



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove):

Last Thursday, I was privileged to be invited to join a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary at which we heard from the Community Security Trust about the deeply unfortunate rise in antisemitic incidents following the terrorist attack that we marked at the start of today's sitting. The increase in antisemitic incidents recorded by the Community Security Trust and its partner, Tell MAMA, is 494%. It is a melancholy trend, and I know that everyone in this House will join me in doing everything we can to defeat antisemitism and to promote peace and justice.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-16/debates/C5140F64-B9B8-456A-9B10-57714D11457E/TopicalQuestions#contribution-8E0C0414-C33D-4C3E-8D72-BA5DC5171FCA>

Anum Qaisar (SNP): Antisemitism is abhorrent and hateful, and there must be meaningful legislation to protect Jewish people. I appreciate that the Department introduced the anti-boycott Bill to help to tackle that, but as the Minister may recall, in Committee the Bill was not supported by many human rights organisations and no Opposition amendments were accepted. We need to work on a cross-party basis, so will the Secretary of State and the Minister meet with me to discuss what support the SNP can provide to tackle the hatred of antisemitism?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for the way in which she couched her question. I take this opportunity to thank the First Minister of Scotland who, in his visit to a synagogue in Edinburgh last week, I think spoke for all of Scotland in expressing his solidarity with the pain being felt by Scotland's Jewish community. I look forward to working together on a cross-party basis if we can.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-16/debates/C5140F64-B9B8-456A-9B10-57714D11457E/TopicalQuestions#contribution-B22EA0CF-89D9-4D79-859F-1143DAC62222>

House of Commons Library Briefing

Reuse of graves

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04060/SN04060.pdf>

Welsh Senedd Ministerial Statement and Q&A

National Hate Crime Awareness Week

Hannah Blythyn (Deputy Minister for Social Partnership): ... Hate Crime Awareness Week encourages people from all walks of life and communities to work together to tackle hate crime. It's an opportunity to highlight the help that is available and to show how important it is to report crimes like this. It is also an opportunity to educate and to support those who have been affected.

The theme of this year's Hate Crime Awareness Week is faith hate crime and antisemitism. With the most horrific events unfolding in the middle east, it is more important than ever that we remain committed to tackling all forms of religious-based hate crime. Ministers are in contact with representatives of Jewish communities and Muslim communities here in Wales to ensure we can support those communities at this incredibly distressing time. We are clear that the Welsh Government stands firmly against any form of antisemitism, Islamophobia and all faith-based hate crime. ...

We can only truly tackle hate crime if each and every one of us is aware of what a hate crime is and the harm it can cause, and are prepared to challenge, change and call it out. ...

Tackling online hate remains a priority whilst, sadly, social media often facilitates a toxic environment that can serve to amplify hate. We are strengthening links with the Office of Communications in readiness for its new role as regulator of online safety in the UK. We welcome the expansion of Ofcom's remit, and we intend to work closely with them, going forward, as they use their new powers to hold companies accountable. ...

The national hate crime statistics for England and Wales 2022-23 were released on 5 October. They show a 4 per cent decrease in recorded hate crimes across Wales compared to last year. This is the first annual fall since the Home Office began collecting comparable data 10 years ago.

When hate crime levels decrease, there is concern that it can mean crimes are going unreported. So, we will continue to focus on encouraging both victims and bystanders to report incidents through initiatives such as our Hate Hurts Wales campaign and awareness-raising activities of the Wales hate support centre. ...

However, this overall 4 per cent drop in recorded hate crime does not tell the whole story. Despite the drop in the total amount, there was a 26 per cent increase in religious hate crimes and a 22 per cent increase in transgender hate crimes. These increases may be due to these incidents being underreported in previous years. For example, two years ago, religious hate crime dropped 25 per cent. Better awareness and better recording by police forces may have also contributed to this increase, but ultimately, any increase is clearly a cause for concern. ...

Altaf Hussain (Conservative): ... The number of hate crimes recorded by police forces in Wales has almost trebled over the last decade. The vast majority of these crimes were racially motivated, with race being a factor in 62 per cent of recorded hate crimes in Wales. 21 per cent were motivated by sexual orientation, 14 per cent by disability, 5 per cent by transgender identity and 4.5 per cent by religion. The stats paint a worrying picture, but hate crime still makes up a small percentage of overall criminal activity. Many scholars believe the rise in reported hate crimes is due to an increase in awareness—that we are becoming more intolerant of intolerance—but one hate crime is one too many. ...

Deputy Minister, in your opening remarks, you highlight the terrible events unfolding in

Israel. While we all pray for peace in the region, we must also do all we can to prevent a rise in domestic hate crime. I was delighted to see leaders of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths standing shoulder to shoulder in London this morning in a bid to discourage any form of hatred or violence in the UK. ...

Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru): ... On their website, South Wales Police state that hate crime comes in many different forms and strikes at the heart of communities. It's so true, because hate crime undermines the very fabric by which communities are bound. Whatever our differences as individuals, be it our ethnicities, our genders, our disabilities, the way we worship or the way we love, our communities share humanity, we share a nation. And every community shares an obligation to respect those differences, because it's through togetherness, seeing each other and all being equally part of our nation that we will eradicate the prejudice and ignorance that leads to hate crime. ...

You referenced the tragic events in the middle east, and we have seen an increase in antisemitic attacks and Islamophobic attacks. You said that Ministers are speaking to community leaders, so how, specifically, is the Government going to address the risks posed to people of Muslim and Jewish faith in Wales, given the current tensions?

Hannah Blythyn: ... the point you make around the impact of words and spoken hate crimes and the impact they can have—it doesn't happen in a vacuum, it does have an impact. So, the things that we say in this place, the things that we say on social media ... when we've had these conversations in this Siambr about the old saying, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names may never hurt me,' and that's not true. ... It could just be words, but those words can hurt, but, ultimately, it can lead into physical and harmful actions as well.

To touch on where we are now in terms of the horrific events unfolding in the middle east, and the work that my colleagues are doing to work with and support communities in Wales, clearly, we'd be concerned by any reports or possibility of increases of hate crime targeted towards Jewish and Muslim communities in Wales, or anywhere in the UK. Very much the message to members of those communities is, however difficult that is, to report any hate incidents, and that can be done by contacting the police or through the Wales hate support centre run by Victim Support. As well as the meetings that my colleague the Minister for Social Justice is undertaking, we've also asked our Wales hate support centre to monitor any spikes in reporting of antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime and to ensure that service users are getting the support that they need and deserve. ...

Gareth Davies (Conservative): ... I welcome the Welsh Government's condemnation of antisemitism, given the previous issues within the Labour Party on that particular subject. My question is around police forces and what discussions or conversations may you have had with police forces, in particular to police community support officers given lots of devolved competency on the triggers of hate crime and the local variants of hate crime that might take place in rural areas, and targeted hate crime, depending on the demographics of that particular area, because the targeted hate crime that's apparent in Cardiff, for example, may be different to those in other parts of Wales. So, what effort is the Welsh Government making to tailoring this message to maximise awareness in all parts of Wales, so we can best educate people that hate crime isn't accepted in any form?

Hannah Blythyn: ... Gareth Davies raises an important point in terms of making sure that the work we do not only reaches out but embraces and involves all communities across Wales. ...

... as we can see from the hate crime statistics, that hate does still exist in all corners of the country as well. So, we're working very closely through our various mechanisms ... actually understanding what the challenges are in different communities and at the same time making sure we are working together collectively, not just to educate, but to call it out as well.

To read the full transcript see

The statistics referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023>

CST

Antisemitic Incidents Update

In the ten days inclusive between the Hamas terror attack on Israel (Saturday 7 October) Monday 16 October, CST recorded at least 320 antisemitic incidents across the UK. This is a provisional total that is almost certain to increase further as we receive more delayed reports of incidents covering this period, and while we continue to verify and log all the reports that we have currently received.

For comparison, CST recorded 47 antisemitic incidents over the same ten days in 2022. This means that we have seen an increase of 581% this year compared to the same period last year. ...

Even compared to periods of previous conflicts involving Israel, these statistics are unprecedentedly high. The last time a significant spike in antisemitism related to events in the Middle East was recorded occurred in May 2021. During the first ten days of that escalation in violence, 298 antisemitic incidents were reported to CST. Across the first ten days of the conflict in July 2014, we recorded 82. Bear in mind, when comparing these to the 320 anti-Jewish hate incidents recorded since Saturday 7 October, that the figures for 2021 and 2014 are final totals including all late-reported incidents, whereas the current total of 320 incidents is only provisional and will almost certainly increase further. ...

The 320 antisemitic incidents recorded over this ten-day period fall into the following categories:

- 15 Assaults
- 14 Damage & Desecration to Jewish property
- 46 direct Threats
- 244 Abusive Behaviour, including verbal abuse, graffiti on non-Jewish property, hate mail and online abuse
- 1 instance of mass-produced antisemitic Literature ...

Two hundred and thirty-four of the 320 antisemitic incidents occurred offline and 86 were online. ...

Thirty-six antisemitic incidents were related to universities across the UK. Meanwhile, 17 incidents targeted Jewish schools, schoolchildren and teachers at non-Jewish schools, or schoolchildren on their way to or from their place of education.

Examples of antisemitic incidents recorded by CST since Saturday 7 October include:

- An email sent to a Jewish newspaper editor, praising Hamas
- A sticker plastered on a synagogue showing the Prime Minister saying, "I stand with genocide"
- "Free Palestine, kill Jews" shouted at the heart of a Jewish community in London
- "Palestine will be 3[sic]" written on the sign of a Jewish cemetery, with the word "Jewish" crossed out in the same pen
- A threat made over the phone to a Kosher shop in Liverpool, saying, "We are coming to get you"
- A Facebook comment from an offender based in Kent, saying, "Shut up Jew boy no one is interested in your crap"
- Under a Jewish newspaper's tweet about BBC Arabic journalists being taken off air, an offender wrote, "And you're still going to claim that Jews don't control the media?"

- Swastikas were seen daubed in Manchester
- Two Jewish schools were splattered with red paint in London
- “Free Palestine” was shouted at the residents of a Jewish house in Manchester following by their grocery delivery driver ...

To read the full press release see

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/10/16/antisemitic-incidents-update>

Tell Mama

Five-fold increase in anti-Muslim cases to Tell MAMA between October 7 and 16

Tell MAMA has recorded 200 cases between October 7 and 16, marking a five-fold increase over the same period last year (37 reports), as of 1 pm today.

As our [previous bulletin](#) made clear, “The nature of many offline cases sent to our service is often overtly racist – targeting Arab and Palestinian communities with dehumanising slurs, anti-Muslim slurs or in some cases targeting their homes, or when speaking Arabic in public, as well as targeting Asian and Muslim communities.”

The following cases came into Tell MAMA between October 7 and October 16:

81 offline cases – (8 assaults, 11 threatening behaviour, 5 vandalism, and 57 cases of abusive behaviour). Cases occurred in areas like London (49), Greater Manchester (13), Lancashire (5), South Yorkshire (3), West Yorkshire (4), Derbyshire (2) and Birmingham (5).

119 online cases – consistent with last week, a majority of which contained dehumanising anti-Muslim language and tropes, equating communities with terrorism and violence.

The numbers remain, like all Tell MAMA cases, subject to further revision and analysis.

Examples of the rhetoric online and offline include calling Muslims “terrorists”, ‘Nazis’ “barbaric” and “bloodthirsty” – in some cases compared to Nazis, language that appeared on social media.

The death threat made towards a Muslim woman on a train is also under investigation by British Transport Police.

A Palestinian Muslim family faced harassment and abuse, including “Nazi” slurs when out in public.

On Saturday, October 14, numerous reports came to us about graffiti in the Raynes Park area in Merton that included the words “Ilsam (Islam) is Evil” on various bus stops, including those near schools attended by Muslim children....

To read the full press release see

<https://tellmamauk.org/five-fold-increase-in-anti-muslim-cases-to-tell-mama-between-october-7-and-16/>

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Israel

See also the Senedd Ministerial Statement “National Hate Crime Awareness Week” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Statement from the Speaker

Mr Speaker: I know that Members across the House will have been shocked by the recent terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas. I invite the House to stand with me and observe a minute’s silence in recognition of all those innocent Israelis, Palestinians and others who have lost their lives, all those taken hostage and all those affected by the conflict in the

region. Please join me now in standing.

The House observed a one-minute silence.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-16/debates/5635C650-EEED-436C-9AF6-0175D850507A/Prayers#contribution-996D16CF-84A2-4F83-8155-312E2845B1B3>

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Israel and Gaza

col 23 The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak): The attacks in Israel last weekend shocked the world. Over 1,400 people murdered one by one; over 3,500 wounded; almost 200 taken hostage; the elderly, men, women, children and babes in arms murdered, mutilated, burned alive. We should call it by its name: it was a pogrom. The families of some of the missing are in the Public Gallery today. We call for the immediate release of all hostages, and I say to them, “We stand with you. We stand with Israel.”

