



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Department for Education

The Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan): Mr Speaker, I stand with this House in condemning the barbaric terrorist attacks on Israel. The brutal actions of Hamas have sent shockwaves that have reverberated all the way to our shores. My ministerial team and I recently met leaders from the Jewish education community. I was deeply moved by the experiences that they shared but horrified by the rise in antisemitism that they faced. That is totally unacceptable. All students deserve to learn without fear or harassment.

Disturbingly, I have also seen evidence of students and academics appearing to support Hamas. Let me be crystal clear: Hamas is a terrorist organisation and supporting it is a criminal act. The Government will take action against those who do. With my Ministers, I have written to schools, colleges and universities, reminding them of their duties under Prevent and that incidents of antisemitism will not be tolerated. We teach our children the British values of liberty, mutual respect and tolerance. This Government will always stand by those values.

David Evennet (Conservative): I join my right hon. Friend in the comments that she has just made. ...

Bridget Phillipson (Labour): I join the Secretary of State in recognising the impact of the conflict in the middle east on our education system here and the importance of every child being able to attend school safely. ...

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [906648] In the wake of the massacre that occurred in Israel—the greatest loss of life since the holocaust—cases of antisemitism in this country have risen by 582%, and Jewish students on our campuses feel very unsafe. Glorification of this massacre has been carried out at Warwick University, Bristol University, University College London and the School of Oriental and African Studies. It is unacceptable for universities to tolerate such activity, so will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning antisemitism and state what she will do to ensure that Jewish students feel safe on campus

and can study like every other British citizen?

The Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon): Sadly, there are a number of Hamas's useful idiots—a fifth column—across some of our universities. The Secretary of State has said that she will not stand for it; the Home Secretary will not stand for it. We have written to universities. This is absolutely unacceptable; we expect our universities to be safe places for all Jewish students. ...

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [906653] In recent weeks, we have seen reported instances of antisemitism rise by 1,300% and Islamophobia by 150%, with Jewish kids afraid to go to school and Muslim kids asked, "Whose side are you on?" What are the Government doing to ensure that children are taught sensitively but robustly about the wrongs of such intolerance, and does Ofsted have a role in ensuring consistency of approach in all schools?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member is absolutely right: antisemitism has no place in education. It was an honour to join the Secretary of State's visit to Menorah High School last week, together with the whole ministerial team, standing in solidarity with that school and with the Jewish community. We have written to all schools and colleges urging a swift response to hate-related incidents and active reassurance for their students and staff, and we continue to work with faith leaders, schools and Ofsted to monitor the response to those concerns.

Aaron Bell (Conservative) [906654] ... since Hamas's attack, Jewish students on campus report that they have had a year's worth of antisemitic incidents in only two weeks. Some have been targeted, the attack itself was celebrated, and some have received death threats. As such, does the Minister agree that universities should work with the Union of Jewish Students to publicise the welfare hotline that it has established; avail themselves of the training that the UJS offers; and work to implement the recommendations of the recent report of the taskforce on antisemitism in higher education?

Robert Halfon: I have made it clear that we will not tolerate antisemitism on campus. We are working closely with the Union of Jewish Students and the higher education Jewish chaplaincy service, as well as the Community Security Trust. I welcome the taskforce's report and its recommendations, and we absolutely urge universities to prioritise the implementation of that report. ...

Anthony Higginbotham (Conservative) [906655] One day after Hamas's brutal massacre in Israel, a student at the University of Manchester spoke of being full of "pride and joy" at a once-in-a-lifetime experience—not only a disgusting comment but one that points to possible extremism in our university campuses. Far too many think that there are no consequences for spreading such hate in our educational settings, so will my right hon. Friend set out what the real consequences are? (906655)

Robert Halfon: I mentioned previously that unfortunately, we have some of Hamas's useful idiots across our campuses, and we will not stand for it—they represent a fifth column supporting terrorism. We are doing everything possible. The Prevent duty requires higher education providers to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, and we will work with the universities to ensure that they take any extremist activity very seriously. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/4012A55C-D5AC-4903-8096-E5615E7055EB/TopicalQuestions>

House of Commons Written Answers

Police: Counter-terrorism

Neil Coyle (Labour) [202991] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department,

whether her Department provides (a) guidance and (b) training to police officers on ensuring that (i) Hamas logos and chants are swiftly identified and (ii) any person suspected of promoting terror in the UK is arrested.

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

Following the terrorist attacks on Israel, the Home Secretary wrote to police chiefs in England and Wales urging them to step up patrols and use the full force of the law to tackle those inciting hatred towards our Jewish communities.

The Home Secretary and the Prime Minister have hosted a roundtable with police chiefs and the Community Security Trust (CST) to discuss the practical steps that can be taken to enhance the operational response to any potential disorder.

Public order policing has disseminated briefing materials to police forces covering hate crime and the proscription offences, including advice on the flags associated with proscribed organisations Hamas and Hizballah.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/202991>

BBC: Hamas

Julian Knight (Independent) [202136] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Chair of the BBC on the appropriate description of Hamas in its news coverage.

John Whittingdale: The events in Israel since 7 October are terrorist acts committed by a terrorist organisation, proscribed in the United Kingdom since 2021 and designated as such by many other governments and international organisations.

The BBC is editorially and operationally independent and decisions around its editorial policies and guidelines are therefore a matter for the BBC not the Government.

However, calling these acts what they are, and accurately labelling the perpetrators, helps audiences to understand what has happened, is happening and its context.

That is why the Secretary of State has communicated with the BBC, and with the public, her disappointment that the BBC has refused to describe Hamas as terrorists, or the atrocities it has carried out as terrorism. The Secretary of State made that point when she met the Director General of the BBC on 9 October.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202136>

Antisemitism

Jim Shannon (DUP) [201888] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department are taking to protect Jewish people from hate crimes.

Sarah Dines: The Government is clear that all forms of hate crime, including antisemitic hate crime, are completely unacceptable. We expect the police fully to investigate these abhorrent offences and make sure those who commit them feel the full force of the law.

In March 2023, the Home Secretary, announced the continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant and increased funding for 2023/24 by £1 million, to a total of £15 million. This grant provides protective security measures at Jewish schools, colleges, nurseries, and some other Jewish community sites, as well as a number of synagogues.

In light of the horrific Hamas terrorist acts in Israel and related reports of increased incidents of antisemitism in the UK, the Prime Minister has announced additional funding of £3 million for the Community Security Trust to provide additional security at Jewish schools, synagogues and other sites.

The Home Secretary chairs the Jewish Community Crime, Policing and Security Taskforce. This meeting brings together Government, law enforcement and the Community Security Trust in order to address Jewish community security concerns. The Home Secretary also meets the Metropolitan Police Commissioner regularly, along with senior officers across the country, to ensure the police are doing everything they can to protect Jewish people from these crimes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201888>

The announcements referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-ramps-up-security-measures-to-protect-jewish-communities>

and

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

Hate Crime

Afzal Khan (Labour) [201247] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has held meetings in 2023 on (a) Islamophobia and (b) hate crime against Muslims.

Lee Rowley: This Government is committed to doing everything we can to tackle anti-Muslim hatred, and all forms of prejudice in our society. Ministers across Government hold meetings covering these important issues regularly.

DLUHC has allocated over £6 million to support Tell MAMA since their inception in 2012 for their vital work monitoring and supporting victims of anti-Muslim hatred.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed. Details of meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201247>

Hate Crime: Muslims

Afzal Khan (Labour) [201246] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has held meetings in 2023 on (a) Islamophobia and (b) hate crime against Muslims.

Tom Tugendhat: This Government is committed to doing everything we can to tackle anti-Muslim hatred, and all forms of prejudice in our society. Ministers across Government hold meetings covering these important issues regularly.

Details of meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201246>

Details of meetings as referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/home-office-ministers-hospitality-data#2023>

Hate Crime: Muslims

Afzal Khan (Labour) [201248] To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has held meetings in 2023 on (a) Islamophobia and (b) hate crime against Muslims.

Maria Caulfield: This Government is committed to doing everything we can to tackle anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of prejudice in our society. Ministers across Government regularly hold meetings covering these important issues. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201248>

Hate Crime: Prosecutions

Mark Logan (Conservative) [201490] To ask the Attorney General, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Crown Prosecution Service is adequately resourced to prosecute hate crime against members of religious minority communities (a) on social media and (b) in community settings.

Victoria Prentis: The Government is committed to delivering justice for victims of hate crimes committed in our communities and online, and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) considers all cases referred by the police.

Considering the events unfolding in the Middle East, a package of measures has been put in place to provide ongoing support to the police. This includes updating existing guidance on protests and offering the use of prosecutors in command centres to advise in real time. In the rolling year to March 2023, the CPS has prosecuted 380 religiously aggravated and 9,1234 racially aggravated hate crime offences, with a charge rate of 85% and 87% respectively. These include aggravated malicious communication offences.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201490>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

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

and

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/racist-and-religious-hate-crime-prosecution-guidance>

and

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/offences-during-protests-demonstrations-or-campaigns>

National Lottery Heritage Fund: Religious Buildings

Stephen Timms (Labour) [201026] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what percentage of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's grants were awarded to local churches, chapels and meeting houses open for worship, excluding cathedrals, in financial years (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19, (c) 2019-20, (d) 2020-21, (e) 2021-22 and (f) 2022-23.

John Whittingdale: The UK's places of worship are a major recipient of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Churches of various sizes and denominations have benefited from National Lottery investment, ensuring that those who care for them can continue to share the significant and cherished heritage they represent with local residents and visitors alike.

In 2017–18, 13% of National Lottery Heritage Funding was awarded to local churches, chapels, and meeting-houses excluding cathedrals. In 2018–19, 15% of funding was awarded in this way. In 2019–20, 9% of funding was awarded in this way. In 2020–21, 5% of funding was awarded in this way. In 2021–22, 8% of funding was awarded in this way. In 2022–23, 8% of funding was awarded in this way.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201026>

Downing Street

Rishi Sunak This weekend we saw hate on our streets. Calls for Jihad are not only a threat to the Jewish community, but to our democratic values. We will never tolerate antisemitism in our country. And we expect the police to take all necessary action to tackle extremism head on. [plus image]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1716503372528758876>

Department for Education

Education Secretary says parents can see sex education material

The Education Secretary is writing ... to all schools in England to make clear that they can and should share relationships, sex and health (RSHE) curriculum materials with parents. In addition, she has penned an open letter to parents – which encourages them to have confidence in their right to know what their children are seeing and being taught in the classroom.

The letter makes clear that companies providing teaching resources cannot use copyright law to forbid schools from sharing materials, and any attempt to do so through contract terms would be unenforceable and void.

If a provider were to attempt to forbid sharing with parents when asked, schools should continue regardless, because a blanket ban would contradict the clear public interest in parents being aware of what their children are being taught. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-says-parents-can-see-sex-education-material>

Scottish Government

Leaders reaffirm inter-faith solidarity in Scotland

First Minister Humza Yousaf has joined faith leaders in Scotland to express a steadfast commitment against all forms of hate crime, bigotry and xenophobia.

In a joint statement, the First Minister and senior religious representatives of Scotland's Jewish and Muslim communities have pledged to continue working together to foster community cohesion and goodwill across Scotland. ...

We express today our mutual respect and understanding, recognising our common humanity, and with love and compassion, knowing that our hearts are full of pain. We also acknowledge the suffering caused to innocent life as a result of recent events and wholeheartedly pray for the full recovery of the many injured and for those who have lost loved ones.

In times of crisis, it is important for our faith communities, and all communities in Scotland, to reaffirm our relationships and maintain our continuing dialogue. We are steadfast in our commitment against all forms of hate crime, bigotry and xenophobia and we are proud of the strong inter-faith tradition in Scotland. We stand together in solidarity to reassure our communities of that continuing commitment. We will continue to work together to foster community cohesion and goodwill across Scotland, so that everyone can live in safety. We are proud of our close and strong working relationships, built up over many years, and which allows us the ability to work with confidence and trust.

Humza Yousaf, First Minister of Scotland

Rabbi Moshe Rubin, Senior Rabbi of Scotland

Chief Imam Dr. Sayed Razawi

Shaykh Hassan Rabbani, Chair of the Scottish Muslim Forum

Rabbi Eliran Shabo, Jewish Chaplain of Scotland Universities

<https://www.gov.scot/news/leaders-reaffirm-inter-faith-solidarity-in-scotland/>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

Cultural Heritage: World War II

Julian Knight (Independent) [201453] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to identify (a) stolen and (b) confiscated (i) treasures, (ii) art and (iii) other cultural assets that were lost during the Second World War.

John Whittingdale: The UK has endorsed the Washington Principles on Nazi-confiscated art, which include identifying looted art and establishing mechanisms to consider claims for its return. Our national museums have undertaken detailed research of their collections to identify objects with uncertain provenance between the years 1933–45. The results have been published in a fully searchable spoliation database which is regularly updated.

