



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Library Briefings

Getting married: Residence requirements

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00644/SN00644.pdf>

Challenging coroners' decisions

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00525/SN00525.pdf>

Downing Street

PM announces new support to keep British Jewish communities safe

... Members of the UK Jewish community, including school children, will be given more protection against antisemitic attacks in the wake of Hamas’ terrorist attacks in Israel, the Prime Minister has announced.

£3 million of additional funding will be provided to the Community Security Trust (CST), an organisation established to protect British Jews from antisemitism and related threats. ...

Today’s announcement brings the total funding for Jewish Community Protection Security grant to £18 million for 2023-24.

The money will enable the CST to place additional guards in schools it supports throughout each school’s operating hours. They will also be able to place additional security staff at outside synagogues on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. ...

The CST has recorded 139 antisemitic incidents in the last four days. This represents an increase of 400% compared to the same period in 2022.

The Prime Minister said: This is now the third deadliest terror attack in the world since 1970. The United Kingdom must and will continue to stand in solidarity with Israel.

At moments like this, when the Jewish people are under attack in their homeland, Jewish

people everywhere can feel less safe.

That is why we must do everything in our power to protect Jewish people everywhere in our country. If anything is standing in the way of keeping the Jewish community safe, we will fix it. You have our complete backing. ...

The Home Secretary said: Hamas terrorists have carried out barbaric attacks on the people of Israel. They massacred civilians, raped women and kidnapped the most vulnerable.

This terrorism is an attack on all of our values. Whenever Israel is attacked, people use legitimate Israeli defensive measures as an excuse to stir up hatred against British Jews. The UK stands unequivocally with Israel.

I have been clear with police chiefs in England and Wales that there can be zero tolerance for antisemitism, and that they should act immediately to crackdown on any criminality – both in our streets and online.

I have been in close contact with the Community Security Trust whose work helps enhance the security of the British Jewish community. ...

Mark Gardner, Chief Executive of Community Security Trust said: We are grateful to the Government for providing extra funding for security guards at Jewish community buildings, following the horrific Hamas terror attack on Israel. The support that we and the Jewish community are receiving from across government and policing is greatly reassuring and welcome at this difficult and worrying time.

We will work with the Home Office to ensure that this extra funding is used in the most effective way to enhance the existing security that is in place and provide the Jewish community with the protection that they need and deserve.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-new-support-to-keep-british-jewish-communities-safe>

Rishi Sunak I stand with you, the British Jewish community, and I will do everything I possibly can to protect you. To those trying to stir up tensions online and on our streets with intimidating behaviour and shameful antisemitism, I say this: Not here. Not in Britain. Not in our country. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1713254402398535927>

Home Office

Suella Braverman Israeli defensive action against Hamas must not be used as an excuse to stir up hatred against Jews. We're giving @CST_UK an extra £3m to enhance the safety of the British Jewish community. We stand against antisemitism. And we stand with Israel. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/SuellaBraverman/status/1712526487344054457>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon The reported rise in incidents of antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate in the UK is unacceptable. Barbaric terrorism is not allowed to push us apart. I condemn hate crimes against all of our communities.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1712843412066509123>

Crown Prosecution Service

CPS prosecution guidance on protests and demonstrations in light of the Middle East conflict

The CPS is aware that following the recent disturbing events in the Middle East, the public and many different communities may be concerned about protests or demonstrations.

The CPS recognises that whilst in the main demonstrations and protests will be peaceful and lawful, there may be incidents of public disorder and it is possible that some individuals may commit criminal offences.

Any potential offences need to be considered in the context of the right to public expression. Individuals have the right to lawfully protest, including the right to protest against the sincerely held beliefs of other individuals or groups. However, neither the right to free expression of views nor the right to protest is absolute. Both are qualified and may be subject to restrictions prescribed by law, for the protection of the rights of others, public safety and the prevention of disorder and crime.

There are a number of possible offences that can be considered, which include hate crime offences, public order offences, criminal damage, assaults and harassment.

Our Counter Terrorism Division will also consider charging more serious offences where necessary, such as stirring up racial hatred, and a range of offences that are available under the Terrorism Act 2000, for activities in relation to proscribed terrorist organisations, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. These offences include:

- inviting support for a proscribed organisation
- expressing an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, and
- wearing clothing or carrying or displaying articles in public in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of the proscribed organisation.

Where demonstrators chant slogans or wave flags in relation to the current situation in the Middle East whether an offence is committed will depend on all the facts and circumstances of the case, particularly the context, location and manner in which the actions take place, all of which will be carefully considered by CPS prosecutors.

More information can be found in our prosecution guidance:

- [Racist and Religious Hate Crime](#)
- [Offences during Protests, Demonstrations or Campaigns](#)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/cps-prosecution-guidance-protests-and-demonstrations-light-middle-east-conflict>

TOP

Israel

See also “PM announces new support to keep British Jewish communities safe”, “CPS prosecution guidance”, and the X post from Suella Braverman that are included in the Home Affairs section above.

