression again—it would not have made those Standing Orders ...

*para 158* ... I would submit that the local residents’ private local interests are affected by

the Bill in an obvious way. They are clearly beneficiaries of the continuing trusts that were put in place by Section 8(1) and Section 8(8) to ensure that the gardens remain as gardens open to the public. The Secretary of State may say and has said that they are in no different a position from any other member of the public, but that is plainly not correct in reality. Even though Victoria Tower Gardens happens to be located close to a major tourist destination, the fact is that it is likely to be used more frequently by those who live or work in the local area all year round than occasional visitors. For that reason, the local residents and those who work in the area are affected disproportionately. ...

*para 165* ... those I represent disagree with the assertion ... that this Bill implements public policy where a whole class is affected and therefore should not be treated as hybrid. First ... it is not clear whether the Bill implements public policy at all. ... It is accepted that it is government policy to support the implementation of the Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. However, the fact that a policy may be government policy does not mean it is public policy for the purposes of deciding whether a Bill is hybrid. ...

**To read the full transcript of the morning sitting see**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50746/documents/3308>

### **Examination for compliance with Standing Orders (afternoon session)**

*para 2* **Baroness Deech [on behalf of Baroness Deech and Holocaust Survivors]:** ... I am asking that you judge this Bill hybrid. I am asking that the affected parties get the opportunities to speak at a Select Committee and have their views heard. ...

*para 3* Our case is a simple one: that our personal experiences, our intangible cultural heritage assets as defined by UNESCO, are affected, and that we should have the right to represent those in any forthcoming legislation. ...

*para 4* ... my parliamentary office in Milbank House directly overlooks Victoria Tower Gardens, and any disturbance or crowding there is inimical to the security and relative tranquility needed for work there and the ability to cross the road to vote at very short notice. ...

*para 5* I am also a member of the Jewish community and honorary president of the National Jewish Assembly, a direct membership body, unlike the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which includes only representatives of organisations. The assembly debated the details of this Bill and came out 82% against it. I am not the descendent of survivors but of victims. ...

*para 6* ... Our distinct private interest lies in the lost opportunity, opprobrium and worse that we are likely to experience if the memorial is built as currently conceived on this piece of land. ...

*para 7* Jewish community members, and especially parliamentarians will be blamed for the disturbance, loss of amenity, threat to security, invasion of the landscape, cost, litter, coach parking and perceived privilege. ...

*para 9* The underground learning centre, if built, in VTG will destroy the wishes of many in the Jewish community who want a full educational centre ...

*para 10* Our descendants, we and they to whom we transmit our experiences and our memories, will never now benefit from what could have transformed Jewish and Holocaust education in this country. The contents of the planned learning centre will not make the connection to today's anti-Semitism, let alone explain it. ...

*para 11* The location in VTG will reduce the Holocaust to genocide committed in the past, a self-congratulatory story reinforced by this placement near Parliament, claiming without evidence that democracy affords protection against genocide. It will cement only the story of dead Jews at the centre of London, not the living. Anti-Semitism is rising today despite more than 300 memorials around the world. Many Jewish people do not see a historical connection between the Jewish genocide and the tragedies of LGBT, Roma and others at the hands of the Nazis, say, by reducing it all to generalities. ...

*para 16* **Martin Stern [on behalf of Holocaust Survivors]:** ...I am a Holocaust survivor ...

*para 17* Many Holocaust survivors have worked intensely on Holocaust education. ...

*para 18* ... We are a distinct and, I believe, important component of the British population. ... We play an intense role in British education and consequently, I believe, in British democracy. The proposed learning centre is too large for the park, thus acting as a stimulus to anti-Semitism, which is of intense concern to all of us. It is rising rather than falling, despite all our efforts, and we do not want to do something that will aggravate it. ...

*para 28* **Baroness Deech:** ... I can see that there are many people—and I am prepared to compromise—who think, “Victoria Tower Gardens, yes”, but I think they are all of a mind, if they are on our side as it were, that there should be something small, graceful and dignified, and then a pointer, or maybe even a shuttle bus, to a nearby learning centre. ...

*para 29* It is against Jewish law and ethics in particular to destroy greenery. ... and it is upsetting to ruin a park, as it will. ...

*para 42* **Richard Buxton [on behalf of the Buxton Family and the Thomas Fowell Buxton Society]:** ... hybridity seems like the proverbial elephant in the room: it is hard to describe, but you know it when you see it. I trust that the Examiners will agree that clearly we have that elephant here. ... What I find difficult ... is the concept of hybridity depending on how the Government choose to draft the Bill by not identifying specific interests in determining that it is not hybrid. It cannot be right that hybridity depends upon the Secretary of State’s choice in his drafting. ...

*para 43* ... the underlying objective, as I understand it, of the hybridity concept is to enable people who should have a say over something, as well as MPs and Peers, to do so. I would submit that the circumstances here plainly merit that. ...

*para 49* we cannot claim to own the memorial or claim somehow that it is held on trust for us, but it was given to the state by my family, so we expect the state to have all due respect to it and to look after it, and we feel that we should have something of a special say if in fact, as just mentioned, there is harm to its chosen setting. ...

*para 62* ... it would be most unfortunate if this Bill were to go through, effectively allowing carte blanche for any sort of Holocaust memorial and learning centre in the gardens. ... It should be constrained to something that is consistent with the fundamental purpose of the gardens—namely, a public garden. ...

*para 66* ... I would have thought that a number of provisions might be added to say, effectively, “provided that the extent of the memorial does not extend to take up more than X percentage of the gardens”, or, “provided that it does not extend to a height greater than any other memorial”. ...

*para 76* **Mustafa Latif-Aramesh [BDB Pitmans LLP on behalf of Westminster City Council]:** ... On the question of what a private interest is, our view is that it must be read in line with the definition of a private Bill itself, which is a Bill that affects a local area or an individual or some particular interest. “Private” in this sense is not a narrow conception of proprietary interest or a very specific legal interest ...

*para 78* ... No other local authority has those interests that are engaged in this Bill. They are the interests of Westminster City Council as the local planning authority, as the local highway authority and, specifically, in its capacity as the body responsible for the laying out of open space and general amenity of its local inhabitants. ...

*para 80* The next interest affected is that of the Secretary of State themselves. ...

*para 81* ... we have put forward the view that the interest of the Secretary of State must be objectively determined. It is not about the current wish or opinion of whoever happens to be in the Secretary of State’s position. It is their legal interest—their legal functions as properly defined in the 1900 Act—that has to be considered. That is adversely affected here. There is a function of maintaining the gardens as public gardens in the 1900 Act. It does not matter if this particular Secretary of State does not agree with that particular function; it is adversely impacted. ...

*para 125* We do not know exactly what form it will take, but ... the intention is to enable the

construction of a Holocaust memorial and learning centre in the gardens. The practical substantive effect of that is that it will reduce the areas available for open space and amenity. In that way we have a clear interest, and that is the only context in which I have referred to what you might call the merits of the question, which is that Westminster City Council objected to these proposals because of the reduction of open space. The Bill does not automatically reduce the amount of open space, but it removes a restriction that would enable that. ...

*para 161 Robbie Owen:* The motivation of some of the Memorialists, particularly Mr Buxton, in wanting the Bill to be declared hybrid appears to be so that Parliament can exercise a degree of oversight on the conduct of the planning process. They want constraints, as you heard Mr Buxton say. They do not want the Government to have carte blanche. We say that that is entirely inappropriate as a motivation. It is also entirely irrelevant to the decision on hybridity. As I say, you must assume that the planning process will run its course lawfully, Again, if there are concerns about that, it will be open to the Memorialists or indeed to anyone else who has standing to apply for another judicial review of that decision.

*para 162* Therefore, Clause 2 is entirely secondary to the planning process. The planning process will call the shots here in relation to the proposals for the Holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, and that will determine quite where in the gardens the work should be carried out, how much of the gardens should be taken up, and arrangements during construction. ... the Bill does not specify design or location, and that is quite intentional; it would not be appropriate to do so. ...

