



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

*See also the exchanges at “Prime Minister’s Questions” and some of the exchanges during questions on “Gaza: Al-Ahli Arab Hospital Explosion” that are included in the Israel section below.*

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Hamas: Demonstrations

**Tom Hunt (Conservative)** [202523] To ask the Attorney General, what guidance her Department has issued on the prosecution of pro-Hamas demonstrators.

**Michael Tomlinson:** On 13 October, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) published further prosecution guidance on protests and demonstrations in light of the Middle East conflict. This compliments the already extensive prosecution guidance on hate crime and offences committed during protests.

A link to the CPS statement can be found here:

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

The CPS provided additional prosecutors to offer advice and assistance to policing in real-time, including in the Met command centre, during recent protests. The CPS continues to work closely with its operational partners to ensure a coordinated and consistent response.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202523>

#### Hamas: Prosecutions

**Mark Logan (Conservative)** [201843] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been prosecuted for belonging and professing to belong to Hamas since that group was proscribed.

**Tom Tugendhat:** The Government takes proscription offences seriously. Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations or individuals who may be members of proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies.

The Government publishes quarterly national statistics on the use of police powers

under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent relevant legislation in Great Britain. This includes information on arrests, charges and convictions for proscription offences. The most recent publication up to year ending March 2023, was published on 08 June on GOV.UK:

[Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation: Arrests, outcomes, and stop and search, Great Britain, quarterly update to March 2023](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201843>

## Crown Prosecution Service

### **Antisemitic abuser fined after successful CPS prosecution**

A man who shouted antisemitic abuse at an orthodox Jewish man in Stamford Hill this week has been prosecuted for a hate crime.

Kevin Joseph, aged 60, pleaded guilty to religiously aggravated intentional harassment at Thames Magistrates' Court on 18 October 2023.

... the court fined Joseph £200, announcing that the amount was increased from £120 in recognition of the seriousness of the antisemitic hate crime he had committed.

The incident happened at approximately 9:30am on 17 October 2023 when Joseph became abusive to the victim, who was dressed in traditional orthodox Jewish clothing, at a bakery on Clapham Common Road, threatening him and using antisemitic language in an appalling example of a hate crime.

He was arrested by police and prosecuted by the CPS at court within 24 hours ...

Varinder Hayre, CPS London North Hate Crime Lead, said: "All hate crimes have a significant impact on victims and the wider community, so it is vitally important prosecutors use Community Impact Statements to demonstrate the dangerous and corrosive affect hate crimes have, and apply to the court for sentence uplifts to ensure that perpetrators receive increased punishments. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/london-north/news/antisemitic-abuser-fined-after-successful-prosecution>

## CST

### **Antisemitic Incidents – 18 October Update**

In the 12 days inclusive between the Hamas terror attack on Israel (Saturday 7 October) and Wednesday 18 October, CST recorded at least 457 antisemitic incidents across the UK. This is the highest ever total reported to CST across a twelve-day period. ...

Even compared to periods of previous conflicts involving Israel, these statistics are unprecedentedly high. ...

Three hundred and twenty-nine of the 457 antisemitic incidents occurred offline and 128 were online. ...

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

- Posters of Jewish hostages taken by Hamas have been defaced in London, Leeds and Manchester
- "F\*ck the Jews" was heard at a pro-Palestinian demonstration outside the BBC headquarters
- On a radio broadcast, the speaker called the listeners to kill by the sword the enemies of Islam in a holy jihad, adding that Israel has no right to exist and that the Jews should be all killed by the sword everywhere in the world until none are left
- After asking a driver to move his van that was blocking his car in a Jewish

neighbourhood in London, the driver responded, "I'm here cleaning up after you filthy Jewish pigs"

- A university Jewish Society was sent an abusive message on Instagram, saying, "Wherever you are in the world, we will take you out of your homes and perform a dance of victory and happiness over your bodies"
- On a work chat forum, a male wrote to his Jewish colleague, "free palestine...sh\*t up stupid monkey" [sic]
- A Jewish teacher at a non-Jewish school in Leeds had "Free Palestine" shouted at him by several students
- A schoolboy was walking home in Manchester when a male shouted, "You f\*cking little ginger y\*d" from a passing vehicle
- In a London pharmacy, a Jewish couple were abused by a male who said, "F\*ck the Jews" to them ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/10/18/antisemitic-incidents-18-october-update>

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## Israel

**See also the Commons written answers " Hamas: Demonstrations" and " Hamas: Prosecutions" that are included in the Home Affairs section above.**

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Prime Minister's Questions

**The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):** I know that the whole House will have been shocked by the scenes at Al-Ahli Hospital. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has said, we are working independently and with our allies to find out what has happened. ...

**Chris Law (SNP):** May I associate myself, and the whole of my party here, with what has been said about the horrors and the unfolding tragedy of last night's bombing of the hospital in Gaza?

The Rafah border crossing from besieged Gaza into Egypt has been hit by several Israeli airstrikes, causing absolute terror to those who urgently need the crossing to be open in order to escape. Nadia El-Nakla, an elected councillor in my city of Dundee and the wife of Scotland's First Minister, has had to take calls from her parents Elizabeth and Maged, who, like all others trapped in Gaza, have been describing the horrors of death and indiscriminate killings everywhere. Members of Nadia's family were hit yesterday by a rocket from a drone, and her mother was saying her final goodbyes this morning, adding: "last night was the end for me, better if my heart stops and then I will be at peace, I can't take another night."

With military action intensifying and the death toll rising rapidly, the Prime Minister's first responsibility must be to bring British citizens home. Can he please give his personal assurance that every single step is being taken to open the Rafah crossing, both for humanitarian aid and to enable UK nationals like Nadia's family to flee? 313 is located here

**The Prime Minister:** The thoughts of everyone in the House will of course be with the families affected by what is happening in Israel and in Gaza, and I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance: we are doing everything in our power to ensure the safety of British nationals who are caught up in all this. That includes my calls with leaders across the region, particularly the conversations about opening the Rafah border crossing—which is why I made talking to President Sisi a priority last

week—and we continue to engage in dialogue with both the Israelis and the Egyptians about the crossing.

**Sajid Javid (Conservative) [906572]** I am proud to live in the most successful multi-racial democracy in the world, but it saddens me, and I think it shames the whole House, that British Jews have been subjected to such vile abuse and hatred in recent days. Antisemitism and all hate crimes fly in the face of British values, and we should not allow events abroad, no matter how horrific they are, to be used to sow seeds of division in our own country. While I welcome all the actions that my right hon. Friend is taking to fight hate crime and to bring people together, may I ask him to consider urgently an immediate and specific policy of revoking the visas of any foreign national who commits an act of antisemitism or any other hate crime?

**The Prime Minister:** I completely agree with my right hon. Friend, who has himself done so much over the years to fight antisemitism. The increase in the number of such incidents that we have seen over the past week is utterly sickening, and this Government will do whatever it takes to keep our Jewish community safe. We have provided an additional £3 million to support the Community Security Trust, we are working with the police to ensure that hate crime and the glorification of terror are met by the full force of the law, and under our existing immigration rules we have the power to cancel a person's presence in the UK if it is not conducive to the public good. We will not tolerate this hatred—not in this country, not in this century. ...

**Keir Starmer (Labour):** ... The news last night of hundreds killed at the Baptist hospital in Gaza is incredibly distressing, but it is much worse for the people of Gaza. Their fear that there is no place of safety is profound. International law must be upheld, and that means hospitals and civilian lives must be protected. Last night the Foreign Secretary said that the UK will work with our allies to find out what has happened. I know that this only happened last night, but can the Prime Minister please tell us when he thinks he might be able to update the House on progress with that work?

**The Prime Minister:** I know that the whole House will have been shocked by the scenes at Al-Ahli Hospital. Any loss of innocent life is a dreadful tragedy and everyone will be thinking both of those who have lost their lives and of the families they leave behind. We should not rush to judgment before we have all the facts on this awful situation. Every Member will know that the words we say here have an impact beyond this House.

This morning, I met the National Security Adviser and the Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and I can tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that our intelligence services have been rapidly analysing the evidence to independently establish the facts. We are not in a position at this point to say more than that, but I can tell him that we are working at pace and co-operating and collaborating with our allies on this issue as we look to get to the bottom of the situation. We will also continue all our efforts to get humanitarian aid into the region.

**Keir Starmer:** I thank the Prime Minister for his answer. The terrible news last night came as we are still mourning the terrorist attack on Israel last week, with Jews taken hostage, mutilated, slaughtered. Yesterday I met the families of some of the British hostages held by Hamas. Every minute of every hour of every day, they hope for good news but fear the worst. They know that the lives of their loved ones are in the hands of murderers. It is unimaginable agony. Israel has a right—a duty—to defend itself from Hamas, keep its people safe and bring the hostages home, but is it not clear that if Hamas had a single concern for human life, a single concern for the safety of the Palestinian people, they would never have taken these hostages, and that they should release them immediately?

**The Prime Minister:** It is important for us consistently to remember that Israel has suffered a shockingly brutal terrorist attack, and it is Hamas, and Hamas alone, who are responsible for this conflict. Our thoughts are rightly with those who have been taken hostage and their families. The distress they are feeling will be unimaginable

for all those affected. I will be meeting some of the families and offering them all the support of the British Government to get their relatives home. We are working around the clock with our partners and allies to secure their freedom and, importantly, in among my other regional calls, I spoke specifically with the Emir of Qatar yesterday on this very issue, which we discussed at length. The Qatari Government are taking a lead in working intensely to help release hostages using their contacts in the region, and we are working closely with them to ensure the safe return of the British hostages.

**Keir Starmer:** Yesterday I also met charities with staff working in Gaza and heard their accounts of the harrowing humanitarian crisis: children fleeing their homes; hospitals barely able to function. The lights are going out, and the innocent civilians of Gaza are terrified that they will die in the darkness, out of sight. International law must always be followed. Hamas are not the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian people are not Hamas. Does the Prime Minister agree that medicines, food, fuel and water must get into Gaza immediately? This is an urgent situation, and innocent Palestinians need to know that the world is not just simply watching, but acting to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

**The Prime Minister:** As I said on Monday, an acute humanitarian crisis is unfolding to which we must respond. It is right that we support the Palestinian people, because they are victims of Hamas too. That is why we have provided a further £10 million in humanitarian aid for people in the region, and we are working on pre-emptively moving aid and relief teams to Egypt, specifically to the el-Arish airfield. We are working with local partners like the Egyptian Red Crescent and the United Nations, primarily, and deploying Navy assets to the region, as well as exploring how we can support logistical requirements.

