



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Library Briefing

Historical representation of minority ethnic groups in the House of Commons

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9864/CBP-9864.pdf>

TOP

Israel

Downing Street

Joint statement following PM call with leaders of US, Canada, France, Germany and Italy: 22 October 2023

Today, President Joseph R. Biden, Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, President Emmanuel Macron of France, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy, and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom spoke regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and the terrorist organisation Hamas.

The leaders reiterated their support for Israel and its right to defend itself against terrorism and called for adherence to international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.

They welcomed the release of two hostages and called for the immediate release of all remaining hostages. They committed to close coordination to support their nationals in the region, in particular those wishing to leave Gaza.

The leaders welcomed the announcement of the first humanitarian convoys to reach Palestinians in need in Gaza and committed to continue coordinating with partners in the region to ensure sustained and safe access to food, water, medical care, and other assistance required to meet humanitarian needs.

The leaders committed to continue close diplomatic coordination, including with key partners in the region, to prevent the conflict from spreading, preserve stability in the Middle East, and work toward a political solution and durable peace.

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Lawyers advising the Israeli Military must act to prevent massive human rights violations and war crimes, refuse legal authorization for actions that violate International Law

UN experts today condemned the massacres of civilians and hostage-taking by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Israel on October 7. The ongoing suffering as a result of these serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law for families, communities and Israeli society as a whole is evident. Recognizing the human rights violations that decades of occupation have had on the Palestinian people, nothing justifies the targeting of civilians in this way. Under international law, Israel has a right to self-defence, but its response must be proportionate and in full respect of the UN Charter and the rules that apply to the use of force in armed conflict, specifically those that protect civilians, the experts said.

The Experts called on lawyers responsible for advising the Israeli military on humanitarian law matters to deny legal authorization and advise against any military orders that would result in war crimes or crimes against humanity. If legal limits are systematically ignored, such lawyers have an independent professional duty to take active steps to stop such abuses and ensure they are not accomplices to war crimes. The Experts recognize the particular burdens of responsibility that fall on legal advisors to Member State militaries consistent with a rule of law framework of operation which non-state armed groups eschew or do not implement, and the grave violations of international humanitarian law that can occur in the absence of such adherence.

As has been reported throughout the world, on October 7, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups summarily executed large numbers of civilians, took 199 individuals hostage including those highly vulnerable from age and injury and launched thousands of rockets indiscriminately into Israel. More than 1,300 people were killed and more than 3,300 were wounded. The majority were civilians, killed, maimed, or injured in their homes and subjected to an array of attendant violations including torture, inhuman and degrading treatment under international law. The extent of these reported crimes is still being documented, but overwhelming evidence demonstrates the extreme brutality and cruelty with which the attacks were carried out. Such intentional targeting of civilians is a blatant violation of international law and constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law and those responsible for these heinous acts must be held to account for their crimes. Hostages must be immediately and unconditionally released unharmed.

Since the attack, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant called for a “complete siege” of Gaza and referred to Hamas militants as “human animals”. ... As of 18 October, the Ministry of Health in Gaza recorded 3,478 Palestinians killed, including 853 children and 936 women, and more than 12,065 Palestinians injured. Reports indicate that the vast majority of the deaths can be attributed to Israeli airstrikes. ... Food, water, and electricity are increasingly hard to find. The Internet is likely to go dark. Israel’s actions amount to collective punishment, which is plainly prohibited by international humanitarian law. The intentional starvation of a civilian population is a war crime and may amount to a crime against humanity. ...

Near midnight on 12 October, Israel called for all Palestinians north of Wadi Gaza to evacuate, including those in hospitals or sheltering in UN buildings. Such an evacuation, of more than 1.1 million people, within a very short period, was clearly impossible and caused panic among a civilian population already experiencing the loss of family members, injuries caused by bombing, extreme hunger, and lack of medical care. ... The forced

expulsion of a civilian population may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes. “As Israel responds to Hamas and conducts operations in Gaza, all lawyers advising the military must identify and seek to prevent acts potentially amounting to war crimes. These lawyers have a professional duty to refuse legal authorization of criminal actions,” the Experts said. “If they cannot stop those crimes, they have a duty to take steps that ensure they are not complicit in war crimes or other grave breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law. Counter-terrorism action does not override the fundamental norms of international human rights and international humanitarian law that apply in these circumstances.”

In Israel, lawyers advising the military take an active role in determining what is and is not permissible in specific operations. Their advice about issues such as lawful targets of attack, the choice and use of weapons, and the means and methods of warfare is essential to the operational planning of military campaigns. ... If such lawyers approve actions that amount to massive human rights violations and war crimes, they may bear accomplice liability for those acts.

“International humanitarian law is not optional,” the Experts said. “It was created by States to curb violations even in the most difficult of circumstances, including those that too often result from the desire to exact revenge following atrocities. It is the role of lawyers advising the military to restrain such instincts by refusing to approve unlawful military actions. ...”

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/ijudiciary/statements/statement-sr-ijl-2023-10-19.pdf>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

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

Welsh Senedd Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee letter to the Minister for Finance and Local Government

<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s141113/Letter%20to%20Minister%20for%20Finance%20and%20Local%20Government%20from%20Chair%20of%20Public%20Accounts%20and%20Public%20Adminis.pdf>

For reference, the Welsh Government LCM can be read at

<https://senedd.wales/media/s4ipp1xv/lcm-ld16016-e.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>

**** The Social Security (Residence and Presence Requirements) (Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and Lebanon) (Scotland) Regulations 2023**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2023/9780111058343/contents>

The Social Security (Residence and Presence Requirements) (Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2023/9780111058312/contents>

TOP

Consultations

**** new or updated today**

**** closes in 3 days**

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

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

**** closes in 8 days**

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>

TOP

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