



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Point of Order

Christian Wakeford (Labour): ... A few days ago, *The Sunday Times* reported on its front page that a “ Hamas fugitive ” who “ ran the group’s terrorist operations in the West Bank ” lives here in London. Muhammad Qassem Sawalha is designated by Israel as a senior Hamas operative in Europe and accused of fleeing the country with fake documents. He is now believed to hold UK citizenship. Zaher Birawi lives in Barnet not far from Sawalha. He was designated by Israel in 2013 as a senior Hamas operative in Europe. He is listed as a trustee of a UK registered charity, Education Aid for Palestinians. A publicly available video shows him hosting a 2019 event in London titled “ Understanding Hamas ”.

Two weeks ago, Hamas launched the deadliest terror attack the world has seen since 9/11. This House rightly voted to proscribe Hamas in its entirety in November 2021. It is therefore a serious national security risk for Hamas operatives to be living here in London, especially where at least one appears to have done so through the use of fake documents in obtaining British citizenship.

Madam Deputy Speaker, can you advise me on how I might raise this with the Government as a matter of great urgency and ask if you have had any indication of a Minister seeking to come to the House to provide an urgent update on this matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for notice of his point of order. I hope that he will understand that I cannot comment on individual cases. I have had no notice of a statement, but he has put the issue on the record and those on the Government Benches will have heard his point.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-26/debates/22ECC056-E236-41BA-95D5-84411C5098FF/PointsOfOrder#contribution-CB1E5C76-FB16-4EDC-B4C1-B16D4B6EE1A3>

The Times report referred to above can be read at

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

House of Commons Written Answers

Universities: Antisemitism

Nick Fletcher (Conservative) [203975] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to protect Jewish university students from antisemitism at university campuses.

Robert Halfon: It has been deeply concerning to see a rise in hate towards Jewish people following Hamas's heinous terrorist attacks in Israel. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I wrote to Vice Chancellors on 11 October 2023, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students, so they can study without harassment or intimidation. We have also written to school and college leaders in similar terms.

On 23 October, I attended a meeting of the Jewish Community, Crime, Policing and Security Taskforce chaired by the Home Secretary, to discuss how we can crack down on any antisemitism or glorification of terrorism in schools, colleges, and universities. We are very clear; all education settings must take swift and robust action against this unacceptable behaviour.

The department is liaising closely with Community Security Trust, the University Jewish Chaplaincy, the Union of Jewish Students, and higher and further education mission groups. We are very aware of the impact of the evolving conflict on Jewish students and the steps being taken by education providers to support them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-23/203975>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Teachers: Languages and Religion

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [202552] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what percentage of trainee (a) religious education and (b) modern foreign language secondary school teachers were recruited against the cumulative targets between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022, excluding the 2020-21 recruitment year.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [202553] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has altered its targets for trainee (a) modern foreign language and (b) religious education secondary school teacher recruitment for 2022-23, in the context of levels of recruitment of teachers for those subjects in previous years.

Nick Gibb: The table below shows the percentage of the postgraduate Initial Teacher Training (ITT) target achieved in religious education and modern foreign languages for the years shown.

Academic Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Religious Education	62%	58%	94%	94%
Modern Foreign Languages	91%	88%	62%	69%

Source: DfE ITT Census statistical publications

To note:

1. Refers to the ITT Census year
2. All figures given are revised.
3. Cumulative performance has not been presented in the table for the following reasons. Doing this could create a misleading answer, as recruitment could be particularly strong/weak during individual years. The methodology for calculating targets has also changed during this period as the Department moved from the Teacher Supply Model to the Teacher Workforce Model. The chosen approach gives the most robust answer, controlling for year on year shifts in the data, whilst staying true to the question.

The Department estimates the number of postgraduate ITT trainees required to meet teacher demand in England each year using the teacher workforce model. The model includes an adjustment to build in any impacts of recruitment being below target for the two previous ITT recruitment rounds, for both primary, and each secondary subject.

The model uses ITT recruitment data, ITT completion and post-ITT employment rates to estimate the number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) entering the workforce having trained via all forms of ITT in the two most recent ITT cycles.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-16/202552>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-16/202553>

House of Lords Written Answers

Media: Gaza

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative) [HL10748] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to media outlets about the potential consequences for the safety of the UK's Jewish community of attributing responsibility for the strike on the Al-Alhi hospital before the facts have been established.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: His Majesty's Government takes any threat to the safety of Jewish people in the UK extremely seriously, and stands strongly against antisemitism in all its forms.

The attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel since 7 October are terrorist acts, committed by a terrorist organisation which has been proscribed in the United Kingdom since 2021 and designated as such by many other governments and international organisations.

On the misattribution of responsibility for the strike on the Al-Alhi hospital, as the Prime Minister said in his statement to the House of Commons on 23 October, "the misreporting of this incident had a negative effect in the region – including on a vital US diplomatic effort – and on tensions here at home. We need to learn the lessons and ensure that in future there is no rush to judgement."

Whilst respecting the editorial independence of the media, the Government has been clear that media organisations should reflect on their coverage and learn lessons for the future.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-23/hl10748>

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

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

Hamas: Demonstrations

Lord Moylan (Conservative) [HL10659] To ask His Majesty's Government whether any body authorised the temporary erection of a structure in the highway adjacent to the Cenotaph during the demonstration held on 14 October, and if so under what power.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Decisions on the authorisation of temporary structures on the highway is entirely a matter for Westminster City Council as the local highway authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/hl10659>

Antisemitic Incidents Update – 27 October 2023

In the 21 days inclusive between the Hamas terror attack on Israel (Saturday 7 October) and Friday 27 October, CST recorded at least 805 antisemitic incidents across the UK. This is the highest ever total reported to CST across a twenty-one-day period. ... In three weeks, CST has recorded more antisemitic incidents than the 803 reported in the first six months in this year. ...

For comparison, CST recorded 102 antisemitic incidents over the same 21 days in 2022. This means that we have seen an increase in anti-Jewish hate acts of 689% this year compared to the same period last year. ...

The 805 antisemitic incidents recorded over this twelve-day period fall into the following categories:

- 35 Assaults
- 44 Damage & Desecration to Jewish property
- 75 direct Threats
- 649 Abusive Behaviour, including verbal abuse, graffiti on non-Jewish property, hate mail and online abuse
- 2 instances of mass-produced antisemitic Literature ...

Five hundred and fifty-five of the 805 antisemitic incidents occurred offline and 250 were online. ...

Sixty-four antisemitic incidents were related to universities across the UK. In the first six months of 2023, CST recorded just 17 incidents of this kind, and 56 in the whole of 2022. Meanwhile, 53 incidents were related to the school sector. Twenty-five of these affected students and teachers at non-Jewish schools; 20 involved Jewish schoolchildren abused on their way to or from school; five targeted Jewish schools; and three involved offenders from non-Jewish schools abusing adult members of the public or Jewish locations. Between January and June 2023, 67 incidents in the school sector were reported to CST. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/10/27/antisemitic-incidents-27-october-update>

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Israel

See also the Point of Order, and written answers HL10659 and HL10748, that are included in the Home Affairs section above, and the report of a UN debate concerning “Hate Speech and Xenophobia” that is included in the Other Relevant Information section below.

In addition to those listed below, there were many written questions relating to the Israel-Hamas war that received the response “It has not proved possible to respond to this question in the time available before Prorogation.”

