



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Debate

Debate on the Address

col 17 **The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):** ... we will not stand for the hatred and antisemitism we have seen on our streets. It sickens me to think that British Jews are looking over their shoulder in this country, and that children are going to school covering up their school badges for fear of attack. This Government will do whatever it takes to keep the Jewish community safe, just as we will do whatever it takes to keep every community safe. We will fight hatred and extremism in all its forms, wherever it is found, today, tomorrow and always. We are the world's most successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy, and we will protect our democracy from all threats to it. ...

col 24 **Stephen Flynn (SNP):** ... We all have grave concerns about the rise of antisemitism and the fear so many people have walking the streets of these isles. I want to send my heartfelt support to all those in the Jewish community and to make it very clear—if, indeed, it ever needed to be clear—that we all oppose antisemitism, no ifs and no buts. ...

col 28 **Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** ... In this country we have to protect Muslims and Jews against hatred, and we need to make sure that we do not have one-sided demonstrations. Everyone needs protection. ...

col 62 **Julie Elliott (Labour):** ... I am extremely concerned about the fact that the Government have brought back the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which is designed to put undue controls on public bodies and limit their ability to express their beliefs. This is a time when language and actions matter—we have heard a lot about the horror that is unfolding in the middle east; about the horror inflicted on Israeli citizens by Hamas; and about the tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians who have died in the horror unfolding in Gaza—and there has never been a more sensitive time in the middle east, so to introduce the Bill at this moment shows a lack of sensitivity by the Government. It is adding fuel to the fire, and it is not sensible to introduce it at this time. ...

col 63 **Theresa Villiers (Conservative):** ...The carry-over of the anti-boycott Bill is welcome. Singling out Israel for boycotts by councils is divisive and unjustified. The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement has driven increases in antisemitism, so I

welcome the continuation of that Bill. ...

col 65 I find it shocking that in modern Britain the Jewish community have such great fears for their security. The antisemitism and hate crime on display at recent mass protests have been both frightening and unacceptable. I have appealed directly to Sir Mark Rowley, the head of the Met, to apply the full force of the law against any law breaking at these protests. I was one of the signatories to a letter from Conservative MPs and Assembly Members asking last week that the protest planned for Armistice Day on Saturday does not go ahead. It would seem to be both insensitive and disrespectful to have such a protest on 11 November. ...

col 79 **Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op):** I am ... proud of the resilience and response from communities in Cardiff South and Penarth, whether in raising funds for aid and relief efforts in many different situations around the world, including in the middle east at the moment, or in working to promote inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue here in the UK. That is absolutely critical when we are faced with a shocking rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia, and a wider rise in race and religious hate crime.

I want to conclude by saying that this weekend I saw communities in my area at their very best. I joined Indian—Hindu, Sikh and others—communities celebrating Diwali together. I joined a very diverse group of Christian and other faith communities who were celebrating with the Greek Orthodox Church 150 years of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot communities in Cardiff South and Penarth. I also met young Muslims and others with Citizens Wales to discuss their hopes and aspirations for the future. We need more dialogue in this country and less division. ...

col 92 **Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op):** ... Here in our country, the conflict [in the Middle East] has already had a significant impact—very directly for the families of British citizens killed, injured, taken hostage on 7 October or killed and injured in Gaza since. For many others, there is a sense of deep distress, renewed anger at the injustice faced down the years by the Palestinian people, and fear and anger among the Jewish community about their safety and security. The rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks in our communities should be a wake-up call to us all to look for ways to bring people together rather than to push each other away. ...

col 99 **Apsana Begum (Labour):** ... I was ... disappointed to see that the King's Speech did not indicate that the Government will finally recognise Islamophobia or take measures to address the soaring level of hate crimes against Muslims. Indeed, the King's Speech did not even mention that it is Islamophobia Awareness Month, and nor did the Prime Minister in his speech today.

I am currently facing death threats and a torrent of Islamophobic and misogynistic abuse. In fact, I have received such abuse since being elected and putting myself forward as a candidate for election. ...

The situation is escalating, not least exacerbated by those trying to capitalise on current events by spreading hate and division. I am now facing a heightened risk to my safety, with serious death threats, threats to kidnap me, threats of sexual violence and threats about ripping off my hijab in public; it goes on and on. ...

col 100 As we know, the problem is widespread and endemic. Every single day, people of Muslim backgrounds like me face discrimination and prejudice. The prevalence of negative stereotypes, harassment and hate crimes are only part of a whole structure of discrimination. Muslims are the most economically disadvantaged faith group in the UK, with some reports showing that half of British Muslims face poverty and deprivation. At the same time, we face institutionalised Islamophobia. Not only does the King's Speech fail to address the fact that Muslims live with a constant and persistent fear overshadowing our lives, but it fails to address the role of Governments and politicians, even though the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has reported that institutional suspicion and fear of Muslims has escalated to "epidemic proportions" and that "numerous" states,

regional and international bodies are to blame. How does that relate to leaked Government documents about plans to clamp down on freedom of expression that could unjustly label organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain as extremist?

In conclusion, I believe in human rights, equality and dignity for all. My constituents deserve more than a Government who think and act otherwise. ...

Catherine West (Labour): ... [Apsana Begum's speech] reminds me very much of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) talked about as a Jewish MP when she was targeted. ... Organisations such as Tell MAMA UK, which looks at the number of attacks on Muslims, and the Community Security Trust, which records the alarming rise and increase in attacks on the Jewish community, underline the importance of security, taking a record and making sure that we are as safe as we can possibly be. ...

I was pleased that the King mentioned the sensitive time that we are going through, as he has a record of interfaith work. One of the most helpful things I did during Prorogation was attend two synagogues in my constituency, where I took part in prayers for Israel. I also attended the London Islamic Cultural Society mosque in my constituency, as well as the interfaith group that meets every couple of months in the constituency, usually to discuss interfaith work, but in the context of the unfolding tragedy in Israel and Gaza, to talk about how we as a community can respond to the horror of the attacks that Hamas perpetrated in the south of Israel on 7 October, a month ago today, and the feelings of despair and sadness experienced by families whose loved ones are still in tunnels somewhere in Gaza, as well as the terrible television coverage and newspaper reports of the situation in Gaza. ...

col 103 **Anna McMorris (Labour):** ... I have reached out to the Jewish and Muslim communities in my constituency to ensure that we do not allow ... events [in the Middle East] to divide us, and that any hate—Islamophobia or antisemitism—is called out. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-07/debates/4BADDC4BB-07D9-4376-ABE6-069C9823F38A/DebateOnTheAddress>

The King's Speech can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-07/debates/24D8E0F6-1D2C-45DE-A8C4-F5C7B2477C68/King'SSpeech>

Welsh Senedd Debate

Remembrance

346 Hannah Blythyn (Deputy Minister for Social Partnership): ... Sadly ... today's debate takes place in the midst of ongoing conflict around the world. I know that there are people and communities in Wales thinking of loved ones as well as people they've never met and will never meet, including in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza. Recent events all too starkly serve to reinforce the distress, misery, pain and grief that conflict inflicts on people and places. ...