HM Government has also established the Spoliation Advisory Panel which advises on claims for the return of cultural objects lost during the German Third Reich and which are now in UK collections. The Panel currently holds the Presidency of the Network of Restitution Committees on Nazi-looted art which works to increase the effectiveness of provenance research and the sharing of information on Nazi-looted art, in the spirit of the Washington Declaration.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201453>

The Washington Principles, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.lootedartcommission.com/Washington-principles>

Information about the Spoliation Advisory Panel, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/spoliation-advisory-panel>

United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation: Training

Julian Knight (Independent) [202196] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation spent on equality and diversity training in the 2022-23 financial year.

Jacob Young: On 2 October, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a value for money audit of all EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) spending in the Civil Service.

The audit will dovetail with the public sector productivity review, aiming at delivering a leaner, more efficient government. The audit forms part of our drive to improve productivity across the public sector by driving down waste and improving performance.

The findings and actions of the audit will be announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202196>

Scottish Government

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust Our CEO @OliviaRMW was delighted to meet @ScotGovFM @HumzaYousaf today in Edinburgh to discuss our work in Scotland. We are grateful for the ongoing support from the Scottish Government to expand our reach across the nation and look forward to working together for #HMD2024. [plus photos]

https://twitter.com/HMD_UK/status/1716491163262243276

TOP

Israel

See also “Topical Questions: Department for Education”, written answers 202991 and 202136, and the Scottish Government press release that are included in the Home Affairs section above, and written answer 201700 that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Israel and Gaza

col 591 The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak): Mr Speaker, last week I visited the middle east, bringing a message of solidarity with the region against terror and against the further spread of conflict. I met with the leaders of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority to co-ordinate our response to the crisis before us, but also to renew the better vision of the future that Hamas are trying to destroy.

I travelled first to Israel. It is a nation in mourning, but it is also a nation under attack. The violence against Israel did not end on 7 October. Hundreds of rockets are launched at its towns and cities every day, and Hamas still hold around 200 hostages, including British citizens. In Jerusalem, I met some of the relatives, who are suffering unbearable torment. Their pain will stay with me for the rest of my days. ... In my meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog, I told them once again that we stand resolutely with Israel in defending itself against terror, and I stressed again the need to act in line with international humanitarian law and take every possible step to avoid harming civilians. It was a message delivered by a close friend and ally. I say it again: we stand with Israel.

I recognise that the Palestinian people are suffering terribly. Over 4,000 Palestinians have been killed in this conflict. They are also the victims of Hamas, who embed themselves in the civilian population. Too many lives have already been lost, and the humanitarian crisis is growing. ...

There are three abiding messages ... First, we must continue working together to get more humanitarian support into Gaza. The whole House will welcome the limited opening of the Rafah crossing. It is important progress and testament to the power of diplomacy, but it is not enough. We need a constant stream of aid pouring in, bringing the water, food, medicine and fuel that is so desperately needed ... We have already committed £10 million of extra support to help civilians in Gaza, and I can announce today that we are going further. We are providing an additional £20 million of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, more than doubling our previous support to the Palestinian people. ...

col 592 Secondly, this is not a time for hyperbole and simplistic solutions. It is a time for quiet and dogged diplomacy that recognises the hard realities on the ground and delivers help now ...

Thirdly, growing attacks by Hezbollah on Israel’s northern border, rising tensions on the west bank, and missiles and drones launched from Yemen show that some are seeking escalation, so we need to invest more deeply in regional stability and in the two-state solution. ... in recent years, energy has moved into other avenues such as the Abraham accords and normalisation talks with Saudi Arabia. We support those steps absolutely and believe that they can bolster wider efforts, but we must never lose sight of how essential the two-state solution is. ...

Mr Speaker, Hamas care more about their paymasters in Iran than the children they hide behind. So let me be clear: there is no scenario where Hamas can be allowed to control Gaza or any part of the Palestinian territories. Hamas is a threat not only to Israel, but to many others across the region. ...

I also want to say a word about the tone of the debate. When things are so delicate, we all have a responsibility to take additional care in the language we use, and to operate on the basis of facts alone. The reaction to the horrific explosion at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital was

a case in point. As I indicated last week, we have taken care to look at all the evidence currently available, and I can now share our assessment with the House. On the basis of the deep knowledge and analysis of our intelligence and weapons experts, the British Government judge that the explosion was likely caused by a missile, or part of one, that was launched from within Gaza towards Israel. The misreporting of that incident had a negative effect in the region, including on a vital US diplomatic effort, and on tensions here at home. We need to learn the lessons and ensure that in future there is no rush to judgment.

We have seen hate on our streets again this weekend. We all stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people ... but we will never tolerate antisemitism in our country. Calls for jihad on our streets are a threat not only to the Jewish community but to our democratic values, and we expect the police to take all necessary action to tackle extremism head on. ...

col/ 593 The 7 October attack was driven by hatred, but it was also driven by Hamas's fear that a new equilibrium might be emerging in the middle east, one that would leave old divisions behind and offer hope of a better, more secure, more prosperous way forward. ... We must keep alive that vision of a better future, against those who seek to destroy it. ...

Keir Starmer (Labour): The brutal attack in Israel just over two weeks ago was the darkest day in Jewish history since the holocaust—two weeks of grief for the innocent people who lost brothers, sisters, children; two weeks of torture for the families whose loved ones were taken hostage by Hamas. There was a small glimmer of light this weekend with the release of two American hostages, Natalie and Judith Raanan. ... But Hamas still hold hundreds more—sons, daughters, mums, dads are still missing. They are innocent people who could, if Hamas willed it, be released immediately. But they remain hostage because Hamas want the chaos of war. Hamas want Jews to suffer. Hamas want the Palestinian people to share in the pain, because the Palestinian people are not their cause, and peace is not their aim. The dignity of human life—Jew or Muslim—means absolutely nothing to them. In light of their barbarism, Israel has the right to defend herself. Yes, to get her hostages home, but also to defeat Hamas so that nobody need suffer like this again and so that we might once more see a road to a lasting peace, with a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel.

This operation can and must be done within international law. We democracies know that all human life is equal. Innocent lives must be protected. Those are the principles that differentiate us from the terrorists who target Israel. There must now be clear humanitarian corridors within Gaza for those escaping violence. Civilians must not be targeted. Where Palestinians are forced to flee, they must not be permanently displaced from their homes. International law is clear. It also means that basic services, including water, electricity and the fuel needed for it, cannot be denied. Hamas might not care for the safety and security of the Palestinian people, but we do. We cannot and will not close our eyes to their suffering. ...

col/ 594 The deal struck by the United States to get a flow of trucks through the Rafah crossing is an important first step ... but it is nowhere near enough. ...

Countries able to provide support must step up, including the United Kingdom, so I welcome the increased funding for humanitarian aid that the Prime Minister has announced this afternoon. ... Even as we stand by Israel in her fight against Hamas, our eyes must also look to the future: a future where Israeli citizens live free from the fear of terrorist attacks, and a future for the Palestinian people where they and their children enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that we take for granted.

For too long, we have talked about a two-state solution and the dignity and justice of a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel, without a serious path or will to make it happen. For too long, we have allowed welcome progress in improving relations between Israel and her neighbours to sit without any progress on the future for Palestine and its people. That must change. We stand with Israel and her right to defend herself against the

terrorists of Hamas. We stand for international law, the protection of innocent lives and humanitarian support for the Palestinians. We do so because we stand for a political path to a two-state solution and a better future. ...

The Prime Minister: ... the Development Minister is in close contact—on an almost daily basis—with Martin Griffiths, the head of the UN's humanitarian relief efforts, to ensure that the UK can play a leading role in supporting what is happening on the ground. ...

col 595 In closing, I concur with what the Leader of the Opposition said. There is absolutely a future available to us that is more prosperous and more stable for people living in the region; one where people can live with dignity, with security and with opportunity. That is the future that Hamas are trying to destroy. We should stand united to stop that happening.

Julian Lewis (Conservative): Did my right hon. Friend get any impression from his discussions with Arab leaders that they understood the purpose of Hamas terrorism to derail their efforts to find a better way of living in the middle east? ...

The Prime Minister: ... from all my conversations across the region with Arab leaders that there is absolutely no love or affection for Hamas. Indeed, it is the opposite, as the Palestinian President said with me when he condemned in no uncertain terms the terrorist atrocities that they have perpetrated. ...

Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... In our collective unequivocal condemnation of the abhorrent attacks of 7 October, the House has been and continues to be fully united, just as we are united in our condemnation of any form of antisemitism that rears its head on these isles, and in our thoughts and prayers for all the hostages, who need to be returned safely to their families.

However, in respect of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza ... I believe that we must go further. Here is why. Turning off electricity and water to Gaza is collective punishment. Limiting the free access of food and medicines to Gaza is collective punishment. Preventing people, including British citizens, from fleeing Gaza is collective punishment. Dropping leaflets in northern Gaza telling people to flee or they will be deemed partners of Hamas is a precursor to further collective punishment. All of us in the Chamber know that collective punishment is prohibited by international law. ...

col 596 **The Prime Minister:** ... Israel has suffered an appalling act of terror. It has the right to defend itself and ensure that something like it does not happen again. He talked about people moving from the north to south of Gaza; it is absolutely right that Israel takes every precaution to avoid harming civilians. In my conversation with the President, he confirmed that Israel intends to act within international humanitarian law, but Hamas are preventing people from moving, keeping them in harm's way. ... he would do well to recognise that that is Hamas's policy: embedding themselves in civilian populations, using civilians as human shields and preventing them from leaving when they have been given advance notice. ...

Vicky Ford (Conservative): ... All were deeply shocked by the events of 7 October. There is no place for hate, but there is great concern about the loss of civilian life since then, and the risk of contagion and of the situation escalating even further. I thank our Prime Minister for saying that, in defending itself from terror, Israel also needs to act within international law. How is that being monitored? If there are breaches, how would any perpetrator be held to account?

The Prime Minister: ... there are established mechanisms for that, but I am reassured by what the Israeli President has said very publicly and in our conversations that Israel intends to act within humanitarian law and is taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians.

Mohammad Yasin (Labour): We all condemned the attacks by Hamas on innocent civilians, but since then thousands of innocent Palestinians—including children—have been killed by the Israeli army's bombardment, which I also condemn. ...

The Prime Minister: Again, Israel has the right to defend itself in line with international and humanitarian law, and it has our support in doing that.

col 597 **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** How can members of the British Jewish community feel safe when people are allowed to chant on the streets of Britain in favour of jihad, call for the raising of religious armies to go and fight Israel, call for the mobilisation of the intifada, and walk down our street holding signs that display despicable ancient antisemitic tropes? Those are marches not for peace but for hate. They glorify the worst murder of Jews since the holocaust, and they have to stop.

The Prime Minister: Hateful extremism has no place in our society. Calls for jihad and for Muslim armies to rise up are a threat not only to the Jewish community but to our democratic values. ... Anyone who commits a crime—whether inciting racial hatred, glorifying terrorism or violating public order—should expect to face the full force of the law.

Ed Davey (Liberal Democrat): ... To prevent a catastrophe it is essential that far more aid reaches the people who need it and it is vital that the hostages are unconditionally released. Hamas's evil attacks have claimed far too many innocent lives already. Israel unquestionably has the right to protect its citizens and target these brutal terrorists in line with international law, just as we all have a duty to prevent more needless civilian deaths. ...

The Prime Minister: Let me just say exactly what I have been trying to do over the past week: ensure that we can diplomatically engage with partners in the region ... That has resulted in humanitarian aid coming into Gaza. ... In all our conversations, particularly with the Emir of Qatar, we are focused on releasing hostages of all nationalities, but we are particularly concerned about the British hostages. ...

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... This is a watershed moment: we are either going to build a future that is based on a killing field in Gaza, or we are going to have a ceasefire and the opportunity to bring the necessary aid there for all the people who are suffering now so appallingly. ...

col 598 **The Prime Minister:** It is difficult to tell Israel to have a ceasefire when it is still facing rocket fire on an almost daily basis and when its citizens are still being held hostage. It has suffered an appalling terrorist attack and has a right to defend itself, but, as I have said, it is important that that is done in accordance with international law and it is important that Israel takes every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians. ...

Jess Phillips (Labour): Nobody is arguing about whether Israel has a right to defend itself, but ... what happens if international law is not followed? ...

The Prime Minister: ... there are established processes and mechanisms to take account of international law. But again, we cannot lose sight, just a week or two later, of the fact that Hamas—an absolutely evil terrorist organisation—have perpetrated a horrific attack on over 1,000 people in Israel, and Israel has the right to defend itself and ensure that that does not happen again.

Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative): ... It is also becoming very clear, as he referenced, that Iran's hand is behind all the genocidal murdering and kidnapping of Jewish Israeli people. ... is it not time that we reviewed again the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps with a view to banning its activities, and the role of Iranian banks here in the UK, in the City of London? ...

The Prime Minister: We have already taken strong action, such as sanctioning more than 350 Iranian individuals and entities, including the IRGC in its entirety. ... we do not comment on specific organisations and whether they are being considered for proscription, but he can rest assured that we discuss Iran and how best to contain it with all our allies on a regular basis.

col 599 **Zarah Sultana (Labour):** Indiscriminate bombing and obliterating entire neighbourhoods is a war crime. Collective punishment and starving a population of

necessities is a war crime. Ordering 1.1 million people to leave their homes and forcibly displacing them is a war crime as well. I absolutely condemn Hamas's killing of Israeli civilians, and I echo the calls for the release of hostages, but that does not excuse war crimes ...