I have also raised the issue of humanitarian access, as a priority, in all my conversations with every leader in the region. We will continue to work with them to get aid to where it is needed as quickly as possible.

**Keir Starmer:** As has been alluded to, since Hamas's terrorist attack our country has seen a disgusting rise in antisemitism: Jewish businesses attacked, Jewish schools marked with red paint and Jewish families hiding who they are. And we have seen an appalling surge in Islamophobia: racist graffiti, mosques forced to ramp up security, and British Muslims and Palestinians spoken to as if they are terrorists. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that every Member of this House has a duty to work in their constituency and across the country to say no to this hate and to ensure that every British Jew and every British Muslim knows they can live their life free from fear and free from discrimination here in their own country?

**The Prime Minister:** All of us in this House can play our part in stamping out those who seek to cause division and hate in our society. We will make sure that we continue funding the Community Security Trust and the equivalent protective security grant that protects mosques and other places of worship for the Islamic community in the UK. That funding was increased earlier this year. We will also remain in dialogue with the police to make sure they are aware of the full tools at their disposal to arrest those who perpetrate hate crime and who incite racial or other religious violence. ...

**Keir Starmer:** We do not want this conflict to harm us here at home, and we do not want it to escalate in the middle east, where there has been too much bloodshed, too much darkness, for too long. A two-state solution—a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel—feels more distant than ever, but it remains the only way through. Does the Prime Minister agree that, because hope is at its thinnest, we must work our hardest to ensure that the voices of division and despair are sidelined and that, however difficult it seems, the hope of a political path to peace is maintained?

**The Prime Minister:** It is precisely because it is that vision of a more hopeful, peaceful future that Hamas have tried to destroy that we must redouble our efforts



to try to bring that future about. ...

**Keir Starmer:** This is a crisis where lives hang in the balance and where the enemies of peace and democracy would like nothing more than for us to become divided and to abandon our values. Does the Prime Minister agree that, during this grave crisis, the House must strive to speak with one voice in condemnation of terror, in support of Israel's right to self-defence and for the dignity of all human life, which cannot be protected without humanitarian access to those suffering in Gaza and the constant maintenance of the rule of international law?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree. We will, in this House, speak with one voice in condemning Hamas for perpetrating a shockingly brutal terrorist attack and causing untold suffering for many. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, we stand united in supporting Israel's right to defend itself, to protect its people and to act against terrorism. Unlike Hamas, the Israeli President has made it very clear that Israel's armed forces will operate in accordance with international law. We will continue to urge the Israelis to take every precaution to avoid harming civilians, while remembering, importantly, that it is Hamas who are cruelly embedding themselves in civilian populations. ...

**Stephen Flynn (SNP):** We all continue to unequivocally condemn the abhorrent terrorist attack on the Jewish people and the Israeli state. We fully support the defeat of Hamas and, of course, the safe return of all hostages who have been taken. So, too, I hope, do we all share the same common humanity of protecting civilians and condemning any acts of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. In that regard, many of the images emanating from Gaza in recent days will shock us all to the core, so may I ask the Prime Minister: will he join those of us on these Benches and call for an immediate ceasefire in the region?

**The Prime Minister:** We believe that Israel does have a right to defend itself, to protect its people and to act against terrorism and ensure that the awful attack we have seen from Hamas cannot happen again. ...

**Stephen Flynn:** My ask for a ceasefire is done with all sincerity, not only in order to protect civilians, but to ensure that we have the safe creation of humanitarian corridors, which will allow not only for food, water and vital medicines to get into Gaza, but for innocent civilians caught up in this terrible conflict to flee. In respect of those who wish to flee, may I ask the Prime Minister what early consideration, if any, his Government have given to the creation of a refugee resettlement scheme ...

**The Prime Minister:** I am proud that we are already one of the most significant contributors to the United Nations' efforts to support Palestinian refugees ... With regard to humanitarian aid, as I said before, we are already working through pre-emptively moving aid and relief teams into the region. But, critically, the most important thing is to open up access for that aid to get into Gaza, which is why our conversations with the Egyptians and others are so critical. ...

**Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [906577]** Last night, sections of the British media were reporting as fact that it was Israeli rockets that had landed and attacked the Al-Ahli Hospital, relying on information supplied by officials in terrorist-controlled Gaza. The headlines have since been rewritten, but the outpouring of Jew hate on social media overnight was vile. So will the Prime Minister please make the point again that the way that this conflict is being reported has massive implications for our Jewish community and that any information coming from Hamas must be treated with a degree of scrutiny and cross-examination that is, sadly, sometimes lacking?

**The Prime Minister:** ... He is absolutely right that we should not rush to judgment before we have all the facts on the appalling situation that we saw yesterday, particularly given the sensitivity that he raises and the impact on communities here, but also across the region. ...

**Desmond Swayne (Conservative) [906580]** Aid poured into Gaza in 2005 when Israel

withdrew. Enlightened governance could have made a success of it. It is Hamas that has turned it into hell, is it not?

**The Prime Minister:** ... we have very stringent governance in place to make sure that it is spent on the humanitarian needs that we want to address. I also agree with him that there is one person and one person alone that is responsible for the atrocities that we are seeing, and that is Hamas. ...

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald (SNP)** [906574] Of course the sadism of Hamas can only be condemned, and there is no question of Israel's right to defence and security, but international law is very clear that acting against international law in response to terrorism is unjustified, so in all the packages that the Prime Minister has announced vis-à-vis humanitarian aid, and the military package that he announced last week, can he tell the House how the Government will ensure that international law is adhered to, beyond just statements from Israel's head of state?

**The Prime Minister:** ... the assets that we have moved into the region are not there in any combat capacity. They are there for two reasons: first and foremost, to provide surveillance to ensure that this crisis does not escalate and that arms are not being sent to entities like Hezbollah—that is what our surveillance aircraft are currently doing, and indeed the next set of assets arriving this week will also help—but also to provide contingency support for humanitarian assistance as and when required in the coming days and weeks. ...

**Gavin Newlands (SNP)** [906579] We have all been horrified by events in Israel and Gaza, and it is right that we condemn utterly the inhuman terrorism of Hamas. That should also be the case for any obscenities and war crimes carried out by the Israeli defence force. Both the UN and Médecins Sans Frontières have described the siege of Gaza and the withholding of water from its people as collective punishment—a war crime under the Geneva convention—yet this week both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have supported Israel's right to do so. Why?

**The Prime Minister:** Quite simply put, Israel suffered from a brutal terrorist attack at the hands of Hamas, and it is absolutely right that Israel has a right to defend itself, root out terrorism, and ensure that such an act does not happen again. ...

**Crispin Blunt (Conservative):** My right hon. Friend has been absolutely right to lead the nation in reassuring the British Jewish community in the wake of the utterly appalling atrocity visited upon Israel and Jews on 7 October. I understand that my right hon. Friend will be travelling to the region, and he will see for himself the shock and trauma that is through the Israeli nation after this event—shock and trauma that is accompanied by a rage. The enormous danger is that the Israeli reaction, led by a Prime Minister who will be held accountable for this failure of intelligence, is going to amount—is indeed amounting—to a war crime. That will not only be a crime; it will be a mistake. I urge my right hon. Friend: there is now no one better placed to urge Israel to stay within the international rule of law, and to exercise restraint on behalf of us all.

**The Prime Minister:** As a friend, we will always urge Israel to take every possible practical precaution to avoid harming civilians, and indeed to act within international law, as Israel's President has said its armed forces will do, while recognising the incredible complexity and difficulty of the situation on the ground. ...

**Simon Hoare (Conservative):** ... What can we in the wider international community do to work with the Egyptians to ensure that refugees coming on to Egyptian soil are legitimate refugees who pose no threat to the Egyptian state and are not terrorists in disguise?

**The Prime Minister:** ... but we have prioritised speaking with President Sisi and are in continued dialogue with our Egyptian partners ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-18/debates/368230C3-9907-44CA-BB0D-47217057270F/Engagements>

## Gaza: Al-Ahli Arab Hospital Explosion

*col 325* **David Lammy (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on the explosion at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):** The destruction of the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza is an appalling tragedy. A hospital is a place of compassion and care. This devastating loss of human life is profoundly disturbing. ...

The UK is working intensively with our allies to establish the facts. We will not rush to judgment. The whole House will understand that pointing fingers prematurely only fuels regional instability and upsets community cohesion here in the UK. We need a firm grasp of what has happened, not a slew of social media commentary. We all share a duty to be thoughtful and careful in how we respond to reports emerging from the conflict, which can be at best incomplete or at worst examples of active disinformation. We are carefully analysing the evidence that has been put in the public domain, and other information. As soon as we have reached a definitive conclusion for ourselves, we will make it public.

Some things are not in doubt, however. ... Hamas carried out a terrorist assault on Israel that was unprecedented in that country's 75-year history. The whole House united in support of Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism. In defending itself, Israel must act with professionalism and an unwavering commitment to international law. States must take every precaution to minimise civilian casualties and ensure that humanitarian support reaches those in need. I welcome President Herzog's unequivocal commitment—made both directly to me and in public—that Israel is operating in accordance with the rules of international law.

By embedding themselves in civilian populations, using innocent Palestinians as human shields, launching thousands of rockets since Saturday from one of the most crowded places in the world, and preventing civilians from heeding Israeli warnings about future areas of operation, Hamas reveal themselves and their callous indifference to human life. In this tense situation, UK diplomacy is relentlessly focused on our aims: supporting our nationals in their moment of need, pushing for and delivering humanitarian support, and working to prevent tensions spilling over into the wider region or playing out on the streets of this country. I have travelled to Israel and engaged with G7 allies and regional partners, and I will visit the region again later today because we recognise that this will require intensive effort.

None of us knows how this complex, protracted situation will develop. The Government are committed to keeping the House updated. Both here in the UK and in the region, this is a time for cool heads and determination to make a difference.