*para 163* Therefore, whatever the principle of the Bill is, the protection afforded by the planning process will apply whether or not the Bill is hybrid ...

**To read the full transcript of the afternoon sitting see**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50751/documents/3315>

*The text of the Holocaust Memorial Bill can be read at*

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0254/220254.pdf>

*The Explanatory Notes to the Holocaust Memorial Bill can be read at*

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0254/en/220254en.pdf>

*The London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900, (the "1900 Act"), referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.scribd.com/document/637541199/London-County-Council-Improvements-Act-1900>

*Managing Public Money, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1089622/MPM\\_Spring\\_21\\_with\\_annexes\\_040322\\_1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089622/MPM_Spring_21_with_annexes_040322_1.pdf)

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon** Delighted to welcome experts to Lancaster House today to discuss the critical role of Holocaust testimony - together we must protect the facts and do all we can to preserve Holocaust survivors' stories for posterity. @FCDOGovUK pleased to co-host this conference with @TheAJR\_

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1648702293267628034>

TOP



## House of Commons Debate

### Human Rights Protections: Palestinians

[Relevant document: [e-petition 585309, Condemn Israel for their treatment of Palestine and Palestinians](#)]

**col 435 Chris Law (SNP):** ... Since the start of this year, the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has deteriorated rapidly. Israelis have been killed outside a synagogue in East Jerusalem. During Ramadan, Palestinians have been beaten by police while worshipping in al-Aqsa mosque. Car-ramming attacks have claimed the lives of Israeli citizens and visiting tourists. Extensive military raids have caused the deaths of numerous Palestinians and injured many more. This unnecessary loss of innocent life is of deep and grave concern, and I want to begin this debate by paying my respects to all the victims who have been killed. In particular, I am sure all of us here today will want to send our sincerest condolences to the family of British-Israeli sisters Maia and Rina Dee and their mother Lucy, who were murdered in a horrific attack in Tel Aviv earlier this month. Extremist ideology, rhetoric and violence carried out by any party to the conflict is never acceptable and cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet. Silence is complicity. It is not until we visit the region, bear witness and listen to the testimonies of people on all sides that we really learn the depth and scale of the horrors of what life is like for the people who live there. Last October, I made my first visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the International Development Committee and heard at first hand stories that are the stuff of nightmares. Things that we take for granted such as freedom of speech and freedom of movement—basic human rights that we would wish for all peoples—either do not exist for many or are under constant threat. ...

It should go without saying that the state of Israel has the right to exist and prosper and should be our friend and ally. However, for the two-state solution to be realistic, the state of Palestine must also be recognised. ...

In order to achieve a sustainable peace, we cannot ignore the fact that systematic discrimination and human rights abuses are the daily reality for all Palestinians living under occupation, 365 days of the year, and the UK Government have a significant role to play in ensuring that this is brought to an end.

**col 436** ... last month, the Foreign Secretary told the House: “The UK enjoys a strong bilateral relationship with Israel, which allows us to raise issues where we disagree.”

He went on to say: “We seek to protect the viability of a sustainable two-state solution. We raised with the Israeli Government our concerns about activities that might put that future at risk.”—[[Official Report, 14 March 2023; Vol. 729, c. 672-673.](#)]

In the face of ever increasing human rights violations at the hands of the Israeli authorities, when will simply “raising issues” with our Israeli counterparts no longer be enough? ...

... we must open this debate by acknowledging how the Israeli Government discriminate against and violate the human rights of Palestinians on a regular basis. As I have said, unlawful killing and the excessive use of force, illegal under international law, are commonplace within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, despite the Israeli military having an international legal obligation to protect the Palestinian population under its control. ...

In many instances, it is not only the military and police that are responsible for these fatalities but settler violence, aided and abetted by Israeli authorities. ...

... Yesh Din collated data from 2005 to 2022 ... demonstrates, shockingly, that 93% of all investigations into ideologically motivated crime committed by Israeli settlers in the west bank are closed without an indictment. ...

**col 437** The process of settlement expansion, forced evictions, demolitions and dispossessions is further evidence of systematic aggression designed to force

Palestinians from their land and deny them their rights. Despite regularly pledging to pause settlement expansion, 7,000 settlement homes in 35 settlements are set to be approved by Israel ... At the same time, in Masafer Yatta in the south Hebron hills, over 1,000 Palestinians face losing their homes—the largest eviction of Palestinians since the 1970s. ...

The displacement of Palestinians and the demolition of Palestinian property is a violation of international law and can never be tolerated or ignored. ... If illegal Israeli settlement construction does not stop, will the UK Government commit to suspending trade deal talks with Israeli counterparts until we can ensure that human rights are being safeguarded? ... This June will mark the 16th year of Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza strip, which has effectively been turned into the world's largest open air prison. The 2 million Palestinians trapped there face a permanent humanitarian crisis. ... B'Tselem has uncovered that in 2022, Israeli authorities rejected more than one third of all medical exit permits requested by ill or dying Palestinians to leave the Gaza strip to seek treatment in Israel, the west bank or East Jerusalem.

The unequal and discriminatory policies pursued by the Israeli Government have led to divergent health outcomes for Israelis and Palestinians ... Israel has three times more doctors per 1,000 people than the Occupied Palestinian Territories; women are nine times more likely to die due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth in the Occupied Palestinian Territories than in Israel; and, on average, Israelis live nearly nine years longer than Palestinians ...

*col 438* Israel stands out as the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts, with up to 700 prosecuted each year... While Israel ratified the UN convention on the rights of the child in 1991, Palestinian children living under Israeli military occupation are routinely denied their rights to life, education and adequate housing, and are denied access to healthcare, among other rights ...

[Israel] now has the most far-right and extreme Government in its history. The de facto annexation of large parts of the west bank was an overarching principle in the December 2022 coalition agreements for the new Israeli Government, which stated that “the Jewish people have an exclusive and incontestable right on the entire land of Israel. The government will advance and promote settlement in all parts of the land of Israel, in the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan Heights and Judea and Samaria”. ...

Last month, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich triggered international outrage by saying that the Palestinian village of Huwara in the west bank should be “wiped out” following a rampage by Israeli settlers. He also said that the Palestinian people are “an invention” of the past century, and that there is “no such thing as Palestinians because there’s no such thing as the Palestinian people”.

Is this not the language of ethnic cleansing ...? Nobody can stand by and condone this disgusting, hateful language, but equally importantly, we cannot let it be put into practice. I say again: silence is complicity. ...

**Steve McCabe (Labour):** ... Is [Chris Law] concerned about the human rights of Palestinians only in relation to Israel, or is he also concerned about the abuses of Palestinian human rights by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority?

*col 439* **Chris Law:** That is a very valid and good question, but right now I am particularly focused on the occupied territories, which of course are under the command of Israel. ... In February 2022, Amnesty International published a report concluding for the first time that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians. Under international law ... apartheid is defined as systematic discrimination and domination, and inhumane acts committed in order to maintain that system. ... This is not about politicising language: this is language that is respected in international law. ...

If the UK Government are serious about protecting the human rights of Palestinians, it is fundamental that the problem—the crime being committed against them—is first acknowledged, then investigated; that perpetrators are brought to justice; and that it is not

allowed to continue. ...

... the UK Government are actively blocking action, and that is the biggest crime at all. Why do I say this? Let us look at the UK Government's position, which is that "we do not recognise the terminology about apartheid. Any judgment on serious crimes under international law is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for Governments or non-judicial bodies."—[[Official Report, 13 December 2022; Vol. 724, c. 876.](#)] ...

Why is it that the UK Government have quite rightly called out war crimes being committed by Russia in Ukraine without any judicial decision, or called out in this House crimes against humanity—language that includes ethnic cleansing and, indeed, genocide—against Xinjiang by China? ...