House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Freedom: EU Countries and Middle East

Conor Burns (Conservative) [203801] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the Church's position is on freedom of religion in conflict zones in (a) the Middle East and (b) Europe.

Andrew Selous: The National Church Institutions recognise that freedom of

religion or belief, like other human rights, is strongly correlated with political stability, and that repression of freedom of religion or belief, whether by societal hostility or state discrimination, can serve as major drivers of conflict and violence.

Sadly, in too many parts of the world today, whether that be in Russia or Ukraine, or in Iraq and Israel, the discrimination against or targeting of religious minorities is commonly associated with rising social tensions, intercommunal strife, violence and even mass atrocities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-23/203801>

Israel: Arms Trade

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [203627] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if the Government will cease the licensing of the export of (a) arms and (b) security equipment to Israel.

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

The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, and if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Criteria, those licences will be revoked.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203627>

Israel: Embassies

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [203461] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to strengthen HM Embassy in Tel Aviv.

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203461>

Israel: British Nationals Abroad

Tobias Ellwood (Conservative) [202926] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the safe evacuation of British nationals from (a) Israel and (b) Gaza.

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

British Nationals in need of help should contact +972 (0)3 725 1222 or +972 (2) 5414100. If they experience technical difficulties or if they are in the UK, call +44 20 7008 5000. British nationals in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, are advised to register their presence with the FCDO.

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

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/202926>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203528] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held recent discussions with his UN counterparts on the potential merits of issuing a new resolution on the war in Israel and Palestine.

Gaza and Israel: Peace Negotiations

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [203728] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of calling for a cessation of hostilities in Israel and Gaza.

David Rutley: Since the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken with counterparts from almost 20 countries as part of extensive diplomatic efforts to sustain the prospect of peace and stability in the Middle East. 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. The UK Government is actively monitoring the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and we maintain regular dialogue with international counterparts. We will continue to use all the tools of British diplomacy to sustain the prospects of peace and stability in the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203528>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-20/203728>

Egypt: Gaza

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [203462] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has held with his Egyptian counterpart on the situation in Gaza.

David Rutley: Since the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken with their Egyptian counterparts on multiple occasions. The Prime Minister visited Cairo on 20 September where he met President Sisi. The Foreign Secretary visited Cairo on 19 and 21 October where he met his counterpart, the Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. The UK will remain committed to mitigating the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and emphasise the importance of taking all possible measures to protect civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203462>

Jordan: Gaza

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [203463] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has held with his Jordanian counterpart on the situation in Gaza.

David Rutley: Since the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken with their Egyptian counterparts on multiple occasions. The Prime Minister visited Cairo on 20 September where he met President Sisi. The Foreign Secretary visited Cairo on 19 and 21 October where he met his counterpart, the Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. The UK will remain committed to mitigating the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and emphasise the importance of taking all possible measures to protect civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203463>

Iran: Gaza

Nicola Richards (Conservative) [203634] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the

likelihood of direct Iranian involvement in the conflict in Gaza; and what steps he is taking to deter such involvement.

David Rutley: The UK is clear that Hamas is fully responsible for these appalling acts of terror in Israel. We are also clear that Iran poses an unacceptable threat to Israel. We have long condemned Iran's destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. During his visit to the Middle East, the Prime Minister discussed the risk of regional escalation extensively with partners and we have deployed UK military assets to the region to carry out surveillance and act as a deterrent. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203634>

Hamas: Terrorism

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [203674] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterparts at the Palestinian Authority on condemning Hamas's terrorist attack on 7 October 2023.

David Rutley: On 20 October the Prime Minister met the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, in Cairo. He expressed his deep condolences for the loss of civilian lives in Gaza, including the terrible destruction of the Al Ahli hospital. Both leaders agreed on the need for all parties to take steps to protect civilians, and civilian infrastructure, and minimise the loss of innocent lives. They condemned Hamas' terrorism and stressed that Hamas do not represent the Palestinian people.

The Foreign Secretary and Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, also continue to engage with the Palestinian Authority. We are deeply worried about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the West Bank and are actively monitoring the situation. The UK Government remains committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region and importantly between Israelis and Palestinians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-20/203674>

Gaza

Beth Winter (Labour) [203142] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the compliance with international humanitarian of Israeli Defence Force's evacuation of civilians in Gaza City from their homes.

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 civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-17/203142>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Health Services

Dan Carden (Labour) [203579] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with international partners to help ensure the protection of healthcare workers in Gaza.

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [203611] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the safety of humanitarian workers in Gaza.

David Rutley: The UK is calling for immediate, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access for lifesaving aid to reach civilians. This includes adequate volumes of food, water, fuel and medical supplies as a priority. The safety of civilians and humanitarian personnel is critical to enable aid to reach those who need it most. We strongly condemn all forms of violence and incitement to violence directed towards healthcare workers. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza and the West Bank should be able to access the urgent medical care they need. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of this issue with the Israeli authorities.

The Foreign Secretary continues to engage regularly and closely with his Israeli counterparts, including in relation to ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in Gaza. The Prime Minister has announced £30 million in humanitarian funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in response to the escalating conflict. This funding will allow trusted partners, including key UN agencies, to provide essential relief items and services.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203579>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203611>

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>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [203607] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the blockade on Gaza on the ability of aid agencies to deliver essential humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza.

David Rutley: The UK is calling for immediate unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza so that essential aid can reach civilian populations, including food, water, fuel and medical supplies. The UK is also calling on all parties to protect border crossings to support safe humanitarian access and mitigate harm to civilians. The Foreign Secretary continues to engage regularly and closely with his Israeli counterparts, including in relation to ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in Gaza. He most recently spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen, on 23 October. 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/2023-10-19/203607>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Gaza: Housing and Infrastructure

Chris Law (SNP) [203505] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the level of damage that has been caused to (a) civilian infrastructure and (b) homes in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

Gaza: Infrastructure

Dan Carden (Labour) [203578] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

Gaza: Health Services

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [203610] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the impact of damage to health facilities in Gaza on their capacity to meet the needs of the civilian population.

David Rutley: The UK Government is clear that civilian infrastructure like schools, hospitals and shelters must be protected in conflict. The UK is calling for unimpeded humanitarian access so that essential aid can reach civilian populations in Gaza including food, water, fuel and medical supplies. 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. Civilian infrastructure must be respected and protected. The Prime Minister, along with the Foreign Secretary, continues to engage regularly and closely with their Israeli counterparts, including in relation to ensuring the protection of civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203505>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203578>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203610>

Gaza: Drinking Water

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [203609] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the level of access to drinking water in Gaza.

David Rutley: The available evidence indicates that immediate action is needed to prevent death and illness from lack of sufficient safe water. According to the United Nations, 50 per cent of water infrastructure has been destroyed or heavily damaged. The opening of the Rafah crossing to humanitarian traffic is insufficient to meet minimum requirements, and the bottled water carried by humanitarian convoys into Gaza is severely insufficient.

The UK is calling for immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza so that essential aid including food, water, fuel and medical supplies can reach civilian populations. On 16 October, the Prime Minister announced £10 million in humanitarian funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 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. The UK is also calling on all parties to protect border crossings to support safe humanitarian access and mitigate harm to civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203609>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [203608] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the humanitarian implications of the Israeli government's evacuation order to civilians in the north of Gaza.

Gaza: Civilians

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [203628] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in Israel on the potential merits of rescinding the order for people in northern Gaza to evacuate to the south of the Gaza strip.