*col 326* **David Lammy:** ... Today, we stand united in mourning the death of hundreds of innocent Palestinian civilians at the Al-Ahli Hospital. A place of healing became a scene of destruction. Hospitals must always be protected. The death of every civilian, Palestinian or Israeli, is an equal tragedy that pushes back the cause of peace.

When facing an incident of this magnitude, we all have a duty to act responsibly and judiciously as the facts are determined. Will the Foreign Secretary join me in urging everyone in this House and beyond to be wary of disinformation, and to avoid dangerous speculation before the facts are clear? Will he also update the House on what he is doing to deal with outside powers that might be seeking to drive division on our own shores?

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have rightly said that they are working to establish the facts, looking at intelligence with our allies, and that must be right. We also note President Biden's comments earlier today. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm whether the UK Government share that initial assessment? I also ask him to share with us what information he can, either publicly or on Privy Council terms. Does he agree that those responsible for the deaths at the Al-Ahli Hospital must be held to account?



Since Hamas's appalling terrorist attack on Israel 11 days ago, Labour has been crystal clear that: first, we support Israel's right to defend itself, rescue hostages and protect its citizens; secondly, international law must be followed at all times; and thirdly, civilians must not be targeted, aid must be provided and innocent lives must be protected. Gaza is in the middle of an active humanitarian emergency: innocent Palestinian civilians are terrified for their lives. Can the Foreign Secretary today commit that the Government will leave no stone unturned in their diplomatic efforts to secure humanitarian access to food, water, fuel, electricity and medicines, and to ensure the establishment of humanitarian corridors and the proper protection of humanitarian workers? Palestinian civilians in Gaza must know that the world is not simply watching, but acting on their behalf.

**James Cleverly:** ... this is an incredibly sensitive situation, and not just for the region itself. Our desire to prevent this tragedy from expanding into a regional conflict remains an absolute priority, and of course we have a duty as a Government—I am sure it is a passion shared by the whole House—to ensure that Jewish and Muslim communities in the UK are safe and feel safe, and do not experience ramifications from circumstances that are far beyond these shores and beyond their control.

*col 327* For that reason, everybody—particularly those who have a voice in the public sphere, whether formal or informal—should be particularly careful about what information they disseminate. They should be particularly vigilant against disinformation, and speculation is never useful. ...

The right hon. Gentleman is right that there are malign influences seeking to take advantage of this terrible situation, and we do guard against that. ...

**Brendan O'Hara (SNP):** It appears that what happened last night at the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza was a war crime—it was a crime against humanity—and if that is the case, there can be no hiding place for those who gave the order and those who carried it out. Independent investigators must be allowed to find out exactly who is responsible for this atrocity and have them brought before the International Criminal Court.

The scenes of death and destruction from last night are beyond harrowing, but the tragic reality of this conflict is that innocent civilian lives are being viewed as little more than collateral damage. ...

Today it was reported that, as a direct result of the draconian collective punishment against the civilian population of Gaza, children are dying of thirst. Will the Government now finally tell the Israeli Government that the imposition of a collective punishment is a crime, that it is a breach of international humanitarian law and that it must end immediately?

*col 328* **James Cleverly:** ... In all our conversations with the Israelis, we have reinforced the need for the protection of civilians; they understand that and they agree. President Herzog has made a commitment about adherence to international law. We must, however, be completely clear that Hamas accept no such limitations on their actions. They have specifically targeted civilians and children—they went out of their way to identify and murder the most vulnerable—and it is completely appropriate for Israel to take action to protect its civilians and prevent Hamas from perpetrating further atrocities in that country. ...

**Alicia Kearns (Conservative):** ... while the horrors of last night cannot be unseen, we must not look away. Violence is increasing across the region, but also in Europe and the US. We in this House have a duty to protect British nationals, so what assessment have the Government made of whether the joint terrorism analysis centre needs to raise the threat level? ...

**James Cleverly:** ... We constantly assess the threat picture both here in the UK and in the region. ... our consular team are maintaining, as best they can, contact with British nationals in Israel, and indeed in Gaza. ...

**Diane Abbott (Labour):** The Foreign Secretary will be aware of the horror with which the missile strike on a hospital in Gaza, which caused hundreds upon hundreds of casualties,

is regarded not just here in Britain, but in the region and internationally. The House has heard his injunction not to jump to conclusions, but would he support a genuinely independent inquiry into what is happening?

*col 329* **James Cleverly:** Of course, an independent inquiry is the gold standard in the event of such a circumstance, but the simple truth in relation to having any kind of independent investigation in Gaza is that the current situation ... makes the practicality of that incredibly difficult. We are making our own assessment. We will gather and analyse as much information as we can. We will not be led by any other nation; it will be a UK assessment of the situation. ...

**Damian Green (Conservative):** ... I am struck by the number of emails I have received from constituents who have already rushed to conclusions, and all blame Israel. Does he agree that this shows the important responsibility not only that broadcasters have to ensure they do not disseminate false information, but that owners of social media platforms have to try to avoid hate being spread literally around the world at times like this?

**James Cleverly:** ... I would make a broad point to broadcasters ... which is that I believe there is an attempt by broadcasters to try to outpace social media platforms. The days of breaking news on traditional platforms are long in the past; they should focus on accuracy rather than pace ...

**Sam Tarry (Labour):** ... It is now quite clear that even hospitals are not a safe place of refuge anywhere in Gaza. ... I want to understand quite clearly from the Foreign Secretary why, as we call on the country for humanitarian access to Gaza, we are not also calling for an immediate ceasefire to enable that to happen. ...

I would really like to hear from the Foreign Secretary assurances that he is speaking to our Israeli counterparts to ensure that any Gazans and Palestinians who do evacuate will have an absolute right of return to their lands and do not end up languishing, as the millions of other Palestinian refugees currently still do, in both Jordan and Lebanon.

*col 330* **James Cleverly:** ... The simple truth is that Israel does have a right to defend itself. The truth is that Hamas have no interest in a ceasefire. They have no interest in resolution, they have never attempted to engage in a two-state solution, and they have made every attempt to collapse the Oslo process. They are no friend of the Palestinian people. ...

**Dominic Raab (Conservative):** ... one fact we know right now is that the primary moral, and as a result legal, responsibility for the appalling civilian life loss in Gaza today and in the days ahead lies with Hamas, first for their attack on Israel, and secondly for the systematic practice of using civilians as human shields ...

**James Cleverly:** ... we must be clear-eyed about the trigger event. It was the most brutal mass murder in a terrorist action in the history of the state of Israel, and the largest loss of Jewish life on a single day since the holocaust. Of course Israel has the right to defend itself, and we must never forget that Hamas's actions of embedding themselves in civilian communities and putting Palestinian lives intentionally at risk to pursue their political aims is completely unjustifiable.

**John McDonnell (Labour):** Whatever the outcome of the independent inquiries into what happened with the tragedy in Gaza yesterday, in reality Gaza is such a densely populated area that no matter what efforts are made, the effects of bombing will be indiscriminate. If the Government cannot go as far as calling for a ceasefire, will they at least call for the end of the rockets and the bombs? If they cannot go as far as to call for the end of the bombing, can they at least call on Israel to stop bombing the south, where refugees from Gaza City are going at the instructions of the Israeli army? ...

**James Cleverly:** ...the simple truth is that the alternative is a ground assault by Israel and, as he says, the practicalities of any military operation in an area as densely populated as Gaza will be deeply challenging. Again, I remind the House that the people who murdered those revellers, those partygoers, those children and those old people embed themselves in civilian communities — in hospitals, in

schools—specifically to use innocent Palestinians as human shields. ...

**col 331 Mark Pritchard (Conservative):** Whoever was responsible for the hospital attack last evening, it was an appalling human tragedy ... Does he agree that if the UK intelligence community, whether that is GCHQ, the Secret Intelligence Service, Defence Intelligence and so on, are having to take time and deliberate in order to come to a conclusion, perhaps all of us in this place, including media organisations outside this place, should also show the same caution and consideration before making statements that could prove incendiary?

**James Cleverly:** ... There is, of course, the completely understandable desire of media outlets to report promptly, but I believe they have a greater duty to report accurately and responsibly. ...

**Steve McCabe (Labour):** I deplore the loss of all civilian life, Israeli and Palestinian, and I commend the Foreign Secretary for his caution over attributing blame for last night's attack. Does he think that we should also be cautious about the figures for casualties coming from Gaza? ... there is reason to believe that there is a very high volume of Hamas combatants among those figures.

**James Cleverly:** ... I am not going to minimise the pain and suffering of those Palestinian families who have lost loved ones and had people injured, but we know that just as Hamas are abusing the Palestinian people, they also abuse the figures that they put in the public domain. We must be highly sceptical of any information coming out of Hamas ...

**col 332 Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative):** ... Our hearts go out to all the innocents who have died and suffered—of course they do—but Hamas are the perpetrators and they have brought this on themselves. We remind ourselves that when they murdered all those Israeli Jews in the territories, they filmed them and committed atrocities deliberately. That was to remind the Israelis of the holocaust and what was likely to come. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... I have Jewish friends who are trying to keep their children off social media, because they know that they will be assaulted with images of Israelis who have been murdered and whose bodies have been desecrated. No one in the modern era should have to endure that kind of repeated pain.

**Olivia Blake (Labour):** Evacuation orders in the past week have included hospitals, but many vulnerable people are unable to move because of their disabilities or illness. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... We recognise the practical difficulties of that evacuation order, and in a highly dense area such as Gaza we completely understand those practical difficulties, particularly for medical organisations.. As imperfect as it may be, attempting to remove civilians from a future area of military operations stands in sharp contrast with the actions of Hamas, who are actively seeking to prevent people from leaving an area of future conflict, and intentionally putting civilians in the way, using innocent Palestinians as human shields.

**Michael Ellis (Conservative):** I commend the Foreign Secretary, and his Opposition shadow, for their tone, but the fact is that last night an evil terrorist organisation that murders Jews and oppresses Palestinians was instantly believed in a number of quarters, whereas many refused to acknowledge that Jewish babies had been brutally murdered without demanding graphic proof. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that unsubstantiated reports such as those we saw last night might actually cost lives, because they inflame tensions in an already highly volatile region?