347 With each annual remembrance period we reach, our second world war generation, whilst remaining no less significant, becomes smaller. ...

351 Our commemoration also rightly reflects on our diversity in Wales. The British legion garden of remembrance in Cardiff castle features a multitude of wooden markers, crosses, crescents, stars of David and other markers representing the diversity and equality of sacrifice in past conflict. ...

365 Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru): ... But we should also reflect on the fact that there are those who are still being put in this appalling and unacceptable situation of being injured, traumatised and killed due to the conflict that arises as a result of man's inability

to live in peace with his fellow man, as a result of the fact that man seeks power or demands dominion over his fellow man, as man seeks to take the territory or resources of his fellow man through violence. ...

369 ... during the past month, of course, atrocities have been committed by Hamas and the armed forces of the Government of Israel on thousands of innocent civilians, with the situation in Gaza becoming ever more parlous for the people of Palestine and the Israeli hostages. ...

395 **Alun Davies (Labour):** ... last week I took a few hours to walk through the Jewish ghetto of Krakow. Today a bustling city, then, of course, a place where tens of thousands of Jews were gathered together before taken to be exterminated. And the memory stays with us all ...

398 In returning from Ukraine last week, I took time to visit Auschwitz. I first visited Auschwitz as a student, and I stood there with an American Jew and a friend from Sri Lanka. They both pointed out that neither of them would've survived. The memory of standing with them stays with me every day of my life. All too often we see the spectre of antisemitism beginning to stalk our continent and our society again. Silence and reflection is important, but so is action. The power of the silence empowers all of us to reflect, to remember, and to say together that never again will we allow our continent and our world to fall, as it did then. We must never forget what happened and we must make sure that we do all in our powers to make sure that it is never ever repeated. ...

405 **Rhianon Passmore (Labour Co-op):** ...The present wars and conflicts between Ukraine and Russia and the terrible human horrors being experienced and unfolding daily across Israel and Palestine show us all so directly the need to consider the importance of the role of peacemaker, and also the importance of political leaders as peacemakers. ...

417 **Altat Hussain (Conservative):** ... This weekend in churches and at war memorials across the British isles we will stand together and remember the sacrifice made by brave servicemen and women who laid down their lives to protect our freedoms and to preserve us from tyranny. We must remember them. We will honour their sacrifices. ...

418 After all, those who fought and died in all the major conflicts were from all races and faiths. Four hundred thousand Muslim soldiers fought for Britain during the first world war. ...

420 So, this weekend, it should not be just churches that are conducting services for remembrance, but also the mosques, the gurdwaras, synagogues, temples and other places of worship. As Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner said, the blood from the battlefields did not discriminate between Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Jews. Therefore we honour those who fought together by remembering them together. ...

421 **Gareth Davies (Conservative):** ... Personally, I haven't served in the forces but my grandfather did his national service between 1948 and 1950, and he was responsible for moving Jewish people from Europe to Israel via Cyprus, and I thought that would be a timely remark to make given the current troubles in Gaza. ...

433 **Hannah Blythyn:** ... for many in communities across the country serving, and veterans communities, when the last post is sounded at services, and in the two-minute silence that follows, there will be particular faces that may come to mind. In communities across the country, there will be people who are remembered, and lives cut far, far too short. So, when we stop and pause on Armistice Day, on Remembrance Sunday, as we have done today in this Chamber, we remember those who have served and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. In their memory, we dedicate our cause to the end of conflict, and we will remember them.

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13556#A83089>

Antisemitic Incidents – November 7 Update

In the 32 days inclusive between the Hamas terror attack on Israel (Saturday 7 October) and Tuesday 7 November, CST recorded at least 1124 antisemitic incidents across the UK. This is the highest ever total reported to CST across a thirty-two-day period. ...

For comparison, CST recorded 183 antisemitic incidents over the same 28 days in 2022. This means that we have seen an increase in anti-Jewish hate acts of 514% this year compared to the same period last year. ...

The 1124 antisemitic incidents recorded over this thirty-two-day period fall into the following categories:

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

CST has recorded 638 antisemitic incidents in Greater London; 210 in Greater Manchester; 38 in West Yorkshire; 33 in Hertfordshire; 20 in Scotland; 18 in Thames Valley; 18 in the West Midlands; 11 in Nottinghamshire; ten in Merseyside; and the remaining 128 incidents were spread across 32 different police regions around the UK.

Seven hundred and seventy-three of the 1124 antisemitic incidents occurred offline and 351 were online. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/11/07/antisemitic-incidents-7-november-update>

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Holocaust

See also the Welsh Senedd debate on “Remembrance” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Debate

Debate on the Address

col 28 Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the holocaust memorial ... The original proposal was that the holocaust memorial would be up within two years—by the end of 2017. Eight years on from 2015, and there is no prospect of it possibly being open in the next five years.

The holocaust memorial galleries have since been developed at the Imperial War Museum, and I propose that those in charge of the project should get together with Baroness Deech, me and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who played in the Auschwitz women’s orchestra and survived Bergen-Belsen, to have a private—not secret—meeting to discuss how we can have a memorial that meets the task without taking over so much of Victoria Tower Gardens, while separating the learning centre. Having a double basement in the middle of a small park south of the House of Lords is not appropriate. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-07/debates/4BAD4C4BB-07D9-4376-ABE6-069C9823F38A/DebateOnTheAddress>

The King’s Speech can be read at

Israel

See also the Welsh Senedd debate on “Remembrance” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Debate

Debate on the Address

col 15 Keir Starmer (Labour): ... The speech mentions the terrible events in Israel and Palestine. It is now one month exactly since the senseless murder of Jews by the terrorists of Hamas and the taking of hostages on 7 October. Every new day in Gaza brings with it more pain, more suffering, more agony. Hostages are still held; thousands of civilians are dead, including so many innocent women and children; millions are struggling for the basics of life—food, water, sanitation, medicines and fuel. We cannot and we will not close our eyes to their suffering. We need a humanitarian pause now and for the hostages to be released now. Israel has the right and duty to defend herself, but that is not a blank cheque; it must comply with international law. This House must commit to doing whatever it can to keep alive the light of peace, so we welcome the clear commitment in the speech to supporting the two-state solution. ...

col 17 The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak): ... let me first address the situation in Israel and Gaza. All of us in the House care deeply about the suffering of innocent people and the scenes we have witnessed. We abhor the way in which Hamas have used innocent Palestinians as human shields. It is right that the United Kingdom is doubling our aid funding for Palestinian civilians. We have been consistent throughout in our calls for a humanitarian pause as soon as possible to get aid in and hostages and foreign nationals out, but a unilateral and unconditional ceasefire would simply allow Hamas to entrench their position and continue their attacks against Israel. Only last week, Hamas reiterated their intentions, stating clearly: “We will repeat the October 7 attack time and again until Israel is annihilated.”