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203608>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203628>

Gaza and Israel: International Law

Dan Carden (Labour) [203557] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure that international law is upheld during the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

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. As President Biden has also made clear, Israel will have to act within international law. The Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team continue to receive legal advice on all matters related to foreign policy, including the situation Israel and Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203577>

Gaza and Israel: Civilians

Dan Carden (Labour) [203580] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure the protection of civilians during the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

David Rutley: The UK is calling on all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law in all its aspects. In his conversations with the Israeli Prime Minister, the Prime Minister has underscored the UK's firm belief in Israel's right to self-defence, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has stated that Israel will operate in accordance with international law.

The UK Government has authorised the sending of a significant support package to the region, UK military assets will support regional stability and prevent escalation. On the 16 October, the Prime Minister announced £10 million in humanitarian funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and on 23 October a further £20 million, in response to the escalating conflict. We will continue to work with our regional partners so that essential aid can reach civilian populations in Gaza, including food, water, fuel and medical supplies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203580>

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>

Palestinians: Civilians

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [203629] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for the Government's policies of the deaths of Palestinian civilians.

David Rutley: Since the beginning of the conflict and as of 22 October, 1,400 Israelis are reported killed and 4,941 wounded. 4,651 Palestinians are reported killed in Gaza and 91 in the West Bank. 14,245 are reported wounded in Gaza and 1,734 in the West Bank. More than 1,000 people have been reported missing and are presumed to be trapped or dead under the rubble. An estimated 1.4 million people in Gaza have been displaced, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Any civilian death is a tragedy. Since the Hamas terrorist 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. We will continue to use all the tools of British diplomacy to sustain the prospects of peace and stability in the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203629>

Gaza: Civilians

Antony Higginbotham (Conservative) [203715] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the accessibility of the safe-routes announced by Israel for the evacuation of northern Gaza.

David Rutley: The Government is calling for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access for aid, including food, water, fuel, and medical supplies, to reach civilians in Gaza. We urge all parties in the conflict to protect civilians, provide safe spaces and comply with International Humanitarian Law. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have pushed for agreements on ongoing humanitarian access to Gaza in meetings with their counterparts in Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Palestinian Authority. We have worked with partners to see the Rafah crossing opened and are now urging Israel to open additional border crossings. We are also pushing for the release of British hostages and foreign nationals and securing safe passage for British Nationals to leave Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-20/203715>

The following four questions all received the same answer

Gaza: Refugees

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203525] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held recent discussions with his (a) Egyptian counterpart and (b) other regional counterparts on allowing refugees from Gaza to (i) cross into Egypt and (ii) be provided with support in the region.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203527] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with (a) international partners and (b) NGOs to establish refugee camps.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203529] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the United Nations on securing safe refugee facilities for refugees leaving Gaza.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203530] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he plans to take steps to provide aid to Egypt to support refugees leaving Gaza.

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

The UK remains committed to the safety and security of those in Gaza. We are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) on the full range of issues relating to conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The FCDO is actively engaging with the international humanitarian system (including Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UN agencies and 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 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. We regularly discuss migration and treatment of refugees with partners, including through our embassies, and we remain committed to supporting them to manage this effectively.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203525>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203527>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203529>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203530>

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>

Israel and Palestinians: Refugees

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [203524] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts on establishing a single international system for supporting refugees from (a) Israel and (b) Palestine.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK remains committed to the safety and security of those in Gaza. We are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) on the full range of issues relating to conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-19/203524>

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Development Aid

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL10488] To ask His Majesty's Government what is the breakdown of aid spend by Government departments to the Palestinian Authority in the past 10 years.

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL10489] To ask His Majesty's Government what information they hold about how aid money given to the Palestinian Authority in the 10 years is spent.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Following Official Development Assistance (ODA) prioritisation exercises undertaken in March 2021, the UK no longer provides direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority. All UK support to the Palestinian Authority is provided through technical advice, procured through commercial suppliers.

The FCDO aid budget is allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate. There is a robust framework in place for allocating ODA. Data on ODA spend in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is available on DevTracker <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/countries/PS>
More than 80 per cent of our ODA spend this year of UK support will be used to meet humanitarian need, or to provide vital health, education, and protection services for Palestinian Refugees.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-16/hl10488>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-16/hl10489>

House of Lords Library Briefing

King's Speech 2023: Foreign affairs and defence

Section 1.1: Israel and Gaza

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/kings-speech-2023-foreign-affairs-and-defence>

Downing Street

PM call with President Macron of France: 29 October 2023

The Prime Minister spoke to French President Macron today following the expansion of Israel's military operation against Hamas.

The leaders stressed the importance of getting urgent humanitarian support into Gaza.

They agreed to work together on efforts both to get crucial food, fuel, water and medicine to those who need it, and to get foreign nationals out.

They expressed their shared concern at the risk of escalation in the wider region, in particular in the West Bank. The Prime Minister and President Macron updated on the conversations they have had with leaders in the region to stress the importance of working to ensure regional stability.

The Prime Minister and President Macron agreed that it was important not to lose sight of the long-term future of the region and, in particular, the need for a two-state solution. They underscored that Hamas does not represent ordinary Palestinians and that their barbarism should not undermine the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The leaders said they would stay in close contact with one another and with leaders in the region.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-macron-of-france-29-october-2023>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Hope and humanity must win out against the scourge of aggression and terrorism: Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon at the UN General Assembly tenth emergency special session on Gaza.

... And at this point, I also want to share our sincerest of condolences for the 30 UNRWA staff and the 16 medical staff who have lost their lives since the 7th of October. Equally, we record our sincere condolences to the victims and the families of the horrendous Hamas' terrorist attacks on the 7th of October on Israel. And equally, we extend our condolences to the families of the innocent Palestinians who have been killed in this tragic conflict. ... Mr. President, every life, every life that is lost is a tragedy, not just for a family in Israel or Gaza or the West Bank, but it is a loss for all of humanity, an Israeli life or a Palestinian life, irrespective of being Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Every life matters. Every life lost is a tragedy. Therefore, as we recall the tragic consequences of what we are witnessing, we call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. Yes, this means the unconditional release of the hostages and taking every possible step to avoid the harming of civilians and importantly, enabling unhindered humanitarian access. ...

Whilst we welcome the important first step of 54 trucks passing through Rafah Border Crossing, we urge the scaling up of this assistance, including to enable fuel for civilian use to pass into Gaza, vital to keep hospitals and the humanitarian response running. And these humanitarian pauses are an important part of ensuring that this can happen. Turning to the attacks on Israel on the 7th of October, my Prime Minister has been clear: the United Kingdom stands with Israel in the face of Hamas' terrorist attacks. We will always support an ally against a terrorist attack and its right to self-defence. But this must be, I assure you, Mr President, and we make that case, it must be within international humanitarian law. And if I may just put also from a personal perspective as a muslim: terrorism is evil. Every terror act is against humanity, and we should condemn it unequivocally.

So, Mr President, the draft resolution in front of us could have been clearer on this very point. It should also, in our view, unequivocally condemn these terror attacks, Hamas' terror attacks that killed over 1400 people. And as we know at this very time, hold over 200 hostages. However, we have equally been clear that all possible precautions and steps are taken to minimise harm to civilians in this conflict and indeed, for any movement of civilians to be both voluntary and safe. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hope-and-humanity-must-win-out-against-the-scourge-of-aggression-and-terrorism-lord-ahmad-statement-at-the-un-general-assembly>

Condemning Hamas' terrorism should not be controversial: UK at the UN General Assembly: UK statement following the UN General Assembly vote on the Jordanian draft resolution on the situation in Gaza

The UK abstained on the Jordanian-drafted resolution.

