



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Scottish Parliament Written Answers

Post Mortem Examinations

Monica Lennon (Labour) [S6W-21730] To ask the Scottish Government whether it can provide figures on how many post mortem examinations have been conducted under the instruction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) since 1 January 2023, in situations where the next-of-kin has given consent for the procedure.

Dorothy Bain: Between 1 January and 31 August 2023, COPFS instructed 4,460 post mortem examinations. Of those, 383 were conducted by way of a non-invasive examination.

Procurators Fiscal do not seek the consent of nearest relatives for a post mortem examination to be instructed. A post-mortem examination may be required to determine the cause of death, to ensure the circumstances surrounding the death are fully investigated and to exclude criminality. Whilst the views of the family will be sought and taken into account, the final decision as to whether it is necessary for a post mortem examination to be carried out is for the Procurator Fiscal as part of their independent role in investigating the person's death. Any views expressed by relatives in relation to the conducting of a post mortem examination are recorded, usually within the report submitted by Police Scotland to the Procurator Fiscal. Further information cannot be provided as that would require a manual check to be made of every case where a post mortem examination was instructed.

While the decision regarding the necessity to instruct a post mortem examination is made by the Procurator Fiscal, and in certain deaths, such as homicides where criminality is being investigated, the Procurator Fiscal must specify certain requirements of the examination to ensure that any evidence obtained meets the required criminal standard, it is a matter for the pathologist, as the medical practitioner responsible for establishing the cause of death, to conduct the examination in the most appropriate manner to ascertain the cause of death accurately.

It is also a matter for the pathologist to decide, during the examination, whether it

is necessary to obtain tissue samples in order for them to instruct further tests or examinations to clarify the cause of death. The pathologist will make the decision as whether any organs require to be removed during a post mortem examination for further testing, whether in the form of whole organs, or small samples from organs. No samples that are retained are kept by COPFS and they are instead retained by the NHS as part of the deceased's medical records

COPFS keeps a record of all cases where a pathologist has decided that it is necessary to retain a whole organ during a post mortem examination. This record also includes details of when the organs are returned to the family of the deceased at the conclusion of examinations.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-21730>

Post Mortem Examinations

Monica Lennon (Labour) [S6W-21731] To ask the Scottish Government whether it can provide figures on how many (a) pieces of human tissue, (b) brains and (c) other human materials, which were recovered during post-mortem examinations conducted under the instruction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), are currently in storage.

Dorothy Bain: As at 28 September 2023, no whole organs (including brains) are being retained following a post mortem examination instructed by the Procurator Fiscal.

Human tissue samples are obtained in the majority of post mortem examinations instructed by the Procurator Fiscal, but only where necessary to assist in confirming the deceased's cause of death, identify inherited genetic conditions or to establish identification through DNA.

It is a matter for the pathologist conducting the post mortem examination to decide whether it is necessary to obtain tissue samples in order for them to instruct further tests or examinations to clarify the cause of death. The pathologist will make the decision whether any organs require to be removed during the examination for further testing, either whole organs, or small samples from organs. At the conclusion of the Procurator Fiscal's investigation, by virtue of the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 any blocks and slides prepared for the purposes of histopathology (examination of the tissue under a microscope to detect any signs of disease, damage or other abnormalities) are considered to be part of the medical records of the deceased person. No samples that are retained are kept by COPFS and they are instead retained by the NHS.

COPFS keeps a record of all cases where a pathologist has decided that it is necessary to retain a whole organ during a post mortem examination. This record also includes details of when an organ is returned to the family of the deceased at the conclusion of examinations.

It is not possible to provide an exact figure of the number of other samples currently being retained.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-21731>

Post Mortem Examinations

Monica Lennon (Labour) [S6W-21732] To ask the Scottish Government whether it can provide figures on how many post-mortem examinations conducted under the instruction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) since 1 January 2023 have involved the removal of the brain.

Dorothy Bain: Pathologists will only retain whole organs on rare occasions when it is absolutely necessary to establish a cause of death. In such cases, there are

well-established procedures for ensuring that families are immediately advised when organ retention is a possibility and the options for return of that organ are discussed with them.

It is a matter for the pathologist conducting the post mortem examination to decide whether it is necessary to remove a whole organ, such as the brain, from the body of a deceased person during a post mortem examination for further testing. COPFS keeps a record of all cases where a pathologist has decided that it is necessary to retain a whole organ during a post mortem examination. This record includes details of when an organ is returned to the family of the deceased at the conclusion of examinations.

Between 1 January and 31 August 2023, COPFS instructed 4,460 post mortem examinations.

The brain required to be retained by the pathologist for further examination to determine the cause of death in one of those cases. That brain is no longer retained by the pathologist and was released to the nearest relatives in accordance with their wishes.

