



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL10411] To ask His Majesty's Government when the Prime Minister last discussed mutual UK–US foreign policy objectives in the Middle East with the President of the United States; and whether those discussions included discussion of the normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to support diplomatic efforts to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. The UK is a firm supporter of Israel's normalisation agreements, including the Abraham Accords. We continue to encourage close regional cooperation in order to tackle regional challenges and we encourage those countries with whom Israel does not yet have diplomatic relations to recognise the economic, cultural and security benefits of cooperation with Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-21/hl10411>

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

<https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom (Conservative) [HL10400] To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to the government of Israel regarding reports of Hamas smuggling weapons and explosive materials across the Gaza border.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is resolute in its commitment to Israel's security. Our position on Hamas is clear: we condemn Hamas' attacks against civilians which are unacceptable and unjustifiable. We unequivocally condemn the use and possession of indiscriminate weapons by militant groups in Gaza. Hamas and other terrorist groups must cease their campaign of violence, for which there is no justification. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions, with consequences for the international community. Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements. In the 2030 Roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral

relations, signed by the Foreign Secretary and his Israeli counterpart earlier this year, the governments of the UK and Israel have stated that we will continue to work together to keep our people safe from cyber, criminal and terrorist threats.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-21/hl10400>

The 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>

Downing Street

PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel : 8 October 2023

The Prime Minister spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this afternoon, following deadly attacks by Hamas against Israel.

He reaffirmed that the UK will stand with Israel unequivocally against these acts of terror.

The Prime Minister offered Prime Minister Netanyahu any support Israel needs.

The Prime Minister outlined the diplomatic work the UK is doing to ensure the world speaks with one voice in opposition to these appalling attacks. Prime Minister Netanyahu thanked the Prime Minister for the UK's support.

The Prime Minister also stressed his commitment to ensuring the Jewish community in the UK feels safe and secure at this time.

The leaders agreed to stay in close contact as the situation develops.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-8-october-2023>

UK Prime Minister The Israeli flag shines on Downing Street tonight in solidarity with the people of Israel. We stand with [Israeli flag] [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1711088298544812096>

Rishi Sunak The scenes we have seen in Israel over the last 36 hours are truly horrifying. I spoke to Prime Minister @netanyahu earlier today to assure him of the UK's steadfast support as Israel defends itself against these attacks. Terrorism will not prevail. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1711070610460189079>

Rishi Sunak As the barbarity of today's atrocities becomes clearer, we stand unequivocally with Israel. This attack by Hamas is cowardly and depraved. We have expressed our full solidarity to @netanyahu and will work with international partners in the next 24 hours to co-ordinate support.

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1710772839983300858>

Rishi Sunak I am shocked by this morning's attacks by Hamas terrorists against Israeli citizens. Israel has an absolute right to defend itself. We're in contact with Israeli authorities, and British nationals in Israel should follow travel advice.

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1710583360756625872>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office After his call with @elico1, the Foreign Secretary spoke with other ministers in the Middle East, including Palestinian Prime Minister @DrShtayyeh, Jordanian Foreign Minister @AymanHsafadi and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. @JamesCleverly underlined our condemnation of

Hamas's terrorist attacks, as well as the need to work together to prevent further attacks and to prevent a wider escalation in the region.

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1711133211877617942>

James Cleverly We will not stay silent as innocent Israelis are murdered by Hamas. Terrorism will not prevail. Earlier today I visited the Israeli Embassy in London to express this government's support for Israel [Israeli flag] [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1711347640078676323>

James Cleverly The UK supports Israel's right to self-defence. We completely condemn these terrorist acts against Israel. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1710697986295001094>

James Cleverly Hamas are not "fighters". Hamas are not "militants". Hamas are terrorists. There is no other word to describe the brutality of firing rockets or terrorist attacks targeting civilians.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1710637200876990932>

James Cleverly The UK unequivocally condemns the horrific attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians. The UK will always support Israel's right to defend itself.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1710573119813845462>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Both the Foreign Secretary & I are engaging all key players to avoid escalation of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. I spoke to Dr Riad Malki, Foreign Minister @pmofa stressing the need for cooperation & communication to prevent an escalation of the conflict to the wider region

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1711145478237134883>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Appalled by devastating scenes in Israel & the shocking & rising death toll. [British flag] is clear in unwavering support to Israel in the face of terrorism; Hamas has fuelled the flames of conflict which has tragically seen 700+ Israelis & 400+ Palestinians killed in the last 48 hours alone.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1711133715986776084>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Shocked and appalled by the missile attacks by Hamas on #Israel this morning which has killed over 20 Israelis and injured hundreds of civilians -there is never any justification for terror.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1710612499727319470>

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Home Office

Suella Braverman Whenever Israel is attacked, Islamists and other racists use Israeli defensive measures as a pretext to stir up hatred against British Jews. Yesterday I spoke with @CST_UK to ensure the government is doing everything necessary for the protection of our Jewish communities.

