



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Debate

King’s Speech

col 69 Baroness Chakrabarti (Labour): ... The [last] month has been a hellish eternity, I have no doubt, for the families of victims of Hamas butchery and hostage taking, and the besieged and bombarded civilian population of Gaza. No British politician, still less a Home Secretary, can unilaterally ease that distress, which inevitably extends to so many people in our own communities. However, they can at times make things worse—worse by collectively branding 100,000 mostly peaceful people as “hate marchers” in the context of a depressing rise in often non-protest related incidents of hate crime.

They can make things worse by repeatedly and performatively trying to influence or instruct a police service which, in this country at least, is supposed to be independent of government. Surely it is better to appeal to all those understandably moved by events overseas to show their aspirations for peace with calm and sensitive restraint in both conduct and tone—and better to let the Metropolitan Commissioner demonstrate the judiciousness that he has overnight, in watching the intelligence but seeking to allow safe outlets for collective expression, while keeping the King’s peace. ...

col 70 Lord Patten (Conservative): ... laws do not necessarily change everything and that when there are new laws, they are not necessarily effective. In some cases, new laws are not going to be effective at all. I take as my best—or worst—example the fact that we have a vanishingly small Jewish population in this country. We have 270,000 Jews in England and Wales out of 58.6 million. Their number is vanishingly small, they are easily identified and they are having a horrible time in what should be a liberal and tolerant country. They are concentrated in a small number of easily targeted urban areas. If there

was any other racial group—and they are a racial group—of such a vanishing size, there would be national uproar: in particular, thought leaders from the progressive part of the world would be right there, arguing their case. Where are they? At the moment, the sound of silence is deafening, which I find very hard to take.

col 71 What is the use of all that expensive Holocaust education in GCSEs and the rest of it? It is money not well spent, I think. What good, in the end, will expensive new Holocaust museums do, wherever they are put, to right the wrongs that the Jewish community in this country face? I am told that poor whites are often to blame for this. I actually sometimes think that posh whites are, too: dinner-party casual anti-Semitism, the tap on the nose over the second or third course. None of this is going to be stopped by any law; it is going to be stopped by a national will that we no longer wish to have this sort of casual anti-Semitism in our country. We need a new body, or bodies, which I cannot invent, whose job it is to concentrate on re-education and deep education on this point—there are people who should be thinking about this—to remove the stain on the nation and make our vanishingly tiny Jewish minority feel safer, more secure, more welcome and much less inclined to up sticks and leave a country where they are very badly needed. ...

col 74 Lord Green of Deddington (Crossbench): ... As Prime Minister, David Cameron saw some of the dangers ahead. In 2010, he said: “We cannot continue to permit vast numbers of people to come to the UK and tell them that they do not need to integrate ... and maintain certain values and ideas that are at odds with British values”.

He was exactly right. Only last month, the commissioner for countering extremism said the following: “Allowing people to maintain parallel lives in our communities, without being part of our communities, has produced and will continue to produce ... people committed to ... undermining our values. The hatred that we have witnessed in recent days ... is not only a cause for alarm among the Jewish community. It must be a wake-up call for ... all decent people”.

Surely the first step must be to reduce substantially the scale of immigration to the UK. ...

col 79 Lord Paddick (Non-affiliated): ... A Liberal Democrat Peer whom I respect and admire told me not to comment on the situation in the Middle East unless I had been there and experienced both sides. I have not been. All I will say is that it is a truly dreadful situation with many innocent victims and no easy or universally acceptable solution. Jewish friends around the House have been incredibly supportive of me personally this year; I offer them my support on a personal level at this distressing time.

Against this backdrop, the police have been accused time after time both of undermining freedom of speech and assembly and of not enforcing the law against demonstrators. I was one of a small cadre of advanced-trained senior officers in public order policing. In my experience, when compared with a peaceful protest, the police need about five times as many officers to enforce conditions on protesters who do not want to follow them and 10 times as many officers to enforce a ban on a procession that participants are determined to engage in. The police operate in the real, unpredictable world. ...

What the police cannot do, and will not do, is make judgments based on the merits of the cause of the demonstrators, as many Government Ministers have rushed to do. What the police will focus on is the preservation of the peace. ...

In 1981, in his report on the Brixton disorders, Lord Scarman explicitly prioritised peacekeeping over law enforcement. Arresting offenders in the middle of a mass demonstration can create disorder: documenting, identifying and subsequently arresting those involved is often the best solution, albeit that the police appear not to be taking action at the time. There will always be political activists and hostile foreign actors who seek to exploit peaceful protests to create unrest, using those who wish peacefully to express their genuinely held concerns as cover for their criminal activities. That is where the police and the intelligence services work together to try to identify, isolate and take action — sometimes pre-emptively—to prevent breakaway groups causing violence and disruption. The circumstances in which the police can ask the Home Secretary to ban a march are set

down in law and are extremely limited. It is only if the imposition of conditions on a procession is unlikely to prevent serious public disorder that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis can make an application to the Secretary of State, under Section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986, to ban all public processions or classes of public procession in a particular area for a limited time. That is a very high bar and a draconian imposition. If the Government believe that the bar is set too high before a ban can come into effect, it is for them to ask this House and the other place to lower it through legislation; it is not for politicians to criticise the police for failing to ask for a ban in circumstances in which the law does not allow it.

col 95 Lord Dubbs (Labour): ... Clearly, we must tackle anti-Semitism and we must do more to tackle Islamophobia—both have loomed large in recent weeks since the tragic events in the Middle East. I would like to see more initiatives to tackle Islamophobia. It is a disgrace that children are frightened to go to school and that there are fears in our local communities about what is happening. We must also ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten, so I welcome the Government's continuing support for the Holocaust Educational Trust.

col 96 We have heard some extraordinary statements by the Home Secretary recently. I shall itemise them. My blunt question is: will the Minister confirm that the Home Secretary does not speak for the Government?

She does not speak for the Government when she condemns the planned marches or demo this weekend as "hate marches". ... She does not speak for the Government when she said that multiculturalism is a "misguided dogma" leading to "parallel lives". Will the Minister confirm that these are aberrations on the part of the Home Secretary and do not reflect the policy of the Government? ...

col 99 Viscount Bridgeman (Conservative): ... in the breakdown of a marriage originally effected under sharia law in England and Wales—known as "nikah"—there are stark differences between the treatment of husbands and of wives. ... a husband can use the talaq procedure, which is not court-based and does not require an additional ceremony. Provided the husband says "I divorce you" three times, for him the marriage has ended. By contrast, divorced women are faced with a different and more complicated and intrusive procedure, involving a further application to a sharia court—it could be the one in which she was married—that is totally dominated by males. These sharia courts are part of the Muslim structure of religious authority and can enable nikah courts to be set up with little formality. The rights of women in divorces where the original marriage was sharia only are not recognised by civil courts in England and Wales.

The women I am talking about here frequently come from poor backgrounds, have limited education and, in many cases, have only a rudimentary command of English. They can expect to be ostracised by their families or communities, who regard the break-up of any marriage as a slur on their standing. These women, probably deeply anxious already, discover—for the first time, in many cases—that they do not have the full protection of the courts, particularly where property is involved. ...

I suggest that there is a simple solution to this problem. The noble Baroness, Lady Cox, has introduced a two-clause Private Member's Bill that would introduce an amendment to the Marriage Act 1949 and would seek to create an offence of purporting to solemnize a marriage that has not been, and will not be, legally registered. This would cover all marriages in England and Wales, but, significantly, it would require the parties in a sharia-only wedding to register the proposed marriage with the appropriate authority, giving the women the security that in many cases they presently lack. This Bill was introduced in July 2017 and has had no fewer than 10 introductions in your Lordships' House. Of these, only one has made it to a First Reading in another place. It was prevented from advancing further only by a busy parliamentary schedule.

col 100 The Law Commission in July 2022 published a report called *Celebrating Marriage: A New Weddings Law*, which included a recommendation very similar to the Bill proposed

... This is an anomaly that really does need to be put right. ...

col 116 Baroness Milner of Chilthorpe Domer (Liberal Democrat): ... it is hard to think of legislation and detail in the face of the situation in Gaza. At a time of immense tension, the Government's role should be to encourage tolerance. People need to express their views and feelings, providing that they are not inciting hatred. The Home Secretary described the forthcoming march on Saturday as a "hate march"; that is truly dangerous, provocative and disgraceful language. Most people who want to march are marching for a humanitarian settlement and for peace; they are not marching out of hate. I commend the Metropolitan Police for its measured stance on this, and I hope that it continues to hold its nerve in the face of government pressure. Some people have said that Armistice Day is not a suitable day for a march. I disagree; I think that the point of remembering war, besides remembering those who died, is to become even stronger advocates for peace.

col 142 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): ... Moving on to more topical matters such as the Israel and Hamas conflict ... I restate that the police in this country are operationally independent and obviously should remain so. However, a number of very unfortunate issues have arisen, in particular around anti-Semitism and, perhaps to a slightly lesser extent but no less importantly, Islamophobia. Anti-Semitism has absolutely no place in our society. That is why we are committed to tackling it in all its forms. The police should take the toughest possible action against any form of anti-Semitism. It is important that the police and the Jewish community continue to work together to ensure security and promote community cohesion. Saying that does not infringe their operational independence. They must also, as I have said, police Islamophobia as and where they find it. ...