We welcome the draft's call for all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law, including the protection of civilians, for the immediate release of hostages and for full and sustained humanitarian access.

These are UK priorities and we have been working tirelessly with partners to achieve these on the ground, including the UK Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary's engagements with Egypt to open the Rafah crossing to get aid to the Palestinian people.

We are proud to have pledged an additional \$37 million in UK aid to help civilians in Gaza since the beginning of the crisis. The UK Prime Minister has been clear that we recognise the need for humanitarian pauses to deliver this aid safely and in a sustained way.

We also welcome the draft's emphasis on preventing regional escalation of the conflict. It is in no-one's interest for this conflict to spread.

However, we are deeply disappointed with the draft's omission of an unequivocal condemnation of Hamas' terrorist attacks that killed over 1,400 people and took over 200 hostages last week. This should not be controversial.

That is why we voted in favour of the Canadian amendment which would have corrected this.

But we cannot vote for a resolution that is silent on the largest terror attack in Israel's history.

Hamas has embedded itself in civilian populations, is still holding civilians hostage, and firing rockets at Israel while using Palestinians as human shields. It is clear that Israel is under attack by terrorists and is entitled under international law to defend itself. Any resolution on the situation in Gaza and Israel should be unequivocal on that too.

This is why we abstained on this resolution.

We will continue to work closely with Israel, Palestine, the UN and our partners in the region to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. To ensure that civilians are protected and have access to food, water, medicine, and shelter. And to work towards the peace and stability which can only be achieved by working towards a sustainable Two State Solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/condemning-hamas-terrorism-should-not-be-controversial-uk-at-the-un-general-assembly>

James Cleverly today @JamesCleverly discussed the latest situation in Gaza. The UK's role is to facilitate: - humanitarian aid - evacuation of British nationals - prevention of regional escalation [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1718257769373986844>

James Cleverly Israel is expanding their military campaign against Hamas. The UK's top priority remains the safety of British nationals in Gaza and the region. We support Israel's right to self defence, in line with IHL, and continue to push for the protection of Palestinian civilians.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1717984597915394473>

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

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

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

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

Scottish Government

Ceasefire in Gaza: First Minister writes to UK political leaders

The abhorrent terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October must be unequivocally condemned, and I will continue to join you in doing so. Hamas must release immediately and unconditionally all hostages and cease its missile attacks on Israel.

The killing of innocent civilians can never be justified, wherever it occurs. Israel, like every other country, has a right to protect itself from attack, but in doing so it must comply with international law.

Since the tragic events of that day, the loss of life has escalated. More than 1,400 Israelis and 5,700 Palestinians are reported to have been killed. More than 1.4 million Palestinians have been displaced and in excess of 600,000 people are sheltering in UN-run facilities. Many British citizens are trapped in a warzone with nowhere to go, under intense daily bombardment of the Gaza strip.

Food, water, fuel, and medicine are being restricted, with limited humanitarian supplies – nowhere near enough – being allowed in. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) – the largest humanitarian agency working in Gaza – has warned that unless fuel is allowed into Gaza immediately, the agency will be forced to halt all operations as of today.

I am, therefore, writing to ask for your support in helping to stop the staggering humanitarian disaster we are witnessing, which is set to get even worse. We should stand together and united in unequivocally calling on all parties to commit to an immediate ceasefire to allow a humanitarian corridor to be opened, so that lifesaving supplies can get into Gaza and innocent civilians who want to leave be given safe passage out.

The situation in Gaza is at the point of being cataclysmic. All of us must do everything we can to prevent that. There must be no more dithering, or delay, together we must call for an immediate ceasefire.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ceasefire-in-gaza-first-minister-writes-to-uk-political-leaders/>

European Court of Human Rights

Internationale Humanitäre Hilfsorganisation v Germany (Application no. 11214/19)

In June 2010 the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (“the Ministry”) issued a decision by which it declared the applicant association, a non-profit organisation, to be acting against the concept of international understanding between peoples ... and proscribed it, which had the effect of causing its dissolution, and ordered the confiscation of its assets. This decision was based on the applicant association’s long-term and substantial financial support of charitable organisations known as “social societies”, which carried out social projects for the benefit of the Palestinian population - in particular, the Islamic Society in Gaza - and which were part of the terrorist organisation Hamas. The applicant unsuccessfully challenged the proscription. ...

In assessing the proportionality of the impugned measure, the Court did not restrict its examination to the written word of the applicant association’s statutes according to which its declared objective had been to “provide appropriate humanitarian aid worldwide in case of natural disasters, wars and other catastrophes”, but looked into their actual application in practice and the activities the applicant association had actually engaged in. In that connection, it noted the applicant association’s undisputed funding of the Islamic Society, and later of Salam, another “social society” also based in Gaza. The Ministry and the national courts had found convincing evidence that those two self-proclaimed “social societies” had not constituted separate entities but had been truly part of Hamas and had duly assessed that the overall organisation of Hamas, including its so-called “social societies”, was to be considered a terrorist organisation. ...

It had been duly established that the applicant association, while continuing to present its activities under the guise of humanitarian aid, had knowingly supported international terrorism, directly or indirectly. ... Furthermore, neither in the national proceedings nor in its application to the Court had the applicant association dissociated itself from Hamas’s violent aims and actions.

In sum ... the authorities had adduced relevant and sufficient reasons and had not overstepped their margin of appreciation. Therefore, the interference with the applicant association’s freedom of association had been proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued and had thus been “necessary in a democratic society”.

Conclusion: no violation (unanimously).

To read the full press release see

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=002-14207>

To read the full judgement see
<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-228016>

European Parliament

Metsola: “we have a duty to meet this moment”

Addressing the European Council, President Metsola said that taking a strong stance against terror and making all efforts to alleviate Gaza's humanitarian crisis are not mutually exclusive.

In her discussion with the leaders, she said: “As a Union, we have a responsibility to remain coherent and united. To do this is not to condone more death and violence but to avoid a dangerous regional escalation of the conflict. We must leave even a sliver of possibility that peace can ultimately be found.

The European Parliament has condemned Hamas in the strongest possible terms. We know that Hamas must be stopped.

As a Parliament we have always and will always keep insisting on respect for international law, that the humanitarian consequences of stopping Hamas must be a priority and that aid must be able to reach the innocent people in need.

Taking a strong stance against terror and making every effort to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza are not mutually exclusive.

That is why we keep doing everything that we can to protect innocent lives. Why we work to free hostages and get aid across and why the European Parliament has called for a humanitarian pause to achieve that.

In the longer term, Europe should stand ready and willing to engage. We must continue to push for sustainable and lasting peace. For a fair two-state solution that is equitable and just. There is a role for Europe and we have a duty to meet this moment”. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231026IPR08403/metsola-we-have-a-duty-to-meet-this-moment>

Council of the European Union

... In light of Hamas’ brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attack against Israel and the unfolding tragic scenes in the Gaza Strip, EU leaders reviewed the state of play and different strands of action, including concerted efforts to assist EU citizens.

In a follow-up to the statement they released on 15 October 2023 and the extraordinary European Council meeting held two days later, they also reaffirmed their:

- condemnation of Hamas in the strongest possible terms
- recognition of Israel’s right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law
- call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any precondition

The leaders underlined the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times. They also expressed their grave concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and called for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need, including through humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs.

