



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

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### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Hamas: Demonstrations

**Nick Fletcher (Conservative)** [203420] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with the police to identify Hamas supporters at anti-Israel rallies in the UK.

**Tom Tugendhat:** 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/2023-10-18/203420>

### House of Lords Oral Answers

#### Counter-Disinformation Unit: Israel and Palestine

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire (Liberal Democrat):** To ask His Majesty's Government what steps their Counter-Disinformation Unit is taking to identify and combat disinformation on social media in respect of the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (Viscount Camrose):** The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology takes the threat posed by disinformation in relation to the conflict extremely seriously. We are taking a three-pronged approach, working in lockstep with communities, technology companies and across government. The Government are working to identify fake accounts, known as bots, and working closely with social media companies to ensure the removal of illegal content and content in breach of their terms of service.

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire:** ... The Minister has confirmed that there is active interaction with social media companies, and there is an effort to identify the sources of this misinformation, many of which are state actors. However, some are individuals in this country and elsewhere. What happens when those sources have been identified? Who takes the action further?

**Viscount Camrose:** ... Where the unit identifies disinformation being deployed at scale, it would first engage with the relevant ministry to allow it to respond. On occasion, it will engage directly with social media companies, if the content it is seeing either is illegal or runs contrary to the terms of service declared by that company.

**Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative):** My Lords, there has been a huge rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on social media, much of it due to disinformation. What steps are His Majesty's Government taking to educate the public to spot disinformation and stop them forwarding and repeating it?

**Viscount Camrose:** ... In the escalating battle between those pushing disinformation at us and our attempts to limit it, media literacy is key. Under the terms of the Online Safety Bill, which is due to become law in just a few days, Ofcom is obliged to produce a media literacy strategy to generate awareness of and resilience to misinformation and disinformation. It is obliged also to create an expert advisory committee on misinformation and disinformation online. In addition, there is now a media literacy programme fund that awards up to £700,000 of grant funding for media literacy programmes. All this is dependent on platforms setting out clearly their terms of service, so that users can access them in the full knowledge of the kind of information that they can expect to see.

**Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour):** My Lords, the EU Commission has formally opened an investigation into X, the platform previously referred to as Twitter, to ensure that it complies with the Digital Services Act following the onslaught of the current conflict in Israel and Gaza, Palestine. Could the Minister outline what discussions and engagement have taken place with the European Commission in relation to its and the UK's investigations?

**Viscount Camrose:** On 11 October, shortly after the commencement of hostilities, the Secretary of State for DSIT convened a meeting of social media platforms. These included Google, YouTube, Meta, X, Snap and TikTok. She made her expectation very clear that not only would illegal content be rapidly and urgently removed but authoritative content would be promoted to create more clarity around what is accurate content in this fast-moving and difficult situation. Those meetings are ongoing daily at official level and are accompanied by detailed correspondence on the acts of those platforms.

**The Archbishop of York:** My Lords, it is good to hear that the Government are engaging with the social media platforms on this incredibly serious issue. ... one goes into this area with great caution, as it is distressing and nasty. I am told that X is currently laying off people whose job it is to monitor and remove posts that contain disinformation. Given this, and given that we have made progress in looking at social media platforms, what are we doing to require them to do this other than simply engaging with them?

**Viscount Camrose:** I absolutely agree with the most reverend Primate about the

seriousness and horror of the situation. On requiring social media companies to act, the Online Safety Bill will become law in a matter of days; it places much more rigorous requirements on the social media companies to remove content which is illegal and is harmful to children and to have only content that is consistent with their published terms of service.

**Viscount Hailsham (Conservative):** My Lords, what are Ministers doing to engage with the leaders of the relevant religious communities to persuade their followers to avoid inflammatory actions and words, which are causing such trouble and intercommunity tension?

**Viscount Camrose:** That is an important part of the Government's approach to this very difficult, nasty situation. Last week, the Secretary of State met leaders of Jewish communities, and ongoing meetings are similarly being convened by DLUHC with all communities. We are establishing bridges between these communities and the social media platforms. One advantage they have in that dialogue is that they are accorded trusted flagger status, which greatly reduces the amount of time it takes to raise content of concern. ...

**Lord Clement-Jones (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, the Minister mentioned that the Online Safety Bill will come into law very shortly. Will he commit to setting up the advisory committee on disinformation and misinformation as soon as possible after this? The current situation clearly demonstrates both the need for it and for it to come to swift conclusions.

**Viscount Camrose:** I very much share the noble Lord's analysis of the need for this group to come rapidly into existence. It is, of course, the role of Ofcom to create it. I will undertake to liaise with it to make sure that that is speeded up.

**Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Conservative):** My Lords, it was reported that a hospital had been hit. Immediately—sadly, in this modern day—the media like to break news, not to check how accurate it is. In practice, when we find out exactly what did happen, the damage has already been done because it went out to billions of people who wanted to believe that the Israelis did it.

**Viscount Camrose:** That was very concerning. I am unable to comment specifically on the role of the BBC reporting on it. Combined with other sources of misinformation and disinformation online, it greatly amplified the damage that was done. We continue to work with the social media companies to ensure that they promote authoritative versions of the truth based on their use of fact-checkers, whether third-party independents or part of their own organisation.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-24/debates/E41C2A61-E9FC-46D2-8C9F-D349F25AC613/Counter-DisinformationUnitIsraelAndPalestine>

## Crown Prosecution Service

### Joint statement on Hate Crime from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)

... Hate crimes not only inflict harm on individuals they have a wider impact on communities and undermine the very fabric of our society. They sow fear, division and mistrust, and cause lasting damage and trauma.

We recognise that strong partnership working between our organisations and with communities, lies at the heart of bringing more offenders of hate crime to justice. We will continue to promote active engagement with all communities, listen and learn from each other, and foster an environment of dialogue in order to build confidence and enhance reporting.

Transparency and engagement remain a cornerstone of our joint commitment, and we

recognise the importance of continuing to be open in our investigations and prosecutions, explaining our decisions and in keeping our communities informed and reassured.

In this continuing context, we once again reaffirm the shared commitment of both our organisations to investigate and prosecute hate crime fairly and effectively and to support victims to give their best evidence to enable positive outcomes to be achieved for all individuals and communities who may experience hate crime in the UK. ...

The law reflects parliamentary intent to support victims of hate crime – ordinary people who experience criminal behaviour involving hostility and hatred based on who they are. ...

Such targeting is unacceptable and Government research demonstrates that victims of hate crime can suffer more serious psychological harm than victims of the same crime with no targeted hostility. No one should need to fear hostility whoever they are, wherever they are. If 'minor' hate crime incidents go unchecked, such behaviour can escalate into more frequent and serious patterns of offending. ...

There is no 'hierarchy' of hate crime. We fundamentally believe that everyone shares a right to live free from hate crime, regardless of the individual characteristics targeted. ...

**To read the full statement see**

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/london-south/news/joint-statement-hate-crime-crown-prosecution-service-and-national-police>

## Welsh Senedd Oral Answers

### Antisemitism

**Darren Millar (Conservative) [OQ60147]** What action is the Welsh Government taking to promote the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism by the further and higher education sector in Wales?

**Jeremy Miles (Minister for Education and the Welsh Language):** Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism—which, as the Member knows, the Welsh Government itself has done—is a matter for universities and FE institutions themselves. However, whilst I respect institutional autonomy, I have been clear with university leaders that I would like to see them adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

**Darren Millar:** I'm very pleased that you've made clear what the Government's position is on this. Earlier this year, the Community Security Trust published a report that showed a 22 per cent increase in university-related antisemitic hate incidents over the past two years, and according to the Campaign Against Antisemitism, there's been a huge surge of 1,350 per cent in antisemitic incidents across the UK since the start of the ongoing hostilities between Israel and Hamas in recent weeks.

We all agree that hate incidents should not be tolerated, particularly at publicly funded institutions. But, regrettably, unlike the overwhelming majority of universities in England and Scotland, the Welsh higher education sector, and the further education sector, is way behind in adopting the IHRA antisemitism definition. I appreciate what you say, that, from a legal perspective, it is a matter for Welsh universities to decide whether they adopt the definition or not, but the Government holds the purse strings for significant sums of income for these organisations. Therefore, can I ask you, will you now take further action on this front by requiring all Welsh further education colleges and all Welsh universities to adopt the IHRA definition as a condition of funding from the Welsh Government?

**Jeremy Miles:** As the Member, I think, knows from our previous discussions, I met Lord Mann, who is the UK Government's adviser on antisemitism, to discuss the approach in relation to educational institutions. I met also with the Union of Jewish Students, and with the National Union of Students Wales in relation to this, and I've raised this not just with vice-chancellors, but also with university chairs. He knows what my personal position is, and what the Government's position is. Universities

in Wales are following the Universities UK guidance in relation to antisemitism and Islamophobia.

I do agree with the Member about the importance of bearing down on incidents of antisemitism, and, indeed, Islamophobia, in our education system generally. There are clear obligations in the anti-racist Wales action plan on all parts of our education system. This week, I'm meeting, together with the Minister for Social Justice, with representatives of the Jewish community in Wales to discuss their concerns about incidents of antisemitism in our education system, and it will be an important opportunity to hear their perspectives and what more we can do to support them in that.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13525#C535173>

The CST report referred to above can be read at

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.pdf>

The action plan referred to above can be read at

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan_0.pdf)

## Tell Mama

### **Tell MAMA received 400 anti-Muslim cases between October 7 and October 24**

Tell MAMA recorded a six-fold increase in anti-Muslim cases between October 7 and October 24 compared to the same period in 2022.

We logged 400 cases (191 offline and 209 online, respectively) compared to 67 cases (both online and offline) the previous year.

Our [previous bulletins revealed](#) how dehumanising, racist language targeted Muslims, Arab and Palestinian communities both online and offline – when in public areas, speaking Arabic in public or targeting their homes or property. ...

From the cases sent to us between October 7 and October 24, we can disclose that from the 191 offline cases, we captured 121 cases of abusive behaviour, 21 threats, 19 assaults, 11 acts of vandalism, 9 cases of discrimination, 7 acts of hate speech and 3 cases of anti-Muslim literature. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-received-400-anti-muslim-cases-between-october-7-and-october-24/>

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## Israel

**See also House of Lords oral answers “Counter-Disinformation Unit: Israel and Palestine” and written answer 203420 that are included in the Home Affairs section above.**

## House of Lords Debate

### Israel/Gaza

**col 515 The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):** ... I take us back to 7 October. It was a Saturday—Shabbat—and the evening before had changed the trajectory not just of Israel but of many commentators, reporters, Governments and perspectives, as well as the many within



Israel whose lives would never be the same. The attacks in Israel on 7 October not only shocked a country, they shocked the world. As His Majesty's Government have made clear repeatedly, the United Kingdom, at that time and today—I am sure that I speak for all noble Lords—stands with Israel, a nation in mourning.

I am a Muslim by faith, as all noble Lords know, and on hearing of the death of any person, the prayer we recite is: "Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji-un", simply translated as "To God we belong and to God we return". When we see the innocent lives taken that day, we pray for those souls. I know that people of all faiths and none were shocked by the inhumanity of the brutal murder of so many innocent people in Israel. Therefore, we should, irrespective of faith, community, belief and religion, condemn unequivocally the terror attacks committed by Hamas against Israel and, indeed, many international citizens. Simply put, these attacks were driven by hatred.

We are also clear—this is important, and I hope that during today's debate it will echo from this Chamber—that it is Hamas, the proscribed terrorist organisation, that our focus is on. It is Hamas that is responsible for that violence, not the Palestinian people or the Palestinian Authority. It is Hamas that is responsible for those abhorrent acts of terror. ... In Israel itself, over 1,400 people were killed. When we reflect on the history of Israel in the last 75 years, we see that this was the most lethal attack against it.

*col 516* There were some who drew comparisons with the shock and horrors of the Holocaust, yet that was then and this is now, with the brutality of an appalling act of terror. We should not for a moment be distracted. ... We can never allow terror attacks to disrupt the incredible diversity and strength of our nation, which is a united United Kingdom when it comes to issues of terrorism. ...

The attacks were both indiscriminate and unconscionable. Those missing come from over 40 countries, including the United Kingdom. ... the youngest person being held hostage is as young as nine months and the eldest of those who shared their testimony about the people being held—the eldest in that incredible group of people who we met—is 93. ... We stand with Israel during its time of challenge and we are working with Israel to support the families who are suffering this pain. ...

Since that terror attack, a violent and vicious sequence of events has unfolded that continues to reverberate across the region and further afield. We have seen ... 4,000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza, and a growing and already challenging humanitarian catastrophe. Many people, right now, are likely to still be trapped under rubble. Let me be clear—and I hope I speak for every noble Lord, irrespective of whether they are Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, or of no faith—we, together, mourn the loss of every innocent life, of every faith and nationality.

My right honourable friend the Prime Minister has made clear Israel's right to defend its borders and people, and to act against terrorism. In doing so ... both he and my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary have been engaged directly with Israel, as have I, urging it to take all possible precautions to minimise harm to civilians in Gaza. ...

*col 517* Supporting our nationals and providing support to their grieving families is a key priority. ... we will leave no stone unturned in bringing our people back safely. We have facilitated flights for those British nationals wishing to leave Israel, bringing out more than 950 people. We are working with Egypt, Israel and other international partners to ensure that British nationals can leave Gaza safely via the Rafah crossing into Egypt. ...

British nationals currently in Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, should register their presence via the Foreign Office's travel advice page. We will then be able to share important updates, including information to help them to leave the country. ...

I make it absolutely clear that we are not only acutely aware of the contagious nature of this conflict but acting in this respect. We are aware, for example, that violence in the West Bank is rising. This year has become the bloodiest for West Bank violence since UN records began in 2005. ...

First, we are redoubling our work with the international community to prevent escalation in

the region and further threats against Israel. ...

*col 518* We have deployed a significant package of support to the eastern Mediterranean, including two Royal Navy ships, RAF surveillance aircraft and a company of Royal Marines. We are bolstering our forces in Cyprus and across the region. However, I make it clear to your Lordships' House that the Royal Navy ships and personnel are not being sent there to fight. We are there to support the humanitarian response and prevent the outbreak of a regional conflict.

Intensive diplomatic engagement is also ongoing ...

We have also made it clear in these engagements that all precautions must be taken to minimise, limit and mitigate against harm to civilians in Gaza, and to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access. ...

Secondly, we are providing humanitarian aid directly to the Palestinian people. The opening of the Rafah crossing this weekend to allow vital humanitarian aid into Gaza is testament to the power of diplomacy. ... I would be the first to say that it is not enough. It is imperative that this continues and increases substantially if it is to have the desired impact of saving the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.

*col 519* We have been clear also that Hamas is a terrorist organisation which, as we have seen, neither speaks for nor acts in the interests of the Palestinian people. It does not stand for the future that Palestinians want or desire. The conflict is exacerbating a situation that is already dire: six out of 10 Gazans were in need of humanitarian assistance before Hamas attacked Israel. ...

On 16 October, the Prime Minister announced £10 million in humanitarian funding to help civilians in Gaza and, as noble Lords will have heard, my right honourable friend announced an additional £20 million yesterday ...

I know that some noble Lords may express concern, as others have in the other place, but I assure them that all UK aid undergoes rigorous oversight, and multiple safeguards are in place to prevent UK funding from going to Hamas. ... As I said—I underline this important point—it is because of the strength of our partnership and relationship with Israel that we can make the case to ensure that it takes every possible precaution to minimise civilian casualties. As such, we welcome the commitment of the Israeli president, President Herzog, who has vowed that Israel's armed forces will operate in accordance with international law.

However, we cannot equate the two: through our lens in this country, Hamas is, by definition, a terrorist organisation. We must have moral clarity when we approach these issues. Yes, Israel is defending its borders and citizens, but, as a state, our role, as a friend and partner, is to work with Israel on the importance of acting within international humanitarian law and of alleviating the suffering of innocent civilians.

Thirdly, as my right honourable friend the Prime Minister said, we are working hard to sustain the long-term prospects of peace and stability in the region. ... The UK wants to see Israelis and Palestinians living safely and securely in peace. ...

*col 520* I reiterate what the Prime Minister said only yesterday: the United Kingdom and this Government remain committed to making progress towards a two-state solution ... we support a negotiated settlement, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. I would go further: ultimately, as they are close neighbours, there will inevitably be an interdependency between people—that is an important vision ...

We stand with Israel as it seeks to restore security to its borders, a country which was shocked to its core. As I said, that shock was not limited to Israel or to its people. It is a shock we all shared: the immediate shock of those innocent lives destroyed, the hostages taken, but also, as we have seen now, the terrible and continuing deeper suffering of the Palestinian people. Let us be clear, and many Israelis in Israel, that the Palestinian people are not the enemy: terrorists are, and the people who can be termed as such. ...

*col 521 Lord Turnberg (Labour):* ... It is hard not to be moved by the awful scenes of

fleeing women and children in stricken Gaza that now seem such a daily event. However, I want to speak of something else. I fear that there is a dangerous myth that the horrendous activities of Hamas on 7 October were the entirely understandable actions of an oppressed people crushed under the boot of Israel. It is the myth that seems to allow some in our media to excuse unspeakable acts of terror as merely those of militants.

But Hamas is not the oppressed; it is, in fact, the oppressor of its own people. When it was formed in 1987, its founding charter was based firmly on the principle that Israel and the Jews must be destroyed and thrown out of the Middle East, from the river to the sea. In 2005, when Israel removed all its settlements with every Jew from Gaza, it did so in the belief that the huge number of greenhouses and agricultural equipment that they had left behind would allow the Palestinians to have a basis on which they could build a viable state. It even left them plans for a harbour and an airport, but Hamas immediately destroyed the vacated houses and greenhouses and began to remove the representatives of its rival faction, Fatah—some, it threw off their rooftops to make the point.

Since 2005, Hamas has engaged in a war, sending an estimated 25,000 rockets into Israel. Although Hamas is Sunni, it shares its ideology with Shia Iran. Hamas has never wavered from its position. It is why it has refused to install a water desalination plant because it would use Israeli technology and why it has bombed the electricity generator at Ashdod that provides it with electricity, so that it can show the world how terrible Israel is to it.

Hamas has shown that it has little concern for its own oppressed Palestinian people. Far from protecting them, it does not allow them to enter the security of its myriad tunnels; it has not allowed its fellow citizens access to the hoard of fuel and food it has stockpiled; and it has prevented its own hospitals receiving medical supplies it has stored away. There is evidence of all that. Hamas has done all it can to prevent Palestinians from leaving the northern parts of Gaza so that it can callously use them as human shields while some of its leaders are living it up in Beirut and Qatar.

This is not a popular uprising of an oppressed people; it is the murderous activities of a malign organisation that cares little for the suffering of its own people as it pursues its aims, and it should be called out as such. For the BBC and, I fear, the *Financial Times* to persist in calling it a militant organisation is shameful and dangerous, as it feeds into the growing anti-Zionism—that anti-Semitism by another name—that we begin to see on our streets. ... If there is any good for Israel and the Palestinians that can come out of this horror story ... it can come only when the capacity of Hamas to create harm is removed. ...

col 522 Perhaps with new leadership on both sides, and with the rest of the world woken up to the serious dangers to world peace of a fraught Middle East, we might see more progress towards what I believe is the only solution offering any hope—a two-state solution. ...

**Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (Liberal Democrat):** ... there is no place for anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom in either private or public life, and we should call it out whenever we see instances of it. The second imperative is the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages. ...

Hamas is proscribed as a terror organisation, and by both its affiliation and conduct it justifies that judgment. We know that its members carried out acts of terrorism in Israel, only days ago. By its membership in the first instance and by its conduct, how else would you describe Hamas other than as terrorists? Its members are a lot more than militants, and that should be recognised universally in this country. Hamas killed at will. It took hostages who included—would you believe it?—the sick, the pregnant, children and the aged. The impact of its actions is global, because the Jewish family is not confined to Israel ...

The actions of Hamas were vicious and illegal, and Israel, by law, has the right to respond in defence of its citizens and territory. However, as was said by the Minister in his powerful opening, that response must be proportionate and openly seen to be targeting Hamas and to avoid civilians in Gaza. ... any standing in the way of the supply of food, water and



medicine when it is so obviously required would be seen as a challenge if not a breach of that proportionate principle.

It has been asked by some why Israel should be required to behave in a more restricted manner than Hamas. It is not about fairness; we gave up an eye for an eye long ago. These are the duties incumbent on democratic countries which claim—and in this case are entitled to—to honour humanitarian law. ...

*col 523* It need not have been this way. President Clinton brokered a deal between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. Promises were made, agreements were signed and hands were shaken, but it came to nothing. Arafat resiled from the agreement and, remarkably, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a settler. ...

I am pleased to see that, right from the beginning, our Prime Minister has majored on the two-state solution. Let us be frank: to take that further there will be difficulties on both sides. For the Palestinians, there are anxieties about the illegal settlements and the status of Jerusalem. For the Israelis, there is the justified anxiety about their security and the continued challenge to it. There is no point in turning to the Balfour Declaration. It is of no use, not least because it is now interpreted by what its reader wants it to mean. ...

**The Archbishop of Canterbury:** ... the innumerable deaths on 7 October and the taking of over 200 hostages have created a situation of trauma in Israel that is hard to exaggerate. ... On Sunday morning, I spent time with families who had lost eight members of their family; they talked about the first pogrom on Israeli territory and their absolute shock. I spoke with a family whose son had been killed on 7 October—a British-Israeli soldier called Yosef. He had been married—and I spoke with his wife at length—for one year and three days. He gave his life against overwhelming odds, as wave after wave of terrorists sought to kill people in one of the kibbutzes. I wonder whether the Government are considering—given that he was a British citizen—what official recognition of his supreme courage can be offered. As well as that, there was—although huge anger—an absence of hate from those families. That dignity that they are showing is the first ray of light ...