... the UK stated its strong opposition to the International Criminal Court's Palestine investigation in 2021. How can the UK continue to oppose the investigation on the basis that it does not recognise Palestinian statehood, while at the same time allegedly respecting the independence of that court—which, incidentally, has ruled by majority that it has jurisdiction? Secondly, the UK voted against the Human Rights Council's resolution in 2021 establishing the current independent UN commission of inquiry on the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Finally, the UK Government voted against the UN General Assembly's resolution to request that the International Court of Justice provide an advisory opinion on the question of the legality of Israel's occupation, and only last month, the UK and Israeli Governments signed the 2030 road map for UK-Israeli bilateral relations. The only pathetic concrete reference to Palestinian people in that document is this: "We will cooperate in improving Palestinian livelihoods and Palestinian economic development." Not a mention of those suffering human rights abuses, and not a slight glimmer of hope for them.

*col 440* The evidence is clear: the treatment of the Palestinian people is not primarily an economic or poverty concern, but one of systematic discrimination, erosion of human rights, and denial of identity and legitimacy. ... silence is complicity.

**John Howell (Conservative):** ... I want to start by telling Members a little about the relationship of Israel and Palestine to the Council of Europe, which owns, as it were, the European Court of Human Rights.

At the institutional level, the Israeli Knesset has enjoyed observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly since 1957, and the Union of Local Authorities in Israel was granted observer status with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in 1994. Israel has signed and ratified 11 Council of Europe conventions and signed but not ratified a further two. Israel participates in four partial agreements and 18 inter-governmental committees.

With respect to high-level meetings, the secretary-general of the Council of Europe paid a couple of official visits to Israel, and the President of the Knesset has paid similar visits to the Council of Europe. We at the Council of Europe have just completed a study on Israel and Palestine ...

The Palestinian National Council was granted partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly in October 2011. The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities was granted observer status with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in 2005.

... Israel signed and ratified the convention [on human rights] in 1986. ... It would help us enormously if the Palestinians would accept the same approach to human rights in their own territory and deal with those human rights themselves. We cannot have one side following one rule and another side following a completely different rule ...

... Hamas and the Palestinians do not protect Palestinian rights. The first place to start with that is LGBT matters. ... Israel welcomes people no matter how they choose to identify. It is not the same in Gaza, where people in LGBT communities fear for their lives ...

*col 441* A second issue is freedom of journalism and freedom of expression. We have some very good examples of how the Palestinians have gone out of their way to

systematically torture those in detention. I am not aware of anyone in Israel systematically torturing people in detention ...

**Andy McDonald (Labour):** The hon. Gentleman ... may not be aware that Palestinian children are often deported into solitary confinement, where they spend hour after hour. If that is not torture, I do not know what is. ...

**John Howell:** ... that is completely different from how Fatah security forces in Hebron dispersed a peaceful protest against the rising cost of living. ...

Neither side has signed the Istanbul convention, and Israel has said that it is not going to sign the Istanbul convention at the moment. I think that is such a shame, because it is a landmark piece of international treaty work that protects women from domestic violence. In the Palestinian territories, there is plenty of domestic violence against women, and women suffer severe inequality under Hamas rule and have no protection against domestic violence. ...

Israel at the moment has a ban on the death penalty, in compliance with its signing and ratification of the convention on human rights. The Palestinians do not have a ban on the death penalty. I know there has been considerable talk in Israel about restoring the death penalty, and I absolutely deplore that. ...

When we look at the Palestinian situation, there is quite a lot to have a go at in order to protect human rights.

**col 442 Naz Shah (Labour):** ... why are the Palestinians' human rights not being protected? ... not only do our Government maintain a position that is morally indefensible, but they fail in their responsibility to protect the Palestinians from the most egregious violations of international law. It is an indisputable fact for any rational person that Palestinian human rights are being violated. ... What is in doubt is the international community's will to do something about it. ...

... what would we do if we were forced, for hours each day, to go through a military checkpoint because of our race, just to get to work? What would we do if we woke up one day and JCB bulldozers was demolishing our homes or our school? What would we do if we were parents whose child needed urgent cancer treatment, but we, as well as our child, were denied a permit to access the only hospital where the care we needed was available? What would we do if we were worshipping in church on Christmas Day, and we were tied up, beaten and arrested on Christmas morning? What would we do if F-16 fighter jets blew up the BBC or ITV buildings in central London? What would we do if we were forced to live in the world's largest open-air prison?

**col 443** What would we do if our home had been set alight by settlers, and our child had two options: either die of suffocation, or go outside and be pelted by rocks thrown by settlers? What would we do if NHS ambulances rushing to save lives were routinely stopped at checkpoints, or if NHS doctors rushing to care were shot at? What would we do if we were subjected to mass collective punishment? ...

It is 75 years since the Nakba, and no one is able to return home; 50 years of growing Israeli occupation, which seemingly no one can stop; 16 years of a blockade of Gaza that has not been lifted, despite the severe humanitarian crisis it has caused for 2 million people. ...

... this is not a clash of two equals. This is not a clash of religions, and neither is it a clash of peoples. This is an illegal military occupation. This is a conflict in which a protected oppressor is persecuting the unprotected Palestinian people. ...

**col 444** Our Government have failed to support any mechanisms of accountability, whether by opposing an investigation by the International Criminal Court, abstaining on crucial votes, or voting against resolutions condemning illegal settlements and the right to self-determination. ... Only a few weeks ago, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, the Israeli Minister for responsibility for administering the occupied west bank, said that there was no Palestinian history or culture, and no such thing as the Palestinian people. That Israeli

Minister also spoke at a podium covered in what appeared to be a variation of a map of Israel, which showed an Israeli state with expanded boundaries that included the west bank, east Jerusalem, Gaza and Jordan. ...

... any relationship with Israel, or any other country for that matter, should be based on a demonstration of an acceptance of our values ... Secondly, the UK should immediately enable international systems of accountability for criminal law violations in the region and must immediately support the International Criminal Court's investigation. Thirdly, the UK must recognise the Palestinians' right to self-determination, which means the immediate recognition of the state of Palestine. ...

**Matthew Offord (Conservative):** ... We are aware that incidents in Gaza and the west bank show us that human rights abuses are occurring and it is clear to see who is perpetrating them. We have reports that LGBT people, women and girls, young people, journalists and critics of the Palestinian Authority have all been abused. These are people in Gaza and the west bank, and their abuse occurs in Gaza and the west bank. ... if people are identified or identify themselves as being gay, they are thrown off buildings. If they are not thrown off buildings, they are often prosecuted. ...

*col 445* ... journalists are often attacked just for criticising the Palestinian Authority. ... gender-based violence and honour killings are encouraged in the west bank and Gaza. Women are not treated as equals; they do not have the same rights or protections as men. Women suffer that inequality under Hamas itself. ...

In July last year, the United Nations Committee Against Torture said it was "seriously concerned" about the consistent reports of torture taking place in Palestinian detention centres and stations. ...

*col 446* **Andy Slaughter (Labour):** ... The conditions on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories are the worst they have been for nearly 20 years. That is directly related to the new far-right Government in Israel, and their willingness to terrorise or to allow the terrorising of the Palestinian civilian population and to ignore international law ... [Gaza] is a trap that we all fall into, because Gaza is blockaded and is kept away from the rest of the world. It is under occupation, effectively, despite the withdrawal of Israeli troops. ...

*col 447* The whole apparatus of occupation has been in effect for 56 years, and in three weeks' time it will be the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, when 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes. ...

What do we expect from the UK Government? ...

Two things have happened so far this year. First, there has been a clear statement, both in the coalition agreement and from Prime Minister Netanyahu, to the effect that "the Jewish people have an exclusive and uncontested right on the entire land of Israel. The government will advance and promote settlement in all parts of the land of Israel," including in Judea and Samaria, which is their description of the occupied west bank. ... When this was previously threatened, by a previous Netanyahu Government, the Government and the Opposition said that they would ban settlement goods if annexation took place. Annexation has taken place and it is now time for action, not simply for words. ...

**Flick Drummond (Conservative):** ... Only Palestinians are tried in military courts. Settlers in the OPTs are tried in Israeli civil and criminal courts. As part of his report in October 2018, the UN special rapporteur wrote about how "the extension of Israeli laws to the West Bank" since 1967 has created "a discriminatory legal regime".