Downing Street

PM words one week on from the start of Hamas terrorist attacks

No words can begin to describe the horror and barbarism unleashed in Israel a week ago. Daughters, sons, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, grandparents taken from people in the cruellest and most horrific way possible. Hundreds of people have been killed, many wounded or missing and others living through the unimaginable agony of having a loved

one kidnapped and held hostage.

British citizens were among the victims. And as we continue to learn more, I know there are families here and in Israel in deep pain and torment. My thoughts and my heart go out to everyone suffering in the wake of these attacks.

I know that the days and weeks ahead will continue to be very difficult. To the people of Israel, I say Britain is with you. What took place was an act of pure evil and Israel has every right to defend itself. We will do everything we can to support Israel in restoring the security it deserves.

To our Jewish community in the UK: I know you are hurting and reeling from these vile terrorist acts. At moments like this, when Jewish people are under attack in their homeland, Jewish people everywhere can feel less safe. We've seen intimidating behaviour and shameful antisemitism online and on our streets with attempts to stir up tensions. I say: not here. Not in Britain. Not in our country. Not in this century. We will do everything we possibly can to protect Jewish people in our country. And if anything is standing in the way of keeping the Jewish community safe, we will fix it.

I am unequivocal. We stand with Israel, not just today, not just tomorrow, but always. And I stand with you, the British Jewish community, not just today, not just tomorrow, but always.

Am Yisrael Chai.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-words-one-week-on-from-the-start-of-hamas-terrorist-attacks>

PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel: 12 October 2023

... The Prime Minister passed on again the deep condolences of the British people for all those killed, injured or kidnapped in this unconscionable tragedy, the true scale and horror of which is only just becoming clear. Prime Minister Netanyahu thanked the UK for its solidarity, including in the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Israel this week.

The leaders discussed Israel's response against Hamas in Gaza and the Prime Minister confirmed that the UK had authorised the sending of a significant support package to the region, including RAF surveillance aircraft, two Royal Navy ships to patrol in the Eastern Mediterranean, three Merlin helicopters and a detachment of Royal Marines. ...

He reiterated that the UK stands side by side with Israel in fighting terror and agreed that Hamas can never again be able to perpetrate atrocities against the Israeli people. Noting that Hamas has enmeshed itself in the civilian population in Gaza, the Prime Minister said it was important to take all possible measures to protect ordinary Palestinians and facilitate humanitarian aid. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-12-october-2023>

UK Prime Minister This evening we lit a yahrzeit candle, remembering the men, women and children senselessly murdered by Hamas terrorists. May their memory be a blessing. We stand with Israel and in solidarity with the Jewish community in the UK and across the world in this time of grief. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1712883273020400029>

UK Prime Minister The Prime Minister @RishiSunak has directed the deployment of UK military forces to the Eastern Mediterranean, primed to deliver practical support to Israel, prevent escalation and reinforce regional stability. Maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft

operations start today. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1712732571480576491>

Rishi Sunak The UK will always stand with our allies against terror. Following the Hamas terrorist attacks on innocent victims in Israel, I have deployed our world class military to bolster regional stability, prevent further escalation and aid humanitarian efforts. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1713209323579375742>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Visiting the Crisis Response Centre at FCDO, @JamesCleverly met the team working around the clock on the UK's response to the situation in Israel, including supporting British nationals. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1712770938364711229>

James Cleverley Israel are trying to get civilians out of danger. Hamas are trying to put civilians into danger. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1713488273903915249>

James Cleverley We should be in no doubt what Hamas stand for - this was terrorism, plain and simple. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1713462793624502487>

James Cleverley Hamas is the greatest threat to the Palestinian people. They hide in hospitals and schools, using woman and children as human shields. The death of any civilian is a tragedy. Palestinian or Israeli - Hamas is the cause of this loss.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1713230923255205928>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Discussed the situation in Israel and Gaza with Arab League Ambassadors to the UK. We talked of the need to protect civilians and to facilitate humanitarian support. [plus photos]

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1712869328335278516>

Updated Travel Information; Israel

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

Updated Travel Information: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

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

Updated Guidance: Living in Israel and the OPTs

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/information-for-british-nationals-residing-in-israel-and-the-opt>

Ministry of Defence

Prime Minister deploys UK military to Eastern Mediterranean to support Israel

... The Prime Minister has directed UK military assets to be deployed to the eastern Mediterranean to support Israel, reinforce regional stability and prevent escalation. ...

The military package, which includes P8 aircraft, surveillance assets, two Royal Navy ships

... three merlin helicopters and a company of Royal Marines, will be on standby to deliver practical support to Israel and partners in the region, and offer deterrence and assurance. The Prime Minister has also asked for all military teams in Israel, Cyprus and across the region to be bolstered to support contingency planning and the efforts of neighbouring countries to deal with any spill over from instability in Israel.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister spoke to the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, today to understand the wider regional picture and underscore the importance of supporting civilians to leave Gaza. ...