The Prime Minister: As I have made very clear, we support the Palestinian people because they are victims of Hamas too. We mourn the loss of every innocent life; we mourn the loss of civilians of every faith and every nationality who have been killed in this conflict. However, I simply disagree with the hon. Lady's characterisation of what is going on. There is a significant difference between a terrorist organisation that deliberately and specifically targeted the killing, mutilation and murder of innocent civilians—including children and women and babies—a couple of weeks ago, and Israel's lawful right to defend itself and go after those perpetrators.

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... was [the Prime Minister] able to obtain any new information about the welfare of hostages who have been taken by Hamas into Gaza? ...

The Prime Minister: ... It is difficult to ascertain that information precisely, but I give him the reassurance that we are talking extensively to our partners. ...

Steve McCabe (Labour): ... Given that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a fundamentalist organisation that is banned in 40 countries and across most of the Arab world, why are its members allowed to parade on the streets of London and call for the destruction of the state of Israel?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, we do of course keep the list of proscribed organisations under review, but we do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription. ...

col 600 Michael Ellis (Conservative): A group of 100 journalists from around the world have just been shown some indescribable raw footage of the Hamas attacks in a private screening. According to a BBC journalist, it features a father and two sons aged roughly seven and nine seen running into a shelter in their underwear. A terrorist throws a grenade into the shelter, killing the father and badly injuring the two boys, who run back into the house covered in blood. The two children are screaming for their father, and saying that they are going to die. The terrorist is seen calmly drinking water from the family's fridge. ... Will the Prime Minister confirm that any person in the United Kingdom supporting this vicious terrorism will be subject to the full force of the law?

The Prime Minister: I saw much of the same footage myself on my visit to Israel last week and I can tell the House that it is absolutely horrifying to watch. ... under the Terrorism Acts of 2000 and 2006, the glorification of terrorism, support for proscribed organisations and the encouraging of terrorism are all offences and will be met with the full force of law.

Julie Elliott (Labour): ... The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire at the moment: 34 trucks have gone in, set against a normal backdrop of hundreds going in every day. We are on a precipice, with people including women and children in hospitals dying because of shortages of power, water and food. ...

The Prime Minister: ... Of course we need more, and that is why the logistical support that we can provide to ensure that high volumes of aid can flow freely to the people who need it is imperative. ...

Nickie Aiken (Conservative): ... My constituency has been the location for two major solidarity with Palestine protests over the past two Saturdays, and I suspect that there will be more to come. The Jewish community in Westminster has highlighted to me that these protests start just a few minutes' walk from synagogues and that they coincide with the end of Shabbat services. Does the Prime Minister agree that, if further such protests go ahead, the timing and location of their starts should be considered, to take into account that members of the Jewish community are still worried about their safety and that the protests coincide with their Shabbat?

col 601 The Prime Minister: ... There is no place on British streets for

demonstrations, convoys or flag-waving that not only glorify terrorism but harass the Jewish community. There is no place for antisemitism on our streets ... The decisions that she refers to are typically operational decisions for the police and local communities, but I will very much bear in mind what she has said in our further engagements with those entities and individuals.

Ian Paisley (DUP): ... I want to draw the Prime Minister's attention to the murder by the terrorists of Kim Damti, a 22-year-old Irish-Israeli woman. I have searched this city long and hard for a book of condolence for her, but unfortunately none is to be found in the Irish embassy or anywhere else, so I want to put her name on record so that she too is immortalised and remembered forever.

The Prime Minister: I know that Kim's family will be grateful ...

Robert Courts (Conservative): Hamas has not just abducted civilians but refused to release proof of life or lists ... Will my right hon. Friend outline the steps he is taking to ensure that the Red Cross does everything possible to extract that information from this terror group?

The Prime Minister: ... That is something we will continue to press on.

Jeremy Corbyn (Independent): The killings on 7 October were appalling and have to be totally condemned ... However, the loss of 5,000 Palestinian lives in Gaza is continuing and getting worse. ... why did the Prime Minister instruct Britain's representative to the UN not to support the call for a very minimal thing, which is a humanitarian pause to allow aid to go in and a ceasefire to take place, to start to bring about a process of peace? ...

The Prime Minister: Our regional and diplomatic engagement has focused extensively on how we can bring about a better and brighter future for the people of Palestine and the Palestinians, but I am surprised the right hon. Gentleman has made no reference to the fact that an organisation he once described as a friend has perpetrated an absolutely appalling act of terrorism against more than 1,000 people.

col 602 **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** Earlier this afternoon, the all-party parliamentary group for Israel, which I co-chair, heard from victims, the families of victims and the families of hostages held in Gaza. Their one ask, above all else, is of course for hostages to be returned home, safe and sound, but there are babies aged nine months and many elderly people who are totally dependent on medicines that they were not carrying when they were taken hostage. ... what is happening to enable the International Red Cross to gain access to the hostages and to supply them with the medicines they need to keep them alive?

The Prime Minister: I can tell my hon. Friend that is exactly what we are trying to do. We are also working with the Egyptian Red Crescent ...

Diana Johnson (Labour): ... what does the Prime Minister have to say to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, who said that, at the moment, law enforcement do not have the powers they need to combat hateful extremism?

The Prime Minister: ... Where there are gaps in the law, we are happy to address and look at them, but we believe that at the moment the police do have the powers to arrest those who incite violence or racial hatred. ... we will work extensively to clarify the guidance to officers on the ground so they are fully aware of the powers and tools available to them to make sure these people feel the force of the law.

Mark Pritchard (Conservative): ... There is a time for peace and a time for war. Of course, this is a time of war for Israel. Does the Prime Minister agree that, post conflict, we cannot go back to the status quo and that there will need to be a comprehensive peace settlement for the region as a whole, involving many actors in the region, perhaps including some people we may not want to talk to today? ...

The Prime Minister: ... He is absolutely right. ...

col 603 **Rushanara Ali (Labour):** Fourteen hundred Israelis have been killed by Hamas attacks, which I utterly condemn. Over 4,700 Palestinians have been killed by the airstrikes and, according to Save the Children, a child is dying every 15 minutes inside Gaza. ...

The Prime Minister: The biggest risk on escalation comes from Iran and its destabilising behaviour. We have seen worrying rocket attacks from the Houthis over the past few days, but also increasing rocket fire from Hezbollah. It is important that those are restrained. ...

Matthew Offord (Conservative): ... In May 2021, a convoy for Palestine drove through north London with loudspeakers advocating that people raped Jewish girls and mothers. On Saturday, as the Prime Minister said, “jihad” was called for on the streets of London, and a London underground driver said the same over the tannoy. Only yesterday, a long-term resident of my constituency has been identified as a Hamas operative. ...

The Prime Minister: ... I am aware of over 38 arrests that have been made by the police over the past week or two on this particular issue.

On the other issue that my hon. Friend mentioned, the British Transport police are actively working with Transport for London to look into it. ... everyone should have the right to travel safely and without intimidation. ...

col 604 **Mark Logan (Conservative):** ... Last week, I met a group of senior leaders from my mosques in Bolton. At the very end, a note was passed to me that said, “Can we stop just having words on the two-state solution and actually have some action?” ...

The Prime Minister: ... The most immediate thing we can do is ensure that there is a future in Gaza after Hamas that provides Palestinians with the opportunity to live with dignity and security. ...

Kim Johnson (Labour): ... according to NGOs on the ground in Gaza, 100 children are dying every day due to Israeli aerial bombardment. Military solutions are not going to end this conflict. Only an immediate ceasefire will ...

The Prime Minister: This House stands united in saying that Israel has a right to defend itself. Then it should stand united with Israel’s right to defend itself in line with international humanitarian law.

Anthony Mangnall (Conservative): After the appalling protests this weekend, will the Prime Minister endorse the October declaration, which so many Members of this House and the other place have signed, and encourage all people across this country to stand up for British Jews? I welcome the decision to double the aid in this situation, but will he reassure the House that not a single penny of it will fall into the hands of Hamas?

The Prime Minister: ... Historically, the vast bulk of our aid has been both humanitarian and channelled through the UN, but we will of course make sure that it gets to the people who need it and is not syphoned off or hijacked by Hamas.

col 605 **Ben Bradshaw (Labour):** ... what is his understanding of the Israeli Government’s medium and long-term strategy, in the event of their ground operation in Gaza going ahead?

The Prime Minister: The Israeli Government are obviously best placed to speak for themselves, but they have a right to defend themselves. They have said very clearly that they want to protect their citizens. I think they do not just have a right to do that; they have a duty to do that, to ensure that attacks like this cannot happen ever again.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative): Constituents of mine have been in touch to express how appalled they are at a report in *The Times* about how an individual with known links to Hamas was not only given UK citizenship, but given a council house and allowed to buy it at a discount. ...

The Prime Minister: ... the Metropolitan police have set out that they will always take appropriate action when provided with information about alleged activity that may be linked to terrorism perpetrated either abroad or here in the UK.

col 606 **Brendan O’Hara (SNP):** I was disappointed that nowhere in this statement did the word “ceasefire” appear. ...

The Prime Minister: ... Israel has the right to defend itself. It is facing an appalling terrorist organisation, which has committed appalling acts, and it has the right to

ensure that those acts stop and do not hurt its citizens again.

Rehman Chishti (Conservative): ... This is not the first time that the terrorist organisation, Hamas, have carried out terrorist activity and killed innocent Jewish people to derail the peace process. They did that in 2002, when they killed innocent Jewish people on the night of Passover, just before the Arab peace initiative was about to be launched. ... from his meetings with Arab leaders, can [the Prime Minister] tell us whether they are still committed to the Arab peace initiative on the 1967 borders? ...

The Prime Minister: One thing we must do collectively is re-energise progress towards a two-state solution. ...

col 607 **Stella Creasey (Labour Co-op):** ... May I ask him about his commitment to ... the 200 UK nationals ... who are stuck in Gaza? ...

The Prime Minister: ... I know that it will be a frightening time for British nationals in Gaza and for their families. We continue to provide assistance to them, and they are in contact with the Foreign Office. We have not been able to secure the movement of any British nationals the other way across the Rafah crossing, but we have had discussions with the Egyptians, including the one that I had with President Sisi, to ensure that when the possibility is there, those people can cross. ...

Siobhan Baillie (Conservative): The new army of online middle east experts, the unverified bots from nefarious sources and the rise of sophisticated artificial intelligence risk seriously undermining the work that the UK and the international community are doing to de-escalate the conflict. ...

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

Afzal Khan (Labour): ... the violence did not end on 7 October, but it did not start then either. Recent wars broke out in the region in 2008, 2012, 2014, 2018 and 2021. What is the Prime Minister doing not only to address the immediate violence, but to bring about a long-lasting peace in the region?

col 608 **The Prime Minister:** We are working hard to make sure that we can provide the people of Palestine with a better future, because they have legitimate aspirations to live with measures of security and freedom, justice, opportunity and dignity. ...

Nicola Richards (Conservative): On Saturday, Hen Mazzig tweeted that a pro-Palestinian protestor carrying a black flag was “too similar to ISIS”. The Met police disagreed, retweeted him, and publicly said that it was not true. That caused a barrage of antisemitic and homophobic abuse on a scale that he had never seen. I spoke to Hen, and he said that after seeing the most horrific massacre of Jews since the holocaust he thought that he was safe in London, and that British people always made him feel welcome, but now he is worried to leave his home. ...

The Prime Minister: ... I have been clear that there is zero tolerance in our country for antisemitism. What we have seen recently is unacceptable and it should be met with the full force of the law.

Liam Byrne (Labour): Hamas’s crime was not just what was once called “the banality of evil”; it was the calculation of evil, which is why Hamas must be defeated. The Prime Minister is right that a humanitarian disaster is unfolding in Gaza. That is why he is right to say that we need a constant stream of aid pouring in. The UN Secretary-General is very clear that only a binding-on-all-sides negotiated cessation of hostilities will allow that aid to pour in ...

The Prime Minister: Aid is already flowing into Gaza as a result of the diplomatic efforts of many, including the UK, and now we are providing further not just financial but logistical support to increase the supply of that aid. ...

Alexander Stafford (Conservative): Two weeks ago, Hamas committed an unprecedented and heinous pogrom against Jewish people—men, women, babies and

children. We all stand with our British Jewish community, so Rotherham Council town hall flew the Israeli flag in solidarity. However, within hours it was attacked, the flag torn down and the flagpole broken. Rotherham Council is refusing to re-fly the Israeli flag. Does the Prime Minister agree that we must stand up against those who wish to intimidate our Jewish community, and re-fly the flag to show that we will always stand up against antisemitism and stand with our Jewish community?

col 609 The Prime Minister: We have zero tolerance in the UK for antisemitism ... I am clear that where people incite racial or religious hatred or their conduct is threatening, abusive or disorderly, or causes distress to others, the police can and should take action, and those who commit those crimes should face the full force of the law.

Caroline Lucas (Green): ... does [the Prime Minister] consider the withholding of fuel to be in line with the Government of Israel's obligations to act within international law?

