



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Israel

*Also see Lord Frost's comment during the debate on "Foreign Policy" that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.*

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [182408] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

**David Rutley:** The UK Government shares the objective of increasing understanding and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. In support of this, we continue to fund peacebuilding projects focused on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. UK officials also remain in close contact with the US government regarding the Middle East Partnership for Peace Act.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-24/182408>

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [182409] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

**David Rutley:** We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to engage in meaningful dialogue to further the cause of peace at every opportunity. We welcome the commitments made by Israel and the Palestinian Authority at Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh: both sides must take steps to honour these commitments. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, has consistently offered UK support in progressing dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians, including in his meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January, and during his regular engagement with the Israeli Ambassador, most recently on 21 April. British diplomats in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv also work tirelessly towards this aim.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [182410] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of Palestinian Authority policies on levels of violence against Israelis and Jews.

**David Rutley:** We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to adhere to non-violent principles and to refrain from policies that have the potential to promote violence. We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable. We continue to raise our concerns about potentially inciteful content in Palestinian textbooks with the Palestinian Authority at the highest level.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-24/182410>

### **Tom Hurndall**

**Patrick Grady (SNP)** [182327] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a response to Early Day Motion 1064, 20th anniversary of shooting of Tom Hurndall, tabled on 17 April 2023.

**David Rutley:** The UK strongly believes that journalists and international aid workers should be able to conduct their work without obstructions. We recognise the Government of Israel's need to deploy security forces in order to defend itself but encourage Israel to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

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. We want to see a contiguous West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as part of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines. We urge Israel to halt its settlement expansion.

The UK is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court and we respect the independence of the Court. We do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-24/182327>

*The Early Day Motion referred to above can be read at*

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/60773>

### **Israel: Nuclear Weapons**

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [183179] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 26 April 2023 to Question 182071 on Israel: Nuclear Weapons, when he last reviewed the available evidence on whether Israel possess nuclear weapons; and if he will make an assessment of the extent to which information held by the National Archives in files FCO 177/1175 and FCO 93/7314 accurately reflects the available evidence on that matter as of April 2023.

**David Rutley:** It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters. The UK Government closely follows the security situation in the Middle East and maintains a regular dialogue with international counterparts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/183179>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-20/182071>

*The National Archives files referred to above are not available online.*

## House of Lords Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Israel: Christianity**

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7217] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel on the reported increasing number of attacks on Christians and Christian property by Israeli settlers and extremists, in the light of the government of Israel's failure to condemn these attacks while supporting restrictions placed on Christian worshippers in occupied East Jerusalem.

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL7218] To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they have taken to coordinate international pressure to protect Christians, their property and their freedoms in Israel and Israeli-occupied territories in the light of recent attacks.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. The UK condemns all attacks on the right to freedom of religion or belief. Israel has made clear its commitment to freedom of religion. We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. We continue to call on all sides to uphold the historic Status Quo in Jerusalem, recognising the custodianship of Jordan over the Holy sites.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-18/hl7217>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-18/hl7218>

## United Nations

### **Permanent Observer Briefs Palestinian Rights Committee on Situation in Occupied Territory Situation, Submissions Guidelines for Opinion Case to World Court**

... **Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, first provided the Committee with an update on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council held eight meetings over the last four months, given Israel's most extremist Government in its history – one which includes ministers who have been convicted in Israeli courts of supporting terrorism organizations. ...

Drawing attention to the Israeli Government's latest acts of aggression, he spotlighted Jericho being under siege for the last 10 days, incidents in Ramallah and the desecration of holy sites, including Christian ones during Easter. There has also been a massive onslaught against Palestinian prisoners whose health have been neglected, he pointed out, reporting that some have engaged in hunger strikes such as Khader Adnan who died on 2 May after an 86-day strike. ...

Also detailing the aggression of extremist settler groups against Palestinians near the town of Nablus, he reported that car and homes had been torched by Israeli settlers with Israeli armed forces watching and taking no action. There was also a "night of hell" in the Gaza strip from the Israeli army's aggression ...

On the upcoming 15 May commemoration of the Nakba at the United Nations, he stressed that the aim is to tell the Palestinian people's story and lift their hopes as they maintain their efforts to live a life of dignity. ...

Detailing the history behind the General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, he informed the Committee on guidelines for the submission of materials. ... Countries can then see

each other's submissions and have until 25 October to make another submission.

The aim, he stressed, is to have a tremendous amount of information so that the entire question on Palestine can not only be heard by the highest Court, but also receive a useful opinion which helps achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, the return of refugees and Statehood. ...

**Cheikh Niang (Senegal), Chair of the Committee** ... underscored the moral duty of the Committee's members to participate by submitting for an advisory opinion from the Court. "If we don't do it at our level, I wonder who else will do it," he said, emphasizing: "This is a very important milestone for the Palestinian cause." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gapal1452.doc.htm>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Israel's human rights record to be examined by Universal Periodic Review**

Israel's human rights record will be examined by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group for the fourth time on Tuesday, 9 May 2023, in a meeting that will be [webcast live](#).