*col 524* From there, on Friday evening and Saturday, I saw the religious leaders—the Christian leaders of the Holy Land. ...

Will ... [the Government] make it clear that the Christian community is essential to the Holy Land, for the other great message I got is that they believe this may be the end of their existence, after 2,000 years? They are caught between the upper and the nether millstone. That brings us to the Palestinians in the West Bank. The Minister made absolutely clear his horror at the huge number—over 74 when I heard on Saturday from their representatives—murdered, almost entirely unarmed, almost entirely by settlers in illegal settlements in Area C. That strengthens Hamas and weakens the Palestinian Authority. ... Fourthly, we turn to that question of the objectives of the war. The hopes of peace and reconciliation are set not only after a military victory but by how that victory is achieved. The more heavy the casualties, the less chance there is of renewed peace, and Gaza has gone from level to level of violence over the last 15 years. War conducted with that aim is not fair. ...

... there is no equivalence between Israel and Hamas. The latter is a terrorist organisation; the former is a legitimate state whose citizens since 1945 have written many of the laws of war. They know how to do this. ...

*col 525* My final point, though, is about the innocent sufferers ... Can there be a corridor of sanctuary, at least on a temporary basis, to enable them to get the treatment without which they will die very rapidly? It is difficult. The call for a formal ceasefire is probably beyond hope, but can there be that humanitarian action? Can the children with autism and other extreme disabilities be allowed to come out so that they can attend school and not be in the midst of a war? ...

**Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench):** ... As someone who is conscious of the horrific history of Christian anti-Judaism, which morphed into anti-Semitism in the 19th century, I believe that the Christian churches have a special responsibility to care about

the safety of Israel, where the Jewish people, after centuries of persecution might at last be safe. Their safety should be our concern. ...

At the same time, we feel close to our Christian sisters and brothers in Gaza and the West Bank, where in this year in the West Bank so far 200 Palestinians and 30 Israelis have been killed. ...

*col/ 526* One group of people in whom the will to peace strongly resides are members of the Parents Circle – Families Forum ... This is made up of family members of those killed in recent conflicts: mothers of Israeli soldiers and mothers of Palestinians teenagers. Created in 1995, it now has more than 600 bereaved members joined together in their shared grief and shared commitment to reconciliation. When will their will for peace be translated into political terms? ...

*col/ 527 Lord Howard of Lympne (Conservative):* ... There is no equivalence between the deliberate murder, beheading and kidnapping that took place on 7 October and what is happening in Gaza. The victims on 7 October were not being used as human shields. The inhabitants of the kibbutzim, many of whom had devoted all their lives to the pursuit of peace, were not harbouring units of the Israel Defense Forces. The IDF is not targeting civilians, but in war, which this has now become, civilian casualties are sadly inevitable. ... I am a patron of an organisation called the Abraham Initiatives, which ... exists to promote trust and good relations between the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel—the only place where Jews and Arabs live together, often side by side. It is carrying out important work at the moment in these very fraught circumstances to calm tensions between the two communities. ...

... may I digress for a moment to nail the myth—the trope—that Israel is, in some undefined way, an apartheid state? A Muslim Arab judge sits on Israel's Supreme Court. I have an Arab friend who was Deputy Speaker in the last Knesset. Half the Israeli football team are Arabs. These are not the hallmarks of an apartheid state. ...

*col/ 528 Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale (Labour):* ... I have been a lifelong supporter and admirer of the BBC around the world ... In the last couple of weeks, I have been both ashamed of it and angry at it. Saying that Hamas is designated a terrorist organisation was a weasel-worded way of getting out of the fact that they were not going to call it terrorist at all. This was shameful. ...

I have also been struck by the great rewriting of history in a lot of the comment coming across in the media. It is not a question of opinion, but of historical accuracy. I keep hearing mentioned that 1948 was an example of how Palestinian Arabs were lured away from their homes with promises that they could return, but they were never allowed back. The history books tell us what happened in 1948. Before 1948, when Britain did not want to continue its mandate for Palestine and returned it, the UN set up a commission that came back with a resolution for two states—something we would all like to see now. Neither the Jewish Agency nor the Arab League liked the division into the two states, but the Jewish Agency accepted it and the Arab League did not. It is beyond historical doubt that the members of the Arab League, the big powers of the time that included Syria, Egypt, Transjordan and Lebanon, rejected it. Incidentally, I have never seen any evidence that the Palestinians were ever asked about it.

Anyway, the Arab League said no, and the powers said to the Palestinians, “Don't worry, because our armies will go in. If there is any Jewish state, that will disappear, and you can have the lot”. Of course, we now know that that is not what happened. ...

Another rewriting of history is what happened in 1967. The first time I set foot in Gaza was in August 1967 and it was a hellhole; it was absolutely awful. ... Egypt kept the Palestinian Arabs in Gaza in those conditions from 1948 to 1967 as a political ploy, a political point, to use against Israel.

The other thing I have been hit with is the way in which anti-Zionism has become a way of being anti-Semitic without appearing to be anti-Semitic. There is no doubt in my mind that anti-Semitic is what it is. Not all Jews are Zionists; we know that. Not all Zionists are

Jewish ...

col 529 A former Chief Rabbi said about anti-Semitism that, in the Middle Ages, Jews were attacked because of religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Jews were attacked because of race. Now, he said, they are being attacked because of their state. ...

Finally, I ask the Minister: why, oh why, when the fingerprints of Iran are all over the horrible event on 7 October, have we not yet proscribed the IRGC?

**Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat):** ... It may be said many times this evening, but it needs to be said again: that, on October 7, evil men crossed the border between Gaza and Israel and murdered young partygoers at a peace concert in the desert. They murdered whole families—men, women children and babies—at an Israeli kibbutz. About 1,400 Jews were slaughtered or taken as hostages. As the Minister said, 7,600 rockets were falling on Israel from Gaza. But, in the last two hours, there has been a big increase in the number of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. ...

This was evil in capital letters. ... Israel has responded with the aim of eradicating Hamas, as containment did not and will not work. I have previously reminded this House of my conversation with a member of Fatah. When I asked what Israel could offer Hamas, his reply was that they only want two things: the complete eradication of Israel and the removal of all Jews. ...

The complication is that these evil men use the people of Gaza as human shields, hiding their command and rocket launchers among the civilian population. ... A hospital was bombed, as has been mentioned. Immediately, Hamas blamed Israel. The media repeated these lies only for the damage to be found to have been caused by a failed rocket launched by Islamic Jihad. By that time, the lie had been gleefully accepted by a public only too willing to believe the perfidy of Israel. Meanwhile, the actions of these evil men are celebrated and applauded at marches and meetings in the UK. ...

Between 7 and 23 October, over 600 anti-Semitic incidents were reported—not in Israel but in the UK. I remind the House that there were Jewish communities throughout the Middle East. Over 800,000 fled from Arab countries; from Iraq alone it was 135,000; from Algeria it was 140,000; from Tunisia it was 105,000—I could go on. Between 1948 and 1972, these Jews were forced to relocate and make new lives for themselves—mainly in Israel. Can one be surprised that they and others say, “Never again”?

col 530 Meanwhile, because of the actions of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, there is a humanitarian crisis for the people of Gaza ... There needs to be a temporary cessation of hostilities to enable food, water and fuel to get through. The challenge is how to supply without the supplies being taken for Hamas’s own use or sold at a profit by it ...

Finally, thought must be given as to how Gaza will be managed and controlled after Hamas has—we hope—been routed. Neither Egypt nor Israel wants to occupy Gaza. ...

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** ... I particularly appreciate the mention by the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury of my young relative Yosef Guedalia, whose relatives he met in Israel last week and whose great-grandparents suffered in the Holocaust.

My theme today is that the root of the problem is education. The creation of Israel and the displacement of population is and was nothing out of the ordinary in the 20th century. There was the partition of India and Pakistan because Muslims and Hindus could not co-exist, which created at least 14 million displaced persons and 1 million deaths. A million Irish entered the UK; hundreds of thousands of Poles had to settle elsewhere; 40% of Greek Cypriots were displaced by the Turkish invasion; and, as the noble Lord, Lord Palmer, said, hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from most countries in the Middle East, leaving no one of the Jewish faith in the countries from which they were expelled, even though 2 million Arabs are living in Israel. All the many displacements and refugees that I have referred to were settled, with one exception. It is not because a state of Palestine has been denied—that has been offered and rejected four times—but because the Islamists cannot accept having any Jews living in the Middle East at all. ...

*col 531* The cure for these problems lies in the Middle East. Will the Minister ... encourage the countries of the Middle East to continue, not abandon, the Abraham accords? Will he ask the many countries in the Middle East where Palestinian refugees are living in dire conditions —most notably Lebanon, Syria and Egypt—to settle them? Why should there be refugee camps 50 years after they arrived there? They should be given citizenship and allowed to work and have an education ... That would not rule out their return to a state of Palestine one day, but they should not be kept in a state of dejection as human pawns. ... The Minister said of the Holocaust, “That was then and this is now”, but that is not the case. There is a straight line from one to the other. Holocaust education and memorialising has almost wholly missed the mark. It is fruitless to cast the Holocaust as a self-contained episode in the past. ... The hatred and anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust are bubbling under again today, and once again there is too much apathy and failure to recognise the old hatred. As David Baddiel said, “Jews don’t count” when it comes to stamping out today’s hatred and racism. ...

I am sorry to say that some of the worst is in our universities. I hear all the time of sad episodes: in Portsmouth an academic is excusing Hamas; a recent NUS report on anti-Semitism in universities is all too sadly being borne out today; there are rampages around universities; there is a motion at the University and College Union calling for “intifada until victory”; and Cambridge and UCL are calling for a mass uprising against Israel. These young people had Holocaust education. I call on the Government to start an overhaul of that education. It should be Jewish history education, setting the Holocaust in context, as the late lamented Lord Sacks called for. Young people should be taught what happened before the Holocaust, of the Jewish contribution to civilisation and what happened afterwards, culminating in the establishment of Israel. We have a Black History Month; why can we not have a Jewish history month, or at least a curriculum? ...

*col 532* **Baroness Morris of Bolton (Conservative):** ... The world was rightly horrified by the barbarity—the killings, injuries and kidnapping—which Israel suffered at the hands of Hamas and Islamic Jihad on Saturday 7 October. ... Yet the price of those atrocities cannot be the deaths of thousands of other innocent children, women and men. What is happening in Gaza is horrific and cannot continue. ...

I warmly welcome the Government’s commitment to increase aid and the first trucks to enter Gaza with crucial supplies. But ... it is not enough. ...

As aid enters Gaza, it is imperative that the hostages are released. I had tears in my eyes this morning witnessing the amazing spirit of Yocheved Lifschitz, shaking the hand of her captor as she was released. ...

While all eyes have been on Gaza, there has been a significant clampdown on the movement of people and goods in the West Bank. Normal life—I use that term advisedly—is on hold. ...

*col 533* To compound this, the date harvest is in full swing and the olive harvest is imminent. Both are vital for the Palestinian economy, yet farmers cannot get to the towns and cities, and shipments of Palestinian goods out of the country are on complete hold. ...

**Lord Reid of Cardowan (Labour):** My Lords, in the midst of the awful complexity of this war, we should constantly remind ourselves and others that it is not a war between Jew and Muslim. It is not even a war between Israeli and Palestinian. It is a war between the State of Israel and a terrorist group called Hamas, the former fighting for its very existence and the latter fighting to completely eradicate the former. ...

*col 534* ... we have all seen it before. It fits the established pattern set by al-Qaeda, Islamic State, al-Shabaab and others. It arises primarily from Islamist ideology and practice, a toxic mix of perverted Islam, fascism and cruelty. ... Against this evil, Israel has the right to defend itself. That is not the question; the question is how it does that.

All of us, including the Israeli Government, should ponder deeply on this, because while I completely understand the anger, grief and frustration felt by the Israelis, I also know that anger and frustration are rarely drivers of good strategy. ... There will be perhaps



thousands more civilians killed in Gaza: collateral damage, in the euphemism. Hamas, for its part, will not care about that —indiscriminate bombing is its trademark, and as far as the people of Gaza are concerned that is not a platform for Hamas but a shield behind which it can hide. ...

If there is a ground war, there will be still more civilian deaths. Gaza is already a humanitarian emergency, without the medicines and food it needs; just imagine if there is a simultaneous ground war with that emergency going on. Inevitably, there will be more Israeli military deaths. The IDF is brave, skilled, well equipped and technically proficient, but in the congested, rubble-strewn debris of Gaza, a ground war is not likely to lend itself to heavy armour or technical superiority. ...

There are also grave questions—what follows invasion? What constitutes success? What is the exit plan? ...

**col 535 Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat):** ... The events of 7 October triggered shock and revulsion. The murder of innocent civilians by Hamas has rightly been condemned internationally. ... I also condemn the rising anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in our country as a result of what has happened in the Middle East.

Israel and Palestine is a land of two people locked in a 75-year conflict, not one that began on 7 October. Although we knew that a response from Israel was inevitable and necessary, for the majority of those of us who have campaigned for years for a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis, the disproportionate response has further escalated fear and tensions for both populations—Israelis and Palestinians.

Also deeply worrying are some of the statements and rhetoric that have come out of the Netanyahu Government. He said: “We are going to change the Middle East”.

We do not know what that means. We know that for 16 years Israel has placed 2.1 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip under an illegal sea, land and air blockade, restricting residents’ movements and limiting their access to electricity and clean water. Now these very civilians, who cannot escape, are facing a humanitarian catastrophe, as others have pointed out.

The Israeli Defence Minister called on 9 October for a “complete siege”. He said: “There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed ... We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly”.

This is a dehumanising and unfortunate statement. It was interpreted as inflicting collective punishment on innocent civilians who bear no responsibility for Hamas’s atrocities. Yet an Israeli spokesperson said that Israel had no responsibility to the people of Gaza. Well, yes, it does. The UN is clear: the Gaza Strip continues to be occupied by Israel, and under international law the occupying power has responsibility for looking after the civilian population under its occupation. So when food, water and medical supplies are cut off, it has a responsibility to restore them. ...

**col 536** Innocent Palestinians in Gaza have been relentlessly bombed and killed. Nothing, it seems, has been off limits: entire residential areas; hospitals—22 medical facilities so far; schools; mosques; churches, including a 12th century church, killing Palestinian Christians and Muslims who had taken refuge there. It is inconceivable that Hamas was hiding in that church. ...

In two weeks, Israel has killed with its bombardment three times as many children as Russia did in Ukraine in two years. ...

We have heard that a lot of Britain’s policy since 1980 has been to support a two-state solution, which I support, as do most of us, I am sure. But massive settlement building and confiscation of Palestinian land on the West Bank and elsewhere have been designed to undermine that solution. Can there really be a two-state solution in the face of this? ...

**col 537 Lord Stevens of Birmingham (Crossbench):** ... I do not accept that the Israeli response to date has been disproportionate, nor do I find it inconceivable that Hamas would conceal themselves in churches or mosques or schools, because there is years of evidence showing that that is precisely what they do. ...



Those of us at Sunday's Trafalgar Square vigil heard raw and direct from the families of the hostages and the relatives of the dead. ... All suffering and every innocent death count, but there can be no equivocation or false equivalence about what has just happened ... Like most of us, I suspect, I support Palestinian as well as Israeli self-determination and nationhood, but all decent people can readily discern the difference between innocent murdered Israelis and murderous Hamas terrorists—all decent people can but not, it turns out, everyone. The past fortnight has exposed some uglier, darker and older reflexes. What were some of the responses by Islamist extremists parading on our streets on Saturday? They demanded the total eradication of Israel "from the river to the sea". Let us not be coy about what that actually means. For the past 75 years, being an anti-Zionist has, in practical terms, meant being an advocate for the annihilation of the world's only majority-Jewish nation, an actually existing UN member state and the Middle East's only liberal democracy.

As if to prove the point, what was the response here from some of the far-left organisations, such as the Socialist Workers Party, to people shot in the head at a bus stop, murdered at a music festival and decapitated in front of their parents—British citizens among them? The SWP said, "Rejoice"—that headline is still on its website as I speak. At times like this, the mask slips and we see the ugly face of anti-Jewish racism.

Criticising particular actions of particular Israeli Governments is not anti-Semitic, but categorising everything Israel does as inherently illegitimate most certainly is. When dead Israeli babies and grandmothers are said somehow to bear responsibility for their own murders, when Israel is blamed because Hamas conceals bombs and rockets in schools and mosques and when jihadists blow up a Gaza hospital, and yet Israel is instantly condemned, then a centuries-old virus is present in our midst.

At times like this, we need what Bernard-Henri Lévy calls *The Will To See*: to see that when the Iranian theocracy hangs its own citizens from cranes, denies the Holocaust and demands Israel be wiped from the face of the earth, they mean it. Therefore, we need the clear-sightedness to see that, all the while Hamas and other Iranian terrorist proxies control Gaza and deploy from Lebanon, they will continue to murder and oppress and destroy, including, as our own security services have confirmed, here on the streets of Britain. ...

col 538 First, will the Government now follow the lead of other countries in proscribing Islamist extremists such as Hizb ut-Tahrir? Why should we tolerate hateful ideologies, the poison on our streets? If there are gaps in our current incitement legislation, as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner believes, surely the Government should use the forthcoming King's Speech to put the matter beyond doubt?

Secondly, the Prime Minister yesterday rightly announced more humanitarian aid for Gaza, and it is obvious that much more will be required. However, in response to the question about the concern for the state of the Palestinian economy, it is not illegitimate to ask why, when over the past decade over \$6 billion of international funding has flowed into Hamas-controlled Gaza, the people of Gaza have been confronted with the situation that they have. What guarantees do we have that none of the future humanitarian aid and assistance will cross-subsidise jihadist tunnels, rockets and death?

Thirdly and finally, can the Minister update us on progress on disrupting Iranian weapons flowing to Hamas and Hezbollah, and to Russia for use against Ukraine? ...

**Baroness Warsi (Conservative):** ... Six minutes is not long enough to fully acknowledge the grief of those who have lost loved ones in this recent outbreak of violence, the pain of the families who so brutally witnessed the killing and abduction of their loved ones on 7 October, and the ongoing pain of those who await the return of those taken as hostages ... Six minutes is not long enough to acknowledge the pain and suffering of nearly 70 years of living under occupation, the forced displacement from ancestral home and lands and the generations that have lost lives, livelihoods and now, tragically, hope. ...

col 539 I want to speak of some of these peacemakers ... British Jews who stand outside the Israeli embassy protesting for peace; rabbis and other British Israelis who attend

marches for Palestinian rights; British Jewish lawyers who call for restraint and adherence to international law; British Jewish and Israeli organisations, including ex-IDF soldiers calling for an immediate ceasefire; and the 30 Israeli human rights organisations which came together calling for an end to the bombardment. ...

I urge noble Lords to choose peace over revenge and join me in asking His Majesty's Government to call for an immediate ceasefire. I ask noble Lords not to follow the lead of an Israeli Prime Minister who is mired in allegations of corruption, in bed with far-right extremists, forming a Government on the basis of a coalition agreement that denies the very existence of a Palestinian state from the river to the sea, and who in 2019 said this about Hamas: "Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas ... This is part of our strategy—to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank". ...

*col 540* **Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat):** ... The horrific events of recent weeks have shocked the world and I join others in condemning the violent attack on Israeli citizens and the taking of hostages. ...

Israel of course deserves support and sympathy across the world in seeking to obtain the release of the hostages, but it must be asked how likely this is to be achieved by the bombardments and siege of Gaza. Is the killing of more than 5,000 Palestinians, and 15,000 casualties, likely to achieve this and the declared objective of destroying Hamas? ...

The scenes of carnage as Israeli troops continue the deadly war in Gaza and drive its people from their homes—people who have no other refuge or escape—risk causing public sympathy to ebb away. ...

*col 541* How, we must ask, will mass retribution and collective punishment of civilians in Gaza provide any resolution to the issue of Israeli security? The five preceding bombardments since 2005 have manifestly failed to achieve this. Indeed, violence and oppression add fuel to the flames of conflict and bolster the positions of extremists on both sides. ...

Long before the events of 7 October, the humanitarian situation in Gaza was in crisis. ... Sixteen years of forced containment of the citizens of Palestine under occupation have not achieved security for Israel. ... The forced evacuation of Gaza, the violent driving of people from their villages and the demolition of their homes and facilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by settlers with the support of the Government are not the way to peace. ...

*col 542* **Baroness Gohir (Crossbench):** My Lords, I stand in solidarity with Israeli and Palestinian civilians. I condemn the horrific terror attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians ... They have justifiably evoked anxiety, fear, trauma and anger, particularly among Jewish communities in Israel, the United Kingdom and worldwide. However, the Israeli Government should not use the recent tragic events as justification for the collective punishment of innocent Palestinian civilians. They are not the enemy.

We must urgently demand an immediate ceasefire—with all sides complying with international laws. ... I know that the horrific hostage ordeal requires urgent actions, but such urgency did not have to involve cutting off water and electricity, bombing civilians and destroying infrastructure. A justification that has been used is that Hamas is using Palestinian civilians as shields. Does that mean that innocent Palestinian civilians have to be killed? ...

Israel has a right to defend itself and to protect its citizens but how is starving, withholding full access to aid for and killing innocent men, women, the elderly, the pregnant, the disabled, children and babies helping to defend Israel? ...