The leaders stressed that the EU will work with partners in the region to:

- protect civilians
- ensure that assistance is not abused by terrorist organisations
- facilitate access to food, water, medical care, fuel and shelter

To avoid regional escalation, the leaders emphasised the need to engage with partners in the region, including the Palestinian Authority. They also expressed their support for a two-state solution and welcomed diplomatic initiatives, including supporting the holding of an international peace conference soon. ...

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2023/10/26-27/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/10/15/statement-agreed-by-the-27-members-of-the-european-council-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east/>

Information about the Council meeting of 17 October, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2023/10/17/>

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

ENAR Condemns Europe's Dehumanising Reactions to the Israel-Palestine Brutality and Calls for Justice and Peace for all

The recent brutal cycle of violence in Israel and Palestine has raised critical concerns regarding the massive scale of loss of life and destruction, in a region that has already been the theatre of many injustices and oppressive policies and practices. The horrendous killing of civilians, including of children, has reached unimaginable levels and brutalised communities. Numerous rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL) have been violated and continue to cause unimaginable levels of human suffering. ...

The European Network Against Racism firmly stands against all forms of violence, suffering, and loss of lives, whether they be Israeli or Palestinian. The continued loss of civilian lives on either side caused by war crimes and crimes against humanity is a profound and unreservedly condemned tragedy that must not be tolerated; every effort must be made to protect them without delay. The EU and MS must exert pressure for an immediate ceasefire and ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered. ...

"Families are being torn apart and communities are being decimated by ongoing committing of war crimes that violate the rules of International Humanitarian Law. EU leaders should promote a more balanced and nuanced approach, emphasising justice and the peaceful coexistence of all communities in the region. Their responses so far have simply added fuel to fire," said Nyanchama Okemwa, ENAR Chair of the Board. ...

ENAR raises concern on the increase in hate speech and hate crimes targeting both Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe as a result of the conflict and the dehumanising rhetoric employed by politicians and the media across the EU bloc. All efforts should be made to address this issue and prevent further harm to the affected communities.

"European Union and Member States leaders are stoking the flames of this conflict by stripping away fundamental rights and internationally accepted humanitarian standards. Meanwhile, war crimes have been committed by both sides and continue to be committed without accountability, particularly in Gaza. War crimes are war crimes, no matter where they occur and who is devastated by them. ...

The European Network Against Racism firmly stands for the principle of justice and peace in Israel and Palestine in this region. We stress the need for a decolonial perspective, acknowledging the historical legacy of European colonialism and the role it played – and continues to play – in shaping the tragedies in the region. We believe it is imperative to address the ongoing violence and suffering in the region without bias and to foster an environment of accountability, justice, and peace towards a transformative resolution of the conflict that guarantees self-determination and dignity for all people and communities. In closing, we emphasise that every human life holds equal value, and it is our collective responsibility to work towards a peaceful resolution and lasting peace in the region. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.enar-eu.org/statement-enar-condemns-europes-dehumanising-reactions-to-the-israel-palestine-brutality-and-calls-for-justice-and-peace-for-all/>

United Nations

Humanitarian System for More than 2 Million Civilians in Gaza Facing Total Collapse, Secretary-General Warns, Once Again Urging Ceasefire, Aid Delivery at Scale Needed

... The humanitarian system in Gaza is facing a total collapse with unimaginable consequences for more than 2 million civilians. As the bombing intensifies, needs are growing ever more critical and colossal.

About 500 trucks per day were crossing into Gaza before the hostilities began. In recent days, an average of only 12 trucks per day have entered, despite needs being far greater than at any time before.

In addition, the supplies that have trickled in do not include fuel for United Nations operations — fuel which is also essential to power hospitals, water desalination plants, food production and aid distribution.

Given the desperate and dramatic situation, the United Nations will not be able to continue to deliver inside Gaza without an immediate and fundamental shift in how aid is going in.

The verification system for the movement of goods through the Rafah crossing must be adjusted to allow many more trucks to enter Gaza without delay. ...

Misery is growing by the minute. Without a fundamental change, the people of Gaza will face an unprecedented avalanche of human suffering. ... History is judging us all.

To read the full statement see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm22010.doc.htm>

Worsening Tension, Unspeakable Violence, Grave Suffering in Middle East Must End Now, General Assembly President Says, Resuming Tenth Emergency Special Session

The worsening tension, unspeakable violence and harrowing suffering must end now, UN General Assembly President stressed ... at an emergency meeting on the situation in the Middle East, during which he condemned the killing of all civilians on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides ...

Assembly President Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), resuming the 193-member organ's tenth emergency special session on "Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory", condemned the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October, rejecting the killings and the taking of civilian hostages. The brutality of the Hamas assaults is shocking and unacceptable and has no place in our world, he stressed.

"The right of self-defence does not — and cannot — lawfully give license to undertake indiscriminate and disproportionate reprisal," he continued ...

He went on to call for the prompt and unconditional release of hostages, and an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and opening for humanitarian assistance and relief. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, called for a cessation of the bombing of Gaza to prevent "an even greater man-made humanitarian catastrophe or a regional spill-over". More than 7,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel in the last two weeks, 70 per cent of them women and children, he said, questioning how some Member States could defend the war. ...

Hospitals have turned into morgues, and doctors and patients wonder if help is on the

way ... “What choices do you make as a parent when there are only impossible choices, when death is everywhere?” ... Recalling the Israeli Foreign Minister’s call to the Security Council to bring back Israeli hostages, he noted that for millions of Palestinians, there are no homes to return to. ...“

Gilad Erdan, the representative of Israel, said the 7 October massacre and what ensued has nothing to do with the Palestinians or the Arab-Israeli conflict. “It is the law-abiding Israel against modern-day Nazis,” he said, adding that his country is at war with Hamas – which has one goal: to annihilate Israel and murder all Jews. Barbaric Hamas terrorists invaded Israel from “the sea, the land and the air” with one purpose: to savagely murder every person they encountered.

He expressed disbelief that the Assembly’s resolution and emergency session weren’t solely focused on the atrocities committed by Hamas. Over 1,400 people were slaughtered. He showed a video from his iPad of a Thai agricultural worker being decapitated. “He’s not Israeli, he’s not Jewish, he was merely alive trying to make a living for his family; but he was decapitated with a blunt gardening tool,” he said. Israel is not at war with human beings but with monsters and against Jihadi terrorists. If Israel fails, the whole world will pay a price. ...

The resolution calls for a ceasefire that will “tie Israel’s hands”, allow Hamas to rearm and attack Israel again, he said ... How is it possible that Hamas is not even mentioned in the text? he asked. ...

Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan ... said that in times of cruelty, inhumanity and total disregard for international law, it is imperative to speak out, clearly and unequivocally. “There is no room for grey areas here. We must stand for life, for justice, for peace,” he said, urging Member States not to fail the Palestinian people, “an occupied people whose days start with death — and end with death”.

Children are dying under the ruins of homes destroyed by Israeli precision bombs. “Don’t be fooled. Don’t let them tell you this is a war between Muslims and Jews,” he said, condemning the killing of all civilians, no matter race, nationality, or religion. ...

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, said that the Palestinian liberation movement has a right to self-defence and self-determination but is being called a terrorist organization by some countries. “... I say frankly to the American statesmen who are now managing the genocide in Palestine that we do not welcome the expansion of the war in the region, but if the genocide in Gaza continues, they will not be exempt from this fire.” ...