There must be zero tolerance for anti-semitism or glorification of terrorism on the streets

of Britain. I expect the police to use the full force of the law against displays of support for Hamas, other proscribed terrorist groups or attempts to intimidate British Jews.

<https://twitter.com/SuellaBraverman/status/1710913251532226830>

Ministry of Defence

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP Israel has the right to defend itself. The UK supports that absolute right, as we always will, and stands with the people of Israel today - because Hamas' horrific actions cannot be described as anything other than terrorist attacks designed to kill innocent civilians.

<https://twitter.com/grantshapps/status/1710615532016107984>

Scottish Government

Humza Yousaf My wife Nadia & I spent this morning on the phone to her family in Gaza. Many others in Scotland will be deeply worried about their families in Israel & Palestine. My thoughts and prayers are very much with those worried about loved ones caught up in this awful situation.

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1710653011125502380>

CST

A message from CST Chief Executive @MarkGardnerCST [video]

https://twitter.com/CST_UK/status/1711009554668962146

PACE

Middle East: "Stop Hamas war", says PACE rapporteur

"Nothing justifies Hamas' disastrous decision to start a war against Israel. This aggression must be unequivocally condemned, thereby expressing solidarity and closeness to Israel and its citizens," stated Piero Fassino (Italy, SOC), Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the situation in the Middle East.

"Hamas pursues a suicidal strategy from which the Palestinian people will only suffer damage and hardship", he added.

"Stability and security in the Middle East cannot be achieved through arms. At this moment, everything must be done to halt the conflict and reopen the path to negotiated solutions that can ensure the security of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian State", Mr Fassino concluded.

<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/9224/middle-east-stop-hamas-war-says-pace-rapporteur>

United Nations

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General regarding the situation in the Middle East

The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms this morning's attack by Hamas against Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip and central Israel, including the firing of thousands of rockets toward Israeli population centers.

The attacks have so far claimed numerous Israeli civilian lives and injured many hundreds.

The Secretary-General is appalled by reports that civilians have been attacked and abducted from their own homes.

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned for the civilian population and urges maximum restraint. Civilians must be respected and protected in accordance with international humanitarian law at all times.

The Secretary-General extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and calls for the immediate release of all abducted persons.

The Secretary-General urges all diplomatic efforts to avoid a wider conflagration.

He stresses that violence cannot provide a solution to the conflict, and that only through negotiation leading to a two-state solution can peace be achieved.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-10-07/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-of-the-secretary-general-regarding-the-situation-the-middle-east>

Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

I vehemently condemn this morning's multi-front assault against Israeli towns and cities near the Gaza Strip, and barrage of rockets reaching across central Israel by Hamas militants.

These events have resulted in horrific scenes of violence and many Israeli fatalities and injuries, with many believed to be kidnapped inside the Strip. These are heinous attacks targeting civilians and must stop immediately.

I am deeply concerned for the well-being of all civilians. I am in close contact with all concerned to urge maximum restraint and call on all sides to protect civilians.

This is a dangerous precipice and I appeal to all to pull back from the brink.

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/statement-un-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-process-tor-wennesland-situation-israel-and>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Comment by UN Human Rights Chief on unfolding situation in Israel and Gaza: Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

I am shocked and appalled at reports this morning that hundreds, possibly thousands, of indiscriminate rockets have been fired by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel, and that at least 22 Israelis have been killed and hundreds injured. I am also deeply concerned at reports that Israeli civilians have been taken hostage.

This attack is having a horrific impact on Israeli civilians. Civilians must never be the target of attack. I note also that Israeli forces have responded with air strikes into the densely populated Gaza Strip, reportedly killing at least two people. I call on them to take all precautions to avoid civilian casualties there.

