



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Antisemitism

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [905854]** What recent assessment [the Minister] has made of the potential implications for his policies of levels of antisemitism in the last 12 months.

**The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove):** We have paid close attention to the concerning figures produced by the Home Office and the Community Security Trust, which have shown the continued prevalence of antisemitism in our society. We are considering Lord Mann's recent reports on the subject, which we will respond to in due course, and we have increased the annual Jewish community protective security grant to £15 million in 2023-24.

**Alex Sobel:** Did the Secretary of State see the research from King's College London, showing that those who believe in conspiracies are most likely to be antisemitic? Much of that antisemitism takes place online and is legal but harmful. What is he doing to tackle conspiracism, misinformation and fake news; why are the measures to tackle them in the Online Safety Bill so weak; and why have the Government removed the legal but harmful provision, which would protect so much of the Jewish community?

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a significant overlap between antisemitism and conspiracy theories, and many of the tropes that conspiracists use are drawn from the antisemitic library. However, with the Online Safety Bill it is important to balance the right to free speech with vigilance in dealing with hate, and this Government are absolutely committed to combating antisemitism wherever it rears its head.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-10/debates/D5369023-D453-499F-B706-BA9254F9E9B6/Antisemitism>

*The Home Office figures referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>

*The CST figures referred to above can be read at*

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/e/6/CST%20Incidents%20Report%202022.pdf>

and

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.pdf>

Lord Mann's reports, referred to above, can be read at

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/PDF-Antisemitism-Report-2023.pdf>

and

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Understanding-Jewish-Experience-in-Higher-Education.pdf>

and

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A-Good-Practice-Guide.pdf>

The research referred to above can be read at

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01624-y>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom: Finance

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [192466] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to provide funding for the Inter Faith Network in the 2023-2024 financial year; and if he will make a statement.

**Dehenna Davison:** The Inter Faith Network will receive funding from the Department in 2023/24 to deliver a range of activities, including work to promote good relations between people of different faiths, and to coordinate activity around Inter Faith Week in November.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-05/192466>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Sarah Owen (Labour)** [192439] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of changes in the levels of violence against civilians in the West Bank this year.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The security situation in the West Bank is deteriorating and further escalation must be avoided. The UK unequivocally condemns terror attacks against civilians, and strongly supports Israel's right to self-defence. The Foreign Secretary discussed the recent violence in the West Bank in and urged the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh to tackle terror and incitement on 5 July. When conducting military operations, Israeli armed forces' conduct must also always be in line with international humanitarian law, including the principles of proportionality, distinction and necessity, and they must prioritise the protection of civilians when defending their legitimate security interest. On 5 July, the Foreign Secretary spoke to Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, where he urged the Government of Israel to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-04/192439>

## United Nations

### **UN and partners visit severely damaged Jenin Refugee Camp**

... “We went to Jenin camp with our partners to show solidarity with residents and reassure them that they are not alone,” said Leni Stenseth, the UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General. ...

“The destruction I saw was shocking. Some houses were completely burned down, cars had been crushed against walls, roads were damaged; the UNRWA health centre was destroyed ... But, more than the physical damage, I saw the trauma in the eyes of camp residents who had witnessed the violence. I heard them speak about their exhaustion and fear.” ...

Mr. Bouloukos [Director of UNRWA West Bank Field Office] said the delegation visited a classroom where students shared that just 10 days ago, they had buried a classmate who was killed in an earlier incursion. He said it is very hard for children to walk to school as the main roads are still unusable.

“When trying to find alternative ways to school, some younger children lost their way. We truly feared for their safety due to the risks of unexploded ordinance. A priority now is to provide mental and psychosocial support to help children cope with their fear and anxiety,” he added.

“The camp is now partially without access to electricity and water,” Mr. Bouloukos said. “Nearly eight kilometres of water piping and three kilometres of sewage lines were destroyed due to the use of heavy machinery that ripped up large sections of the roads.” ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138487>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Special Rapporteur Says Israel’s Unlawful Carceral Practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory Are Tantamount to International Crimes and Have Turned it into an Open-Air Prison**

... **Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967**, presenting her report on arbitrary deprivation of liberty, said since 1967, Israel had detained approximately one million Palestinians in the occupied territory, including tens of thousands of children. Currently, there were 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, including 160 children, and approximately 1,100 of them were detained without charge or trial. Her report did not condone any acts of violence committed by Palestinians, while living under an unlawful occupation or in their pursuit to end it. However, it must be acknowledged that most Palestinians had been convicted through a series of violations of international law, such as discrimination, persecution, and breaches of due process and for ordinary acts of life and in the exercise of legitimate civil and political rights. A widespread and systematic arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Palestinians was a structural component of their subjugation. ...

The occupying power framed the Palestinians as a collective incarcerable security threat, ultimately de-civilianising them, namely eroding their status as protected persons. This large-scale carceral practise was an essential feature of settler-colonial regimes, aimed at crushing the native populations, while incrementally seizing their ancestral lands.