*col 448* If an Israeli settler child and a Palestinian child throw a stone in the same area, the former will almost certainly not land up in a court and will be protected by Israel's legal system. However, the Palestinian child will face a military court. Israel's military court at Ofer has, by its own figures, a 99.74% conviction rate. ...

International law is very clear on the legal authority to impose military law and establish military courts to try civilians. The key provisions are found in the Hague regulations and

the fourth Geneva convention. Articles 64 and 66 of the fourth Geneva convention state that local laws “may be repealed or suspended...where they constitute a threat to...security” and replaced with military law, enforced in “properly constituted, non-political military courts”.

That is what the Israeli military authorities use as the jurisdictional basis for establishing military courts in the west bank. However, international law also stipulates that occupation should be on a temporary basis ...

There is also detention without trial. Palestinians may be held without charge for up to six months under an administrative detention order issued by an Israeli military commander. ...

Detainees, including children, are handcuffed and blindfolded. Some are kept in total isolation, as we have heard, and there are widespread allegations that they are threatened during interrogation. Some 70% of child detainees and 80% of adult detainees have been unlawfully transferred to prisons in Israel, in violation of the fourth Geneva convention and the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court. ...

*col 449* Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts. ... The most common charge is stone throwing, and it is often unclear who has thrown the stones. Stone throwing is not acceptable, but no child should be arrested in the middle of the night, roughed up, taken by the army without a parent or a responsible adult and interrogated without a lawyer present.

Worst of all, families are not informed where their children are taken ... Confessions are often signed in Hebrew, which few of the Palestinian children understand, and 90% plead guilty regardless of whether they committed the offence. ...

The resentment towards the Israeli defence force that each of those 95,000 children must grow up with must be huge, and to say that it is counterproductive must be one of the biggest understatements ...

Sadly, most Palestinian children’s only experience of Israelis is framed by such experiences, and violence from Israeli soldiers and illegal Israeli settlers. ...

*col 450* **Steve McCabe (Labour):** ... The Palestinian Authority has full civil control over the vast majority of Palestinians living in the west bank, and as we all know, the Palestinian Authority is plagued by authoritarianism and corruption. In neither the west bank nor Gaza do Palestinians enjoy the right to vote. The Palestinian Authority has not held presidential elections since 2005 or legislative elections since 2006. President Abbas is now in his 18th year of a four-year term. New laws are simply introduced as presidential decrees. Meanwhile, the Gaza strip is governed by a proscribed terrorist group whose ambition is to destroy the state of Israel. ... Freedom House, a not-for-profit democracy group, describes Gaza as a “de facto one-party state”. ... Gaza is given a score of 11 out of 100 for its human rights record. ...

The Palestinian Authority has a track record of arbitrary detention, with more than 200 Palestinians detained last year. In June its security forces attacked a peaceful demonstration on the cost of living, and detained the organisers. ...

The Independent Commission for Human Rights received more than 130 complaints of torture by the Palestinian Authority last year. ...

*col 451* As we have heard, women and girls in the Palestinian Authority territories continue to face discrimination, including early enforced marriage, partner and family violence, rape, incest, psychological abuse and sexual exploitation. ...

**Naz Shah:** ... Does he agree that when it comes to discussing women in Palestine, all of a sudden everyone becomes a women’s advocate, because we are not talking about anything on the other side? Women are always used when it comes to Islamophobic tropes too.

**Steve McCabe:** ... [we] would raise if it was happening here. I am saying that we should not ignore it when it happens there. ...

There is no doubt that the absence of a Palestinian state and Israel's continued military presence in the west bank have a pernicious impact on the lives of many Palestinians, but human rights abuses against Palestinians take place on a daily basis by their own governing bodies. ...

Human rights are virtually non-existent for the long-suffering people of Gaza under the violent and bloodthirsty rule of the Hamas terrorist group. Palestine is under occupation, as ... Andy Slaughter suggested—occupation by Hamas. ...

*col 452* **Sam Tarry (Labour):** ... I take this moment to remember the British rabbi Leo Dee, following the awful death of his wife and daughters—British nationals who lost their lives in the west bank 13 days ago. I also remember those who were injured in Tel Aviv. ...

This year alone, 98 Palestinians, including 17 children, have been killed by Israeli forces—not by terrorists or by a semi-legitimate Government but by a Government who want to be seen to be on a par with their European, middle eastern and Mediterranean neighbours. ... Settler violence is also rising. ...

When the al-Aqsa mosque was raided and Palestinians were evicted from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah during the holy month of Ramadan in 2021, I received more than 5,000 emails from constituents expressing their concern about these illegal acts and calling for justice for the Palestinian people. Just last week, I met worshippers outside my local Islamic centre, with many telling me of their profound kinship with the Palestinian people and their deep feeling of injustice over the ongoing violence. ... this is not a remote issue on the other side of the world; it is one of the foremost issues in their minds ...

*col 453* During the recent attacks on al-Aqsa, Red Crescent ambulances were fired upon by the IDF with rubber-coated steel bullets, and a paramedic was severely assaulted and injured by an Israeli soldier. ...

In another raid in Nablus, the IDF obstructed Red Crescent ambulance crews from accessing a two-year-old girl who had heart problems and was suffering from tear gas inhalation. The ambulance crews had to rush to the child's home, under gunfire, to reach her. Israel is supposed to be a democratic country. ... Article 59 obliges Israel to permit the free passage of humanitarian relief and to protect, not fire upon, any such relief.

*col 454* ... last month the Government published their 2030 road map for UK-Israel bilateral relations. The road map has been widely condemned by a host of international organisations as poorly timed and the most egregious effort to date to try to insulate the relationship between the British and Israeli Governments from anything to do with Israel's behaviour towards the Palestinians. ...

Is it the Government's view now that the situation in Israel/Palestine should be exempt from international scrutiny and that Israel should be held to a lower standard when it comes to human rights violations against Palestinians? ...

*col 455* **Liam Byrne (Labour):** ... This House today has already heard a catalogue of horror. ...

All of us in this House would stand four-square behind Israel's right to self-defence. ... Most of us here know that the Palestinian Authority needs radical reform, and most of us would condemn the brutality of Hamas, but all of us also know that this is not a time for whataboutery. This is a time to call out the root cause of the violence today, which is the radical spread of settlers illegally through the west bank. ...

We have to ask this: when are the Government going to accept that those red lines have indeed been crossed? When we have a UN rapporteur saying that what is going on is now getting close to the legal definition of apartheid, how much more evidence do the Government need to call out a violation of the red lines? When we have Israeli Cabinet Ministers appearing in Paris before a map of greater Israel that includes the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and when we have members of the Israeli Cabinet leading the protests for the expansion of settler communities, how much more evidence do we need? ...

*col 456* **Andy McDonald (Labour):** ... Since the formation of the far-right Israeli

Government at the end of last year, we have seen opposition spilling out across civil society in the region, and it has continued to escalate as Israeli Ministers pursue their very frightening agenda. Last month it came to a head and we saw tens of thousands of people protesting not only on the streets of Israel, but in Germany and the UK ...

First, there is National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, who just 15 years ago was convicted of inciting racism and supporting a terrorist organization. It appears that Netanyahu is set to hand Ben-Gvir control over his personal militia as part of a deal over putting the judicial overhauls on pause—a truly terrifying prospect that will see many Palestinian lives put in danger.

Then there is Finance Minister Smotrich, who describes himself as a “fascist homophobe” and only recently said that “there is no such thing as the Palestinian people”.

This is the same man who called for the Palestinian village of Huwara to be wiped out, following what an IDF spokesperson called a “pogrom” at the hands of illegal settlers and some Israeli soldiers. Smotrich has been given powers over the west bank, transferring authority away from the Israeli Defence Ministry to Israeli civilian control.

Human rights groups consider that the latest example of the irreversible entrenchment of the occupation of Palestine as de facto annexation by the Israelis becoming de jure. ...

*col 457* For Palestinians, that far-right Government are no different from the Government who came before them. In fact, 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in decades ...