“Brutal occupation has transformed into brutal and deep apartheid”, a terrible combination that gives the occupying regime the psychological permission to kill people under occupation, he said. ...

Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, said that nothing can justify the barbaric acts committed by Hamas. Israel has an unequivocal right to defend itself, but it must act in accordance with international law. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12546.doc.htm>

General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling for Immediate, Sustained Humanitarian Truce Leading to Cessation of Hostilities between Israel, Hamas

... the Assembly adopted the resolution titled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations” (document A/ES-10/L.25), demanding that all parties immediately and fully comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. ...

Resuming the ... emergency special session on the “Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East

Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, the Assembly called for immediate, full, sustained, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) ... It also called for the rescinding of the order by Israel, the occupying Power, for Palestinian civilians and United Nations staff to evacuate all areas in the Gaza Strip north of the Wadi Gaza and relocate to southern Gaza.

Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all civilians who are being illegally held captive, the Assembly also stressed the grave impact that armed conflict has had on women and children as well as on other civilians who may have specific vulnerabilities ... Prior to adopting the resolution, the Assembly failed ... to adopt the amendment titled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations” (document A/ES-10/L.26). In addition to unequivocally rejecting and condemning the terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting on 7 October 2023, the rejected amendment would have also condemned the taking of hostages and would have demanded the safety, well-being and humane treatment of those hostages in compliance with international law and call for their immediate and unconditional release. ...

Gilad Menashe Erdan, the representative of Israel, said the world has witnessed that the United Nations “no longer holds even one ounce of legitimacy or relevance”. This Organization was founded in the wake of the Holocaust for the purpose of preventing atrocities, he said. Israel just endured the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and according to a majority of the so-called “Family of Nations”, Israel has no right to defend itself, he said.

Entire families and communities have been exterminated by genocidal Hamas jihadists, he said, adding: “We saw exactly what they dream of doing to every Israeli and Jew, and we will not sit idly by to let them rearm and commit such atrocities.” The only way to ensure this is the eradication of Hamas’ terror capabilities. Yet this resolution does not even name Hamas; even when discussing “our hostages”, the drafters could not even bring themselves to name the Hamas terrorists responsible for this blatant war crime, he said. “Why are you defending terrorists that deliberately beheaded children and abducted babies,” he asked.

“We all know that if given the chance Hamas and Hizbullah would commit the October 7 massacre again and again and again until there is not a single Israeli left to murder or a single citizen to terrorize and drive away from Israel,” he said. Hamas has embedded itself deep within and under the Gazan civilian population and the people of Gaza are being exploited as human shields for terrorists. “Why are you not holding Hamas accountable,” he asked. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said that in the world’s parliament today, peace-loving nations stood up and proved that the international community has not forsaken the promise, purpose and principles of the United Nations and has not abandoned the Palestinian people in these darkest hours. ...

The occupying Power has launched its ground invasion and has cut electricity, Internet and all communication, he added. Some still refuse to condemn these war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by Israel, he said ...

After the General Assembly has clearly spoken and said enough bullying and inciting, the representative of the occupying Power still comes here and tries to force everyone to accept their twisted, criminal definition of self-defence, he said. “There is no such right in this world, not legally, not politically, not morally,” he said. ...

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the representative of the United States, said that two key words were missing from the draft resolution: Hamas and hostages. “It is outrageous that this resolution fails to name the perpetrators of the 7 October terrorist attack,” she said. “These are omissions of evil.” ...

Hamas is determined to destroy Israel and kill Jews, it has never cared about the genuine needs or safety of the people it claims to represent and has no respect for the rule of law

or human life, she said. As Israel exercises its right and responsibility to defend its people, it must do so in line with the rules of war. ...

Olof Skoog, the Permanent Observer for the European Union ... [said] This dramatic conflict and the humanitarian situation required a timely and strong message by the Council, which it failed to deliver ... and condemned “in the strongest possible terms” Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. The use of civilians as human shields by Hamas is a particularly deplorable atrocity, he said ...

Sedat Önal, the representative of Türkiye, said there can be no justification for indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure or the forced displacement of people. ...

Osama Mahmoud Abdelkhalek Mahmoud, the representative of Egypt, said the world must oppose the targeting of civilians, the violation of international law, bombardment of hospitals and medical centres, the killing of children, as well as forcible displacement and destruction of human rights. ...

The representative of Pakistan said resolution “L.25” is a humanitarian text. The crime originated with Israel, he added. The real cause is the occupation of Palestine. ...

... the representative of Iran said historical experiences and recent developments “demonstrated that Palestinians have no choice but to continue their resistance against occupation, aggression and blatant violations of their rights”. ...

The Syrian delegate said ... Syria voted for the resolution because it primarily aims to stop the barbaric Israeli war machine ... He expressed reservation over some of the language of the resolution, which he said could be construed as equalizing the Israeli aggressor, the murderer, and the occupied Palestinian people, the victim. ...

The representative of France said he voted in favour of the resolution because nothing justifies the suffering of civilians but regretted the missing condemnation of the terror attack by Hamas and other groups, and he said that the Assembly must call for the release of hostages. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12548.doc.htm>

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/ES-10/L.25)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/ES-10/L.25>

Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations (A/ES-10/L26)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/ES-10/L.26>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gaza: Continued violence is not the answer: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk

Last night’s bombardment and ground operations in Gaza by Israeli forces were reportedly the most intensive yet, taking this terrible crisis to a new level of violence and pain. Compounding the misery and suffering of civilians, Israeli strikes on telecommunications installations and subsequent Internet shutdown have effectively left Gazans with no way of knowing what is happening across Gaza and cut them off from the outside world.

We remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The bombing of the telecommunications infrastructure places the civilian population in grave danger. Ambulances and civil defence teams are no longer able to locate the injured, or the thousands of people estimated to be still under the rubble. Civilians are no longer able to receive updated information on where they can access humanitarian relief and

where they may be in less danger. Many journalists can now no longer report on the situation.

We lost contact with our colleagues in Gaza last night. Our colleagues had already endured days and nights under the incessant bombardment of Gaza. They lost families, friends and homes in strikes that have killed several thousands in a mere three weeks and razed complete neighborhoods across Gaza. There is no safe place in Gaza and there is no way out. I am very worried for my colleagues, as I am for all civilians in Gaza.

When these hostilities end, those who have survived will face the rubble of their homes and the graves of their family members. Inflicting wounds and trauma on hundreds of thousands of people does not help anyone.

The humanitarian and human rights consequences will be devastating and long-lasting. Thousands have already died, many of them children. Given the manner in which military operations have been conducted until now, in the context of the 56-year-old occupation, I am raising alarm about the possibly catastrophic consequences of large-scale ground operations in Gaza and the potential for thousands more civilians to die.

Continued violence is not the answer. I call on all parties as well as third States, in particular those with influence over the parties to the conflict, to do all in their power to de-escalate this conflict, and to work toward the goal where Israelis and Palestinians can fully enjoy all human rights and live side by side, in peace.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/10/gaza-continued-violence-not-answer>

Grave violence in Israel and Gaza has outraged the conscience of humanity, UN Commission of Inquiry says

All parties to the conflict in Israel and Gaza have shown reckless disregard for civilian life and must comply with international law to prevent atrocities from continuing, the Independent International [Commission of Inquiry](#) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, said ...