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: We must be unequivocal in making sure the types of horrific scenes we have seen this week will not be repeated. Alongside our allies, the deployment of our world class military will support efforts to ensure regional stability and prevent further escalation.

Our military and diplomatic teams across the region will also support international partners to re-establish security and ensure humanitarian aid reaches the thousands of innocent victims of this barbaric attack from Hamas terrorists. ...

The package of military support, which will work alongside allies already in the region, is a significant demonstration of the UK's support for Israel's right to self-defence and will allow the UK to adapt to the needs of partners as the situation evolves over the coming weeks.

The step change comes after the Prime Minister spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this week, and the Defence Secretary discussed the situation with his NATO counterparts in Brussels. ...

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: The monstrous terrorist attacks committed by Hamas in recent days have proven why the UK must support Israel's absolute right to self-defence and deter malign external interference. No nation should stand alone in the face of such evil and today's deployment will ensure Israel does not.

The Royal Navy Task Group, RAF operations and our wider military support will be an undeniable display of the UK's resolve to ensure Hamas's terrorist campaign fails, whilst reminding those who seek to inflame tensions that the forces of freedom stand with the Israeli people. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-deploys-uk-military-to-eastern-mediterranean-to-support-israel>

Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

Michelle Donelan Terrorism cannot prevail. Tech is fundamental to any modern economy, not least in Israel – a linchpin of the global industry. Today, I'm asking the British tech industry to join us and support Israel through the horrors it faces. Together, we can rise to the challenge. [plus image of letter to UK tech companies]

<https://twitter.com/michelledonelan/status/1712502824796303718>

Scottish Government

First Minister speech: Service of Solidarity at Giffnock Synagogue

Friends, I stand here today not just as First Minister, but first and foremost as a fellow human being.

A father, a son, a son-in-law, a husband.

It is with deep sorrow that I join you this evening.

I want you to know, that this First Minister, who is proudly Muslim, shares the pain of our Jewish communities.

Your heartbreak is my heartbreak.

Your loss is my loss.

Your tears are my tears.

No-one should ever be harmed because of their faith.

No child should ever be murdered for their citizenship, or any other reason.

Nothing can ever justify such acts of brutality as we saw on Saturday morning.

They must be condemned in the strongest possible way. ...

“Love your neighbour as yourself” of [Leviticus 19:18] is echoed in all our scriptures.

It says in the Quran, my Holy Book, that if someone kills one innocent person, it is as if he killed the whole of humanity.

No religion on earth condones the killing of innocent men, women or children.

To those who wish to return us to the darkest ages of religious hatred – I say, you will not prevail.

So I stand here tonight to mourn with you all the innocent lives wasted in violence.

I pray in solidarity with you all that the guilty are punished and the innocent protected.

I know you fear greatly for your loved ones who continue to be missing, or that have been harmed after Saturday’s terror attack. ...

And I will continue to be clear that hate crimes, or antisemitism of any kind, will never be tolerated here in Scotland.

Scotland has one of the strongest interfaith traditions in the world.

Many of you know I was brought up in this community, with Jewish neighbours most of my life.

We shared culture, traditions and even food – I still miss receiving my batch of Sufganiyot during Hannukah.

When I became First Minister, I promised to be First Minister for all of Scotland.

At a time of great sorrow and sadness I want you to be in no doubt whatsoever that your government stands with you. ...

Solidarity goes far beyond tolerance - it embraces love. ...

Let us all hope and pray for a swift resolution to this conflict, for justice and an end to terrorism, and for a peaceful future for all.

When I pray tonight I will not only be praying for my in-laws, but praying for Bernard Cowan, and for all those innocent men, women and children who have been killed or harmed - be they Israeli or Palestinian.

May God have mercy on all of them.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/first-minister-speech-service-solidarity-giffnock-synagogue/>

Humanitarian aid funding

International Development Minister Christina McKelvie ... has confirmed the Scottish Government will provide £500,000 towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) flash appeal in response to the ongoing escalation in the Gaza Strip.

The UNRWA’s appeal is urgently seeking funds to respond to the immediate food, health, shelter and protection needs of up to 250,000 people seeking safety in UNRWA shelters in Gaza and another 250,000 Palestine refugees within the community. ...

Ms McKelvie said: “Our thoughts are with all the innocent people caught in the middle of escalating conflict in Israel and Gaza. The Scottish Government reiterates the call from the First Minister and the UN Secretary-General for a humanitarian corridor to be established so that urgent assistance can be given to those civilians who are trapped, helpless and cannot leave. ...

UNRWA Director of External Relations and Communications Tamara Alrifai said: "This generous contribution is an incredibly humane gesture towards tens of thousands of people who are in utter distress in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA is very grateful for the show of support by Scotland and will use every penny to help alleviate the suffering of civilian

women, children and men in Gaza.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.scot/news/humanitarian-aid-funding-1/>

First Minister First Minister @HumzaYousaf attended a service of prayer and solidarity last night with Scotland’s Jewish community. Expressing sorrow for those who lost loved ones, he said @scotgov stands in solidarity with all communities in Scotland suffering the loss of innocent life. [plus photos]

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1712836194436870589>

Humza Yousaf Bernard's mother and family went out of their way to tell me that they would be praying for my family in Gaza. We hugged, we cried, and we promised to re-dedicate ourselves to peace and to be unequivocal; no innocent man, woman, or child should pay the price of another's actions.