*col 458 Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat):* ... The aims of the new far-right Israeli Government and the conduct of their Ministers are hugely concerning. It is not just Itamar Ben-Gvir, with whom our Government will rightly not engage. What about Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who stood up in Paris just weeks ago and said “there is no such thing as a Palestinian people”?

Will the Government condemn these deeply racist remarks and rule out engaging with Smotrich too? ...

The United Kingdom must be absolutely clear that we stand on the side of international law. It is therefore hugely disheartening that the Government are opposed to the International Criminal Court’s investigation into international crimes in the west bank. It damages our credibility in the region, and it undermines our efforts to speak out when international law is violated in other parts of the world ...

The UK has an important card that it can play now: recognition of the state of Palestine. In the context of this deteriorating situation, what a powerful sign that would be, not only to demonstrate a tangible commitment to a two-state solution but to provide real hope to Palestinians ...

*col 460 Richard Burgon (Labour):* ... A long-lasting peace for both Palestinians and Israelis can only be secured through a solution that tackles the underlying injustices faced by the Palestinian people. A two-state solution means that Palestine must have the right to exist, but Israeli state actions make that ever less likely. As the former colonial power in Palestine, Britain has a special responsibility to do all it can to end Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian land, its colonial settlements, its denial of the right of Palestinian refugees to return, the siege of Gaza, and Israel’s violations of human rights and international law.

But words alone are not enough. We need action too. That means—it has to mean—that the British Government should recognise the state of Palestine, as this Parliament voted to do back in 2014. It means that we should end all trade with illegal Israeli settlements, and that we should impose an embargo on arms sales to Israel. ...

**Imran Hussain (Labour):** What we saw at al-Aqsa in Jerusalem this month, with Israeli security forces storming the mosque, firing stun and smoke grenades within its grounds and brutally beating worshippers, was one of the most concerning incidents, because it marks a worrying escalation in the abuses being perpetrated by the Israeli security forces. While the desecration of a holy site is wrong at any time, to march heavily armed soldiers



into al-Aqsa to use weapons on the site of one of the most revered places of worship during the holy month of Ramadan, at the start of Passover and just before Easter, and in one of the holiest cities in the world, is frankly outrageous. Let us be clear in this House that what we saw was not a policing operation, but a clear and deliberate provocation by the Israeli security forces.

For hundreds and hundreds of years, the sanctity of places of worship and the convention that they should as far as possible remain untouched during conflict has been respected, whether in law or in unspoken practice. It is clear, however, that this reverence, this convention and this respect for one of the most fundamental human rights—for people to worship and practise their religion—is being rapidly eroded, because that was not the first raid on al-Aqsa; nor was it even the first raid during Ramadan. It is now becoming an all-too-common occurrence, with the international community failing to take a stand to end this abuse. ...

We must also remember that the raid on al-Aqsa came just weeks after the riot of settlers through Palestinian villages. This violence by settlers towards Palestinians should not be surprising, because rather than being deterred by action from the international community, the Israeli Government, security forces and settlers have instead been emboldened by their silence. ... How much more does the future state of Palestine have to shrink before the UK Government will consider recognising a viable and independent state of Palestine? *col 461* The raid on al-Aqsa, the settler violence and the expansion of illegal settlements is just the tip of the iceberg, because there is a long and exhaustive catalogue of human rights abuses still being committed by the Israeli Government against the Palestinians. ...

*col 462* **John McDonnell (Labour):** ... Last year, on behalf of the NUJ, I attended the commemoration of the life of Shireen Abu Akleh. People may remember that Shireen, who was an al-Jazeera correspondent, was shot dead by the Israeli armed forces on 11 May 2022, while she was reporting in Jenin. ...

Since then, Reporters Without Borders has compiled video and audio evidence about at least 11 other journalists who have been targeted or aggressed by Israeli security forces in the west bank. In fact, we now know that at least 30 journalists have been killed by Israeli security personnel over the last few decades. ...

*col 463* **Jeremy Corbyn (Independent):** ... The Nakba of 1948 occurred on 15 May, which has now been declared Nakba Day around the world. It saw 750,000 people expelled, and 500 towns and villages destroyed as a result of that, with people for ever living in exile. ... I wonder what goes through the mind of a Palestinian building worker who has to go into Israel to work during the day, and go through the humiliation of dozens of checkpoints. Then, when he is on his way home, he gets delayed for no reason whatsoever, often for hours and hours, while exhausted from a day's work, and he has to do it all again the next day. That plays on people's minds. Then, when an ambulance cannot get through and medical aid cannot be delivered because of it, that is where the anger gets worse and worse. ...

*col 464* The occupation is utterly brutal and the UN is not wrong when it describes the situation on the west bank as an apartheid state, where some people are allowed to use some roads and some are not, some are allowed to travel and some are not, and some are allowed to get through borders and some are not. ...

Surely to goodness, the Palestinian people have suffered enough. The least we can do as a country is recognise the state of Palestine—no qualifications—to show that we are serious in speaking up against the abuse of human rights and for an end to the siege of Gaza. ...

*col 465* **Tommy Sheppard (SNP):** ... as violence increases, I caution against slipping into what we used to call the politics of the last atrocity, whereby we try to understand and explain an event by seeing it as a reaction to the event that happened before. We need a wider, longer-term view that looks at the context and the factors behind what is happening

in Israel-Palestine, if we are to have any prospect of beginning to rejuvenate moves towards peace. When we do that, the obvious and glaring thing in front of us is that within 20 years of the state of Israel coming into existence, it began a military occupation of territories outwith its borders that belong to other countries or that were designated by the United Nations as a future homeland of Palestine.

Fifty-six years later, that military occupation continues. ... Until we commit to ending that military occupation, it will be impossible to properly establish human rights for Palestinians. ...

*col 466* ... there are two major factors in the recent past that ought to dictate a change and a review of UK Government policy. The first is the stated policy of the Israeli Government. People have commented throughout the debate that they are the most extreme right-wing Government in the history of the state of Israel, and that is true. People have commented on Ben-Gvir and Smotrich and some of the vile statements they have made, but it is not just them. ...

Why do we not stop pretending that the current Israeli Government are a good actor and believe in a long-term two-state solution, when they have clearly stated that they do not? ... The other factor that needs to be addressed is the escalating and widespread problem of settler violence. ... there are now effectively armed militias operating a campaign of violence and intimidation against the local Palestinian population, often with the connivance of, or certainly with the turning of a blind eye by, the official Israeli authorities. ...

I also want to mention the word apartheid. I expect in his notes the Minister has something that says that the British Government do not consider that to be a relevant word in the context of Israel and Palestine, because it is about South Africa, and that they do not agree with the description. Let us be clear: the word apartheid is not an adjective, but a noun. It has a precise legal definition. Respected international and Israeli organisations have spent a lot of time considering the matter and have come to the conclusion that the legal test for the crime of apartheid has been met in the occupied territories and that it is being practised by the Israeli authorities. ...

*col 467* **Bambos Charalambous (Labour):** ... Under the UN convention on the rights of the child, children have special protection and must be protected from violence at all times. Every action necessary must be taken to keep children safe. According to Save the Children, last year alone 34 children were killed by Israeli security forces and settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The use of violence against children can never be justified. ...

*col 468* Paragraph 2 of article 17 of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights states: "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property."

Despite that, Israel seems to be pursuing a policy of forced evictions and demolitions. More than 1,000 Palestinians face eviction in Masafer Yatta in the south Hebron hills. Palestinians in the Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah districts of East Jerusalem and Khan al-Ahmar ... face a similar fate. ...

After demolition, land is often used to expand or develop settlements, which is illegal because international law requires occupying powers not to move their civilian populations into occupied areas ...

*col 469* The permit system operated by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories limits the ability of Palestinians to travel freely and creates uncertainty and additional layers of bureaucracy and delays, whether people are trying to access medical care in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or to work, study or travel abroad. ...

Similarly, there are visa restrictions on those coming from abroad to work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, such as academics. Israel will argue that a permit system is necessary for security purposes, but the way in which the system is applied can be seen as punitive and unjust. ...

All those human rights violations are a result of the occupation. ...