The murdered and the missing come from over 30 countries, including the United Kingdom. The terrible nature of these attacks means it is proving difficult to identify many of the deceased, but, with a heavy heart, I can inform the House that at least six British citizens were killed. A further 10 are missing, some of whom are feared to be among the dead.

We are working with Israel to establish the facts as quickly as possible, and we are supporting the families who are suffering unimaginable pain. We are also helping British citizens who want to leave Israel. ... We are working with neighbouring countries on land evacuations for our citizens in Gaza and the west bank. ...

I will come back to the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza in a moment, but I want first to address the British Jewish community directly ... we stand with you now and always. This atrocity was an existential strike at the very idea of Israel as a safe homeland for the Jewish people. I understand why it has shaken you to your core. I am sickened that antisemitic incidents have increased since the attack. We are doing everything we can to protect you. We are providing an additional £3 million for the Community Security Trust to protect schools, synagogues and other Jewish community buildings, and we are working with the police to ensure that hate crime and the glorification of terror are met with the full force of the law. ...

I also recognise that this is a moment of great anguish for British Muslim communities, who are also appalled by the actions of Hamas but are fearful of the response. We must listen to those concerns with the same attentiveness. Hamas are using innocent Palestinian people as human shields, with the tragic loss of more than 2,600 Palestinian lives, including many children. We mourn the loss of every innocent life, of the civilians of every faith and every nationality who have been killed, so let us say it plainly: we stand with British Muslim communities, too.

col 24 Israel was founded not just as a homeland for the Jewish people, but as a guarantor of their security, to ensure that what happened in the holocaust could never happen again. Through its strength and resilience, Israel gradually achieved some of that longed-for security, despite the strategic threats on its borders, including Hezbollah in the north with Iran at its back. Israel normalised relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain through the Abraham accords, and moved towards normalising ties with Saudi Arabia—steps that were considered unthinkable not long ago.

One reason this attack is so shocking is that it is a fundamental challenge to any idea of co-existence, which is an essential precursor to peace and stability in the region. The question is: how should we respond? I believe that we must support absolutely Israel's right to defend itself, to go after Hamas and take back the hostages, to deter further incursions, and to strengthen its security for the long term. That must be done in line with international humanitarian law, while recognising that Israel faces a vicious enemy who

embed themselves behind civilians.

As a friend, we will continue to call on Israel to take every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians. ... Humanity, law, decency, respect for human life—that is what sets us apart from the mindless violence of the terrorist.

There are three specific areas in which the United Kingdom is helping to shape events. First, we are working to prevent escalation and further threats against Israel. On Friday, RAF surveillance aircraft began patrols to track threats to regional security ... we are not engaging in fighting or in an offensive in Gaza, but we are increasing our presence to prevent broader regional instability at this dangerous moment.

Secondly, I am proud that we are a long-standing and significant provider of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. I can announce today that we are increasing our aid by a third, with an additional £10 million of support. ... Like our allies, we believe that “ Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, or their legitimate aspirations to live with equal measures of security, freedom, justice, opportunity and dignity.”

Hamas simply do not stand for the future that Palestinians want, and they seek to put the Palestinian people in harm’s way. ...

We also need to keep the situation in the west bank at the forefront of our minds at this moment of heightened sensitivity. Earlier today, I spoke to Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the Palestinian Authority, to express our support for his efforts to provide stability.

col/ 25 Thirdly, we will use all the tools of British diplomacy to sustain the prospects of peace and stability in the region. Ultimately, that requires security for Israelis and Palestinians and a two-state solution, so we are increasing our regional engagement. ...

In conclusion, unequivocally backing Israel’s right to defend itself, stepping forward with humanitarian support, working to protect civilians from harm, and straining every sinew to keep the flame of peace and stability alive—that is our objective. ...

Keir Starmer (Labour): ... Last Saturday, Israel was the victim of terrorism on an unimaginable scale: the senseless murder of men, women, children and even babies; the horrors of hostage taking; music festivals turned to killing fields; innocent Jews slaughtered within their own kibbutz—an attack with no cause other than bloodshed. I am sure that over the last few days, every Member of the House has seen images from this crisis that will never be unseen: tiny bodies, wrapped in bundles, in Israel and now in Gaza; mothers and fathers grieving—Israeli, Palestinian, Muslim, Jew; the innocent, dead.

As in any time of grave crisis, it is crucial that this House speaks with one voice in condemnation of terror, in support for Israel in its time of agony and for the dignity of all human life, because Hamas do not wish to see peace in the middle east; they just want to see Israel wiped off the map. But Hamas are not the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian people are not Hamas.

Labour stands with Israel. Britain stands with Israel. The attack is ongoing, terrorists are at large and hostages are still being held, some of them British citizens. Israel has the right to bring her people home, to defend herself and to keep her people safe. While Hamas have the capability to carry out attacks on Israeli territory, there can be no safety. ...

col/ 26 As the Prime Minister has said, there is an acute humanitarian crisis unfolding. Israel’s defence must be conducted in accordance with international law, civilians must not be targeted and innocent lives must be protected. There must be humanitarian corridors and humanitarian access, including for food, water, electricity and medicines, so that hospitals can keep people alive and so that innocent people do not needlessly die. And there must be proper protection for all those who work selflessly so that aid can be delivered to victims.

There can be no doubt that responsibility for this crisis lies with Hamas. They have no interest in Palestinian rights and no interest in the security of the people of Gaza. They unleash terror and then hide among them—women and children used as human shields; hostages held, who should be released. Hamas are destroyers of lives, of hope and of peace. And we cannot give them what they want.

We must keep striving for a two-state solution: a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel. We cannot give up on that hope. We cannot let Hamas brutality be a catalyst for conflict in the wider region. Engagement between Israel and Arab nations must be strengthened, not abandoned. ...

These attacks are having a huge impact on communities across the United Kingdom. Many in this House will have heard devastating stories from people who have lost friends and family, and from people who are deeply worried about the future of those they know in Israel or Palestine—including the First Minister of Scotland ... We stand with all of them. We stand against the worrying rise in Islamophobia and against the antisemitic abuse, threats and assaults that we have seen on British streets, because we must never underestimate the burden of history that Jewish people carry with them.

I do not want Britain to be a place where Jewish schools are closed, where Jewish children stay at home out of fear and where Jewish families feel compelled to hide their identity. I do not want Britain to be a place where British Muslims feel they have to apologise for the actions of people who do not act in their name. We cannot allow community cohesion in our country to be destroyed. ...

The events of the past week have seen horrors beyond our imagination, so let us send a strong message that Westminster is united, and Britain is united: with Israel, against terror, for international law and for the protection of innocent lives. ...

The Prime Minister: ... we must always have at the forefront of our mind that responsibility for this crisis lies with Hamas, and with Hamas alone. It was a barbaric act of terrorism that has inflicted untold suffering and misery on so many people, and we have felt that acutely here at home.

col 27 We have seen the impact on our streets over the past week, and it has sickened all of us. We stand united in saying that antisemitism has no place in our society. Let me be unequivocal that those who incite racial or religious hatred on our streets, or who inflict violence and cause untold suffering to people, will be met with the full force of the law. ...

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... This is not the time to point out the faults of Benjamin Netanyahu. What we have to say is that the inexcusable terror attack on Israelis was intended to bring awful harm to the Palestinians.

... I want to quote a senior constituent, who said: "This is a very harrowing time for Jews all over the world. There are about 16 million of us worldwide. Why can't they leave us alone?"

If we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we want to try to bring security, both to the people of Israel and to the Palestinians in Gaza. ...

Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... The abhorrent terrorist attack by Hamas on the Jewish people and the Israeli state was a crime against our common humanity, and it must be condemned unequivocally. What more powerful response can we have than to seek to protect the shared innocence and shared humanity of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians?

That will require a lot. It will require the defeat of Hamas; it will require the safe return of all those hostages who have been taken; it will require the opening of humanitarian corridors, so that people can escape Gaza and aid can get in; and it will require medicine, water and electricity for hospitals, so that people who are injured can be treated. It will require no collective punishment. ...

col 28 ... we all need to be very conscious that history will judge us on our response not just to these abhorrent attacks but to the humanitarian crisis that is undoubtedly unfolding in Gaza. Let us not be on the wrong side of history.

The Prime Minister: ... I agree that this crisis demands that the United Kingdom steps up diplomatically to make a difference—to bring about peace and stability. ...

We also recognise the scale of the humanitarian situation that is unfolding and are playing a leading role in helping to alleviate it ...

Theresa May (Conservative): The attack on Israel by Hamas terrorists was barbaric.

Terrorists must be defeated, whoever they are and wherever they are. I commend my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for the stance that the Government have taken in support of the Jewish community here in the UK, and in support of Israel and its right to defend itself. I welcome the Prime Minister's statement that action must be taken in line with international humanitarian law, but will he give a commitment today that the Government will leave no stone unturned in their efforts to prevent regional escalation of the conflict? In doing so, will he reflect on the role of Iran?

The Prime Minister: I can give my right hon. Friend that reassurance. ...

Ed Davey (Liberal Democrat): The scale of Hamas's terrorist attacks has been utterly horrifying and the atrocities they have committed are truly sickening. We stand with the people of Israel and with the Jewish community, who are grieving and afraid. We call for the unconditional release of all hostages and urge the Government finally to proscribe as a terrorist organisation the funders of Hamas: Iran's revolutionary guard.

col 29 Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself and its citizens. That means targeting Hamas, not innocent civilians, in line with international law. I am concerned about the forced evacuation of hospitals in Gaza, which means death for innocent Palestinians who will not survive being taken off life support. ...

The Prime Minister: Unlike Hamas, the Israeli President has said that the Israeli armed forces will operate in accordance with international law. Israel's attempt to minimise civilian casualties by warning people to leave northern Gaza has been further complicated by Hamas terrorists telling the local population not to leave and instead using them as human shields. ...

Alicia Kearns (Conservative): Saturday's terror attack on Israel constituted crimes against humanity—crimes so heinous that they violated our understanding of the depths of human depravity. That depravity continues today, as innocents remain held hostage by Hamas terrorists and their patrons, the state of Iran.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence and to defeat Hamas. We can support Israel and grieve with its people while recognising that how a counter-terrorism operation is conducted matters. It matters because Israel's actions as a rule-of-law nation, and our words as its friend, shape our ability to be a legitimate arbiter in future conflicts and to have the right to call out abusers such as Russia. It matters because although there is an imperative to defeat Hamas in the immediate term in order to secure Israel's future, how they are defeated will shape the region's future, and because the people of Gaza are not Hamas—1.2 million children bear no collective guilt for Hamas's terror. ...

Christian Wakeford (Labour): On Saturday, I went to shul and sat next to a constituent whose cousin is one of the hostages. ...

col 30 While conflict escalates in the middle east, we see the effects on the streets here in Britain. ... in the past week we have seen an increase of around 500% in antisemitic incidents and an 850% increase in suspicious behaviours, and even this weekend glorification of Hamas and genocidal chants on the streets of our cities, in some cases mere feet away from police officers. Will the Prime Minister join me in applauding the efforts of the CST in keeping the Jewish community safe, but also commit to ensuring that anyone found to be preaching this hate speech on our streets faces the full extent of the law?

The Prime Minister: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. ...

Nadhim Zahawi (Conservative): ... Israel has to take the necessary steps to root out this evil virus of fundamentalism that has so clearly infested those in Hamas and, of course, destroy it. Just as we stood together against ISIS, we will stand together again. My request ... is that, when this has been done, the UK encourages Israel to set out for all to see the positive actions it will take to change the reality in Gaza once and for all. Gaza and the world will need Israel to show her best self after this war.

The Prime Minister: ... in spite of this awful tragedy, we cannot lose sight of the better future that we all want to strive for. ...

Richard Burgon (Labour): The massacre of Israeli civilians was a heinous act of terrorism that we all utterly condemn and the hostages must be released immediately. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, “the horrific acts by Hamas do not justify responding with collective punishment of the Palestinian people.”

But that is what we are seeing in Gaza, with civilian areas bombed and food, electricity, water and medicines all cut off. Such collective punishment is a war crime under the Geneva conventions, so will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to make it clear to the Israeli Government that this collective punishment of Palestinian civilians must end immediately?

col 31 **The Prime Minister:** ... I actually believe that we should support absolutely Israel's right to defend itself and to go after Hamas, recognising that it faces a vicious enemy that embeds itself behind civilians. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... Does the Prime Minister agree that after the acts of barbarism by Hamas, there is no going back to the situation before where, right under the noses of the international community, Hamas were allowed to rearm time and again? They were allowed to misappropriate aid into terrorist infrastructure, building those tunnels, amassing armaments and hiding them behind civilian families. Does he agree that the international community must take a stand and not allow the Gaza strip to go back to becoming a terrorist statelet?

The Prime Minister: ... no country can or would tolerate the slaughter of its citizens and simply return to the conditions that allowed that to take place. Israel has the right—indeed, the obligation—to defend itself and to ensure that this never happens again.