... any arrests are very much an operational matter for the police. There have been about 30 arrests in London at protests related to the Israel-Hamas conflict, including racially aggravated public order offences. The Metropolitan Police Service has also made arrests not directly linked to protest activity and there have been arrests elsewhere in the country. It would be unwise to say too much more than that ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-08/debates/01B324A6-46FB-4BD5-A583-58D79EBFFC54/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>

The Law Commission report referred to above can be read at

<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jsxou24uy7q/uploads/2022/07/A-new-weddings-law-LC-report.pdf>

UK Parliament Early Day Motions

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [26] Islamophobia Awareness Month – That this House supports Islamophobia Awareness Month, which is taking place this November; recognises the incredible contributions that British Muslims make to our country; acknowledges that anti-Muslim sentiment is far too prevalent in our society; notes with concern that the horrifying Israel-Gaza conflict has led to a rise in Islamophobia in the UK, with Tell MAMA reporting a sevenfold increase of anti-Muslim incidents between 7 and 29 October compared to the same period last year; emphasises the importance of standing up to religious hatred in all its forms; and calls on the Government to ensure that public bodies have the resources and training they need to identify and prevent hate crimes.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61505>

Conor McGinn (Independent) [23] 400th anniversary of the establishment of the British Jesuits – That this House congratulates everyone associated with the Jesuits in Britain on the 400th anniversary of the foundation of a Province in this country; notes that the vision and mission of their founder St Ignatius of Loyola is still flourishing today through the Jesuits' pastoral, intellectual, educational, spiritual and social activities through parishes, schools, universities, retreat centres, outreach and the Jesuit Refugee Service-UK and Jesuit Missions; and commends the Jesuits as they continue to inspire people to work for the good of others.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61502>

Jewish News together with other Jewish media outlets

Open Letter

Amid an unprecedented level of antisemitism globally, Jewish media outlets across the world come together today to publish a joint editorial on the fear – and unity – felt by our readers. The project, a first in Jewish history, was conceived by Jewish News in London and organised in partnership with the Jerusalem Post.

Two decades ago, the former British Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, astutely likened antisemitism to a constantly evolving virus. One that, in the modern era, specifically targets the Jewish nation-state.

He aptly described this prejudice as a deeply ingrained malignancy, perpetually lingering beneath the surface of society. ... Until recent days, the extent and intensity of this virulent strain of hatred were tragically underestimated.

While the need for stringent security measures at schools and synagogues has long been a familiar reality, the realization that such profound levels of hatred and indifference to the threat exist on a global scale has been a devastating shock.

We dared to hope such malevolence had been relegated to the annals of history. ...

The events of recent weeks have surpassed even the somber portrayal offered by Rabbi Sacks all those years ago. Some of those who propagate hatred, concealing their prejudice under the veneer of being 'anti-Israel,' no longer find it necessary to obscure their malice. We've witnessed raw hatred against Jews in cities across the globe.

In Dagestan, a mob ran towards planes on a runway to check passengers' passports, hunting for disembarking Jews.

In Sydney, when authorities lit the famous Opera House in Israel's colors, a crowd sang 'Gas the Jews'.

In France, a woman was stabbed at her home, and a Swastika was spraypainted on her front door.

In London, red paint was daubed on Jewish school doors and the Wiener Holocaust Library.

In Berlin, Magen Davids have been spray painted on homes, a haunting echo of scenes in that German city 90 years ago.

On campuses across the United States, 'martyrs' who butchered Jewish children in their beds are being celebrated while a student at Cornell University was arrested for posting death threats against Jews.

This is not a call for two states living side by side in peace. This is not legitimate opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu and his government. ...

Meanwhile, some world leaders act as cheerleaders, sometimes inadvertently but at other times, not. ...

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said: " Hamas is not a terrorist organization".

The head of the UN Antonio Guterres said 7/10 "didn't happen in a vacuum".

No, it didn't, Mr Guterres. It required decades of indoctrination, years of holding up terrorists as heroes to be lionized, a sure way to fame and, often, fortune, and the presence

of a terrorist organization whose central aim is to wipe Israel – and every one of our a Jewish family and friends – off the face of the earth.

Have no doubt, that Hamas is cheering those ‘from the river to the sea’ chants because a Palestine between the river to the sea leaves not a single inch for Israel. ...

... why are so many good people still silent when cheerleaders for terrorists decide the worst massacre of our co-religionists since the Holocaust is a good moment to open up a second, global front targeting Jews on campus, at work, on the streets, and at home?

Clearly not everyone marching under the Palestinian flag fantasizes about our deaths or the destruction of the world’s only Jewish state.

But please, try to understand that whether it’s one person, 100 people, or 10,000, the chilling impact of seeing so many people echo and excuse hateful chants is profound. ...

... the level of fear among our readers is like nothing in memory. ...

This is heightened by the fact there will be those who dismiss every word in this piece as having been written in bad faith, part no doubt of our supposed control of power and the media that has manipulated their warped minds. There will also be Jews who tell you this article doesn’t speak for them. Before those in the media feel the urge to put them on the airwaves in an attempt at ‘balance’, please first ask for an ounce of proof that they represent more than a tiny band of misfits. ...

Please don’t, however, mistake this growing fear for a lack of determination to fight our corner as citizens deserving of support and protection in our home nations, or doubt our solidarity as a people numbering just 16 million. ... The incredible response in holding rallies, supporting charities, and fighting running battles on social media is something that will remain a source of pride for as long as those horrific images from Kibbutz Beerli remain a source of anguish and pain.

This unity has been a light in the darkness. Another has been the support, publicly and sometimes not, of our real friends in all communities. Again, we will never ever forget this. ...

Over the unbearably painful days ahead, we – as providers of news for secular or religious Jews, those who frequently critique Israeli policy and those who don’t, those who see Israel are central to their identity, and those who are drawn nearer by crises such as this – call on the world to listen and treat us as you would want to be treated.

It shouldn’t be too much to ask. ...

To read the letter in full see

<https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/global-editorial-jews-worldwide-havent-been-this-fearful-in-living-memory/>

Tell Mama

Tell MAMA records seven-fold increase in anti-Muslim cases in one month

The updated figures correct till November 7 total 701 anti-Muslim cases to Tell MAMA – a seven-fold increase for the same period last year (75 offline and 25 online cases) following the deadly Hamas terror attacks on October 7.

326 Offline cases

(212 cases of abusive behaviour, 28 threatening behaviour, 29 assaults, 24 vandalism, 16 discrimination, 17 hate speech and 5 anti-Muslim literature). Cases occurred in areas like London (209), Northwest (39), South Yorkshire (9), West Yorkshire (17), East Midlands (9) and West Midlands (17), Southeast (5), Southwest (5), North East (9), Wales (2), Scotland (5). ...

We have monitored an increase in specific language related to the attacks and ensuing conflict in universities and schools, Anti-Muslim language on campuses including calling Muslims (or those perceived as Muslims) ‘terrorists’ has been commonplace. While linking Muslims to terrorism is one of the most common forms of abuse that Tell MAMA records

throughout each year, the aftermath of the terror attacks in October and the conflict has since created a deeply hostile environment on campus and social media that has accelerated the use of such hateful tropes targeting Muslim communities. The number of university cases reported to Tell MAMA is 33 in total versus three cases over the same period last year. ...

375 Online Cases

Since October 7, the sheer volume of dehumanising, racialised, and violent language about Muslims, with the most extreme examples calling for genocide – with Muslims compared to rats or viruses from accounts who also call on or suggest a ‘civil war’ will occur on British streets. Similar worrying examples weld the above to broader anti-refugee and anti-migrant narratives about so-called ‘invaders’ and that ‘patriots’ must ‘fight back to stop it’. More broadly, the danger is not only from what appears online, but how it may inspire or motivate individuals to cause harm to Muslims and other communities on our streets. ...