However, the UK is resisting efforts to hold Israel to account within international institutions. The 2030 road map makes no reference to a two-state solution, and contains commitments that raise concerns about the Government's willingness to apply diplomatic scrutiny to breaches of international law and their support for the role and independence of international legal institutions such as the ICJ and the ICC. ...

I call the Minister, and ask him to leave at least two minutes for the hon. Member for Dundee West (Chris Law) to wind up the debate.

**col 470 The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Andrew Mitchell):** ...

As I said in my statement earlier today, the Government condemn the horrific murder of Lucy, Maia, and Rina Dee by a terrorist ... and we offer our deepest condolences to Rabbi Leo Dee. The decision of the family to donate Lucy's organs is an act of compassion that stands in extraordinary and vivid contrast to the senseless violence that robbed a family of its mother and two sisters. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns this and all other acts of terrorism perpetrated against Israel and her citizens.

This is, sadly, a timely debate. Last year, as has been pointed out throughout the debate, was the deadliest in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories since the second intifada, according to UN records. ... We welcome the leadership shown by the Israelis and the Palestinians when they attended the meetings in Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh to discuss ways to de-escalate the rising tensions. We are grateful to the Governments of Jordan, Egypt, and the United States for instigating those discussions. The UK is now working with both sides and international partners to support the process, and calls on both Israel and the Palestinians to honour the commitments made in those meetings. ...

**col 471** The UK calls for all parties to respect the historic status quo arrangements at Jerusalem's holy sites, and we welcome Israel's decision to prevent non-Muslims from visiting the al-Aqsa compound for the final days of Ramadan ...

... the UK is clear that the demolition of Palestinian homes and forced evictions cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution. In all but the most exceptional of cases, demolitions by an occupying power are contrary to international humanitarian law. ...

We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in administrative detention in Israel. We have made clear our concern about the continued reports of ill treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli administrative detention. Reports of the heavy use of painful restraints and the high number of Palestinian children who are not informed of their legal rights, in contravention of Israel's own regulations, are particularly troubling, as is the continued transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel in violation of the fourth Geneva convention. ...

We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions on movement, access and trade are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians, especially in Gaza. While we welcome the steps that Israel has taken to ease some restrictions, we want to see Israel go much further. We urge access into and out of Gaza in accordance with international humanitarian law for humanitarian actors, reconstruction materials and those, including Palestinians, travelling for medical purposes. ...

... we have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian properties in area C of the west bank and in East Jerusalem, and we call on them to cease the policy of demolition and to provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians. ...

**col 472 Liam Byrne:** The Minister has just set out four sets of sins that the UK Government have protested about to the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu. He must therefore accept that our words are failing to deter egregious behaviour. When will he shift from words to deeds, to deter things from getting any worse?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... What is said in the House of Commons will be read. ...

The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority reaffirmed their joint readiness and commitment to work immediately to end unilateral measures for a period of three to six months. That includes an Israeli commitment to stop discussion of any new settlement units for four months, and to stop the authorisation of any outposts for six months. ...

The UK will always seek to advance the cause of Palestinian human rights in a manner that is fair and balanced, and that supports proportionate and fair international scrutiny of Israel. ...

I reiterate that the UK Government want to see the human rights of all Palestinians protected, as this is a vital step towards the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state, living in peace, security and side by side with a safe and secure Israel.

... The UK's position on settlements is absolutely clear: settlements are illegal. I was asked about recognition of the Palestinian state, and the UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when the Government believe this will best serve the objective of peace. ...

**col 473 Chris Law:** ... the UK Government cannot take two sides. They have to take a clear position. If they believe in human rights and international law, they should do something about it by not repeatedly blocking proposals at the UN and the International Criminal Court to judge serious crimes. ...

Silence is complicity. By doing nothing, we are complicit in not allowing judgment to be taken on these serious crimes. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-04-20/debates/FA8242F1-F6CB-4E0E-AC9F-A9F05F8C5E3E/HumanRightsProtectionsPalestinians>

*The Yesh Din data referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.yesh-din.org/en/data-sheet-december-2022-law-enforcement-on-israeli-civilians-in-the-west-bank-settler-violence-2005-2022/>

*The B'Tselem data referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.btselem.org/gaza\\_strip/20230404\\_in\\_2022\\_too\\_israel\\_prevented\\_thousands\\_of\\_palestinians\\_in\\_need\\_of\\_medical\\_care\\_from\\_leaving\\_gaza\\_for\\_treatment](https://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip/20230404_in_2022_too_israel_prevented_thousands_of_palestinians_in_need_of_medical_care_from_leaving_gaza_for_treatment)

*The Amnesty International report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MDE1551412022ENGLISH.pdf>

*The 2030 Roadmap, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations>

*The UN Committee Against Torture report referred to above can be read at*

<https://tinyurl.com/3fraz2d8>

*The report from the UN special rapporteur referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/NY/GA73/A\\_73\\_45717.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/NY/GA73/A_73_45717.docx)

*The Reporters without Borders report referred to above can be read at*

<https://rsf.org/en/recordings-gathered-rsf-show-israeli-security-forces-still-deliberately-targeting-reporters>

*The Save the Children statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.savethechildren.net/news/2022-becomes-deadliest-year-palestinian-children-west-bank-over-15-years-save-children>

## House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

### Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories

**col 391 The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Andrew Mitchell):** ... I know the whole House will join me in condemning the

horrific murder of Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee by a terrorist just over a week ago, and in offering our deepest condolences to Rabbi Leo Dee and the rest of the family in their pain and grief. My colleague, the noble Lord Ahmad, recently joined Lucy Dee's family in London to sit shiva, the Jewish mourning period. I pay tribute to the extraordinary and noble decision of the Dee family to donate Lucy's organs, saving five lives so far and possibly more. That act of compassion and generosity in a moment of tragedy stands in vivid contrast to the senseless and abhorrent violence that robbed a family of its mother and two sisters.

The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns that act of terrorism. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen on the Friday, shortly after Maia and Rina had been murdered, to offer our sympathy and co-ordinate our response. We also condemn the second act of terrorism against Israel on Good Friday, when a car rammed into civilians in Tel Aviv, killing an Italian citizen and injuring many others, including some British nationals.

Those callous acts are more examples of the attacks that have plagued the lives of ordinary Israelis and Palestinians for too long. As the British Government has made clear, the UK remains steadfast in its commitment to work with the Israeli authorities, the Palestinian authorities and all parties in the region and in the international community to bring an end to the terrorism that Israel faces and to the destructive violence that we continue to witness. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and antisemitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. The UK strongly condemns the numerous terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians this year, including the killing of seven Israelis on Holocaust Memorial Day. In recent months, Israel has also faced indiscriminate rocket, missile and drone attacks from groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza, and from hostile groups in Lebanon and Syria, unjustifiably and unlawfully threatening the lives of civilians. Israel must also contend with appalling rhetoric from Iran and others calling for an end to its very existence. That underlines the threats that Israel faces every day, and the UK will never waver from supporting Israel's legitimate right to self-defence.

However, our support for Israel is not confined to its defence and security. I can also inform the House that on 21 February the Foreign Secretary signed the 2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations, alongside his Israeli counterpart Eli Cohen. The UK is proud of its deep and historic relationship with the state of Israel. Both countries are committed to a modern, innovative and forward-looking relationship, focusing on shared priorities for mutual benefit.

col 392 The roadmap is the product of detailed negotiations to deepen and expand our co-operation up to 2030, following the elevation of our relationship to a strategic partnership in 2021. It provides detailed commitments for deepening UK-Israel co-operation, including in trade, cyber, science and tech, research and development, security, health, climate and gender. The roadmap also demonstrates the seriousness with which we take the global problem of antisemitism. The UK is proud of being the first Government to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition. There is no better tool to define how antisemitism manifests itself in the 21st century.