Israel is one of 14 States to be reviewed by the UPR Working Group during its upcoming 43rd session from 1 to 12 May 2023. Israel's [first, second and third UPR reviews](#) took place in December 2008, January 2013 and January 2018, respectively.

The documents on which the reviews are based are: 1) national report - information provided by the State under review; 2) information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities; 3) information provided by other stakeholders including national human rights institutions, regional organizations, and civil society groups.

The three reports serving as the basis for the review of Israel on 9 May can be found [here](#). ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/israels-human-rights-record-be-examined-universal-periodic-review>

### **Israel: UN experts demand accountability for death of Khader Adnan and mass arbitrary detention of Palestinians**

The death of Palestinian hunger striker Khader Adnan must be accounted for, UN experts\* said today, calling Israel's mass arbitrary detention of Palestinians "cruel" and "inhumane." The 45-year-old Palestinian prisoner died in his prison cell on Tuesday morning after a hunger strike that spanned nearly three months. He was protesting Israel's widespread policy of arbitrarily detaining Palestinians against fair trial guarantees and in abhorrent conditions.

Khader Adnan went on hunger strike shortly after he was last arrested on 5 February 2023 by Israeli authorities on terrorism-related charges. Despite the serious deterioration of his health, Israeli authorities refused to release Adnan or transfer him to hospital, and continued to detain him in a prison hospital facility, reportedly without providing adequate health care. The experts noted that Khader Adnan was arrested at least 12 times in the past, spent around eight years in prison, mostly in administrative detention, and went on hunger strike five times.

"The death of Khader Adnan is a tragic testament to Israel's cruel and inhumane detention policy and practices, as well as the international community's failure to hold Israel accountable in the face of callous illegalities perpetrated against Palestinians," the experts said.

Israel currently holds approximately 4900 Palestinians in its prisons, including 1016

administrative detainees who are held for an indefinite period without trial or charge, based on secret information. The number of administrative detainees in Israeli detention facilities is at its highest since 2008, despite repeated condemnation from international human rights bodies and recommendations for Israel to immediately end the practice. In recent years, many Palestinian prisoners have resorted to hunger strikes to protest the brutality of Israel's detention practices.

"We cannot separate Israel's carceral policies from the colonial nature of its occupation, intended to control and subjugate all Palestinians in the territory Israel wants to control," the UN experts said. "The systematic practice of administrative detention, is tantamount to a war crime of wilfully depriving protected persons of the rights of fair and regular trial."

The experts said it was ever more urgent for the international community to hold Israel accountable for its illegal acts in the occupied territory and stop the normalisation of war crimes that have become a daily reality in the lives of Palestinians.

"How many more lives will have to be lost, before an inch of justice can be delivered in the occupied Palestinian territory?" they said.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/israel-un-experts-demand-accountability-death-khader-adnan-and-mass>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Lords Debate

#### Foreign Policy

*col 585GC* **The Lord Bishop of St Albans:** ... Long gone are the days when we could boast that Britannia ruled the waves or when the UK was famous for being the home of the Industrial Revolution and known as the workshop of the world, but as some things have declined, others have emerged. ...

*col 586GC* The recent Covid-19 pandemic ... gave us a real-time lesson that, whatever our racial and ethnic background, we are all part of one human race. The pandemic revealed our mutual dependence and we learned a lot about the vulnerability of some of our supply chains. ...

Of course, there are times when tyrants and bullies have to be confronted. However, it is equally important to develop and deliver a foreign policy that seeks to build a more peaceful world—and peace is dependent on justice. Unaddressed injustices and inequalities breed resentment, and in that dark pool of bitterness is born conflict. It is well said that peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice. ...

*col 588GC* At a fundamental level, the UK has been, and should continue to be, a country that stands up for human rights across our world. Tyrants are watching with interest as some people in our country want to water down some of our human rights. ...

*col 590GC* **Lord Frost (Conservative):** ... How can our country play its hand in this increasingly difficult world ... First, we should not give in to those who say that we cannot have influence on our own ...

Secondly, we must invest in our friends, new and old, through thick and thin, and build genuine partnerships and alliances through difficulties, avoiding a tendency we sometimes have to preachiness. ...

*col 591GC* Thirdly, one country that I am concerned that we do not influence as much as we should is the United States. ... Indeed, I have heard it said by well-placed commentators that not just Israel or Ireland but countries such as Poland or France are more effective on the Hill than the UK nowadays. ...

This is a difficult, dangerous and turbulent world. If we are to navigate it effectively, we

must stick by our friends, raise our game and stand up to those who wish us harm. ...