**James Cleverly:** My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. Everything has a cost, and rushed, inaccurate reporting costs lives. ...

**col 333 Hannah Bardell (SNP):** We rightly unite to condemn the barbaric actions of Hamas against innocent Israelis, and the loss of Palestinian lives and the unfolding humanitarian crisis is a profound tragedy. ... Will he hear and heed the words of Nadia El-Nakla, the wife of our Scottish First Minister, whose family are trapped there right now? ...

**James Cleverly:** The consular department in the FCDO has got in contact with the

families of those British nationals who are trapped in Gaza, and we are providing ongoing consular support. ...

**Andrew Percy (Conservative):** One fact that is not in dispute is that every rocket fired from Gaza into Israel is aimed at murdering civilians, in stark contrast to Israeli defensive action. Last night, there were Members in this place, including senior Members, scurrying around, stating as fact that this incident was caused by an Israeli rocket. The BBC and other media referred to statements by “ Hamas officials ”—I think they meant to say Hamas terrorists—and presented them as fact without challenge. That not only risks radicalisation of communities in this country, where we already know there is a problem with antisemitism, but puts Jews at risk. I urge colleagues to be careful of their comments given the role that blood libels play in promoting antisemitism.

**James Cleverly:** ... I restate my request of all people commenting on this—whether they have a formal role within the media or are in a high-profile position, such as Members of this House—to be thoughtful of the implications of their actions, to be sceptical of all information coming out from Hamas, and to take a little extra time to verify, which can literally save lives here and abroad.

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op):** ... we have to recognise that Palestinians cannot defend themselves. They have no means, and now their places of sanctuary, such as hospitals, are no longer safe places either. ...

*col 334 James Cleverly:* ... This was not a conflict that Israel asked for; it is a conflict that they were forced to engage in because of the mass murder in their country perpetrated by Hamas terrorists who embed themselves in schools, hospitals and in civilian communities.

Calls for ceasefires are all well and good, but I have seen nothing—nothing—that leads me to believe that Hamas would respect calls for a ceasefire.

**Crispin Blunt (Conservative):** ... whatever the investigation finds out, in a sense it will not matter a great deal to all those who are dead in the hospital ... in the end both sides have now committed war crimes. ... the only way to get out of this mess is a ceasefire. Otherwise, we will not see the relief of people who are starving and are dehydrating to death—that is a collective punishment, which is illegal under international law—following the deportation of people from northern Gaza, which again is illegal under international law. ...

**James Cleverly:** The House needs to understand that prior to Hamas’s terrorist attack, tens of thousands of Gazans passed through the border into Israel every day in order to work. Israel provided—often without payment—water, electricity and gas to the people of Gaza. That was interrupted as a direct result of Hamas’s brutal terrorist action. Thousands of rockets are fired from Gaza into Israel from in and among schools, hospitals and civilian communities. ...

**Margaret Hodge (Labour):** ... Many children and young people here in the UK will have seen the images on our televisions and screens and on social media platforms, and I think they will be influenced by that. While I thank the Government for the money and support they are giving to the organisations protecting faith schools, mosques and synagogues, can the Minister tell us what he is doing to provide advice and support to ordinary schools and our universities, where there is an intensification of hatred emerging and where I am hearing of both antisemitic and Islamophobic views being expressed and attacks being wrought on individuals?

*col 335 James Cleverly:* ... the Home Secretary has made [a commitment] that we will protect all communities in the UK—Muslim, Jewish and others—and we will work with institutions, whether educational institutions or others, to try to ensure that the people at those institutions can go about their lives free from fear, intimidation and discrimination.

**Rehman Chishti (Conservative):** ... the entity responsible for the loss of lives we are seeing now is Hamas: a terrorist barbaric organisation that killed innocent Jewish people.



The question now is about doing everything we can to save lives of both Israeli and Palestinian people who are innocent in that regard. ...

The Foreign Secretary says that, moving forward, we will work towards a two-state solution. The people in the region want to know what that two-state solution is. Is that based on Security Council resolution 242 and the 1967 borders, which the United Kingdom signed up to? ...

**James Cleverly:** ... we remain committed to a two-state solution, with Palestinians and Israelis living side-by-side in peace and prosperity. While at the moment and in these circumstances that might feel like an unachievable aim, we refuse to be fatalistic and give up that aspiration. The details will be for negotiation, but he and the House will have heard us say on a number of occasions that it will be based on the 1967 borders, with land swaps and a shared capital in Jerusalem. But we will not be dogmatic; what we want to see is peace brought about. ...

**Anum Qaisar (SNP):** I repeat my condemnation of the Hamas attacks against innocent Israeli citizens. We saw civilians in Gaza forcibly moved from their homes with no guarantee of safety or return, yet the Government failed to speak out. We saw food, water and electricity cut off in Gaza, yet the Government failed to speak out. Last night, we saw the destruction of a hospital in Gaza. The Government now need to speak out.

Will the Foreign Secretary support the International Criminal Court investigation into the situation in Palestine, given that the prosecutor has said that its mandate includes the current context? ...

*col 335* **James Cleverly:** I must say to the hon. Lady that her assessment of the UK Government's voice on this issue is fundamentally wrong. We have consistently discussed with Israel—and publicly—our commitment to humanitarian law. She needs to understand that a military force highlighting a future potential area of conflict and encouraging people to move away from that area of conflict is not forced relocation. *[Interruption.]* It is not forced relocation. I draw her attention to the actions that Hamas have taken to prevent innocent Palestinians from moving away from places of danger. The contrast could not be more stark.

**Richard Graham (Conservative):** ... Will my right hon. Friend ... do his best to stay in touch with the Anglican Church to see if it has more information about what has happened to those who were there, to see how we can help re-establish what was a valuable programme ... and do all he can to think about how, in the longer term, we can enable people in that troubled land to co-exist in a way that we have, for so long, failed to do ...

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the tragic loss of life in this instance. ... We know that there are incredibly passionate voices on both sides, but, as I have said a number of times, we have a duty to be calm and careful when we speak about this issue. We will continue to work for peaceful co-existence of all the communities in that region. ...

*col 337* **Sarah Champion (Labour):** I am terrified that there will be an escalation leading to many more civilians on all sides being murdered. ... could he explain both as a diplomat and as a military man how we can get humanitarian aid in, how we can create safe zones and how we can prevent civilian loss of life? ...

**James Cleverly:** ... I, the Prime Minister, my ministerial colleagues and of course our ambassadorial teams in the region have been speaking extensively to try to facilitate humanitarian access. That has been most notably with Egypt, but we have also been using our very good relationship with the Qataris to try to influence Hamas, and of course our direct relationship with Israel to try to broker some kind of humanitarian access, even if only temporarily. ...

**Duncan Baker (Conservative):** ... there are Gazans sheltering in churches, so will the Foreign Secretary please make it absolutely clear in his discussions that the humanitarian role that the churches are currently partaking in must not be underestimated and that the Roman Catholic Church in North Gaza and the Greek Orthodox Church must be absolutely



protected for the people they are sheltering?

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the importance of the faith communities. We often talk about the Jewish faith and Islam but when it comes to this region, the Christian churches play an incredibly important role ...

**Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat):** When seeking to counter an insurgency in Afghanistan over a decade ago, General McChrystal adopted a new concept for NATO soldiers: courageous restraint. This was to separate the insurgents from the civilians among whom they lived. ...

*col 338* **James Cleverly:** Courageous restraint ... is now a well-embedded concept in professional military forces. I have discussed with representatives of the IDF my admiration for its professionalism and my expectation that it will maintain that professionalism through any military operations. Courageous restraint is not a concept in the heart of Hamas terrorists. We must be realistic about that. Therefore, we will work with Israel and other countries in the region to try to bring this to a conclusion as quickly as possible, but we maintain our support of Israel's self-defence and we highlight the fact that Hamas are just as willing to see Palestinians killed as they are to see Israelis killed, to pursue their political aims.

**Nicola Richards (Conservative):** ... Hamas have no morals, no boundaries and no problem with killing any innocent civilian in Israel or Gaza. Will the Foreign Secretary reassure me that he knows that standing with Israel now will put us on the right side of history?

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight the callous nature of Hamas's activities and those of other terrorist groups embedded in Gaza. We expressed our solidarity with the Israelis in their time of grief in the aftermath of those terrible attacks, and we stand in solidarity with them still. ...

**Marion Fellows (SNP):** I keep hearing the words of my mother in my brain, and I have done for the last week: "Twa wrangs dinnae make a right." Hamas are an indefensible organisation in any right person's books, but the fact that they will not do right does not mean that the UK Government should not demand and work hard towards a ceasefire, and make sure that humanitarian aid gets into Gaza. ...

*col 339* **James Cleverly:** Calls for a ceasefire are understandable ... but a ceasefire has to be respected by both parties in a conflict, and I have seen absolutely nothing in the behaviour of Hamas during and since the terrorist attack that gives me any confidence at all that they would respect a ceasefire. ...

**Debbie Abrahams (Labour):** ... the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has also called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Clearly, the Foreign Secretary has some issues with that, though I do not really understand why. ...

**James Cleverly:** I remind the hon. Lady and the House that we have people on the ground. My staff are in danger in Gaza. They choose to put their lives at risk in an incredibly dangerous part of the world in order to give me direct insight into the realities on the ground. ...

The truth is that I have received nothing that gives me any indication that Hamas or the other terrorist groups operating in Gaza would respect a ceasefire. I respect the UN Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire. ... but we have to be realistic about the fact that Hamas, like the other terrorist organisations in Gaza, have demonstrated over and over again a complete callousness towards human life, whether Israeli or Palestinian.

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour):** After all the decades of suffering, injustice and occupation endured by the Palestinian people, this terrorism and the scenes of death and destruction at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital are truly heart-wrenching. Those responsible must be held to account, international law must be adhered to and there should be no collective punishment of the Palestinian people. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... We will not rest. We will continue to do everything we can to

alleviate this terrible humanitarian situation. The hon. Gentleman asked what is the best thing to do for peace. A good starting point would be terrorists not firing rockets from densely populated areas into Israel.