Israel’s unlawful carceral practices were tantamount to international crimes which warranted an urgent investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. All the more as these offences appeared to be part of a plan of ‘de-Palestinisation’ of the territory. This threatened the existence of a people as a national cohesive group. ...

**The Vice-President of the Council** said Israel was not present in the room to take the floor as a country concerned.

**State of Palestine** ... [said that] The report said detention was being used as a tool to stop those within the occupied territory from exercising their rights. There were also threats, blackmail, assault and medical negligence being used against detainees, as well as their transfer outside the occupied territories. These practices amounted to flagrant violations of the Hague Convention, the Geneva Convention and humanitarian law, and constituted crimes against humanity and war crimes. ...

**Independent Commission for the Human Rights of Palestine** said medical negligence in detention had caused 700 Palestinian prisoners to suffer in prison, including 24 with cancer. This included a prisoner who had been imprisoned since 1969, who had been diagnosed with a rare form of bone marrow cancer, and left without medical attention. The authorities had rejected requests to release him for further treatment. ...

In the ensuing discussion, some speakers were concerned about the increasingly high number of civilian casualties, including women and children. While recognising Israel's right to defend itself and to protect its civilian population, speakers recalled that the use of force must be proportionate and in line with international human rights law and international humanitarian law; it should be used only as a last resort when it was strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. ...

Some speakers expressed grave concern at the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and related activities, including the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, and the confiscation and destruction of property ... Some speakers remained concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to administrative detention without formal charge, and called on it to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of Palestinian minors, faced with arrest and detention, in line with international obligations and standards regarding the detention of children.

Some speakers expressed strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and activities, including in and around East Jerusalem, noting that settlements were illegal under international law. ... The recent aggression by Israel on Jenin camp, as well as the displacement and violence perpetrated against the Palestinians, were condemned roundly. ...

A number of speakers reiterated their support for the realisation of the legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. ... The people of Palestine must be allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, in the light of international legitimacy and the relevant Arab initiatives. The situation was, some speakers said, a crime against humanity. ...

Some speakers said the mandate, due to its fundamental flaws, failed to provide an unbiased and objective assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The consistent focus on criticising Israel while turning a blind eye to the actions and responsibilities of the Palestinian leadership undermined the credibility of the mandate. One speaker said the report had reached a shameful low point by seeking to justify a so-called "right to resist". The key context of the vital need for strong and appropriate Israeli counter-terrorism measures was, unsurprisingly, missing from the report. Member States must speak out against this moral outrage and contemplate what was becoming of the United Nations, which had now become a place where anti-Semitism was ignored.

Agenda item seven referred to the "Occupied Palestinian Territories", but the Council neglected to address the responsibility of Palestinian leaders in this matter, some speakers said. This Council overlooked the fact that the Palestinian Authority allocated a substantial portion of its annual budget to compensating terrorists. Similarly, it deliberately turned a blind eye to Hamas' exploitation of children in hostilities, contributing to a dangerous cycle of indoctrination, hatred, and incitement of violence within the Palestinian society. Instead, it only served as another platform to delegitimise the State of Israel. ...

**Francesca Albanese** ... said ... International law was there be respected; it was not an a la carte menu from which one could pick and choose. Human rights were for all and not for a select group of people. The issue of incarceration was massive and was essential to address in order to progress towards peace. The occupation had transformed the occupied Palestinian territory into a surveilled prison. ...

Ms. Albanese said the international community needed to shift how it looked at Palestine and their approach. Every Member State had the opportunity not to recognise the legitimacy of the occupation. There were a number of conducts which could amount to crimes prosecutable under the Rome Statute. These needed to be investigated, either by the International Criminal Court or other international jurisdictions. The Palestinians faced an existential threat and needed protection from the international community. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/07/special-rapporteur-says-israels-unlawful-carceral-practices-occupied-palestinian>

### **Dismantle Israel's carceral regime and "open-air" imprisonment of Palestinians: UN expert**

Israel's military occupation has morphed the *entire* occupied Palestinian territory into an open-air prison, where Palestinians are constantly confined, surveilled and disciplined," a UN expert said ...

"Over 56 years, Israel has governed the occupied Palestinian territory through stifling criminalisation of basic rights and mass incarcerations," said Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, in a new report to the Human Rights Council.

"Under Israeli occupation, generations of Palestinians have endured widespread and systematic arbitrary deprivation of liberty, often for the simplest acts of life and the exercise of fundamental human rights," Albanese said. Without condoning violent acts that Palestinians may have committed during decades of Israel's illegal occupation, most of their criminal convictions have resulted from a litany of violations of international law, including due process violations, that taint the legitimacy of the administration of justice by the occupying power.

The report finds that since 1967, over 800,000 Palestinians, including children as young as 12, have been arrested and detained under authoritarian rules enacted, enforced and adjudicated by the Israeli military. Palestinians are subject to long detention for expressing opinions, gathering, pronouncing unauthorised political speeches, or even merely attempting to do so, and ultimately deprived of their status of protected civilians. They are often presumed guilty without evidence, arrested without warrants, detained without charge or trial and brutalised in Israeli custody.