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1712866804156997684>

First Minister First Minister @HumzaYousaf has met with members of Scotland’s Palestinian community in Glasgow. He said the loss of innocent lives in both Israel and Gaza is catastrophic and cannot be justified. The First Minister reiterated his call for humanitarian corridors in Gaza. [plus photos]

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1712867889378717929>

Humza Yousaf I also met with Palestinian leaders from different faiths today. They want peace & they want the life of a Palestinian to be equal to the life of an Israeli. I gave them my assurance that @scotgov will continue to call for a ceasefire and a humanitarian corridor to be opened.

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1712868527596556781>

First Minister The First Minister also met with Muslim faith leaders from other communities, following his meeting with Scotland’s Jewish community. He expressed @scotgov's condolences to the victims and the families of all those affected by the ongoing situation across Gaza and Israel.

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1713172391801581700>

Humza Yousaf UN has said the order to move 1.1m people in 24 hours will lead to "devastating humanitarian consequences" The international community must step up and demand an end to collective punishment. Enough. There can be no justification for the death of innocent men, women & children.

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1712723175077769620>

Humza Yousaf Right that Conference started with a resolution advocating for an end to the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. We're unequivocal in our condemnation of Hamas. Innocent people must not pay the price for their terror. Humanitarian corridor & ceasefire needed now. #SNP23

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1713507111366177175>

Scottish Trades Union Congress

STUC statement on Israel/Palestine crisis

The human suffering of the past week is unimaginable.

We utterly condemn the killing of civilians at the hands of Hamas and call for the immediate release of all hostages.

Just as previous wrongs can never justify the attack on the defenceless by Hamas, neither does this recent tragedy justify the unfolding humanitarian disaster caused by IDF bombing and siege. Cutting off supplies to Gaza is a war crime. International law must be upheld. The UK Government and our political leaders stand complicit in the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people unless they call for the unlawful siege to end. Silence is not an option.

The STUC re-asserts its view that the only road to peace, difficult as it may be, lies in a two states solution fully respecting pre 1967 borders and rights of religious access. The occupation must end. Illegal settlements must be dismantled. All peoples living in Israel and Palestine must be afforded equal rights, including the right to return.

The immediate priority is for a ceasefire to be negotiated and the siege of Gaza ended without delay. We support calls for a humanitarian corridor to be opened with supplies, energy and medical aid and for the release without condition of all hostages.

<https://stuc.org.uk/media-centre/news/1730/stuc-statement-on-israel-palestine-crisis>

Irish Congress of Trades Unions Northern Ireland Committee

Statement on Israel Gaza violence

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions unequivocally condemns the ongoing attacks on civilians in Israel and Palestine in recent days. Deliberately targeting civilians, carrying out disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks which kill or injure civilians are war crimes. Our solidarity goes out to all Palestinian and Israeli families affected.

Israel has a horrific track record of committing war crimes with impunity in previous wars on Gaza. None of this can justify indiscriminate attacks and hostage taking. Palestinian armed groups from Gaza, must also refrain from targeting civilians and using indiscriminate weapons and must immediately release any hostages taken.

The violence must also be put in context. Almost six decades of hostile military rule over an entire civilian population are in themselves a form of violence, and a recipe for more insecurity for all.

A recent Congress delegation to the region witnessed all of this including the accelerated growth of illegal settlements, effectively stealing land from Palestinians. Palestinians in Gaza and the Occupied Territories face persecution and denial of human rights by an occupying power in breach of international law. Palestinians in Israel face persecution and denial of human rights in what is now an apartheid state.

The Israeli complete blockade of Gaza - no electricity, no food, no fuel, and humanitarian corridors closed – is completely unacceptable and contrary to international law. The accompanying bombardment of Gaza is not a conflict of equals but rather a government with one of the most powerful armies in the world inflicting terror on the 2 million people of Gaza – the most densely populated area in the world. Gazans have nowhere to flee. They are a population under siege and undoubtedly many hundreds of people including children have been killed and will continue to be killed. ...

We reiterate our support for the campaign of peaceful resistance - Boycott Divestment and Sanction call from Civil Society in Palestine. As the leadership of the Irish Trade Union movement, we call for government sanctions and an embargo on all security-military trade and joint military research. ...

The violence, trauma, and killing reminds us again of the consequences of the collective inertia of the international community and enduring failure to achieve a political resolution to this conflict. We urge an immediate ending of this current bout of fighting and reiterate our position that security is only achievable by adherence to international law and realizing equal rights of all to live in dignity, freedom, and peace.