The Prime Minister: The Government of Israel will manage their behaviour in line with international law. Our job is to ensure that we get aid into the region, and that is what we are focused on doing.

James Sunderland (Conservative): During his visit to regional partners in the middle east last week, did the Prime Minister get any sense of the extent to which any necessary Israeli action in Gaza can and will be contained from wider involvement by malign actors?

The Prime Minister: It is important that this conflict does not escalate. That is why our Navy presence to stop illegal arms shipments to entities such as Hezbollah is important, as is the diplomatic engagement that we have had ...

Christian Wakeford (Labour): ... Since Hamas's barbaric terrorist attack on Israel over two weeks ago, the Community Security Trust has reported a more than 700% rise in antisemitic hate incidents, and Tell MAMA has reported a more than 500% rise in Islamophobia over the same period. ...

The Prime Minister: I have been clear that there is zero tolerance for antisemitism or indeed anti-Muslim hatred in any form. ...

col 610 David Simmonds (Conservative): A great many constituents whose families found refuge here in the UK from the holocaust in Europe have reached out to me in the last few weeks to tell me about how they have been personally and directly affected by the ongoing attacks from Hamas in Israel. ... what further efforts can be made to ensure that, once the current threat from Hamas is addressed through Israel's actions, the evidence is gathered and the perpetrators are identified so that the due process of international law can bring them to justice?

The Prime Minister: It is important that people act in accordance with international law, that those procedures are followed and, indeed, that Israel takes every precaution to avoid harming civilians. In the meantime, we will ensure that we get humanitarian support into the region. Those efforts are starting to bear fruit, but we must double our efforts.

Richard Burgon (Labour): The horrific death toll of this crisis now includes 1,800 Palestinian children. ... We need more than just expressions of regret about the loss of civilian lives; we need action to stop it. ...

The Prime Minister: ... I spoke to the President of France last night and also leaders from the US, Canada, Italy and Germany. We are united in supporting Israel's right to self-defence ...

Gareth Bacon (Conservative): ... At the weekend, shocking footage travelled the world showing flags of proscribed organisations on the streets of London, with extremists proclaiming Allah's curse on the Jews and others calling for jihad. British Jews are increasingly feeling unsafe in their own country. But what has made that worse is the apparent refusal of the Metropolitan police to do anything about it ...

The Prime Minister: Hateful extremism has no place in our society. Calls for jihad and Muslim armies to rise up are a threat not only to the Jewish community but to

our democratic values. ... Anyone who commits a crime—whether it be inciting racial hatred, glorifying terrorism or violating public order—should expect to face the full force of the law.

Stephen Timms (Labour): ... What is [the Prime Minister's] assessment of the impact of continued illegal settlement building in the Palestinian territories on the prospects for Palestinian statehood?

col 611 **The Prime Minister:** Our position on illegal settlements is of long standing and is in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution ...

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): ... There is a narrative developing that I think we need to challenge. Someone can stand for Israel and still care about what is happening in Gaza. Someone can stand for Palestine and not support Hamas or the atrocities that they have committed. ... Will [the Prime Minister] look again at the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which ... relates to this specific conflict? Whatever one may think of the content of the Bill, I hope that he agrees that now is not the time.

The Prime Minister: The Bill ... delivers a manifesto commitment to ban public bodies from imposing their own boycott, divestment or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries. ... It is important that the UK has a consistent foreign policy and speaks with one voice internationally.

Khalid Mahmood (Labour): I have—not just now but for a very long time, since 2007—condemned Hamas for their action, which has always led to Palestinian bloodshed in Gaza. ... However ... I want support for the people whom Hamas use as shields, and I want their rights protected. ...

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that Hamas are using innocent Palestinian people as human shields, with tragic consequences. We mourn the loss of every innocent life, of civilians of every faith and nationality who have been killed. ...

Diane Abbott (Labour): The Prime Minister said earlier that aid is flowing into Gaza. ... every single non-governmental organisation is saying that the aid is only of a token amount? ...

col 612 **The Prime Minister:** ... aid is going in, but I have also said that it is not enough and there needs to be more. ...

Andrew Western (Labour): ... what steps [is the Prime Minister] taking to be certain that independent observers are able to monitor fully the ongoing situation in Gaza, to ensure that there is no collective punishment of the innocent and that international law is upheld at all times?

The Prime Minister: Our overriding priority is to ensure that aid gets to those who need it ...

Clive Efford (Labour): Clearly, Israel is not going to have a ceasefire while it is still under attack, and it has every right to defend its citizens. However, the deaths in Palestine are increasing, and international concern about that is growing. ... Is the use of safe zones or humanitarian zones part of a solution that would allow the aid to get in and the hostages to be got out, and would save more lives?

The Prime Minister: ... we are having those conversations about ensuring that aid can get across the Rafah crossing safely to those people who need it. ...

Chris Stephens (SNP): Has the Prime Minister considered calling on Israel to allow patients in a critical condition in Gaza to be medically evacuated for urgent care?

col 613 **The Prime Minister:** At this point, there are no people leaving Gaza the other way across the Rafah crossing. ... We continue to press for that, and will continue our diplomatic activity to ensure that those who need to come across can do so. ...

Florence Eshalomi (Labour Co-op): ... The killing of innocent people at a music festival should shock us all, and the kidnapping of innocent children should be condemned. Every night that I put my six-year-old and eight-year-old to bed, I think of those innocent children,

kidnapped without their parents. ... Israel has the right to defend itself, and how Israel does so matters. ...

col 614 The Prime Minister: We are working on efforts to get more humanitarian aid into Gaza. The crossing is now open, aid is being pre-positioned to el-Arish and neighbouring areas, and we are intensifying our conversations on logistical support as well as further financial support. ...

Florence Eshalomi: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. ...

Earlier this afternoon the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) mentioned some of the horrific chanting this weekend. He also mentioned that a London Underground tube driver had said the word “jihad”. To ensure clarity—at this really sensitive time, our words matter—should the hon. Member not come and correct what he has said, because it has been stated that the London Underground staff member actually said “Free Palestine”, not “jihad”?

Mr Deputy Speaker: ... If the hon. Gentleman feels that he has something that he wishes to amend, he will do so, but that is not a matter for the Chair.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/018D96AB-5D91-48D7-9809-19A03E54125A/IsraelAndGaza>

The Times article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hamas-chief-lives-london-council-house-uk-phnpsssx5>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Embassies

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [202271] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff work at the UK embassy in Israel.

David Rutley: Both our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate in Jerusalem remain staffed and continue to provide consular services to British nationals who require assistance. A Rapid Deployment Team has also been sent to Israel to bolster the efforts of British consular officials.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202271>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Development Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [202274] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much aid his Department has provided for projects in Gaza since 2000.

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [202501] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much (a) aid and (b) other assistance (i) his Department and (ii) other UK-based organisations have sent to Gaza in each year since 2020.

David Rutley: The FCDO aid budget is allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate. The UK remains a long-standing supporter of the Middle East Peace Process. There is a robust framework in place for allocating Official Development Assistance (ODA). Data on ODA spend in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is available on DevTracker. More than 80 per cent of our ODA spend this year of UK support will be used to meet humanitarian need, or to provide vital health, education, and protection services for Palestinian Refugees.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202274>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202501>

DevTracker, referred to above, can be read at
<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/countries/PS>

Gaza

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [203173] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the press release of 16 October 2023 entitled UK announces £10 million humanitarian aid for civilians in Occupied Palestinian Territories, whether he plans to publish the (a) process and (b) mechanisms by which that aid will be distributed in Gaza.

David Rutley: The FCDO aid budget is allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate. There is a robust framework in place for allocating Official Development Assistance (ODA). Data on ODA spend in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is available on DevTracker

<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/countries/PS>

More than 80% of our ODA spend this year of UK support will be used to meet humanitarian need, or to provide vital health, education, and protection services for Palestinian Refugees. The new funding announced on 16 October 2023 will allow trusted partners, including key UN agencies to provide essential relief items and services. These could include food, water and emergency shelter, depending on the needs on the ground. The UK is also exploring options for moving humanitarian supplies closer to the region and is liaising with aid agencies in the region to ensure relief supplies can be distributed as quickly and effectively as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203173>

Arms Trade: Israel

Claire Hanna (SDLP) [203419] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will take steps to suspend arms licences to Israel until a full assessment of its compliance with international human rights law can be carried out.

Nigel Huddleston: All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203419>

Hamas: Hostage Taking

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [202502] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to help the government of Israel to secure the swift return of (a) British and (b) other Israelis taken captive by Hamas.

David Rutley: My [Minister Rutley] thoughts are with those families who are facing unimaginable uncertainty and fear because of these despicable attacks and kidnappings. This is a fast-moving situation, and we are not commenting on individual consular cases. The safety of all British nationals continues to be our utmost priority. We are using all the tools available to us in our diplomatic toolkit to maximise our chances of bringing innocent British nationals back home to their loved ones. The Foreign Secretary is working with his Israeli counterparts along with international partners to establish a safe passage for British nationals out of Gaza.

British Nationals in need of help should contact +972 (0)3 725 1222 or +972 (2) 5414100. If they experience technical difficulties or if they are in the UK, call +44 20 7008 5000. British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, are advised to register their 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://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202502>

Gaza: British Nationals Abroad

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [202270] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of UK nationals in Gaza.

David Rutley: We have asked British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, to register their presence with the FCDO and we remain in touch with those who have done so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202270>

Gaza: British Nationals Abroad

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [202272] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on taking steps to ensure (a) the safety and (b) safe passage for UK nationals in the Gaza Strip.

David Rutley: The safety of all British nationals continues to be our utmost priority and we have asked British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, to register their presence so that we can share important updates with them. British nationals should continue to check our travel advice which is kept under continual review. The Foreign Secretary continues to engage regularly and closely with his Israeli counterpart, including in relation to ensuring safe passage for British Nationals from Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202272>

Israel: Hamas

Stephen Timms (Labour) [202867] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 16 October 2023, Official Report, column 24, what steps the Government plans to take to help ensure that Israel's actions to defend itself are in line with international humanitarian law.

David Rutley: The UK is steadfast in its position that all states should uphold international humanitarian law, and we call on our friends and partners to do so. Israel has the right to defend itself proportionately, and its military operations must be conducted in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Civilians must be respected and protected. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have, in their discussions with their Israeli counterparts, emphasised the importance of taking all possible measures to protect innocent civilians. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has stated that Israel will operate in accordance with international law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/202867>

The Prime Minister's remarks referred to above can be read at

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

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza

Richard Burgon (Labour) [203076] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received legal advice on the Israeli Government's (a) evacuation order issued on 12 October 2023 to civilians and (b) recent military operations in Gaza.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [203110] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received legal advice on the

Israeli Government's recent military operations in Gaza.

David Rutley: The Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team receive legal advice on all matters related to foreign policy, including the unfolding situation in Israel and Gaza. The UK Government is closely following the security situation in the Middle East and maintains a regular dialogue with international counterparts. We will continue to use all the tools of British diplomacy to sustain the prospects of peace and stability in the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203076>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203110>

Israel: Hamas

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [202504] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role of hostile third-party states in Hamas's recent attacks on Israel.

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [202505] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that Iranian officials aided Hamas in its attack on Israel.

David Rutley: The UK is clear that Hamas is fully responsible for these appalling acts of terror in Israel. We are also clear that Iran poses an unacceptable threat to Israel. We have long condemned Iran's destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions. We work closely with our partners to hold Iran to account, and we currently have over 350 sanctions in place against the Iranian regime. We expect to see total international condemnation of the atrocities committed by Hamas. The UK Government will continue to stand with Israel as it faces pressing challenges to its security.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202504>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202505>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [203111] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Israel on the compatibility of restrictions in the provision of (a) water, (b) food and (c) electricity to Gaza with international law.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [203112] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on helping to ensure that the Israeli Defence Force's actions in Gaza adhere to the Geneva Conventions.

David Rutley: The UK is steadfast in its position that all states should uphold international humanitarian law, and we call on our friends and partners to do so. Israel has the right to defend itself proportionately, and its military operations must be conducted in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Civilians must be respected and protected. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have, in their discussions with their Israeli counterparts, emphasised the importance of taking all possible measures to protect innocent civilians. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has stated that Israel will operate in accordance with international law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203111>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203112>

Gaza

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [203113] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on humanitarian access to Gaza.

David Rutley: The UK is calling for immediate unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza so that essential aid can reach civilian populations including food, water, fuel and medical supplies. The UK is also calling on all parties to protect border crossings to support safe humanitarian access and mitigate harm to civilians. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have raised this with their Israeli counterparts. The FCDO is actively engaging with the international humanitarian system to address the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. On 16 October, the Prime Minister announced a £10 million package of support for Palestinian civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203113>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Gaza

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [203114] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with which UK-based humanitarian organisations he has held discussions on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Olivia Blake (Labour) [203164] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with humanitarian organisations on delivering aid in Gaza.

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [203172] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what meetings he has had since 7 October 2023 with aid and charity organisations operating in Gaza on the provision and access of British aid.