In the current climate, we continue to urge communities to stand together and practice compassion and care for each other and for themselves, to be upstanders and intervene safely to stop racism and hate crime, and we urge those in positions of influence and public authority to consider how their language risk stereotyping communities and how it may unduly influence discussions online and offline. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-records-seven-fold-increase-in-anti-muslim-cases-in-one-month/>

TOP

Holocaust

See also the House of Lords debate on the King’s Speech that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

Scottish Parliament Motion

Kenneth Gibson (SNP) [S6M-11207] 85th Anniversary of Kristallnacht Highlights Increasing Antisemitism – That the Parliament commemorates the victims of Kristallnacht, also known as the Night of Broken Glass or the November Pogrom, a destructive campaign of violence against Jewish people and their communities, on its 85th anniversary; understands that, throughout the night of 9-10 November 1938, the Nazi Party and its collaborators targeted almost every synagogue and Jewish prayer room in Germany, with over 1,400 burned or badly damaged, 7,500 Jewish businesses across Germany and Austria vandalised, and at least 91 people murdered, with a further 30,000 Jewish men being arrested and taken to concentration camps, where many more died; further understands that this was followed by hundreds of suicides in the Jewish community and mass emigration; recognises the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany’s relaunched campaign, #ItStartedWithWords, highlighting that the Holocaust did not start with camps, ghettos and deportations, but with words of hate; understands that this campaign is important, in light of what it sees as the growing prevalence of Holocaust denial, distortion and hate speech towards Jewish communities and individuals in many countries and online; notes with concern recent reports that more than 1,000 hate incidents have taken place across the UK against British Jews since the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023, the highest 28-day total recorded since the Community Security Trust began tracking antisemitic attacks in 1984, and a 537% increase compared to the same period in 2022; recognises the resilience of Holocaust survivors who have taken part in this campaign and continue to highlight the barbaric

actions that took place during the Second World War, particularly following what it sees as the unacceptable rise in antisemitism throughout the last month, and continues to remember the six million Jewish people and others targeted due to ethnicity, religion, political beliefs and sexual orientation who were victims of Nazi persecution.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-11207>

TOP

Israel

See also the House of Lords debate on the King's Speech, the EDM "Islamophobia Awareness Month", and Jewish media outlets' open letter that are included in the Home Affairs section above, and Scottish Parliament motion "85th Anniversary of Kristallnacht Highlights Increasing Antisemitism" that is included in the Holocaust section above.

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Occupied Palestinian Territories: Humanitarian Situation

col 138 The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Mr Andrew Mitchell): ... A tragedy is unfolding. Israel has suffered the worst terrorist attack in its history. Palestinian civilians in Gaza are experiencing a devastating humanitarian crisis and violence is rising in the west bank. The best estimates emerging from a confused situation are that 2.3 million people need access to safe drinking water, food supplies are running out, one third of hospitals have been forced to shut down and 1.5 million people are displaced. ...

Britain is working intensively to get more aid into Gaza, to support the safe return of hostages and British nationals, to back Israel's right to self-defence and to prevent a dangerous regional escalation. ...

Despite the many challenges, the whole Government are determined to do all that we can to continue to stand up for what is right and do the right thing. Immediately after Hamas's brutal assault, the Government brought home almost 1,000 British nationals safely on charter and military flights, but the safety of all British nationals is our utmost priority, so we are in regular contact with those in Gaza registered with us since the conflict began. Working with partners, we have been engaging intensively with Israel and Egypt to allow foreign nationals to leave Gaza via the Rafah border crossing. This has proved possible on five of the last seven days, and I can confirm to the House that, as of late last night, more than 150 British nationals had made it through to Egypt. ...

Sadly, among the British nationals in Gaza some are held hostage by Hamas, among the more than 200 innocents cruelly kidnapped on 7 October. Their plight is a stark reminder of what Hamas represent. The terrorists continue to launch rockets relentlessly at Israeli homes and families. Their stated aim, repeated publicly in recent weeks, is the destruction of the Israeli state and the eradication of its people. That is why the Government unequivocally support Israel's right to defend itself. However, we have also repeatedly stressed that Israel must take every precaution to minimise civilian casualties in line with international humanitarian law. We continue to press Israel to ensure that its campaign is targeted against Hamas leaders, militants and military infrastructure. We also condemn settler violence. Israel needs to take concrete measures to address it and hold the perpetrators to account.

col 139 All parties to a conflict must ensure that their actions are proportionate and necessary, affording innocent civilians the protection that is their right under international

law. Who can doubt that this is true, because the Palestinian people are also victims of Hamas. ...

Since 7 October, the UK has made available £30 million of additional aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, more than doubling our existing aid commitment for this year. So far, three UK flights carrying a total of 51 tonnes of aid have landed in Egypt. ...

Since 21 October, a limited number of trucks of aid have crossed into the strip, but the volume going through the Rafah checkpoint is nowhere near enough to meet civilian needs and it cannot be, even were it operating at full capacity. We are therefore urgently exploring with partners measures that can help to increase the flow of humanitarian support. These measures must include effective humanitarian pauses ... and we are urging Israel to consider utilising the facilities at other land border crossings into Gaza, such as Kerem Shalom. ... Control and oversight matters, given the absolute imperative of ensuring that aid reaches those in need and is not diverted or misused. Aid diversion is a real risk—more so during conflicts ...

All UK aid undergoes rigorous oversight. No funding goes to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority. ...

col 140 ... to prevent further conflict and terrorism and truly alleviate civilian suffering, there must be a political solution to the conflict. This issue is uniquely polarising. We have seen across the world and in our own communities its potential to radicalise. The long-standing British position on the middle east process is unchanged: we want to see a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. ...

We have moral clarity over Israel's right to self-defence and we reject all forms of antisemitism, but we are also committed to discharging our moral duty to alleviate the suffering of ordinary Palestinians and we reject all forms of Islamophobia. ...

Lisa Nandy (Labour): ... Four weeks on from the horror of 7 October, it is hard to comprehend the scale of the devastation in Gaza: almost 1.5 million people displaced and more than 10,000 people killed, with more trapped under the rubble of destroyed buildings. Every single one of those lives matters. Every single death is a devastating tragedy. With two thirds of the dead being women and children, these civilian deaths are not just shocking—they cannot be ignored. ...

I was surprised the Minister did not make more mention of fuel, because this is the urgent priority. Without it the water cannot flow, the hospitals cannot power their incubators and the food cannot be cooked. The sewage system breakdown is now threatening a major public health crisis. For weeks, the international community has demanded that the siege conditions on Gaza be lifted, but that has still not happened. That is totally unacceptable and it cannot continue. ...

Can the Minister tell the House what efforts the Government are making to insist that fuel for humanitarian purposes can get into Gaza? ...

col 141 We all recognise that while rockets and bombs continue to fall, it is impossible to deliver the scale of aid needed across the whole of Gaza and to repair the damage, extensive as it is, to water and electricity systems. We all want an end to the violence and the urgent release of hostages, but with Hamas leaders doubling down on their determination to attack Israel, and with Israel ruling out a ceasefire until hostages are released, the reality is that humanitarian pauses are, as Martin Griffiths wrote movingly last week, "the only viable prospect". ...

We are devastated by the deaths of so many aid workers and United Nations Relief and Works Agency staff ...

I echo the Minister's words about the unacceptable nature of settler violence in the west bank, but will he join me in reiterating our calls that Israel's clear right to self-defence is not a blank cheque? ... Has he raised the protection of hospitals, schools and refugee camps with his Israeli counterparts, and the need for action to be in accordance with international law in order to protect civilians and ensure safe and unimpeded access for aid?

The average age in Gaza is just 18. Make no mistake: this is a children's war. More children have died in Gaza in four weeks than in all the world's conflicts in each of the last three years. ... In most conflicts we would expect children to be evacuated to a safer place to receive care and shelter. What makes this so devastating is that, almost uniquely, in this conflict that is not going to happen. ...

The crisis did not start in Gaza on 7 October. Even before then, two thirds of children were suffering from trauma. One aid agency that operates in North Sinai and Gaza told me last week that this now stands at 100%. ...

col 142 Andrew Mitchell: ... The hon. Lady made a particular point about the importance of fuel and, of course, she is absolutely right. We are negotiating for it. She will know that Hamas have a lot of fuel in their tunnels—we recognise entirely what that fuel is being used for—so fuel could be made available to help in humanitarian purposes. We are doing our best to negotiate for it. ...

We are arguing for humanitarian pauses, but she will also accept that, in the method within the pause by which humanitarian support is distributed, it is extremely important that we do not repeat the mistakes we made in Srebrenica, Rwanda and northern Iraq, when vulnerable people were brought together whom we were unable to protect. ...

The hon. Lady mentioned that support for Israel is not a blank cheque. Of course, she is right. Good friends deliver hard messages, and they are able to do so precisely because they are good friends. ...

Finally, I remind the House of the wise words of our former colleague, and former Foreign Secretary, the noble Lord Hague. At the end of his brilliant article in *The Times* on 9 October, he said: "It is no consolation to those caught up in it but...this is no strategic masterstroke by Hamas, more a desperate move to fend off a future that is rapidly leaving them behind."