Faced with such a threat, no country could reasonably be expected not to act.

Last week, I spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu to reiterate the United Kingdom’s backing for Israel’s right to defend itself; it is the first duty of any Government. I also stressed the need to allow more aid into Gaza, to take all possible measures to minimise civilian casualties, and to avoid inflaming tensions in the west bank, where settler violence must stop. I can update the House that now well over 100 British nationals have been able to leave Gaza, thanks to our diplomatic efforts to reopen the Rafah crossing. ...

col 24 Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... We believe in peace, we believe in protecting civilians and we believe in democracy. ... it is important to reiterate that all of us in this Chamber are united in our unequivocal condemnation of what Hamas did exactly a month ago. There can never be a justification for the senseless killing of men, women and children in the way that that terrorist organisation did. What we have seen off the back of that on our streets is equally—not perhaps equally—concerning. We all have grave concerns about the rise of antisemitism and the fear so many people have walking the streets of these isles. I want to send my heartfelt support to all those in the Jewish community and to make it very clear—if, indeed, it ever needed to be clear—that we all oppose antisemitism, no ifs and no buts. ...

Finally on that point, I think what we all so urgently want to see is diplomacy in action to release the hostages who are still under Hamas's control. There can be, as I said in relation to other matters, no justification for that and we all want to see those people returned to their families as quickly as possible. ...

The conflict in Israel and Gaza cannot be forgotten without mentioning what we are seeing in Gaza itself. Thousands upon thousands of people have been killed. People do not have access to food. They do not have access to clean water. They do not have access to fuel. col/ 25 They cannot turn on the lights. They do not have access to medicine. In many instances, the hospitals they go to no longer exist, the schools they once went to no longer exist, the universities they once went to no longer exist. What we are seeing—this is perhaps where the agreement across the Floor goes away—is collective punishment. What we so badly need to see is a humanitarian ceasefire. No, not a humanitarian pause, which fills people's bellies, only for them to be blown up in the days to follow. What we believe in unequivocally is a humanitarian ceasefire. I sincerely hope that Members across the Chamber will join us in coming to that position in the not too distant future, because those are our values. We believe in peace and we believe in the protection of civilians. ...

col/ 28 **Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** ... Overhanging our debate is the misery and terror both from the attack on Israel and the Israelis, and from the conditions of people in Gaza. We need to keep in mind that until Hamas releases hostages, until it can honestly say that it will not repeat that kind of attack, and until it recognises the state of Israel, it will be a continuing problem. We cannot close our eyes and say that an instant, lasting ceasefire will solve all the problems.

Although many people have criticised the Leader of the Opposition, I think that what he and the shadow Foreign Secretary have said is worth reading. We have to have an end to the violence. We have often talked about how the aggressive settlements have destroyed people's lives in the west bank and about the conditions of people in Gaza, but we have to recognise that the bigger reality is that what happened on 7 October was another pogrom, which prompted one of my constituents to say, "There are only 16 million Jews around the world. Why do they keep picking on us?"

In this country we have to protect Muslims and Jews against hatred, and we need to make sure that we do not have one-sided demonstrations. Everyone needs protection. ...

col/ 30 **Ed Davey (Liberal Democrat):** ... Today's Gracious Speech is overshadowed by horrifying events around the world, with the monstrous terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel one month ago—more than 1,400 Israelis were slaughtered and hundreds were taken hostage, and they are in our thoughts today—and now the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Innocent Palestinians have been cut off from food, water and medicine. Their homes have been destroyed, and more than 10,000 have been killed. ...

col/ 44 **Sammy Wilson (DUP):** ... I am glad that the Government have once again restated their commitment to stand by those who are under attack from tyrants and from terrorism, with their commitment to Ukraine and their commitment to Israel, both of which are under huge pressure at present. Indeed, across the world there appears to have been a tiring in support for the war in Ukraine and for the Ukrainian Government as well as, almost immediately, condemnation of the nation of Israel for standing up and doing its duty by its citizens who were brutally murdered by terrorists. Many people—some of them may be well-meaning, and some may be simply reacting to the cruelty of war—are calling for an immediate ceasefire. While the Government of Israel have their citizens held captive and while Israel's very existence is under threat because of a huge terrorist army on its doorstep, regardless of how strong the siren calls are from the UN, nations across the world and all the non-governmental organisations, it would be foolish to go for a ceasefire. It is a typical terrorist tactic: when terrorists are under pressure or the state comes after them, they call for a ceasefire. What for—because they want to stop the violence? No. It is because they want to regroup. We have seen it in Northern Ireland. When the terrorists

in Northern Ireland were under pressure, they declared ceasefires. It gave them time to regroup, and I do not think the situation in the middle east is any different. There will be difficult days ahead—I am sure there will be pictures on our TV screens that will make us all sorrowful—but I hope our Government stand by the resolution in the King's Speech and stand by the state of Israel in defence of its citizens. ...

col 62 **Julie Elliott (Labour):** ... I am extremely concerned about the fact that the Government have brought back the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which is designed to put undue controls on public bodies and limit their ability to express their beliefs. This is a time when language and actions matter—we have heard a lot about the horror that is unfolding in the middle east; about the horror inflicted on Israeli citizens by Hamas; and about the tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians who have died in the horror unfolding in Gaza—and there has never been a more sensitive time in the middle east, so to introduce the Bill at this moment shows a lack of sensitivity by the Government. It is adding fuel to the fire, and it is not sensible to introduce it at this time. ...

col 66 **Ian Blackford (SNP):** ... Of course, much of the attention over the past few weeks has rightly been on the appalling events that unfolded in Israel on 7 October. It is right that each and every one of us in this House should call out that act of terrorism, that attack on the people of Israel that took place, and that slaughter of men, women and children. Yes, we call out Hamas as the terrorist organisation it is, and yes, Hamas must be destroyed—it must be defeated—but we also need to recognise that, sadly, what we have seen over the past few weeks is the inhumane slaughter not just of the Israelis, but of those who live in Gaza and are casualties of a war that is not of their making. We must remember the responsibility that we have, yes, to support Israel, but also, yes, to support those who desire peace on the Palestinian side.