Charlotte Nichols (Labour): ... “No stone can remain unturned in finding a political solution.” Those are not my words, but those of the Israeli and Arab mothers' collective Woman Wage Peace, echoed in recent days by survivors from Kibbutz Be'eri, the family of those murdered at Netiv Ha'Asara, organisations such as B'Tselem, Omdim Ben Yachad, and thousands of peace activists and ordinary Israelis who are desperately praying for the cycle of violence to end and a lasting peace to be secured. What will the Government be doing to heed that call and mobilise international actors to find the political solution ...?

The Prime Minister: We must provide an alternative to the vision of violence, fear and terror presented by Hamas, and that is what the United Kingdom will do, standing with Israel but also working together with its people and our allies across the region ...

col 32 **Crispin Blunt (Conservative):** ... I welcome in particular [the Prime Minister's] urging of the state of Israel to act in line with international humanitarian law and his call for Israel to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians. May I ask him to press upon our Israeli friends the principles of distinction and proportionality in their action to avoid any sense in which it looks like a collective punishment is being meted out on the Palestinians in Gaza, as well as ensuring that we do nothing that will leave the democracies worse off at the end of this, which is not in line with the principles all of us would wish to hold?

The Prime Minister: As I said, we support Israel's right to defend itself, but, as a friend, we will continue to call on Israel to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians. ...

Afzal Khan (Labour): A six-year-old Palestinian child was murdered in Chicago because of his Muslim faith, and as a response to the war between Israel and Hamas. In the last week, we have seen a sharp rise in Islamophobic rhetoric and the dehumanisation of Palestinians. ... Will the Prime Minister review his statements about the conflict and ensure that he does not add to the further vilification of Palestinians and Muslims when condemning the actions of Hamas?

The Prime Minister: ... We will not tolerate anti-Muslim hatred in any form, and we will seek to stamp it out wherever it occurs. ...

Michael Ellis (Conservative): In the long litany of attacks against Jews around the world, this is the single most murderous since the end of the Holocaust in 1945. ... Does the Prime Minister agree that Israel has acted entirely in accordance with international law, despite Hamas using human shields and every type of horrific provocation? ...

The Prime Minister: ... Israel has not just the right but the duty. One only needs to imagine, if a similar incident had occurred in our country, what we would do to secure the safety and security of our citizens. ...

col 33 **Julie Elliott (Labour):** I condemn unreservedly the actions of Hamas and the horror that has unfolded in the region, and I ask that the hostages are returned safely as soon as possible. However, from speaking to aid workers based in Gaza, the reality on the ground is that despite the evacuation order, people who are ill, frail, in hospital or just getting old cannot get out. This morning, I spoke to aid workers who told me people are returning from southern Gaza to northern Gaza because they have no water and there is nowhere to go. They cannot escape. ...

The Prime Minister: ... I have spoken to President Sisi about the importance of the Rafah crossing being open for humanitarian purposes and I will continue to do so, and about the importance of allowing humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza. ... I contrast Israel's attempt to minimise civilian casualties by warning people to leave Gaza with Hamas, who are urging the local population to stay to use them as human shields. ...

Andrew Percy (Conservative): Every tragic loss of life in Gaza is the responsibility of Hamas alone. ... A week on from the pogroms, what do we have on the streets of Britain? We have some people attending pro-Palestinian marches, holding up banners in support of terrorists, whether it be hang-gliders, chanting anti-Jewish chants, supporting the racist boycott, divestment and sanctions movement or, in the case of a protest in Glasgow, reminding Jews where they were in 1940. Jews need no reminder of where they were in 1940. Those scenes are deeply distressing to British Jews, many of whom do not believe that the police will take action. ...

The Prime Minister: ... these acts are appalling. I want to make sure that we provide security and relieve the anxiety in the Jewish community here in the United Kingdom ... I am clear that where people incite racial or religious hatred, or where people's conduct is threatening, abusive or disorderly or causes distress to others, we expect the police to take action, and those committing such crimes should face the full force of the law.

col 34 **Imran Hussain (Labour):** I join this House in its condemnation of the bloodshed in Israel and Palestine. The 2 million Palestinians in the open-air prison of Gaza faced a dire humanitarian emergency long before today, yet indiscriminate airstrikes and siege tactics have turned what was a critical emergency into a devastating catastrophe. Will the Prime Minister make it clear to the Israeli Government that laying siege to civilians in Gaza by cutting off food, water, power and medical supplies and through indiscriminate airstrikes killing civilians is in clear violation of international law? ...

The Prime Minister: I again point out gently to the hon. Gentleman that Hamas are the entity responsible for the suffering we are seeing, and Hamas alone. ...

Julian Lewis (Conservative): Does the Prime Minister accept that what Hamas did was not terrorism for its own sake, but an act of calculated barbarism with a strategy behind it? The present war will not feature Egypt and Jordan as enemies of Israel as was the case in previous wars, so does he agree that that strategy is to try and prevent similar peace agreements with countries such as Saudi Arabia? ...

The Prime Minister: ... he is right to point to the broader situation and welcome the progress that had been made on normalisation between Israel and other countries in the region ...

Dawn Butler (Labour): Noam Sagi, his wife Michal and their son are here today to watch you give your statement, Prime Minister.

Ada Sagi, Noam's mum, was taken hostage from her home by Hamas on Saturday 7 October, and is currently being held hostage in Gaza. Ada booked a ticket to the UK to celebrate her 75th birthday. Noam has written to the Prime Minister to ask for his immediate intervention and assistance. Joe Biden has made personal calls to his citizens. I ask the Prime Minister if he will please—remember, the family are watching—spare just five minutes to have a quick conversation with them.

The Prime Minister: Of course I am happy to have a quick conversation, but I am also engaged actively with our partners in the region to try to ensure the safe release of our hostages ...

col 35 Priti Patel (Conservative): We in this House are all absolutely horrified by the terrorist atrocities in Israel and the appalling way in which the Hamas terrorists have murdered, tortured and kidnapped men, women and children. ... Can [the Prime Minister] explain from his conversations with President Sisi how the opening of the border crossings between Gaza and Egypt on humanitarian grounds will be undertaken in a way that prevents Hamas terrorists from leaving and potentially creating further atrocities in the region?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has made an excellent point. That is why there is complexity to opening the Rafah border crossing, but she should be reassured that we are engaged in those conversations with the Egyptians and with other partners, including the Americans, to find a safe way to open the crossing ...

Sarah Champion (Labour): The International Committee of the Red Cross has stated that "hospitals in Gaza risk turning into morgues without electricity."

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has said that the agency's colleagues in Gaza are no longer able to provide humanitarian assistance ... Some civilians have no choice but to stay in the north of Gaza, and must be protected at all times. What conversations has the Prime Minister had with his Israeli counterpart about creating safe zones and humanitarian corridors in Gaza? ...

The Prime Minister: I am proud that over the past few years we have been one of the leading donors to UNRWA ...

Bob Blackman (Conservative):

There can be no greater contrast between the actions of the Israel defence forces, which attempt to prevent the loss of civilian life, and the sheer brutality of the terrorists who kill and maim as many people as they possibly can. ...It is beyond belief that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which funds and supports Hamas, was not behind this whole operation. Will my right hon. Friend now take the action that the whole House has asked him to take, and proscribe the IRGC in its entirety?

col 36 The Prime Minister: We have already taken strong action against the Iranian regime, including the sanctioning of 350 individuals and entities including the IRGC in its entirety. ... As the House knows, the Government have a long-standing policy of not commenting on whether specific organisations are being considered for proscription ...

Sammy Wilson (DUP): The Israeli Government have the right, indeed the duty, to protect their civilians against these bloody terrorist attacks ... [The] statement indicated that we would not tolerate the glorification of terror, which would be met by the full force of the law. Will he therefore join me in condemning the Irish language-speaking school in west Belfast whose students held pro-Palestinian demonstrations this week, which were facilitated within the school? ...

The Prime Minister: ... I do not know the details of the incident that he has described, but he is right that this malicious activity should not be happening in schools. ...

Conor Burns (Conservative): ... What we have seen is not just an attack on the territorial integrity of Israel, but an attack on Jews and those of the Jewish faith. ...

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend. This was an attack on Jews and we should call it out for what it was. ...

col 37 **Tahir Ali (Labour):** The Prime Minister has reaffirmed his commitment to a two-state solution. Why, then, have his Government failed to recognise the state of Palestine when 138 United Nations member countries have done so? ...

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom Government's long-standing position under both parties has been that the United Kingdom will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the object of peace. ...

Liam Fox (Conservative): Does my right hon. Friend agree that to conflate Hamas and the Palestinians is not only wrong but dangerous? Hamas have abducted, tortured and executed Palestinian members of Fatah, they have broken the arms of children who have worn Fatah colours to school, and they do not want a two-state solution because they do not believe Israel should exist as a state. But if the fingers on the trigger were Hamas's, the strings were being pulled from Tehran. With £100 million of investment going from Tehran to the terrorists of Hamas, is it not time that we in this country asked again why Iranian banks are operating from the City of London, why Iran Air is operating from Heathrow airport and why we have not proscribed the IRGC ...

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend that, crucially, the Palestinian people are also the victims of Hamas ... Hamas do not represent the Palestinian people or their legitimate aspirations to live with security and dignity. They do not stand for the future that the Palestinian people want ...

col 38 **Kit Malthouse (Conservative):** Modern media have brought the full horror of the profoundly evil crimes committed against state of Israel into our homes, and they are now bringing the unfolding horror of the human catastrophe taking place in Gaza into our sitting rooms as well. In his statement, the Prime Minister indicated that Israel and Egypt are denying access for humanitarian aid into Gaza. What possible reason could there be for that?

The Prime Minister: As we heard previously, there are complexities with ensuring the safe opening of the Rafah crossing. ...

Naz Shah (Labour): The use of white phosphorus in densely populated areas against civilians is illegal. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported the use of white phosphorous against civilians in Gaza. Has the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office received confirmation of those reports? ...

The Prime Minister: ... I am not going to comment or speculate on reports where we do not have full access to information or are unable to verify facts.

Rehman Chishti (Conservative): ... Terrorism is terrorism. As somebody who comes from a Muslim background, I say this: the actions that we saw with regard to Hamas were clearly terrorist and barbaric, and therefore everything must be done to confront that terrorist organisation.

col 39 As the former special envoy for freedom of religion or belief, I worked with people from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths. We worked together to tackle intolerance against all people of all faiths. ... Hamas will be defeated, but the question is who replaces Hamas in Gaza. ...

The Prime Minister: ... exactly that was part of the conversations I had both yesterday, with the King of Jordan, and today with President Abbas. We need to provide stable leadership in Gaza once Hamas have, hopefully, been removed. ...

Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru): On behalf of Plaid Cymru, I condemn the atrocities of Hamas. Our thoughts are with all the Israeli and Palestinian civilians killed, injured or bereaved in this horrific conflict.

International humanitarian law exists for a reason: to safeguard all civilians, universally. Among the rights under that law is the right to water. Fuel is necessary for many people in Palestine to have safe drinking water. Without clean water, people will die. ...

The Prime Minister: ...as a friend we will continue to call on Israel to take every

precaution to avoid harming civilians, and we will continue to do everything we can to provide humanitarian support to those affected.

Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative): ... Some people forget that the reason we defend Israel's right to exist and its security is that 6 million Jews were murdered due to a perverted ideology, and we must never return to that. That is why we stand with Israel in its time of absolute need.

I have a Jewish sister-in-law. She is quite clear that she has never felt more threatened than she did this weekend when she saw people take to the streets waving flags bearing Hamas's crest—I do not know whether the Prime Minister saw this—and calling for Israel to be swept "from the river to the sea". This is all about getting rid of the Jews in Palestine; there is no question about it. We must be clear about this: we have to protect the Jewish people here, who are British citizens, and we must stamp out antisemitism. ...

col 40 The Prime Minister: ... there is no place for demonstrations, convoys or flag waving on British streets that glorifies terrorism or harasses the Jewish community. That is why, last week, I met police chiefs and people from the Community Security Trust in Downing Street to discuss how better we can protect the Jewish community at this time and police these protests appropriately. ... anyone who breaks the law should be met with the full force of the law and be swiftly arrested. ...

Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour): The acts of terror that were committed by Hamas were horrifying, and our prayers go out to everyone affected, both in Israel and across the world ... Israel is seeking justice, but innocent Palestinians must not collectively pay the price. I urge the Prime Minister to seek guarantees from the Israeli Government on four crucial points: first, that incendiary weapons will not be used in civilian areas; secondly, that hospitals and medics will not be targeted; thirdly, that food, water and electricity supplies must be immediately restored; and, finally, that we must not see military occupation and annexation of Gazan land.

The Prime Minister: I am confident that the Prime Minister of Israel does not want to see any regional escalation beyond dealing with Hamas. ...