I turn now to the alarming violence we are seeing across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The conflict is exacting an ever-greater human toll. The numbers of Palestinians killed by the Israeli security forces in the west bank, including 15-year-old Muhammad Nidal, and Israelis killed in acts of terrorism, including Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee, is significantly higher than at this point in 2022. In that regard, we call on the Palestinian Authority to denounce incitement to violence and resume their security co-operation with the Israeli authorities. We say to the Israeli Government that although Israel has a legitimate right to defend its citizens from attack, the Israeli security forces must live up to their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In this situation, it is all too easy for actions by one side to escalate tensions. The raid by

Israeli police on Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan and on the first day of Passover was one such incident. When Israeli security forces conduct operations, they must ensure that they are proportionate and in accordance with international law. The anger that arose across the region and beyond from the police's actions in Al-Aqsa underlines the necessity of respecting and protecting the sanctity of Jerusalem's holy sites, especially when Ramadan, Passover and Easter overlap, as they have done this year. It is vital that all parties respect the historic status quo arrangements in Jerusalem, which allow coexistence between faiths. I welcome Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent announcement on de-escalating tensions. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, and I pay tribute to the Jordanian authorities for protecting the safety and security of the holy sites and all who worship and visit them.

Let me restate clearly the position of the UK: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines with agreed land swaps, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. To be clear, the UK-Israel road map agreement that I have mentioned in no way alters our position on the middle east peace process. A two-state solution offers the best prospects of achieving sustainable peace.

We do not underestimate the challenges but firmly believe that, if both parties show bold leadership, peace is possible. The Israelis and the Palestinians showed leadership recently when their representatives met in Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh to discuss ways to de-escalate. Those talks—the first of their kind for many years—were a positive and welcome step. The UK is working with both sides and our international partners to support this process and uphold the commitments that were made.

The UK continues to be a strong supporter of all efforts to promote peace in the middle east and a lasting and sustainable agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and we will work with all parties to progress that goal. ...

**col/ 393 Bambos Charalmbous (Labour):** I ... join him in condemning the appalling and cowardly murder of Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee. On behalf of the Labour party, I send our deepest condolence to Rabbi Leo Dee and the rest of the family at a time of unimaginable grief for them.

We are deeply concerned by escalating violence against Palestinians and Israelis. This year has been one of the deadliest for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: 98 Palestinians, including at least 17 children, have been killed by Israeli forces, and 17 Israelis have been killed so far in 2023. Each life lost is a tragedy, and every Palestinian and Israeli deserves a just solution to the conflict.

As Ramadan ends, it is crucial that steps are taken to reduce tensions and avoid any further escalation in the days ahead. There must be no repeat of the unacceptable violence used against worshippers at Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan earlier this month. Israeli authorities must respect all places of worship and maintain the agreed status quo around holy sites. Since the formation of the new Israeli coalition Government, which is led by Prime Minister Netanyahu and includes extreme far-right elements, there has been a renewed assault on the rights of Palestinians, a ramping up of inflammatory rhetoric, and dangerous new moves to try to legitimatise illegal settlements, threatening the viability of a two-state solution. Israel has suffered from appalling terrorist attacks and rocket attacks, including indiscriminate attacks from Gaza and escalation with Lebanon. ...

The UK must be a strong and consistent advocate for justice, human rights and international law in this conflict. Escalating violence and human rights violations leave us further than ever from a two-state solution and a thriving and prosperous Palestinian state, alongside a safe and secure Israel. ... We are therefore incredibly concerned about measures already being taken by the Israeli Government, such as giving Defence Minister Bezalel Smotrich control over much of the Civil Administration, the military body that administers the occupied west bank—a far-right Minister who called for the Palestinian

village of Huwara to be “wiped out” in February amid the unprecedented settler violence against Palestinians. ...

*col 394* This road map appears to dilute long-standing UK positions held by successive Governments in relation to international law. It makes no mention of supporting a two-state solution, and it implies that there could be a change in the long-standing UK position that illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories should not be treated as part of Israel. It also raises concerns about the UK’s commitment to apply proper diplomatic scrutiny to breaches of international law and its support for the role and independence of international legal institutions such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. ...

There needs to be more accountability, and the UK Government should challenge human rights breaches wherever they occur. ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... I can assure him that the road map does not indicate any change in the long-established and long-stated position of the British Government on these matters. There is no change in our position. ... we condemn all acts of violence and terror without qualification, whenever they occur and whoever perpetrates them.

**Matthew Offord (Conservative):** ... Can the Minister advise the House what the UK Government are doing to protect innocent civilians in Israel, and particularly British tourists as they visit sites of interest?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... We condemn all attacks against civilians, from wherever they come. They are unjustifiable and unlawful.

*col 395* **Drew Hendry (SNP):** ... Violence on either side must be thoroughly condemned. No innocent Israeli or Palestinian should face this kind of terror when going about their day. ...

There is little to disagree with, and much to support, in the Minister’s statement; however, there is also little specific action outlined. The UK Government must act to call out the glaring and obvious mass and systematic discrimination in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at the hands of the Israeli Government and military, so why does the 2030 road map for UK-Israeli bilateral relations contain no reference to the Israeli authorities’ treatment of Palestinians there? ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary raise these matters regularly in all the conversations that they have with both sides. On arms sales, as he will know, the Government have the strongest and toughest export regulations of any country in the world. ... we welcome the recent engagement between Israeli and Palestinian leadership at Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh.

**Pauline Latham (Conservative):** ... The UK accepts that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, and continued trade with them facilitates and legitimises their existence. Will my right hon. Friend set out what consideration has been given to banning the importation of goods from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and including such a ban in any forthcoming trade deal with Israel?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... such trading is not allowed under the existing trade and partnership agreement, and we have no plans to change that—our position is absolutely clear. ...

*col 396* **Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat):** ... the Minister ... is at risk of conflating the positions of the Palestinian Authority, who are not a sovereign Government, with the Israeli Government, who are a sovereign Government, and as such have responsibilities towards the Palestinian people as an occupying force ... Will he confirm that in any dealings and agreements with the Israeli Government, it is made explicit in writing that any agreement applies only to the sovereign state of Israel, and not to the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... we do our best to remain even-handed in assisting the cause of peace in the middle east, and that is the point we were making. We were not

equating the two forms of governance in the way that he feared.

**Desmond Swayne (Conservative):** ... Has he considered the possibility that sooner rather than later we will need to decide what our priority is? Is it to preserve even the physical possibility of a two-state solution, or is it to maintain at quite the current level of intensity the strategic partnership that he has announced with the current Israeli regime?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... the position of the UK Government is precisely as I have set out ...

**Hilary Benn (Labour):** ... Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we are now probably further away from peace and a two-state solution than we have ever been, and that we will continue to see this kind of violence again and again and again until such time as new courageous political leadership emerges on the part of the Government of Israel and of the Palestinians that is prepared to compromise in the interests of that peace?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The right hon. Gentleman ... makes the case with impeccable clarity.

*col/ 397* **Flick Drummond (Conservative):** ... can he tell me what discussions he has had with the Palestinian Authority and what help has been offered to bring the violence to an end?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... These discussions take place all the time. ... the UK is committed to working with all parties to reduce tensions and maintain calm across Israel and the OPT. ...

**Andy Slaughter (Labour):** It was disappointing that there was no announcement in the Minister's statement on recognition, on settlement trade and on supporting international law processes in the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice. ... Will he deal with one point, which is the transfer of a major part of the occupied territories to civilian administration? As a matter of law, that is de facto annexation. ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... he is right in his analysis of the issue, and the British Government are doing everything we can to advance that.

**Greg Smith (Conservative):** ... Fuelling this conflict is undoubtedly Iran. It has been promoting violent uprisings in Israel and the west bank and welcoming new terror networks, such as the Lions' Den, as well as orchestrating rocket attacks across three of Israel's borders. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is about time that the UK proscribed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety and sent a strong message out that the British Government are against state-sponsored terrorism?

**Andrew Mitchell:** My hon. Friend draws attention to the point I made in my statement that Iran is a malign actor in the region, in the very way that he sets out. As he knows, the IRGC is a sanctioned organisation. ...

**Naz Shah (Labour):** ... Since 2005, 2022 was the deadliest year. We are not even six months into 2023, and it is even more deadly. What assessment has the Minister made of the escalating violence and the impact that will have on a two-state solution?