David Rutley: The UK is calling for immediate unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza so that essential aid, including food, water, fuel and medical supplies, can reach civilian populations. The UK is also calling on all parties to protect border crossings to support safe humanitarian access and mitigate harm to civilians. The FCDO is actively engaging with the international humanitarian system (including UN agencies, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), and Civil Society Organisations) to address the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. On 19 October, the Foreign Secretary visited the region where he will meet leaders in Egypt, Turkey and Qatar and push for agreement on humanitarian access to Gaza, the release of British hostages and foreign nationals, and securing safe passage for British Nationals to leave Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203114>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203164>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203172>

Refugees: Palestinians

Claire Hanna (SDLP) [203418] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of creating safe routes to the UK for Palestinians.

Robert Jenrick: The safety of all British nationals continues to be our utmost priority. The UK is also calling for unimpeded humanitarian access in Gaza so that essential aid can reach civilian populations, including food, water, fuel and medical

supplies.

The Home Office has not considered establishing a separate route for Palestinians to come to the UK. Since 2015, over half a million people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK. We are not able to provide a tailored route for every conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203418>

West Bank: Demolition

Caroline Lucas (Green) [200266] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to the Israeli Government on the demolition orders issued on 17 May 2023 to six families in the Ein Juweza district of Al-Wallajah; to make it his policy to call on the Israeli Government to rescind the demolition orders; to ask what recent discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on urban development and planning in Al-Walajah; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley: As I [Minister Rutley] said in the House of Commons on 18 July, the UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to international humanitarian law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon continues to reiterate this position to Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and Israel's Ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely. On 13 September, the Foreign Secretary met Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh in Ramallah where he acknowledged apprehensions over continued Israeli settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions in the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-19/200266>

The Minister's comments referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-18/debates/CAE81580-310A-4884-991D-68ABC4CA687B/IsraelAndTheOccupiedPalestinianTerritories#contribution-4A858351-E210-42B1-AF46-010D729D871C>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Israel and Gaza

[The Prime Minister's statement](#) to the House of Commons was read in the Lords.

col 486 **Baroness Smith of Basildon (Labour):** ... The horror and the suffering of the brutal attack on 7 October are seared into memories, with images of the dead and dying that can never be unseen, and Israel remains under attack, with rockets still being launched against it. That suffering is compounded by the continuing plight of over 200 hostages, with so many families not knowing whether loved ones or friends are alive. The glimmer of hope of the release of the two American hostages was a relief beyond words for their families, and noble Lords may have heard the news in the last hour that two older women have been released by Hamas. It just shows that Hamas can and must go further. These are innocent people—men and women, young and old, some ill and infirm. We stand united with all of those who have called for their immediate release.

col 487 ... there is also collective pain across Israel and the Jewish community worldwide. On Friday evening in Tel Aviv, the families of the hostages came together for the traditional Friday night Shabbat dinner, with 200 empty place settings marking each and every one

of those taken. ...

Israel has the right—indeed, the duty—to bring home all hostages being held by Hamas and to weaken the capabilities which made Black Saturday possible. A military response from Israel is justified in these circumstances, and it must be within those sacred parameters of international law and the protection of human life. It is, after all, these values, and the upholding of international norms, which separate lawful states from terrorists.

The purpose of military actions will be to deliver peaceful security. Israel's objectives—to bring home the hostages and to protect itself by defeating Hamas—are to ensure that no one should endure such suffering again. During this period of conflict it is imperative that humanitarian aid reaches those in need and that corridors are established to allow civilians to escape violence. Where Palestinians are forced to flee, they must not be permanently displaced. Hamas may not care for the safety and security of the Palestinian people, but we should make it clear that we do. ...

Gaza is now a humanitarian emergency. Life was a struggle before, and now hospitals are trying to provide care without the medicines they need, and with food, water and electricity running out. ...

The opening of the Rafah crossing is welcome progress, but more is needed. We welcome that the Prime Minister has announced an additional £20 million today. ...

col 488 As I said last week, we all know of Jewish and Muslim leaders and those active in their communities who seek to bring people together in support of mutual understanding, acceptance and the celebration of shared and diverse religious views and cultures. Yet when someone is afraid to leave their home for fear of attack or abuse, we must stand side by side with them. When someone is attacked, not for what they have said or done but for the very essence of their being, we stand with them. Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have no place in the UK. ...

When we debated the Statement last week, we were rightly totally united in our support for Israel to protect itself against Hamas. We unite for a future where Israel can live free from the fear of terror and where the children of Palestine can enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that we take for granted. ...

Lord Newby (Liberal Democrat): ... The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Archbishop of Canterbury have called for a temporary humanitarian ceasefire to allow essential supplies to reach Gaza and to provide time for the negotiation of the release of hostages by Hamas. We agree with this call. Do the Government also agree that such an initiative is now needed and, if not, why not? One of the problems around the supply of aid appears to be the constraints at the Rafah crossing. Given that Gaza has a long coastline and that the UK, the US and other allies have warships in the area, is there any reason why humanitarian supplies cannot be landed by sea? ...

col 489 Did the Prime Minister discuss with Prime Minister Netanyahu the need to commit to the two-state solution and, if so, what was his response? ...

In planning its next steps, Israel must—at the same time—seek to hit Hamas hard, do so while minimising civilian deaths, and try to avoid igniting a greater conflagration. ...

Finally, we stand with the Prime Minister in supporting the Jewish community in the UK. We can understand why events in recent days have roused passions on both sides; but now is also a time for tolerance and for determination to seek a way forward that will make a repetition of the events of the past fortnight simply unimaginable.

Lord True (The Lord Privy Seal): ... The position remains that Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack. We support Israel's right to defend itself, to go after Hamas and free hostages, to deter further incursions and to strengthen its security for the long term, because the only basis of a long-term solution is for Israel's security to be accepted and recognised.

Humanitarian aid ... is of course profoundly important. ...

col 490 ... we support Israel's right to defence but, equally, we have to keep humanitarian support going. We must support the Palestinian people, who are

victims of Hamas too. ...

I think it is difficult for Israel to ask for a ceasefire when its citizens have been slaughtered and others are being held hostage by a terrorist organisation. ...

The opening of the Rafah crossing into Gaza is highly welcome. ... we need to see a stream of trucks rolling in through that crossing to bring aid to the civilian population. We also need to see all water supplies to Gaza restored where physically possible, and all sides should commit to the sanctity of UN installations, hospitals and shelters. ...

I strongly agree ... that there is no place for extremism—for violence of tongue or of action that spreads fear to members of any community in our country. ... No one should live in fear, as I said last week, for who they are or where they come from. As the Prime Minister said, the Government will look extremely carefully at the activities of those who do not accept that basic, civilised tenet of coexistence in a society where disagreement is valuable but violent disagreement, terror and fear have no place. ...

col 491 Lord Pannick (Crossbench): ... My Lords, the Statement and the comments of the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, rightly emphasise the plight of the hostages, more than 200 of them, including children, the disabled and the elderly, the taking of whom is a despicable crime. The International Committee of the Red Cross has said that it is in “sustained, daily contact with Hamas”. Will the Government urge the Red Cross to demand access to the hostages and to do everything it can to ensure their welfare, pending what we hope will be their return home?

Lord True: My Lords, we are making every diplomatic effort to secure that. ...

... we have to remember that not only were 10 British nationals, tragically, killed in the Hamas attacks but a further six British nationals are missing, some of whom are feared to be among the dead or kidnapped. ...

Lord Polak (Conservative): ... In the Statement, [the Prime Minister] talked about the incident at the hospital and said: “The misreporting of that incident had a negative effect in the region”. ...

col 492 What conversations have the Government had, especially with broadcasters—the BBC, specifically, and Sky—and, if I may say so, some parliamentarians who were a little too trigger happy with their phones and made statements which ended up not being true? ...

Lord True: ... we must not rush to judgment before we have all the facts. ... there is no doubt that widespread unrest followed the reporting around that hospital blast. ...

The Culture Secretary has spoken to Tim Davie on several occasions. The BBC and other broadcasters recognise that they have a duty to provide accurate and impartial news and information, particularly when it comes to coverage of highly sensitive events. The BBC has admitted that mistakes were made. ...

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench): My Lords, would the Leader of the House say a few words of gratitude and admiration ... for the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency? ...

Lord True: ... UNRWA has a unique mandate from the UN General Assembly ... It is a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region.

col 493 The Government are clear that the final status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of eventual peace negotiations. Until then, the UN remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and those who work with it. ...

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): ... over the last decades billions of dollars have been channelled into the Palestinian territories, largely through UNRWA. Where has it all gone? The concrete that was supposed to build houses has apparently been used for nefarious purposes and for hiding. What has happened to all that money from all over the world, which appears to have been used by Hamas to get rockets and to make trouble, rather

than supporting their people?

Secondly, the two-state solution is all very well. However, as long as the call goes out “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”, we know that “From the river to the sea” means the total annihilation of Israel and its replacement with one state. A state has been offered on four occasions to the Palestinians and rejected.

Thirdly, I hope the Government will have a mind to the trouble going on in our universities. Just today I heard from someone connected with Warwick University that two Jewish students there who refused to join a pro-Palestine march have been ostracised and made to feel extremely unwelcome, and that the Jewish society app has been hacked with all sorts of nasty messages. ...

Lord True: ... It is not the case that every part of aid offered and sent is used for the purposes it ought to be. That cannot be the case, sadly, in what is effectively a terrorist-controlled entity. What we can do, working with the agencies and the UN, using them as conduits, is to ensure that as much as possible goes to the support of the people. ...

... it is obvious that there can be no diplomatic two-state solution while Israel feels that it does not have the basic security of the right to survive that any people and nation have.

col 494 ... all in authority need to have a care that their campuses are not misused or penetrated by malign organisations. ... If the story that the noble Baroness told is true, it is appalling and I hope that it is not replicated elsewhere.

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): My Lords, I assure my noble friend of how much the Jewish community appreciates the words of the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition and other Members of Parliament today. We have appreciated the messages of support we have received from not just non-Jewish but Muslim members of the public, and not just non-Jewish but Muslim Members of this House, who reached out to us. In this country, dialogue exists between moderate Jewish and Muslim people, and that is to be encouraged and welcomed.

The Prime Minister specifically said: “let me be clear: there is no scenario where Hamas can be allowed to control Gaza or any part of the Palestinian territories”. ...

We have to explain why electricity and, in particular, fuel are being withheld, and why every inch of aid, while it must be supplied, has to be examined when it goes through the crossing to ensure that what is in those lorries is not capable of being misused. We have to explain why a ceasefire is not possible at this time. ...

Lord True: ... There will be difficult and sad times, and Israel has the right to defend itself. We need to cherish not only the Jewish community but the Muslim community, because I believe that so many Muslims—my daughter-in-law is one—will recoil with horror and outrage at the thought of people crying “God is great” while they are butchering babies. ...

col 495 **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green):** ... In the other place, my honourable friend Caroline Lucas asked whether withholding fuel from Gaza is in line with the Government of Israel’s responsibilities under international law. The Prime Minister’s response was that they will “manage their behaviour” in line with international law, but surely the UK Government can and should make their own judgment about what is happening, in terms of international law. ...

UN agencies are warning that many are being forced to drink dirty water and are becoming ill as a result. The temperature in Gaza yesterday was 31 degrees Celsius. Much of the supply comes from Israel through a pipe currently opened for only three hours a day. ...

Lord True: ... the United Kingdom would of course wish to see humanitarian aid flowing. ... But I repeat that the difficult and delicate situation arises from the activities of the people who have power in Gaza, who started this terrible war. ...

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar (Conservative): ... On the Monday afternoon—and I mean the Monday afternoon after the massacre, so 48 hours later, while the bodies were still

warm—the United Nations Human Rights Council observed a minute’s silence. It observed that minute’s silence, to quote the council itself, for the “loss of innocent lives in the occupied Palestinian territory and elsewhere”.

For 2,000 years, the Jewish people had nowhere. Now it would appear, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council, that they have an “elsewhere”. Does my noble friend the Leader of the House think that some moral clarity is also needed on the part of the United Nations?

Lord True: My Lords, I had not seen those particular remarks. To say that they were disappointing would be a bit of an understatement. ...

col 496 Baroness Foster of Oxtou (Conservative): ... the marches that have taken place in London, particularly during the past two Saturdays, supporting the Palestinian cause, have clearly been hijacked by hostile groups, chanting dreadful things ... along with calls for jihad. It was obvious to anyone that this would happen. Could my noble friend the Leader please find out who signed off on these marches ...

Lord True: My Lords, marching is part of a free society, as is protest. ...

The Home Secretary spoke with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner today, as part of an extraordinary meeting of the Jewish Community Police, Crime and Security Taskforce, to discuss some of these matters. The Government recognise the complexities of the law in policing aspects of protest and prosecutor decisions. We will support the police as they continue to enforce the law against anyone suspected of committing an offence, and we will back them in that. There are currently more than 200 live police investigations over suspected offences, as a result of protests and online incidents linked to the Israel/Hamas conflict ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-23/debates/6DD8CAB3-2CED-4AD1-A045-0B20F4680670/IsraelAndGaza>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK stands resolutely with Israel in defending itself against terror: Minister for Security Tom Tugendhat statement at the UN Security Council

... The past 17 days have shocked all of us around this table who value the dignity of human life. It is a reminder of the solemn responsibility we carry to uphold peace and security across the world. Israel is a nation in mourning. It is also a nation still under attack. The violence did not end on 7 October.