**col 592GC Lord Browne of Ladyton (Labour):** ... We heard the Armed Forces Minister, two weeks ago in the other place, discuss the UK's role as a champion of the "rules-based international order", even as his colleague the Home Secretary introduced the Illegal Migration Bill, with a covering letter blithely admitting that there is more than a 50% chance that its provisions are incompatible with our duties under the European Convention on Human Rights. Further, we see the Home Secretary attempting to dilute the strength of interim measures under the European Court of Human Rights in order that she realise her dream of seeing deportation flights to Rwanda, even as Ukraine relies upon those measures repeatedly in its fight against Russian aggression. ...

**col 600GC The Lord Bishop of Leeds:** ... The question that underlies this debate is this: do we in the UK listen to ourselves and the language of mere aspiration, or can we look through the eyes of those who experience us? ...

For example, I have been met with incredulity in Germany and elsewhere in Europe when we make statements about the importance of the rule of law, and our moral demand that countries such as Russia and China should stand by it, at the same time as we draft legislation that consciously seeks to breach it. ...

**col 607GC Baroness Meyer (Conservative):** ... Britain has a unique role. Indeed, our assertive stand on Ukraine has generated huge admiration around the world. ... Not since World War II has Britain been able to validate its reputation as the world-leading defender of democracy, and the champion of law and order. ...

Yet while we are fighting for the rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian people, we are at the same time allowing our basic freedoms in this country to crumble before our very eyes. ...

How has this come to pass? ... Essentially, the ideology behind this new wave is that meritocracy is inherently racist and that judging people as individuals is wrong. Instead, one's identity is better defined by the social groups to which one belongs. ...

**col 608GC** It has toppled our traditional values and long-held beliefs. It has infiltrated every strand of our society, put children's welfare at risk and directly attacked women's rights, family life and religious belief, including Christianity—all at an alarming speed. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-05-03/debates/7EF5B5BD-CE87-4E45-B140-7B7D6C518DB0/ForeignPolicy>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Court of Justice of the European Union

**According to Advocate General Collins, a public body may, under certain conditions, prohibit its employees from wearing any visible sign of political, religious or philosophical belief in their workplace**

... a female employee of the municipal authority of Ans (Belgium) was prohibited from wearing the Islamic headscarf in her workplace. In that context, the municipal authority then amended its terms of employment, henceforth requiring its employees to observe strict neutrality, prohibiting any form of proselytising and banning the wearing of overt signs of ideological or religious affiliation. The employee claims that, in doing so, the municipal authority infringes her freedom of religion. The Labour Court of Liège ... considers that the prohibition laid down by those terms of employment does not constitute direct discrimination on the grounds of religious or philosophical belief, but seemingly indirect discrimination based on those criteria.

That court is uncertain whether ... the imposition of 'exclusive and absolute' neutrality on all the employees of a public service, even those who have no direct contact with users of the public service, constitutes a legitimate aim and whether the means used to achieve that aim, that is to say, the prohibition on the wearing of any signs of belief, are appropriate and necessary.

In his Opinion, Advocate General Anthony Collins finds that the Ans municipal authority's terms of employment do indeed fall within the scope of the directive ... and that a prohibition such as the one at issue comes under the scope of 'employment and working conditions' within the meaning of that directive. He also observes that the concept of 'religion' in that directive covers both the fact of having a belief and the manifestation of religious faith in public, such as a woman wearing the Islamic headscarf. ...

As for the question whether that prohibition constitutes indirect discrimination, Advocate General Collins considers that, while it is apparently neutral, it is possible that the prohibition in practice affects a certain category of persons more, such as the municipal authority's employees who observe religious precepts requiring them to wear certain clothing, and in particular female workers who wear a headscarf on account of their Muslim faith, although that point is for the referring court to assess. He adds that such a difference of treatment would nonetheless not constitute indirect discrimination if it were objectively justified by a legitimate aim and if the means employed to achieve that aim were appropriate and necessary. ...

The desire to pursue a policy of political, philosophical and religious neutrality within a public body is, in absolute terms, capable of constituting a legitimate aim, in particular for the purpose of respecting the philosophical and religious beliefs of citizens as well as the need to ensure equal and non-discriminatory treatment of users of the public service. ... He considers that it is for the municipal authority to demonstrate that that choice responds to a genuine need, and for the Labour Court of Liège to assess ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2023-05/cp230074en.pdf>

*The directive referred to above can be read at*

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0078>

**To read the full opinion see**

<https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=273313&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4073347>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/50958/documents/3360>

## **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

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

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

## **Online Safety Bill**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Schools Bill**

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

## **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

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

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

## **Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454>

## **Scottish Parliament**

### **Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-bill>

### **Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **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>

**Charities tax compliance** (closing date 20 July 2023)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/charities-tax-compliance/consultation-charities-tax-compliance>

**JPR 2023 Antisemitism in the UK Survey** (closing date not stated)  
<https://www.jpr.org.uk/panel/UKantisemitism2023> (UK except Scotland)  
and  
<https://bit.ly/3Vg7DDH> (Scotland)

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