Jonathan Djanogly (Conservative): Since the Hamas terrorist attack, the unequivocal Government support and concern for the safety and welfare of the UK Jewish community has been extremely well received by those in that community ... Over the coming days, as Israel takes the remedial and self-defence action that it has been forced to take, can my right hon. Friend confirm that he will work with our international allies to ensure continued support for Israel, such that Israel is not left out on a limb, on its own, to be picked off by enemies?

The Prime Minister: ... we will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself. We remain engaged in the region, talking to our partners, so that we can provide Israel with all the support that we can, defend its position and also provide humanitarian support to alleviate the impact as best we can.

Rushanara Ali (Labour): ... These atrocities were committed by terrorists who do not seek peace, and they have set back the just cause of Palestinian freedom and statehood ...

col 41 Over a million Palestinians in Gaza have been told to flee, highlighting the scale of the impending humanitarian disaster, which will only inflame tension in the region. ...

The Prime Minister: Both the Foreign Secretary and I are speaking extensively to all our partners in the region to urge everybody to put pressure on those who would seek to take advantage of the situation not to. As I said, we have deployed surveillance aircraft to the Mediterranean, not least to ensure that Hezbollah is not in receipt of extra arms shipments ...

Matthew Offord (Conservative): In 2013, I took a group of schoolchildren from the Beit Shvidler Primary School in Edgware to the Hanukkah party at No. 10. A leading voice of the choir was Nathanel Young, one of the first people to be killed in the terrorist attack in Israel. Will the Prime Minister advise the House what actions have been taken for the

bereaved families and the families of the 17 hostages who remain in Gaza ...

The Prime Minister: I express again my sympathies to all those families who have been impacted by the appalling situation in Israel in this terrorist attack. ... the Foreign Office is providing extensive consular support to all families who are impacted, and we will continue to do so throughout this crisis.

Anum Qaisar (SNP): ... I wish to put on record my utter condemnation of the Hamas attacks. Israeli hostages must be released. Over the last week, we have all seen horrific images of innocent Israelis and Palestinians on our screens—it has been awful. What struck me was a quote that I have seen from an aid worker in Gaza from Medical Aid for Palestinians. Mahmoud Shalabi said: “I’ve seen kids write their names on their palms, because when they die they want people to know who they are.”

That is because in Gaza, families are being wiped out.

Across the globe, there has been a collective outcry for the people of Gaza, most of whom, as the Prime Minister has said, have nothing to do with Hamas. ...

The Prime Minister: I have specifically spoken to President Sisi about the importance of opening the Rafah border crossing, both for humanitarian purposes and to provide for the safe evacuation of British nationals. Today, we have announced an increase in our aid funding to the region by around a third, and we will figure out how best that money can help those who need it as quickly as possible.

col 42 **William Cash (Conservative):** On international law and media impartiality, will the Attorney General be asked to provide a legal note, if not a full opinion, given, for example, that one of Ofcom’s directors ... is reported to be supporting posts this week arguing that the Government’s support for Israel is a “vile colonial alliance”, and referring to “ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians”?

Ofcom must surely be told that it must deal with this at once as a matter of impartiality, quite apart from any criminal action that may be needed under terrorist or criminal law.

The Prime Minister: ... I will ensure that the Attorney General looks into it, and more generally, I will just say that I absolutely endorse those describing these attacks as what they are, which is acts of terror by a terrorist organisation. ...

Diana Johnson (Labour): Hamas’s kidnapping of 200 Israelis is a stark reminder that the terrorist group have learned from their paymasters, the Iranian regime, who for years have promoted state hostage taking ...

The Prime Minister: ... We have, for a long time, maintained Foreign Office travel advice that people should not travel to Gaza, because we know the situation is dangerous. ...

Tobias Ellwood (Conservative): ... This has rightly been called Israel’s 9/11, but we now appreciate that, following those attacks on America in 2001, grave operational and strategic errors were made, however well-intentioned, in the name of defeating terrorism. That led to significant escalation and, indeed, radicalisation.

How events play out in the next few days will have severe repercussions across the middle east and beyond for years. With no emergency governance, security or humanitarian plans yet confirmed, does the Prime Minister agree that, if we are a true friend of Israel, we should counsel against a full-scale ground invasion at this time, as it will see this conflict spill into the west bank, East Jerusalem and southern— ...

col 43 **The Prime Minister:** Of course every country has the right to defend itself, and it would not be appropriate for the UK to define that approach. ...

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): As you are aware, Mr Speaker, my immediate family are from the west bank, but I have extended family in Gaza city. Their house was bombed by the IDF, so they went to seek sanctuary in a church—we are Christian Palestinians—and I am afraid to say that they are still there, because they are too old to leave. They say to me that they have nowhere to go.

Because of this, not despite it, I attended a vigil in Oxford organised by the Jewish

community. Between our communities, we now share profound emotions, loss and grief. When the Prime Minister says never again, I agree with him. Will he give his assurance that it will be never again and that, whenever we get through whatever happens in the next few days, he will keep the promise he made to my great-grandfather that there will be a Palestinian state to call our own at the end of it?

The Prime Minister: I start by expressing my sympathies to the hon. Lady and her family ... I also pay tribute to her, because her presence at the vigil, in spite of everything, will have meant an enormous amount to many people, and the courage she shows in talking about that experience here today is admirable. ...

This is an unspeakably difficult situation, a tragedy, but we must find a way to move forward to secure a more stable, peaceful settlement for those living in the middle east, because this tragedy has reminded us all of the horrors of war and the horrors of terrorism. ...

Vicky Ford (Conservative): ... The Hamas atrocities of last weekend rewrote the definition of evil. The Prime Minister is right to have condemned Hamas, he is right to have stood beside the Jewish population and he is right to have stood by Israel's duty to defend itself. But our history also tells us that terrorism is rarely defeated by further terror, so he is right also to be concerned for innocent Palestinians caught in the crossfire and who are being used as human shields. ...

The Prime Minister: ... We are keen to make sure that that aid makes a difference to as many people as quickly as possible ...

col 44 **Jess Philips (Labour):** Hamas knew what would happen to the people that they purport to represent after their atrocious terrorist actions. They knew that it would rain down fear and pain and killing in the region. Anybody in our country who purports to support them deserves, as the Prime Minister says, the full force of the law. I thank the Prime Minister for saying that more aid will be going to Gaza, but I want to know, from conversations that he has had with Israel, which he said he has had today, what progress has been made to ensure that that aid—medical supplies, fuel and water—will actually reach the people of Gaza? ...

The Prime Minister: It is also important that Egypt is involved in that conversation because the Rafah crossing is one of the primary routes for aid to reach Gaza. ...

Robert Buckland (Conservative): ... What assessment are my right hon. Friend and the Government making of current escalations on the northern border of Israel and Lebanon? We heard this afternoon of an evacuation of Israeli citizens within 2 km of the border. ...

The Prime Minister: We absolutely do not want to see regional escalation. One of the ways that we can help to ensure that that does not happen ... is the deployment of our surveillance assets, which went into the region last week ...

Cat Smith (Labour): ... what representations have the Government made for the protection particularly of people with disabilities in northern Gaza who are unable to move?

The Prime Minister: ... we will continue to call on Israel to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians, and we will do everything that we can to bring humanitarian support to the region.

col 45 **Theresa Villiers (Conservative):** During the Prime Minister's school visit this morning we heard incredibly powerful speeches from students about the situation, showing the anguish felt about the worst attack on Jewish people since the holocaust. In the light of that, will he ensure that the unequivocal support for Israel that he has expressed today is maintained and does not weaken in the difficult days ahead as Israel does what it has to do to remove the capacity of Hamas ever to do this again?

The Prime Minister: ... I praise the courage and eloquence of the students we heard, who were incredible in explaining how this has affected them and their families. She has my assurance that we will continue to stand with Israel, as I said this morning, not just today, not just tomorrow, but always.

Tony Lloyd (Labour): The Prime Minister is absolutely right to say that the unspeakable

actions of Hamas mean that Israel has not simply the right but a duty to protect its own citizens. However, Israel also has a duty to protect innocent Palestinians. How does Israel cutting off food and water seriously bring the hostages home and help to defeat Hamas?

The Prime Minister: It is not right for us to prescribe how another country can best exercise its lawful right—indeed, it is a duty—to self-defence ...

Jake Berry (Conservative): On Saturday, I met ... representatives of the British Muslim and British Palestinian communities ... They were united in one voice condemning the appalling actions of Hamas in the barbarous murder of Jewish people. ... They want to see Israel comply with international law; they want humanitarian corridors to remain open to enable innocent Gazans to escape. How will the deployment of the Royal Navy help to ensure that that happens?

The Prime Minister: ... we recognise that this is a moment of anguish for British Muslim communities, who are appalled by the actions of Hamas but fearful of the response. As I said, we mourn the loss of every innocent life—of the civilians of every faith and nationality who have been killed. Our Navy assets can help, as I have said, to ensure that illegal arms shipments do not find their way to people such as Hezbollah. ...

col 46 **Flick Drummond (Conservative):** ... The median age of a Palestinian in Gaza is 18 years. In the west bank, the median age is 21 years, and in Israel it is 29. If we do not sort out this long-term conflict quickly and permanently, we will have generations of young people affected in both Palestine and Israel, more radicalisation, and more tragedy for families living in those countries. ...

The Prime Minister: It is precisely because Hamas have tried to kill off that notion of a peaceful settlement for the middle east—peace, stability and security for both the Palestinian and Israeli communities—that we must redouble our efforts to bring it about. ...

George Howarth (Labour): ... What role does the Prime Minister see for the United Nations in providing much-needed humanitarian relief in the region, particularly in Gaza, and in trying to get a new peace process off the ground? ...

The Prime Minister: ... The United Nations can play a significant role when it comes to the humanitarian side. ...

col 47 **Alec Shelbrooke (Conservative):** It is not just the barbarity that we saw in the Hamas attack—burning, murdering, mutilation and rape—that is making my Jewish constituents fearful, but the fact that we came through several years where antisemitism had been given a safe space in this country and that there are now protests on the street pushing forward the antisemitic message. Every day, they are worried about how they go about living their normal life. ...

The Prime Minister: ... I am clear that there is zero tolerance of antisemitism in the UK. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure the security and safety of our Jewish citizens.

Kim Johnson (Labour): I stand with this House in condemnation of Hamas's appalling killing of innocent Israeli civilians and call for the immediate safe return of all the hostages, but I am very concerned about the increasing numbers of deaths of innocent Palestinians. ...

The Prime Minister: I believe that we must absolutely support Israel's right to defend itself and to ensure that attacks like this cannot happen again, but as a friend, we will continue to call on Israel to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians, and we will provide humanitarian support.

Henry Smith (Conservative): This morning, I was contacted by a constituent who, on visiting London on Saturday, was deeply disturbed by the pro-Hamas chants that were being shouted, the destruction of national monuments, the fact that the main stage for the protest was right next to the Cenotaph, and media reports of somebody with a Union Jack being detained and led away. What representations are going to be made to the Mayor of

London and the Metropolitan police so that future protests are policed appropriately?

The Prime Minister: We have ensured that the police have the tools, powers and guidance they need to police these protests appropriately. ...

col 48 Sarah Owen (Labour): Over the weekend, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that “The price of evil cannot be paid by the innocent”, yet in Gaza, Palestinians have had no access to food, water or electricity for over a week. We have seen an evacuation order that has left people with an impossible choice. ... Even at times of war, there are still laws, so as well as the urgent and desperate need for humanitarian aid and corridors, what are Ministers doing to counter breaches of international law ...

The Prime Minister: It is Hamas alone who are responsible for this conflict, and we support Israel in taking action against terrorism and to defend itself. Hamas have also enmeshed themselves in the civilian population in Gaza and are using them as a human shield. ...

Andrew Selous (Conservative): Is it not the case that Israel’s best hope for its future security in its justified response to Hamas’s atrocity is to treat the civilian populations in Gaza and the west bank with the full respect that the laws of war and civilised nations demand ...?

The Prime Minister: ... we must support Israel’s right to defend itself—to go after Hamas—and recognise that it faces a vicious enemy who are embedding themselves behind civilians, but it will do so in accordance with international law. ...

Colum Eastwood (SDLP): ... the despicable, horrendous acts by Hamas last week ... was and is an ongoing war crime. Of course, though, one war crime does not excuse another, so will the Prime Minister please speak to Prime Minister Netanyahu and ask him to stop dropping bombs on innocent children in Gaza? ...

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Israeli President’s words, where he has been clear that the Israelis are working operationally according to the rules of international law. ...

col 49 Douglas Ross (Conservative): The barbaric terrorism at the hands of Hamas saw babies and children robbed of their futures in the most brutal way. The victims were male and female, young and old. One of the victims was Bernard Cowan, who moved from Newton Mearns to Israel. Last week, his mother, Irene, joined many others at a service of solidarity and lit a candle in his memory. We grieve and think of all the victims, and indeed of all the families of the hostages. Jewish communities in Scotland are worried about their safety, so I ask the Prime Minister, what action can and are the UK Government taking to ensure that Jewish communities in every part of the United Kingdom feel safe at this terrible time?