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ictuni.org/news/statement-israel-gaza-violence>

Council of Europe

Situation in Israel: Statement by Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić

"The outbreak of terror in Israel, a long-standing partner of our Organisation, is appalling. I condemn in the strongest possible terms the terrorist crimes of Hamas, which have claimed the lives of so many innocent people and caused so many injuries. The Council of Europe stands firmly with the victims, their families, and their loved ones. Our support and solidarity are full and unreserved.

"I also welcome the resolute action taken by the governments of our Member States to block the path of extremists on all sides, in order to prevent the Middle East conflict from being exported to Europe. Our fellow citizens of the Jewish faith must continue to feel safe in their homes. Anti-Semitism – wherever it comes from – is unacceptable and must be fought relentlessly. The Council of Europe is a peace project. Our Organisation is determined to protect the flourishing of Jewish communities in our Member States, wherever they may be. Peaceful coexistence is based on mutual understanding and respect.

"I also call on the Israeli authorities, in their legitimate response to the aggression suffered, to remain faithful to our democratic values, to respect the principle of proportionality and to strictly protect civilian populations. The necessary response to terrorism by democracies cannot and must not contradict our values."

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/situation-in-israel-statement-by-secretary-general-marija-pejcinovic-buric>

United Nations

Secretary-General's remarks to the press on the situation in the Middle East

... The situation in Gaza has reached a dangerous new low.

The horrific terror attacks by Hamas on Israel that killed more than 1200 people and injured thousands more last Saturday were followed by intense bombardment of Gaza that has already killed 1800 people, and injured thousands more.

After days of airstrikes, the Israeli Defense Forces have ordered the Palestinians in Gaza City and its surroundings to move to the south of the territory.

Moving more than one million people across a densely populated warzone to a place with no food, water, or accommodation, when the entire territory is under siege, is extremely dangerous – and in some cases, simply not possible.

Hospitals in the south of Gaza are already at capacity and will not be able to accept thousands of new patients from the north.

The health system is on the brink of collapse. Morgues are overflowing; eleven healthcare staff have been killed while on duty; and there have been 34 attacks on health facilities in the past few days.

The entire territory faces a water crisis as infrastructure has been damaged and there is no electricity to power pumps and desalination plants. ...

Even wars have rules.

International humanitarian law and human rights law must be respected and upheld; civilians must be protected and also never used as shields.

And all hostages in Gaza must be released immediately. ...

Finally, I want to say something about the hatred that is being stoked by this terrible conflict – across the Middle East and around the world.

Dehumanizing language that incites violence is never accepted.

I call on all leaders to speak out against Antisemitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and hate speech of all kinds.

This is a time for the international community to come together around protecting civilians and finding a lasting solution to this unending cycle of death and destruction. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-10-13/secretary-generals-remarks-the-press-the-situation-the-middle-east>

Concluding Deliberations on Crimes against Humanity, Sixth Committee Speakers Debate Need for Universal Treaty Amidst Recent Conflict in Middle East

As the Sixth Committee (Legal) concluded today its deliberations of crimes against humanity, speakers spotlighted the need for a universal instrument on preventing and punishing those crimes in the midst of geopolitical confrontations, including the recent violence between Hamas and Israel ...

Noam Capon (Israel), recalling the attack executed by “the genocidal jihadist Hamas terror organization” against innocent Israeli civilians last weekend, reported that more than 1,300 Israelis were killed and 3,500 wounded, with 150 citizens forcibly taken into Gaza. The terrorists committed three war crimes — targeting Israeli civilians, using the residents of the Gaza Strip as well as the abducted Israelis as human shields and threatening to execute the hostages. “Hamas is worse than ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da’esh],” he said, detailing the killing of infants and the displaying of their mutilated bodies in Gaza. Therefore, every legal and other mechanisms being used against Da’esh must also be used against Hamas. Commending the International Law Commission's achievements on the agenda item, he stressed the need to achieve the objective of preventing and punishing crimes against humanity. “The incomprehensible events should not be forgotten by the international legal community,” he said, urging that the world stand united and condemn such inhumane acts. The recent attacks are another example of why Israel will continue to fight the terrorists, he stated, not just for Israel but also to maintain international peace and security for “the Israeli children, my nine-month-old daughter and for the Palestinian children who are suffering under the yoke of Hamas, which is robbing them of their present and their future, for all the victims”. ...

Bahram Heidari (Iran) ... Turning to the atrocities perpetrated against Palestinians, in particular those living in Gaza, he said that the root causes of the issue stem from prolonged occupation. An inhumane blockade was imposed on the Palestinian people, cutting off essential humanitarian supplies. Severe conditions were inflicted intentionally, including through deliberate deprivation of food, water and medicine. This amounts to collective punishment and such actions should cease immediately, without any preconditions. “Such unlawful measures, which aim to bring about the destruction of the Palestinian people, constitute living and vivid examples of crimes against humanity,” he stressed, calling on the international community to hold the perpetrators of those atrocities accountable. ...