**col 340 Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... last weekend Hamas terrorists killed 1,400 Israelis, injured 3,500 and kidnapped almost 200. ... The bombing of the ill and the elderly at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital is reprehensible to the extreme and to be condemned. However, the circumstances of that horrific event are not clear. Does the Secretary of State agree that while horror and sympathy are to be expressed, judgments must be withheld until all facts are known and clear?

**James Cleverly:** ... The immediate and understandable expression of sympathy and condolence is absolutely right and proper, but that should not be conflated with a rush to judgment. ...

**Caroline Lucas (Green):** We do not yet know who is responsible for the unspeakable atrocity at the Gaza hospital, but we do know that hundreds were killed and hundreds more were injured; we do know that yesterday an IDF airstrike hit an UNRWA—United Nations Relief and Works Agency—school where thousands were sheltering, killing more; and we do know that over 3,000 civilians have been killed in Gaza so far. Israel does have the right to self-defence, but that cannot include mass bombing of densely populated areas if Israel is simultaneously to stay within international law. ...

**James Cleverly:** Israel is one of the parties engaged in this military operation, but there are others, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. I suggest that anybody calling on Israel to cease military operations should at least—at least—call on the terrorists to do likewise.

**col 341 Afzal Khan (Labour):** ... how many functioning hospitals are left in Gaza and how Palestinians who continue to be targeted by bombardments are supposed to receive lifesaving medical treatment?

**James Cleverly:** ... I do not know the status of the medical facilities in Gaza. We want them to be protected—we have made that clear, and we will continue to do so ... We will, of course, call on Hamas and the other terrorist organisations to remove themselves from the proximity of those hospitals if they are conducting military operations.

**Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru):** The UN reports that the last water treatment desalination plant in Gaza has shut down. At the same time, people are drinking contaminated tap water and polluted sea water. The World Health Organisation says that people need 15 litres of water a day and people in Gaza are surviving on three. Can the Foreign Secretary tell me what practical steps are being taken to ensure the resumption of fuel supplies to water treatment works in Gaza?

**James Cleverly:** ... Gaza did have its own water production capabilities. We saw videos posted by Hamas proudly demonstrating how water pipes, funded by European aid, were being ripped up and turned into rockets to fire into Israel. Although of course we speak with Israel about support to the Palestinians in Gaza, and our own support to the Palestinians in Gaza, we must not overlook the fact that Hamas has habitually persecuted, punished and oppressed the Palestinian people in Gaza.

**Sharon Hodgson (Labour):** We have already seen one Iranian terror proxy, Hamas, launch attacks against Israel in the past 11 days, but we know that another Iranian proxy, Hezbollah, is waiting in the wings to attack Israel from the north ... What steps are the Government taking to deter Hezbollah from seeking to attack or otherwise undermine Israel at this most difficult time?

**James Cleverly:** The hon. Lady makes an incredibly important point. The United States of America and the United Kingdom have put naval assets in the eastern Mediterranean ... That is not to conduct military operations; it is to conduct surveillance operations to prevent Iran, or indeed anyone else, from supplying

Hezbollah with lethal aid that might be used against Israel.

**col 342 Stephen Farry (Alliance):** In recognising Israel's right to self-defence against Hamas's brutal terrorism, the Government have rightly cited international humanitarian law. However, it seems to be the position of the Government that it has so far not yet been broken. Indeed, today the Foreign Secretary has several times cited President Herzog to that effect. By contrast, we have a number of UN agencies and actors, non-governmental organisations and international lawyers all saying that collective punishment is a clear breach of international humanitarian law, including, for example, the cutting off of supplies and the forced movement of people. Frankly, forcing people to leave their homes or hospitals because they are under threat of bombing is forced movement. How does the Foreign Secretary address those contradictions in the UK Government's position?

**James Cleverly:** There are no contradictions in the UK Government's position. ... The hon. Gentleman may disagree with it and others may disagree with it, but there are no contradictions.

**Andrew Gwynne (Labour):** The terror attack on Israeli citizens and the subsequent abduction was brutal and evil. The scenes from Al-Ahli hospital last night on the television were beyond comprehension and upsetting ... But I am really concerned ... that the conflict between Israel and Hamas does not spill over into the streets of any community in the United Kingdom. ... What more are the Government doing to ensure that the catastrophe in the middle east does not end up on the streets of Britain?

**James Cleverly:** ... I can give him and the House our commitment to protect all communities in the United Kingdom. No one should be held responsible for actions happening thousands of miles away. They have an absolute right to live in peace and security here in the UK. ...

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba):** Fourteen hundred years on from Cáin Adomnáin, the law of the innocents to protect women and children in conflict, both the terror of Hamas and the utterly disproportionate and illegal response by Israel stain our modern world. Rather than the supine acceptance of Israeli-US policy, will the Secretary of State instead heed the wise counsel of President Higgins of Ireland and seek both an immediate ceasefire and justice for the Palestinian people?

**James Cleverly:** UK foreign policy is set in London, not in Washington and not in Dublin.

**Diana Johnson (Labour):** ... Does he share my bafflement at why the BBC, our national broadcaster, has repeatedly refused to describe Hamas as a terrorist organisation when they are a proscribed terrorist group?

**col 343 James Cleverly:** I am genuinely baffled by this. I understand that the BBC says that to do so would be to take sides, but I fundamentally disagree with that. The BBC has used the word "terrorist" on a number of occasions, both domestically and internationally, and I just do not understand why it cannot bring itself to describe Hamas as terrorists, because that is what they are.

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op):** The grief and loss of millions in Gaza and in Israel have only been added to by the horrific and heinous attack on Al-Ahli Hospital. ... What is the Foreign Secretary doing to ensure that those hospitals can carry on treating innocent civilians, working with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the hospitals themselves?

**James Cleverly:** We do of course speak with Israel, and, as I have said, we call on the Israelis to employ the professionalism of which they are understandably proud to minimise civilian casualties and to ensure that, where possible, civilian infrastructure—particularly schools, hospitals and religious sites—is not damaged. However, it is not by accident that Hamas habitually embed their terrorist operations in those very places, making the lives of Palestinians inevitably far more dangerous than they would be otherwise.

**Joanna Cherry (SNP):** I commend the UK Government for the announcement of an extra £10 million of aid for Gaza, but that will be of no use to the civilians who are trapped and injured there if it just piles up at the border. ...

*col 344* **James Cleverly:** ... we do of course want to end the suffering that Palestinians are experiencing, and the best way of doing that is to remove the yoke of Hamas from their shoulders ...

**Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op):** ... In view of the hundreds killed last night, the children writing their names on the palms of their hands, and the mothers giving birth in the street as their homes are destroyed and their hospitals damaged, can the Foreign Secretary update the House on the action being taken with international partners now to ensure that hospitals and medical staff are being protected ...

**James Cleverly:** As I said earlier, in a fast-evolving situation during a conflict such as this, it is extremely difficult to conduct an up-to-date assessment of the ability of medical facilities in Gaza to maintain operations. We do of course want civilians and civilian infrastructure to be protected wherever possible, and we have communicated that to Israel, but let me say again that protecting them is made infinitely more difficult in these circumstances, because Hamas and other terrorist organisations specifically embed themselves in civilian infrastructure. ...

**Deidre Brock (SNP):** I welcome the Foreign Secretary's recognition of the need to exercise caution before leaping to conclusions, given the difficulty of verifying information in situations of crisis, but will he commit himself to personally making contact with different social media and technology companies, urging them directly to help prevent the spread of disinformation and prevent any information war relating to this horrific situation?

**James Cleverly:** I will not commit myself to doing that personally, but I know that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport takes this issue extremely seriously. ...

*col 345* **Emma Hardy (Labour):** ... will the Foreign Secretary do everything he can to ensure that international law is followed? ...

**James Cleverly:** ... while dealing with the immediate challenges, we will also keep that long-term aspiration at the forefront of our minds. ...

**Fleur Anderson (Labour):** When I visited Israel and Palestine three weeks ago with a group of MPs, we met aid workers and health workers who say their last goodbyes to their families every morning because they do not know whether they will return. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... I can assure the hon. Lady that we have very close relationships with non-governmental organisations and aid organisations based in the UK and operating in Gaza and the region. We will of course be liaising with them both in terms of getting an updated understanding of the situation on the ground and of maximising our support to the Palestinian people.

*col 346* **Richard Burgon (Labour):** ... the UN General Secretary has called for an immediate ceasefire. Leading humanitarian agencies such as Oxfam have also called for that. Surely the Government must add their voice to that. ... Will he also withdraw his earlier remark that what is going on is not forced relocation? If he does not, I believe that he will come to regret that remark.

**James Cleverly:** Of course all of us want to see an end to the lives that have been lost, but we also recognise that Israel feels the need to take action to protect the lives of its citizens from the attacks emanating from Hamas and other terrorist organisations in Gaza. ...

**Carol Monaghan (SNP):** We need swift confirmation of who is responsible for the devastating attack on the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, but the immediate priority is humanitarian support for those affected. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... There was an open, fluid border between Israel and Gaza, and tens of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza—tens of thousands of Gazans—worked in Israel daily and moved to and fro between Gaza and Israel. That crossing



had to be closed, as did the Rafah crossing into Egypt, in response to the terrorist attacks that were perpetrated against Israel. ...

**Christian Wakeford (Labour):** The level of conflicting information and indeed disinformation coming from Gaza, and the irresponsible reporting of this as fact, including that coming from the BBC yesterday, is surely something that we should be condemning. What are the Foreign Secretary and his Department doing to correct this approach from broadcasters? ...

**James Cleverly:** ... I am a big fan of the BBC and I know the huge influence that the voice of the BBC has internationally. Because of that influence, it is incredibly important that the BBC and other broadcasters are very careful in the reporting of this issue, because of the sensitivity and because of the implications not just in the region itself but here in the UK. ...

*col 347* **Kirsten Oswald (SNP):** ... The sights that we have seen overnight are horrifying. I will not ask the Foreign Secretary for facts that he does not yet have, but we saw this human tragedy unfold further overnight, so I am asking for clear assurances on deliverable humanitarian aid now. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... we want to see the money that we have allocated actually turned into humanitarian support for the Palestinian people. That of course means having humanitarian access, but that is not happening at the moment. We will continue to use all our diplomatic effort to try to unlock those humanitarian access routes. ...