Full compliance with core international legal obligations is essential in this critical moment. In accordance with resolution A/ES-10/L.25, passed by the General Assembly ... the Commission calls on all parties to the conflict to comply fully with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to act to prevent the commission of and incitement to any crimes under international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

The Commission reiterates that States have the obligation to protect their citizens and others under their control. Article 51 of the UN Charter provides for the use of force by a State in self-defense only in the case of an armed attack by another State. The Commission refers to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 2004, which affirmed that Israel is the Occupying Power over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and that Article 51 of the Charter is not applicable in this case – when the threat originates from a territory over which Israel exercises control.

The protection of civilians and civilian property is the paramount obligation in the current circumstances. There must be a clear distinction between *jus ad bellum*, which refers to the conditions under which States may resort to war or to the use of armed force in general, and *jus in bello*, the laws of war which regulate conduct of all parties to an armed conflict. The Commission therefore emphasises that all parties, including Israel, Hamas, and other Palestinian armed groups, must reject all actions that fail to protect civilians and civilian objects. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/grave-violence-israel-and-gaza-has-outraged-conscience-humanity-un>

**Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied
Palestinian Territory (A/ES-10/L.25)**
<https://undocs.org/en/A/ES-10/L.25>

**Israel / OPT UPDATE: Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human
Rights: Ravina Shamdasani**

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk is appealing to all sides to heed the calls for peace. ...

For almost three weeks now, Palestinian civilians in Gaza have endured relentless bombing by Israel from air, land and sea. Thousands killed, lying dead amongst destroyed residential buildings, mosques and bakeries. We receive harrowing testimonies of entire families killed by airstrikes on their homes including the families of our own staff members. Of parents writing children's names on their arms to identify their future remains. Of the terrifying, sleepless nights people are spending in the open air, as airstrikes continue overhead. ...

Despite its repeated orders to residents of northern Gaza to move to the south, suggesting it is safe, Israeli Forces' strikes on two southern Governorates and Middle Gaza have intensified in recent days. ... Nowhere is safe in Gaza.

Compelling people to evacuate in these circumstances, including to places such as "the Israeli designated area" of Al Mawasi, and while under a complete siege raises serious concerns over forcible transfer, which is a war crime.

Israel's use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas has caused extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and loss of civilian lives that, by all appearances, is difficult to reconcile with international humanitarian law.

Collective punishment is occurring through the choking-off of water, food, fuel and electricity. Fuel shortages forcing the closure of hospitals and bakeries. ...

Collective punishment is a war crime. Israel's collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza must immediately cease. The use of dehumanizing language against Palestinians must also be halted.

Indiscriminate attacks by Palestinian armed groups, including through the launching of unguided rockets into Israel, must stop. They must immediately and unconditionally release all civilians who were captured and are still being held. The taking of hostages is also a war crime. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/10/israel-opt-update>

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Statement: Israel and the State of Palestine

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ...

Alarmed by the scale of violence and the humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding in the occupied Gaza Strip and by the well-founded fears that the region is being engulfed in a broader conflict;

Deeply shocked by the cruel attacks carried out by Hamas and other armed groups on the 7 October, as well as the launching of rockets towards Israel ... as well as the taking of hostage;

Deeply shocked also about the ongoing Israeli indiscriminate and brutal military attacks in Gaza Strip, particularly the airstrikes, leading to the killing of more than 7,000 Palestinians, including at least 2,900 children ...

Alarmed by the decision of Israel on 9 October to further tighten the ongoing and long-

standing blockade of the occupied Gaza Strip and to withhold essential supplies such as food, water, electricity, energy sources and supplies and medicines, which amounts to a form of collective punishment ...

Gravely concerned by the Israeli decision of 12 October ordering 1.1 million Palestinians in north Gaza to relocate to southern Gaza within 24 hours ...

Deeply concerned about the longstanding Israeli military occupation of Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Israeli policies and practices ...

Highly concerned about the sharp increase in racist hate speech and dehumanization directed at Palestinians since 7 October ...

Concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied West Bank ...

1. **Calls upon** Israel to fully respect its international obligations ...
2. **Urges** Israel and other State parties to develop and implement an immediate and complete ceasefire;
3. **Urges** the release of hostages taken by Hamas and other armed groups as well as the release of Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem and Palestinian citizens of Israel who are arbitrarily detained by Israel;
4. **Calls upon** Israel and other State parties to provide all necessary financial and humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip and the creation of humanitarian corridors ...
5. **Urges** Israel to ensure that all Palestinians under its effective control, particularly those in Gaza Strip, enjoy full rights under the Convention without discrimination ...
6. **Calls upon** Israel to firmly condemn any form of hate speech and distance itself from racist hate speech expressed by politicians and public figures, including members of the government and parliament, and ensure that such acts are investigated and adequately and robustly punished;
7. **Further calls upon** Israel to combat the spread of racist hate speech in the media, on the Internet and in social media ...
8. **Urges** the State of Palestine to ... combat hate speech and incitement to violence ...
9. **Calls upon** Israel to take all the necessary measures to fully implement the recommendations made by the Committee ...
 - a. To ensure that measures taken in the Occupied Palestinian Territories:
 - i. Do not discriminate in purpose or in effect against Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in territories under the State party's effective control;
 - ii. Are implemented with full respect for human rights ...
 - b. To rescind its blockade policy and urgently allow and facilitate the rebuilding of homes and civilian infrastructures; ensure access to necessary urgent humanitarian assistance; and also ensure the right to freedom of movement, housing, education, health care, water and sanitation ...

To read the full statement see

<https://tinyurl.com/m5jksx9c>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Syria: Military Bases

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [203278] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of Iranian military facilities established in Syria.

James Heapey: The UK has long made clear our apprehension towards Iran's reckless and destabilising activity in Syria. Iran's support to militant and proscribed groups, including potentially more permanent Iranian military bases, directly counters UK interests. The Ministry of Defence continues to maintain thorough assessments of the threats to stability and security across the Middle East region including Syria. The Government is also committed to working with the international community to ensure Iran and the regime are held to account for their destabilising activity in Syria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-18/203278>

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Other Relevant Information

United Nations

With Hate Speech and Xenophobia Rising Worldwide, Third Committee Calls for End to Systemic Racism, Racial Discrimination, Implementation of Durban Declaration ... Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Ms. Verene A. Shepherd ... said that racist hate speech, including via social media, remains a deep concern ... high-ranking government officials and public figures engage in xenophobic rhetoric against migrants and asylum seekers ... Raising alarm over persisting structural racial discrimination against people of African descent ... she called for ambitious and effective measures to end systemic racism. ...

The representative of Israel expressed deep shock at how Ms. Shepherd's statement did not acknowledge that the 7 October attacks by Hamas aimed to "kill as many Jews as possible" or the recent explosion of antisemitic attacks. ...

... **Ashwini K.P., Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**, voiced grave concern over continued violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories and tragic loss of life on both sides. Expressing further dismay over a "tidal wave of hate speech" against Jewish communities and Muslim and Arab people, she said: "Hate speech that dehumanizes and demonizes entire communities paves the way for atrocity crimes, including genocide." ... she said that racist hate speech on and offline has life-threatening consequences for the targeted, destroys the social fabric of communities and undermines the norms of human rights and democracy. ...

Iran's delegate stressed that the United Nations is duty-bound to prevent a genocide on Palestinian land. ...

Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ... presented a report on "A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" (document A/78/197). ... Some States have reported progress in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance ... Despite these efforts, the report recognizes persisting racism and lagging implementation of the Durban Declaration ...