The Prime Minister: I agree ... that there is zero tolerance in our society for antisemitism, which is why we have provided extra funding to the Community Security Trust to ensure the safety and security of Jewish institutions, schools and synagogues, and clear guidance to the police so that they can step in and take action where someone is breaking the law.

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour): After the brutal terror atrocities carried out by Hamas, which tragically led to the deaths of over 1,000 Israelis, the Israeli Government of course have a duty to defend their citizens, but that must be proportionate and in line with international law. We must also condemn any indiscriminate killing or forcible eviction from their land of the Palestinian people, who have suffered so much for several decades and are now facing horrors on an unimaginable scale. ...

The Prime Minister: We are working with our partners to bring humanitarian support to the region. ...

James Gray (Conservative): ... is [the Prime Minister] aware of an organisation called Palestine Action, which has this weekend listed a series of companies and the directors of those companies whom it believes to be legitimate targets for terrorist action? Will he now name this outfit, Palestine Action, and condemn what it is doing, and will he ask the police

and the Crown Prosecution Service to act without further delay to deal with it?

The Prime Minister: ... arrests are an operational matter for the police, but obviously what he has said, on the face of it, sounds concerning. ...

col 50 Andy Slaughter (Labour): Our thoughts at this time must above all be with the Israeli and Palestinian civilian dead and injured, and with the hostages. According to Medical Aid for Palestinians, over 2,700 Palestinians have been killed so far in air attacks, more than a quarter of them children, and this is before any ground invasion. ...

The Prime Minister: We continue to be in dialogue with partners, notably with the Egyptians about the Rafah crossing ...

Stephen Hammond (Conservative): ... Hamas. Hamas, Hezbollah and a multitude of other terrorist organisations get their logistical, administrative, financial and armament support from Iran. Will the Prime Minister assure the House that he will act with our international partners to do everything to isolate Iran and to increase economic sanctions?

The Prime Minister: Hamas are fully responsible for the appalling act of terror that has taken place, but Iran does pose an unacceptable threat to Israel, including through its long-term support for Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. I reassure my hon. Friend that we are working with our allies, as we have been for a while, to decide how best to deal with the destabilising actions of the Iranian regime in the region.

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): ... International humanitarian law demands that any Israeli response must be legal and proportionate. Does the Prime Minister agree that, regardless of the circumstances, the collective punishment of an entire civilian population—one that involves forced displacement and the cutting off of water, food, fuel and medicine—can never be legal or proportionate?

The Prime Minister: I believe that we must support absolutely Israel's right to defend itself, to go after Hamas and to ensure its security in the long term and that such acts cannot happen again. ...

Chris Clarkson (Conservative): Greater Manchester is home to a large and vibrant Jewish community. ... It is also home to a sizeable presence of the BBC which, when faced with child murder, rape and torture, decided that Hamas should be called militants rather than terrorists. The political leaders of this country and our royal family can decide that they are terrorists; why cannot our national broadcaster?

col 51 The Prime Minister: ... I absolutely endorse those who, in describing these attacks, call them what they are: attacks of terror by a terrorist organisation. ... the BBC is editorially and operationally independent of the Government, but the Culture Secretary has raised this issue directly with the director general and we wait to see.

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op): ... I press upon [the Prime Minister] the need to integrate a framework of atrocity prevention into the UK's strategy, to ensure that UK officials are able to properly centre its treaty and ethical obligations throughout its response to the crisis ...

The Prime Minister: ... The existing support that we provide to the region ensures the stability of the Palestinian Authority ... We will work with partners to make sure that the new money we announced today can be used in the most effective and quickest way possible.

Nicola Richards (Conservative): Two weeks ago at conference, we were brought to tears listening to Hannah Lewis, a holocaust survivor, describe watching, at the age of seven, her mother get shot in the head—a scene that broke her heart, and that broke ours, too, as she spoke. Five days later, holocaust survivors were kidnapped or killed, babies were slaughtered, women my age were raped next to the bodies of their friends and then killed, and hostages were paraded through the streets of Gaza and spat on. That was the reality that unfolded in front of holocaust survivors and their families. My own staff member shared the story of his 10-day-old cousin, who was surrounded by Hamas trying to murder them. Will the Prime Minister join me in utterly condemning the acts of Hamas and in saying that

we will never forget and that “never again” really does mean never again?

The Prime Minister: ... I agree with her wholeheartedly in unequivocally condemning this act of barbarity as well as saying that there is no place in our society for antisemitism. She is right: we must never forget. I praise her work and that of the Holocaust Educational Trust and others for making sure that we never will.

col 52 Chris Bryant (Labour): I wish that the horrific terrorist attacks by Hamas last week had been truly exceptional, but the truth is that they reminded me of what the Russians did last year in Bucha in Ukraine. They also brought to mind how the first place the Russians targeted in Kyiv was a Jewish cemetery. There is a pattern here, and actually there is a network around the world. So while of course we must ensure that Israel is able to do everything it can to defend itself ... we also have to tackle this network, do we not? Does that not mean having some tough words with Qatar in particular about why it has hosted so many people from Hamas over recent years?

The Prime Minister: ... We will continue to speak to all leaders in the region to find ways to de-escalate the crisis and ensure that we can bring about an end to the evil that Hamas represent. ...

David Jones (Conservative): Hamas are an Iranian proxy terror organisation, designated as such under the Terrorism Act 2000. Credible reports indicate that the 7 October attacks were planned in concert with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. For many years, hon. Members have been calling for the IRGC to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation ...

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend that Iran both poses an unacceptable threat to Israel and has a destabilising influence throughout the region. That is why we have sanctioned more than 350 Iranian individuals, including the entirety of the IRGC. ...

Tulip Siddiq (Labour): ... Following Hamas’s brutal attack on Israel, there has been an increase in antisemitic incidents in my local area. Most heartbreakingly, I have had emails from local parents who are very worried about their children going to a local Jewish school because aggressive men have been standing outside taking photos. Some of the parents have had their car tyres slashed. The Prime Minister has pledged support to Jewish institutions, but will he commit publicly to ensuring that the support actually reaches local Jewish schools? ...

The Prime Minister: ... This morning I visited a Jewish school in north London to ensure that the community there knew that I will do everything I can to keep them safe. That is why last week I met with the Community Security Trust, which does an excellent job. We have provided it with extra funding, which it will ensure gets to the frontline, whether that is to schools, synagogues or other institutions. ...

col 53 Tom Hunt (Conservative): I think it is disgusting to choose the day after the massacre to start waving Palestinian flags outside the Israeli embassy. I also find what happened at the Cenotaph disgusting, but those who are explicitly pro-Hamas are on a different level. Does the Prime Minister agree that it is important to work with the Home Office and, where possible, to deport these individuals, because they do not share our values and they are not welcome in this country?

The Prime Minister: The military wing of Hamas has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK for some time, in addition to the political wing more recently. Once a group is proscribed, it is a criminal offence for people in the UK to do various things in support of that organisation, under the Terrorism Act 2000. Furthermore, the Terrorism Act 2006 created the offence of the encouragement of terrorism, which gives the police the powers and tools they need to arrest those individuals who are perpetrating that kind of support. I will ensure that they face the full force of the law.

Caroline Lucas (Green): I utterly condemn the barbaric attacks by Hamas and call for the

unconditional release of all those taken hostage. These are horrific acts of terrorism and constitute war crimes. Israel does have a right to self-defence, but the collective punishment of the people of Gaza is also a war crime. Those two things can both be true. The killing of over 2,600 civilians by the IDF is not only a humanitarian catastrophe but risks driving the deadly cycle of violence still further. ...

The Prime Minister: It is that vision of a safe and secure two-state solution that Hamas have tried to kill off with their terrorist atrocities over the past week. ...

col 54 **Chris Stephens (SNP):** ... what discussions [have] the Government ... had with international aid organisations, particularly on ensuring that if the Rafah border crossing is opened to allow a humanitarian corridor, the aid is successfully co-ordinated? ...

The Prime Minister: ... Our support to the UN directly helps around 5.8 million Palestinians refugees every year over the past few years. We have announced an increase in that funding today by around a third ...

Simon Clarke (Conservative): ... May I ask specifically about the aid that we have pledged today for Palestinians? Clearly, we have seen that Hamas have been misappropriating aid, including using piping designed for water to fire missiles at Israel. How will we make sure that aid that goes into the Gaza strip is not used to strengthen Hamas?

The Prime Minister: ... it is something we review and monitor very carefully. We channel the vast majority of our aid for the Palestinian territories through the UN, and it is almost overwhelmingly on humanitarian purposes—health, education and the protection services for Palestinians. We do not provide any bilateral financing aid into the region ...

Stephen Timms (Labour): ... Israel's response needs to be constrained by international humanitarian law. What steps will the Government be taking to monitor compliance with those constraints in the coming days ...

The Prime Minister: We are doing everything we can to support humanitarian efforts ...

col 55 **Mark Logan (Conservative):** ... At the onset of the horrific atrocities, the Government rightly reach out their hand to the victims of unspeakable terrorism. Does the Prime Minister agree with me and my constituents that the people of Gaza must be treated fairly, within the bounds of international law, and that we refuse to accept an all-out humanitarian crisis?

The Prime Minister: We do support Israel's right to defend itself and, as a friend, we will continue to call on Israel to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians. ...

Nadia Whittome (Labour): The targeted killing of civilians, whether Israeli or Palestinian, must be condemned, as must the kidnapping of hostages. The civilians of Gaza should not be made to pay the price for the atrocities of Hamas. ...

The Prime Minister: I must gently point out to the hon. Lady that it is not Israel that is deliberately targeting civilians in Gaza; it is Hamas who are enmeshing themselves in the civilian population and using people as human shields. ... Israel is attempting to minimise the impact on civilians by asking people to leave northern Gaza, and it is Hamas who are telling people to stay and using them as human shields.

Matt Warman (Conservative): We should all have no time for those who express sympathy for the terrorists of Hamas, and we should have no time for those who amplify their horrible messages either. Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming the actions of the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology in trying to call the social media giants to account ...

The Prime Minister: ... online offending is as serious as offline offending. We have robust legislation in place to deal with threatening and abusive behaviour or behaviour that is intended or likely to stir up hatred, and it applies whether the

behaviour takes place online or offline. ...

col/ 56 Holly Lynch (Labour): ... it is crucial ... that we distinguish between Hamas and innocent Palestinian civilians, in line with international humanitarian law. ... What efforts are being made to ensure that Gaza's hospitals are protected and able to operate for those pregnant women, newborns, children and all others who need urgent medical attention?

The Prime Minister: This is an incredibly difficult time, with an impact on many, and it is important that we recognise and remember that the people responsible for bringing it about are solely and unequivocally Hamas, with their appalling acts over the last week. ...

James Morris (Conservative): Does the Prime Minister agree that we face a grave and dangerous moment in the middle east, which has been the result of myriad policy failures going back more than 25 years, and that a vacuum has been created where countries such as Iran, through its Hamas and Hezbollah proxies, are testing the will of Israel and the west as they seek to destabilise the region? ...

The Prime Minister: ... we must stand resolutely with Israel and also with our allies, such as the US, to demonstrate that Hamas's terrorism will not prevail. ...

Karen Buck (Labour): The barbarism unleashed last weekend is unparalleled in the history of the state of Israel. Israel unequivocally has the right to defend itself, and yet it remains the case that half the population of Gaza are children under the age of 18, of whom around 500 are believed to have died already. I welcome very much the additional aid provided, but with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency warning that its ability to provide relief is running out today, can the Prime Minister use every channel to drive home the message that humanitarian aid delayed risks being aid too late?

The Prime Minister: ... we are working very hard with partners across the region to bring humanitarian aid to the people who need it as soon as practically possible. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-16/debates/4B1D5F8B-41E2-4977-8559-51C36494AC90/IsraelAndGaza>

House of Commons Written Answers

Energy Supply: International Cooperation

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [199711] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the signing of a trilateral energy agreement between (a) Greece, (b) Cyprus and (c) Israel; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of this agreement on regional energy security.

Leo Docherty: The UK Government is committed to working alongside our partners to protect Europe's energy security. We welcome regional agreements, including this trilateral agreement, which support this aim.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-15/199711>

al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [199710] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to proscribe the (a) Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and (b) al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

Tom Tugendhat: Whilst the Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under careful review, we do not routinely comment on intelligence and security matters, including whether or not an organisation is under consideration for proscription.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-15/199710>

House of Lords Speaker's Statement

The Lord Speaker: My Lords, I know that the House will have been shocked by the recent terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas. I invite the House to join with me and observe a minute's silence in recognition of all those innocent Israelis, Palestinians and others who have lost their lives, all those taken hostage, and those affected by this conflict.

A minute's silence was observed.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-16/debates/63E5A133-F172-4E46-AC8D-F8F8F2779755/LordSpeaker'SAnnouncement>

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Israel and Gaza

The Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons was read in the Lords.

col 66 Baroness Smith of Basildon (Labour): ... When we heard the initial news just over a week ago, the accounts of unimaginable horror and suffering, and of hostages being taken, were deeply shocking. The senseless murder of men, women, children and babies is hard to comprehend. Those images of 250 young people targeted and killed while celebrating a Jewish holiday at a music festival are impossible to understand. ...