Jonathan Hollis (United Kingdom) ... said that as crimes against humanity still occur in today’s world, the absence of a multilateral convention represents an indefensible gap, given the existing frameworks for other serious crimes such as genocide, war crimes and torture. Not only does its absence undermine the prevention and prosecution of such crimes, but it also fails to give victims and survivors the recognition they deserve. ...

Ahmad Samir Fahim Habashneh (Jordan) ... called for the protection of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territory, as stated in his country’s submission to the International Court of Justice in the advisory proceedings on the legal consequences arising from the

policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The prolonged occupation has been marked by the carrying out of a large number of crimes against humanity, he noted. ...

Mohamed Kamal Ali Elhomosany (Egypt), voicing his rejection of the serious levels of violence being carried out in the conflict between Israel and Gaza, said ending the violence must be a priority. Humanitarian assistance must be guaranteed under the guidelines of international law and international humanitarian law, he stressed, observing that Gaza is under siege with people being deprived of energy, food and water. Israel, as the occupying Power must allow humanitarian assistance to reach Palestinian civilians, in line with the Geneva Conventions. Further, the current situation is the result of the marginalization of the Palestinian issue. ...

Mhd. Riyad Khaddour (Syria) noted that thousands of families in the besieged Gaza are being exterminated under the debris of buildings that are brutally and systematically targeted. Such actions should be reflected in an agreed-upon definition of crimes against humanity. What is happening in Gaza is a full-fledged genocide, given the premeditated purpose and the absolute authorization and open instructions to the Israeli occupying army to exterminate the Palestinian population suffering under the “worst racist settler colonial occupation in contemporary history”. States that lecture on the need to codify crimes against humanity are not bothered and have even launched campaigns to support Israel, he observed. In Syria, hundreds suffered because of a barbaric drone attack on a graduation ceremony of young officers and their families last week, killing 80 people and injuring more than 200. Only a few hours ago, an Israeli military aircraft targeted two civilian airports in Damascus and Aleppo. “Do you think that these are pro-humanity crimes?” he asked. Accountability for such crimes is impossible because the perpetrators belong to the group of good allies or are satellites of major global powers that ensure their impunity, he said. ...

Majed S. F. Bamyia, an observer for the State of Palestine, recalled that the international community elaborated rules to prevent the recurrence of the tragedies of the Second World War. Upholding these rules rely on their consistent, just and equal application. However, when they are applied with double standards, when there are civilians’ lives worth saving and when it is acceptable for other civilians to be killed, such rules are undermined. There would be no human rights law if discrimination was accepted based on region, race or national origin and no international humanitarian law if the principle of distinction and principle of humanity were abandoned. There would be no Charter if its provisions were rewritten to accommodate each State. “Consistency is the condition of credibility,” he said, adding it is extremely hard to speak while the Gaza Strip is being bombed into oblivion. Israeli officials, announcing a siege on 2 million people and cutting off electricity, fuel, water and food, have said they are fighting “human animals”, he reported, adding: “Hell is being unleashed over Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.” He questioned the difficulty for some people to demand that the siege be lifted, the killing stopped and immediate access for humanitarian aid be provided, while international laws are violated. “The fact that it is so difficult to say that, when those killed are Palestinians, puts into question how we apply the laws that were elaborated,” he said. ...

The representative of Israel said that he needed to leave the discussion earlier, as he had to review photographs and evidence following a massacre in the south of Israel. Many of the bodies were not even recognizable. The world must see, in the name of the victims, what Israel has witnessed since the previous Saturday. He pointed out that, in the Israeli statement today, there was no reference to the Palestinian Authority. Israel directed its criticism at the genocidal terrorist organization Hamas, which perpetrated grave violations of international law and openly aims at annihilating Israel. It is shocking that the Palestinian delegation and their supporters have not condemned one of the most brutal and cruel terrorist organizations in the region. Israel had expressed condolences to all Palestinians who have lived under the brutal rules of Hamas, which has been using them

as human shields during the past 16 days. Any alleged root causes are irrelevant, as there is no justification for terrorism. Israel is preparing for a prolonged military response to remove the threat posed by Hamas. The terrorist organization's leadership bears full responsibility for the actions Israel must take to defend its citizens and maintain security in the region, he said.

The observer for the State of Palestine recalled that Israel's delegate said there was no justification for murdering babies in their sleep. "The fact that they are killed by bombs from the air doesn't make it less brutal and doesn't kill them less," he stressed. He also recalled the delegate saying that everyone should take full responsibility. Agreeing, he said the Palestinian Government has been clear: even in the darkest hours, it rejects the killing of all civilians. "It is never easy when people are killed to make the right choices", he observed, which is why international law exists. Israel's delegate also said his country would do everything necessary to protect its citizens. Underscoring that the problem lies in the "everything necessary", he asked whether war crimes and crimes against humanity become lawful if they are "necessary". "That's why it's not your call, and not for you to determine what the law says," he stressed. Palestinians cannot be told they are not allowed to express their pain, suffering, loss and anger by killing civilians and then hear some say that, under the circumstances, Israel can. Adding that Palestinians are expected to be non-violent and respect the law, he asked: "Why do you expect something different from Israel?" ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gal3691.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert warns of new instance of mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, calls for immediate ceasefire

... "The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel has reached fever pitch," said Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

"The United Nations and its Member States must intensify efforts to mediate an immediate ceasefire between the parties, before we reach a point of no return," said Albanese. "The international community has the responsibility to prevent and protect populations from atrocity crimes. Accountability for international crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces and Hamas must also be immediately pursued," she said.