Terrorist rockets are still raining down on civilian towns and cities in Israel. Around 200 of her citizens are still being held hostage in Gaza. Some of those are fellow British citizens... Israel has the right to defend itself. And the duty to protect all those on its territory, of whatever religion they may be, from terrorism.

We recognise that Palestinians are suffering too. Thousands have been killed in this conflict. Over 1 million have been displaced. We know that Hamas are using innocent Palestinian children, civilians, and others as human shields. They have embedded themselves in civilian communities. Hamas care more for the opinion of their paymasters in Tehran than they do for the opinion of their fellow citizens. We know they fire rockets that often fall short, killing and injuring innocent Palestinians. Those people are victims of Hamas too. ...

President, the UK stands resolutely with Israel in defending itself against terror. We are clear that it must act in line with international humanitarian law and take every possible step to avoid harming civilians. ... We must urgently get more humanitarian support into Gaza. Sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access must be allowed so civilians can receive lifesaving support as quickly and as effectively as possible. ...

President, we must prevent this conflict sparking conflict beyond Gaza and engulfing the

wider region in war. The attacks by Hizballah terrorists on Israel's northern border, rising tensions in the West Bank, and missiles and drones launched from Yemen all warn of the conflagration that is possible. ...

Now is the time for dogged diplomacy that recognises the hard realities and delivers help now. Lastly, President, the UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process remains clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-stands-resolutely-with-israel-in-defending-itself-against-terror-minister-for-security-tom-tugendhat-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

James Cleverly We cannot lose sight of the evil that has caused suffering for so many. Hamas. Today, @tariqahmadbt and I met with the families of those who were murdered or are missing because of Hamas' brutality. The UK stands with you – now and always. [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1716860056040357997>

James Cleverly Hamas has never supported the two state solution. Hamas is preventing humanitarian aid from reaching those who need it most. Hamas is no friend to the Palestinian people.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1716806278364741810>

Scottish Parliament Ministerial Statement and Q&A

The First Minister (Humza Yousaf): ... First, let us unite in unequivocally condemning the terror that Hamas unleashed on 7 October in southern Israel. The more we learn about Hamas's barbaric attack, which took place on the Jewish Sabbath—on a Jewish holy day—the more we are sickened by its brutality. ... Let me say, as someone who is proudly Muslim, that I was taught from a young age that Islam tells us that, if you kill one innocent person, it is as if you have killed the whole of humanity. There can be no religious or moral defence of the killing of innocent civilians. Israel, like every other country in the world, has a right to protect itself from terror. That, of course, must be done within the confines of international law, which is an issue that I will return to later. The Scottish Government also joins the international community in calling for the hostages who were taken by Hamas to be released immediately and unconditionally.

Secondly, let members in the chamber unite in our common humanity by accepting that there is no hierarchy of grief—that when a mother loses a child, we all feel that pain, hurt and sorrow, whether that mother is Israeli or Palestinian. I certainly felt that pain when I met Irene Cowan, the mother of Bernard Cowan, who was killed by Hamas. Irene and I held each other, we cried and we shared in each other's grief. She is an incredible woman, who, despite her own heartache, told me that she was praying for my in-laws and for all the innocent men, women and children who were trapped in Gaza. ...

Thirdly, let us all unite in saying clearly that the overwhelming majority of men, women and children in Gaza have nothing to do with Hamas and that they must not be punished for Hamas's crimes. ... Cutting off electricity, food, water and fuel supplies to the people of Gaza is collective punishment and must be condemned in the strongest possible manner. International law must always be respected, especially when it is difficult.

The Scottish Government calls on all sides to agree to an immediate ceasefire to allow a humanitarian corridor to open and for supplies to get into Gaza, as well as allowing safe passage out for those who want to leave. ...

Today, premature babies, injured infants, pregnant women and all the people who have

lost their homes overnight in Gaza have little in the way of access to clean water. They cannot make bread, and many are in desperate need of sufficient medical treatment for horrendous injuries and have virtually no access to life-saving medicine. The trickle of aid that is arriving in Gaza must be significantly increased without delay, and it must include fuel, because otherwise the hospitals will simply shut down and the sick, the injured and premature babies will die. ...

On the humanitarian effort that is now required, Scotland stands ready to do our part. The Scottish Government has already pledged £500,000 in humanitarian funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, to help displaced people in Gaza. The Palestinian people are proud people. They are proud of their culture, their history and their land. They should not be forced to leave. However, we know that this conflict alone has meant that 1 million people in Gaza have already been displaced. Therefore, for those who wish to leave, I reiterate my call for the international community to commit to a worldwide refugee programme for the people of Gaza ...

As I have said before, Scotland is willing to play her part and to be the first country in the UK to offer safe sanctuary to vulnerable people who are caught up in this war. Scotland is ready to treat the injured men, women and children of Gaza in our hospitals where we can. ...

I am greatly concerned by the plight of British citizens who have been captured as hostages by Hamas, and I reiterate our call for them to be released. I am also deeply distressed thinking of Scots who are trapped in Gaza. ...

Of course, there is the plight of my own in-laws. I thank members from across the chamber who have sent kind messages of support and solidarity and who have told me that our family is in your prayers—your words have been of great comfort to me and Nadia.

Every night, Nadia and I go to bed, barely sleeping as we count down the hours until the morning, waiting anxiously for a message from my mother-in-law to tell us that they have survived the night. Throughout the day, the 100 people who are in our family home must ration their food. The adults barely eat—my mother-in-law only ate cashew nuts yesterday. They ration so that the children in the house do not end up malnourished, but time is running out.

I spoke to my mother-in-law this morning. She feels helpless. She has lost hope. She tells me that she feels as though the UK Government has forgotten about her. Please do not interpret my point as a political one; it is not. My mother-in-law is a UK citizen, yet the only communication that she receives from the Foreign Office is a text message telling her what she already knows: the Rafah crossing is closed. ...

Too many innocent men, women and children are suffering. We cannot allow the conflict to create new tensions in our peaceful communities in Scotland or, indeed, elsewhere in the world. There must be zero tolerance for antisemitism, Islamophobia or sectarian violence of any kind anywhere.

Scotland's Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities are communities that I love. They are ones with which I have grown up and whose pain and sorrow I share. Let me be abundantly clear that, as long as I am First Minister—I am sure that I speak for the entire Parliament—there is no room for antisemitism, Islamophobia or hatred of any kind in Scotland.

I am steadfast in my commitment to solidarity and our strong tradition of inclusion and interfaith working across Scotland. I was pleased to be able to bring together senior rabbis and imams to put their names to a joint statement clearly stating that they will not be divided and that they stand together against hatred in any form. ...

Douglas Ross (Conservative): The barbaric terrorist attack on Israel was horrifying. Innocent civilians were targeted, people murdered in cold blood, women raped and children snatched from their homes, some never to return. We cannot begin to imagine what it is like to live in fear that that could happen.

Israel has more than a right to defend itself. It has an obligation to its people and a duty to

protect them by preventing such a terrorist attack from ever happening again. My party stands with Israel. ...

At this time, we think of the family of Bernard Cowan, who moved from Newton Mearns to Israel and tragically was a victim of the attack. Bernard's mother, Irene, showed extraordinary courage and dignity just a few days after his death to light a candle in his memory at the service in the Giffnock Newton Mearns synagogue. His whole family remains in our thoughts at this time, as do the families of the hostages, and we reiterate the international calls for their immediate release.

We also stand with the innocent people in Palestine who are caught up in the situation, including the First Minister's own family. ...

The Palestinian people are not Hamas. They are civilians, they are innocent and they are caught up in a terrible situation, suffering from the tyranny, exploitation and oppression of Hamas terrorists. On issues like this, words matter and we must be unequivocal: the attack was not carried out by freedom fighters, nor were they militants. There is no just equivalence between the two sides, Israel and Hamas. It was an attack by terrorists, and there should be no debate about that. Terrorism is cowardly. It preys on innocents, it spreads fear and it knows no decency.

Finally, Presiding Officer, although we should never fixate on flags, especially when lives are being lost, I believe that the Scottish Parliament should have shown visibly that it stood with Israel against terrorism and flown its flag after the attack. I am disappointed it did not, especially as it would have shown solidarity with Scotland's Jewish community in a moment of grief and tragedy. We all know that there has been fear and concern in the Jewish community here in Scotland.

Will the First Minister outline what actions have been taken to support our Jewish friends and neighbours, and what has been done to ensure that there is a zero tolerance approach to antisemitic, Islamophobic and sectarian behaviour?

The First Minister: ... there is real and palpable fear among many communities here in Scotland, and the Jewish community undoubtedly fears any growing rise in antisemitism ...

First and foremost, I recently had a meeting with the new chief constable of Police Scotland, and she told me that, thankfully, there has not yet been any reported rise in antisemitism or Islamophobia, but that is not to be complacent. There might well be underreporting, as there often is when it comes to hate crime.

It is incumbent on every single one of us to take a zero tolerance approach, but also to do what we can in our constituencies and our leadership positions to take the hands of all communities, but if I take the Muslim community and the Jewish community, who are feeling particularly vulnerable, it is incumbent on us to take their hands and to say that we will do everything we can to shield them from hatred, be it antisemitism or Islamophobia.

That is why we have made today's important joint statement with the senior rabbis and senior imams. ... members all have mosques in their constituencies, and many will also have synagogues. Of course, members will also have churches in their constituencies, and we know that many Palestinians are from the Christian community. ...

Anas Sarwar (Labour): Everyone in Scottish Labour stands with the people who have been affected by the crisis and bloodshed in Israel and Palestine. ...

We all unequivocally condemn Hamas and its actions. There is never any justification for targeting civilians or for the loss of innocent life. I think particularly of the family of Bernard Cowan, a Scottish citizen who is one of the many people who was murdered in that horrific act of terror.

Although Israel has a right to defend itself, it must act in accordance with international law. Hamas is not Palestine; there is no justification for the collective punishment of the people of Gaza. Let me be clear: withholding water, electricity, food and medicine is a breach of

international law. ...

I know how much the crisis is affecting people in Scotland. To Scotland's Jewish, Israeli, Muslim and Palestinian communities, I send my solidarity, love and support. Tragically, whenever there are rising tensions in the middle east, we see a spike in antisemitism and Islamophobia. We must say with one voice that we have zero tolerance for all forms of prejudice and hate and that we stand together with Scotland's Jewish and Muslim communities in the face of that hate.

What additional action is the Scottish Government taking to tackle antisemitism and Islamophobia in Scotland? In particular, what additional support and resources is the Government making available to protect visible symbols of faith such as places of worship? ...

The First Minister: ... I agree with almost everything that Anas Sarwar has said about international law and collective punishment. He is absolutely right about that, and we all understand Israel's right—like that of any other country—to protect its citizens from terror. However, that must be done within international law. ...

I go one step further than Anas Sarwar. I do not think that the situation requires de-escalation; I think that it requires a ceasefire, which is required now because too many innocent men, women and children have lost their lives in Israel and Gaza. ... Our security for places of worship fund helped a number of religious institutions with their own security. ...

I also recently met the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, which does a lot of work on reminding people of the Holocaust, but also of genocides such as the Bosnian genocide and the Rwandan genocide. It does so not only because of those tragic, terrible events but to remind us of the precursor to them, which was hatred, antisemitism and—in the case of the Bosnian genocide—Islamophobia. ...

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Liberal Democrat): ... What happened on 7 October was an atrocity. Members of Hamas are terrorists who degraded, kidnapped and murdered hundreds upon hundreds of Israelis, including women and children. What has happened since to the innocent civilians of Gaza, who Hamas hides behind, is fast becoming a humanitarian catastrophe that has shocked the world. ...

Does the First Minister agree that one can fervently believe in Israel's right to defend herself within the bounds of international law and, at the same time, support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in a country of their own? ...

The First Minister: ... the trickle of aid that is coming into Gaza is simply not enough. It is a start; we all accept that, and any movement is positive, but it is nowhere near enough. A number of United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization and others are calling for at least 100 trucks per day of aid ...

... we have all lived our lives seeing these cycles of violence erupt, and until we address the root cause, we will continue to see cycles of violence perpetuate in the region. One of the key issues is that two states were promised. One state exists and has every right to exist, but the other—the Palestinian state—does not exist free and unoccupied. ...

Gillian Mackay (Green): ... I wish to associate the Green group with what the First Minister has said this afternoon about the brutality of the Hamas attacks on 7 October and the taking and holding of hostages, on the need for Israel to adhere to international law and to cease the collective punishment of innocent people and families in Gaza, and on the need for immediate actions—including a ceasefire—and the protection of humanitarian corridors and aid access. ...

The First Minister: ... I know from being married to a Palestinian Scot that Palestinians are very proud people, and they should be. They are proud of their culture, history, language, music and land and they do not want to leave that land. My wife's family are in Gaza but they were not originally inhabitants of Gaza: they lived on the west bank but were forced to leave following 1948 and ended up in

Gaza, where they have been for around 75 years.