Because the conflict is a deeply sensitive and complex issue, it evokes strong emotions and passionate responses. We have therefore seen a surge in hateful rhetoric, stereotypes and discrimination towards Jewish and Muslim communities in Britain. I am outraged by the actions of a small minority attempting to hijack the protests in support of Hamas or

even to celebrate the attacks. Such behaviour is utterly reprehensible and should be dealt with by the full force of the law.

*col/ 543* However, it is crucial to emphasise that these individuals do not represent the majority, who are united in their support for Palestinian human rights. Palestinian human rights do not equate to antisemitism or endorsing Hamas. ...

**Lord Morrow (DUP):** My Lords, the massacre of Israeli civilians and the taking of more than 2,000 hostages ranging from babies to a Holocaust survivor on 7 October, together with the sustained rocket attacks on to the State of Israel and at sea have shocked the whole world. The attacks were clearly planned to coincide with the Sabbath nearest to the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur war ...

This conflict is distinctive, because it began with a deliberate massacre of civilians and is the result of a general strategy that, as plans found on the bodies of dead Hamas combatants reveal, involves the deliberate targeting of civilians. Thus, the civilians affected are not victims of so-called collateral damage, where they are killed or injured accidentally, but the result of their being the express and deliberate target. Of course, that makes sense, because according to Hamas, Israel has no right to exist; and if it has no right to exist, plainly no one in Israel, be they combatants or non-combatants, has a right to exist.

Israel's reaction, by contrast, has been quite different. It has a massive challenge, because the only way in which it can stop Hamas is by counterattacking Gazan territory to remove Hamas—a territory that, as in any war, has a far larger civilian than combatant population. Rather than asking its troops to target Gazan civilians, the Israeli army is doing the opposite. It is urging its troops to avoid civilians. It is sending warnings about the areas that it intends to target and is encouraging civilians to move. Some people might respond by saying, "Well, why should they move? It is wrong to ask them to do so." However, if we are to adopt that position, we are effectively saying one of two things: either we are saying that they should stay put and Israel has no right to defend its population and should not seek to take out Hamas and should just let the rocket and other attacks continue; or we are saying that Israel should attack to take out Hamas, and if civilians are killed because they remained in target areas, then so be it. Neither approach is credible. The only credible approach is what Israel is actually doing. ...

*col/ 544* **Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative):** My Lords, there is a prayer said in my synagogue and others at least once in every service by the whole community, and particularly by those in mourning: "May He who makes Peace in His high places, may He make Peace for us, for all Israel and all mankind".

It is pretty much the last prayer of the service, when we do not pray for a better quality of life, for happiness or for material success: we pray for peace, which is the ultimate gift God can give. I suspect there is a similar thread in other religions, not least the Muslim religion ...

Israel has the right and duty to ensure peace for all its citizens. It is now clear that the only way to achieve that, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, is the termination of the power of Hamas. ...

To understand Hamas, you have to listen to Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of the founder of Hamas. He spent years in an Israeli prison, and now explains to the world that Hamas has only one objective, which is to enrich and empower itself, even at the risk of its own people. ...

*col/ 545* There must be consequences of this evil perpetrated by Hamas on innocent Jews and innocent Muslims, so what do we need to do? First, we now need to proscribe the IRGC. ... Will [the Minister] please explain to us why our security services and the BBC took so long to confirm that the missile that landed near the al-Ahli hospital was not Israeli? Have we learned the lesson not to trust briefing from Gaza, but to know that the Israelis have a track record of telling the truth and undertaking proper investigation?

Secondly, we need to properly police the demos in the UK, which are clearly inciting violence. Further, I have seen the manual from Palestinian Action Underground with

instructions on how to commit offences on British businesses supplying Israel. It even has its own website up and running. This needs to be closed.

Thirdly, we need to press Qatar to do more to secure the release of the hostages and reduce the violence. Lastly, we need to support Israel when it eventually enters Gaza to find these evil people, who will otherwise seek to kill again and are still sending rockets to Israel, even today into Tel Aviv. ...

The IDF has been rated by British servicemen as the most ethical military in the world. It is full of conscripts who are themselves regular citizens and quite rightly at pains to minimise any further suffering to civilians. Any breaches of international code by them, and indeed by settlers—as the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury has just said—deserve punishment and will receive it. However, we have to stand up, take the difficult decision and say, “We will back Israel to take these actions that it believes are necessary, as we believe this is the only route to peace”.

We know and mourn that there will be innocent tragedies—innocent fatalities. There always are in war. It is the price that Hamas has forced us to pay, but we still pray: “May He who makes peace in His high places, may He make peace for us, for all Israel and all mankind. Amen”.

**col 546 Baroness Blackstone (Labour):** ... A group of eminent Jewish lawyers wrote a letter over a week ago to the *Financial Times* condemning the appalling atrocities committed by Hamas as a crime against humanity. I strongly agree. They also state that, under international law, Israel has a right to respond in self-defence and to seek justice for the awful crimes that have been committed on its soil. I agree. They continue by saying that international law and, more specifically, the rules of war should be complied with in any response, however great the crimes against them. The lawyers then list their concerns about Israel’s response, arguing, first, that it is a grave violation of international law to hold a civilian population under siege and, secondly, that international law requires ensuring minimum destruction of civilian life and infrastructure. It is essential that we live by these laws, they say, and I agree with them.

Since the publication of this letter, 2.2 million people in Gaza have been besieged without supplies of food, water, fuel and medicines, with the maximum destruction of infrastructure destroying any semblance of normality in civilian life. Israeli bombs have razed residential areas and hit schools, medical facilities, plants providing electricity and water, mosques and churches. Nearly 6,000 Palestinians have been killed, more than a third of them children, and more are unaccounted for, buried under rubble. Hospitals are struggling to cope with thousands more who have been injured, including many children. ...

**col 547** An invasion of Gaza is a terrifying prospect for the families of hostages. It also threatens a widening conflict across the Middle East, with horrific consequences, including a war between Hezbollah and Israel and the destabilising of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. ...

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat):** Salaam alaikum. ... I was in my early teens in a classroom when I learned of the horrors that Jewish people had suffered during the Second World War. I remember the moment well. What made a deep impression was the realisation that it was not ancient history; that it had happened only a few short years before, and that there were people alive who had endured the Holocaust, and people alive who had perpetrated it: 6 million innocent people murdered because they were born Jewish. I abhor cruelty and injustice, and my heart bled for the Jewish people.

Today, I condemn unreservedly Hamas’s vicious attack on unarmed civilians on 7 October and the taking of hostages. Both are war crimes committed by a proscribed terrorist organisation. Anguish and trauma in Israel are all-consuming, and action to punish the perpetrators is Israel’s right; but further war crimes and the contravening of international humanitarian law can never be the answer—not for a democratic country with principles and values rooted in the rule of law. ...

**col 548** The British Government expressed their support for the complete siege of Gaza:



no electricity, no food, no water and no fuel, as announced by the Israeli Defense Minister. I think that was an aberration. ...

Can the Minister say whether our Government are making it plain that there will be a distinction between Hamas militants—terrorists—and civilians, and that it is not acceptable to use language that dehumanises Palestinians? ...

I finish with the word of the released hostage Yocheved Lifschitz to her masked Hamas captor: shalom.

**col 549 Lord Bilimoria (Crossbench):** My Lords, I was privileged to be a member of the delegation to Israel ...

Not once did we feel unsafe. In fact, we were impressed by Israel being on top of its security situation, including with regard to Gaza. Who would have predicted what happened a few months later on 7 October, when Hamas took Israel by surprise and brutally murdered 1,400 Israelis and took over 200 hostages. As the most reverend Primate said, it was a pogrom. Last week, I was shown a film by the Israeli embassy, with footage of the horrors of 7 October. It was horrific beyond belief—cruel, monstrous and barbaric. These are terrorists; these are inhuman monsters. What they did to babies, children, families, old people and Holocaust survivors was horrific beyond the worst possible nightmare. This is just two-and-a-half weeks after 7 October. We cannot forget the magnitude of that horror. Israel must have the right to defend itself. Its aim is to dismantle Hamas and this must be allowed to happen.

However, in doing so the loss of life in Gaza is tragic, with the destruction taking place as a result of the airstrikes and shelling—and this is before a possible ground assault. The Palestinians in Gaza have been asked to move to the south, and yet bombing by Israel in the south continues because Hamas continues to operate from the south. ...

Every Israeli Minister we spoke to mentioned Iran. Why are we not proscribing the IRGC? ...

What is tragic about this war is that it seems to have given rise to huge anti-Semitism. It is not a war between Islam and Judaism or between Muslims and Jews. This is a battle of humanity against Hamas; a battle of humanity against terrorism of the most horrific and worst kind. This is a battle against sheer evil. ...

**col 550** As she was released as a hostage, Yocheved Lifschitz turned around and gripped the hand of one of the masked Hamas terrorists who had kept her captive and said, “shalom”. What amazing dignity. ...

**Lord Harrington of Watford (Conservative):** ... I have made many visits to Israel to family and friends. I went to Gaza several times, in better times, and I saw people who were very like the Israeli population: there were a lot of small businesses, people working in workshops and people who we would call middle class with professions and occupations.

Most of those people are dead today, not at the hands of Israelis but at the hands of Hamas. This is not a war between Israel and Palestine or between Jew and Muslim. It is a war against Hamas, which represents terrorism and evil. This is good against evil. It is a proxy war for that between western democracies and Iran, which is the enemy of everything that we all stand for. ...

We have to accept that, before what happened on 7 October, 70% of the adult population of Gaza were unemployed. Those people had no hope. Their way of life was under tyranny, hugely exacerbated by Hamas, which was using them to siphon off a lot of well-meaning aid. ...

**col 551** If one good thing comes from this terrible mess, it is that it will put paid to the false belief in Israeli society that security alone is enough for the Israeli people’s future and will provide a way of life that means they can live for ever in the type of freedom and prosperity they want. A solution somehow has to be found in their relations with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. ...

In my remaining time, I will make a brief point as a British Jew. Some things do not change.



In 1940 my father was conscripted into the British Army and was hospitalised by his fellow troops, who were Mosleyite fascists, for being Jewish. While they were kicking him, they told him to get back to Palestine. That was quite interesting, since his family had been here since 1680, but that is a small problem.

What has changed? In the rally of 100,000 people supposedly for Palestine, the same kind of anti-Semitic comments were heard. They were not anti-Israeli comments; they were anti-Semitic. I am a British Jew. Despite having family and friends in Israel, this is 100% my country. It has been the country of my ancestors for hundreds of years. The Israel cause and the Israel-Palestine thing are now being fully exploited by extremists preaching anti-Semitism—and I never thought I would say that. I am the last person to talk about anti-Semitism all the time. ...

**col 552 Lord Hussain (Liberal Democrat):** ... On 7 October we woke to learn the shocking news that Hamas, a terrorist organisation proscribed by the UK Government, had launched an assault on Israeli territory. ...

In response to the Hamas attacks, Israel launched a relentless bombing campaign against the besieged enclave, razing neighbourhood after neighbourhood. ... The latest media reports by the Gaza Ministry of Health indicate that the number of people killed in Gaza since 7 October has risen to 5,000. ...

As a result of the Israeli bombardment, thousands of buildings are reported to have been destroyed, including residential blocks, hospitals, mosques and churches. More than 1 million people have been displaced in the territory, which has been under siege and largely deprived of water, food and other basic supplies. This collective punishment is against international law and could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. ...

Since the initial Hamas attacks, rising tensions in the West Bank have led to deadly clashes between Israeli security forces and the settlers and Palestinians. The UN reports that 79 Palestinians, including 20 children, and one Israeli soldier have been killed.

Let us remind ourselves that this conflict did not start on 7 October 2023. Gaza is a walled area, 25 miles long and six miles wide. The flow of food, water and basic amenities is controlled by Israel. It is recognised by most humanitarian groups as the world's largest open prison. People try to live there while staring death in the eye on a daily basis. This has been normalised by the rest of the world. ...

**col 553 Lord Pannick (Crossbench):** ... I declare my interests. ... We know families who have been bereaved by the terrible actions of 7 October. My friends in Israel have children and grandchildren who have paused their university careers, occupations and family life to join the armed forces to defend their country. They would all much prefer to live in peace with their neighbours, but certain basic truths explain why these reasonable, decent people are supporting military action at this time.

The first is obvious, but it needs to be said. Hamas seeks the destruction of the State of Israel and all Jews living there; its charter proclaims these goals. The shocking events of 7 October demonstrate that this is not just a theory. Hamas is willing to implement its aims by the murder, torture and abduction of Jews, however young or old, religious or secular and whatever their political views. Worse, Hamas is supported by a powerful state, Iran, which has regularly announced the same aim of destroying Israel. Tragically, we know from recent European history—two decades before I was born in 1956—that, when states or groups announce that they are going to murder Jews and remove them from the face of the earth, they need to be stopped.

The second basic truth follows from the first. Because Hamas and its supporters seek the destruction of Israel and the murder of all Jews who stand in the way, Hamas has no interest in a political settlement. It has no wish to negotiate a two-state solution. The only solution in which Hamas is interested is what the Nazis called a final solution. ...

The third basic fact is that a state that faces such threats to its existence is entitled to defend itself. No other state in the world would tolerate or be expected to tolerate such a threat at its border. International law clearly permits Israel to remove the ability of Hamas

to fire missiles at its population and the threat of further incursions to torture, kill and abduct people.

*col 554* The fourth basic truth is that Israel faces profound strategic as well as moral dilemmas. There are no easy answers when Hamas is embedded in a civilian population, has a network of tunnels and is holding more than 200 hostages. ...

A fifth and final basic truth is that Israelis know and deeply regret that the civilian population of Gaza are suffering. Tragically—and it is a tragedy—war in Gaza is causing and will cause immense suffering and death to innocent people. ...

**Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated):** ... In 2017, I visited Nir Oz, one of the small kibbutzim on the Gaza border attacked by Hamas. Survivors say that between one-quarter and one-third of its 350 residents were killed or kidnapped. What happened is worth repeating: babies beheaded, women raped, and families tied together and burned. It seems to me that, when Israeli officials use the word “animals”, they are not talking about Palestinians in general; they are talking about Hamas. It seems to be a perfectly accurate description. ...

*col 555* I could never understand Holocaust denial, but social media for the past fortnight has been flooded with people claiming that babies had not been killed, or not in the reported numbers, and questioning the accounts of the survivors and Israeli officials bringing it to our attention. The attack on young people at the music festival would be the equivalent of 2,000 young British people being killed at Glastonbury. Over 7,000 missiles have been aimed indiscriminately at residential areas in Israel—not at military targets, which is what the IDF try to do. That is the same number of rockets fired by the Germans on the UK throughout the whole of the blitz. More Jewish people were killed on a single day than on any day since the Holocaust. In the face of that, Israel does not just have the legal right but a clear duty to defend its citizens, rescue the hostages and deal with Hamas. ...

I have campaigned for a Palestinian state since I was a teenager, but the failure to establish one cannot be laid at Israel's door. When the United Nations decided that there would be two states in land administered by the British in Palestine—two states, side by side ... the Jewish leadership agreed, and Israel was established. Instead of agreeing to a Palestinian state for the Arab population, five Arab countries invaded on day one and the Palestinians, tragically, are still without a state.

Since then, the Palestinians have been offered a state on three or four occasions. Tragically, again, the Palestinian leadership rejected them all, and groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continued with terrorism. ...

Gaza has not been occupied. We heard earlier that Gaza is under occupation, but Gaza has not been occupied for 18 years. When Israel unilaterally pulled out of Gaza in 2005, it had a functioning economy, control of its imports and exports, open borders, plans to build a seaport and discussions on an airport. Then Hamas, committed to Israel's destruction, staged a bloody coup, executed its rivals and banned elections. Its founding charter calls for Jews to be killed. ...

Instead of building hospitals and schools or a successful economy, it spends funds on rockets and tunnels to attack Israel. When people say that fuel has to be provided for the people of Gaza, of course it does, but the fuel is stolen by Hamas to fire its rockets. That is why Israel had to build border controls and security fences. Last week's attacks show just how necessary they were. It is not, as we heard today, a blockade; it is a defence. ... While Israel uses its weapons to protect its people, Hamas uses the people to protect the weapons. ... We have heard calls for a ceasefire this afternoon. Hamas would use a ceasefire just to prepare the next attack.

*col 556* Tragically, we have seen an increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the UK, as we have heard. Since the attacks, the Community Security Trust has recorded at least 600 anti-Semitic incidents across the country, the highest ever recorded in a 17-day period. We have seen disgraceful support for terrorism at marches. This weekend in London, a

rally was organised by the racist extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, at which people held a banner with the slogan “Muslim armies, rescue the people of Palestine”. A speaker was filmed asking, “What is the solution to liberate people in the concentration camp called Palestine?”, and in response the crowd chanted “Jihad”. Does anyone think that they were using the word “Jihad” to mean some sort of personal spiritual struggle? In that context, it is obviously a call to wage war on Israel. If that is not incitement, which the police should be dealing with, I do not know what is. ...

**Lord Polak (Conservative):** ... I was in Jerusalem on 7 October. The right reverend Prelate the Archbishop of Canterbury talked about pride. I was proud the next day when I saw Downing Street with the flag of Israel, followed by the Foreign Office with the colours of Israel. Nobody should underestimate what that meant to the people of Israel ...

However, that careful approach is in stark contrast to some elements of the media ... The noble Lord, Lord Palmer, in particular, spoke about the hospital. I had my phone on just now, because I clicked on the BBC World Service, which has 5.3 million views, and it is still saying that Israel did the bomb the hospital. ...

*col 557* On Tuesday 17 October, I was at home watching Sky News as the story of the explosion at the hospital emerged. Anna Botting’s questioning of Mark Regev was deeply troubling. ... Like others, she had taken the words of Hamas propaganda as if it were the truth. ...

While we focus on the hostages—it is right that we focus on the hostages; they have to be returned—we should not forget the devastation to the families of 1,400 butchered innocent men, women and children. It is important to name them. There is one hostage in particular I would like to talk about this evening: Ohad Munder-Zichri. He turned nine years old yesterday, but rather than celebrating his birthday at home with his loved ones, he is currently being held hostage in Gaza, among the 200 other individuals. Ohad has been described as a gifted student, with exceptional abilities, encompassing various fields including sport and chess, and a remarkable skill on the Rubik’s cube. Like my noble friend the Minister and myself, he is an avid Liverpool football fan. I have a picture of him here, with his Mo Salah kit on—a nine year-old child. ...

*col 558* **Lord Liddle (Labour):** ... Nothing can excuse that kind of slaughter. I cannot bear the people in Britain who seem to think that this is something the Israelis brought on themselves. ... After what happened in the Second World War and the Holocaust, we all had a moral responsibility to provide a Jewish homeland. It has the full right to defend itself.

Having said that, I hope that the Israeli Government will behave with great care. ...

*col 559* **Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat):** ... After the horrors of the Holocaust and the centuries of prejudice, pogroms and expulsions, to which we must now add the barbarism of 7 October, the ability of the people of Israel to live in safety and security in their own democratic state is, to my mind, essential to the values of a liberal international order. ...

On that Saturday, I was in touch with a friend sheltering in a bomb shelter in Israel. She later told me that every one of her children knew a teen who had been killed.

In carrying out its attack and in continuing to hold hostages, Hamas is in violation of every international law and of every value that we should hold dear. ...

In the face of the barbarous assault on its citizens, Israel has every right in law and morality to take action to eliminate the threat to its people from Hamas. The issue at stake is not whether Israel has that right but how it exercises it in the manner most likely to prevent avoidable civilian death and secure the long-term safety and security of both Israeli and Palestinian people. Whatever the outcome of this war, at the end of it Israelis and Palestinians will have to live side by side. ...

*col 560* The attachment that many of us have to Israel is precisely because it holds itself to different standards from other regimes in the region. It is essential that, in its response to Hamas, it upholds those standards, abides by international law and allows sufficient

humanitarian assistance to reach the civilians of Gaza, who are also victims of Hamas brutality and are suffering devastating hardship.

It is also critical that the Israeli Government act decisively against those settlers in the West Bank who are unleashing violence on Palestinians that has left many innocent Palestinians dead. ...

**Baroness Altmann (Conservative):** ... I never would have believed that we would witness a pogrom against Jews in my lifetime. My family was nearly all wiped out by anti-Semitic hatred in the 1930s and 1940s. To then witness these murders being supported, celebrated and glorified by Palestinians in Gaza and their supporters around the globe has shaken me to the core. ...

*col 561* Those who glorify Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahrir and their ilk are a threat not just to Israel or to Jews but to all of us ... Israel has always wanted to live in peace with its neighbours, but ... Peace is a duet, not a solo. ...

If the Palestinian people do not really support the actions of Hamas but are frightened to speak up, as ordinary Germans were in the 1930s while the Nazis increasingly threatened Jews, Israel must have the courage to rid them of Hamas once and for all. If Hamas really does have majority support, Israel must anyway destroy further Hamas threats and help the Palestinian people recognise that extremism brings only misery, not a better life. ...

Israel is the only Jewish state. It has known nothing but rejection by most of its Arab neighbours since its inception ... As long as Israel's right to exist is not accepted, what can it do but keep defending itself? ... what else can Israel do other than warn civilians to leave and then do what it must to stop the attacks, dismantle the rockets and show its people that Jews will not submit to torture and murder, as millions did in the Nazi horrors?