Since 7 October 2023, more than 1,900 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 600 children, more than 7,600 injured, and over 423,000 people have been displaced as a result of the Israeli strikes. This fate befell a population which has already experienced five major wars since 2008 in the context of an unlawful blockade imposed by Israel since 2007, which Albanese said has been widely condemned by the international community as collective punishment.

On 12 October, Israeli forces issued an order for 1.1 million Palestinians in north Gaza to move to the south within 24 hours, amidst ongoing airstrikes. The next day, Israeli forces reportedly began to enter Gaza in order to "clear" the area. Palestinians have no safe zone anywhere in Gaza, with Israel having imposed a "complete siege" on the tiny enclave, with water, food, fuel and electricity unlawfully cut off. Rafah, the only border crossing that remained partially open to the Gaza strip, was closed after damage caused by Israeli airstrikes.

"There is a grave danger that what we are witnessing may be a repeat of the 1948 Nakba, and the 1967 Naksa, yet on a larger scale. The international community must do everything to stop this from happening again," the UN expert said. She noted that Israeli public officials have openly advocated for another Nakba, the term for the events of 1947-1949

when over 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands during the hostilities that led to the establishment of the State of Israel. The Naksa, which led to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, displaced 350,000 Palestinians.

"Israel has already carried out mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under the fog of war," the expert said. "Again, in the name of self-defence, Israel is seeking to justify what would amount to ethnic cleansing.

"Any continued military operations by Israel have gone well beyond the limits of international law. The international community must stop these egregious violations of international law now, before tragic history is repeated. Time is of the essence. Palestinians and Israelis both deserve to live in peace, equality of rights, dignity and freedom," Albanese said. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-warns-new-instance-mass-ethnic-cleansing-palestinians-calls>

Israel must rescind evacuation order for northern Gaza and comply with international law: UN expert

... "Forcible population transfers constitute a crime against humanity, and collective punishment is prohibited under international humanitarian law," said Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

"We are horrified at the prospect of an additional 1 million Palestinians joining the over 423,000 people already forcibly driven from their homes by the violence over the past week," she said.

"It is inconceivable that more than half of Gaza's population could traverse an active war zone, without devastating humanitarian consequences, particularly while deprived of essential supplies and basic services," said Gaviria Betancur.

Shortly before midnight, the Israeli military informed the United Nations that the entire population of Gaza, north of Wadi Gaza, should relocate to southern Gaza within 24 hours, including UN staff and those sheltered in UN facilities.

"The humanitarian system in Gaza is already at breaking point. Gaza's infrastructure has been devastated by indiscriminate bombardments from air, land and sea, and those currently displaced have nowhere to go," the expert said.

"Tripling the displaced population overnight will decimate and permanently alter the civilian population of Gaza," she warned.

The Special Rapporteur said that humanitarian actors in Gaza were facing an overwhelming rise in needs against a backdrop of attacks on healthcare facilities and health workers, threats against humanitarian workers, and a draconian siege that has cut off access to water, fuel, medicine, electricity, communications, and essential humanitarian supplies.

"More than two-thirds of internally displaced persons are sheltering in UNRWA schools which are not fit for this purpose, and have themselves been bombarded. Over 1,400 Palestinians have been killed and more than 6,000 have been injured since 7 October, leaving hospitals overwhelmed," she said.

"Because there is no conceivable way for hospitals to evacuate the most serious cases, the WHO has called the evacuation order an effective 'death sentence' for the sick," added Gaviria Betancur added. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/israel-must-rescind-evacuation-order-northern-gaza-and-comply-international>

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Ravina Shamdasani

... As we have stressed, civilians must never be used as bargaining chips. Yet, we continue to receive heartbreaking messages of helplessness from people in Gaza, who are moving from house to house, terrified, seeking elusive safety. And civilians continue to be held hostage by Palestinian armed groups – in clear violation of international humanitarian law. We call, again, for their humane treatment and their immediate and unconditional release. More than 2,700 people, including civilians, have already been killed in both Israel and Gaza. We urge Palestinian armed groups to halt the use of inherently indiscriminate projectiles, which violate international humanitarian law, as well as attacks directed against civilians. And we urge Israel to ensure full respect for international humanitarian and human rights law in any and all military operations. ... rhetoric from high-level officials raises concerns that a message is being sent to the members of the Israeli Defense Forces that international humanitarian law has become optional rather than compulsory. It is absolutely crucial that Israeli leaders make it unambiguously clear that military operations must be conducted in full compliance with international law. ...