We should not forget that, the day after this, there will be an urgent need for a political context. ...

col 143 Andrew Selous (Conservative): ... The Minister talked about a viable Palestinian state, which requires land. The reality is that so much of that land has been lost to illegal settlements. Will he continue to make that point, because a brighter future will require land to guarantee the peace we all yearn for.

Andrew Mitchell: ... I condemned settler violence, as did the Prime Minister in yesterday's response to the Gracious Speech. What he says is right, and we will not forget that.

Chris Stephens (SNP): ... the Israeli military must follow the laws of war in this situation. Have the Government made an assessment of Israel's compliance with international human rights law since 14 October? As he mentioned in his statement, hospitals in Gaza are running out of fuel and UNRWA is warning that its aid operation will shortly "come to a stop" if fuel supplies do not get into Gaza, with blood and life-saving equipment also running out. Have the Government considered sending a military hospital ship to Egypt to help injured men, women and children who have been able to leave Gaza? ...

In Gaza, 4,100 Palestinian children have died—a rate of 180 children a day. At what point will the UK Government join the many of us who are asking them to use their leverage to reach that political solution and call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza?

Andrew Mitchell: ... He asks whether we are aware of the full impact of supplies running out in Gaza, and I can assure him that we absolutely are. He speaks about the importance of following the rules of war and international humanitarian law, and both Front Benches are urging the Israeli Government to do that. We note the commitment of the President of Israel in that respect, but everyone will be watching to ensure that the rules of war are obeyed.

Saqib Bhatti (Conservative): I have not spoken to a single constituent who has not felt the pain and tragedy of the 1,400 people murdered on 7 October, or of the tragedy

unfolding in Gaza. ... Can he confirm that aid will increase, if necessary, in future? Does he share my concern about the risk of the conflict expanding because of the presence of Hezbollah? Its 100,000 soldiers and 150,000 rockets pose a risk to the region.

col 144 Andrew Mitchell: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. We have doubled the amount of aid going into the region, but we will increase it further if necessary. ...

Of course, regional expansion is an enormous worry for us all, and it is one of the reasons why the Prime Minister decided to send both air and naval assets to RAF Akrotiri in the eastern Mediterranean, to see what is being moved, to interdict any arms that are coming in, and to make sure we do everything we can to ensure that this conflict is contained and does not expand further.

Rupa Huq (Labour): Ten thousand people have been killed in a month, with UN staff, buildings, hospitals, journalists and the third oldest church in Christendom unspared, since Hamas's deadly atrocities. There are 230-plus hostages still in captivity. The Minister talks about being a critical friend, so will he urge the Netanyahu Administration to recognise that statements such as the one about a "permanent" Gazan takeover, with some Israeli Ministers not even ruling out nukes, are only losing them support? ...

Andrew Mitchell: I thank the hon. Lady for her comments. As far as the hostages are concerned, she will appreciate that we do not give a running commentary on those negotiations. She may rest assured that we are working very closely, including with Qatar, to secure their release. She will have seen the condemnation of the nuclear comment made by a senior Israeli.

On the subject of what happens when the conflict is over, she will have seen the very constructive comments made not only by some of the surrounding Arab leaders but by Secretary Blinken when he addressed that point.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative): ... will he assure the House that the UK Government are doing everything possible to work with allies to negotiate the return of the hostages?

Andrew Mitchell: Yes.

Chi Onwurah (Labour): ... As we look forward to a time when the bombing stops, does the Minister agree that the lack of focus on progressing a two-state solution over the past decade and more was a failure on the part of the international community? ...

col 145 Andrew Mitchell: ... It is important to note that the huge progress—ultimately unsuccessful—that was made at Oslo took place on the back of the first intifada. It may therefore be that there will be an opportunity, given the disaster that has taken place, to re-energise that political track. ...

David Davis (Conservative): ... Does he agree that those who call for a ceasefire must recognise that Hamas is a terrorist organisation and, as was said by the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) yesterday, that terrorist organisations go for ceasefires only when they suit their own regrouping, not to end violence?

Andrew Mitchell: ... of course, he is absolutely right. We all recognise the motivation of those who call for a ceasefire and why they are doing it, but at this time, in this situation, it is perfectly clear that Hamas have no intention of engaging in a ceasefire. Indeed, they have repeatedly made it clear that their intention is to repeat the awful events of 7 October. ...

Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat): ... So often, I am being asked to take sides, but, in the words of Jonathan Freedland: "This is not a football match... Two peoples with deep wounds, howling with grief, fated to share the same small piece of land."

Does the Minister agree that the side we need to be on is the side of all those who are working towards a lasting peace?

Andrew Mitchell: ... we must focus, whenever the opportunity presents itself, on the political track and all the opportunities that could then open up.

Michael Ellis (Conservative): ... On 7 October, amid Hamas's atrocities in Israel, the terrorist group made a concerted effort to destroy water and electricity lines from Israel

into Gaza. Apparently, Israel has reopened two of the three water lines into Gaza, but the third remains heavily damaged, as do the power lines. Does he share my concern that Hamas deliberately seek to worsen the humanitarian conditions inside Gaza?

col 146 Andrew Mitchell: ... of course he is right. Once again, I draw his attention to the words of the former Foreign Secretary Lord Hague, who so accurately, so soon after these awful events took place, predicted the reasons why Hamas were doing this and why, ultimately, they must fail.

Stephen Timms (Labour): ... Will the Minister distance himself from the description of the Palestine marchers as “hate-filled”? The constituents I have been talking to are decent, law-abiding families who have no truck at all with Hamas but who are horrified by the scenes they are seeing, of children killed and maimed, day after day on their screens and are wanting this to stop, as we all must. ...

Andrew Mitchell: The rights of protest are much cherished in this country, and, of course, they are enshrined in law and we respect that. ...

Richard Graham (Conservative): ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is, in a sense, an intractable problem, because the nature of Hamas and how they are based in Gaza makes it impossible for Israel to defend itself effectively without, surely, breaking the rules of engagement and causing casualties, which everyone here finds very hard to accept? Does he therefore accept that the smidgeon of hope in all of this is that this disaster, which could repeat itself time and again, must be the catalyst for those in the region, above all, to lead on finding a proper political solution?

Andrew Mitchell: ... I hope that he will agree with my Oslo analogy and think that should give us all some hope at a very dark time. He is entirely right in what I take him to have meant, which is that Hamas can play no part in the future of Gaza after what has happened. ...

col 147 Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour): Heartbreakingly, the number of children killed in Gaza in just four weeks of Israeli bombardment has surpassed the number killed in global conflict zones for every year since 2019 ... It pains me to see that the death toll in the occupied west bank ... is rapidly rising, including as a result of an Israeli airstrike on a mosque and more deadly settler violence. Those victims are certainly not Hamas. ...

Andrew Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to ask us to condemn settler violence. ... violence in the west bank has reached unprecedented levels. We are doing everything we can to urge restraint and ensure that it stops. ...

Robin Walker (Conservative): ... I remind the House that the full wording of the Balfour declaration included: “it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”. Children’s rights should be at the heart of that, so may I urge my right hon. Friend to double down on the push for humanitarian pauses and for humanitarian access ...

Andrew Mitchell: I thank my hon. Friend ... for his recollection of the Balfour declaration.

Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru): I am told by the Muslim Council of Wales that seven families in Wales have lost immediate family members in Palestine ... We fear for the Israeli hostages in Gaza, among them British citizens. ... In advocating for humanitarian pauses, does the Minister recognise that innocent non-combatants in Gaza will again be killed when pauses cease and that the only way to achieve lasting peace is a ceasefire?

Andrew Mitchell: The right hon. Lady will have heard what I and the Opposition Front Bench spokesperson, the hon. Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy), have said about ceasefires ...

col 148 Bob Blackman (Conservative): The atrocities on 7 October were well planned and well resourced. Indeed, Hamas, the terrorist group, stockpiled in advance, knowing what the response would be from Israel. Equally, Hamas have been caught out putting injured terrorists through the Rafah crossing into Egypt. What is my right hon. Friend’s assessment of what Hamas should do now to release the resources they have stockpiled,

so that there can be a wider humanitarian effort than there is currently?

Andrew Mitchell: ... This was a pogrom. It was the worst loss of Jewish life at any time in one day since the Holocaust and since 1945. One reason why the Rafah crossing is so difficult is precisely because of the circumstances that he described, with the misuse of the rules by injured Hamas terrorists.

Nadia Whittome (Labour): ... How many more people must die before the Government join the UN Secretary-General, the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, Oxfam and the UN General Assembly in calling for an immediate ceasefire?

Andrew Mitchell: ... her comments underline the importance now of trying to achieve these humanitarian pauses, so that help and succour can be brought to those who are suffering.

Vicky Ford (Conservative): ... the statement from Hamas that they will not stop until the people of Israel are annihilated is deeply chilling. In his statement, the Minister mentioned radicalisation and the concern that the greater the loss of civilian life, the greater the risk of radicalisation, so I thank him for saying clearly that Israel must take precautions to minimise civilian casualties. I would add that Israel needs to be seen to be taking such precautions. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... from all this death, destruction and killing, we must guard against the radicalisation of an entire new generation of young people. ...