A third report focused on the "Right of peoples to self-determination" (document A/78/261) ... The report provides guidance on how the right to self-determination is currently interpreted by the UN human rights mechanisms, and calls attention to the connections between the right to self-determination and other human rights. ...

... **the representative of the United States** expressed concern over the lasting effects of

racial discrimination on members of ethnic and racial minorities ...

The representative of the Russian Federation expressed concern over racism in European countries, including Russophobia ... Voicing further concern over exacerbation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza, he lamented horrific terrorist attacks, hostage-taking, and civilian deaths by air attack. Worse, an economic blockage is in effect and barriers erected against the delivery of humanitarian aid. ...

Hanna Suchoka, Chair of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action ... presenting her report (document A/78/385), recalled that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Member States adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome document of the third World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. This landmark and visionary document — which was negotiated by consensus — condemned, in the strongest terms, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. She highlighted the continued relevance of the document, as it contains fundamental human rights principles enshrined in international human rights treaties ...

While it seems that States are finally starting to acknowledge the existence and consequences of systemic racism, much remains to be done to ensure real transformative change on the ground, she continued. “However, it would be presumptuous of me to affirm that racism and racial discrimination have increased or decreased over the last two decades,” she said, adding that there is simply no global tool which allows the international community to measure the occurrence of racism and racial discrimination worldwide and reach a definite and evidence-based conclusion. ...

The representative of the European Union ... said his bloc remains fully committed to the elimination of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. ...

Mr. Akram (Pakistan) said that, while most people under colonial rule have been able to exercise their rights to self-determination, the people of Palestine and Kashmir have not. Pakistan hopes that the General Assembly will succeed, where the Security Council failed, to stop the Israeli aggression ...

Mr. Ghanei (Iran) said that severe forms of discrimination across the globe persist, adding that the United States has imposed inhumane unilateral coercive measures on his country. ... “Islamophobia is a specific form of racism that must be tackled,” he said. “It is fueled by governments supporting those who violate Muslims’ rights under the guise of freedom of expression and opinion. ...

In a separate statement on the situation in Gaza, he reaffirmed Iran’s support for the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination. “Iran denounces Israel’s colonial agenda and ethnical cleansing on the Palestinian land of its indigenous inhabitants,” he said, adding that the international community has witnessed horrific atrocities and collective punishment of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli regime, particularly the heinous terrorist attack on Al Ahli Arab Hospital. “The deliberate targeting of the hospital in a clear violation of international humanitarian law is nothing short of a war crime,” he stated, adding that the United Nations is duty bound to prevent this genocide. ...

Ms. Shepherd presented her report on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (document A/78/18). She said that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination paid attention to three issues. First, the persistence and rise of racist hate speech, including via online media platforms, which can and has led to violence against specific and targeted vulnerable groups or individuals. ...

Finally, the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination has raised the alarm that systemic racism and structural racial discrimination persist, in particular against African people and Indigenous Peoples, who consistently experience marginalization and discrimination ...

Israel’s delegate ... said she is “deeply shocked” by how the statement has failed all the victims of the 7 October massacre, not issuing a condemnation towards the Hamas terror

organization. She expressed alarm that there is no acknowledgement that the aim of the Hamas terrorist attack was “to kill as many Jews as possible”. Also, there is no acknowledgement of the fact that this group has carried out the biggest atrocity against the Jewish people since the Holocaust and no proper acknowledgement of the global explosion of antisemitic attacks. ...

Ms. Ashwini K.P. expressed sadness and grave concern about the continuing violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories and the tragic loss of lives on both sides. “I also wish to express my concern about an unacceptable tidal wave of hate speech, as well as reports of hate crimes rising against Jewish communities and against Muslim and Arab people and others,” she said. “Hate speech that dehumanizes and demonizes entire communities paves the way for atrocity crimes, including genocide,” she stressed...

... she said the advent of multiple digital platforms with global reach, including social media platforms and communications applications, has caused a seismic shift in the way which people live and share information. She noted that some online materials constitute racist hate speech, with real, in the most serious cases life and death, consequences for targeted individuals and groups. She underscored that racist hate speech, including disseminated online, also has a powerful detrimental effect at the societal level, destroying the social fabric of communities and undermining the norms of human rights and democracy.

Turning to her report on combating the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and related ideologies (document A/78/302), she emphasized that the document notes with concern the continued prominence of racist, nationalist and far-right political parties and organizations operating throughout various national contexts, recommending that Member States take substantial measures to address the concerning prominence of different manifestations of hatred. ...

Ms. Ashwini expressed concern about rising antisemitism, which has been taken very seriously by her mandate. ... On Islamophobia, she said: “Islamophobia has been one of the most contentious and concerning issues in the recent past, from the burning of the holy Quran to various instances across the globe ...

Nizhan Faraz Bin Rizal (Malaysia) said that, unfortunately, 30 years after the Vienna Declaration and 22 years after the Durban Declaration, the international community is witnessing the opposite of a stronger fight against acts of racism and racial discrimination. These acts, particularly that of Islamophobia, have risen to disconcerting levels around the globe, under the guise of the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression. The international community is also witnessing the intensification of apartheid practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israel, the occupying Power, which is motivated by its deep-rooted sense of ideological and racial superiority. ...

Turning to the right of peoples to self-determination, he said this right is a core principle of the United Nations, noting that the question of Palestine has been a longstanding quest for self-determination that remains unrealized until this very day. The reason is clear — the blatant refusal by apartheid Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the two-State solution. ...

Mr. Albadr (Saudi Arabia) said the Palestinian people are suffering under the siege and constant escalation of the Israeli war machine, in addition to consistent targeting of their civilian buildings and everyday facilities, such as schools, hospitals and infrastructure. This has taken the lives of thousands of innocents, including women, children and elderly persons. The international community's complacency in the face of the Israeli occupation forces' collective punishment of the people of Gaza, and their attempts to forcibly displace them, will not bring us any closer to the security and stability that all aspire to. The cause of the Palestinian people will be Saudi Arabia's principal priority until they achieve the right to self-determination, and to live in peace and security in their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. ...

Mr. Yaseen (Iraq), noting that hate speech and discrimination based on race or religion have led to new forms of racism and neo-racism, including the Islamophobia that is

suffered by many Muslims ... called for commitment to the Durban Declaration ... Speaking about the suffering of the Palestinian people that has continued for decades, he called on the international community to stand with them. He stressed the need for the occupying Power to respect international law and withdraw from all the occupied territories, including holy Jerusalem. ...

Ms. Al Dhanhani (United Arab Emirates) said the world is suffering from the spread of hate speech, which tears the social fabric and creates imaginary divisions among peoples and religions. ... An example of how quickly misinformation can spread across the world is the current situation in Gaza, she added. ...

To read the press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4393.doc.htm>

A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (A/78/197)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/197>

Right of peoples to self-determination (A/78/261)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/261>

Report of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on its eighth session (A/78/385)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/385>

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/78/18)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/18>

Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/78/302)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/302>

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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>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

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

Nakba Commemoration Bill

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

**** Online Safety Bill**

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

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-26/debates/419CF473-EAD9-4107-9733-5DD723F274FE/Osteoporosis#contribution-2763CB48-CF37-4F42-ACC4-8B48C9892E86>

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 [Draft]**

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

Regulation agreed

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15497&i=132220&c=2524899#ScotParlOR>

Regulation as made

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2023/309/contents/made>

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

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 days**

The 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