**Alison Thewliss (SNP):** ... I have been moved by the stories from many of the medical professionals on the ground in Gaza who have not only run out of medical supplies, including painkillers, but have no water with which to carry out their job. When can they expect to receive those essential items?

**James Cleverly:** ... At this stage, I am not able to give her any credible assurances on the timescales around this. Obviously, we are working with the international community and the countries in the region to try to get humanitarian access. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-18/debates/4FD3FF74-0477-470B-B1AB-B1E72FCD8625/GazaAl-AhliArabHospitalExplosion>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Israel: British Nationals Abroad

**Mark Logan (Conservative)** [201844] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) establish and (b) help ensure the safety of UK nationals in Israel.

**David Rutley:** The safety of all British nationals continues to be our utmost priority and we urge everyone to continue to follow our travel advice which is kept under continual review. We are working around the clock to support British Nationals wishing to leave and remain committed to assisting their safe passage out of the country. The government has facilitated a number of commercial flights from Tel Aviv to the UK to help British nationals wanting to leave Israel. The Royal Air Force was also instrumental in evacuating British nationals from Israel. British nationals who want to leave Gaza and can do so safely are advised to check the status of the Rafah crossing into Egypt. We are advising all British nationals currently in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, to register your presence with the FCDO.

<https://www.register.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/israel-20231009/tell-the-uk-government-youre-in-israel-or-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201844>



### Israel: Administration of Justice

**Rupa Huq (Labour)** [200981] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Government of Israel on the protests against that Government's proposed judicial reforms.

**David Rutley:** The Prime Minister made clear the importance of upholding the shared democratic values that underpin our relationship, including in relation to the proposed judicial reforms in Israel during his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 24 March in London. The Foreign Secretary also raised judicial reform and the importance of seeking consensus on this sensitive issue with Mr Netanyahu and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen, during his visit to Israel on 11-13 September. The UK enjoys a deep and historic relationship with Israel and we continue to urge all parties to ensure that a robust system of checks and balances, and the independence of Israel's judiciary, are preserved.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/200981>

### Israel: Saudi Arabia

**Mark Logan (Conservative)** [201354] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to progress Israel-Saudi Arabia normalisation talks.

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201354>

## House of Lords Oral Answer

### UN General Assembly September 2023

... **Lord Woodley (Labour):** My Lords, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has today called for a humanitarian ceasefire in Israel. We need the hostages home safely to their people, and we need to stop the unnecessary bombing of innocent men, women and children. Does the Minister agree?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, I have been very much engaged and quite heavily involved in the diplomatic efforts since the abhorrent crimes that were committed against the Israeli people and the Israeli nation. Let us be very clear from this House: Hamas itself is a proscribed organisation and its tactics, antics and impact on Israel shook that country to the core. Equally, I assure the noble Lord that we are engaging in all diplomatic efforts. He will have heard the statements of my right honourable friend the Prime Minister, and indeed those of the right honourable leader of the Opposition, that we as a country are at one. We do not want to see innocent lives lost, be they Israeli or Palestinian. I assure the noble Lord that we are working all diplomatic channels—bilaterally and collectively in the region—to ensure that this conflict, which has cost so many lives already, can be brought to a halt. We need the hostages back and we need humanitarian aid to enter to help the desperate people in Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-18/debates/91AE5999-C2A2-4B74-A07D-194FF4A8ADA3/UNGeneralAssemblySeptember2023#contribution-A8F4DE11-F3BF-45E9-9074-E87D98AE017A>

### **2023 Israel– Hamas conflict: UK and international response**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9874/CBP-9874.pdf>

### **Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Parliamentary reading list, 2020-23**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9873/CBP-9873.pdf>

## Downing Street

### **PM meeting with the President of Israel Isaac Herzog: 19 October 2023**

The Prime Minister met Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Israel today.

He expressed his personal condolences for the horrific loss of life in Israel as a result of Hamas' terrorism. He reiterated that the UK stands in solidarity with Israel and firmly believes in the country's right to self-defence in line with international law.

The Prime Minister and President Herzog agreed on the importance of getting urgent humanitarian support to ordinary Palestinians in Gaza who are also suffering. The Prime Minister welcomed yesterday's announcement that Israel would not stop aid from entering Gaza. He expressed his sincere hope that further progress could be made on delivering crucial food, water and medicine.

The Prime Minister conveyed his gratitude to President Herzog for the support Israel has provided to British nationals caught up in the attacks, including to the families of those who have been taken hostage. The leaders agreed to continue working tirelessly to secure their release.

The Prime Minister and President Herzog stressed the imperative need to avoid further escalation of violence in the region. They agreed to continue working together to that end.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-the-president-of-israel-isaac-herzog-19-october-2023>

### **PM meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel: 19 October 2023**

The Prime Minister met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel today.

He expressed the deep condolences of the British people for the terrible loss of life that has occurred in Israel. He underscored the UK's firm belief in Israel's right to self-defence in accordance with international humanitarian law, as they work to end the threat of Hamas and secure the freedom of hundreds of Israeli hostages.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Netanyahu for his support for the British nationals who have been taken by Hamas and both leaders agreed to work closely together to secure their freedom.

The Prime Minister welcomed Prime Minister Netanyahu's announcement yesterday on opening up aid access to Gaza. He emphasised the importance of establishing sustained access to get more vital food, water, medicine and fuel into Gaza and to enable British nationals trapped there to leave.

Both leaders underscored the need to prevent any regional escalation in the conflict and the importance of restoring peace and stability to the region.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-the-prime-minister-of-israel-19-october-2023>

### **Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's statement at joint press remarks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.**

Prime Minister, thank you for your warm words and for welcoming me to Israel. I am just sorry to be here in such terrible circumstances.

In the last two weeks, this country has gone through something that no country, no people,

should have to endure.

Least of all Israel, which has lived through some of the most awful scenes, the spectre of violence and terrorism every day of its existence.

I want to share the deep condolences of the British people, and stress that we absolutely support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law, to go after Hamas, to take back hostages, deter further incursions and to strengthen your security for the long-term.

Now I know that you are taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians, in direct contrast to the terrorists of Hamas, which seek to put civilians in harm's way.

But I also want to thank you for the support that your government has given to the families of British nationals caught up in this horror, including your efforts to secure the release of hostages, and I know that we will continue to cooperate, particularly with regard to the British nationals that are involved.

Can I also say that we have seen scenes over the past day that have shocked all of us, particularly at the hospital, and we mourn the loss of every innocent life, civilians of every faith and every nationality who have been killed.

We also recognise that the Palestinian people are victims of Hamas too, and that is why I welcome your decision yesterday that you took to ensure that routes into Gaza will be opened for humanitarian aid to enter.

I am glad that you made that decision; we will support it, we are increasing our aid to the region, and we will look to get more support to people as quickly as we can.

The last thing for me to close on is this: you describe this as Israel's darkest hour, well then it's for me to say that I am proud to stand here with you in Israel's darkest hour as your friend, who will stand with you in solidarity, who will stand with your people, and we also want you to win.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-statement-at-press-conference-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-19-october-2023>

### **PM meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia: 19 October 2023**

The Prime Minister met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia today. The leaders agreed that the loss of innocent lives in Israel and Gaza over the last two weeks has been horrific. They underscored the need to avoid any further escalation in the region and agreed to coordinate action on this front.

The Prime Minister and Crown Prince agreed on the pressing need for humanitarian access into Gaza to provide vital water, food and medicine. The Prime Minister outlined the steps the UK has taken to address the increasingly urgent humanitarian situation, including announcing £10 million of further aid. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-of-saudi-arabia-19-october-2023>

### **PM call with President Christodoulides of Cyprus: 18 October 2023**

... The Prime Minister thanked President Christodoulides for the vital Cypriot support in the repatriation of British Nationals from Israel.

Discussing the situation in Israel and Gaza, the leaders reflected on the awful terrorist attacks by Hamas, the importance of avoiding escalation and protecting innocent civilians.

The Prime Minister reflected on his calls with other regional leaders, and said he hoped a way forward could be found that brought lasting peace for innocent civilians on both sides. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-christodoulides-of-cyprus-18-october-2023>

**Rishi Sunak** I've just met President @Isaac\_Herzog and conveyed my gratitude for the support provided to British nationals caught up in the terror attacks. Together we agreed on the importance of getting urgent humanitarian support to ordinary Palestinians in Gaza who are also suffering. [plus photo]  
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1714937722157052057>

**Rishi Sunak** Prime Minister @netanyahu , I stand with you in Israel's darkest hour. I welcome your commitment to ensure routes into Gaza are opened for humanitarian aid. I support your work to secure the release of hostages, to strengthen your security and to end the threat from Hamas. [plus video]  
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1715007906343489640>

**Rishi Sunak** I am in Israel, a nation in grief. I grieve with you and stand with you against the evil that is terrorism. Today, and always. סולידריות [plus photo]  
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1714895569334735124>

**Rishi Sunak** I To have a child taken from you is a parent's worst nightmare. This morning I heard from families going through this unbearable agony. Working with our partners, we're determined to secure the release of the hostages taken by Hamas terrorists. [plus photo]  
<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1714925911290663286>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Foreign Secretary travels to Middle East to help prevent regional spread of conflict**  
... James Cleverly is planning to meet senior leaders in Egypt, Turkey and Qatar over the next 3 days, where he will discuss coordination on efforts to avoid a spillover in violence which would devastate the wider region.

The trip has been planned to countries which are vital to international efforts to uphold regional stability, free hostages and allow humanitarian access to Gaza, with all 3 vital interlocutors in the Middle East. The Foreign Secretary will discuss the urgent need for the Rafah crossing to open so that lifesaving aid can reach those who need it and for Hamas to release the hostages.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: It is in no one's interests – neither Israeli, Palestinian nor the wider Middle East – for others to be drawn into this conflict.

I am meeting counterparts from influential states in the region to push for calm and stability, facilitate humanitarian access into Gaza and work together to secure the release of hostages.

Since the Hamas attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken to counterparts from almost 20 countries as part of extensive diplomatic efforts to sustain the prospect of peace and stability in the Middle East.

Earlier this week, a [£10 million aid package was announced by the Prime Minister in response to the escalating conflict in Gaza](#) – with funding now being made available to agencies helping vulnerable civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs).