I call for an immediate stop to the violence, and appeal to all sides and key countries in the region to de-escalate to avoid further bloodshed.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/comment-un-human-rights-chief-unfolding-situation-israel-and-gaza>

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Other Relevant Information

United Nations

Halting and Reversing the Lasting Consequences of Slavery, Colonialism, Genocide and Apartheid Are Critical to Addressing Racism against People of African Descent, Permanent Forum Tells Human Rights Council

... Some speakers said that in a diverse world ... freedom of religion or belief was one of the fundamental rights and principles. However, anti-Semitism, racism, and all forms of intolerance and discrimination undermined human rights and the rule of law, and threatened the basic fabric of societies. They posed constant and serious challenges to the dignity of every person. Many speakers reaffirmed the importance of combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all its forms and manifestations. ...

Various forms of anti-Semitism, including Holocaust denial and distortion, were on the rise throughout the world, some speakers said. Despite multiple efforts made by governments, international organizations and sporting bodies, anti-Semitic incidents in stadiums, among fan groups or on social media continued to be a serious problem that affected the reputation of sport. Speakers reiterated their commitment to combat anti-Semitism and all forms of racism, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination, through all channels, including in sport.

Some speakers said that alarming trends of religiously motivated hatred, including public and deliberate burning of the Holy Quran, and the inadequate response by States, meant the mandate had become even more relevant. The recurrent instances of desecration of the Holy Quran, ban on wearing facial veils, misuse of national security measures, and stigmatisation of Muslim and African migrant communities were ugly manifestations of contemporary forms of racism. Speakers unequivocally condemned the practice of insulting Islam, Christianity, Judaism and any other religion, including desecrating sacred books and religious places.

Some speakers noted that with the advent of artificial intelligence, disinformation was likely to cause even more social harm. ...

A number of speakers called on the international community to take meaningful legislative and administrative steps to prevent the growing plague of racism in all its contemporary forms and manifestations. All States should implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and commit to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2023/10/sont-recommandees-au-conseil-la-reconduction-de-la-decennie>

Human Rights Council Continues General Debate on Agenda Item Nine on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Forms of Intolerance, Follow-Up to and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

... some speakers said the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remained the United Nations' blueprint to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance globally. It was also a victim-centred document which offered practical steps that needed to be taken to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. The systemic nature of all these had been well documented. Consequently, much more than mere rhetoric was required to effectively combat racism and all forms of intolerance.

Despite the significance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, some speakers regretted persistent efforts to undermine its follow-up and implementation by

casting doubt on its validity and relevance. In the fight against racism, unity was of utmost importance. The international community must work together in order to address the underlying root causes and various manifestations of racism and discrimination. To effectively address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, including Islamophobia, it was imperative to resist and oppose all manifestations of hatred, particularly those rooted in myths, stereotypes, and fear of the unknown. ...

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action set out a clear roadmap ... Had States fully and effectively implemented this Programme of Action, many of the mechanisms that annually reported to the Council would not have been necessary because the world would have made significant progress in eliminating the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. ...

The historical injustices born of colonialism had shaped the unequal geopolitical landscape of today. Radical ideologies were growing in many parts of the world; ideologies that incited hatred towards races, ethnicities, religions, cultures and migrants, hatred that was aimed against unity and diversity. ...

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance were abhorrent and had no place in the world. These manifestations of hatred and prejudice undermined the principles of equality, justice and human dignity that underpinned the collective efforts to promote and protect human rights. It was imperative that the global community remained resolute in its commitment to eradicate these scourges, a speaker said.

There was a need to develop a more comprehensive anti-hate speech legislation to prevent racist acts at the root cause. States should adopt and implement legal frameworks that would ensure accountability for those responsible for incitement to racial and religious hatred, and adopt and implement legal frameworks that would ensure accountability for those perpetrators responsible for inciting racial and religious hatred. ...

Only with the spirit of unity and multilateralism as guiding values could the world move from rhetoric to reality in combatting racism ... The work that needed to be done needed to be as inclusive as possible, taking into account the input of individuals, and the economic, social and cultural rights of peoples. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/10/human-rights-council-continues-general-debate-agenda-item-nine-racism-racial>

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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>

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

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

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

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

Management of burial grounds, application for burial, exhumation, private burial and restoration of lairs: regulation in Scotland (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/regulation-burial-scotland/>

Statutory inspection of burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/statutory-inspection-burial-authorities/>

Funeral director licensing scheme for Scotland (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/licensing-funeral-directors-scotland/>

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) [Northern Ireland] (closing date 24 November 2023)

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-consultation>

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