"Mass incarceration serves the purpose of quelling peaceful opposition against the occupation, protecting the Israeli military and settlers, and ultimately facilitating settler-colonial encroachment," the Special Rapporteur said.

"Bundling Palestinians as a collective "security threat", Israel has used draconian military orders to punish the exercise of basic rights. These measures have been used as tools to subjugate an entire population, depriving them of self-determination, enforcing racial domination and advancing territorial acquisition by force," she said.

Albanese noted that Israel's "carceral regime" haunts Palestinian life even outside prisons. Blockades, walls, segregated infrastructure, checkpoints, settlements encircling Palestinian towns and villages, hundreds of bureaucratic permits and a web of digital surveillance, further entrap Palestinians in a carceral continuum across strictly controlled enclaves.

"The widespread and systematic arbitrariness of the occupation's carceral regime is yet another expression of the apartheid imposed on the Palestinians and strengthens the need to end it immediately," the UN expert said.



“The mass and arbitrary deprivation of liberty that Palestinians have been collectively subjected to for decades aims to protect Israel’s annexation of Palestinian territory, a project with unlawful aims pursued by unlawful means,” Albanese said. “This macroscopic violation of fundamental principles of international law cannot be remedied by addressing some of its most brutal consequences. For Israel’s carceral regime to end, and its inherent apartheid with it, its illegal occupation of Palestine must end,” she said.

Albanese called on Member States to uphold their obligations not to aid or recognise Israel’s settler-colonial occupation and incremental annexation, and use all diplomatic, political and economic measures under the UN Charter to bring it to an end and make sure its architects are brought to justice.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/07/dismantle-israels-carceral-regime-and-open-air-imprisonment-palestinians-un>

**Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese**

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/advance-versions/A\\_HRC\\_53\\_59\\_AdvanceUneditedVersion.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/advance-versions/A_HRC_53_59_AdvanceUneditedVersion.pdf)

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## Other Relevant Information

### UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**

**Ashwini K.P., Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**, said the international community had seen a groundswell of commitment to addressing racism and racial discrimination in recent years, but more must be done to translate that into concrete improvements in the lived experiences of those affected by racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. ...

The first report [*see below*] ... stressed the significance of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to the material scope of the mandate, a range of international human rights treaties provided protection from racial discrimination. Finally, the report made targeted recommendations for Member States and other stakeholders, including calling on States to increase efforts to implement international legal provisions providing protection from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action ...

The Special Rapporteur said the report on combatting the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and related ideologies noted with concern the continued prominence of racist, nationalist and far-right political parties and organizations operating throughout various national contexts. ... It recommended that Member States take substantial measures to address the concerning prominence of different manifestations of hatred. The measures recommended included improving relevant national legal frameworks; adopting national action plans; strengthening and expanding efforts to employ education and public awareness campaigns to combat racist stereotypes and promote diversity; increasing disaggregated data collection; and augmenting efforts to implement relevant international legal provisions. ...

Many speakers said they were committed to combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Declaration was an opportunity to highlight the need for strengthening efforts against all forms of discrimination. ...

Some of those speaking expressed deep concern about the various contemporary forms of racism, particularly those that were hostile to Muslims. This could be seen through acts such as the burning of the Holy Koran in some countries, which was extremely troubling. ... The glorification of Nazism was concerning, and speakers categorically condemned ideologies, including fascism and Nazism which represented a path which had already been defeated by humanity following the establishment of the United Nations. Neo-Nazism and neo-fascism were rising and needed to be condemned. These practices could not be justified.

Increased efforts were needed to raise public awareness of the harmful effects of hate speech, both online and offline. Many speakers shared the concern of the Special Rapporteur about the proliferation of hate speech online, including based on race, ethnicity, nationality, ancestry, religion, immigration status or gender identity. ...

**To read the full press release see halfway down the page at**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/07/dismantle-israels-carceral-regime-and-open-air-imprisonment-palestinians-un>

**Report of Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/HRC/53/60)**

<https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/HRC/53/60&Lang=E>

**Combatting glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/HRC/53/62)**

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/advance-versions/A-HRC-53-62-Reissuance-AdvanceEditedVersion.docx>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

**Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

**Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

**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>

Report Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-07-10/debates/049FB9B5-C87F-4750-8523-63A07315339D/OnlineSafetyBill>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-07-10/debates/7D3B44D0-9B82-42EF-A426-133ED1AD872C/OnlineSafetyBill>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/52169/documents/3793>

### **Nakba Commemoration Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461>

### **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

**\*\* closes in 9 days**

**Charities tax compliance** (closing date 20 July 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/charities-tax-compliance/consultation-charities-tax-compliance>

**Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill** (closing date not specified – no later than 14 September 2023 but may be earlier)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2023/july-2023/economic-activity-of-public-bodies-overseas-matters-bill-call-for-evidence/>

**A Human Rights Bill for Scotland** (closing date 5 October 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/equality-and-human-rights/a-human-rights-bill-for-scotland-consultation/>

**The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales** (closing date 26 October 2023)

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/>

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