In 400 of those 4,460 cases, temporary removal of the brain by the pathologist during the post mortem examination took place to enable samples to be taken for neuropathological examination. In each case, the brain was returned to the body prior to the conclusion of the post mortem examination and the release of the deceased's body to their nearest relatives.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-21732>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM call with President el-Sisi of Egypt: 12 October 2023

The Prime Minister spoke to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi this morning, following the terrorist atrocity carried out by Hamas in Israel.

He expressed his condolences for the Egyptians who have lost their lives, along with so many others. The Prime Minister said that terrorism is an evil which must be confronted, wherever we find it. It was also important that the conflict did not spread further. He noted the importance of Egypt's historic role in the region, including in seeking de-escalation.

The Prime Minister acknowledged the challenging security situation at the Rafah border crossing. He offered the UK's support to try to manage this situation and keep the route open for humanitarian and consular reasons, including for British nationals.

The leaders agreed to remain in contact as the situation develops.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-egypts-president-12-october-2023>

Rishi Sunak I spoke to President el-Sisi of Egypt this morning following the appalling terrorist atrocities carried out by Hamas in Israel. As we confront the evil of terrorism, we are working closely with international partners to ensure regional security and stability.
[plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1712423926981161147>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK Government to arrange flights to get British nationals out of Israel

... The UK government will facilitate commercial flights to the UK to help British nationals wanting to leave Israel following the Hamas attack, the Foreign Secretary has announced. The first flight is due to depart from Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv today (Thursday 12 October).

Vulnerable British nationals will be prioritised for these flights. At this stage we will contact those who are eligible for the flights directly and British nationals should not make their way to the airport unless they are called. ...

The safety of all British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) continues to be our utmost priority and we urge everyone to continue to [follow our travel advice](#). Those in Israel and the OPTs, including Gaza, are advised to [register their presence with the Foreign Office](#). The FCDO continues to advise against all travel to parts of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and to advise against all but essential travel to all other parts.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly visited Israel yesterday (Wednesday) to reiterate the UK's unwavering solidarity with the Israeli people following Hamas' terrorist attacks. He met senior Israeli leaders to outline UK support for Israel's right to defend itself. ...

- British nationals, including dual nationals, and dependants if travelling with a British national normally resident in the UK, will be invited to take up seats on the flights.
- these are paid commercial flights – our standard procedure. Each ticket will cost £300. This reflects the costs of operating the flight only ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-to-arrange-flights-to-get-british-nationals-out-of-israel>

Foreign Secretary visits Israel to underline UK's unwavering solidarity in the face of terror

... The Foreign Secretary visited Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and southern Israel ... days after Hamas launched a barbaric terrorist attack on the country.

Demonstrating the UK's solidarity with Israel and its fundamental right to defend itself against Hamas, James Cleverly underlined the UK's support in meeting with President Herzog. They discussed the UK and Israel's ongoing security, military and diplomatic cooperation in the face of terror.

He also travelled with Foreign Minister Eli Cohen to the southern Israeli village of Ofakim to witness first-hand the devastation caused by Hamas. On the first visit by a foreign minister to a site of the attacks, Cleverly met survivors to emphasise that the UK stands with them against terrorism.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: I'm in Israel today to show the UK's unwavering support for Israel.

The facts are clear. Hamas are terrorists. Israel has the right to defend itself. Hamas and Hamas alone are responsible and accountable for these appalling attacks.

Terrorism must never be allowed to prevail. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-visits-israel-to-underline-uks-unwavering-solidarity-in-the-face-of-terror>

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

Israel terror attacks: compensation for victims

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has

designated the attacks in Israel starting from, but not limited to, 7 October 2023 as acts of terrorism. This means applications can be made to the [Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority \(CICA\)](#) under the [Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme 2012](#) (VOTCS) by those victims injured, or the families of those killed, in the attacks. You can get more information in CICA's [guide to the VOTCS](#).

You do not need a paid representative, such as a solicitor or claims management company, to [apply for compensation](#).

Free independent advice may be available from Victim Support or other charitable organisations. You can [get support as a victim of terrorism](#) on GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/israel-terror-attacks-compensation-for-victims>

European Parliament

President Metsola in solidarity with the victims of the terror attacks in Israel

... October 7th is a day that will go down in global infamy. The world has witnessed Jews being murdered simply because they were Jewish. Again. In Israel.

We are here with the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and all of you - as one - to express our solidarity, to condemn the appalling acts of terror and murder and to demand the immediate release of hostages.

Europe stands ready to help broker resolutions, but I have said it before and it bears repeating - There is no justification for terrorism.

Hamas is a terrorist organisation. They do not represent the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. They do not offer solutions. They offer bloodshed.

It helps to speak plainly. On October 7th Hamas murdered more than a thousand innocent babies, children, women and men and still hold close to 100 more hostage. They opened fire on hundreds of young people at a music event, killing indiscriminately - including EU nationals. They abducted young girls and boys. They took elderly Holocaust survivors and dragged them out of their homes. They paraded dead people through the streets like trophies.