People should not be forced to leave, but they are displaced and their homes have been turned to rubble. When those who wish to leave seek safe sanctuary, people in Scotland and across the United Kingdom have been very generous in years gone by in opening their homes and hearts to people, whether from Syria, Ukraine or elsewhere. If that is required, let us show that generosity of spirit again. ...

Clare Adamson (SNP): ... The world rightly condemned the abhorrent attacks by Hamas on 7 October, but the international community must also be equally unambiguous and unequivocal in its commitment to international law and the rejection of any collective punishment of the people of Palestine.

How are the First Minister and his Government engaging with the international community to achieve a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, a humanitarian corridor and a very much-needed negotiated and lasting peace for the region?

The First Minister: ... We have had many debates here about the issue of Israel and Palestine, which have often been heated and have exposed our differences about the geopolitical situation. It is undoubtedly legitimate to express those differences, but, notwithstanding that, we must be able to unite on the common humanity of the situation. ...

I hope that every member will feel it to be their incumbent duty to reach out to all communities that are feeling vulnerable, particularly our Jewish and Muslim communities, to reassure them that hate crime will not be tolerated. ...

Meghan Gallacher (Conservative): ... The UK Government has engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to open the Rafah crossing from Gaza into Egypt to allow humanitarian aid to enter the territory. The crossing is now partially open and aid trucks have been arriving over the past few days. Does the First Minister recognise those efforts and acknowledge the delivery of aid into the Gazan territory so far?

The First Minister: ... it is a fraction of what is needed.

We are listening to the UN agencies on the ground, and I heard Medical Aid for Palestinians say just yesterday that hospitals are running out of not just medical supplies but, importantly, fuel. ... The Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza is reporting that it only has 48 hours before it will shut down, and that is Gaza's largest hospital ...

Ivan McKee (SNP): The latest round of the tragic conflicts between Israel and Palestine has so far claimed the lives of more than 5,000 people, most of them innocent civilians. We condemn the brutal acts carried out by Hamas, but we also recognise that collective punishment of a civilian population by Israel is a war crime.

Does the First Minister agree that a lasting peace will only come about through negotiations that recognise the rights of Palestinians in Gaza and in the west bank, remembering, of course, that many innocent Palestinians have been killed by settlers and soldiers in the west bank while this conflict has continued? ...

The First Minister: I agree with the sentiments expressed by Ivan McKee, who has a long-standing history of engaging with the situation. ... The numbers that he reads out are more than statistics; they are people. The 5,000 people in Gaza and, we think, round about 1,400 that have been killed in Israel are real people with real families ...

The member's point about collective punishment is one that I have reiterated and will reiterate again. It cannot be justified. Cutting off electricity, food, fuel and supplies cannot be justified, I am afraid. It goes against the principles of international law.

The points that Ivan McKee makes about the west bank are well made. That is why this Government has had a long-standing position on the end of the occupation, the end of the siege or blockade of Gaza and recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to their own state, which is, of course, an objective that the international community agreed to not years ago, but decades ago. ...

Jackie Baillie (Labour): I very much agree with the First Minister's comments about solidarity and inclusion in Scotland. However, across the UK, for this month alone, a 1,300 per cent increase in antisemitic hate crime has been recorded and Islamophobic hate crime is up by 140 per cent. We are, of course, united in saying that hatred, violence and racism in any form cannot be tolerated. Will the First Minister advise whether our laws are sufficiently robust to tackle antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime? ...

The First Minister: ... The chief constable made it clear to me that, although Police Scotland has not seen a rise, there can often be a delay in reporting.

... there can be lots of underreporting and that there can be a real worry or anxiety in communities about reporting to the authorities. That is why we have third-party reporting centres...

I will certainly consider what more we can do with local government, and with the UK Government where necessary, to send a united message that not only do we oppose antisemitism, Islamophobia and hatred in any way, shape or form, there are means and methods by which people can report such things. ...

Rona Mackay (SNP): Across the UK, we have warmly welcomed refugees from Ukraine, Syria and other countries. ... Will the First Minister confirm again that Scotland is ready to play its part in welcoming those who wish to leave Gaza?

The First Minister: We are. We will begin with our colleagues in local government the process and the work necessary for a resettlement scheme. ... so that, if there is a requirement for a refugee scheme, we are ready and prepared to be the first country to offer that safety and sanctuary when it is required.

Jackson Carlaw (Conservative): In his very public embrace of Irene Cowan in her moment of deepest grief, and in his reflections and remarks to a packed congregation in the Giffnock Newton Mearns synagogue, the First Minister's sincerity and empathy were deeply impressive and hugely appreciated by Jewish constituents ...

The Jewish community in Scotland is small. It has perhaps 11,000 souls ... They have never been more fearful or anxious. They may take some comfort from the forthcoming visit of the chief rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, to the Calderwood Lodge campus, which is the first and only joint Catholic-Jewish primary school campus anywhere in the world and a tribute to the work of interfaith communities in Scotland to improve things for people in their communities, to protect them and to make them feel safe. ...

The First Minister: ... I also spoke to the chief rabbi, Rabbi Mirvis, last week. I was again deeply touched by the fact that he made a point of telling me that he was praying not just for my family but for all the innocent men, women and children in Gaza. I can give Jackson Carlaw, I hope, a reassurance that not only are our words important—although they are important; people need to hear what we are saying about our joint endeavour to tackle antisemitism, Islamophobia and hatred—but actions are important as well. That is why I take it as a personal responsibility to be visible and to engage with communities that are very fearful indeed. ...

Willie Coffey (SNP): ... Can the First Minister give the people of Scotland an assurance that he will focus on humanitarian support, reconciliation and peace in order to save the countless thousands of innocent lives that are still at risk?

The First Minister: I can. I see it as a duty of the Government to continue to speak out and make sure that our response is rooted in empathy, compassion and international law, so that everybody who is suffering—there are many suffering in Gaza and Israel—believes that the Government speaks for peace, justice, compassion and humanity. ...

Neil Bibby (Labour): We know that since 7 October, in addition to many other innocent civilians, at least 21 journalists have tragically been killed. ... Democracy relies on a free press, particularly against the backdrop of misinformation. Will the First Minister take the opportunity to express his solidarity with the journalists in Israel and Palestine ...

The First Minister: Neil Bibby makes an excellent point. Fearless journalism has

allowed us to see the true horrors of this conflict, the true horrors of the barbaric attack by Hamas and the true horrors of the collective punishment that is taking place, unfortunately, in Gaza. ...

Ruth Maguire (SNP): ... I condemn the barbaric terrorism of Hamas and urge it to release all hostages unharmed. I urge the Israeli Government to operate within international law and cease the dehumanising, genocidal language towards and collective punishment of innocent men, women and children in Gaza. ...

The First Minister: Speaking out is really important. We have seen many demonstrations across cities and towns in Scotland and right across the United Kingdom. It is important to facilitate people's participation in that peaceful democratic process. That is an important outlet for people to channel their anger, frustration, compassion and humanity. It is important to state that we support people's right to do that. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15494&i=132204#ScotParlOR>

The joint statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/news/leaders-reaffirm-inter-faith-solidarity-in-scotland/>

Scottish Government

Humza Yousaf We demand a ceasefire to allow more humanitarian aid to flow to Gaza, including fuel. @ScotGov unequivocally condemns Hamas' terror attack on Israel. The response cannot be collective punishment of innocent Gazans, who have nothing to do with Hamas. That too must be condemned. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1716891589250084934>

Welsh Senedd Oral Answer

Business Statement and Announcement

Mabon ap Gwynfor (Plaid Cymru): Everyone will have been horrified by the evil actions of Hamas on 7 October, with some 1,400 people killed in Israel. There is no justification for these horrific acts. There is no justification either to deny water, electricity, fuel, medicine and other essentials to 2 million people on the Gaza strip—with half of the population under the age 18—punishing children and other innocents. Hospitals there are now running out of essential medicines and materials. It's estimated that 5,000 Palestinians have now been killed, and missiles are still falling in southern Gaza, where people are being encouraged to move.

I understand that the Government here secured humanitarian aid for Palestine in previous conflicts. So, can we have an urgent statement from Government, setting out what humanitarian support the Government can provide to the people of Gaza, and an assurance that the Government here is using all of its powers in order to call for a ceasefire in that part of the world as a matter of urgency?

Lesley Griffiths (Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd): ...

I can assure you that Welsh Government is taking the steps to which you refer. I know both the First Minister and the Minister for Social Justice have really reached out to our faith groups here to see what more we can do to support them. Obviously, international affairs is not a devolved matter, but I'm sure we all watch with absolute horror as these scenes unfold before us on our television screens every evening.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13524#C534387>

'Even War Has Rules', Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Demanding All Parties in Middle East Uphold International Humanitarian Law, Unrestricted Aid for Gaza

... The situation in the Middle East is growing more dire by the hour. The war in Gaza is raging and risks spiralling throughout the region. Divisions are splintering societies. Tensions threaten to boil over.

At a crucial moment like this, it is vital to be clear on principles — starting with the fundamental principle of respecting and protecting civilians. I have condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts of terror by Hamas in Israel.

Nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians — or the launching of rockets against civilian targets. All hostages must be treated humanely and released immediately and without conditions. ...

It is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation. They have seen their land steadily devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced and their homes demolished. Their hopes for a political solution to their plight have been vanishing.

But, the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the appalling attacks by Hamas. And those appalling attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Even war has rules. We must demand that all parties uphold and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law; take constant care in the conduct of military operations to spare civilians; and respect and protect hospitals and respect the inviolability of UN facilities which today are sheltering more than 600,000 Palestinians.

The relentless bombardment of Gaza by Israeli forces, the level of civilian casualties, and the wholesale destruction of neighborhoods continue to mount and are deeply alarming. ... The protection of civilians is paramount in any armed conflict. Protecting civilians can never mean using them as human shields. Protecting civilians does not mean ordering more than 1 million people to evacuate to the south, where there is no shelter, no food, no water, no medicine and no fuel, and then continuing to bomb the south itself.

I am deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza. Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law. ...

To ease epic suffering, make the delivery of aid easier and safer, and facilitate the release of hostages, I reiterate my appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Even in this moment of grave and immediate danger, we cannot lose sight of the only realistic foundation for a true peace and stability: a two-State solution. Israelis must see their legitimate needs for security materialized, and Palestinians must see their legitimate aspirations for an independent State realized, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sqsm22003.doc.htm>

Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East: Tor Wennesland

... The abhorrent attack launched by Hamas on 7 October and Israel's devastating, ongoing military operation in Gaza have taken a staggering toll on civilians and deeply shaken Israelis and Palestinians alike. ...

Testimony and evidence emerging from that tragic day reveal a sickening killing spree,

designed to terrorize, with appalling scenes of brutality, massacres and hostage-taking, including against infants and young children. In all, Hamas and other Palestinian militant-groups killed over 1,400 Israelis and foreign nationals – the bloodiest attack in Israel’s history. This includes over 1,000 civilians, many of them women and children, and over 360 security forces personnel. Over 5,400 Israelis were injured.

At least 220 civilians, including women and children, as well as soldiers, were abducted and taken into the Gaza Strip as hostages. While not confirmed, Hamas has said that 22 hostages were killed by Israeli strikes. ...

Heavy fighting between Israeli forces and militants inside Israeli communities continued until 10 October, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it regained control of the perimeter fence. Over 120,000 Israelis were displaced from the area.

Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in Gaza have continued to launch indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, reaching as far north as Haifa. To date, according to Israeli sources, some 7,700 rockets have been launched. ...

On the day of the attack, Israel’s Security Cabinet declared a state of war for the first time in over 50 years, with the aim of “the destruction of the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.” That same day, Israeli forces began a massive bombardment of what they said were Hamas sites throughout Gaza. ... On 8 October, Israel’s Minister of Defense announced a complete siege of Gaza, blocking all entry of goods, including electricity, water, food, fuel, and medical equipment.

The airstrikes have been devastating and resulted in a staggering number of Palestinian fatalities, a vast number of whom are civilians. Thus far, the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza has reported over 5,000 Palestinians killed, including over 1,100 women, 2,000 children as well as journalists, medical workers and first responders, with more than 15,000 injured. ...

The level of physical destruction has left entire neighborhoods in rubble and critical infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged. ...

Violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem – already at worrying levels – has increased since the outbreak of war. Israeli authorities have imposed widespread movement restrictions and conducted extensive arrests. ... Since 7 October, 93 Palestinians, including 27 children, have been killed by ISF or settlers, and one Israeli security personnel was killed in an armed exchange. ...

Meanwhile, across the Blue Line ... Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have launched rockets and anti-tank missiles toward Israel, while IDF responded with artillery fire and air strikes, leading to casualties on both sides. ...

On the Golan, the Israeli Defense Forces responded on 10 October with artillery and mortar shells towards what they said were a number of launches from Syria toward Israel. ...

The unresolved conflict and continued occupation shape the reality of every Israeli and every Palestinian. For 15 years, the Palestinian population has been living under militant rule and a strict closure regime, as the Palestinian divide hardened. For a generation, hope has been lost and despair has prevailed for those who see prospects for a more peaceful future pulling still further away.