This is an increase of more than a third on existing UK support to the OPTs. Half the new funding will support an appeal by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA), which is responding to critical food, water, health, shelter and protection needs in Gaza.

The UK remains committed to mitigating the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and calling for international humanitarian law to be respected, while standing alongside the people of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas.

Last week the Foreign Secretary was the [first foreign minister to visit the site of Hamas's attacks on Israel](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-travels-to-middle-east-to-help-prevent-regional-spread-of-conflict>

### **The UK will continue work to break the cycle of violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: UK statement at the UN Security Council**

... President, the UK is shocked and deeply saddened by the destruction and the hundreds of lives that were lost and people who were killed at the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza yesterday evening. This is a devastating loss of life, and our thoughts and prayers are with those impacted.

The UK is working intensively to establish the facts. But fundamentally, hospitals are protected under international law and should not be targeted.

... Israel has the right, under the UN Charter, to defend itself against Hamas' appalling terror attacks. We have also emphasised that every feasible precaution must be taken to minimise harm to civilians, and we continue to call for immediate unimpeded humanitarian access to enable essential aid, water, food and medicines to reach civilians. Israel has itself acknowledged that it must act in accordance with international humanitarian law.

President, the UK is clear that Hamas does not speak for the Palestinian people. Humanitarian support and access must be maintained into Gaza. To support that effort we have announced a further £10m in UK humanitarian support.

And we call for the opening of the Rafah crossing and guarantees of security for any foreign nationals wishing to cross, as well as for vital humanitarian aid entering.

President, we are also clear that we must avoid further escalation of any conflict in the region. That is why the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have been working urgently to engage Israeli, Palestinian and regional leaders. ...

**To read the full statement see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-will-continue-work-to-break-the-cycle-of-violence-across-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

### **Updated Travel Advice: Israel**

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

### **Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories**

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

## **Department for Business and Trade**

### **Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/652d4ea76b66bf0014b75740/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-10-19.pdf>

### **Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/652d52a06b66bf000db7575b/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2023-10-19.pdf>

## **Scottish Government**

**Humza Yousaf** My brother-in-law, a doctor in Gaza, is spending his seventh consecutive day in hospital. Nadia spoke to him & said he should go home to rest, his response "I can't leave my people when they need me." Health workers in Gaza are heroes. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1714926781625405942>



### **MEPs condemn Hamas attack on Israel and call for a humanitarian pause**

Parliament has condemned Hamas' despicable terrorist attacks against Israel while expressing serious concern over the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

In the resolution adopted on Thursday with 500 votes in favour, 21 against and 24 abstentions, MEPs strongly condemn the brutal attacks, express their support to Israel and its people and underline the need to "eliminate the terrorist organisation Hamas". They also call for the immediate release of all hostages kidnapped by Hamas and recognise Israel's right to self-defence "as enshrined in and constrained by international law". As such, any actions by Israel must strictly comply with international humanitarian law, the text states. Parliament also stresses that both the attacks by Hamas and the Israeli response risk reinforcing a cycle of violence in the region. MEPs therefore call for a "humanitarian pause" of the fighting and stress that attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure, including UN workers, medical workers and journalists, is a serious violation of international law.

They also deeply mourn the loss of hundreds of innocent lives and those injured at the recent blast at the Al Ahli episcopal hospital in Gaza. The resolution calls for an independent investigation under international law to establish whether this was a deliberate attack and a war crime and, if so, calls for the perpetrators to be held accountable. ...

Parliament emphasises the importance of differentiating between the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspirations on the one side, and the Hamas terrorist group on the other ...

The resolution strongly condemns Iran's support to Hamas and other terrorist groups in the Gaza strip. MEPs reiterate their call to include the entirety of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Lebanese Hezbollah on the EU list of terrorist groups ...

They also denounce the rocket attacks from Lebanon and Syria into Israel and call for a de-escalation of tensions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. ...

While voicing strong support for stepping up the humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, MEPs also urge the European Commission to thoroughly review all EU financial assistance to Palestine and the region in order to ensure that no EU funds directly or indirectly finance terrorism. ...

Stressing the need to immediately relaunch the peace-process, the resolution reiterates its unwavering support for a negotiated two-state solution for Israel and Palestine on the basis of the 1967 lines with two sovereign, democratic states living side by side in peace and guaranteed security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states. ...

Parliament finally voices its concern over the increase in anti-Semitic speech, rallies and attacks directed at Jews since the beginning of Hamas' terrorist attacks. It calls on the European Commission and on all EU countries to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Jewish citizens.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231013IPR07136/meps-condemn-hamas-attack-on-israel-and-call-for-a-humanitarian-pause>

**Text adopted: The despicable terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel, Israel's right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law and the humanitarian situation in Gaza**

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0373\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0373_EN.pdf)

### **Security Council Fails to Adopt Resolution Calling for Humanitarian Pauses in Israel-Gaza Crisis on Account of Veto by United States**

... If adopted, the resolution would have condemned all violence and hostilities against civilians and all acts of terrorism, and would have unequivocally rejected and condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting on 7 October. It would have also called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and for the protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian personnel, as well as hospitals and medical facilities, consistent with international humanitarian law.

By other terms, it would have called for the rescission of the order for civilians and UN staff to evacuate all areas in Gaza north of the Wadi Gaza and relocate in southern Gaza. It would have also strongly urged the continuous, sufficient and unhindered provision of essential goods and services to civilians, including electricity, water, fuel, food and medical supplies, under international humanitarian law. ...

**Sérgio França Danese (Brazil)** ... said that his country had tried to build a unified position, its focus was on and remains on the critical situation on the ground, adding that humanitarian law and international law provided a clear path for the action. He said that the text condemned all acts of violence against civilians and called for hostages' immediate release and for all parties to abide by international legal obligations, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and stressed the urgent need for humanitarian access. It reflected the ethical necessity to provide for citizens in Gaza, including with electricity, food and medical supplies. The Council response we proposed was "robust and balanced", he said. "Sadly, very sadly, the Council was yet again unable to adopt a resolution" on the conflict, he added, saying again silence prevailed "to no one's long-term interest". Hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza cannot wait any longer, "actually they have waited for far too long, to no avail".

**Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)** said: "We have just been witnesses once again of the hypocrisy and double standards of our American colleagues." ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)** ... pointed out that her country "is on the ground doing the hard work of diplomacy" ... "When I talk about the protection of civilians, I mean all civilians," she stressed, highlighting that the United States is working to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)** ... stressed the importance of ensuring humanitarian access and protecting civilians, while emphasizing the Council's shared priority in preventing the regional escalation of the conflict. However, the text could have been clearer on Israel's inherent right to self-defence, and it ignored the fact that innocent Palestinian civilians were being used as human shields. ... [\[click here to read this speech in more detail\]](#)

**Lana Zaki Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)** recalling that, for more than 140 years Al Ahli Arab Hospital has provided medical care and shelter for Gazans, added: "Each passing hour of this ruinous war makes a mockery of the principles of international humanitarian law." Noting that "Gaza is laid to waste, and nobody feels safe", she called for an investigation to this incident. She also reported that more Palestinians have died in this outbreak of violence than in any other in the history of the conflict, expressing her support for a "no less than a humanitarian ceasefire". Stressing that Hamas is indeed responsible for "sparking this latest fire that is now engulfing the streets of the capitals around the region," she stated: "Make no mistake. The kindling was already there fuelled by decades of violent dehumanization." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15450.doc.htm>

## **World 'at Brink of Abyss That Could Change Trajectory of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', Middle East Coordinator Warns Security Council**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process** ... said ... "I have to be very honest here now and say that this is one of the most difficult moments facing the Israeli and Palestinian people in the last 75 years," ... "The massacre and despicable acts of violence and terror perpetrated by Hamas against Israelis on 7 October are seared into our collective memories. There is no justification or excuse for such acts and I condemn them unequivocally." ...

After more than a century of conflict and more than half a century of occupation, the international community has failed, collectively, to bring the parties to a just, sustainable political resolution, he continued. The longstanding fissures run deep and extend well beyond the confines of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

He said meetings and discussions with leaders in Egypt have focused on the critical question of facilitating the passage of humanitarian assistance through the Rafah crossing and reining in further regional hostilities. ...

The only way to end the bloodletting and prevent any recurrence is to pave a way towards a long-term political solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements. ...

**Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator** ... said that he was not just looking at the horrors of the last 11 days, but looking fearfully ahead at the horrors to come. He voiced his horror and despair at the attack on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip ...

The hospital was also hosting numerous internally displaced persons sheltering in the expectation, or hope, that it would provide safety ... He went on to stress that what happened on 7 October with the invasion of Israel and the taking of hostages still hidden away in Gaza was simply wrong, unconscionable and unacceptable, and their unconditional release is an essential component of any return to normalcy. ...

He went on to state, "I am compelled to reiterate that under international humanitarian law, there are simple requirements, simple rules of war that apply to all of us, whatever the provocation, and God knows there have been provocations: parties to armed conflict must protect civilians and civilian objects and take constant care to spare them. To ensure the wounded and sick receive the care they need." ...

As many as 1 million people have fled their homes to other parts of Gaza, he continued, noting that they did so in response to Israel's announcement that civilians should leave northern Gaza. However, "There is simply nowhere to go to for civilians to escape the destruction and privation, both of which grow by the hour as missiles continue to fly, and essential supplies, including fuel, food and medical items run low." ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)** ... called on Israel "to prioritize international humanitarian law" for humanitarian access to be granted immediately. He said that assuming the Council is unable to formulate a clear response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis and potential for the conflict to spread, his country will initiate the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on the protection of the civilians in Palestine for a comprehensive discussion of the situation regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and ways to settle it. ...

**Zhang Jun (China)** expressed shock over the heinous attack on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital and strongly condemned it, adding that the protection of civilians and civilian facilities is a red line under international humanitarian law. ... Tens of thousands of civilians had moved south, following evacuation orders, while air strikes are being carried out there as well, he said, adding that from north to south, Gaza is full of frightened children and desperate mothers. ...

**Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland)** said her delegation joins the Secretary-General in unequivocally condemning yesterday's strikes, particularly the one at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital. ... All parties must respect international humanitarian law, particularly the

principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and human rights. ...