This is not a time for whataboutism. We have to be clear about what we are talking about: this is terror in its worst form. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231011IPR06911/president-metsola-in-solidarity-with-the-victims-of-the-terror-attacks-in-israel>

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Escalation of violence in the Middle East: PACE holds current affairs debate

“Nothing can justify the atrocities committed by Hamas and there can be no ambiguity on this point,” today said Piero Fassino [PACE rapporteur on the situation in the Middle East] at the opening of a current affairs debate on “Escalation of violence in the Middle East following the recent Hamas attack on Israel”. He expressed his full solidarity with Israel and the families of the victims.

“Everything must be done to block Hamas’ aggression and obtain the release of the hostages,” said Mr Fassino, emphasising “the suicidal nature” of this war. While recognising Israel's right to defend itself, he called on the Israeli authorities “not to make the Palestinian people pay for the actions of Hamas, and to ensure that they receive essential goods for daily life”.

“We cannot give up. The international community has the responsibility to relaunch a political and diplomatic initiative paving the way for a negotiated solution – the only one that can guarantee peace – by abandoning any wait-and-see attitude” ...

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/escalation-of-violence-in-the-middle-east-pace-holds-current-affairs-debate>

PACE does not produce transcripts of Current Affairs Debates, but a video of the debate is available at

<https://vodmanager.coe.int/coe/webcast/coe/2023-10-11-1/en/20>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/occupied Palestinian territory: UN experts deplore attacks on civilians, call for truce and urge international community to address root causes of violence

UN independent experts today unequivocally condemned targeted and deadly violence directed at civilians in Israel and violent and indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian civilians in Gaza and a further tightening of the unlawful blockade, which will have devastating impacts on the whole civilian population.

“We strongly condemn the horrific crimes committed by Hamas, the deliberate and widespread killing and hostage-taking of innocent civilians, including older persons and children. These actions constitute heinous violations of international law and international crimes, for which there must be urgent accountability,” the experts said.

“We also strongly condemn Israel’s indiscriminate military attacks against the already exhausted Palestinian people of Gaza, comprising over 2.3 million people, nearly half of whom are children. They have lived under unlawful blockade for 16 years, and already gone through five major brutal wars, which remain unaccounted for,” they said.

“This amounts to collective punishment,” the UN experts said. “There is no justification for violence that indiscriminately targets innocent civilians, whether by Hamas or Israeli forces. This is absolutely prohibited under international law and amounts to a war crime.”

The experts also expressed concern about reports that journalists and media workers reporting on the conflict had been targeted, with seven Palestinian journalists and media workers reportedly killed in Israeli airstrikes. ...

Reports suggest that more than 100 Israelis and foreign nationals, including children and older persons, and some known human rights defenders, have been taken hostage in Gaza by Hamas.

“Taking hostages in the context of hostilities constitutes a war crime. The civilians taken by Hamas must be immediately released, pending which their fate and whereabouts must be disclosed,” the UN experts said.

As a result of the Israeli attacks against Gaza, by air, land and sea, at least 1,100 Palestinians have been killed, including older persons and 290 children, and more than 5,000 injured. The airstrikes appear to have targeted densely populated areas, including markets, two hospitals, destroyed residential buildings and damaged 20 United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency (UNRWA) facilities, including schools sheltering displaced civilians. As of 11 October, the UN estimated that at least 340,000 people have been displaced within Gaza, and nearly 218,600 people are sheltering in 92 UNRWA schools across the Gaza Strip.

“Indiscriminately killing civilians in the context of hostilities, with no regard for the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality, is a war crime,” the experts said.

They also stressed that indiscriminate rocket attacks, bombing of civilian infrastructure and shelling densely populated areas constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law, whether committed by Palestinian armed groups or by Israeli Defence Forces.

On 9 October, the Israeli Defence Minister announced that authorities would completely cut essential supplies to Gaza, stating they are fighting “human animals.” ...

“Besides this appalling language that dehumanises the Palestinian people, especially those who have been unlawfully “imprisoned” in Gaza for 16 years, we condemn the withholding of essential supplies such as food, water, electricity and medicines. Such

actions will precipitate a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where its population is now at inescapable risk of starvation. Intentional starvation is a crime against humanity,” the experts said.

The experts reminded the international community of its responsibilities to address the root causes of the current conflict, including the 56-year-old occupation and the annexation pursued by Israel. ...

In the **short term**, the experts urged:

1. An immediate end to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular the right to life. ...
2. The agreement of a ceasefire, to be monitored by an independent, international body;
3. The release of hostages taken by Hamas and Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel ...
4. The establishment of an international protective presence in the occupied Palestinian territory;
5. The provision of all necessary financial and humanitarian aid and the creation of humanitarian corridors ...
6. The dignity of the dead from the latest violence be respected and that they are swiftly handed over to mourning relatives. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/israeloccupied-palestinian-territory-un-experts-deplore-attacks-civilians>

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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/>

The UK's engagement with the Middle East and North Africa (closing date 31 October 2023)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3205/>

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