Jews yearn for peace; we pray for it every day. Jews have accepted being expelled from Arab countries where their families had lived for centuries, and have settled elsewhere. ...

Hamas has never honoured international humanitarian law. If Israel cannot protect its citizens by ridding Gaza of the Hamas rockets—made, by the way, with some of the water pipes provided for Gazans by western aid—a new standard for horrific assaults against Jews is established in our time. International commentators already seemingly consider the repeated rocket barrages from Gaza into Israel as somehow acceptable, on the apparent justification that its Iron Dome can shoot them down, even though civilians are still killed. ...

The Palestinian leadership is anti-Semitic: Mahmoud Abbas has repeated anti-Semitic canards and blamed the Jews for the Holocaust because of, apparently, their social role. He rewards Palestinian terrorists for attacking Israelis. They just want Israel to disappear. Well, Israel cannot disappear. Jews have no other homeland. Israel must defend its civilians against missile attacks and targeted torture. ...

*col 562* **Lord Verdirame (Non-affiliated):** ... There has been a lot of talk about proportionality in the law on self-defence. ... *vlt* does not mean that the defensive force has to be equal to the force used in the armed attack. Proportionality means that you can use force that is proportionate to the defensive objective, which is to stop, to repel and to prevent further attacks. ...

Asking a state that is acting in self-defence to agree to a ceasefire before its lawful defensive objectives have been met is, in effect, asking that state to stop defending itself. For such calls to be reasonable and credible, they must be accompanied by a concrete proposal setting out how Israel's legitimate defensive goals against Hamas will be met through other means. It is not an answer to say that Israel has to conclude a peace treaty, because Hamas is not interested in a peace treaty.

Proportionality also applies in the law that governs the conduct of hostilities, not only in self-defence. The law of armed conflict requires that in every attack posing a risk to civilian life, that risk must not be excessive in relation to the military advantage that is anticipated. That rule does not mean, even when scrupulously observed, that civilians will not tragically



lose their lives in an armed conflict. The law of armed conflict, at its best, can mitigate the horrors of war but it cannot eliminate them. The great challenge in this conflict is that Hamas is the kind of belligerent that cynically exploits these rules by putting civilians under its control at risk and even using them to seek immunity for its military operations, military equipment and military personnel. ...

*col 563* There has also been some discussion about siege warfare. The UK manual of the law of armed conflict, reflecting the Government's official legal position—it is a Ministry of Defence document—says: "Siege is a legitimate method of warfare ... It would be unlawful to besiege an undefended town since it could be occupied without resistance".

Gaza is not an undefended town. ... it is not correct to say that encircling an area with civilians in it is not permitted by the laws of war.

A further point that concerns the laws of war is also of particular relevance to the British Government's practice. It has already been mentioned that the Government have taken the view that Gaza remains under Israeli occupation, even though Israel pulled out in 2005. The traditional view until 2005 was that occupation required physical presence in the territory. That view is consistent with Article 42 of the Hague regulations of 1907, which states that a territory is occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the occupying power. Again, it is also the view taken by the UK manual of the law of armed conflict, which reflects the UK's official legal position and states that occupation ceases as soon as the occupying power evacuates the area. The European Court of Human Rights, in its jurisprudence, has also adopted a similar approach to occupation. So I have always been rather baffled by the British Government's position on this issue, which, as far as I know, has not changed. Yes, it is true that Israel has exercised significant control over the airspace and in the maritime areas, but even as a matter of plain geography it takes two—Israel and Egypt—to control the land access points to Gaza.

More fundamentally, it is Hamas that has been responsible for the government and administration of Gaza. I appreciate that this is a legal matter on which the Minister may not want to respond immediately but it is an important one, because the legal fiction that Israel was still the occupying power under the laws of armed conflict has been relentlessly exploited by Hamas to blame Israel for everything, while using the effective control that it has over the territory, the people and the resources to wage war.

On a final note, I would like to say something briefly on the way in which the war is being reported. When a serious allegation is made, particularly one that could constitute a war crime, the immediate response of the law-abiding belligerent will be to say, "We are investigating". The non-law-abiding belligerent, by contrast, will forthwith blame the other side and even provide surprisingly precise casualty figures. The duty to investigate is one of the most important ones in armed conflict. What happened in the way in which the strike on the hospital was reported is that the side that professes no interest whatever in complying with the laws of armed conflict was rewarded with the headlines that it was seeking.

*col 564* **Baroness Eaton (Conservative):** ... The types of hostages seized, as well as the murders and rapes committed of civilians, proves that Hamas's claims that its actions were about resistance are lies. Leaving aside the fact that the holding of hostages is a crime in itself, Hamas is breaking international humanitarian law by refusing medical care to the hostages or allowing a humanitarian corridor to them. ...

The scenes on British streets over the past two weeks have been nothing short of disgraceful. While nobody wishes to restrict the right to protest in this country, and we all value the principles of free speech, it is quite a different matter to allow the spreading of hate and the glorification of terrorism, as has quite obviously been occurring in some portions of pro-Palestinian marches. It is telling, for example, that the first pro-Palestinian marches assembled on our streets on 7 October, when the only activity that had happened in Israel to that date had been the massacre of Jewish civilians by Hamas terrorists. The dead had not yet been identified and Israel had not responded, yet certain sections of the



United Kingdom population felt that they should come out on to the streets, not in sympathy with the victims but seemingly celebrating their murder. ...

Since then, calls for jihad and intifada have somehow been explained away by police language experts as not being meant as violent. "Free, free Palestine, from the river to the sea" has been suggested to be offensive only if directed at a Jewish person, rather than chanted generally. We have been told to believe that these blood-curdling cries on British streets somehow relate to spiritual struggle. This is in complete contravention of the view of the average British citizen, who rightly concludes that those shouting such slogans after the grim massacre of Jewish civilians might well be intending to show support for such actions and could even inspire further ones. Meanwhile, marchers have also referred to the rhetoric of the Battle of Khaybar, which of course celebrates the massacre of a Jewish Arabian tribe on account of its alleged betrayal of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. There can be no doubt what suggestions of repeating this could mean in the contemporary context. ...

**col 565 Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP):** ... Hamas is no friend of the Palestinian people. It has oppressed ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. It has diverted resources, which are much needed in Gaza, towards military attacks on Israel. It has literally rained bombs down on its own people and has used, and continues to use, civilians as human shields. ...

... there are also repercussions beyond the boundaries of Israel and Gaza, not least in our own country. For the Jewish communities in the United Kingdom, most have family relations or friends who live in Israel, and many know the victims of the events of 7 October. They are, in many cases, deeply concerned and scared today. So while it is right that every community and individual in the United Kingdom, of whatever background, should be safe from terror, fear, intimidation and violence, we must keep uppermost in our minds the Jewish community. They are frightened, in particular, when they see tens of thousands of people come on to the streets of the United Kingdom, many giving implicit cover, and some implicit support, for Hamas, with the kind of anti-Semitic, hateful rhetoric that the noble Baroness, Lady Eaton, has explained so clearly ...

**col 566** It is also the case that this has not come from a blank page. Earlier this year, with other parliamentarians, I visited facilities which showed the extent to which Jewish properties have to be monitored from a security point of view for their own protection—and this was at a time when there was relative peace in the Middle East. Perhaps most shocking from that visit—I will not be too explicit in the details, for obvious reasons—was when we visited a Jewish primary school where children were being taken through drills on a regular basis of the preparations they needed to take in the event of intruders. ...

**Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench):** My Lords, Sikh teachings remind us that conflict arises when we fail to recognise that we are all members of the same one human family, with equal rights and dignity. ...

In the 1930s and 1940s, Jews were vilified, not only in Germany but in much of Europe. The word "Jew" was used as a term of abuse. At school, I was frequently called a Jew by those who wished to hurt me. Then we saw film footage of atrocities in Belsen and other extermination camps. I have visited Auschwitz and seen evidence of the unbelievable cruelty shown to those considered lesser beings. Jews suffered horrendously in the Holocaust and from the cruel anti-Semitism of Europe. Some moved to Palestine to build a homeland where they could live free from persecution.

Despite clear promises made to the indigenous Palestinians that their rights would be safeguarded, many were forcibly moved from land that they had inhabited for centuries. Their anger and bitterness have been made worse by subsequent events and broken promises, such as that of the UN for a separate Palestinian state. The world has also turned a blind eye to illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank. According to a report by Amnesty International, Palestinians in Israel live in apartheid conditions ...

**col 567** However, the deplorable and callous treatment of Palestinians cannot justify the barbaric attack by Hamas on the State of Israel and the taking of hostages. ...

In its recent report, Amnesty International ... refers to what it considers compelling evidence of Israel's use of white phosphorus, which can burn to the bone. Why the silence of the UK Government and the western media? If this banned substance had been used by Russians in Ukraine, there would have been banner news headlines about a chilling disregard for human life. ... To rephrase an appropriate line from Shakespeare, "If a Palestinian is cut, does he not bleed?"

Israel's response is not proportionate. It is the cruel, inhumane, collective punishment of some 2 million already deprived and starving people—a collective punishment not seen since the Second World War. ...

**Lord Leigh of Hurley:** ... is he aware that the Israel Defense Forces categorically and specifically denied using white phosphorus, and would he care to withdraw that suggestion?

**Lord Singh of Wimbledon:** They have, as one would expect, but is there any evidence? Is Amnesty International deliberately telling untruths?

*col 568* **Lord Gold (Conservative):** ... Last Sunday, a peaceful vigil was held in Trafalgar Square calling for Hamas to release the hostages it has taken. There was solidarity and empathy with those poor people locked away from their loved ones. By contrast, on Saturday, as we have heard, in a massive march across London there was no concern for the hostages or condemnation of Hamas. There was just hatred—hatred for Israel—and calls for jihad and Israel's destruction...

We should have no doubt: this is anti-Semitism in its ugliest form. Since the Hamas attack on Israel, the number of anti-Semitic acts just in London has risen by 1,350%. This is a horrific statistic, and we must stand together to stamp out anti-Semitism and unreservedly make it clear to all that such conduct and behaviour are totally unacceptable ...

*col 569* **Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** My Lords, the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel was more than a war crime. This anti-Jewish pogrom was dripping with sadism.

Do noble Lords remember the horror when we saw film some years ago of so-called Jihadi John and the ISIS Beatles using swords to behead hostages such as David Haines and James Foley—the cruelty of it? We knew then that this was not about the number of hostages killed—a handful that we know of in that instance—but we viscerally understood that this was an off-the-scale incident in terms of depravity. Those sickening shockwaves are felt a thousand times over in response to the 7 October killing spree, in which Hamas butchers recorded themselves boasting of their torture and violence and gloating over the desecration of naked dead bodies.

Yet, ever since then, self-styled progressives in the UK, Europe and the US have insisted that the evil of the atrocity emanates from Israel, presenting the real victims as civilians in Gaza. In a grotesque distortion of political categories, events on 7 October are being portrayed as some sort of justifiable resistance to oppression. ... Indeed, Green Party MSP Maggie Chapman responded to the Hamas attack by posting: "The OPPRESSED are fighting back ... Don't let the Western media fool you into thinking it's terrorism, this is decolonization".

Let me be clear: no, it is not. ...

*col 570* It is hard to explain such moral disorientation. As one commentator noted, those who collaborated with the Nazis often claimed they did not know that Hitler's henchmen were planning to exterminate the Jewish people. Today's progressive apologists in the West have no such excuse, as Islamists flaunt their desire to eliminate the Jews, and yet, still, too many look away, ignoring these inconvenient truths. ...

Finally, we as legislators have to ask how we should respond at this pivotal moment, now that the curtain has been pulled back on this new anti-Semitism. One plea I will make to us all is that we should resist the siren calls for more hate speech laws ...

*col 571* But I fear that a public clamour for more restrictions is likely in response to what

could be described as, at best, “eccentric” policing priorities ... The police can turn up at your door if you misgender someone, they can arrest you for praying silently in the wrong place and they can treat a terrified autistic pupil as a criminal for accidentally kicking a Koran, yet they passively stand by as pro-Gaza protesters deface public monuments, scale scaffolding on government buildings and allow people to run riot on the streets. But, despite such institutional torpor, eroding free speech is never the answer. ... If we are to take the call of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for more and better education seriously—and if we are to win young hearts and minds away from the new identitarian anti-Semitism, and to offer the young some moral clarity—we need more, not fewer, difficult arguments in the public sphere. ...

**Baroness Lawlor (Conservative):** ... Hamas is committed, by its founding charter, to the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in the whole of historic Palestine. Yes, an update in 2017 suggested that Hamas might accept the 1949 to 1967 borders, if this was the result of consensus, but it rejected Zionism and the Zionist project, stating its preference for establishing an Islamist Palestinian state from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea and from the border with Lebanon to the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

The Hamas terrorist war, like its ideology, combines the potency of Palestinian nationalism and the power of Muslim fundamentalism. In this war, ends and means are one: the destruction of Israel from the river to the sea. It is an end financially and militarily backed by Iran, most recently in its supply of rockets and training. As noble Lords have pointed out, Iran is also fighting to establish its own hegemony in the whole region. To that end, it is willing to make a marriage of convenience with the Sunni terrorist group Hamas—the military capabilities of which it has helped to develop—and a marriage of love with the Shiite Hezbollah towards the northern border with Lebanon. ...

*col 572* Few of us will not be moved by the condition of Gaza, but any let-up in Israel’s pursuit of the terrorists would be the wrong course. The destruction of Hamas is a prerequisite for the restoration of stability to the territory and for allowing the people of Gaza to live their lives under democratic rule. ...

Although it is often said in debate that one can be against the state of Israel without being anti-Semitic, given history, that cannot be so. Of course, any Israeli Government can be criticised for their policies, but doubting whether the state and its people have a right to exist is an offence to not just Israelis but Jews the world over. ...

The pro-Palestinian demonstrations in London on the night that the news of the massacre broke and over two Saturdays have, to put it mildly, descended into a threatening anti-Semitism. Whatever fine construction the Arabic grammarians of the Metropolitan Police may put on the words, the chant of “Jihad, jihad, jihad” by a crowd waving Palestinian flags is clearly to call a holy war against Israel and to insist that Palestine must stretch from the river to the sea. It is a call for the dispersal of Jews in Israel and the end of that state, if not the murder of present Jewish inhabitants. If that is not anti-Semitism, what is?

**Lord Mendelsohn (Labour):** ... I was in Israel when the rockets started hitting and when the land incursion took place. In fact, I was woken up by my phone which I had set to one of the alerts which tell you if rockets come over. I had it on silent, but it just did not stop vibrating. It woke me at 7 am; my wife had been up since 6.30 am. It was immediately apparent that this was something very, very different. The reason I mention this is that I have kept it vibrating still every day. Every single day I get a reminder of the condition of rockets being fired into Israel and the murderous intent to kill as many people as possible, which has been stopped only by some advanced technology. These happen constantly, and it was almost prescient that just before we started this debate, the most enormous amount of rockets were fired on Israel, including one in an area that I was staying in when I was there on Saturday, which would have given me 90 seconds to get to a bomb shelter. ...

*col 573* We must address the inescapable point that, for as long as Hamas remains a force,

the cause of peace will be the profound casualty. Hamas in Gaza is like having ISIS on your border. It has had a destructive legacy on peace from Oslo: suicide bombers, child soldiers—it does not matter what it is, Hamas has always been the great underminer. Our core mistake has been to believe that a Hamas presence is possible and consistent with any peace initiative. It is not. ...

*col 574* The central unarguable point is that Hamas is the problem, and everyone has to choose which side they are on: peace or conflict. People must understand that Hamas is not the Palestinians. Those who argue in the media, at demonstrations or elsewhere, who provide succour or support for Hamas, its methods or policies, who justify or explain away its actions or even recite or chant the politics and phrases from its hateful charter do nothing for peace. ...

**Lord Alderdice (Liberal Democrat):** ... It is very difficult to approach this debate calmly. One might argue that there is no reason to be calm. Horrible, frightening things have been happening in Israel and Gaza and it is natural to rage and wish for vengeance and to identify more with one side of the conflict than the other. ...

I also identify very strongly with my Christian co-religionists, who hoped to be safe when they sheltered in the third oldest Christian church in the world but found no sanctuary there. Dozens of them were killed by an IDF missile. Are those Christians simply to be regarded as collateral damage? ...

One of the lessons of recent times is that armies with massive military capability less often win wars than they did in the past ... Hamas more closely resembles the Taliban than al-Qaeda or ISIS because it is a governing authority that has run a defined territory for some years. That should give us pause for thought. ...

*col 575* Israel is in an even more difficult situation—a small country in a dangerous neighbourhood embarking on a ground invasion of Gaza that will not only result in the deaths of many ordinary Palestinian people and Israeli soldiers but will likely open up a war on other fronts, notably in the north with Hezbollah, backed by Iran. ...

The proposed ground offensive will be a death mission for many hundreds or perhaps thousands of other young Israeli soldiers, and its aims are unachievable. Even if every Hamas operative in Gaza was killed, it would not address the membership of Hamas and other extremist groups in the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan. Indeed, it is already acting as a recruiting sergeant for extremist groups across the world, including—as colleagues have noted—in this country, where we are seeing increasing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. ...

*col 576* There is no military solution and no political solution that does not take account of the needs of Palestinians. I have been involved with this region for many years and no proposal that fails to take account of the political need of the Palestinians will work. ...

**Lord Shinkwin (Conservative):** ... As soon as I heard about the vile, racist pogrom perpetrated by Hamas, I WhatsApped a Jewish friend who lives here in London and whom I had got to know on a March of the Living trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps a few years ago. I told him how sorry I was about the tragic loss of life in Israel. He replied to say that he had already flown out and re-joined his IDF unit the day after Hamas's horrific, barbaric butchery. To a further WhatsApp, he replied: "Even though you are far away, your prayers and words of encouragement are felt here".

We may be far away, but we should know that what we say in this Chamber today will be felt throughout not just our own Jewish community but also in Israel. Our Jewish brothers and sisters need and deserve our support at such an unbearably painful and traumatic time so, like other noble Lords, I am grateful for the opportunity this debate provides to express mine. In doing so, I am mindful that I cannot possibly know how it feels to be the target of such racist, brutal bloodlust—that I cannot possibly appreciate the horror of knowing that over 6 million of your own people were exterminated in industrialised mass murder within living memory. How can any of us who are not Jewish understand what it feels like to know that your own state, Israel, is the only thing standing between you and



extermination simply for being Jewish?

In case we are tempted to dismiss such fears as melodramatic almost 80 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Hamas has reminded us that this is not theory; it is fact. ...

*col 577* If the post-Nuremberg pledge of “never again” is not to be rendered meaningless by Hamas’s savagery in the largest single loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust, we have to recognise that warm words of sympathy do not suffice, and that Israel must be allowed to get on with the job of destroying the evil that is Hamas as a matter of urgency. Time is of the essence. I fear that a ceasefire would be a gift to the murderers who threaten us and our values as much as they do Israel—whose very right to exist they deny. ...

My friend flew from London to rejoin his unit because he knows what is at stake—Israel’s survival is on the line. The question is: do we? Do we recognise that unless and until Hamas and its puppet masters in Iran are defeated, they remain a threat to us all? ...

**Lord Grabiner (Crossbench):** ... On the weekend of 7 to 8 October, Hamas entered Israel, ISIS style, and engaged in the slaughter, rape, beheading and hostage taking of civilians. Israel’s response has produced great hardship to Gazans, including many who must be innocent of wrongdoing. Israel has also conducted hundreds of bombing raids on Hamas targets. I believe that it has made best efforts to minimise the suffering of those Gazans who are not terrorists. That is the key difference between the Israeli approach—to preserve innocent life wherever possible—and Hamas, whose avowed objective is to kill Jews. ...

*col 578* As Hamas well knows, it is obvious that Gazans would be killed or injured because Hamas fires rockets from locations near schools and hospitals hoping to secure worldwide sympathy when Israeli efforts to destroy the source of the firing inevitably result in the death of innocent Gazans. The Al-Ahli Anglican hospital episode has been referred to and is instructive. The loss of life and the related damage to the car park at the hospital were the result of a misfired missile from the cemetery located close to the hospital. There was no Israeli bomb, the missile did not hit the hospital and 500 people were not killed. The journalistic performance of the BBC over this episode was appalling. It also led to unfair international criticism of Israel. It was a piece of fake news. ...

Two points come out of that episode. First, Hamas is exclusively responsible for what happened. Secondly, firing missiles from the vicinity of a hospital is an example of Hamas’s indifference to the loss of Palestinian life. From Israel’s perspective this war, as others have said, is about survival. Hamas is committed to the “obliteration” of the State of Israel ...

Repeated references to proportionality, often in the context of demands for Israel to cease fire, merely obscure the underlying problem. Hamas is fully operational. Even as we speak, rockets from Gaza have not ceased to rain down on Israel since hostilities began. Apart from the release of four hostages, no word has been heard from Hamas about the other 222 hostages. Why does Hamas not let them go? Why is it keeping them? This is a gross breach of international law. Israel has an absolute right to defend herself. Israel’s response can not fairly—or even honestly, I would say—be described as disproportionate. It is easy to bandy about the word “proportionate,” but when you think about it, the complexity associated with its application in this context is not fathomable. It has actually become a clichéd mantra. ...