**Nicolas De Rivière (France)** ... condemned the attack on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital claiming the lives of Palestinian civilians, adding: "Nothing can justify a strike on a hospital, and full light must be shed on this." ... Civilians who wish to leave must be able to do so, and Hamas must not prevent them from leaving. He voiced unwavering solidarity with Israel in these testing times and emphasized its right to defend itself while adhering to international humanitarian law. ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)** said hospitals are protected under international law and should not be targeted. Israel has the right, under the Charter of the United Nations, to defend itself against Hamas' appalling terror attacks. Her delegation is clear that Hamas does not speak for the Palestinian people or act to protect their interests and security. She called for immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access to enable essential aid, water, food and medicines to reach civilians. ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)** ... voiced outrage at the explosion in Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. Noting that President Biden on the evening of 17 October directed his national security team to gather information about what happened, she said, through overhead imagery and open-source information, "our current assessment is that Israel is not responsible for the explosion." ...

**Lana Zaki Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)**, noting the nearly two-week relentless bombardment of Gaza, said 1 million people are now displaced and more than 500,000 are sheltering in UN facilities. Bombs are being dropped on UN schools where people are seeking safety, she added, stressing: "The evacuation order for over a million people to try to move to safety is, in these circumstances, an impossible demand that fails to comply with international law." ...

**Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine**, emphasizing that there is no right to commit massacres in international law, said Israel is perpetrating massacres in Gaza every single day, pointing to the killing of entire families, and the bombing of shelters, schools and hospitals. He stressed: "You all say civilian lives should be protected, yet some of you until now continue being unable to call for a stop to the assault and to call for an immediate ceasefire." Those who cannot or will not call for a ceasefire will lose any credibility or authority and hold some of the responsibility for the devastation that is occurring now. ...

The region is united in telling the Council that it is not possible to avert a human catastrophe and a regional spillover, while Israel continues its bombings and killing Palestinians, he said. "The only way to prevent both is to stop this criminal aggression against our people," he stressed, emphasizing that for 75 years, Israel has brazenly justified how it had to dispossess the Palestinian people or occupy their land in full impunity. ...

"In the next few hours, more Palestinians will be killed. Tensions in the region will rise to new dangerous levels and anger and resentment will explode," he warned. ... Israel has now killed 3,500 Palestinians, almost all of them civilians, including more than 1,000 children, but will blame Palestinians for their own death as it has always done. ...

**Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel)**, stating, "What is going on here? I'm truly shocked and horrified," said that 11 days after the most barbaric attack, bigger than 9/11, it seems the Council has forgotten about it. "The pictures and footage from the 7 October pogrom are seared in mind and every Israeli's brain forever, but it seems like I must remind some of you what happened," he said, recalling that thousands of "barbaric Hamas Nazis" invaded Israel and murdered 1,400 Israeli civilians, with some raped, others beheaded, some burned alive while bound and gagged. Many paramedics were murdered on way to treat the wounded, and mothers watched as their babies were slaughtered, he said, stressing: "This attack was planned and carried out by the terrorists ruling Gaza as we speak." As many as 200 hostages were taken, including many nationals of Council members' countries, he said, recalling that Hamas's Charter does not constitute empty threats, but an action plan, adding: "Their goal is the annihilation of Israel."

Hamas is no different than Da'esh, he went on, adding that they do not believe in dialogue or political solutions, only to exterminate Jews and annihilate the Jewish State. ... He deplored that, 11 days after an attempted Jewish genocide, the Council has failed to condemn the brutal terror attack, and is instead fixated on humanitarian corridors and aid, adding: "These are important and noble causes, but they are not a solution to prevent Hamas' next massacre." ...

"Once Israel strikes back, they can parade the civilian bodies they hide behind," he continued, adding that Hamas is weaponizing the UN to prevent his country from obliterating them. ... He said that his country has footage and audio recording to prove that Al Ahli Arab Hospital was hit by a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket and that the tragic loss of lives is the sole fault of Hamas. ...

**Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud (Jordan)** ... condemned the heinous massacre by the Israel Defense Forces on 17 October "against innocent civilians receiving care" at the hospital, calling it a war crime. He called on the Council to bring about an immediate ceasefire and for humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip, and the prevention of the forcible displacement of people there. He said that the heinous crimes of the occupation contravene the rules of international law. ... He called for Israel to be held accountable for the "massacres and crimes it continues to commit against the defenceless Palestinian people". ...

**Osama Mahmoud Abdelkhalek Mahmoud (Egypt)** stressed that the "crime committed on 17 October (against Al Ahli Arab Hospital) is a new chapter in a long series of violations which did not begin on 8 October but much earlier". They began when the occupation began, he added. ... "They shouldn't recycle narratives accusing us of terrorism." Condemning all crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians, he said Israel attempts to evade responsibility, while certain international parties cover for it with false excuses. ... he said the so-called evacuation order by Israel — one of the most abominable instances of forced transfer of populations in the modern era — must be withdrawn. ... Detainees and hostages must be freed, and they must be treated in keeping with international law the principle of humanity, he added. ...

**Mohamed Al Hassan (Oman)** ... voiced regret that the Council failed, earlier in the week, to take tangible steps to maintain peace and security and avoid an escalation of the situation in the Middle East, adding that the result of this inaction was more murder and collective punishment and the killing of innocent souls. ...

Since the past few days, Israel has dropped the equivalent of quarter of a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip, he said, adding that the violence has killed many Palestinians every hour, levelled 17,000 residential buildings and 18 mosques, a toll which continues to increase. He called for accountability for the collective punishment and famine, "criminal acts practiced by Nazis which have no place in today's world". ...

**Alhakam Dandy (Syria)** ... condemned the "carnage by Zionist criminal forces against hundreds of innocents in Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza". ... He deplored Israel's continuing damage of civilian infrastructure, its inhumane blockade, and its siege, its use of prohibited weapons and obstruction of aid, in its "savage" attempt to obliterate Gaza from the face of Earth. ...

**Björn Olof Skoog, Permanent Observer for the European Union** ... [said] The Union has been clear as it condemns Hamas and its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks against Israel. He called for the immediate release of all hostages without any preconditions. "There is no justification for terrorism. We support Israel's right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law, in the face of such violent and indiscriminate attacks," ... It is vital to provide urgent humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza and the European Union has stepped up its emergency assistance to the Palestinian people. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15451.doc.htm>



### **Third Committee Condemns Brutal Bombing of Gaza Hospital, Enforced Displacement of Palestinian Civilians, Emphasizes Urgent Need for Unimpeded Humanitarian Aid**

... **Ms. Carmeli, youth delegate of Israel**, recalled her experience living on the Kerem Shalom kibbutz close to Gaza, where her bedroom was in a bomb shelter. Recalling sirens sounding as indiscriminate rocket shelling came from Gaza — common in the past 18 years since Israel disengaged from Gaza — she said she chose to live there anyway, choosing life over terror. This past Saturday, terror chose the kibbutz, she continued, recalling the Hamas terrorist attacks resulting in numerous murdered and wounded people as well as 200 taken hostage. “Israel is in a war against a terror organization called Hamas, she said — not citizens, not individuals.” She expressed grave concern for the kidnapped, noting that they are denied their most basic rights. She urged the international community to unequivocally condemn Hamas, call for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza and support Israel’s right to defend itself, and she warned against Hamas’ politicization of events. ...

**Heba Mostafa Mostafa Rizk (Egypt)** ... condemned Israel’s bombing of the hospital in Gaza City. “Israel must immediately stop its collective punishment of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip,” she said, adding that Egypt categorically rejects attempts to enforce displacement of Palestinians to neighbouring countries in contravention of the right to self-determination and rights of return. ...

**Mr. Aldaikan (Kuwait)** said that the brutal shelling of the hospital in Gaza was a flagrant violation of international law that the international community must condemn. ...

**Abdulaziz M. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia)** urged the restoration of the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination, including an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions. Saudi Arabia categorically rejects the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza and firmly condemns the crime perpetrated by Israeli forces that bombarded the hospital in Gaza, resulting in hundreds of casualties. ...

**Sahar K.H. Salem, observer for the State of Palestine**, said that, for 11 days, the world has witnessed Israel brutally killing over 3,000 people in the Gaza Strip — over half of them women and children — by direct strikes. “Israel has not spared a single Palestinian family in Gaza,” she said. Those who are not injured are displaced, and those who thought they found safety in Al-Ahli Hospital were massacred. ... Following an evacuation order, they are scrambling for safety with nowhere to go, she said, adding that entire neighborhoods have been razed to the ground, including schools and UN buildings. There is no power, no water, no fuel, and food supplies are running low, she said, emphasizing that “morgues are overflowing” and bodies are buried in mass graves. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4386.doc.htm>

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### **Bureau of General Assembly’s Palestinian Rights Committee Condemns Killing and Wounding of Civilians in Gaza, Calls for Immediate Ceasefire**

... The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People strongly condemns the killing and wounding of civilians and the targeting of civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. It expresses grave concern at the humanitarian disaster being imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population. It calls on the international community to put aside divisions and uphold the political, legal, humanitarian and moral obligations invoked by this dangerous crisis. The international community must act with urgency for an immediate ceasefire, to deliver humanitarian assistance to all those in need, and for a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict, which has been too long delayed. ...

The current escalation in Gaza, coming after decades of denying the rights of the Palestinian people, has already broken the limits of international law and is providing ample evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ongoing indiscriminate and collective punishment, military attacks on densely populated areas as well as against hospitals, places of worship, and schools where civilians seek refuge are war crimes under the Fourth Geneva Convention. ...

There is no military solution to this conflict. Only a solution that recognizes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom, can bring peace and security to the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. ...

**To read the full statement see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gapal1455.doc.htm>

TOP

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

### **UK Parliament**

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

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

Amendment paper

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0325/amend/econactivity\\_rm\\_rep\\_1020.pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0325/amend/econactivity_rm_rep_1020.pdf)

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

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

#### **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

#### **Online Safety Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

#### **Nakba Commemoration Bill**

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

#### **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

#### **Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

#### **Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438>

## Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

## Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

## Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

## Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454>

## Scottish Parliament

### Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

### **\*\* closes in 7 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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