We must recognise that for far too long many of us right across this Chamber have been calling for a two-state solution. To get to that prize, where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace together, yes, we must ensure that those who are held hostage by Hamas are returned to their families and loved ones, but we must also recognise that we cannot have the slaughter of innocent civilians—the children who have given their life. All of us across these islands, and across the western world, have a responsibility to ensure that the case for a humanitarian solution to protect innocent lives must be at the forefront of our minds. ...

col 78 **Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op):** ... What happens elsewhere in the world—in Israel and Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, the Sahel, south Asia, Yemen, Nigeria, Syria and many, many other regions and countries—matters deeply to my constituents. In the past weeks I have heard from constituents about their anguish at the deaths, loss of civilian life and destruction in Gaza, and their horror at the terrorism, hostage taking and killing that Israel and its citizens have had to endure. I have heard about the need to ensure we protect civilians, aid workers, hospitals and schools; to secure humanitarian pauses and get humanitarian aid in, particularly into Gaza; and to move back to a pathway to peace and a two-state solution, and to an adherence to international law and international humanitarian law. I have also ... heard face to face from those who have families who are directly affected in both Gaza and Israel—a genuine fear about what divisions can mean for us in our communities. ...

col 83 **Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op):** ... My constituents have overwhelmingly expressed their call for an immediate ceasefire across Israel and Gaza, putting the humanitarian cause at the forefront of our response. Our hearts are breaking for the hostages, the casualties and their families caught up in this war. While I utterly condemn the horrific violence perpetrated by Hamas, I cannot be silent about the barbarity of the bombing in Gaza. As Israeli citizens are suffering, the civilians of Gaza are suffering too. They have neither perpetrated any violence nor have any means of defence. Last night Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, described this as “a crisis of humanity” and

said that Gaza was fast becoming “a graveyard for children”. Over 4,100 innocent children are dead. Every life is a precious gift and we carry a heavy responsibility to do everything in our power to stop the killing.

I therefore call for an immediate ceasefire, with the return of all hostages. I call for justice for those whose human rights have been stolen. I call for talks to be taken to a new level and note the dereliction of duty of this Government over many years in focusing on the situation in the middle east. If we join the majority of nations calling for a ceasefire and work for a ceasefire, it is more likely to come about than if we do not. A humanitarian pause might be the first step, but we cannot let the killing then resume. We know that 10,000 Palestinians and 1,400 Israelis are already in their graves.

We must also ensure that this conflict is not fuelled by the further supply of defence weapons into the hands of any actors in this war. The UK arms trade has sold equipment into Israel and I call for that to stop today while working internationally to prevent Hamas from regrouping and rearming. With 1.5 million people now displaced in Gaza, we also demand an escalation in the Government’s humanitarian response. They must use all their power, their ships and planes, their diplomacy and persuasion and, as necessary, their resources to get food, water, medical aid and other humanitarian supplies into Gaza. History will not judge this nation well unless we refocus to bring about the cause of peace. It is possible, but we carry a heavy responsibility to join the majority of nations who now make this call. ...

col/ 91 Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op): ... I utterly condemn Hamas’s appalling and ongoing terror attacks on Israel. There can never be any justification for the shocking attacks a month ago or the continued holding of hostages. When an innocent is killed, it is equally tragic, whether they are Palestinian or Israeli. We must uphold the basic fundamental human rights of innocent Palestinians too, caught in the crossfire between Hamas and Israel. International law must be upheld.

With this the fourth and most horrific clash between Hamas and Israel since the terrorist group took over Gaza, with more than 1,400 Israelis and 10,000 Palestinians reported dead, so many of them children, and with neither Hamas nor the Government of Israel yet to allow a humanitarian pause or a ceasefire, we must not give up looking for ways to save lives, and to end this cycle of misery, violence and fear. Military action, rockets, bombs and violence will not deliver long-term justice for the Palestinian people, nor long-term security for the Israeli people. As so many—from the United Nations to Save the Children and the excellent Medical Aid for Palestinians—have already made clear, urgent medical aid, water, food and fuel for hospitals must be delivered into Gaza, hostages must be brought home and siege conditions lifted to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Many years ago, I visited Gaza. At that time, despite considerable barriers to peace, there was hope for a negotiated peaceful future and serious attempts were under way to find a way forward. It is even more essential now to find new routes for such a future. As a Minister for International Development in the last Labour Government, I worked closely with UN organisations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Funding to UNWRA was significantly increased but, until a few days ago, Ministers had sadly reversed that investment. UNWRA needs new support, long-term commitment and a recognition that it is a fundamental part of the route to helping secure both a safer Israel and a sovereign Palestinian state.

col/ 92 Here in our country, the conflict has already had a significant impact—very directly for the families of British citizens killed, injured, taken hostage on 7 October or killed and injured in Gaza since. For many others, there is a sense of deep distress, renewed anger at the injustice faced down the years by the Palestinian people, and fear and anger among the Jewish community about their safety and security. The rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks in our communities should be a wake-up call to us all to look for ways to bring people together rather than to push each other away. ...

col 97 Patrick Grady (SNP): ... the issue I have most heard about from my Glasgow North constituents in recent weeks is the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the need for an immediate ceasefire. ... Thousands of completely innocent children have been killed—by some counts, one child for every 10 minutes of the conflict so far—and acts of what can only be described as collective punishment are being inflicted on people in Gaza by the Government of Israel. Likewise, there is no justification for the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas. Nor is there any excuse for antisemitism in any form. At the end of the day, a lasting settlement can only come about through negotiation and a willingness to come to agreement.

That is why a ceasefire, which means that everybody involved ceases firing, must be the start. ... [and] aid convoys to be allowed in, people who want to leave to be able to do so, and then legitimate representatives to get round a table and work out a route to peace.