David Linden (SNP): ... Does the Minister think that the Pope is naive in calling for a ceasefire?

Andrew Mitchell: I have set out very clearly our understanding, our logic and the reasons why we and Opposition Front Benchers have reached the conclusions we have on a ceasefire.

col 149 **Antony Higginbotham (Conservative):** ... Reports suggest that Hamas are holding more than 200,000 gallons of fuel that could be used for generators, to power hospitals or for ambulances. What is the Government's assessment of Hamas holding fuel? What steps are being taken to ensure that once aid gets into Gaza, it does not end up in the hands of Hamas?

Andrew Mitchell: ... we know Hamas have hoarded fuel in Gaza, although I cannot give him a statistic on that. ... I can tell my hon. Friend that we are very careful indeed. We never work through the Palestinian Authority or Hamas in terms of direct support; we only go through trusted organisations. ...

Naz Shah (Labour): The United Nations Secretary-General has said: "Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children." ...

I watched a small girl being pulled out of the rubble, asking her uncle if she was dead and whether he was taking her to a graveyard. Another video showed a girl of barely five stuck under a collapsed building, praying her final prayers in preparation for her death. At their age, children should be asking whether they are going to a playground, to buy an ice cream or any of those usual things, not whether they are going to a graveyard or preparing for their death. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... what is happening to children in Gaza appals us all. I just ask her to consider the wider context ...

col 150 **Flick Drummond (Conservative):** ... I received a report from a surgeon at a hospital in Gaza today. He says the situation is beyond catastrophic and that he is seeing "horrific" injuries, the majority of which are to children. He says: "The type of injuries we are seeing is not something a human mind can accept or tolerate." ... The UK is the penholder for the protection of civilians in conflict at the UN Security Council. Can we ensure that all health facilities, including the Indonesia Hospital in Gaza, which was at threat of being bombed, be protected from attack?

Andrew Mitchell: ... We take those responsibilities extremely seriously ... My hon. Friend will have heard what the Prime Minister said about the treatment of hospitals,

and we will continue to do everything we can to protect them.

Ben Bradshaw (Labour): ... When the Government make representations to the Israeli Government about the increase in settler violence in the west bank, what do the Israeli Government say in return?

Andrew Mitchell: ... we are doing everything we possibly can to drive forward what both he and I believe is the right answer to this.

Nickie Aiken (Conservative): It is incredibly difficult to hear the testimonies of the survivors of the 7 October Hamas atrocities. It is equally difficult to see the media reports of what is happening in Gaza, particularly in relation to the children ... Can the Minister please assure us that, once this conflict is over ... the Government will do all they can to help rebuild Gaza?

Andrew Mitchell: ... there is no doubt that when peace comes and the international community is able to engage in a political process, the rebuilding of Gaza will certainly be a part of that.

col 151 **Jeremy Corbyn (Independent):** There are 1,400 dead in Israel and 10,000 dead in Gaza; there is increased military activity on the west bank, increased settler violence, and now more and more children dying as this conflict goes on in Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu is now promising that Israel will control the Gaza strip into the indefinite future. Is it not time that the British Government joined all those other sensible and reasonable voices around the world that are doing everything they can to demand and get a ceasefire ...

Andrew Mitchell: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard what his successor, the leader of the Labour party, has said on the subject of a ceasefire, and we agree with him. ... He also talks about security on the west bank, the key purpose of which for Israel is to ensure that the rockets cannot come over the border again. I think we need to see security in that context, rather than in the ebb and flow of the debate that is going on at the moment.

Sara Britcliffe (Conservative): ... With reports that Israeli forces have started raiding refugee camps on the west bank, we know that there is real risk to innocent Palestinians. There are also reports of Israeli settlers on the west bank becoming increasingly hostile in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... escalation is not just about the region, but about the west bank as well. That is why the Prime Minister has condemned settler violence ...

Mike Amesbury (Labour): On the question of humanitarian pauses, can the Minister tell us his assessment of how long they will last, how people will be protected, and how those pauses will be managed? ...

Andrew Mitchell: The aim of humanitarian pauses is not only to get humanitarian relief and supplies into Gaza, but to ensure that there is a safe structure ... Therefore, a humanitarian pause should not be seen as one on its own; we are looking at negotiating a series of humanitarian pauses ...

Rob Butler (Conservative): ... We know that Hamas hide behind human shields—including, shockingly, even in hospitals. How is my right hon. Friend's Department working with partners on the ground in Gaza to ensure that aid gets to those who need it, including in hospitals, despite the barbarity and the barriers put in their way by Hamas?

col 152 **Andrew Mitchell:** My hon. Friend is quite right to raise the importance of ensuring that Hamas brutality does not fetter our ability to get aid through to those who really need it. ...

Julie Elliott (Labour): ... will the Minister confirm that the Government support the independence of the International Criminal Court and recognise its jurisdiction to address the conduct of all parties in the conflict in Gaza?

Andrew Mitchell: ... In respect of the International Criminal Court, she will know that the Government are a very strong supporter of it and the role that it plays in international affairs.

Heather Wheeler (Conservative): ... can we make sure that, looking to the future, we work on the two-state solution and put in place a safe place for all Gazans and Jewish families going forward?

Andrew Mitchell: ... charities and non-governmental organisations ... say that only a full ceasefire can deliver the conditions to get lifesaving food, fuel, water and medicine into Gaza, not least because critical infrastructure, such as roads and hospitals, needs to be mended first and that cannot happen if there are only humanitarian pauses. ...

Andrew Mitchell: The hon. Lady is correct about the importance of tackling the deficiencies of infrastructure ...

col 153 **James Morris (Conservative):** ... Hamas made a massive strategic error when they attacked innocent Israeli people on 7 October, and they are paying a heavy price with the destruction of their terror network in the Gaza strip. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... people are very much focused on how to get a political track going again when these dreadful events draw to a close. ...

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op): ... What steps are the Government taking to ensure that there can be family reunions, and that refugees can come from the Gaza strip to the UK?

Andrew Mitchell: We are working very hard to ensure that families are not broken up through the Rafah crossing. ...

Mark Logan (Conservative): ... We have seen statements coming out of Israel about having “security responsibility” for Gaza for an “indefinite period”. The Minister mentioned that Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that there shall be no Israeli reoccupation of Gaza after the war. What is our Government’s position on that in the long term? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... we are doing everything that we can both to construct a scenario where there can be a number of pauses and to ensure that humanitarian support can be safely delivered within Gaza. ...

col 154 **Afzal Khan (Labour):** The International Committee of the Red Cross has reported that as Gaza loses power, hospitals lose power, putting newborns in incubators and elderly patients who are on oxygen at risk. Without electricity, hospitals turn into morgues. ...

Andrew Mitchell: We are extremely concerned about the position in hospitals ...

Neil Hudson (Conservative): ... Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the brave humanitarian workers who are doing so much in Gaza ...

Andrew Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for once again reiterating the strong support across the House for the brave humanitarian workers and what they are doing in this terrible conflict ...

Ruth Cadbury (Labour): ... Now that Israel is threatening to occupy Gaza permanently, will the UK Government support the US Secretary of State Blinken’s insistence that there should be no Israeli occupation of Gaza after this war?

Andrew Mitchell: ... The British Government agree with what Secretary Blinken said, but are absolutely clear that the perpetrators of the dreadful events on 7 October—Hamas—must never be allowed to do it again.

Paul Bristow (Conservative): ... How much longer do we have to wait until this suffering ends and humanitarian aid can reach people such as my constituent’s family?

col 155 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... we are doing everything that we can to ensure that the period is as short as possible. ...

Liam Byrne (Labour): ... I commend to him the motion passed by Birmingham City Council last night that calls for an immediate ceasefire binding on all sides, because it is the best way to save the hostages, get aid through, and let the war crimes inspectors do their work. ...

Andrew Mitchell: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will explain to our friends on Birmingham City Council the reason the Government and indeed his own Front Bench take the view that they do about a ceasefire ...

Patrick Grady (SNP): ... have the Government made an assessment of whether or not the Government of Israel are complying with international human rights law?

Andrew Mitchell: It is not for the Government to make such an assessment; it is for lawyers and a court to do so. ...

Rushanara Ali (Labour): ... There are grave concerns that starvation is being used as a weapon of war against 400,000 civilians in the north of Gaza. That is illegal under international law. ... What are the Government doing to use their influence at the international level to stop the bombardment, so that at the very least aid can get in?

col 156 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... we are engaged on all those matters and doing everything we can, through Britain's very strong diplomatic network ...