It is imperative that both this House and our Parliament as a whole speak with one voice against such terror and for the dignity of all human life; and that we stand with Israel in solidarity and support of its right to defend itself, to rescue the hostages and to protect its civilians. As long as Hamas has the capability to carry out attacks on Israeli territory, there is no safety. Yet what makes this harder to bear is that that is the very reason for the existence of Israel. ... it is more than a homeland; it was there to ensure that what happened in the Holocaust could never happen again. ... For many, it provided a sense of belonging and affirmation of their Jewish identity; they wanted security and peace. Yet Hamas has no interest in peace and is not protecting Palestinians.

col 67 Let us be clear—the Lord Privy Seal emphasised this point too: Hamas is not the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian people are not Hamas. So, as we support the right, and indeed the duty, of Israel to defend itself and to seek to bring the hostages home, we must also recognise that it is both Israelis and Palestinians who are suffering terribly because of Hamas's actions. That is where the responsibility for this crisis lies squarely: with Hamas. Terrorism can never be justified; it can never be excused. Hamas is not protecting the security of the people of Gaza as it unleashes terror and then hides behind them. It should release all the hostages.

We welcome the steps taken by this Government to support Israel's response and the additional aid funding announced today. ...

We also agree with the Government that Israel's defence must be conducted in accordance with international law. Civilians must not be targeted, and innocent lives must be protected. Humanitarian corridors are required and humanitarian access, including to food and water, electricity and medicines, is needed to save lives. ...

These attacks are also having a huge impact across the UK. Many of us will have heard desperate accounts from those whose loved ones have been killed or are missing. They are worried for the lives and the future of friends and family in Israel and Palestine. The sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents, and reports of Islamophobic threats and abuse, must be denounced in the strongest possible terms. When I heard that Jewish schools were closing out of fear for the safety of pupils and that Jewish people were hiding their identity in public, I was not only shocked and angry but deeply saddened. Many Jews and Muslims have worked within the wider community to bring people together, to foster understanding and acceptance of our differences and to celebrate both shared and diverse religious views and cultures.

We must support them and share responsibility with them, because we cannot allow our community cohesion to be destroyed. ...

Let us be clear: we condemn the terror of Hamas and reiterate that it does not represent the Palestinian people. Hamas's brutality only escalates the problems and destroys lives, hope and the pursuit of peace. We continue to support and strive for a two-state solution: a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel. ...

col 68 Lord Newby (Liberal Democrat): ... The scale of Hamas's terrorist activities has been beyond belief, and we condemn it unequivocally. The abduction and degradation of hostages, including women and children, are particularly appalling. We echo demands for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and abhor the suggestion that they should be used as bargaining chips. ...

On the day the Yom Kippur War broke out, as a guest of the Israeli Government, I was on a visit to the Golan Heights. I heard and witnessed the start of the Syrian attack in that war. It is therefore a source of profound sadness to me that in the intervening 50 years, so little has been done to deal with the root causes of this conflict.

The impact of the atrocities on families in Israel, but also the wider community abroad, is understandably profound. We stand in solidarity with the Jewish community in the UK, in Israel and around the world, who now feel fear and grief. We utterly condemn the anti-Semitic incidents in the UK, which have tragically increased in recent days. We welcome the additional support the Government have committed to the Community Security Trust and their assurance that the police will take firm action to deal with hate crime and the glorification of terror.

Israel has, without question, a right in international law to defend its territory and citizens, and we fully support that right, but it is also vital that terrorists are now targeted, not civilians—again, in line with international law. Many innocent Palestinian civilians have been killed in recent days in Gaza, and the whole population now live in fear of attack.

They also face an absence of essential supplies. ...

The Prime Minister said he had spoken to President Sisi about British citizens being able to leave Gaza via the Rafah crossing. The crossing remains closed, but the Prime Minister implied that it might soon reopen, at least for foreign nationals. ...

col 69 Lord True [The Lord Privy Seal]: ... the situation at the present moment is the result ... of one of the most atrocious, despicable and cowardly planned and deliberate terrorist attacks that we have seen in recent memory. ... The Prime Minister did not give any kind of undertaking. He said that he had specifically raised the issue of the Rafah crossing with President Sisi. ... it remains closed currently, but we are working with the Egyptian authorities, we are in contact with them and it is our hope that it may be possible to facilitate approved individuals, including British nationals, to leave Gaza via Rafah ...

We are calling for unimpeded humanitarian access so that essential aid can reach civilian populations, and that includes food, water, fuel and medical supplies. ... the conflict launched by Hamas has exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation. ...

... it is Hamas that has been discouraging civilians in Gaza to move towards the relative, certainly not perfect, safety that might be afforded. Hamas has shown no consideration, certainly not for the Israeli civilians it so brutally slaughtered, but nor for the Palestinian people it purports to represent, so I endorse and repeat the noble Baroness's condemnation of Hamas.

col 70 I also welcome and support the comments from the noble Baroness and the noble Lord, Lord Newby, condemning the anti-Semitic attacks. It is almost inconceivable, in the light of the events that we have seen, that there are people among us who support and welcome this action and support the perpetrators. People in this House believe that in the United Kingdom, no Jew, no Muslim, no citizen, whoever they may be, of whatever age or walk of life, should ever go in

fear, should ever be subjected to hate, should ever be subjected to criticism for who they are. That is the profound resolve of this Government. This Government are not only providing support for the protection of Jewish citizens ... but continuing our programme for safety and security of Muslim places of worship and other places of concern to the Muslim community.

... in the long run the two-state solution, as the Prime Minister set out in the Statement, remains the only viable outcome. The United Kingdom will continue to work for it. It will come slower rather than sooner because of this brutal act of terrorism, but it remains the objective of the United Kingdom Government. ...

Lord Howard of Lympne (Conservative): ... The NGOs and the United Nations have understandably been vociferous in their concern for the civilian population of Gaza. However, those organisations have been working in Gaza for many years and so must have extensive contacts with Hamas and its leadership. Will His Majesty's Government urge those organisations to use their contacts with Hamas to persuade it to release the hostages now—the grandmother, the Holocaust survivor, the babes in arms, all 199 of them—in return for which Israel has said it will resume the supplies of food, fuel and water to the people of Gaza?

Lord True: My Lords, the British Government will bend all their efforts not only to securing the release and safety of British people who are missing but to supporting all those who have been kidnapped, taken and oppressed ...

col 71 **Lord Pannick (Crossbench):** ... This is personal for me. My wife is Israeli. We have a home in Israel. We have friends with family members who were murdered by Hamas nine days ago. The Statement mentioned international law. Do the Government agree that the obligation of Israel to respond in a proportionate manner depends in very large part on the severity of the threat which it faces?

Do the Government further agree that there can be no doubt that the threat is very grave indeed, since Hamas aims not to negotiate a peace treaty or to secure a two-state solution but to destroy Israel? It has the military capacity to send thousands of missiles and we have seen that it has the ability and the willingness, astonishingly, to enter Israel to torture, murder and abduct its citizens simply because they are Jewish. Hamas does not care whether they are supporters of the Netanyahu Government or of a peace settlement. They do not care whether they are religious or secular, whether they are babies or elderly ladies. Do the Government agree that there is no country in the world that would tolerate such a threat on its borders and that therefore a military response is the only available response to the threat posed by Hamas?

Finally, do the Government agree that international law does not prohibit military action which, sadly and regrettably, will lead to civilian deaths, especially when Hamas hides behind the civilian population? Does the Minister agree that the essential difference between Hamas and Israel is that Hamas aims to kill civilians—Jews—while Israel does all that it can to avoid civilian deaths?

Lord True: ... This is an unprecedented situation. The UK stands side by side with Israel in fighting terror. We agree that Hamas must never again be able to perpetrate atrocities against the Israeli people ... Israel has stated that it will operate within international law. ... every country is allowed to defend itself. It is not for the UK to define their approach. Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack. It has a right to respond and defend itself.

col 72 **The Lord Bishop of Sheffield:** ... There is no justification for the truly shocking atrocities perpetrated by Hamas nine days ago, a shock exacerbated for many of us by the fact that those attacks took place on the Sabbath. Nor is there any justification for the cancers of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia that stalk our own streets. ... In view of the unfolding and escalating humanitarian tragedy, and looking to the future, what assurances have the Government sought and been given that the innocent people of Gaza will be able to return to their home neighbourhoods after the immediate conflict?

Lord True: ... that is the wish that all might have. ... The reality is that Israel is reacting to the attack, which the right reverend Prelate rightly characterised as an attack on the Sabbath of such horror. ... there is a distinct difference between those who seek to kill babes because they are Jews and a nation that we believe—as the President of Israel has stated—will operate within international law. If Hamas turned away from terror, laid down its arms and dedicated itself to improving the welfare of the Palestinian people, we would not have to wait too long for the outcome that the right reverend Prelate seeks ...

Baroness Blackstone (Labour): ... the cold-blooded murder of Israeli civilians and the taking of hostages was a dreadful crime against humanity. However, the Israeli reprisals in Gaza and their effects on the Palestinian community there are deeply concerning. Does the Minister accept that no crime against humanity justifies another one? ...

Lord True: ... of course all countries have a responsibility to seek to abide by international law. ... Israel has stated that it will operate within international law, but it has a brutal terrorist enemy to deal with.

col 73 **Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, after the barbaric massacre of Jews taken from a Holocaust instruction manual, can the Minister see any peaceful resolution to an attack that started with the supreme evil of murdering young people who were enjoying themselves?

... many years ago I sat down for coffee with a member of Fatah who had spent years in an Israeli jail. I asked what we could offer Hamas: “What do they want?” He replied that it wanted the complete eradication of Israel and the removal of Jews. ...

In the last few days, 6,000 rockets have rained down on Israel. Residents old and young of the kibbutzim have been slaughtered and abducted. Israel has decided that containment of Hamas does not work, which means that if possible it must be defeated. Neither Israel nor Egypt wants to occupy Gaza; they just need a clear view of Hamas, the enemy. ... Israel is not bombing exit routes, as it is in Israel’s interest that the people of southern Gaza leave? It is Hamas that wants the human shield to remain to cover its barbaric terrorism.

Lord True: ... It is important that our hearts go out also to the Palestinian people who have been caught up in this. Israel has our full support in fighting the terror of Hamas ... It is extremely important that the window for civilians to relocate remains open for as long as possible and that civilians are allowed to relocate voluntarily and safely. Hamas also must support that objective. ...

Israel has been attempting to minimise civilian casualties by warning residents to leave northern Gaza; that has been complicated by Hamas terrorists telling the local population not to leave and instead, as the noble Lord said, using them as human shields. ...

Lord Polak (Conservative): ... Actually, there are no words. With the noble Lord, Lord Howard, I too met the family of Ada Sagi, including her son Noam. It is so vital to mention her name. Ada Sagi should have been in London today, celebrating her 75th birthday with her family. She is from Kibbutz Nir Oz and she is being held by those monstrous Hamas terrorists.

col 74 All I am going to do is to ask the Leader and other noble Lords to join me in saying a prayer that is said in every synagogue throughout the world when there is a problem like this. In Hebrew it is called “Acheinu Kol Beit Yisrael”:

“As for our brethren, the entire house of Israel who still remain in distress and captivity, whether on sea or on land, may God have compassion on them, bring them from distress to relief, from darkness to light, from servitude to redemption, at this moment, speedily, very soon”. Amen.

Lord True: My Lords, I pray for all innocent souls created under God. ...

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated): My Lords, I draw the attention of your Lordships’ House to the presence in the Chamber this evening of relatives of some of the hostages.

I am sure that the whole House stands with them in total solidarity, praying for the safe return of the hostages and the IDF soldiers who have to go to Gaza to release them and to deal with Hamas. We all say to you, “Am Yisrael Chai”.

The position of the people of Gaza is solely and squarely the responsibility of Hamas. When Israel withdrew in 2005, Gaza had a functioning economy, control over imports and exports, discussions on a seaport and plans for discussions on an airport too. Then Hamas launched a bloody coup, drove out Fatah, executed its rivals and used the Gaza Strip as the basis to launch a campaign for the destruction of Israel. The poor people of Gaza are also the victims of Hamas’s brutal dictatorship, while its leaders amass billions and live in luxury in Doha.

Earlier today, UNRWA accused the terrorist gangsters of stealing humanitarian aid. Will the Government investigate these reports and ensure that any aid that we provide goes to where it is needed?

Lord True: ... I of course express the fullest solidarity ... with members of the families who have been caught up in this dreadful affair. ...

col/ 75 Lord Howell of Guildford (Conservative): ... While it is clear that the Hamas butchers should be hunted down for their revolting crimes against humanity and made to pay for them, and while we somehow have to get out those hostages who have not been executed in cold blood by Hamas in the meantime, does the Minister agree that minds should begin to turn, for the longer term, to revisiting the two-state process and combining it with the best features of the Oslo accords and the Abraham accords ...