*col 579* **Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown (DUP):** ... Sadly, just like the Holocaust deniers of the past, there are many across the world who totally blinker themselves and peddle the narrative that Israel was to blame for this slaughter of the innocents; or they try to minimise the magnitude of the atrocities carried out by these hate-filled fanatics who invaded Israel with the intent of butchering, burning and capturing innocent civilians. We cannot allow this dangerous propaganda to go unanswered. The undisputable truth is that numerous heavily armed Hamas terrorists with murder in their hearts entered into different Israeli villages and left unbelievable carnage behind them. They did so unashamedly, cheering as they recorded their actions in order to gloat over



their atrocities—yes, they recorded the innocent being shot, stabbed, tortured and burned. They bound, gagged and riddled with bullet holes the bodies of young and old. Hamas celebrated the beheading of men, women, children and babies, and yet there are those within our society who seek to justify these actions.

*col 580* Let me make it clear that those who claim that the Hamas gunmen were soldiers fighting for a just cause are totally deceived. They were evil assassins who murdered the elderly, disabled, children and babies; they raped women, even abusing a dead young woman's body, having been instructed to kill anyone and everyone. ...

Those who planned this attack did so to cause maximum fear and distress to innocent civilians. Over recent years Israel has been bombarded with numerous rockets fired from Gaza and Lebanon, but what happened on 7 October was completely different. Hamas carefully planned its attack; it knew when and where it would happen and had every opportunity to make preparation for the needs of its own people—the Palestinian people whom it claims to represent. Yet, within days of the attack, the news media talked endlessly about shortages of food, fuel, water, medical supplies; in other words, shortages of everything—but let us note carefully, no shortages of rockets. ...

Even parts of our own media are afraid to call out Hamas as a terrorist organisation and content to call its murderers “militants” or “fighters”. There is absolutely no excuse for creating the impression of a moral equivalence between Hamas and Israel's armed forces. ...

*col 581* Israel cannot co-exist with Hamas, which is out to annihilate it. Either Israel will defeat and wipe out Hamas or Hamas will continue to destroy Israel. ... the Israeli Government have exhorted the innocent to leave the Hamas enclave before they attack the enemy. The people living in the villages of Israel were not given that warning. Hamas ordered its terrorists to kill, kill, kill without mercy, to behead or do whatever they liked against peaceful civilians and glory in their evil deeds. ...

*col 582 Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Conservative):* ... On 26 October 1994, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty called the Washington declaration, signed by Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein, with President Clinton serving as a witness. Until his death, King Hussein used every endeavour to find an answer to the peace process. In the last 20 years, his son King Abdullah has widened and extended such endeavours and has become the most respected and influential leader in the whole Middle East internationally, in particular with President Biden. We must not forget that until relatively recent times it has been a warm peace. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has an excellent rapport with King Abdullah and shares the same long-term sentiments: a two-state solution with the Palestinian state totally independent in all forms from Israel, and the Israelis with no future involvement whatever in Gaza after Hamas has been totally defeated. ...

*col 583 Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green):* ... Last night I spoke about the more than 2 million people facing acute water shortage. In 30-degree temperatures they do not have clean water to drink, let alone in which to bathe. More than 1 million people have been told to move, when there is nowhere to move to. ... forcible transfer is illegal and a war crime, but there are narrow exceptions if it is temporary and to protect civilians from hostilities, provided that there are assurances that they will be able to return home and there is a humanitarian safe haven—safe from war and provided with essential needs. Israel is not adhering to those principles in Gaza. ...

Last year, before all this started, a report found that four out of five under-18s in Gaza said that they already suffered from depression, grief or fear. That was a sharp deterioration compared with a 2018 study. A ceasefire would of course not undo all that damage to young minds and bodies, but it would mean an end to the reign of death and destruction in Gaza and Israel. ...

*col 584* There are limits to what we can do, although restoring overall levels of official development assistance would be a good place to start. ...

The Government could start by speaking up for international law and accepting their

responsibility to make a judgment call about what is happening in Gaza now, not trying to evade doing so as they have been in the face of multiple challenges in recent days. By not doing so they are implicitly saying that they regard the continuing slaughter of the innocents as acceptable. ... Atrocity prevention should be at the centre of all UK foreign policy. ...

**Lord Stone of Blackheath (Non-affiliated):** ... First, we need to arrive at a position where the nations of the world, including the United Kingdom, are ready to acknowledge and recognise the state of Palestine alongside Israel. ...

Secondly, it is time for us to take action, extend compassion and earnestly work towards a peaceful resolution for both sides. We cannot permit the continuation of the suffering faced by the citizens of Israel under the existing status quo. Let us begin to strive for a future where Israel and Palestine can coexist in peace and prosperity. ...

*col 585* Saudi Arabia—Mohammed bin Salman—should work with Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians to build a huge port in Gaza, linked to Cyprus, so that Palestine becomes the Hong Kong of the region and its citizens become wealthy. Together, these countries—Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan—having become partners in this huge, positive construction project, can all develop the Sinai peninsula as a huge solar energy park as a source of clean energy for the planet, moving the region from oil and gas income to solar power.

This partnership would build peace, co-operation and green energy on the vast scale that the world needs. ...

**Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat):** ... Whoever the perpetrators might be— Hamas is a terrorist organisation—the majority of people in Gaza are under 18. They are not the perpetrators of the crimes of 7 October. The premature babies lying in incubators in hospitals in Gaza are innocent victims of what is happening. Food, energy and clean water need to get into Gaza, and we need to be looking to support that. ...

*col 586* Lady Deech, raised concerns about a lack of education about Judaism and the Holocaust. In particular, she raised concerns about two universities, one of which is my university—the University of Cambridge. I apologise if anybody feels that there is anti-Semitism stemming from the University of Cambridge. Clearly, anti-Semitism must be condemned. The spillover of anti-Semitism into this country, the rise of anti-Semitic crime, and the concerns as raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, of Jewish children going to school and university, is something that we really need to be looking to. We need to overcome anti-Semitism in this country, but we also need to avoid a spillover into Islamophobia. Both of those things are vital. ...

As my noble friend Lord Alderdice reminded us, in Palestine it is not just Muslims who are being killed but also Christians. We talk about the Holy Land. Jerusalem is a city that is prized by Christians, Muslims and Jews. We can only join with the Minister when he recited earlier the Muslim prayer, “To God we belong and to God we return”. Let us hope that that sees us returning not just to God but to peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

*col 587* **Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated):** ... I stand in this House as a daughter of a land, born of a mother and a family, that stood with courage to resist the might of genocidal occupiers who vowed to obliterate a whole nation and people with one purpose: to crush the inalienable rights of self-determination to live in a free and independent nation. ...

We did not have modern smartphones relaying the live butchery of war but as a child, like millions of others, I was a witness, and for the 52 years since that experience has shaped my life and my thinking, as has the hope that my mother embedded in my heart. ...

There is no question that the terror perpetrated by Hamas was disgusting, barbaric and merciless—as is the indiscriminate bombing of innocent civilians in Gaza today. ...

Indeed, the UK Government’s strident support has emboldened the current Israeli Government, mired in national controversy. Regardless of any constraint gently called for by our Government, Israel continues to shower thousands of bombs—possibly using

phosphorus —on the civilians of Gaza. ...

I am deeply concerned at the dehumanising language that our Government and some media organisations have been using in relation to Palestine, Palestinians and Muslims across the world, including in the UK. That dehumanising language holds immense power and is detrimental to the individuals and communities that it targets, perpetrating harmful stereotypes, fostering suspicions and resulting in an intensely hostile environment that is dangerous for our children and for a cohesive Britain.

*col 588* While I note the Prime Minister's assurances, I cannot overstate the public perception and sense of anger that we have failed in safeguarding British Muslims and Jewish communities against a very real, threatening rise in Islamophobic and anti-Semitic attacks. ...

Public support cannot be taken for granted and there is evidence of an erosion of trust as government and non-government officials continue to offer unequivocal support for the Israeli Government, who may be committing war crimes, as stated by human rights organisations.

What legal advice and assurance have the Government obtained prior to declaring unreserved support for Israel's military operation in Gaza and its civilian population? Do the Government view any aspects of Israeli attacks as potential war crimes?

I call upon my Government to urge on the Israeli Government an immediate ceasefire and to urge their co-operation with the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, Egypt, South Africa, Malaysia and all the other countries which attended the summit in Cairo. ...

*col 589* **Lord Godson (Conservative):** ... Although our voices will be heard abroad, our particular responsibility, as British subjects, is here in the UK. Our deliberations will have especial resonance on our doorstep. ...

It was on 22 October that the Muslim Council of Britain urged its followers on social media to "Write to your MP. Stop Gaza Genocide".

Genocide—think of the word. This is an outrageous assertion, to the point of being a blood libel. No reputable authority on international law, whatever they think of Israel's response to Hamas's attack of 7 October, believes that her actions come within the definition of the UN's genocide convention and other key relevant texts. By contrast, it is Hamas's professed agenda—to wipe out Israel—which is the genocidal one. Incendiary language such as claims of genocide, and old canards of Jews being party to and pushing genocide, have unfortunately played some tragic part in the explosion of anti-Semitic attacks in this country since 7 October, which, according to the Metropolitan Police's own statistics, are up by 1,353%.

There are policy implications for our country here. The first relates to community engagement. Pre-eminently, the previous Labour Government under Gordon Brown rightly cut contact with the Muslim Council of Britain in 2009, after its then deputy secretary-general signed the Istanbul declaration, calling for attacks on Royal Navy vessels enforcing a UN weapons blockade on Hamas-run Gaza. The Muslim Council of Britain, despite its avowed modernisation programme, still does not resile from that position. Indeed, its present deputy secretary-general, Mohammed Kozbar, has publicly praised the founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, as "the master of the martyrs of the resistance".

*col 590* That is why it is right that all successive Prime Ministers, whether under the coalition or Conservative Governments since then, have maintained the ban on the Muslim Council of Britain. Will my noble friend the Minister therefore now reaffirm this non-engagement policy and give further assurances that the policy will be implemented throughout government, including within the Ministry of Defence and other departments? ...

**The Archbishop of York:** ... I want to say a little about an element of this that we have not discussed that much in this debate, which is the impact of it all here in our own country

and how this, in turn, affects the world. We are, as we know, a global community living in an age of instant communication. Our interconnectedness means that this conflict is felt deeply across the world and directly affects communities here in the UK, immediately and especially Jewish and Muslim communities. ...

At the same time, the unfiltered platform that social media allows to extremist voices is making the situation worse, creating an atmosphere of palpable fear... It has no place in our democracy. As the noble Lords, Lord Harrington, Lord Bilimoria, Lord McCrea and Lord Godson, have said, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise, but particularly anti-Semitism. Senseless and pointless attacks on Jewish community buildings, schools and individuals have all increased, and the statistics are truly frightening, as we have heard.

*col 591* Up and down the country, and built up over many years, we have across our nation a strong network of regional faith forums, many of which I have been involved with, as have almost all the Bishops on these Benches. Yet, I hear that a number of them, while relationships continue, are struggling to agree joint statements or hold vigils for peace because it is all too raw and emotions are running so high, and because there are still so many unhelpful voices around. ... I also want to pay tribute to women and men from across our faith communities—I am thinking especially of Muslim and Jewish leaders that I know—who are working courageously to lead through this time and at considerable personal cost. ...

We need to be clear that how individuals and communities act here and now, today, tomorrow, in this country, will shape and influence what happens next, in the coming days and for the years ahead. ...

Finally, in the last couple of weeks I have noticed two things: first, that human blood is red—Jewish blood, Muslim blood, Christian blood; secondly, like the ocean, tears are salt water, and the flood levels are rising. ...

*col 592* **Lord Wolfson of Tredegar (Conservative):** ... On Saturday night, I had two children in uniform. My son, who has now made his life in Israel, wore the uniform of the Israel Defense Forces. Like most 20 year-olds in Israel, he is doing military service. He personally saw the aftermath of Hamas's atrocities, sights which no 20 year-old—in fact, no one—should see. But he is in uniform because, if he and his friends were not, there would not be an Israel. It really is that simple.

My other child in uniform was my daughter. Her uniform was trainers, jeans and a necklace with a Magen David—a Star of David—around her neck. That is her customary Saturday night uniform, in common with many teenage girls in north London, as they come into town on the Tube to enjoy this great city's nightlife. I was more concerned about the safety of my daughter than of my son.

How on earth have we got to a place where I am more concerned about a teenage girl in London with a Star of David around her neck than my son in an army uniform in a country at war? ...

The first is information. The BBC is not a state broadcaster, but it is a national broadcaster. I say this with genuine regret as a supporter of the BBC: in the past few weeks it has brought us national shame. I need not take time with the BBC's abject failure to describe Hamas in plain English as what it is: a terrorist group. After an intervention from me and other noble Lords, the BBC announced that it had stopped calling Hamas "militants"—I am not making this up—because "we have been finding this a less accurate description for our audiences as the situation evolves". A "less accurate description"—no further comment is necessary. ...

In our community we are used to some people, such as Mr Corbyn, parroting Hamas propaganda, but to have the BBC do it when it would not have done so with propaganda from ISIS or al-Qaeda led to real consequences, not just the cancellation of a summit in Amman but in this city too: Jewish schools closed, kosher restaurants smashed up, heightened security at every synagogue—and my daughter wondering whether it was safe



to go on the Tube. ...

*col/ 593* The second is our institutions. The Jewish community has learned over the past two weeks who our many friends are. We have also seen who they are not. ... University Jewish societies no longer publicise where they are meeting. The address is handed out, samizdat fashion, shortly before the meeting. This is not some underground group in Soviet Russia but a Jewish society in this country in 2023.

Our universities have become centres of binary thinking, where you are either an oppressor or the oppressed. In the case of Israel, it would seem that oppressors include murdered babies and kidnapped grandmothers—although sometimes Hamas preferred to kidnap the babies and murder their grandmothers. ...

The third is our constitution. ...

The Jewish community is protected by law, but many currently feel that they are not protected by those whose job it is to enforce the law. The shout “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is not a nursery rhyme; it is a murderous rhyme because it calls for the destruction of Israel and, necessarily, its inhabitants. It is not a demand for the two-state solution in which I and so many others still believe. But the police have done nothing about it.

They did not even intervene when members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a group that is illegal in many other western countries but is still legal here for some reason, chanted for jihad. I am aware that “jihad” has several meanings apart from armed struggle: it can refer to self-reflection, personal improvement and quiet meditation. But when it is chanted on the streets of London with a banner referring to Muslim armies liberating Palestine, and when the group’s website refers to “heroic feats carried out by the heroic Mujahideen in the Blessed Land—Palestine”, I simply do not understand how the Metropolitan Police concluded that that cry for jihad was not supporting or glorifying Hamas, which is a criminal offence. ... ]

The safety of my son in his army uniform is ultimately a matter for the Government of Israel, but the safety of my daughter on the Tube in London is a matter for our Government and this Parliament. ...

*col/ 594 Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat):* ... the year leading up to 7 October in Israel and the Occupied Territories had been one of the most violent in years, but we were all horrified that in Israel, children, babies and the elderly had been targeted by terrorists. We are equally horrified that in Gaza more than 3,000 children, women and elderly have now been killed. ...

*col/ 595* All our efforts now must be to prevent further suffering within Israel, in Gaza and the West Bank, and to prevent conflict contagion in the neighbouring countries. ... From my many visits to northern Iraq during the occupation of Mosul, I know ... that any ground invasion will be catastrophic for the civilians in the area, and indeed for many of the IDF recruits and conscripts who will be sent to carry out that work. ...

As noble Lords have said, there is no equivalence to the acts of Hamas terrorism. There should be no justification or equivocation in the condemnation of them. Equally, there are not two versions of international law ... We cannot in one conflict espouse the rules-based international order, only to set it aside in another. ...

I agree that international law is applicable to allies and adversaries alike. Clear breaches by Hamas do not justify breaches by Israel. ...

*col/ 596* In recent days we have seen the slight opening of lifesaving aid for Gaza civilians ... which is welcome, but ... this is not enough. We also saw good offices used to free some hostages, but there should be no question that all hostages need to be released, and not through the deliberate psychological torture of partial release ...

In Gaza the conditions forced upon the civilian population are now extreme... Southern Gaza is now the most densely populated place on the planet, with UN shelters hosting up to 11 times the number of people they were designed for. ...

UNRWA stocks of medicines are critically decreasing and it is warning today that services will run out tomorrow. ...

There should be a cessation of hostilities in key areas. Water services need to be restored. A humanitarian suspension of hostilities should also allow for the much-needed diplomatic work on the conditions of the next stage, which should be a ceasefire whereby civilians are protected, along with Israel's right to get its hostages home safely and protect itself. This will of course be exceptionally difficult but it will be necessary. ...

*col 597* I welcome the announced increase in support to UNRWA ...

Wider than funding, our diplomatic presence will be needed more than ever in the coming days to prevent the wider conflagration which Hamas and its sponsors will be hoping for. We need to recognise that, if we do not work even harder for the two-state solution, even in these terribly fraught times, then we push the Palestinian cause further from Israel's Arab neighbours to Tehran. ...

These Benches have called repeatedly for the recognition of the state of Palestine. We recognise Jerusalem to be the capital of two peoples. Even though at this deeply dark moment that may be harder to achieve than for 50 years, our minds must still be on what has to be a future where Israel is a state free from existential threat and Palestinians have a state which is a homeland too. Both need to live in security and peace and to build prosperity for the future. ...

The wider world needs Israel, as the democracy in the region that it is, and it needs it to operate within international law ...

In our debates, being pro-Israel should not silence you when its politicians take extreme political positions, and being pro-Palestinian should not mean that you turn a blind eye to terrorist atrocities. I am pro-Israel. I am a friend of Palestine. We need not feed a narrative which sophisticated misinformation and disinformation— malignant forces—seek to perpetuate. They wish a polarisation and to close down a measured perspective which shows respect and maintains common principles. At times of violence and conflict, we need those approaches more than ever, even though they may be harder than ever. ...

*col 598* **Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour):** ... As Keir Starmer said yesterday, the brutal attack in Israel just over two weeks ago was the darkest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust. The horror and suffering caused is seared into memories with images of the dead and dying that can never be unseen. As we have heard in this debate, despite those events two weeks ago, Israel is still under attack, with rockets still being fired over it and launched against it. Israel has the right and, 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. ...

*col 599* As we have heard in the debate, Gaza is facing a humanitarian emergency and innocent civilians are terrified for their lives. We have seen children forced to flee their homes, clean water running out and hospitals barely able to function. Certainly, we welcome President Biden's initiative and the US-led diplomacy that brokered the agreement for a few dozen trucks carrying life-saving humanitarian aid to cross into the Gaza Strip. The Minister mentioned the numbers: 20 on Saturday, 14 on Sunday and, tonight, we are up to 50 trucks getting through; but that is simply not enough.

Gaza is a city the size of Birmingham; a place where, even before this devastation, life was a struggle ... The UK Government must do everything in their power, working with partners, to get food, water, medicine and fuel to help those innocent citizens. ...

We must also follow the US example by appointing a UK special co-ordinator for international aid to Gaza. ...

*col 600* The simple fact is that, if Hamas had a single concern for the safety of Palestinian people, it would never have taken hostages. The responsibility for this crisis lies with Hamas and nobody else. The scenes of hundreds killed at the Al-Ahli Arabi Baptist hospital are devastating and cannot be justified. As we have heard tonight, we know who was responsible for that. Hospitals and civilian lives must be protected. We all have a duty to act responsibly and judiciously, as the facts are determined.

I stress that I also agree absolutely with the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of York that we must not allow these tragic events to divide our communities. As we have heard in the debate, the Community Security Trust and the Metropolitan Police have reported a steep increase in anti-Semitic incidents in recent days, including abuse and assaults. Tell MAMA has reported a tripling of cases for its services, including reports of anti-Muslim threats, abuse and assaults. We must denounce hate crime in the strongest terms. We are in touch with the police, the CST and Tell MAMA, which are co-ordinating the response to such threats. We expect to see a robust response to all incidents of hate associated with the conflict and call on Government to support these groups, and to play their part in preventing an escalation of tensions. There is absolutely no place in Britain for anti-Semitic hate or Islamophobia. ...

Another issue brought up in the debate has been that in the fog of this war, disinformation is flooding social media. What are the Government doing to ensure that social media companies act responsibly to limit toxic and dangerous disinformation? ...

The biggest risk of this war is that it could deepen into a wider regional conflict. That would be disastrous for the Middle East as well as the wider world. ...

*col 601* I also welcome what the Minister said about support for British nationals who have been trapped in Gaza since the outbreak of this war. ...

Hamas wants the chaos of war, which is why it has committed this outrageous act. Hamas wants Jews to suffer. Hamas wants the Palestinian people to share in the pain. That is because, as my noble friend Lord Turnberg said, the Palestinian people are not its cause. Peace is not its aim. The dignity of human life, Jew or Muslim, means absolutely nothing to Hamas. So that nobody needs to suffer like this again, as my noble friend Lord Mendelsohn said, Hamas must be defeated so that we might once more see a road to a lasting peace. As the Minister said, there should be a Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel. For too long, we have allowed welcome progress in improving relations between Israel and her neighbours to sit without any progress on a future for Palestine and its people. This must change.

We stand with Israel and its right to defend itself. We stand against the terrorists of Hamas, who must release the hostages. We stand for international law and the protection of innocent lives and, together with the Government, we stand absolutely for a political path to peace.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** ... I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, *yehi zichra baruch*—may their memory be a blessing. We join her and many other families who have sadly and tragically been impacted. Every life lost on this issue is a tragedy. As I said in my opening remarks, we stand united with Israel as it seeks to strengthen its response and to ensure that it secures its citizens, for security is the first duty of any responsible Government. ...

The ramifications of Hamas's attack on Israel which, as we have heard from many noble Lords, was a terrorist attack, continue to unfold. As I said in my opening remarks, many in Israel, including from within, made comparisons to the Holocaust. While the world has moved on—this is 2023—the brutality of that appalling act of terror, which many noble Lords talked about, resonates. ...