As Pope Paul VI said: “peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men”—more succinctly: “if you want peace, you must work for justice.” The God that he spoke of is the God held to be true by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike—the God who teaches in their holy books that we should treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated. In that golden rule of reciprocity lies the route to peace in the middle east, and indeed to peace and justice around the world ...

col 98 Apsana Begum (Labour): ... People in my constituency are alarmed and appalled at the disregard for Palestinian life that has been demonstrated widely in the recent period. It is therefore very concerning that the King’s Speech did not include a commitment to securing a ceasefire on both sides in Gaza and the release of all hostages, along with a condemnation of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This is not an abstract point; this is a live issue. The situation is urgent. Figures from Gaza indicate that over 10,000 Palestinian civilians have now died—over 10,000 in just 30 days—almost half of whom are children. According to Save the Children, the number of Palestinian children killed in Gaza by last week’s figures has already surpassed the annual number of children killed across the world’s conflict zones since 2019. Gaza, in the words of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, is becoming a “graveyard for children”. It is beyond unacceptable that children are paying the ultimate price amidst the failure of political leaders in the US, the UK and Europe to call for an immediate ceasefire and oppose violations of international law.

Every hour, every day, the number of deaths gets higher and higher, and the reports and images of the impact of the military bombardment on refugee camps, hospitals and schools are simply horrifying. Nothing—nothing—can justify these crimes against humanity that we are witnessing in real time. Can the Government confirm why they seem to understand that killing thousands of children in response to the horrific killings and hostage taking that included children on 7 October is either moral or in keeping with international law? Can the Government clarify why they support the collective punishment and killing of innocent civilians as a legitimate response to the killing of innocent civilians? Can the Government confirm whether any weapons traded from the UK have been used to kill any children or civilians? All lives should be valued and cherished—Israeli and Palestinian—yet the ongoing dehumanisation and collective punishment of Palestinian civilians will be marked as a terrible crime against humanity for years to come.

col 99 My constituents—multicultural, multiracial, from all faiths and none—would have liked the King’s Speech to address the long-term situation for Palestine. ...

col 100 Catherine West (Labour): ... One of the most helpful things I did during Prorogation was attend two synagogues in my constituency, where I took part in prayers for Israel. I also attended the London Islamic Cultural Society mosque in my constituency, as well as the interfaith group that meets every couple of months in the constituency, usually to discuss interfaith work, but in the context of the unfolding tragedy in Israel and

Gaza, to talk about how we as a community can respond to the horror of the attacks that Hamas perpetrated in the south of Israel on 7 October, a month ago today, and the feelings of despair and sadness experienced by families whose loved ones are still in tunnels somewhere in Gaza, as well as the terrible television coverage and newspaper reports of the situation in Gaza. I think the *Financial Times* reported a week ago that people in Gaza were running out of shrouds in which to wrap the fatalities, and were having to build mass graves, which is a terrible moment for any humanitarian organisation. ...

col 103 Anna McMorrin (Labour): ... Like many, I am horrified by the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, violence and devastation that is impacting many thousands of innocent people—including women and children—in Gaza. Our priority must be to protect innocent civilians, to ensure that food, water and support reaches them, and to ensure that international law is upheld.

I have reached out to the Jewish and Muslim communities in my constituency to ensure that we do not allow these events to divide us, and that any hate—Islamophobia or antisemitism—is called out. ... The only solution to the crisis is a peaceful and political one: a two-state solution that recognises both a secure Israel and a Palestine where Palestinians live freely. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-07/debates/4BADDC4BB-07D9-4376-ABE6-069C9823F38A/DebateOnTheAddress>

The King's Speech can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-07/debates/24D8E0F6-1D2C-45DE-A8C4-F5C7B2477C68/King'SSpeech>

House of Lords Debate

The King's Speech

col 11 Baroness Smith of Basildon (Labour): ... For many of our citizens, these are challenging and worrying times. ... Today is just a month since Hamas's brutal attack on Israel, with 1,400 people murdered and over 200 taken hostages. Their families still do not know their fate. The violence and suffering that has been unleashed is devastating. As the death toll in Gaza continues to rise, it is clear that humanitarian support is now essential to ensure that aid gets to those who desperately need it, and the hostages must be released.

Over the years, it has been too easy to look away when there have been tensions, and just to hope that peace will endure. When it does not, it is harder to find a way back and to keep the faith that a lasting peace is possible. But we must hold on to that faith. Saying that something is so does not make it happen. With so much suffering and violence across the world, our role, working internationally with other countries and institutions for the greater good, remains essential. ...

col 15 Lord Newby (Liberal Democrat): ... International crises are often the great unpredictable disruptors that preoccupy our politics, and in this Parliament Ukraine and now Gaza have done so. We have supported the Government in their response to Ukraine, and on Gaza we agree that Israel has the clear right to defend itself against attack, but we are concerned about the impact of its response on the innocent citizens of Gaza. We call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the release of all the hostages and call on the Government to intensify their diplomatic efforts to bring these about. ...

col 17 Lord True (Conservative): ... We think also of the victims of the truly barbaric atrocities perpetrated by Hamas against Israel a month ago today in which at least 14 British nationals were killed, and for which there can be no justification whatever. The Government continue to support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international

humanitarian law. We must also support the Palestinian people and are doing so; they are victims of Hamas too. As the Prime Minister has said, there is no scenario where Hamas can be allowed to control Gaza again. We are working to support British nationals in Gaza and the wider region and to secure the safe return of hostages. We continue to work with international partners to prevent a destabilising regional escalation. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-07/debates/61944406-C0B2-4826-B3E1-CF36791A8E5B/King'SSpeech>

The King's Speech can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-07/debates/24D8E0F6-1D2C-45DE-A8C4-F5C7B2477C68/King'SSpeech>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Richard Burgon (Labour) [1] Protecting civilians in Gaza and Israel – This House utterly condemns the massacre of Israeli civilians and taking of hostages by Hamas; agrees with the United Nations Secretary-General that these horrific acts do not justify responding with the collective punishment of the Palestinian people; expresses its deep alarm at the Israeli military bombardment and total siege of Gaza and the resulting deaths and suffering; believes that the urgent priority must be to stop the deaths and suffering of any more civilians in Gaza and Israel; welcomes the joint statement from 12 leading aid agencies, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Medical Aid for Palestinians and Islamic Relief, calling on the UK Government to use its influence to help protect civilians, to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law and to guarantee civilians have access to critical life-saving humanitarian support; and to this end supports their call for the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to urgently press all parties to agree to an immediate de-escalation and cessation of hostilities, to ensure the immediate, unconditional release of the Israeli hostages, to end the total siege of Gaza and allow for unfettered access of medical supplies, food, fuel electricity and water, to guarantee that international humanitarian law is upheld and that civilians are protected in accordance with those laws.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61468>

The joint statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/12-aid-agencies-call-on-uk-government-to-put-civilians-first-in-israel-gaza-conflict/>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

G7 Hiroshima Summit: Foreign Ministers' Statement

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union, are more united than ever in the pursuit of international peace, security, and prosperity. ... We remain steadfast in upholding and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law, respecting the United Nations (UN) Charter. We reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the peacefully established status of territories by force or coercion anywhere in the world. Such attempts undermine the rule of law, which protects all nations, especially the vulnerable, as well as global security and human dignity. ... We remain deeply concerned about foreign interference, information manipulation, and other hostile actions designed to undermine our democracies. ...