Lord True: I agree with that. ...

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumssee (Non-affiliated): ... terrorism can never be contextualised ... Under the Terrorism Act 2000, Hamas is a proscribed organisation and it is an offence to invite support for a proscribed organisation. Can the Leader of the House tell us what actions His Majesty’s Government will take to deal with the enormous amount of people on the streets of the United Kingdom asking for support for this proscribed organisation ...?

Lord True: ... I agree ... Hamas is proscribed—those who invite support for this group could be jailed. However, arrests are an operational matter for the police. ...

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): ... I mourn the passing of a young relative, only 22, who died in the military just a few days ago. I hope that the Minister will agree with me that the root cause of this is Iran. It is Iran that has funded Hamas and it is its equipment being used. We must stop funding Iran. At this very moment, there are protests outside the BBC, because the BBC has become partisan in not using the word terrorists. ...

Lord True: ... broadcasters are independent in this country, a free country, but as the noble Baroness will know, the Culture Secretary took up certain matters, which she has referred to. So far as Iran is concerned, Hamas is fully responsible for the appalling act of terror that has taken place, but Iran poses an unacceptable threat to Israel, including through its long-term support for Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. We condemn Iran’s destabilising activity throughout the region and we will look at its activities with wide-open eyes.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-16/debates/EE69B297-B0FC-48B0-AC6E-518210D98D65/IsraelAndGaza>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Brendan O’Hara (SNP) [1676] Israel’s response to Hamas atrocities and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza – That this House unreservedly condemns Hamas and their appalling act of terrorist violence in which more than 1,400 Israeli civilians were murdered and hundreds more taken hostage; supports Israel’s right to find the perpetrators of those

atrocities and hold them accountable for their actions; believes that any Israeli response to those attacks must be legal, proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law; recognises that the vast majority of Palestinians want nothing to do with Hamas and therefore deeply regrets Israel's decision to impose a collective punishment, including forced displacement, on the civilian population of Gaza, who as a result of Israel's actions now have little or no access to water, food, fuel or medicine, and who are living under constant military bombardment; calls on Israel to immediately end its siege and restore power and water supplies and open the Rafah border to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza; urges the Government to work with international allies to create a humanitarian corridor, one which allows innocent civilians to flee Gaza but which also provides them with a guaranteed right of return; believes that the UK has an obligation to uphold and promote international humanitarian law; and calls on the Government to play its part, along with the rest of the international community, to find a just solution to this ongoing crisis, as without justice, there can be no peace, and this cycle of violence will continue resulting in even more innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives being lost.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61423>

Downing Street

PM call with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani: 17 October 2023

The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks to the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani from his office in 10 Downing Street.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke to the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, this afternoon about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Prime Minister reiterated his complete condemnation of Hamas' terrorist attack and set out the UK's efforts to support Israel and protect Palestinian civilians and British nationals caught up in the violence.

The leaders discussed areas of cooperation between the UK and Qatar, including on ensuring safe passage for aid to Gaza to alleviate the humanitarian suffering and on urgent efforts to secure the release of hostages. The Prime Minister thanked the Amir for his constructive role in regional diplomacy.

The Prime Minister updated on his conversations with other Arab leaders and they agreed that the conflict must not be allowed to destabilise the wider region and cause further bloodshed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-the-amir-of-qatar-sheikh-tamim-bin-hamad-al-thani-17-october-2023>

PM call with the Prime Minister and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman: 17 October 2023

The Prime Minister spoke to the Prime Minister and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, this afternoon.

Their discussions focused on the conflict in Gaza following Hamas' terror attack, and the Prime Minister welcomed Saudi Arabia's leadership in seeking a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

The leaders agreed on the importance of avoiding further destabilisation across the Middle East, including through Iranian proxies in the region, and committed to coordinate action to deescalate tensions.

The Prime Minister set out the UK's support for Israel's right to defend itself against terror and combat the threat from Hamas. He confirmed the UK would provide further humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza and continue to support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to statehood, alongside regional partners like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

The leaders also discussed wider cooperation between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, including in the areas of defence, trade and investment.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-the-prime-minister-and-crown-prince-of-saudi-arabia-mohammed-bin-salman-17-october-2023>

PM call with President Erdoğan of Türkiye: 16 October 2023

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke to President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, this afternoon about the conflict in Gaza following Hamas' terror attack.

The Prime Minister welcomed the opportunity to speak to President Erdoğan at this critical time, as an influential regional partner and NATO ally. The leaders shared their concerns about the risk of violence spreading in the region and agreed to work together to mitigate against further escalation.

The Prime Minister updated on the UK's military deployments to the region, which provide surveillance capabilities and offer a platform to support humanitarian operations if needed. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's support for Israel's right to defend itself following last week's abhorrent attack, noting that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people. They discussed the importance of facilitating humanitarian aid to Gaza and taking all reasonable measures to protect civilians caught up in the violence.

The leaders also agreed to work together with international partners to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process and bring about a peaceful and lasting resolution to this conflict.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-erdogan-of-turkiye-16-october-2023>

UK announces £10 million humanitarian aid for civilians in Occupied Palestinian Territories

... the Prime Minister has announced a further £10 million in humanitarian aid funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), in response to the escalating conflict.

He made the announcement in a statement to the House of Commons, in which he also reiterated the UK's condemnation of Hamas' actions in both Israel and Gaza, and called for immediate access for humanitarian organisations to be allowed to deliver life-saving aid.

This latest commitment is in response to the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, including shortages of key goods and widespread displacement due to the conflict.

This funding will allow trusted partners, including key UN agencies to provide essential relief items and services. These could include food, water and emergency shelter, depending on the needs on the ground.

The UK is also exploring options for moving humanitarian supplies closer to the region and is liaising with aid agencies in the region to ensure relief supplies can be distributed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Speaking in Parliament, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: I'm proud that we are a longstanding and significant provider of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. ...

An acute humanitarian crisis is unfolding, to which we must respond. We must support the Palestinian people – because they're victims of Hamas too.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: We are committed to supporting the Palestinian people – they are victims of Hamas too.

This funding will provide vital, lifesaving support to Palestinian civilians who are caught up in this conflict and are in desperate need of help. ...

Today's announcement is a 37% uplift to the existing £27 million of UK funding this year which is already providing critical support to the region, including an extra £10 million [announced by the Foreign Secretary during his visit last month](#). We will consider further support depending on the changing humanitarian needs on the ground.

The UK remains committed to mitigating the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza while standing alongside the people of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas. ... All UK aid funding to the OPTs undergoes rigorous oversight, and no funding goes to Hamas.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-10m-humanitarian-aid-for-civilians-in-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Rishi Sunak I spoke to President Abbas earlier. We condemned the horrific actions of Hamas and agreed they do not represent the Palestinian people. I offered my support to the Palestinian Authority in working to pursue peace and stability in the region. [plus photo]
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1713952099690496398>

Rishi Sunak I updated Cabinet this morning on our response to the Hamas terror attacks. As we stand with Israel, we will play our part in helping Palestinian civilians. And at home we will continue to take every step to support our Jewish community. There is no excuse for antisemitism. [plus photo]
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1714279943352500407>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We cannot support a resolution which fails to condemn Hamas' terror attacks: UK statement at the UN Security Council: Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

The United Kingdom is outraged at Hamas' terror attacks in Israel, and supports Israel's right to self defence, in line with international law.

We are also working urgently to respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We have voted no on the draft resolution put forward by the Russian delegation.

We cannot support a resolution which fails to condemn Hamas' terror attacks.

As my Prime Minister said earlier today: Hamas actions were an existential strike at the very idea of Israel as a safe homeland for the Jewish people. It is unconscionable for this Council to ignore the largest terror attack in Israel's history.

We remain clear, too, that all possible measures on the ground must be taken to ensure civilian casualties are minimised and to facilitate humanitarian aid.

President, the gravity of the situation requires serious Council discussion. This draft, and this process, was not a serious attempt to find Council consensus. So, we look forward to continuing consultations on the basis of the Presidency's proposals.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-cannot-support-a-resolution-which-fails-to-condemn-hamas-terror-attacks-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

James Cleverly I've now engaged representatives from 17 countries about the situation in Israel and Gaza. There must be a global solution to this crisis.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1714175844149510655>

Welsh Senedd Questions to the First Minister

Rhun ap Iorwerth (Plaid Cymru): ...The atrocities in Israel and Gaza continue to touch us all over a week after the Hamas attacks. Just as we united in condemning those appalling attacks, we must also unite now in calling for the preservation and respect of international law. There is never a justification for punishing a whole population as is

happening in Gaza at the moment. We in Plaid Cymru—and I'm sure I speak on behalf of the whole Senedd—stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone in Wales who is concerned about loved ones in the middle east. We send our support to a vigil held in Cardiff this weekend, led by Rowan Williams, for the people of Israel and Palestine.

In Gaza, of course, there is a real humanitarian crisis, with the United Nations warning that asking people to move out of hospitals in northern Gaza is tantamount to a death sentence for them. Given the lack of medical supplies, fuel and water, will the First Minister ensure that the Welsh Government plays its part, like other Governments across these isles, by making a contribution, including a financial contribution, to that humanitarian effort in Gaza?

Mark Drakeford (The First Minister): ... I'm grateful to people like Rowan Williams and other leaders in the faith communities, who have come together to support people here in Wales with family members and other loved ones over in Israel and Gaza as well. Today, the Minister, Jane Hutt, has been talking to people in this area regarding whether it would be useful to draw people together, as we are doing in the faith communities forum that we have here in Wales. If there is more that we can do to help people here in Wales to cope with everything they're facing, of course, we will be eager to do so. But, things are moving so quickly every day, what we're trying to do is to stay with the people who have the responsibilities. We don't have responsibilities on the floor of the Senedd for overseas affairs, but we are trying to stay in contact with the people with those responsibilities in Westminster, in Government and opposition parties, to see whether there's anything that we can do, and we'll be eager to do it.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13522#C532204>

European Commission

EU launches Humanitarian Air Bridge operation to bring aid to Gaza

Following the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas terrorists against Israel and the aftermath, which has led to a disastrous humanitarian situation for the people of Gaza, the EU continues to step up its emergency assistance to the Palestinian people. The EU is now launching an [EU Humanitarian Air Bridge](#) operation consisting of several flights to Egypt to bring lifesaving supplies to humanitarian organisations on the ground in Gaza.

The first two flights will take place this week, carrying humanitarian cargo from UNICEF including shelter items, medicines and hygiene kits.

This operation via the [European Humanitarian Response Capacity](#) will facilitate the delivery of assistance to people in need in Gaza. Additional emergency items from EU emergency stockpiles are available and ready to be deployed to our humanitarian partners as soon as requested. ...

To read the full press release see

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_5051

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Escalation of violence in the Middle East: protect the children

Simon Moutquin (Belgium, SOC), Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, and Theodoros Rousopoulos (Greece, EPP/CD), Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, today made the following statement:

“Children are the ones who suffer most in any conflict – the disaster now unfolding in the Middle East is another tragic proof of this. We are deeply shocked by the loss of human

life, particularly children, in the latest escalation of the conflict in the Middle East ignited by the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October. The abject murder of Israeli civilians – babies and children, young people enjoying a music festival and whole families in their homes, and the abduction of almost two hundred hostages - cannot be justified in any way. But the response of the Israeli authorities to the aggression suffered must remain faithful to our democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Hamas must immediately release all hostages, first and foremost children. Hamas and Hezbollah must immediately stop their rocket attacks on the civilian population of Israel. And Israel must allow water, food and power to reach the desperate civilian population of Gaza, immediately stop the barrage of attacks which are indiscriminately killing civilians, damaging hospitals, schools, UNWRA shelters and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, allow the international community to bring humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza, and refrain from using white phosphorus bombs and forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians. All sides must respect the provisions of international humanitarian law.”

<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/9261/escalation-of-violence-in-the-middle-east-protect-the-children>

United Nations

With 5 Members in Favour, 4 Against, Security Council Rejects Russian Federation’s Resolution Calling for Immediate Humanitarian Ceasefire in Israel-Palestine Crisis

... **Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)**, condemning what took place on 7 October, the death of Israeli civilians and the deaths of civilians in the Gaza Strip, said the Council must not waste any more time with the same discussions or inaction. Noting that on Friday, his delegation proposed that the Council consider a purely humanitarian draft resolution, he said its main element is a call for an immediate and durable humanitarian ceasefire. Stressing that without a ceasefire, humanitarian efforts will not be possible, he said the draft condemns all violence and calls for the opening up of humanitarian corridors and the safe release of all hostages. ...

The Council then failed to adopt the text, as it did not obtain the required number of votes. It received 5 votes in favour (China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates) to 4 against (France, Japan, United Kingdom, United States) with 6 abstentions (Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Malta, Switzerland).