*col 602* I will be very clear. I have noted and will come on to the issue of a ceasefire. A ceasefire is important for both sides, but when dealing with an organisation that is terrorist in its ideology—scratching the surface, comparisons were made to Daesh this evening; and I have visited parts of the region, including Iraq—it might at times be defeated on the battlefield or in the theatre, but the perverse ideology of such organisations remains. We should never lose sight of this. Hamas's reason for being is the destruction of Israel. Its actions, terror, division and hate are reflected in what it did to innocent civilians.

Again, there was unity on the important issue of the taking of hostages ... The clear, unequivocal message from your Lordships' debate this evening is: release them now and release them unconditionally. ...

I will share a personal anecdote. When those attacks happened, the first call I received was from the Israeli ambassador. Very soon that morning, calls started rapidly coming in. Because of a family bereavement, my wife was not there. I was on paternal duties as well. I was standing on the side of a hockey pitch watching my son in his debut performance as a goalkeeper. As I watched my son play, the gravity of the unfolding situation dawned on me. Therefore, when my noble friend Lord Polak talked of that young child in his Liverpool shirt, I wiped a tear from my eye—I mean that sincerely. That could have been my nine year-old, although he would have been wearing a Tottenham shirt ...

The importance of life and of the dignity of life should not be lost. When the attacks happened I made three calls, though not deliberately to show how faith matters to me personally. One of the first was to my noble friend Lord Polak, because I knew he was in Jerusalem. The second call was to Imam Sharif Odeh in Haifa; I have been in discussion with him this evening. Tomorrow he is hosting people, including the Mayor of Haifa, who are all of different religions— Muslim, Christian and Jewish together to ensure a unity of response from the community. It is important to recognise that 20% of the population of the State of Israel are non-Jewish—Israeli Arabs made up of Christians and Muslims. As several noble Lords pointed out, Jerusalem is the Holy City, the Holy Land that brings together these three Abrahamic faiths. ...

*col 603* It is interesting that we have had debates on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred, and I will come on to the community response. But what is it when you as a Muslim stand up for the Jewish community and you receive hate? How do we describe that? Is that anti-Muslim hatred or is that anti-Semitism? I would say it is a vile combination of both. ...

We mourn the loss of every innocent life in this tragic conflict. The picture changes with each hour. I have been sitting here, as all noble Lords have, for several hours, being constantly updated about the current situation in Israel and Gaza. ...

*col 604* I was with the Foreign Secretary, who made it absolutely clear that while of course we defend British interests and look towards British hostages, this is about every innocent person taken, irrespective of whether they are a man, woman or child and irrespective of age or nation. We want all hostages released. ...

I can share that all British nationals who have registered and want to leave Israel on government flights have been allocated seats. We are also working on the very difficult and fluid situation in Gaza. I talked about the 900 people we brought back from Israel to the UK. Commercial flights operate and continue to operate from Tel Aviv, but we are cognisant of our wider responsibilities and that is why we changed the travel advice for Lebanon. ...

*col 605* Let me be very clear: we want this conflict to end tomorrow, but that needs Hamas to stop throwing rockets into Israel and to stop holding innocent hostages. We are true to our word, standing up and providing that humanitarian lifeline. ...

The issue that the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, raised about ensuring that we prevent wider conflict is very much at the forefront of our mind. We are engaging directly. ...

We had seen some real progress being made on the issues in Yemen, but it was Houthi drones pointed towards Israel that were recently shot down, so it is important that we stay vigilant in this respect.

We are also intensifying diplomatic engagement guided at the principle of standing with Israel. As I said, we want Hamas to give back the hostages, stop its incursions and look towards security for the longer term.

Thirdly, we are providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinians now. ...

*col 606* The most reverend Primate asked specifically about our support for the reconstruction of hospitals and other parts of Gaza. We are committed to that. ...

We will continue to assess the situation on the ground and, as I said earlier, we will continue to update noble Lords ... We want to keep the Rafah crossing open. ... it is good that we have started some trucks going in but that is not enough to sustain the innocent civilians who are currently being used in Gaza by Hamas. ...



... just about everyone asked about the proscription of the IRGC. The malign influence of Iran is very clear. I cannot give what the noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked for today, but of course we are observing closely Iran's continued influence, the escalation and its support for organisations within the region. We are clear that Iran poses an unacceptable threat to Israel, as my noble friend highlighted, including through its long-term support for Hamas, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group. We have long condemned its destabilising influence. ...

*col 607* Of course we are raising directly with Israel the issue of proportionality and ensuring that it takes all necessary steps to prevent civilian casualties. We are impressing that upon Israel, and we would not be having this number of trucks carrying deliveries if Israel did not recognise the importance of opening the crossing at Rafah. We have stressed to Israel the importance of protecting civilians and facilitating safe and unhindered access to humanitarian and medical aid for Gaza. ...

We have not been silent on illegal white phosphorus. ... The accusation made against the IDF regarding the use of white phosphorus is, in its words, categorically false. Israel recognises its responsibilities under international law. Yesterday the Prime Minister called for us to speak on the basis of facts alone. We need to recognise that there is a lot of misinformation out there and we need to verify the facts. ...

*col 608* We will sustain the long-term prospects of peace and stability in the region—we cannot lose sight of this. Hamas's abhorrent actions must not be allowed to dictate the fate of the region. If we give up, collectively—and that applies to Palestinians and Israelis—then Hamas has won. Therefore, it is right that we step up even more strongly in support of bringing about peace. As I have said, we remain committed to a negotiated two-state solution—a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, a just and lasting solution that ends occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. ...

The final point I want to make is on the rising tide of hate which we have seen. On the work of the CST and Tell MAMA, we have ... increased funding to the CST, which provides vital support. ... We celebrate our democracy for its right to protest but that protest must be without incitement to hatred. That is important. ...

I echo the call made by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech. I remember going to Auschwitz-Birkenau with a group of students when I was a Communities Minister. I still remember that, as we turned into the camp, the silence of that bunch of 16 year-olds was total. At that moment, there was silence in the coach. Why? Because the dawning of their historical learning was very real. It is therefore right that we invest in such initiatives. I pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Warsi for her initiative, Remembering Srebrenica. These genocides happen and they are happening today. We need to stand united against them and call them out. ...

*col 609* We will stand strong against anti-Semitism. ... We cannot let hate divide communities or spill into our streets. We need to stand firm, whether that is against anti-Semitism or anti-Muslim hatred.

On our universities, I acknowledge the points made by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and my noble friend Lord Wolfson. It should not be the case that he is worried about his daughter. I have a daughter as well; I want her to be safe and his daughter to be safe. I want all daughters and sons, all children, all people to be safe in our country. ...

I recognise the strength of feeling in your Lordships' House this evening but today this is perhaps more important than ever. The heavy toll that has been paid by innocents ... demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. We should not lose sight of that. We should rekindle the spirit of President Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin: that peace is possible. We should all strive for that and say that we will do our part to ensure that hope transcends over despair, peace over conflict and love over hate.

*col 610* I end my remarks with words which I am sure some noble Lords will recognise. There was a very revered person who understood the Middle East—as my noble friend

said, blessed are the peacemakers, and this person was one of those. He said that the only “radical means of sanctifying human lives” is “Not armored plating, or tanks, or planes, or concrete fortifications. The one radical solution is peace”.

That was the revered, respected and late Yitzhak Rabin, Nobel Peace Prize winner, in his lecture of December 1994. ... I join others in saying that, in our respective ways and homes, and our respective faiths and religions, that kind of faith is needed now and those prayers for peace are needed now. In our own way, let us work towards ensuring that it becomes a sustainable peace for people across the Holy Land.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-10-24/debates/17465F6F-4705-40A0-9250-0939AA74444B/IsraelGaza>

## House of Commons Oral Answers

### Israel and Palestine

**Chris Clarkson (Conservative)** [906657] What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with the Government of Israel on the situation in Gaza.

**Desmond Swayne (Conservative)** [906666] What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with representatives of the Palestinian Authority on a two-state solution.

**Marsha De Cordova (Labour)** [906668] What recent reports [the Minister] has received on the situation in Israel and Palestine.

**Steven Bonnar (SNP)** [906673] Whether [the Minister] has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the (a) compatibility with international law and (b) proportionality of Israel’s response in Gaza to the attacks by Hamas.

**Karl McCartney (Conservative)** [906677] What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with the Government of Israel on the situation in Gaza.

**James Sunderland (Conservative)** [906680] What steps [the Minister’s] Department is taking with international partners in the middle east in response to the situation in Gaza and Israel.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):** Since Hamas’s brutal terror attacks on 7 October, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have visited the region and have spoken and met extensively with counterparts totalling almost 20 countries, as part of our extensive diplomatic efforts to prevent escalation, to sustain the prospect of regional peace and to secure the free movement home of British nationals in Gaza and the release of hostages.

**Chris Clarkson:** It has been reported that the Palestinian Authority is to pay up to \$3 million a month in so-called martyr salaries to the families of dead and captured Hamas terrorists. Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning those payments to rapists, torturers and murderers, some of whom have killed Brits? Will he use his good offices to ensure that no British aid money has gone towards this filthy practice?

**James Cleverly:** I can reassure my hon. Friend that we always ensure that UK aid money is protected from misappropriation. I can confirm to him and the House that no British aid money goes directly to the Palestinian Authority. We have raised this issue with the Palestinian Authority and highlighted our belief that it is not conducive to good relations and a future two-state solution.

**Desmond Swayne:** What are the prospects of a two-state solution, given the pace of Israeli settlements on the west bank?

**James Cleverly:** The Government’s long-standing position is that we oppose settlement expansion, for the reasons I have highlighted extensively in the conversations that I have had with the Israeli Government and the leadership of countries in the region. Despite the terrible circumstances we are experiencing,

there is a renewed desire for a meaningful resolution that means that the terrible images that we saw on 7 October will never be repeated.

**Marsha De Cordova:** Close to 1,000 constituents have contacted me, deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding and the need for a ceasefire. Nearly 5,000 people have died in Gaza, including 1,700 children. While the whole House rightly condemned the Hamas atrocities, we must be unequivocal in our condemnation of violations of international law. Will the Foreign Secretary set out in what circumstances he believes it is legal for Israel to cut off water, fuel, food and electricity in Gaza?

**James Cleverly:** There is always much debate in this House about the interpretation of international humanitarian law. I have raised directly with my Israeli counterparts the need, in whatever actions they take to secure their protection, defend Israeli citizens and secure the release of hostages, for them to act in accordance with international law. I have received assurances from the Israeli President to that effect.

**Steven Bonnar:** There have been countless reiterations from the Israeli authorities, including in a joint speech with the Prime Minister last week, that they are taking precautions to avoid civilian casualties. However, more than 4,650 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in the last 16 days. Palestinian lives matter, so what more action, other than just repeating promises about civilian protection, is the Foreign Secretary's Department taking meaningfully to ensure that innocent Palestinians are kept safe?

**James Cleverly:** I am on record mourning the Palestinian lives that have been lost in this conflict, just as we mourn, and I mourn, the loss of Israeli lives in this terrible situation. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the UK Government take the loss of life, from whichever community, incredibly seriously.

I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that Hamas routinely and consciously put civilians in harm's way, specifically to generate fatalities that they then use as part of their media operations. We are conscious of that and the Israeli armed forces are conscious of that—that is why, they explained to me, they have given notice of future areas of military operation. We have seen evidence that Hamas are routinely preventing Palestinians from leaving areas that are going to be engaged by the Israeli Defence Forces.

**Karl McCartney:** ... The Government's unequivocal message that Israel has the right and must be able to defend itself against the Hamas terrorist group is right and just. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to support Israel in its efforts to secure the release of the 200-plus captives still held in Gaza, including any British citizens? Can the Secretary of State ensure that they receive immediate assistance from the international Red Cross?

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend reminds the House that the Government remain focused on the protection of British nationals in Israel, the west bank and, of course, Gaza. It would be inappropriate for me to go into detail, but I can assure him and the House that we speak with all parties who we believe could have influence on those holding hostages: Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others. It is incredibly difficult. We do not have direct lines of communications, but we will not rest—we will not rest—in trying to secure the release of hostages and the evacuation of British nationals from Gaza.

**James Sunderland:** I am clear that the international community, backed by the UN, must now work together to dial down the rhetoric, open humanitarian corridors, encourage restraint and protect life. Will the Foreign Secretary commit the UK to expanding the Abraham accords as a priority, which will not only bring strategic partners to the table but may offer a future peace between Israel and Palestine?

**James Cleverly:** I have said regularly how much I value the Abraham accords. The improving of relationships between Israel and the Arab nations in its near neighbourhood is an extremely positive step. There is a realistic belief that part of

the aim of the attack of 7 October was to derail future normalisation and negotiations. Again, I think that highlights the fact that Hamas are not a friend to the Palestinian people. They are not trying to improve relationships between Israel and the Arab world. They brought down the Oslo agreements, and they have consistently blocked all attempts to normalise relationships between Israel and the wider Arab world. We must not let them win in that endeavour, and we must work to bring peace between the Palestinian people and the Israelis. ...

**Sarah Champion (Labour):** I have been inundated with emails from constituents terrified for the future of the internally displaced Palestinians in Gaza. Since 7 October, nearly 600,000 internally displaced persons have been sheltering in 150 United Nations Relief and Works Agency facilities, 35 UNRWA staff have been killed, and 40 UNRWA installations have been damaged. When the ground invasion inevitably starts, where are these people meant to go? Who is expected to host them? Who will administer them, and where will the support come from? Finally and fundamentally, what does the Foreign Secretary believe is the Israeli politicians' long-term objective?

**James Cleverly:** All the conversations that we have had with Israel, with Egypt and with intermediaries who are able to maintain lines of communication with Hamas have been about the preservation of human life. Let me put this on the record once again: we completely support Israel's right, and indeed duty, of self-defence. We are only just starting to see the scale of the brutality. Video evidence retrieved from those individuals who brutalised and murdered Israeli citizens on 7 October has now been put in the public domain, and it is worse than any of us could have imagined. We absolutely stand by Israel's right to self-defence, and we have said that we want to work with Israel, with Egypt, with the countries in the near neighbourhood and, of course, with those who are the de facto Government in Gaza to minimise civilian casualties. We have had that commitment from Israel; we have had no such commitment from Hamas.

**Imran Hussain (Labour):** ... indiscriminate airstrikes and a total siege blocking food, water and medical supplies have killed thousands of innocent Palestinian men and women and more than 1,000 children. ... this is now beyond a humanitarian catastrophe. Even as we stand here today, innocent blood continues to be spilt on the streets of Gaza, and mosques, churches, schools, hospitals, bakeries, water plants and homes continue to be flattened by the Israeli military. ...

How many thousands of innocent Palestinians must be slaughtered before this Government condemn the brutality and bloodshed?

**James Cleverly:** We have consistently said that we want to minimise further loss of life, and the lives lost among the Palestinian people are of course something for which we grieve, but we must never lose sight of the fact that during the period since 7 October, thousands of rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israel. Indeed, according to an assessment that we now have, one of the most high-profile losses of lives in Gaza, which was covered extensively by the British and international media, was likely caused by a rocket emanating from Gaza and targeting Israel. While I respect the hon. Gentleman's passion about the preservation of life, and I assure him that I share his passion, we must be thoughtful, and we must remember why this is happening. It must not be forgotten that the single largest murder of Jews since the holocaust was initiated by Hamas, who then put Palestinians intentionally in harm's way as part of their operations.

**Jake Berry (Conservative):** One of the appalling hallmarks of the terrorist attack by Hamas on the state of Israel has been hostage taking, and we are now seeing hostage taking increasingly being used in state-sponsored terrorism. With that in mind, and given the number of British hostages who are currently being held, does my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary think that now is the time to appoint a prime ministerial envoy for hostages, with full diplomatic immunity, so that the British state can keep in touch with



Britons who are being held and use our soft power to negotiate their release?

**James Cleverly:** ... We have one of the largest and most effective diplomatic networks, so our diplomats on the ground are often best placed to initiate those negotiations, but he raises a good point and I will take his suggestion seriously.

**Rachel Hopkins (Labour):** ... It is more than a humanitarian emergency. Does the Secretary of State agree with Labour's calls to work with international partners to give UN agencies such as UNRWA the long-term resources they need, as well as to insist that fuel is allowed into Gaza?

**James Cleverly:** The Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Development Minister and I have had extensive and regular talks on ensuring that humanitarian supplies get to the Palestinian people in Gaza. Indeed, the Development Minister has virtually daily conversations with Martin Griffiths, the head of the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Prime Minister has recently announced an additional £30 million of humanitarian support on top of our pre-existing £27 million, making us one of the most generous contributing nations to humanitarian support for Palestinians in Gaza. ...

**David Lammy (Labour):** George Mitchell, the great American peacemaker, said that diplomacy was "700 days of failure and one day of success".

Labour recognises the hard, quiet diplomacy required to secure the release of hostages and eventually long-term peace, but in this bloody war we cannot afford 700 days without success. ...

**James Cleverly:** ... this remains an absolute focus of our attention. ...

**David Lammy:** The situation in Gaza is heartbreaking and deeply troubling. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that Israel must follow the laws of war by taking every possible step to protect civilians and by ensuring that aid is rapid, safe and unhindered, that blocks to water, food, medicines and fuel are lifted immediately, and that Palestinians who are forced to flee are not permanently displaced? Does he also agree that upholding these laws is not just a legal and moral obligation, but necessary to prevent Israel's campaign from undermining long-term prospects for peace and stability.

**James Cleverly:** ... The preservation of civilian life remains a priority, and we discuss this regularly and at every level with the Israeli Government. Of course we reflect on the point that Israel itself—as well as the countries in the near neighbourhood—is trying to prevent this from becoming a regional conflict. As I say, professionalism and restraint by the Israeli Defence Forces are an important part of preventing this from becoming a regional conflict. ...

**Brendan O'Hara (SNP):** Has the Secretary of State seen any evidence, been made aware of any evidence or had reasonable grounds to believe that Israel has breached international humanitarian law in its response to the Hamas atrocities on 7 October?

**James Cleverly:** I am not in a position, and indeed it is not my role, to make an assessment of the interpretation of events that are unfolding as we speak. There will, of course, be assessments of the nature of international humanitarian law. We are trying to make sure that, in all of its actions for its legitimate self-defence, Israel abides by international law.

**Brendan O'Hara:** If it is not the Foreign Secretary's responsibility to make that assessment, I wonder whose it is. He knows that international humanitarian law is unambiguous in saying that the collective punishment of a civilian population is illegal. Is he telling us that he is unaware, or has seen no evidence, that people have been forced from their homes and that their water, food, power and access to medicine have been cut off? Or is he actually saying that all of this has happened but the UK Government have unilaterally decided that international humanitarian law does not apply to this conflict?

**James Cleverly:** The hon. Gentleman undermines his own question by making the assertion that his interpretation of international humanitarian law is, by default, one to which I have to subscribe. His definition of what is happening is not one that I

necessarily agree with.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/75470CDF-9F3C-4170-9174-3D0FC058E16A/IsraelAndPalestine>

*The Abraham Accords, referred to above, can be read at*  
<https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/>

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**Israel, Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Humanitarian Access and Human Rights**

**Deidre Brock (SNP)** [906661] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to support the monitoring of potential human rights abuses in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Vicky Foxcroft (Labour)** [906662] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking to help ensure access to Gaza by humanitarian organisations.

**Kerry McCarthy (Labour)** [906665] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking with his international counterparts to help open humanitarian corridors in Gaza.

**Martyn Day (SNP)** [906674] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to help ensure the safety of (a) Palestinian and (b) Israeli civilians in the Gaza-Israel conflict.

**Kate Hollern (Labour)** [906676] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking to help ensure access to Gaza by humanitarian organisations.

**Sarah Owen (Labour)** [906678] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking to help ensure access to Gaza by humanitarian organisations.

**The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Mr Andrew Mitchell):** I talk to Martin Griffiths, the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, almost every day, and on Friday I attended a meeting with development Ministers convened by Samantha Power, the head of the United States Agency for International Development.

**Deidre Brock:** How are the Foreign Secretary and his Ministers working with international counterparts to prevent any deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Israel and Palestine?

**Andrew Mitchell:** By drawing all parties' attention to the international rules of war.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** At a vigil outside Parliament this morning, the names of some of the more than 2,000 children killed so far in Gaza were read out. Children in Gaza have begun writing their names on their hands so that they can be identified and buried with their families when they are killed. What action are the Government taking to prevent more children being harmed in Israel's military action and to ensure a rapid end to this conflict?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Prime Minister set out yesterday very clearly what our policy is. We are doing everything we can to protect children. British aid is already making a difference by supporting the international relief effort, which is going in through Rafah.

**Kerry McCarthy:** ... Trucks at the Rafah crossing are welcome, but the aid getting through is nowhere near enough to avert humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Fuel is urgently needed for the desalination plants that would ensure drinking water and for the energy generators that would power hospitals, which would prevent huge loss of life. Why is that fuel not being allowed through?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The hon. Lady is entirely right that the Rafah crossing is currently the only way we can get food and relief supplies in. Supplies are coming to El Arish, but the number of trucks going through every day is far too small. We will continue to press all the relevant authorities to allow humanitarian support and aid of the type she describes through the Rafah crossing to help those whose circumstances are precisely as she describes.