1. Situation in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank

We unequivocally condemn the terror attacks by Hamas and others across Israel that began on October 7, 2023, as well as ongoing missile attacks against Israel. We emphasize Israel's right to defend itself and its people, in accordance with international law, as it seeks to prevent a recurrence. We call for the immediate release of all hostages without preconditions. We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims of these attacks and their families, as well as all civilians, Palestinian, Israeli, and others, including our own citizens, who have died or been injured during this conflict. Israelis and Palestinians have an equal right to live in safety, dignity, and peace. We reject antisemitism and Islamophobia in any form in our own societies and anywhere in the world.

We stress the need for urgent action to address the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. All parties must allow unimpeded humanitarian support for civilians, including food, water, medical care, fuel, and shelter, and access for humanitarian workers. We support humanitarian pauses and corridors to facilitate urgently needed assistance, civilian movement, and the release of hostages. Foreign nationals must also be allowed to continue to depart. We underscore the importance of protecting civilians and compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Since October 7, the G7 members have pledged an additional \$500 million for the Palestinian people, including through the UN agencies and other humanitarian actors. We urge countries around the world to join us in this effort. We welcome the November 9 international conference in Paris on humanitarian issues.

The rise in extremist settler violence committed against Palestinians is unacceptable, undermines security in the West Bank, and threatens prospects for a lasting peace. The G7 members, along with partners in the region, are working intensively to prevent the conflict from escalating further and spreading more widely. We are also working together, including by imposing sanctions or other measures, to deny Hamas the ability to raise and use funds to carry out atrocities.

The G7 members are committed to working closely with partners to prepare sustainable long-term solutions for Gaza and a return to a broader peace process in line with the internationally agreed parameters. We underscore that a two-state solution, which envisions Israel and a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace, security, and mutual recognition, remains the only path to a just, lasting, and secure peace. ...

6. Iran

We call on Iran to refrain from providing support for Hamas and taking further actions that destabilize the Middle East, including support for Lebanese Hezbollah and other non-state actors, and to use its influence with those groups to de-escalate regional tensions.

We remain determined that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon and reiterate that Iran must cease its unabated escalation of its nuclear program, which has no credible civilian justification and brings it dangerously close to actual weapon-related activities. We call on Iran to fulfill its legal obligations and political commitments regarding nuclear non-proliferation with prompt action, including the full and unconditional cooperation with the IAEA. We urge Iran to reverse the de-designations of the IAEA inspectors, which affects in a severe way the Agency's ability to conduct effectively its inspections in Iran. A diplomatic solution remains the best way to resolve international concerns.

We express our grave concern regarding Iran's other destabilizing activities, such as the development of ballistic missile programs, including under the guise of space launch vehicles, transfer of missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and related technologies to state and non-state actors, as well as training and funding of non-state actors. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/g7-foreign-ministers-statement-in-japan-november-2023>

British Embassy in Tel Aviv marks 30 days since 7 October

On 7 November, the British Embassy in Israel marked 30 days since the events of 7 October

The embassy's team, Israelis and British people who work shoulder-to-shoulder on normal days and in crisis, stood together for a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the atrocities committed in Israel by Hamas a month ago ... and in the hope of a quick and safe return of the hostages.

The Israeli workers expressed their gratitude for the support they received from the embassy. The ambassador, Simon Walters, recited a prayer for the safe return of the hostages.

The ceremony was also attended virtually by members of the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Jewish Society, who expressed their support of their colleagues in Israel.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-embassy-in-tel-aviv-marks-30-days-since-7-october>

Welsh Senedd Motions

Tabled on 25/10/2023 | For debate on 08/11/2023

Rhun ap Iorwerth (Plaid Cymru) [NDM8391 - Opposition Debate on 8/11/2023] To propose that the Senedd:

1. Condemns the horrifying attacks carried out by Hamas against Israeli civilians and calls for the immediate release of hostages.
2. Notes that Israel has a duty to ensure the protection, security and welfare of its citizens and the occupied Palestinian population.
3. Condemns the Israeli Government's indiscriminate attacks on Gaza, resulting in the death of thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians and agrees with the United Nations Secretary-General that collective punishment of the Palestinian people cannot be justified.
4. Calls on the international community to:
 - a) unite in seeking an immediate ceasefire to end the human suffering and allow humanitarian organisations to reach those in need;
 - b) bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government to end the siege of Gaza which contravenes international law and the basic human rights of Palestinian civilians; and
 - c) do everything within its power to create safe and meaningful aid corridors into the Gaza Strip and enable safe passage out of the region.
5. Stands in solidarity with the Israeli and Palestinian communities in Wales affected by the conflict.
6. Urges the Senedd to support a two-state solution in order to pursue lasting peace in the region.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Motion/8391>

Darren Millar (Conservative) [NDM8391 – 1 Amendment] Delete all and replace with: To propose that the Senedd:

1. Condemns the indiscriminate attacks, violence and acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas against Israel on 7th October.
2. Recognises the right of all sovereign states, including the State of Israel, to defend themselves and their citizens.
3. Believes that war should be conducted in accordance with international law, including avoiding civilian casualties.
4. Regrets the loss of civilian lives and casualties in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.
5. Extends the deepest sympathy of people across Wales to those who have lost loved ones.

6. Recognises the further risks posed by the significant humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

7. Calls for:

a) the release of hostages;

b) a suspension of hostilities to allow for the establishment of humanitarian corridors;

c) the reopening of the Rafah crossing to enable civilians, foreign nationals, aid workers and humanitarian supplies to cross without unnecessary hindrance;

d) the international community to work with Israeli and Palestinian representatives to bring an end to the conflict and negotiate a permanent peace settlement which delivers security and prosperity for all, based on the principle of the two-state solution.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Motion/8391#A1>

United Nations

Secretary-General Reiterates Condemnation of Terror Acts Committed by Hamas in Israel, Again Calls for Immediate Humanitarian Ceasefire

... One month after the horrific events of 7 October, the Secretary-General reiterates his total condemnation of the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel for which there can be no justification. He will never forget the horrendous images of civilians being killed and maimed and others being dragged away into captivity. He reiterates his appeal for their immediate and unconditional release.