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation), expressing regret that the draft was not adopted, said the entire world had waited with bated breath for the Security Council to take steps to put an end to the bloodletting. But Western countries have basically stomped on those expectations, he said, adding that they have blocked the Council from sending a unified message for purely selfish and political interests. ...

Linda Thomas Greenfield (United States) stated that terror was unleashed on Israel by Hamas over a week ago, with the worst massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust, leading to the slaughter of more than a thousand civilians, including American citizens. Such acts brought to mind the heinous atrocities by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da’esh, and it is these acts by Hamas that led to the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, she said, stressing: “Civilians should not suffer for these atrocities, and it is the Council’s responsibility to address the crisis, unequivocally condemn Hamas and support Israel’s right to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations.” However, the proposed resolution does not meet these conditions, by failing to mention Hamas, she said, calling this “outrageous and indefensible”. ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom) ... said: “Hamas actions were an existential strike at the very idea of Israel as a safe homeland of the Jewish people.” Emphasizing that it is unconscionable for the Council to ignore the largest terror attack in Israel’s history, she stressed that all measures on the ground must be taken to ensure that civilian casualties

are minimized and to facilitate humanitarian aid. ... [[click here to read this speech in full](#)]

Lana Zaki Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) pointed out that long before Hamas' unjustifiable attack on Israel on 7 October, Gaza was already one of the most desperate places to live in. All Council members have rightly condemned the indiscriminate murder of innocent Israeli civilians and the taking of 199 of them hostage, she recalled, reiterating that condemnation. "But Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people or the people of Gaza who are suffering immensely," she stressed ...

Nicolas De Rivière (France) condemned the terrorist attack conducted by Hamas on 7 October, without a doubt the worst experience by Israel since its creation. He underscored the need to protect Israel's security and its right to defend itself. Humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians are also essential, as is adhering to the Geneva Conventions. The population of Gaza is also a victim of Hamas. ...

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer For The State Of Palestine, said that for 10 days, the world has watched Israel assaulting over 2 million Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Stressing that killing more Palestinians will not make Israel more secure, he recalled the many times he had appealed to the Council for action. "You now have important decisions to make," he said, calling on its members to be guided by the rule of international law, with no exception or exceptionalism. The Council must not send the signal that Palestinian lives don't matter, he said. It must not blame the victim, he said, adding that Israel has killed, as of now, 3,000 Palestinians, most of them overwhelmingly civilians, more than half of them women and children. More than 1,000 Palestinian children have been killed so far in this assault.

Palestinians, he continued, have been killed daily by Israeli soldiers or settlers for years now, and yet the Council always pressed them to choose peace. Now, at this pivotal moment, "why would this Council be unable to call for a ceasefire?" he asked. The humanitarian and health system in Gaza has collapsed, he continued, noting that over 1 million people have been displaced. People can't even bury their loved ones and mourn them. Israeli officials said they were fighting "human animals," he said. What would have been the Council's reaction if any Palestinian official had done the same, he asked.

Highlighting three urgent calls — an end to the assault on Palestinian people; immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout the Gaza Strip; and an end to the forced transfer of Palestinian people — he said that anything else would be legally, morally and politically unacceptable. "In the next hour, Israel will kill 12 Palestinian civilians, including 5 children. And then the next, and the next and the next, until you decide to act," he said. Reminding the Council how it insisted that Palestinians should not resort to violence, regardless of their legitimate grievances about the occupation, blockade, killing and mass imprisonment, he said that by the same logic, nothing can justify the killing of Palestinian civilians. ... The Palestinian struggle will continue, he stressed, pledging, "we will not fade away." Right is on the side of Palestine, he added.

Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel) said the Security Council is facing one of the most pivotal moments in its history, a turning point, a moment of truth, that demonstrates whether it holds legitimacy and whether the United Nations has a moral compass. Hamas is not a political organization but a terror organization that seeks to exterminate; that's its purpose and stated goal, he said. If Hamas has the opportunity to commit these atrocities again it will and it will not stop until Israel is obliterated. "Israel must obliterate Hamas first," he said, "we must do so for self-preservation."

He said that for the past 16 years, the international community and the United Nations have "been complacent to Hamas' terrorist build-up. The world has kept its head in the sand" as Hamas embedded its war machine under Gaza's civilians. He said that the international community has seen with its own eyes that nothing will change Hamas' ideology, not any promise of a brighter future. ... Nothing can change a genocidal ideology,

he said, adding that abundant resources and aid from the United Nations were squandered by these terrorist monsters. He said that Israel is on a rescue mission to “save our hostages, to save our future and the people of Gaza from their savage tyrants.” He added this war can end without one more shot fired should Hamas put down its arms tomorrow and return hostages and turn themselves in. He asked why this is not part of the resolutions.

He said Hamas should be designated a murderous organization, before any calls for aid or calm. He asserted that the Council must support Israel’s right to defend itself — meaning standing in solidarity with Israel in its rescue mission to obliterate Hamas capabilities and eradicate the group. He called for the Security Council to designate Hamas as a terror organization, hold it fully responsible for what’s happening in Gaza, uphold Israel’s right to defend itself, and call for the release all hostages, and that these should be addressed in all future discussions.

Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud (Jordan) ... said that the Council is meeting as Israel’s “brutal war” continues against the Gaza Strip, threatening the explosion of wider cycles of violence in the region. He stressed the need to immediately stop the war and prevent its expansion, also noting that a silence of the international community is a silence vis-à-vis an aggression that dehumanizes the Gazans and prevents them from the right to protection. In this regard, Israel’s prevention of humanitarian aid delivery and forcing more than a million of its citizens to leave their homes is a violation of international law ... He noted that any attempt to displace the Palestinian people is a crime, urging Member States to address the war against Gaza using the same set of standards to condemn the killing of civilian Palestinians as it did with Israeli civilians.

He also recalled that according to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Israel does not have the right to defend itself within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Emphasizing that Israel’s military actions do not respect the “bare minimum” stipulated by humanitarian law, he added: “It [Israel] is not even claiming to be doing so.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15445.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert urges immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access as Gaza health sector reaches “breaking point”

Continuing violent displacement and threats of further attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip pose a major public health risk and emergency, a UN expert said today after at least 12 health workers were killed and 24 Gazan health facilities were affected since the escalation of violence in the region.

“All parties to the conflict and their international partners must ensure swift and unimpeded access to essential humanitarian supplies, including food, water and medicine, fuel, and electricity,” said Tlaleng Mofokeng, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health. “Gaza’s medical infrastructure has been irreparably damaged and healthcare providers are working in a dire situation with limited access to medical supplies and conditions that do not allow them to provide timely and quality healthcare,” Mofokeng said.

“Humanitarian workers, physicians, civil society, human rights organisations and journalists continue to work in the region while under bombardment themselves,” the expert said.

The World Health Organization has documented more than 111 attacks on health care services in the occupied Palestinian territory, including 48 attacks on the Gaza Strip which resulted in the death of at least 12 health workers. ...

Mofokeng called on the international community to intervene immediately to prevent the

escalation of conflict and protect and respect the right to health of all, by demanding access through humanitarian corridors, protection of the healthcare infrastructure and health workers. ...

“The Palestinian people have been displaced for more than 75 years. The occupied Palestinian territory has been under military occupation for more than 56 years – an occupation entailing a lack of accountability, ongoing displacement and demolition, movement restrictions, and systematic racial discrimination,” she said. ...

“Steps to realising the right to self-determination of Palestinians is linked to their dignity and sovereignty,” Mofokeng said. “You cannot extinguish the human desire for freedom.”

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-urges-immediate-ceasefire-and-humanitarian-access-gaza-health>

Occupied Palestinian Territory/Israel: Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Ravina Shamdasani

With a staggering 4,200 people killed, over one million people displaced in just 10 days, and large areas in the Gaza Strip reduced to rubble, we have grave fears about the toll on civilians in the coming days. Military operations show no signs of abating, the continued siege on Gaza is affecting water supply, food, medicine and other basic needs, and there are daily indications of violations of the laws of war and international human rights law. ... It remains unclear how many more bodies may be buried in the rubble – with many families missing loved ones, terrified about their uncertain fate. ...

Appalling reports that civilians attempting to relocate to southern Gaza were struck and killed by an explosive weapon must be independently and thoroughly investigated, as must all allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law.

We urge the Israeli forces to avoid targeting civilians and civilian objects or conducting area bombardments, indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, and to take precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.

Those who managed to comply with the Israeli authorities' order to evacuate are now trapped in the south of the Gaza Strip, with scant shelter, fast-depleting food supplies, little or no access to clean water, sanitation, medicine and other basic needs. ...

International law requires that any lawful temporary evacuation by Israel, as the occupying power, of an area on the basis of the security of the population or imperative military reasons must be accompanied by the provision of proper accommodation for all evacuees, undertaken under satisfactory conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition. There appears to have been no attempt by Israel to ensure this for the 1.1 million civilians ordered to move. We are concerned that this order combined with the imposition of a “complete siege” on Gaza may not be considered as lawful temporary evacuation and would therefore amount to a forcible transfer of civilians – in breach of international law. ...

The latest reports indicate that around 199 Israeli are held hostages by Palestinian armed groups in Gaza. And once again, we urge Palestinian armed groups to immediately and unconditionally release all civilian hostages, and to halt the use of inherently indiscriminate projectiles against Israel.

We are also concerned at increased violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since 7 October, 52 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli security forces, and five more have been killed by settlers. We urge Israeli authorities to ensure that Israeli security forces refrain from the use of live ammunition except as a last resort to address an imminent threat to life or serious injury and we urge them to take immediate steps to end settler violence against Palestinians and to ensure the protection of the Palestinian population. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/10/latest-occupied-palestinian-territoryisrael>

Civilians are the primary victims of increased violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, says the UN Commission of Inquiry

All parties to the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory have failed to take effective precautionary measures to avoid civilian casualties, exacerbating the long-running crisis and deepening divisions and hate on all sides, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel, said in a new report today.

The report to the General Assembly, which was completed before the latest upsurge in violence began and covers the period between May 2021 and August 2023, examines the use of force by Israel and the de facto authorities in Gaza, and Israeli military and police operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.

“Our report is painful and timely,” said Navi Pillay, Chair of the Commission. “It emphasises that the only path towards ending violence and achieving sustainable peace is through strict observance of international law throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. This requires addressing the root causes of the conflict, including the occupation of Palestinian territory, and allowing the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination.” ...

Following the complex attack on Israel launched by Hamas on 7 October, the Commission has begun [collecting evidence of war crimes](#) committed by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups and by Israeli security forces. ...

In the report, the Commission concluded that the firing of rockets and mortars by Palestinian armed groups towards civilian population centres is inherently indiscriminate in its nature and so clearly constitutes a war crime. The report also found that the damage and casualties caused by Israeli attacks were not proportionate to the military advantage and so the actions constitute a war crime. Additionally, the Commission noted that the prevention of entry of food and medical supplies into Gaza is a violation of international humanitarian law.

It also found that Israel’s history of military incursions and aerial attacks on Gaza must be seen within the broader context of Israel’s occupation, which it has no intention to end. Militarized law enforcement operations and incursions into Gaza are intended to weaken opposition to the occupation, fragment Palestinian political cohesion, and ultimately prevent the establishment and functioning of a free Palestinian state.

The report found that Israeli security forces used excessive force and indiscriminate means to disperse demonstrators in Israel and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, resulting in serious harm to persons, including death and permanent injuries. The Commission found there is a distinct hierarchy of methods in dispersing demonstrations, with the harshest and often lethal responses used against Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The Commission reviewed search and arrest operations said to be aimed at disrupting the activities of armed groups in the West Bank. It concluded that several operations carried out in Jenin in 2023 appear to have included use of unnecessary and disproportionate force by the Israeli security forces. Based on the evidence before it, the Commission concluded that Israel applies the framework governing conduct of hostilities to law enforcement operations in the West Bank, contrary to international law, resulting in civilians being killed and injured.

The Commission examined the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and concluded on reasonable grounds that Israeli forces used lethal force without justification under

international human rights law and, intentionally or recklessly, violated Abu Akleh's right to life. ...

The report recommends that the Government of Israel clearly distinguish between situations of law enforcement and conduct of hostilities and apply the framework of international human rights law to law enforcement operations in line with its obligations as an occupying power and relevant treaties; review and reform rules of engagement; ensure independent, impartial and thorough investigations into possible violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza; and end the practice of withholding bodies and information from family members.

The report recommends that the State of Palestine ensure strict observance of international humanitarian and human rights law and enforce accountability for violations of that law, and that the de facto authorities in Gaza, along with armed groups, stop all targeting of civilians, including through indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other munitions towards civilian populations.

The report recommends that the International Criminal Court prioritize the investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine, including the identification of those exercising command responsibility in the killing of Abu Akleh and other cases. It also urges the United Nations Secretary-General to list Israel in the annexes of the next annual report on Children and Armed Conflict ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/civilians-are-primary-victims-increased-violence-israel-and-occupied>

Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/198>

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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>

House of Commons Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9799/CBP-9799.pdf>

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

**** closes in 9 days**

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