**Martyn Day:** With thousands of innocent civilians dead, tens of thousands injured, hundreds of thousands displaced and a denial of humanitarian need, what level of civilian suffering will it take before this Government back calls for a ceasefire?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The hon. Gentleman sets out the tremendous suffering that is happening, but he, like me, will agree with the Prime Minister that the source of this was the appalling terrorist, murderous action by Hamas, which, as the Foreign Secretary said a few minutes ago, killed more Jewish people than on any day since the second world war and the holocaust.

**Kate Hollern:** As the fighting continues, the UN estimates that about 160 women will give birth every day in Gaza; meanwhile the lives of at least 120 newborns in incubators are at risk due to lack of power, fuel, medicine and water. These women and children are not terrorists. Will the Secretary of State listen to the increasing calls for a ceasefire, which would be the best way to ensure the release of hostages, who are in a terrible situation, and the delivery of aid for Palestinian citizens?

**Andrew Mitchell:** On delivering aid and support, I had the opportunity to meet a very large number of the British charities and non-governmental organisations that are trying to help in Gaza, and I keep in very close touch with them. On the issue of access and support through these trusted agencies, we will do everything that we can to help.

**Sarah Owen:** Thousands of innocent people have been killed, and aid workers are included in that devastating loss. UN experts on the ground have given repeated warnings that the current Israeli military strategy could lead to the permanent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said at the Dispatch Box that there were mechanisms to deal with breaches of international law. Can the Minister tell us more on what the Government are doing to support independent investigations and the International Criminal Court?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The answer to the hon. Lady's perfectly proper question is that international and legal organisations all around the world will be looking at this and giving their opinions.

**Mary Robinson (Conservative):** ... we know that Hamas have a history of diverting and misusing aid that is given to them for their own terrorist purposes. What steps can we take to ensure that this much-needed aid gets to the people in need?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... this is probably the most scrutinised programme of humanitarian relief and support that Britain has. If ever we see anything that we think is untoward, we immediately stop using that group. None the less, we operate through trusted partners, and the proof is that they are trusted and are partners.

**Stephen Crabb (Conservative):** Last week, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency stated that Hamas had stolen fuel, medical supplies and food intended for Palestinians. It then subsequently deleted that statement, but the way that Hamas have repeatedly compromised UNRWA operations in Gaza has been well-documented in recent years. What assurances can my right hon. Friend give that that aid will be targeted correctly and will reach the people who so desperately need it?

**Andrew Mitchell:** My right hon. Friend is right that UNRWA operates in difficult circumstances, but I can tell him that we talk to it all the time about the proper use of these resources and we will do everything we can always to make sure that they go to the intended place.

**Sara Britliffe (Conservative):** ... the UN has stated that it needs at least 100 trucks a day to take the aid to those who desperately need it. Can my right hon. Friend set out what conversations he is having with his Israeli and Egyptian counterparts to make sure that that aid is getting to where it needs to be?

**Andrew Mitchell:** Foreign Office officials, the Foreign Secretary and others are talking to all the relevant authorities in Egypt and Israel. My hon. Friend will understand that the key thing is to increase the number of lorries that are getting

through Rafah. The current number is wholly inadequate. I talk to Martin Griffiths virtually every day about the operations that the UN is conducting to try to beef up that number.

**Crispin Blunt (Conservative):** Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that we would finally challenge actions that undercut legitimate aspirations for Palestinian statehood, and there are none more fundamental than 57 years of breaches of the fourth Geneva convention by the illegal occupation of the territories, and then with 750,000 Jewish settlers being placed in those territories making a two-state solution very, very difficult. Are we actually now going to do something about that, or does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the meaningful resolution to which the Foreign Secretary referred may include the transfer of the people of Gaza and Gaza itself out of the state of Israel into the hands of another state or state system, and, more concerningly, that that would be followed by the expulsion of the Palestinians from the west bank?

**Andrew Mitchell:** My hon. Friend has a long-standing and principled view on these matters. I do not share his view and nor do the Government. ...

**Lisa Nandy (Labour):** ... every minute counts right now in Gaza. Incubators have been switched off and children are drinking dirty water. Fresh water and power are the most pressing issues, but despite our shared hopes of progress this week, fuel was not permitted in the convoys that entered Gaza, while several hospitals have been hit and many given multiple warnings to evacuate. ...

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... we are having humanitarian discussions with everyone, intent as we are on getting humanitarian supplies to those who need them. She asked specifically about attacking a hospital. Attacking a hospital is a war crime. We should be in no doubt about that.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/DEC4C8D5-718D-4086-BA09-F115533513B7/IsraelGazaAndTheOccupiedPalestinianTerritoriesHumanitarianAccessAndHumanRights>

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### **Iran: Support for Hamas**

**Greg Smith (Conservative)** [906658] Whether [the Minister] has received reports on the potential role of Iran in providing financial and other support for Hamas for terrorist attacks on Israel.

**Henry Smith (Conservative)** [906664] Whether [the Minister] has received reports on the potential involvement of Iran in providing support for Hamas for terror attacks on Israel.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):** Hamas is responsible for these appalling terrorist attacks. We know that Iran has been a long-term funder and supporter of Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Iran's support for these militant groups has a destabilising impact on regional and international security, and we remain ever watchful of its actions.

**Greg Smith:** ... Iran's fingerprints are all over Hamas's brutal massacre in Israel. Iran's blatant arming, funding—worth \$100 million a year—and training of terror groups around the region is no secret. Hamas's leaders have even publicly lavished praise on Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for their support. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we must be absolutely clear about the threat posed by Iran abroad and at home, and that now is the time for a policy reset?

**James Cleverly:** ... The Government and the FCDO are well aware of this, and I can assure him that we have been clear-eyed throughout the work we do with regard to Iran and its influence in the region. We will remain ever watchful. I am sure that no reset is required, because we are very conscious of Iran's impact on



the region.

**Henry Smith:** What diplomatic efforts are His Majesty's Government taking to protect and, indeed, enhance the Abraham accords in the light of the fact that the Iranian regime is clearly seeking to engender discord and, indeed, conflict in the middle east?

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the Abraham accords have been a force for good. We need to protect them and ideally enhance them. Anything that sees greater co-operation between Israel and the Arab world has to be a step in the right direction when it comes to the creation of a sustainable two-state solution. I can assure him that we remain focused on that outcome.

**Tahir Ali (Labour):** This Government have rightly imposed sanctions on those states and organisations that support terrorism. Can the Secretary of State therefore clarify that if it is found, following an independent investigation, that Israel has also broken international law and committed war crimes in Gaza, his Government will consider the introduction of appropriate sanctions?

**James Cleverly:** The hon. Gentleman invites me to speculate about our future response to future events. At the moment, I am dealing with events in the here and now. I am trying to prevent loss of life. I am in constant conversations with the leadership in the region to try to prevent further Israeli and Palestinian loss of life.

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat):** Yesterday I had the privilege of meeting families whose loved ones have been taken hostage. They came here to share their testimony, which was deeply moving. They raised the fact that Iran is very much behind this, so why have we yet to proscribe the IRGC? It was time a year ago, so it is surely time now. What is the excuse for waiting?

**James Cleverly:** I have a huge amount of sympathy for the plight of the families who have either lost loved ones or have loved ones who are still held hostage in Gaza. I will be meeting families who have members held hostage later.

As I have said regularly, we are well aware of Iran's influence. Any decision about proscription will be a cross-Government decision. The advantages and disadvantages of proscribing will always be at the heart of any decision-making process, but as the hon. Lady knows, we do not comment on future sanctions or proscription designations.

**Wayne David (Labour):** ... Labour has been calling on the Government for many months to proscribe the IRGC. Evidence is emerging of Iranian involvement in the Hamas terrorist attack in Israel. We also understand that the United States has called on the United Kingdom to follow its example. I therefore press the Foreign Secretary: when will the Government act, by using either existing terrorism legislation or a new process of proscription directed at the IRGC?

**James Cleverly:** I remind the House that the IRGC—as well as certain individuals who are members of it—is sanctioned in its entirety. As I said in response to the question of the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran), no international measure comes without cost. There are advantages and disadvantages to proscription, which fundamentally would mean that we could have no direct diplomatic relations with Iran. As I have said, we always take those issues seriously, and any decision will be made cross-Government, but we do not speculate on future sanctions or proscription designations.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/7E98FB4B-7356-4702-8C66-0CC8B8A0EDA4/IranSupportForHamas>

*The Abraham Accords, referred to above, can be read at*  
<https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/>

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## **Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):** In response to the terrorist attacks on 7 October, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, other Ministers and I have of course engaged intensively with allies in the region, but we are equally determined to deliver on other vital priorities, notably supporting Ukraine, tackling illegal migration, supporting stability in sub-Saharan Africa and alleviating poverty around the world.

**Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat):** ... the Government of France have announced today that they are sending their Foreign Minister to the United Nations Security Council to argue for a humanitarian truce in Gaza, which in their words would be capable of leading to a ceasefire and necessary for the distribution of aid to civilian populations. It would also allow the focus to concentrate on the release of hostages, which I would have thought would commend itself also to the Government of Israel. ...

**James Cleverly:** I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we are trying to find every avenue to alleviate humanitarian suffering. We will be represented at senior ministerial level at the Security Council later today. We want to take action that will actually deliver aid and support to the Palestinian people who are suffering in Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EE942A9F-DCA0-4A25-BC4A-C52D1C953583>

**Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [906688]** Does my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary agree that one of the most important messages that Palestinians need to hear from the international community right now is that the two-state solution is not dead? Will he say a bit more about his discussions with Israeli counterparts on what more can be done to resuscitate faith and optimism in a two-state solution?

**James Cleverly:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right: the prospect of a peaceful and secure Israel alongside a peaceful and secure Palestine—a two-state solution—is our best route to navigate these terrible situations successfully, and it will remain at the heart of UK foreign policy in the region.

**Stephen Morgan (Labour) [906682]** Does the Minister agree that the delivery of fuel supplies into Gaza is essential to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe and to ensure that the delivery of aid achieves its full impact?

**The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Mr Andrew Mitchell):** We are doing everything we can. The hon. Gentleman will understand that these are complex negotiations, both to get the food and other humanitarian supplies into the region and to deliver them to those who need them. All I can assure him of is that all those negotiations are taking place with vigour and speed.

**David Simmonds (Conservative) [906690]** On my recent visit to the Pinner United synagogue, I heard from constituents about the impact of the Hamas terrorist attack on their family and friends in Israel. Will my right hon. Friend restate the commitment that we all share to ensure that promoters of terror are unable to do their work from the sanctuary of safe countries such as ours? To that end, will he work with our allies to proscribe the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps?

**James Cleverly:** With regard to the proscription of the IRGC, my hon. Friend will have heard the answer that I gave some minutes ago. The work that we are doing, in close co-ordination with the Home Secretary and her team, to ensure that communities here in the UK feel safe and secure remains an absolute priority for us. Limiting, and ideally stopping, the ability of organisations and countries to fund terrorism will remain a priority for us.

**Ian Byrne (Labour) [906684]** The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said yesterday that an immediate and “broad humanitarian ceasefire is essential for both

Gaza and Israel”and that“if more aid for Gazans, including fuel, medicine, food and water, does not arrive in days...many more people in Gaza will die.”He added:“The violence will never end unless leaders stand up and take the brave and humane choices that are required by fundamental humanity.”Will the Secretary of State heed those calls from the international community and support an immediate humanitarian ceasefire?

**Andrew Mitchell:** In order to have a ceasefire, all parties have to agree to it. I refer the hon. Gentleman to other answers that have been given during this session of questions. We are doing everything we can to address the humanitarian problem that he sets out, and we will continue to do so.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-952E375A-92F6-425F-A2EE-2AFD9533C57C>

**Kerry McCarthy (Labour)** [906685] Fifty thousand women in Gaza are pregnant, with 5,000 due to give birth now in truly hellish circumstances. If bombing a hospital is, as the Minister just said, a war crime, how would he describe the deliberate withholding of fuel to power those hospitals and keep them working?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... we are doing everything we can to address the issue she has raised. It is as much a concern to us as it is to her, and we will continue to do that.

**Flick Drummond (Conservative):** It is vital for peace that the rule of law is established and upheld in both Palestine and Israel. Has my right hon. Friend made an assessment of whether the weakening of the judiciary in Israel will impact on legal decisions relating to the Israel defence forces' rules of engagement in the current conflict?

**James Cleverly:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. While I was in Israel prior to the 7 October incidents, we of course discussed the proposals for judicial reform. Those proposals have not yet been taken forward by the Israeli Government, but I can assure her and the House that we remain committed to international law and will always communicate that to all parties involved.

**Martyn Day (SNP)** [906686] If Government will not back an actual ceasefire, will they at least consider supporting a humanitarian pause, to allow essential supplies to reach the 2 million civilians trapped in Gaza?

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Government, along with their partners, are doing everything to try to progress humanitarian support and supplies into Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-F0D3FDE4-51A1-44A4-AFEA-901A949CAE24>

**Joanna Cherry (SNP)** [906687] Do the Government agree that there needs to be a full independent international inquiry into the recent terrible events in Israel and Gaza, with full access to the Gaza Strip as well as Israel? Do the Government agree that the only way forward is a proper process of accountability for those responsible for the commission of any crimes—including war crimes—identified, whether Israeli or Palestinian? Will the Government review their position on the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court?

**James Cleverly:** I have no doubt that, in the aftermath of the brutal terrorist attacks on 7 October and Israel's defensive response, there will be an assessment of what has happened. We would want any such assessment to be as comprehensive and independent as possible.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-040BC244-A2EF-46EF-A8AE-CBD38D5269AA>

**David Linden (SNP)** [906689] On Saturday I stood with thousands of Glaswegians whose overwhelming message was clear that we need a ceasefire now. The only way we can begin to de-escalate this conflict—a conflict that has led to a humanitarian catastrophe—on both sides is by ending the bombardment of Gaza, ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid and creating a space for engaging in diplomacy and dialogue. In the light of all that,

why do the British Government not call for an immediate ceasefire now?

**James Cleverly:** As we have seen over and over again this morning, calling for a ceasefire is the easy bit; actually negotiating something meaningful is considerably harder. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said repeatedly from the Dispatch Box, we are working with all parties. The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) has made reference to Israel's actions, but I remind the House that a ceasefire without Hamas stopping its bombardment of Israel is not a meaningful ceasefire.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-535919EB-2F29-4924-A6EE-36BDB7C95E28>

**John Cryer (Labour):** Let us have another try: has the international development Minister had direct discussions with his Israeli counterpart about getting fuel into Gaza? Once the fuel runs out, hospitals stop and people die.

**Andrew Mitchell:** I have not had those discussions with my Israeli opposite number, but the hon. Gentleman may rest absolutely assured that the contact with the Israeli Government—not least during the visit of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary over the past few days—focuses on every aspect of this issue.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-9616CFE5-CF5A-435D-8892-2A5BF344EB22>

**Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour):** When atrocities take place, we have a duty to call them out. When Hamas murdered and kidnapped innocent civilians, we rightly called it out, and when Putin targeted innocent Ukrainians and Assad targeted hospitals, we expressed our horror in this House. Now we also have a duty to speak on behalf of innocent Palestinians who are being collectively punished, starved, and indiscriminately bombed in their homes by Israeli forces. Children's bodies are lying in the street. It is wrong, and it is why we need a ceasefire. Will the Secretary of State convey that to his Israeli counterpart?

**James Cleverly:** Again, the hon. Lady asserts her interpretation of international law, which is not necessarily one that is shared by the Government. The preservation of all life, including Palestinian life, remains at the forefront of our thinking.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-2612E5FD-C833-4CB6-ABA0-63CB293E4761>

**Neil Hudson (Conservative):** ... The potential implications of the conflict between Israel and the terrorist group Hamas are deeply concerning for the wider region, so can the Foreign Secretary update the House on the steps the Government are taking to prevent this conflict from spreading to the wider region?

**James Cleverly:** In the conversations I had with the Israeli Government in the immediate aftermath of the 7 October attacks, they expressed a desire for this not to turn into a regional conflict. That desire was echoed by all the leaders of the Arab world that I have spoken to. It remains an absolute priority for this Government, and indeed the Governments of the region, to prevent this from turning into a regional conflict. That is exactly what Hamas wants, and therefore is exactly what we do not want.

**Richard Burgon (Labour):** Is it not simply impossible to get aid in on the scale that is needed if we are to end the humanitarian nightmare under way in Gaza without a ceasefire?

**Andrew Mitchell:** ... I reiterate what I said earlier: we are doing everything we can to try to make sure that we help those who are suffering in Gaza today.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/9653C084-5FB7-4BDF-8C40-D53048C98F4A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-3675BA0A-5CF5-45E1-97FA-F94BBF7F0450>



## House of Commons Written Answers

### Gaza: Assets

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [202269] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assets owned by the UK Government are in Gaza.

**David Rutley:** The British Information and Support Office in Gaza has a small amount of office equipment and furniture.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/202269>

### Israel: Geneva Conventions

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [202273] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development, whether he has had recent discussions with the Government of Israel on upholding the Geneva conventions.

**David Rutley:** The UK has a strong track record of supporting international humanitarian law, and we call on our friends and partners to do the same. 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/2023-10-13/202273>

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

### Israel: Palestinians

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [203389] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure Israel (a) acts in accordance with international law and (b) protects civilians from harm.

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [203390] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the compatibility of targeting civilian infrastructure with international law.

### Israel: Human Rights

**Claire Hanna (SDLP)** [203417] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has made an assessment of Israel's compliance with international human rights law since 14 October 2023.

**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. The President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, has stated that Israel will operate in accordance with international law. The Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team continue to receive legal advice on all matters related to foreign policy, including the unfolding situation in Israel and Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203389>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203390>

and

### **Palestinians: Christianity**

**Andrew Rosindell (Conservative)** [201998] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department have taken to (a) support and (b) protect Christians in the (i) Gaza Strip and (ii) West Bank.

**David Rutley:** The UK is actively monitoring the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and engaging closely with Israelis, Palestinians, and partners across the region. We are a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and call for places of worship to be respected. Israel must ensure those responsible for attacks on Christians are held to account. Israel has made clear its commitment to freedom of religion. We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. We continue to call on all sides to uphold the historic Status Quo in Jerusalem, recognising the custodianship of Jordan over the Holy sites. The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Netanyahu on 12 October, he reassured him that the UK will provide whatever support they need to end the current violence as quickly as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201998>

### **Church of England: Gaza and Israel**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [203517] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what support the Church of England has provided to (a) churches and (b) other people in (i) Israel and (ii) Gaza since 7 October 2023.

**Andrew Selous:** Following the events of 7th October, the Archbishops of York and Canterbury called on Christians, and people of all faiths and none, to pray for the victims of the terrorist attacks by Hamas and for the innocent affected by the conflict.

The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Jerusalem, from 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, to stand in prayerful solidarity with the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem following damage to the Al-Ahli Hospital and to show pastoral care and support to all those affected by the war. During the visit, the Archbishop met with those who had lost loved ones as a result of the 7 October attacks. Several dioceses are supporting humanitarian appeals to support the ongoing work of the Al-Ahli Hospital.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's most recent comments on the issue of Israel and Gaza can be found here:

<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203517>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [203387] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department are taking to help expedite negotiations between Israel and Palestine on ending violence and promoting peace.

**David Rutley:** On 19 October, the Foreign Secretary travelled to the region where he met leaders in Egypt, Turkey and Qatar to help prevent the conflict spreading across the region and to seek a peaceful resolution. He will 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. The Foreign Secretary also discussed the urgent need for the Rafah crossing to open so that

lifesaving aid can reach those who need it and for Hamas to release the hostages. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon along with the Foreign Secretary attended Cairo Peace Summit on 21 October to address the international community on the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Since the Hamas attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken to counterparts from almost 20 countries as part of extensive diplomatic efforts to sustain the prospect of peace and stability in the Middle East.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203387>

### **Refugees: Israel and Palestinians**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [203521] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a family reunion scheme to support Israeli and Palestinian relatives of UK residents to come to the UK for the duration of the war.

**Robert Jenrick:** There are no plans to create a bespoke family reunion scheme. We will accept applications, which would normally have to be made in the country where the person is living, at any of the UK's Visa Application Centres.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203521>

### **Refugees: Palestinians**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [203522] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has considered the potential merits of introducing a scheme similar to the Homes for Ukraine scheme 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/2023-10-19/203522>

### **Refugees: Israel and Palestinians**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [203523] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has established services to support people seeking refuge in the UK from (a) Israel and (b) Palestine.

**Robert Jenrick:** All asylum and human rights claims lodged in the UK and accepted into the UK asylum system, including those from Israel or Palestine, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Further information on how to claim asylum is available on the GOV.UK website at: [www.gov.uk/claim-asylum](http://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum)

The Home Office does not provide immigration advice in individual cases. Further information is available on GOV.UK at: [www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser](http://www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203523>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [203388] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help ensure the safe and unimpeded entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza in accordance with humanitarian principles.

### Israel: Humanitarian Aid

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [203391] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to provide humanitarian support to Israel since the start of the terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023.

**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 FCDO is actively engaging with the international humanitarian system (including Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UN agencies, Civil Society Organisations) to address the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

On the 16 October, the Prime Minister announced £10 million in humanitarian funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and on 23 October a further £20 million, in response to the escalating conflict. This funding will allow trusted partners, including key UN agencies, to provide essential relief items and services. These could include food, water and emergency shelter, depending on the needs on the ground. The UK is also exploring options for moving humanitarian supplies closer to the region and is liaising with aid agencies in the region to ensure relief supplies can be distributed as quickly and effectively as possible.