Claire Hanna (SDLP): ... Almost half of Palestinians are children, many thousands of whom have been killed, maimed and orphaned. So have many Israeli children, including one dual Irish citizen who is believed to be among the hostages in Gaza. Does the Minister agree with UNICEF's regional director, Adele Khodr, who says that the situation in Gaza is "a growing stain on our collective conscience"?

Andrew Mitchell: The head of UNICEF, who made those comments, is right to focus on what is happening in Gaza and to express her abhorrence of what is taking place. ...

Stella Creasy (Labour Co-op): Everybody wants the bloodshed to stop; the question is how to secure that ambition in a lasting way ... Both Oded and Ibrahim are at direct risk of harm due to Hamas and the Israeli missiles. Oded, the father of one of my constituents, was kidnapped by Hamas, and the Prime Minister made a personal pledge to assist him. Ibrahim is at risk because we do not yet know why he and his family have not been able to cross the border at Rafah. ...

col 157 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... the crisis centre in the Foreign Office, which is full of both willing volunteers and experts in these consular matters, will be the right place to take this issue. ...

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op): A doctor sent a message last night from Gaza saying, "We have worms coming out of wounds even after we do surgeries. Nothing is clean. Nothing is sterile." ... At the same time, as well as condemning settler violence in the west bank, we need more action to bring an end to it. ... Will the Minister confirm that the Government support the independence of the International Criminal Court and recognise its jurisdiction to address the conduct of all parties in Gaza and the west bank?

Andrew Mitchell: We are very strong supporters of the International Criminal Court ... On the hon. Lady's important point that we need to see an end to settler violence, the Government entirely agree.

Holly Lynch (Labour): ... The supply of basic utilities such as water, medicine, electricity and fuel needed to operate the hospitals in Gaza should not be blocked. It is unacceptable that siege conditions are still being imposed on Gaza by Israel. ...

Andrew Mitchell: The Government at every level are engaged in those discussions with the state of Israel. ...

John McDonnell (Labour): ... Have the Government verified in any form with Qatar the reports that Hamas might be willing to agree a release of civilian hostages for a five-day ceasefire, and have the Government engaged at all with the proposal by the families of hostages for an "all for all" release of hostages for prisoners of Israel?

Andrew Mitchell: ... I can confirm to him that Qatar has been exceedingly helpful and that releasing the hostages remains at the very top of our list of priorities in this dreadful situation.

col 158 **Steve McCabe (Labour):** ... I am not sure we can exactly trade hostages in these conditions. However, does Minister agree that the immediate release of the hostages would go a long way towards enabling the conditions for the kind of humanitarian pause or pauses that we need ...

Andrew Mitchell: Yes.

Jon Trickett (Labour): As a person of Jewish heritage, I was mortified and horrified by what happened on 7 October, but I did not for one second believe that any Palestinian child anywhere was responsible. Yet the Secretary-General of the United Nations has said that Gaza is “a graveyard for children” and that the Israelis are committing war crimes, and has called for humanitarian peace. ... Is it not time we got behind the Secretary-General, who speaks with great moral authority on these matters, and ourselves called for a ceasefire?

Andrew Mitchell: The British role at the United Nations is second to none in trying to stop what is happening in Israel and in Palestine. The point I would make to the hon. Gentleman is that Hamas knew exactly what they were unleashing on that dreadful day of 7 October, and the blame for what has happened should be allocated precisely where it rests.

Zarah Sultana (Labour): Gaza used to be described as a “prison camp” ... This week the United Nations Secretary-General called it “a graveyard for children”. ... Today I tabled an amendment to the Humble Address calling for an immediate ceasefire, a move backed by 76% of the British public. Will the Government finally do what is right and demand an immediate ceasefire to end the bloodshed?

Andrew Mitchell: ... In respect of the amendment that she has tabled, of course that is a matter for the House, but it will not be supported by the Government, nor by those on her own Front Bench.

Alison Thewliss (SNP): ... Oxfam has said that humanitarian pauses and safe zones are simply not enough to address this humanitarian crisis ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... there have not yet been any pauses. That is why we are working so hard to try to achieve them.

col 159 **Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op):** ... We are getting reports that there are hospitals in the north that have only 24 hours’ worth of fuel. We are seeing and hearing horrific reports of children dying, and of people trying to work in those horrific circumstances. What are we doing to help those people? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... we are doing everything we can, across the international community and the humanitarian sector, to ensure that the pauses are implemented and take place as soon as possible.

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op): We are seeing a humanitarian catastrophe of unfathomable depths unfolding among the world’s youngest population. Last week, the UN General Assembly voted on a resolution calling for the “immediate, full, sustained, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access” for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, as well as an “immediate and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”. ... Why did the UK abstain? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... Britain’s decision not to oppose it but to abstain, he will have seen the reasons set out by the Government. ...

Clive Efford (Labour): The Secretary of State has said that he is discussing with partners how to increase the amount of aid going into Gaza, and that humanitarian pauses must be part of that, but how long must a humanitarian pause be to live up to that name? ...

col 160 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... these matters are the subject of intensive negotiations at this time.

Sarah Owen (Labour): ... how many horrors and deaths do the Government believe we must see before that pressure comes from the international community? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... we are calling for comprehensive humanitarian pauses to enable us to reach civilians in the desperate circumstances that the hon. Lady describes.

Stephen Farry (Alliance): ... Since 7 October, an estimated 39 journalists have been killed in the conflict. That makes it the most deadly month for journalists in almost 30 years. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... Many very brave journalists are in the area trying to ensure

that we get accurate reporting of what is going on there—they risk their lives ... When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was Foreign Secretary, he specifically implemented a number of changes to try to defend journalists who were caught up in those sorts of difficulties, and the British Government strongly support the work that he set in train.

Jim McMahon (Labour Co-op): ... The shadow Foreign Secretary ... has asked the Government to provide for a co-ordinator for aid to be appointed. Will the Government meet that request?

Andrew Mitchell: We are certainly considering that as the situation evolves, but for the moment, there are many specialists fulfilling a series of different purposes and different work in connection with the international situation.

Janet Daby (Labour): ... what steps are the Government taking to support UNICEF and others in protecting the million innocent children in Gaza?

col 161 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... Britain has consistently been one of the most generous and strong supporters of UNICEF, precisely because of the effectiveness of that organisation. ...

Andy Slaughter: ... Will the Minister answer the question that he has deftly avoided so far: is there a role for the International Criminal Court in investigating the conduct of all parties to this terrible war?

Andrew Mitchell: ... Britain was one of the first countries to support the ICC ... so Britain's support and enthusiasm for the work of the ICC should not be in doubt.

Fleur Anderson: ... Does the Minister agree that, for the 1.5 million Palestinians who had to flee, the right to return to their homes is vital for long-term peace, especially given the history in the region? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... The two-state solution means that Israel is able to live behind secure borders and the state of Palestine emerges, so the answer to the hon. Lady's question is a fairly qualified yes.

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... It is understood that the Egyptian Government have opened the Rafah crossing for dual nationals to vacate the Gaza strip, and many have already taken advantage of that. What steps will the Government take to ensure that British dual nationals are guaranteed safe passage via the crossing to get back to the UK for a much-loved reunion with their families?

Andrew Mitchell: ... More than 150 British nationals have now come out, and all our country-based staff and dependents were out by last night. There are 32 British nationals who are waiting for clearance, and 48 British nationals who have been cleared and who were waiting to come across when this statement started. ...

col 162 **Rachel Hopkins (Labour):** The charity Medical Aid for Palestinians has warned that people are struggling to find food and water and meet their basic needs, and that even the minimal humanitarian aid that has been allowed in is unable to be distributed fully, due to the damaged roads and lack of fuel for trucks. The north of Gaza is basically receiving no aid at all ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... These are very challenging circumstances ... but she may rest assured that the international humanitarian community is doing everything it can to address them.

Diana Johnson (Labour): The World Health Organisation estimates that there are 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza, with an average of 180 giving birth every day without access to obstetric services ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... if we are able to get aid in, we have specific humanitarian aid and support for mothers of babies—for mothers who have just given birth—and when we are able to get access in that respect, we will do everything we can to meet that need.

Munira Wilson (Liberal Democrat): Thousands of children are dead. Many more are traumatised, millions are being starved, and as we have heard, the UN has described

Gaza as becoming a “graveyard for children”. We all agree that Israel has the right to respond to the senseless and brutal attack of 7 October, but many of us ... believe that this response is utterly disproportionate. ... will the Minister explain to the House what it will take for his Government to stand up to Netanyahu and his extremist Ministers and make clear that this abject suffering simply cannot, and must not, continue?

Andrew Mitchell: Because we are strongly supportive of Israel’s right to self-defence—we have been absolutely clear about that throughout these dreadful circumstances, as have the Opposition—we are able to have clear and firm discussions with the Prime Minister of Israel, and that is what we do.