The Secretary-General remains extremely distressed by the killing of civilians in Gaza and the humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Gaza, with an unimaginable toll on civilians.

He also reiterates his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm22024.doc.htm>

Amid Conflict in Gaza, General Assembly's Discussion of World Court, Human Rights Council Never More Important, Speakers Say, Noting Requests for Advisory Opinion

... Many Member States commended the World Court for its integrity and impartiality and expressed hope that it would look at Israel's possible violations of international law.

The Egyptian delegate ... noted the importance of the Court's advisory opinions and said that he eagerly awaits its opinion on the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The continued bombings of civilians in Gaza and the Israeli rhetoric against the helpless Palestinian people run counter to all international treaties.

"The legal dimension of the Palestinian question is very important," he said, adding that Egypt has submitted a request for an advisory opinion on Israeli practices. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine said the international law-based order is failing the Palestinian people, notably in Gaza, where an entire nation is fighting for its survival. The Court was created to avoid such atrocities, he said, urging the international community to reject double standards in the application of the law. ...

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply, **the representative of Israel** regretted that the Palestinian delegate chose to exploit the Assembly platform. Israel upholds the truth regarding the conflict with Hamas, he said, adding that his country is at war with a terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip, not with the Palestinian population. He called for the release of all Israeli hostages and said that Hamas will be held accountable for its attack. He added that Hamas must lay down its arms and surrender, and if it does so, the war ends tomorrow. ...

During the discussion, several delegations condemned Israel's actions in the occupied

Palestinian territories, stressing the need for multilateral institutions to uphold their integrity in maintaining global peace and human dignity. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12557.doc.htm>

Fourth Committee Hears More Pleas for Humanitarian Truce in Gaza as Debate Concludes on Israeli Practices, Palestinian Rights

... **Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh (Iran)** ... said that the forced evictions through the systemic demolition of Palestinian homes in the occupied territories constitute the most egregious gross violation of human rights. Condemning the Israeli regime for its determination to occupy more land and integrate it into other occupied areas, he urged support for the mandate of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to raise awareness about illegal Israeli activities. He added that the illegal and inhumane land and sea blockade that has turned Gaza into the world's largest open-air prison must be lifted immediately. As the collective conscience of the international community, the General Assembly should condemn Israeli aggression and adopt measures to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes. Underlining the urgency of a comprehensive action for reconstruction, he said that Israel should be compelled by the international community to pay its contribution and be held liable for its crimes.

Hasanain Hadi Hasan Al-Dahlaki (Iraq) ... said that Israel is openly flouting resolutions and human rights instruments. The international community must be firm in addressing this aggression, he said, rejecting that country's racist laws and militant behaviours in its attempt to create a new reality. Ending the occupation and creating two States, with an independent and sovereign Palestinian State, is the only way to arrive at a just and lasting peace. Condemning the bombing of civilians, the large-scale detention of Palestinian people, the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, as well as the destruction of schools and places of worship, he said that all obstacles placed in the path of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must be lifted. Also condemning the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, he said that Palestine must be given full-fledged membership within the United Nations.

Fahad Mohammad F M F Alajmi (Kuwait) ... suggested that it would perhaps be wise to change the name of this agenda item from "Israeli practices" to "Israeli violations". ...

Abdulrahman Abdulaziz F. A. Al-Thani (Qatar) ... said the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory has caused the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world. The targeting of residential communities, hospitals, schools and shelters for internally displaced persons constitutes "barbaric massacres against unarmed civilians". This portends a dangerous repercussion on regional peace and security. The international community should protect affected Palestinians besieged in the Gaza Strip, he said, warning against the dangers of collective punishment and depopulating the northern part of Gaza. He also condemned the statement by the Minister of Heritage of Israel that a nuclear bomb be dropped on the Strip. ...

Mohannad Baghdadi (Syria) ... said the right of self-defense — "a license given to Israel to continue killing Palestinians" — cannot apply in this case, as Israel was recognized as an occupying Power in an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice. Recent nuclear threats against Gaza made by Israeli officials are "evidence of the State terrorism practiced by the Israeli entity". Turning to the Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan, he condemned Israel for obstructing the construction of homes by Golan residents and demolishing houses. He also detailed cases of converting agricultural land into military areas and the disposal of radioactive waste which has reportedly led to increased health problems, including cancer. ...

Geng Shuang (China) called on Israel, as the occupying Power, to fulfil its obligations under international law, restore basic services to Gaza, secure local communications, ensure unobstructed relief routes and cease its collective punishment of the people of Gaza. Rejecting the forced displacement of the Palestinian population, he called for the immediate lifting of the evacuation order for northern Gaza. Behind the conflict in Gaza is the fact that Palestinian living space has been “squeezed to the limit” by more than 50 years of Israeli occupation, he said, adding that the continued expansion of settlement activity has made an independent, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State even more elusive. ...

Ahmad Samir Fahim Habashneh (Jordan) ... condemned the vile Israeli crimes in Gaza, particularly those in the Jabalia refugee camp and the Al-Shifa hospital. The international community must deter Israel from committing further crimes against civilians. Israel’s actions since 7 October are war crimes under the 1949 Geneva Convention, he said, adding that “this will never bring security or peace to Israel and its society”. Pressure should also be placed on Israel to allow sufficient, predictable and sustainable humanitarian aid to enter Gaza alongside the resumption of vital services to civilians. Jordan will confront any targeting and displacement of civilians to neighbouring countries with “all our force and determination”. Demanding an immediate ceasefire, he rejected Israel’s characterization of its actions as self-defence. He condemned an Israeli Government Minister’s remarks about dropping a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip as provocative, racist and inciteful, adding that such declarations are an admission that Israel is violating international law. ...

Fayee Fahad M. Al Kahtani (Saudi Arabia) ... called for a ceasefire and an end to Israel’s military operations. Israel must be held accountable for its continuing wide-ranging crimes against Palestinian people, including the use of internationally prohibited weapons, the premeditated targeting of women and children and older persons, and attacks on schools and hospitals. ... He also called for an end to the targeting of the Palestinian presence in Al Quds and the incursion of Israeli settlers into the Haram al-Sharif, emphasizing that an aggression against Islamic holy sites will be a provocation against Muslims around the world.