On 19 October, the Foreign Secretary travelled to the region where he met leaders in Egypt, Turkey and Qatar and pushed 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. The UK will remain committed to mitigating the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and calling for international humanitarian law to be respected, while standing alongside the people of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203388>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203391>

*The announcements referred to above can be read at*

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

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/018D96AB-5D91-48D7-9809-19A03E54125A/IsraelAndGaza#contribution-61483896-20C4-4BA0-AC5E-163033573EB4>

### West Bank: Demolition

**Fabian Hamilton (Labour)** [201463] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of Palestinian homes in Masafer Yatta.

**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/2023-10-13/201463>

*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>

### Trade Agreements

**Jonathan Reynolds (Labour)** [202608] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many civil servants in her Department are currently working on negotiations for (a) free trade agreements with (i) India, (ii) Canada, (iii) Mexico, (iv) Israel, (v) the Gulf Cooperation Council and (b) memoranda of understanding with US states.

**Nigel Huddleston:** The Department for Business and Trade operates a flexible resourcing model to maximise efficiency across negotiations. The Department is currently delivering seven trade negotiations, alongside work on the US. The number of staff working on these will change depending on the stage and scale of the deal. Staff work across multiple negotiations so it is not possible to quantify the number for each workstream.

With the Machine of Government, Trade Negotiation Group increased its responsibility to cover wider trade policy and FTA implementation. In September 2023, DBT had 724 staff in the newly named Trade Policy, Implementation and Negotiations Group.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-16/202608>

## UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

### Gaza: Humanitarian Situation and UK Humanitarian Efforts

**The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Mr Andrew Mitchell)** [HCWS1091] ... The UK is committed to easing the desperate—and deteriorating—humanitarian crisis in Gaza, while standing alongside the people of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas and supporting Israel's right to defend itself.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, announced an additional £20 million in humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza in response to the severe humanitarian crisis.

This assistance is in addition to the £10 million of aid announced by the Prime Minister last week and brings the total UK contribution to the occupied Palestinian territories since Hamas' terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October to £30 million—doubling our existing aid commitment this year and making us one of the largest donors.

The funding will allow key UN agencies and trusted partners, including the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), a number of whom have presence in Gaza and Egypt, to provide essential relief items and services. The aid will respond to critical food, water, healthcare, shelter and protection needs for those affected by this severe humanitarian crisis. We are committed to ensuring UK aid is allocated to address the greatest needs.

The Prime Minister welcomed the limited opening of the Rafah crossing—it is important progress, and testament to the power of diplomacy. Sustained, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access must be allowed so civilians can receive vital, lifesaving support, including food, water, shelter, and fuel as quickly and effectively as possible.

Civilians must be protected and we continue to stress to all the importance of humanitarian access. Hamas, who have no regard for Palestinian civilians, continue to indiscriminately

terrorise the Israeli people and the region as a whole. We unequivocally support Israel's right to self-defence. The UK has been clear that international humanitarian law must be followed and every effort made to avoid civilian casualties.

The UK is at the forefront of the global effort to help Palestinian people access the vital lifesaving support they need. We will consider further support depending on the changing humanitarian needs on the ground.

This support goes beyond funding alone and includes intensive diplomatic efforts to prevent regional escalation, back Israel's security and support long-term solutions to the crisis in the middle east. The Prime Minister raised humanitarian support in his meetings with the leaders of Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Palestinian Authority last week. During the Foreign Secretary's recent visit, he spoke to counterparts in Egypt, Turkey and Qatar to work with them to push for agreement on ongoing humanitarian access to Gaza. Lord Ahmad has also spoken with the Foreign Ministers of Iraq, Tunisia, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria and the Palestinian Authority. I am in regular contact with Development Ministers and our humanitarian partners to discuss response and co-ordination efforts.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-24/debates/23102429000010/GazaHumanitarianSituationAndUKHumanitarianEfforts>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Ed Davey (Liberal Democrat) [1719] Humanitarian ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict** – That this House condemns the awful terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on the 7th October; notes with utter dismay the scenes of violence in the weeks and days since; further notes with deep concern the devastating situation in Gaza which is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis for its 2.2 million residents and that over 200 Israelis are being held hostage; urges the UK Government to lead international efforts to call for the restoration of essential supplies such as food, water, medicine and electricity to Gaza in line with international law; further urges the UK Government to heed the calls of the World Health Organization, that the forced evacuation of hospitals in Northern Gaza may be a breach of international humanitarian law; affirms that Israel has a right to protect its citizens and target Hamas in line with international law; further affirms that innocent Palestinians must not pay the price for the atrocities of Hamas; accordingly urges the UK Government to lead calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire as a pause in hostilities which will facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza and provide an opportunity to realise the release of the hostages; further believes that the people of Israel and Palestine have a right to live free from fear; and that accordingly the UK Government must redouble efforts to bring about a lasting peace and a two state solution.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61466>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**We regret the draft resolution proposed by the United States has not been adopted: UK statement at the UN Security Council: Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.**

President, we regret that the draft resolution proposed by the United States was not adopted. The text would have had a real impact on the ground by calling for hostages to be released, for aid to get in, including through humanitarian pauses. Through this resolution the Security Council would have rightly, and for the first time, unequivocally condemned Hamas' terrorist attacks.

The United Kingdom could not support the resolution proposed by Russia, which once

again failed to recognise Israel's right to self-defence.

As so many of us have said, there is a grave crisis unfolding in the Middle East. The Russian text was put to a vote without a single minute of consultation with the Council members. It was not a serious attempt to have this Council speak with one voice.

We are committed to continuing to work across the Council towards a balanced text that condemns Hamas, reaffirms Israel's right to defend itself, is clear on the need for everything to be done to protect civilians in line with international humanitarian law and gets more aid flowing into Gaza. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-are-committed-to-working-across-the-council-towards-a-balanced-text-that-condemns-hamas-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

### **UK delivers humanitarian aid to support Palestinian civilians**

An RAF C-17 aircraft is en-route to Egypt to deliver vital UK Government humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians. ...

Essential supplies including 76,800 wound care packs, 1,350 water filters and 2,560 solar lights were dispatched to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

The UK has also delivered a temporary, rapid-assembly warehouse and mechanical handling equipment including two forklift trucks, which can be set up close to the Rafah border crossing to respond quickly to needs on the ground.

The aid is part of the [£30 million increase in humanitarian support for the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#) announced by the Prime Minister – more than doubling the UK's existing commitment for this year from £27m to £57m.

Supplies will be distributed via the Egyptian Red Crescent, which has requested them to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. Each water filter and light is intended to support a family of five. ...

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: Today's airlift is a clear demonstration of the UK's commitment to helping those most in need - rapidly deploying the RAF to get life-saving aid into the region.

Together with our regional partners it's critical that we prioritise protecting all civilians from harm ...

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: The urgent humanitarian need in Gaza is clear. This delivery of vital UK aid into Egypt will save lives but more is needed.

Humanitarian aid must continue to be allowed into Gaza to reach the people who need it most. The UK is working with Israel, Egypt and other partners in the region to enable life-saving aid to reach civilians including food, water, medical supplies and fuel as a priority. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-delivers-humanitarian-aid-to-support-palestinian-civilians>

## **Scottish Parliament Oral Answers**

### **Gaza (Humanitarian Assistance)**

**James Dornan (SNP) [S6O-02622]** To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to support the provision of humanitarian assistance for the civilian population of Gaza.

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Christina McKelvie):** We have all looked on in horror at the escalating humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding in the middle east. Our condolences go to all those who have lost loved ones on both sides of this conflict.

We unequivocally condemn the abhorrent terrorist attacks that have been committed by Hamas. Israel, like every other country in the world, has a right to

protect itself from terror. However, that must be done within international law. As the number of civilians displaced in Gaza increases and their supplies are restricted, innocent people are being affected and conditions continue to deteriorate.

Last week, I announced that we will make a £500,000 contribution to the United Nations' flash appeal in response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Those funds will support the immediate food, health, shelter and protection needs of people who are seeking safety. We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire and for the creation of a safe humanitarian corridor that allows such much-needed supplies in and innocent people to leave. ...

**James Dornan:** I am sure that the minister will agree that the First Minister has led politicians across the UK in the thoughtful way that he shows care and compassion for the victims of the horrendous attacks by Hamas, while reminding Israel and others of the need to show the innocent civilians in Gaza the same compassion as they demand elsewhere. Given the desperate need to protect those who are affected during and after the on-going onslaught of Gaza, will the Scottish Government reiterate its call for a worldwide refugee programme and refugee resettlement programme?

**Christina McKelvie:** A ceasefire by all sides is needed in order to allow the creation of a secure and sustained humanitarian corridor to ensure protection of innocent civilians and delivery of essential supplies including food, fuel, water and medical provisions. Currently, 1.4 million people are displaced within the Gaza strip.

We know that many Palestinians will wish to stay in their homeland; they must be supported to do so with urgent humanitarian aid. However, for people who choose to leave, the Scottish Government is also calling on the international community to commit to a worldwide refugee programme for the people of Gaza. The First Minister has called on the UK Government to take urgent steps to use the existing UK resettlement scheme and to ensure that it is aligned with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—the United Nations' refugee agency—to provide those who want to leave with all the support that they require. Scotland stands ready to work with the UK Government to create and implement a resettlement route for the people of Gaza.

**Katy Clark (Labour):** I welcome the Scottish Government's response to the crisis. Given that aid is currently not getting into Gaza, how does the minister expect the money that has already been committed to be used? What work is being done to look at further support that could be given, in light of the siege and the worsening conditions?

**Christina McKelvie:** Katy Clark echoes concerns that we all feel. To answer her question directly, I note that the flash appeal that we contributed to is a UN appeal. United

Nations Relief and Works Agency staff remain on the ground in Gaza; the money will be channelled through their work. They are currently protecting 600,000 internally displaced people in 150 UNRWA facilities, and they tell us today that they are running out of fuel and might therefore have to leave the area. We do not want that. We want the aid money to get to UN people on the ground, and support to be given to the people who need it most.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15497&i=132223#ScotParlOR>

## Welsh Senedd Statement of Opinion

**John Griffiths (Labour) [OPIN-2023-0370] Israel Gaza Conflict – This Senedd:**

1. Expresses grave concern at the continuing tragedy in Israel and Gaza.
2. Condemns the attacks on Israeli citizens and taking of hostages.



3. Is very concerned at the bombardment and siege of Gaza with resulting loss of life.
4. Extends deepest sympathy to Welsh citizens who have lost loved ones during the conflict.
5. Calls for an end to the siege to allow vital supplies into the area in the volume required, immediate ceasefire and release of hostages.
6. Urges the international community to renew commitment and action to achieve a two state solution and lasting peace.

<https://record.senedd.wales/StatementOfOpinion/370>

## United Nations

### **As Civilian Casualties Reach Record Levels in Gaza, Third Committee Underscores Need to End War, Lift Blockade of Essential Needs, Hold Parties Accountable**

... **Navi Pillay, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel**, said that the eruption of violence in Israel and Palestine since 7 October is profoundly concerning ... The Commission unequivocally condemns the killing of over 1,000 Israeli citizens by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups as well as the taking of over 200 Israeli hostages, including children, she added. It also unequivocally condemns Israeli military attacks, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Palestinian civilians. The Commission calls for an immediate ceasefire and safe return of all hostages ...

Turning to the "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel" (document A/78/198), the Chair recalled that, while the report was completed before this upsurge in violence, its findings are "tragically relevant", as it examines the use of force by Israel and the de facto authorities in Gaza. Israel's increasingly militarized law enforcement in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza consistently violate international humanitarian law, she said. ...

Israel has used excessive force in disrupting protests among Palestinians asserting their right to self-determination, resulting in deaths and permanent injuries, she said. ... The report also addresses the human rights violations of Israeli authorities and Hamas in Gaza of withholding bodies for "bargaining chips", causing severe trauma to families of the deceased, with a particular gendered impact on Palestinian female relatives, she said. The continuing unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory has overwhelmingly affected Palestinian children, who experience human violations, some of which amount to war crimes, she said. ...

... **the representative of Israel** called Hamas a barbaric group that has filmed unimaginable acts of violence for all the world to see since its 7 October attacks on Israel. This Commission has been dedicated to justifying and downplaying Palestinian terrorism, while delegitimizing and demonizing Israel's efforts to defend itself. The Commission has sent a clear message to Hamas, other terrorist groups and Iran that they have little to fear on the international front. The Human Rights Council and its open-ended Commission on Inquiry has created the immoral equivalent between a democracy defending itself, following international law, and radical terrorists. Hamas and other terrorist groups have been carrying out acts of terrorism for decades. The report is not just a mockery but a damning indictment of the moral corruption of the Commission. Israel goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid civilian casualties, despite the Palestinian terrorists' use of civilians as human shields. He said the report is riddled with many inaccuracies. The United Nations was founded in the wake of the Holocaust and a sacred vow of "never again". Israel will not rest until its people can live in peace and security.

**The observer for State of Palestine** asked anyone to explain why the situation in human rights in Palestine, as a conflict area, should not be examined by the Committee. She asked why the violations of the occupying Power should not be looked at and why Israel

should enjoy a special status. “Are the Palestinians less worthy,” she asked. States have a duty and obligation to protect their citizens and the State of Palestine also has a duty and obligation to protect its citizens, she said ... The scale of Israel’s brutal war against Gaza is massive, with Gaza besieged for 17 years, as Israel runs a campaign that aims to make its crimes normal. She called on the international community to stay out of this criminal campaign. “We are not human animals, but human beings who have suffered loss for decades,” she said. She called for the international community to recognize the equal value of Palestinian life and end the war.

In the ensuing debate, many delegates condemned the attacks on civilians and urged all parties to adhere to international law and humanitarian law and allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians trapped in Gaza. ...

... **the representative of the United Kingdom** said his delegation regretted the creation of the Commission in May 2021. His delegation firmly supports human rights and the Commission does not further those goals....

**The representative of the European Union**, in its capacity as observer, said her delegation did not support the Commission’s creation in May 2021 because of its broad mandate and open-ended scope. She said the current conflict must be urgently ended and a two-State solution in line with relevant Security Council resolutions achieved. ...

**Francesca P. Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967**, presenting her ... report (document A/78/545), said the events of 7 October have marked a major tragic turn in the history of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. ... Much of what these militants have done against civilians in Israel are war crimes and must be accounted for. In response, Israeli occupation forces have yet again indiscriminately bombarded the Gaza Strip, hitting entire residential areas, schools, hospitals, mosques and churches and killing around 5,000 people. Israel has further tightened the unlawful siege of the Gaza Strip, depriving the population of indispensable items of survival at such a critical time, including food, water, energy and medicines. Starvation as a tool of war is now being waged on the civilian population of Gaza, exposing those who have survived the incessant bombardment to further risk of death or disease. ...

Palestinian children, constituting half of the population under occupation, are the prime victims of this system, living in constant fear and despair. One of the most troubling requests I heard from the children I interviewed for this report was to “ask the world” why it continues to neglect them. ... For any Palestinian child, living under Israeli occupation is a deeply traumatic experience, she said, adding that Israel deliberately deprives Palestinian children of their fundamental human rights, as part of its drive to impede the development of Palestinian society. Lethal attacks on Palestinians by Israeli soldiers and armed settlers in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, and methodical military assaults against Gaza, epitomize daily hardships and injustices endured by generations of Palestinian children. ...

**The observer of the State of Palestine** said that more than 2,000 Palestinian children have been killed over 18 days in the Gaza Strip and every 15 minutes a child is pulled from the rubble of their home. Many small hearts are now filled with fear and unbearable pain due to the unrelenting bombardment, she said, calling on the international community to support an immediate ceasefire. Children in Palestine need only to open their windows to see the wall, apartheid and other human rights violations they experience every day, she added. “Children cannot unsee killing,” cannot unhear the bombing and crying voices of bereaved mothers and they cannot unfeel oppression and loss or restore the sense of family or a school, she said. This is what parents and grandparents have had to endure for years, she added, underscoring that a child is a child. All children must be protected and none should be targeted.

**The representative of Israel** said the Special Rapporteur hides behind the guise of human rights to spread lies about his country following the worst attack on Jewish people

since the Holocaust. She is not independent or unbiased, he said, citing instances of support for the terrorist group Hamas on social media and her use of the term “Jewish lobby”. Worse, at an online conference in Gaza, Ms. Albanese said that resistance to occupation requires violence. Is slicing open a pregnant woman and removing the fetus and stabbing it required violence? Does it look like 1,400 dead Israelis and kidnapped hostages, he asked. Condemning the Rapporteur for questioning clear acts of genocide committed by Hamas, he highlighted the irony of her taking offense when her antisemitism is called out. Israel refuses to engage with her, he said, decrying that the UN empowers an antisemitic voice by providing a platform to spread vitriol. ...

**The representative of Yemen** said that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to target Palestinian children and their families, decrying the destruction of homes as contrary to international law. He asked how Israel can be held accountable for violating the rights of children. **The representative of Jordan** said the collective punishment of a besieged population is a war crime. ...

**The representative of the European Union** ... condemned in the strongest possible terms Hamas and its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel, adding that the horrendous death toll of civilians is haunting. The establishment of a two-State solution is indispensable for peace in the region, she said, noting that the bloc remains committed to supporting a just and lasting peace in line with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

**The representative of Ireland** ... expressed grave concern over the situation, reiterating that “even wars have rules”. ...

**The representative of Lebanon** said that parents in Gaza are writing the name of children on their bodies to identify them if they are killed. She asked, “What is the international community waiting for to stop such bloodshed?”. ...

In response, Ms. ALBANESE said ... These tragic circumstances in the Middle East are an opportunity for the international community to act with wisdom and even-handedly ... It is possible to stand in solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians at the same time, as they have both experienced incredible losses, she said. States, however, are held to different standards than people. Statements from delegations seem to be out of touch with the reality on the ground, she stressed. While some States express support for Israel, mentions of a single crime committed against the Palestinian people is lacking, she said, noting that, in 15 days, 5,000 people have been killed in Gaza, a larger amount than in five wars over the past several years. Self-defence is misplaced here, according to international law, she said, noting that it may be used to repel an attack but it ends there. The moment Israel started bombing Gaza indiscriminately, confusing civilians with Hamas, they were committing war crimes by indiscriminately targeting civilians and also tightening a blockade. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4390.doc.htm>

**Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (A/78/198)**

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

**Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/78/545)**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a78545-situation-human-rights-palestinian-territories-occupied-1967>

### **‘Unchilded’ from birth: UN expert calls for decisive protection of Palestinian children under Israeli rule**

Israeli occupation forces kill, maim, orphan and detain hundreds of children in the occupied Palestinian territory every year, a UN expert [said](#) today, and their plight has multiplied in recent weeks.

“The oppression and trauma suffered by Palestinian children, half of the Palestinian population under Israeli rule, is a unique stain on the international community,” said Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, in a [report](#) to the General Assembly.

The report does not cover the horrific events of 7 October and their aftermath. The expert found that Israel, despite its obligations as an Occupying Power, deprives Palestinians and their children of their basic human rights as part of its efforts to impede the development of Palestinian society and to permanently frustrate the Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

From 2008 until 6 October 2023, 1,434 Palestinian children were reportedly killed, with an additional 32,175 sustaining injuries, primarily at the hands of Israeli occupation forces. Of these, 1,025 children were killed in Gaza alone, since the unlawful blockade began in 2007. During the same timeframe, 25 Israeli children were killed, mostly by Palestinian assailants, and 524 were injured. Between 2019 and 2022, 1,679 Palestinian children and 15 Israeli children sustained lasting physical injuries, leaving many permanently disabled. An average of 500-700 Palestinian children are reported to be detained by Israeli occupation forces each year, with an estimated 13,000 mostly arbitrarily detained, interrogated, tried in military courts and imprisoned since 2000.

“Israel’s framing of Palestinian children as ‘human shields’ or ‘terrorists’ to justify the violence against them and their parents is profoundly dehumanising,” the expert said.

“Today’s hell cannot obscure the violence of the past decades,” the Special Rapporteur said. “To address the crisis, it is imperative to comprehend what led to it. This does not mean justifying or downplaying the heinous crimes against Israeli civilians on 7 October; rather it compels us to face that horror in the context of what preceded it.”

“We must understand the devastating impact of Israel’s occupation and ever-expanding colonial presence on generations of Palestinian children,” the expert said.

The report details children’s daily experiences of violence through the confiscation of family land and expropriation of resources, separation of communities, destruction of homes and livelihoods, and attacks on their education.

“Generations of Palestinian children, whether in the besieged Gaza Strip, the West Bank enclaves or annexed east Jerusalem, have seen their lives reduced to the bare minimum and, far too often, cut short as expendable,” Albanese said. “This is profoundly “unchilding”: it takes away the lightness of childhood and robs children of their future,” she said.

The Special Rapporteur urged the international community to use all measures under the UN Charter to immediately end Israel’s illegal occupation, sanction its internationally wrongful acts, prosecute all international crimes by all actors in the occupied Palestinian territory, and set up a task force to dismantle Israel’s settler-colonial occupation as a precondition for peace in the region.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/unchilded-birth-un-expert-calls-decisive-protection-palestinian-children>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Tunisia: Christianity

**Andrew Rosindell (Conservative)** [200224] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to Christians in Tunisia.

**David Rutley:** We continue to engage with different faith groups to understand the challenges they may face. During his visit to Tunisia in June 2022, the Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious sites to understand the situation regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and to express UK support for respect and tolerance between communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-19/200224>

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

### UK Parliament

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

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

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

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

#### **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

#### **\*\* International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3499>

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0373/220373.pdf>

#### **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 tomorrow**

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