Andrew Gwynne (Labour): I abhor the loss of all innocent civilian life. ... This vicious cycle of killing must stop. ... the Prime Minister told us before Prorogation that he would use British logistical capacity to get hundreds of aid lorries a day—rather than the tens that were crossing at the time—across the Rafah crossing. By when do we expect that target to be met?

col 163 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... Britain has not only been supplying humanitarian provisions into el-Arish so that they can go through Rafah when circumstances permit but has provided heavy lift materials so that others, as well as us, can move those supplies towards Rafah when they are able to get through. ...

Margaret Greenwood (Labour): ... will the Minister urgently press all parties to agree to an immediate de-escalation and cessation of hostilities ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... I am not sure I can add to what I have already told the House ...

Cat Smith (Labour): The only route to long-term peace is a two-state solution. ... can he commit to making representations to his Israeli counterparts that all those displaced in Gaza will be able to return?

Andrew Mitchell: ... Britain, along with its allies, is absolutely focused on the wellbeing of the people of Gaza and their future. It is very important to make clear that Hamas is not the Palestinians.

Richard Burgon (Labour): ... The UN Secretary-General says that we need a ceasefire, one binding on all sides. The UN high commissioner for human rights also says that we need a ceasefire; so, too, do the heads of the UN’s Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Children’s Fund, UN Women, the UN World Food Programme and the World Health Organisation. In fact, the heads of all major United Nations agencies are calling for a humanitarian ceasefire. Why do this Government think that they know better than the world’s leading humanitarian agencies?

col 164 **Andrew Mitchell:** ... it is not the policy of either the Government or the Opposition to call for a ceasefire, for the reasons I have set out. ...

Sharon Hodgson (Labour): ... what discussions are the Government having with regional partners, especially Egypt, to ensure that the Rafah crossing will allow for many more people to leave Gaza much more quickly? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... we are having detailed discussions with all our regional partners. ...

Gavin Newlands (SNP): In depriving the civilian population of Gaza of water, food, medicine and power, combined with the forced relocation of civilians, not respecting the sanctity of hospitals—indeed, bombing or threatening to bomb hospitals—and targeting civilian infrastructure including refugee camps, Israel has broken articles 3, 18, 23, 33 and 47 of the Geneva conventions. What exactly do the Israel Defence Forces have to do before this Government call out Israel for its war crimes?

Andrew Mitchell: I would not accept the hon. Gentleman’s analysis, in his question, of the Geneva convention, but when he talks about the need for water, food and medicines, he may rest assured that Britain is focused very much on those supplies in its humanitarian efforts.

Paula Barker (Labour): In 2014, a six-hour pause made way for a three-day pause before

a ceasefire. This House must be on the right side of history ... does he agree that, for lasting peace, we must inevitably reach the point of a ceasefire, even after humanitarian pauses? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... I cannot agree with her, for the reasons I have set out, about calling now for a ceasefire ...

col 165 Justin Madders (Labour): I understand the need for Israel to act to free the hostages and deal with Hamas, although the images we see and the number of children who have been killed can sometimes seem a very distant way away from those objectives. ... in relation to Hamas's capacity, I would like to know how the UK Government will judge whether that objective has been reached ...

Andrew Mitchell: I recognise that the hon. Member is being supportive in saying that the purpose of the Israeli Government is to free the hostages and deal with Hamas. I am sure this will not be the only occasion when I come to the House to give a statement about both the humanitarian position and also the position throughout Gaza.

Joanna Cherry (SNP): When so many children are being horribly maimed and killed, it really is not naive to call for a ceasefire. ... against the background of an assessment that the rules of international humanitarian law have not only been broken by Hamas, but may be being broken by the Israeli Government.

I was very disappointed to hear that the UK Government have not carried out an assessment of whether international humanitarian law is being obeyed on the ground in Gaza. ... May I suggest to the Minister that if the UK Government fulfilled their obligation to carry out an assessment of whether international humanitarian law is being obeyed on the ground in Gaza, that might change both the UK Government's mind and the mind of the official Opposition, and make them support a ceasefire now?

Andrew Mitchell: ... the judgment she is asking the Government to make is not a judgment for Ministers and politicians, but a judgment for lawyers in respect of international law ...

Florence Eshalomi (Labour Co-op): ... What more will the Minister and this Government do to make sure they are speaking to their Israeli counterparts to ensure that that pause is real and that it comes now, so we can get in urgent assistance and do not see more innocent civilians dying?

col 166 Andrew Mitchell: ... the hon. Lady ... talked about the importance of releasing the hostages and addressing humanitarian concern. Those two things are at the heart of what the House has been discussing today ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-08/debates/F42FB301-D582-424F-BE62-97E2C6511200/OccupiedPalestinianTerritoriesHumanitarianSituation>

The Times article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hamas-has-set-a-trap-that-israel-must-avoid-kpv562gm7>

Sammy Wilson MPs comments referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-07/debates/4BAD4BB-07D9-4376-ABE6-069C9823F38A/DebateOnTheAddress#contribution-AB79F85D-C41E-4179-B7CB-3977136CF855>

Jonathan Freedland's comments referred to above can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/27/tragedy-israel-palestine-conflict-horror>

The United Nations Secretary-General's comments referred to above can be read at

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sqsm22021.doc.htm>

The minutes of the Birmingham City Council meeting referred to above are not yet available online, but a video of the discussion of the motion referred to above is available at

https://birmingham.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/816236/start_time/14149000?force_language_code=en_GB

The UNICEF statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-casualties-gaza-growing-stain-our-collective-conscience>

The Government explanation of abstention in the UN vote referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-supports-israels-right-to-self-defence-in-line-with-the-un-charter-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign Secretary arrives in Saudi Arabia to drive diplomatic efforts on the conflict in Gaza and Southern Israel

... James Cleverly will meet with foreign ministers from the Middle East, who are gathering in Saudi Arabia ahead of a League of Arab States emergency meeting on Gaza on Saturday.

He is expected to raise efforts to prevent wider regional escalation, including in Lebanon and Yemen, and offer continued UK support to bolster deterrence and counter threats from malign groups in the region.

The Foreign Secretary will also discuss initiatives to significantly increase the volume of aid reaching civilians in Gaza, including medicines, fuel and water, and ensure a pipeline of funds and supplies to support the relief effort. He will reaffirm the UK's support for further humanitarian pauses in the fighting as soon as possible to deliver aid and provide a crucial window for hostages – including British nationals – to be released.

In his meetings with counterparts, the Foreign Secretary will also reiterate the UK's condemnation of the rise in settler violence and call for Israel to hold those responsible to account to improve the situation in the West Bank. He will outline the UK's support for reinvigorating diplomatic efforts towards achieving a viable two-state solution. ...

The Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, said: I have been focused on diplomatic efforts to secure the release of hostages, to ensure that foreign nationals can leave Gaza, to deter any escalation regionally and to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid at scale.

I will continue this essential work in Saudi Arabia where I will meet with a number of my counterparts in the region to explore how we achieve those aims quickly and also look to the future of a lasting, peaceful, and prosperous two-state solution for both Israelis and Palestinians. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-arrives-in-saudi-arabia-to-drive-diplomatic-efforts-on-the-conflict-in-gaza-and-southern-israel>

The UK will work with our partners towards a two-state solution: UK statement at the UN Fourth Committee: Explanation of vote by Ambassador to the General Assembly Richard Croker at the UN Fourth Committee.

... Alongside our ongoing support for Israel's right to self-defence against terrorism, we continue to be clear that Israel must act in line with international humanitarian law and take every feasible precaution to avoid harming civilians.

We continue to underline, in parallel to our support of today's resolution, that Hamas does not speak or act in the interests of the Palestinian people. Hamas' deliberate murder and kidnapping of innocent people in Israel now callously puts civilians in Gaza at risk. We express our pain at seeing so many innocent lives destroyed on and since 7th October and reiterate our support for the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate representative of

the Palestinian people.

Palestinian civilians are experiencing a devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza and violence is rising in the West Bank. We strongly condemn settler violence against Palestinians and maintain our longstanding position that settlements are illegal under international law and contrary to the cause of peace.