Only a political solution will move us forward. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/briefing-security-council-situation-middle-east-delivered-un-special-coordinator-tor-wennesland>

Remarks on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator delivered by Assistant Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lynn Hastings:

... As intense airstrikes continue to rain down on Gaza and as indiscriminate rockets fly

into Israel, death, injury, destruction and displacement, are mounting.

On the Israeli side, the fatality toll is more than three times the cumulative number of Israelis killed since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005.

In Gaza, the reported Palestinian fatality toll of the past 17 days is more than double the total number of fatalities of the entire 2014 [war], a war which lasted 50 days. Women and children comprise some 62 per cent of these victims.

The number of those who are internally displaced has swelled to 1.4 million. ...

As my colleagues have repeatedly highlighted, there is nowhere to seek refuge in Gaza. When it comes to decisions on whether and where to flee, civilians are damned if they do and damned if they don't. ...

Meanwhile, Gaza remains under a full electricity blackout. Hospitals are on the brink of collapse due to shortages of electricity, medicine, equipment, specialized personnel and the damage and destruction. Patients are being treated on the floors due to a shortage of beds. Doctors are being forced to operate without anesthesia. ...

This past weekend, 34 trucks entered Gaza with life-saving supplies, and another 20 crossed Rafah into Gaza yesterday. Twenty more of those are due to cross today. We welcome this important development ...

And most crucially, the deliveries made over the past few days do not include fuel. That is essential for powering the services that are needed for people to survive. ...

While we negotiate with the Government of Israel as to how best to bring fuel into Gaza, we have 400,000 litres [in] trucks ready to go; this would provide fuel for approximately 2.5 more days. ...

The parties, on all sides, must take constant care to spare civilians – including medical and humanitarian personnel – civilian objects – including homes, hospitals and humanitarian assets. ...

If we are to prevent any further descent into this humanitarian catastrophe, dialogue must continue – to ensure essential supplies can get into Gaza at the scale needed, to spare civilians and the infrastructure they depend on, to release hostages, and to avoid any further escalation and spillover. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.unocha.org/news/essential-supplies-must-enter-gaza-scale-needed-senior-un-official-tells-security-council>

Security Council: The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, warned that the situation in the Middle East grew more dire by the hour ... Recalling his unequivocal condemnation of the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts of terror by Hamas in Israel, he stated, “nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians — or the launching of rockets against civilian targets.” ...

The attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum, with the Palestinian people being subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation, during which they saw their land devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced; their homes demolished, and their hopes for a political solution vanishing ... [\[click here to read this statement in greater detail\]](#)

Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process ... [said] “The abhorrent attack launched by Hamas on 7 October and Israel’s devastating, ongoing military operation in Gaza have taken a staggering toll on civilians and deeply shaken Israelis and Palestinians alike” ...

indiscriminate rocket fire from there into Israel, and to date, according to Israeli sources, some 7,700 rockets have been launched. “On the day of the attack, Israel’s Security

Cabinet declared a state of war for the first time in over 50 years ...

Israel's air assault in the Strip has continued to date, with some 5,000 such sites targeted ... the Ministry of Health in Gaza has reported over 5,000 Palestinians killed ... [\[click here to read this briefing in greater detail\]](#)

Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, briefed the Council that violence is at historically high levels on both sides. ... She called on Israel to bring water and electricity supplies back to pre-conflict levels and work with her teams to find a secure way of bringing fuel into Gaza. ... [\[click here to read this briefing in greater detail\]](#)

Riad Al-Maliki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, urged to stop the killing and massacres being committed against his people. He said that the ongoing massacres perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population under its illegal occupation must be stopped. "The Security Council has a duty to stop them. The international community is obliged under international law to stop them. It is our collective human duty to stop them — now. ...mourning the senseless killing of UNRWA staff and other humanitarian workers, including doctors, nurses and paramedics who were directly targeted by the ongoing barbarous aggression.

"By the time representatives are done delivering their speeches today, 150 Palestinians will have been killed, including 60 children," he said ... "More injustice and more killing will not make Israel safer," he stressed, adding that no amount of weapons and no alliance will bring to it security, but only peace with Palestine and its people will.

"The fate of the Palestinian people cannot continue to be dispossession, displacement, denial of rights and death," he emphasized, adding that the freedom of the Palestinians is the condition of shared peace and security. "For those actively engaged to avoid an even greater humanitarian catastrophe and regional spillover, it must be clear that this can only be achieved by putting an immediate end to the Israeli war launched against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip," he said, urging to stop the bloodshed. "Peace and security cannot and will not be achieved by crushing the skulls of infants" or through "wiping out Gaza" or "turning it into a hell" or "reducing its area", as has been announced repeatedly by everyone who carries out these killing and destruction. ...

He stressed that the urgent solution required from the Council today is to call for a ceasefire, an immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression, to work urgently to secure humanitarian access in all parts of the Gaza Strip, to end the forced displacement, to provide international protection for the Palestinian people and to achieve justice through accountability. ...

Eli Cohen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, said that young babies and children are held in Gaza, a situation beyond imagination. These children and babies have not caused evil, but they are victims of evil, he said, adding that Saturday, 7 October — when more than 1,500 terrorists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad infiltrated Israel and killed more than 1,400 men, women and children, wounding more than 4,000 — will go down in history as a brutal massacre and a wakeup call to the free world. They went from house to house, slaughtering entire families and individuals in their beds, people on their way to synagogues, raping women, burning them alive, he said. "Hamas are the new Nazis," he said, and the civilized world must stand united behind Israel to defeat them. ...

Israel gave Palestinians Gaza down to the last millimetre — there is no dispute regarding the land of Gaza, he said. But they took the money they received from the world and instead of building hospitals, office buildings and commercial centres, they took the money to dig tunnels and to build rocket factories, he said. "Listen to these monsters — the West is next," he said, adding that the war which was imposed on Israel is "not just Israel's war. It's the war of the free world." As for calls for proportionality or a ceasefire, what is the proportional response to the killing of babies, for the raping and burning of women, for beheading a child, he asked, adding that the proportional response to the 7 October

massacre is the total destruction of Hamas. ...

As Iran's proxy, Hamas had three objectives for its barbaric attack: the murder of Jews, the kidnapping of hostages and the derailment of peace, stability and normalization in the region, he said, adding that Israeli citizens are under heavy missile and rocket fire from Gaza. Meanwhile, there is a clear attempt to escalate and provoke a war on Israel's northern border where the Iran proxy Hezbollah is targeting Israeli cities, he said. Last week, cruise missiles were launched at Israel from Yemen. Have no illusion who is behind it or what is the reason, he said. ...

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States said he had put forth a resolution containing practical steps to address the crisis, building on elements of the text by Brazil. First, it recognizes the right and imperative of States to defend themselves against terrorism, and condemns Hamas' terrorist attack against Israel, during which, he said, "young people were gunned down with glee, young people were beheaded, parents were executed in front of their parents, and children were executed in front of their parents, and so many were taken hostage." In this context, he said, "it must be asked: where is the outrage? Where is the explicit condemnation of these horrors?" The Council must denounce Member States arming, funding or training Hamas. Noting that the violence had affected United Nations employees, and many Member States, including Council Members, he said: "Every one of us has a stake and responsibility in defeating terror."

While Israel has "the right and indeed the obligation to defend itself", Palestinian civilians must be protected, and Hamas must cease to use them as human shields, he continued. Food, medicine and water must flow into Gaza, and humanitarian pauses must be considered. ... "A civilian is a civilian is a civilian, no matter their nationality, gender, or faith," he said. He welcomed the release of four hostages and implored all Council members to use their leverage to secure the release of the 200 hostages still in the grip of Hamas. ...

Pointing to Iran's support to Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, he stressed: "The United States does not seek conflict with Iran but if it or its proxies attack United States personnel, we will defend our people and our security swiftly and decisively." The two-State solution is the only way to break out of the cycle of violence and achieve broader regional security, he said, adding: "Two paths lie before us — one path is offered by Hamas, and it leads to death, destruction, and darkness. The other is the path to greater peace, normalization and integration; the path to the Palestinians' right to self-determination and a state of their own." Hamas does not get to choose the path the world takes, he stressed.

Catherine Colonna, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France said: "It is our duty to condemn unambiguously Hamas' terrorist attack and that of other terrorist groups against Israel." ... She affirmed her country's solidarity with Israel and underscored its right to defend itself and protect its people, while noting that Israel must do so while respecting international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Hamas in no way represents the Palestinians, she emphasized, underscoring that it is the duty of the international community, including Israel, to guarantee the ongoing provision to civilians in Gaza of basic goods: water, food, medicine and fuel. ...

Maya Tissafi, State Secretary of Switzerland, said that, as the depositary of the Geneva Conventions, her country prioritizes the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law. ... Switzerland calls for an immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Gaza as it recognizes Israel's legitimate concern for national defence and security. "We remind the parties of the binding nature of all its rules, without exception, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities. Joining the Secretary-General to unequivocally condemn the incident at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, she called for an investigation to be carried out so that the facts can be clarified ...

Tom Tugendhat, Minister of State for Security of the United Kingdom ... said: "Israel is a nation in mourning. It is also a nation under attack." The violence did not end on

7 October, he said, noting terrorist rockets still raining down on Israeli towns, and around 200 of its citizens are held hostage in Gaza ... Palestinians are suffering, too, he said, noting that thousands have been killed in the conflict, while more than 1 million have been displaced. ... [\[click here to read this speech in greater detail\]](#)

Reem Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates ... warned that “an unchecked slide into regional war risks ominous outcomes” that will threaten regional security and affect stability around the world. ... Immediate, safe, sustainable and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid must be allowed to enter the Gaza Strip in a manner that meets the basic needs ...

Stressing that the attacks launched by Hamas on 7 October are barbaric and heinous, she demanded that the group release hostages immediately and unconditionally. Hamas’ crimes against civilians can never justify the policy of collective punishment towards the Gaza Strip, she underscored, stressing that Israel must respect its obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians. ...

Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) said “the scale of the humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip has exceeded all of our worst imaginations.” We all face the more urgent challenge to stop the violence and ensure the supply of humanitarian assistance to Gazans who face arbitrary strikes by Israel and violations of international humanitarian law. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15462.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/OPT: Türk says humanity must come first, urges humanitarian ceasefire

UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk today called for a broad humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and Israel. He also called on the parties to the conflict to redouble efforts to ensure proper compliance with international law.

“Far too many civilian lives, many of them children, have already been lost – on both sides - as a consequence of these hostilities. And, unless something changes, coming days will see more civilians on the brink of death from continuing bombardment. ...

The humanitarian situation in Gaza, already strangled by 16 years of blockade, is now verging on catastrophe due to lack of water, power, sanitation, essential medicine, food, and other basic necessities, Türk said. Reports of overcrowding and spread of diseases are deeply worrying, even more so when hospitals are damaged and destroyed, there is a worsening shortage of medicines, and movement is heavily restricted.

“This violence will never end unless leaders stand up and take the brave and humane choices that are required by fundamental humanity. The first step must be an immediate humanitarian ceasefire ...

Since 7 October, more than 5,000 people in Gaza have been killed, including 2,000 children, mostly as a result of IDF attacks and operations, as have 1,300 Israeli citizens and residents as a result of attacks by Palestinian armed groups. Civilians constitute the majority of those killed in both Gaza and Israel. ...

“All civilians captured and held by Palestinian armed groups must be released immediately and unconditionally. The taking and holding of hostages is prohibited by international law,” Türk said.

“Action by Israel to cut off civilians from access to essential goods and services as a form of collective punishment, also violates international law. ...

Over the weekend, in some of the most intensive Israeli raids of the past two weeks on Gaza, close to 1,000 Gazans were reportedly killed, some in and around hospitals, mosques and schools where many had sought shelter and safety.

The humanitarian aid which resumed from Egypt over the weekend is a mere drop in the ocean of what is needed, when hospitals deprived of resources are overflowed by over

15,000 wounded, Türk said.

“If more aid for Gazans, including fuel, medicine, food and water, does not arrive in days or even hours, many more people in Gaza will die, of hunger, thirst and lack of medical care,” ...

“International humanitarian law is crystal clear. The protection of civilians is paramount, and any actions that contravene this will be scrutinised closely, with grave breaches risking exposure to liability for war crimes and other atrocity crimes,” Türk said. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/israel-opt-turk-says-humanity-must-come-first-urges-humanitarian-ceasefire>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

France: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [201700] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met his French counterpart since His Majesty the King’s state visit to France in September 2023.

Leo Docherty: While the Foreign Secretary and French Foreign Minister did not meet in person in the last month, they are in regular contact on a range of shared priorities. They most recently spoke about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201700>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

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

Amendment paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0325/amend/econactivity_day_rep_1025.pdf

House of Commons Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9822/CBP-9822.pdf>

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

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

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

Motion to Agree [Standing Orders]

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-23/debates/5ACAFA33-AE67-456D-A937-59D27A144D7F/HolocaustMemorialBill>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 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 7 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>

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