*col/ 398* **Andrew Mitchell:** ... we are committed to working with all parties to reduce the tensions and maintain calm across Israel and the OPT.

**Brendan O'Hara (SNP):** Remarkably, the recent road map makes no mention whatever of human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, preferring to concentrate on trade and defence co-operation. ... will the Minister take this opportunity to acknowledge that Palestinians in the OPT are subject to calculated and systematic mass discrimination? ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** The hon. Gentleman invites me to condemn violence on one side and not on the other. The point I want to make is that in order to advance to the objectives that are commonly held across the House, we should condemn all these things on all sides whenever they take place.

**Matt Western (Labour):** Can the Minister confirm that he has raised the issue of the eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Masafer Yatta with his Israeli counterpart? ... Can the Government outline how they intend to ensure that the new Israeli Government



abide by their obligations under international law?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... we press the Israeli Government to abide by international law on all relevant occasions. ...

**Andy McDonald (Labour):** ... Yesterday, I met Defence for Children International Palestine to discuss its campaign, "No Way to Treat a Child". Eleven Palestinian children are being held by the Israeli military in administrative detention, a relic of the British mandate. Children can be held indefinitely without ever being charged, some for more than one year. ... will the Minister commit to impressing upon the Israeli Government the need to end this brutal practice, and reserve the option of sanctions should they fail to do so?

**Andrew Mitchell:** I am not going to get into the issue of sanctions at this point, but on the hon. Member's substantive point about sticking with internationally agreed regulations and conventions, particularly in respect of children, he makes the point extremely clearly, and I agree with him.

*col 399* **Alex Davies-Jones:** ... what [is] the Government's assessment ... of the current security situation and of the recent loss of life in Israel and the occupied west bank?

**Andrew Mitchell:** As the hon. Member will know from news reports, the position has been extremely tense. We seek at all stages to try to de-escalate that tension ...

**Marsha De Cordova (Labour):** ... The Israeli High Court of Justice recently rejected appeals against eviction orders issued to Palestinian inhabitants of Masafer Yatta and allowed the Israeli Government to forcibly evict Palestinians. That is happening at the same time as legislation in Israel is transferring control of the west bank to civilian Ministries and away from the military. Obviously, this is in effect annexation, and we know that there are going to be violations of international human rights laws. Can the Minister confirm that the Government regard the forced transfer of civilian populations in occupied territories, whether in south Hebron in Palestine or in Donbas in Ukraine, as illegal under international law?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... the British Government welcome the decision by the Israeli Prime Minister to pause the legislation to reform Israel's judiciary ...

**Ruth Cadbury (Labour):** On top of the ongoing day-to-day restrictions on life for Palestinians in the occupied territories, in February there was unprecedented settler violence towards local Palestinians in Huwara, during which Israel's Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, called for the town to be "wiped out". Has the Minister raised concerns with his counterparts about settler violence and the culture of impunity in relation to attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... Britain condemns it in the strongest possible terms. ...

*col 400* **Tommy Sheppard (SNP):** ... we now have the most extreme right-wing Government there has ever been in the history of the Israeli state, including Ministers who are openly racist and who deny the very existence of the Palestinian people. Yet, while other countries were using diplomatic pressure to try to curb the Tel Aviv Government's actions, this country and this Prime Minister invited the Prime Minister of Israel to London, rolled out the red carpet for him and signed an agreement with Israel that makes no reference to human rights abuses or to the upholding of international law. ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... the very close relationship Britain has with Israel enables us to have conversations at all levels of Government. ... the fact that the Prime Minister of Israel comes and is seen by our Prime Minister is a very good way of advancing that dialogue. ... in Israel too there is free and open discussion, with many different opinions put. The view he takes is also expressed by many within the state of Israel, and that happens because it is a democracy ...

**Jeff Smith (Labour):** ... the Minister said: "When the House speaks with one voice...we...are heard." However, I must ask the question: who does he think is listening ...?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... We use our very considerable diplomatic presence in the

region and our diplomatic work from London to try to advance a position that I think the House is agreed upon, as I have said, and I do believe that that voice is heard. ...

**Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... In Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin aligns itself alongside Hamas, a terrorist organisation proscribed by our own UK Government, and has called for sanctions, including a boycott of Israeli products. Does the Minister agree with me that Hamas are terrorists and that the boycotting of Israeli goods is utterly abhorrent?

*col 401 Andrew Mitchell:* Yes. ...

**To read the question and answer session in full see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-04-20/debates/AE73754D-C8F3-4555-84C4-FFC9F4BEF2CE/IsraelAndOccupiedPalestinianTerritories>

*The 2030 Roadmap, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations>

*Information about the “No Way to treat a Child” campaign, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://nwtac.dci-palestine.org/>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Israeli Settlements

**Fleur Anderson (Labour)** [180753] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the recently approved 7,000 new housing units in the West Bank by Israeli planning authorities.

**David Rutley:** The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. The Foreign Secretary has repeatedly raised this issue with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, when they met in person on 21 March, and in phone calls on 10 January and 7 March. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon also raised this point with the Israeli Government during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) in January. Lord Ahmad also reaffirmed the UK's opposition to Israeli settlement expansion during his 31 March meeting with Palestinian Head of Mission Zomlot.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-17/180753>

### Al-Aqsa Mosque

**Taiwo Owatemi (Labour)** [180247] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of the recent raid on the Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli forces.

**David Rutley:** As The Foreign Secretary said in his statement on 7 April, the UK condemns Israeli police violence at the Al Aqsa Mosque. When Israeli security forces conduct operations, they must ensure they are proportionate and in accordance with international law. The UK is a strong supporter of freedom of religion or belief and calls for places of worship to be respected. We continue to value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem. As the subsequent rocket fire from Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza shows, incidents such as those at Al Aqsa can be the trigger for a cycle of violence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-14/180247>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/calls-for-de-escalation-at-jerusalem-holy-sites-foreign-secretary-statement>

### **Al-Aqsa Mosque**

**Toby Perkins (Labour)** [180536] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterparts on the violent incursions at the Al Aqsa mosque.

**David Rutley:** The UK is a strong supporter of freedom of religion or belief and calls for places of worship to be respected. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem and we condemn the Israeli police violence at the Al Aqsa Mosque. When Israeli security forces conduct operations, they must ensure they are proportionate and in accordance with international law. The Foreign Secretary has emphasised these points to his Israeli counterpart Eli Cohen during his recent visit to London and since the incident at Al Aqsa.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-14/180536>

## **Department for Business and Trade**

### **Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1150605/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-04-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1150605/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-04-20.pdf)

### **Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1150694/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-04-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1150694/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-04-20.pdf)

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## **Other Relevant Information**

### **Henry Jackson Society**

#### **Anti-Hindu Hate in Schools**

<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/HJS-Anti-Hindu-Hate-in-Schools-Briefing-final.pdf>

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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>

Uncorrected Transcripts of Examination of Petitions for Private Bills

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50746/documents/3308>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50751/documents/3315>

## **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

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

## **\*\* Online Safety Bill**

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

Ministerial Statement: Government Amendments at Lords Committee Stage

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-04-19/hlws713>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-04-19/debates/0C27A2E7-484D-46A2-A68C-4C6B9FBA671E/OnlineSafetyBill>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50781/documents/3332>

## **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

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

## **Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill**

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

## **Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438>

## **Schools Bill**

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

## **Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill**

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

## **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>

Ministerial Statement and Q&A

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15248&i=130054#ScotParIOR>

Gender recognition reform: Section 35 Order challenge – petition

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/gender-recognition-reform-section-35-order-challenge-petition/>

House of Commons Library Briefing: The Secretary of State's veto and the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9705/CBP-9705.pdf>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**Prospective Scheme of Delegation for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**  
(closing date 15 May 2023)

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-prospective-scheme-delegation-charity-commission-northern-ireland>

**Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements** (closing date 15 June 2023)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/private-family-law-consultation/>

**Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997** (closing date 18 June 2023)

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-review-race-relations-ni-order-1997>

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