Gershon Kedar (Israel) said that following Hamas’ barbaric attack on Israel, it would be a disgrace to those murdered and a dishonour to those taken hostage “if we were to carry on business as usual”. Despite the horrific slaughter of so many innocent Israelis, there are no expectations that the United Nations will establish a committee to investigate Hamas’ crimes. Rather, the Fourth Committee’s budget and time have been spent — for decades — in complete disregard of Hamas’ brutality against both Israelis and Palestinians, focusing solely on disseminating destructive Palestinian propaganda. He detailed the contents of a report that would be written were the United Nations to establish such a committee, and were its members to investigate Hamas’ war crimes in an objective manner “as befits a UN body”. Such a report would note that, this year, the committee “was presented with the clearest evidence it has seen of Hamas’ policies that systematically violate the human rights of the Israeli people in a manner many interlocutors see as akin to barbarism”.

Such a report, he continued, would deplore the attack on southern Israel on 7 October and note that the President of the Palestinian Authority has not condemned the “most horrific and extensive attack on Jews since the Holocaust”. It would also condemn the continued firing of rockets into areas populated by Israeli civilians from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen by Hamas, Hizbullah and other Iranian proxies. Further, it would deplore Iran’s active support and significant involvement in terror actions by Hamas, Hizbullah and the Houthis through financing, training and weapons proliferation. “That is what surely would have been written, were the United Nations to value the lives of Israelis and were a United Nations body to report accurately on the terrible events of 7 October in southern Israel.” Recalling the words of Solomon Mikhoels on the reasons to destroy fascism, he

said that Israel's message today is: "If you want to live, destroy Hamas. If you want culture to continue and develop, destroy Hamas. If you want humanity to live, destroy Hamas. If you want to help mankind, destroy Hamas." ...

Robert A. Wood (United States) said after 7 October, the world "must not return to the status quo where Hamas terrorizes Israel and uses Palestinian civilians as human shields and where violent extremist settlers terrorize Palestinians in the West Bank". ... Condemning Hamas' acts of terror that seek to destroy Israel, he noted that Hamas never cared about the genuine needs or safety of the people it claims to represent. ... While Hamas operates within civilian areas, it creates an additional burden of responsibility on Israel to distinguish between terrorists and civilians, he added. ...

Mohammad Ali Jardali (Lebanon) condemned the Israeli aggression against Gaza and the destruction and killing of civilians, many of which are women and children. ... Noting Israel's refusal to cooperate with the Special Committee and preventing access into the occupied territories, he said that the Secretary-General's report shows that Israeli practices reflect a deliberate and systematic policy without any accountability or resistance, aimed at creating a new geographic and demographic reality that will be detrimental to the Palestinians. ...

Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) said that the conflict has entered a new and dangerous phase, with the full-scale ground operation by the Israeli armed forces accompanied by large-scale missile attacks and bombing of the Gaza Strip, deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure and refugee camps. In the West Bank, violence is escalating as a result of Israel's continued settlement activity. References to the right to self-defence are not convincing in this instance, he said, also condemning Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan and shootings on Lebanon's borders. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine, responding to Israel's representative, recalled that the Human Rights Council has established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. However, Israel has constantly assailed that body and blocked its work. She also asked whether, by continually referencing Hamas and using hateful rhetoric, Israel will make the international community lose sight of the Palestinian people's long struggle. ... On threats by the Israeli officials "to wipe out Gaza" and "to drop a nuclear bomb," she added: "One can only imagine what is said behind closed doors by the extremists".

The representative of Iran said that portraying Israelis as innocent victims is part of the Israeli regime's playbook. The actions taken by Palestine in resistance are solely determined by Palestinians themselves and are grounded in their right to self-determination. He added that blaming Hamas is a "flimsy excuse" for settlement and genocide. Iran is not involved in Palestine's response, he said, reaffirming support for Palestinians' legitimate reactions aimed at realizing their rights to self-determination.

The representative of Israel said that countries that violate the human rights of their own people are all too comfortable lecturing a particular Member State on alleged human rights violations. Of the 27 countries that spent the past two days in the Fourth Committee promoting a one-sided, extremist and false narrative against Israel, 19 are classified as "not free" and seven as "partly free" by Freedom House. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaspd797.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gaza: Destroying civilian housing and infrastructure is an international crime, warns UN expert

The world must act now to end the horrifying and massive attacks against civilian housing and infrastructure in Gaza, which comes at a tremendous cost to human life, a UN expert

said today.

“Carrying out hostilities with the knowledge that they will systematically destroy and damage civilian housing and infrastructure, rendering an entire city – such as Gaza city - uninhabitable for civilians is a war crime,” said Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.

The expert said systematic or widespread bombardment of housing, civilian objects and infrastructure are strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law, criminal law and human rights law.

“Such acts amount to war crimes and when directed against a civilian population, they also amount to crimes against humanity,” Rajagopal said.

In a recent [report](#) to the UN General Assembly, Rajagopal used the term “domicide” to refer to such systematic or widespread attacks on housing and civilian infrastructure that causes death and suffering. ...

International humanitarian law is based on the distinction between civilian and military objects, the expert said.

“Apartment buildings are not military objects. Hospitals and ambulances are not military objects. Refugee camps are not military objects. Schools are not military objects. Churches or mosques are not military objects. Water and electricity infrastructure for civilians are not military objects,” Rajagopal said.

“Civilian housing in Israel is also not a military object - launching indiscriminate rocket attacks on them from Gaza or elsewhere is a war crime,” he warned.

Even when civilian housing may be used by combatants to take shelter, as alleged in the attacks on the Jabalia refugee camp, launching attacks on entire apartment blocks is prohibited if they will lead to disproportionate damage, death and displacement of a large number of civilians, the UN expert warned.

“No asserted right of self-defence under international law can cover such attacks,” he said.

“This is particularly the case when the right of self-defence is asserted in the context of an occupation.” ...

“There can be no peace without justice,” Rajagopal said, urging the International Criminal Court to investigate alleged international crimes in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory without delay or bias, and hold those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and apartheid, accountable. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/gaza-destroying-civilian-housing-and-infrastructure-international-crime>

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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>

**** The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Explanatory Memorandum

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/654b4cc8e2e16a000d42ab50/retained_eu_law_explanatory_memorandum_the_equality_act_2010_regulations_2023.pdf

Equality and Human rights Commission press release

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality-act-2010-amendment-regulations-2023>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 9 days**

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/>

**** closes in 9 days**

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/>

**** closes in 9 days**

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