International humanitarian law grants special protection for specifically protected persons and objects, including medical personnel, medical units, medical transport, humanitarian relief personnel and objects, as well as cultural property. The parties to the conflict must respect and protect them in all circumstances.

The “complete siege” announced by Israel is already leading to a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, with estimates that more than 250,000 people in Gaza have already been displaced, the only power station ceasing to operate and a serious shortage of water. No fuel, food, water or medical supplies are being allowed in, placing the entire population of Gaza at risk. Such collective punishment of civilians is strictly prohibited by international law.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk urges all States to insist upon and assist the parties to the conflict in immediately implementing a humanitarian corridor to ensure safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid. ...

In many countries around the world, there has also been a proliferation of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic hate speech. ... We call on political and other leaders to speak out, unequivocally, against such speech, and to take clear measures to stem any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/10/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Human Rights Council Concludes Fifty-Fourth Session

... Some speakers made an urgent call to the international organizations in Geneva to bring aid to the Gaza Strip and bring an end to the war. The international community should respect a solution to the Palestinian situation, and the devastating repercussions of current events. The current threat against Gaza and the rights of Palestinian civilians, the elderly, women and children, including the right to life, were of great concern. The attacks against Muslim places of faith were deplored.

Racist statements against the Palestinian people were condemned by some speakers, and the international community was urged to respect common values and ensure humanitarian aid could reach Gaza. Any attempt to remove the Palestinian people from their land would only exacerbate refugee flows. The whole situation undermined regional stability, as well as the credibility of the international community itself. The Palestinian people should enjoy the right to return, the right to self-determination, and an independent

State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Immediate humanitarian assistance must be provided by all States with consciences, a speaker said.

A number of speakers said Israel had a right to defend itself from acts of hostility by eliminating terrorist groups such as Hamas - the only possible response to terrorism was a strong and just response. Terrorist actions by Hamas had no justification, no legitimacy, and must be universally condemned. Entire families continued to be held as hostages, a speaker said, emphasising that this was not a moment for any party to exploit these attacks to seek advantage. There should be equal measures of justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The conditions must be set, the speaker urged, for a peaceful and integrated Middle East. The acts of Hamas must be unequivocally condemned, said another speaker.

Some speakers said the loss of innocent life was heart-breaking, and the deliberate targeting of civilians demanded unequivocal international condemnation of Hamas. There must be equal justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and global solidarity against vile acts of terrorism and violence which only caused immense suffering and sought to instil fear among civilian populations.

The hostages must be released, urged one speaker, pointing out that the situation could lead to a grave humanitarian disaster. Hamas was a barbaric, genocidal, terrorist organization, a speaker said, saying that they were the same as ISIS, and calling for international solidarity for Israel. Hamas must be condemned, and all should stand with Israel in its right to defend itself in the war against terror.

One speaker said there was deep concern for the loss of all civilian lives in the conflict. There had been brazen violation of economic, social and cultural rights: the right to self-defence was no license for mass murder, a speaker said. Indiscriminate targeting of civilians and collective punishment constituted war crimes. Accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression and genocide must follow: there should be an immediate cease-fire, return of all civilians, and access to justice. War crimes should be reported to the Council for consideration. Many speakers recognised the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for statehood. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/10/human-rights-council-concludes-fifty-fourth-session>

World Health Organisation

Evacuation orders by Israel to hospitals in northern Gaza are a death sentence for the sick and injured

... the World Health Organization (WHO) strongly condemns Israel's repeated orders for the evacuation of 22 hospitals treating more than 2000 inpatients in northern Gaza. The forced evacuation of patients and health workers will further worsen the current humanitarian and public health catastrophe.

The lives of many critically ill and fragile patients hang in the balance: those in intensive care or who rely on life support; patients undergoing hemodialysis; newborns in incubators; women with complications of pregnancy, and others all face imminent deterioration of their condition or death if they are forced to move and are cut off from life-saving medical attention while being evacuated. ...

Forcing more than 2000 patients to relocate to southern Gaza, where health facilities are already running at maximum capacity and unable to absorb a dramatic rise in the number patients, could be tantamount to a death sentence.

Hospital directors and health workers are now facing an agonizing choice: abandon critically ill patients amid a bombing campaign, put their own lives at risk while remaining on site to treat patients, or endanger their patients' lives while attempting to transport them

to facilities that have no capacity to receive them. Overwhelmingly, care givers have chosen to stay behind, and honor their oaths as health professionals to “do no harm,” rather than risk moving their critically ill patients during evacuations. Health workers should never have to make such impossible choices. ...

WHO calls for Israel to immediately reverse evacuation orders to hospitals in northern Gaza, and calls for the protection of health facilities, health workers, patients, and civilians. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.emro.who.int/media/news/evacuation-orders-by-israel-to-hospitals-in-northern-gaza-are-a-death-sentence-for-the-sick-and-injured.html>

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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