To prevent further spread of the conflict, the UK will continue to invest all efforts for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The UK will work with our partners towards a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines with Jerusalem as a shared capital, which provides justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-will-work-with-our-partners-towards-a-two-state-solution-uk-statement-at-the-un-fourth-committee>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Katy Clark (Labour) [S6M-11019] **Arms Sales to Israel** – That the Parliament expresses its concern at reports of the ongoing sale and export of arms from the UK to Israel, in light of what it sees as the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza; understands that the UK has licensed £442 million worth of arms to Israel since 2015, according to research by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT); expresses its disappointment that the UK Government has not suspended arms sales to Israel, in light of the current conflict; understands that the UK Government previously placed restrictions on arms sales to Israel in 2009 during the then Gaza conflict; acknowledges the calls by campaigners for the UK Government to suspend arms sales to Israel, pending a review into whether any arms sold have been used, and contributed to civilian casualties, in the ongoing conflict in Gaza; understands that five arms companies with a presence in Scotland have applied for export licences to sell arms to Israel; further understands that research from The Ferret in 2021 had previously highlighted that these companies received £10 million in publicly-funded grants through Scottish Enterprise, and notes the calls for the Scottish Government to immediately suspend the awarding of publicly-funded grants to arms companies who hold export licences to sell arms to Israel.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-11019>

Welsh Senedd Debate

Conflict in Israel and Gaza

The motion and amendment under debate can be read at

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

and

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

399 Rhun ap Iorwerth (Plaid Cymru): ... I feel the need to speak today as a member of humanity. We are human. The pain of loss is felt equally by an Israeli and a Palestinian mother. Today we speak up for peace for all mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. We speak today in pursuit of unity. We reject division. We take a stand against those seeking to encourage division. To those seeking to provoke anti-Jewish or anti-Muslim sentiment, we say, 'Stop now'. In fact, Jewish and Muslim representatives here in Wales have told me in recent days how support for each other means so much to them. ...

400 But just as anything that threatens the harmony here in Wales must stop, so must the killing in this awful conflict.

401 My limited time will not allow me to adequately reflect the complex chronology of the

Israel-Palestine conflict, neither will it allow me to set out the detailed context to a conflict that long predates 7 October, but let me set out again what all of us have responded to with absolute unity: the horrifying, unspeakable attacks by Hamas and loss of innocent lives in terrible circumstances, the sheer fear felt by Israelis, and the taking of hostages must be condemned and has been condemned by us all in the strongest terms. ... We can all surely sympathise with and understand Israel's anger that day. ... But in the war that ensued after 7 October, the response that ensued—inevitable as a response was going to be, so there has to be a duty to be proportionate. ... There can never be justification for the collective punishment of an entire population.

402 The United Nations reports that the overall death toll currently stands at over 10,000 as a result of the relentless bombardment—10,000 people, who leave behind widows and widowers, grieving parents, lost orphans; 4,500 of the dead are children. ...

403 We owe it to all those who have lost their lives, Israeli and Palestinian, to speak up for a lasting peace. ... whilst any pause in the fighting would be welcome to enable vital aid and supplies to reach those in need, any pause must surely be with a view to become permanent—that's why a ceasefire is the call. ...

406 Isn't this humanitarian catastrophe a failure of humanity itself? Do we not owe it to every man, woman and child to speak with one voice and to say that all such suffering is unconscionable? ...

407 Hamas's attacks on 7 October were unjust and inhumane—indescribable. But the collective punishment of the Palestinian population is also unjust and inhumane ...

412 Today's debate is about giving a voice to the voiceless. It is about telling the world that it's time to answer the plight of Gaza's children. Ordinary Israelis want peace, too, and we grieve with them also.

416 **Darren Millar (Conservative):** ... My last visit to the middle east was in June of this year. I visited Amaan, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jerusalem, with Russell George. We met there with Israeli, Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian Authority representatives and church leaders, and without exception, every single one of those that we met wanted peace and stability. ... But on 7 October, we woke to the dreadful news that Hamas had unleashed a deadly, indiscriminate terror attack on Israel and Israeli citizens from Gaza, a Palestinian territory from which Israel withdrew in 2005. And earlier today, many Members of this Senedd attended a briefing by the Israeli Embassy, and we were shown chilling images filmed by the terrorists themselves. ... The severity of the indiscriminate physical and sexual violence inflicted on Israeli citizens old and young was so shocking that I dare not repeat some of what was shared. It was the worst atrocity committed against the Jewish people since the Holocaust. And then there are the hostages—at least 240 people who have now been held by Hamas for a month. And let us be clear, Hamas is a racist, genocidal, misogynistic and homophobic organisation that is hellbent on terror. ...

417 And Israel, as is the case for any sovereign state, has the right to defend itself and its citizens in the face of such barbarity, and that is why Israel has set out on this mission to dismantle Hamas in a bid to prevent similar attacks in the future. But it's important to draw the distinction here: Israel is at war with Hamas, it is not at war with the Palestinian people. And of course it must conduct that war in accordance with international law, including avoiding civilian casualties. Yet, in recent weeks, we have all looked on in horror at the growing humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza, with more than 10,000 killed so far, many of them innocent women and children; whole families—sometimes with a number of generations—wiped out in an instant, some of them while taking refuge in churches, mosques and hospitals. Many were killed by Hamas as they sought to evacuate after warnings from the Israeli defence forces; others because they were used unwittingly as human shields by Hamas, which we all know operates from tunnels beneath hospitals and fires rockets from locations next door to schools and places of worship. Because, let's be clear, Hamas doesn't care about Palestinian civilian casualties. A Hamas official, Mousa

Abu Marzouk, was asked in a tv interview just last week why the organisation's more than 300 miles of tunnels in Gaza couldn't be used to shelter civilians. He responded, and I quote:

418 'The tunnels are for us'—

419 Hamas—

420 'The citizens in the Gaza Strip are under the responsibility of the United Nations.

421 ... the Rafah crossing has now been reopened, and it must be kept open, and more aid must be allowed to cross. But that crossing, while being open, must not be open to abuse. ... the US authorities confirmed that efforts to bring injured civilians out of Gaza were being disrupted because Hamas was attempting to sneak its wounded fighters out instead of civilians. ...

422 Palestinian lives matter just as much as Israeli lives ... But Hamas has vowed to never lay down its arms. And by the public admission of one of its own senior leaders last week, Ghazi Hamad, and I quote, 7 October was

423 'just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth'.

424 He went on in the interview to make it clear that Hamas is hellbent on Israel's annihilation. ... Hamas is an obstacle to the long-term peace we all want to see, as are those in the Israeli Government who have dangerously talked about the possibility of a nuclear strike in Gaza, and those who resist any prospect of the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. ...

426 **Jenny Rathbone (Labour):** ... This unsolved conflict has been going on for over 75 years. ...

427 ... we have a moral duty to stand up for the cause of peace. We have to heed the call for a ceasefire from the United Nations, the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNICEF. ... But a ceasefire is evidentially not the holy grail nor the extent of our ambitions for peace. How can ceasefire be achieved while neither Hamas nor the current Israeli Government continue to say they're having none of it? ...

428 The war crimes of Hamas cannot justify similar breaches of the Geneva convention by the Israeli Government, and the UK Government cannot be complicit, or they too could end up in the International Criminal Court. ...

429 Time is not on our side. Babies in incubators will die, as will children drinking contaminated water. A family of seven, we learnt today, cannot survive on four pieces of pitta bread. The 240 hostages will perish along with the rest of the Gazan population unless there is a let up in the constant bombardment. ... The horrific events of 7 October are a reminder there can be no security without peace, and the death toll in Gaza just underlines that. If Yocheved Lifshitz can shake hands with her captors with the word 'shalom' or 'peace' or 'salam', then people in leadership responsibilities must follow her example. ...

433 **Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru):** ... At the heart of this conflict, we must remember that it is the overwhelmingly innocent who are suffering—in the abhorrent violence and hostage taking by Hamas and the indiscriminate attacks on Gaza by the Israeli Government, which has caused the suffering of innocent civilians, a suffering that cannot be denied and cannot be tolerated. ... Save the Children have stated that more children have been killed in the Gaza strip over the last three weeks than in every other armed conflict annually since 2019. Those are the figures. But we must also respond to those images we see each night on our television screens. Those horrendous injuries on the little bodies. The terrible anguish on those small faces. The tears of confusion and pain and terror, night after night. The tiny shrouds. ...

434 A further 1,000 children have been reported missing, and more than 6,000 children have been injured. And the mothers, the poor mothers. ... A hundred and sixty Palestinian women will give birth every day in Gaza as this fighting continues. ... And the fathers—helpless and heartbroken as they bury their children. ...

435 The UN reports suggest that 42 per cent of housing in Gaza has been completely destroyed. People are living on the streets, in tents, overcrowded in buildings, and never

safe. The ongoing conflict is exacerbating an already very serious refugee crisis in the region. ...

436 Wafa Abu Hashish, a health worker for Palestinian family planning, described the shelters for displaced Palestinians as suffering from a shortage of water, lack of medical care and an increase in the incidence of diseases such as influenza, chest infections, skin ulcers, scabies, lice and diarrhoeal diseases. ... that's why Plaid Cymru echoes the calls of the Scottish First Minister, Humza Yousaf, for the UK to accept Palestinian refugees in the same way as was done for the people of Ukraine. ...

439 **Alun Davies (Labour):** ... I've sat in the coffee shops of Amman and spoken with refugees who lost their homes in the Nakba. I've spoken with children in Lebanon who have been made homeless by successive wars. ... I've spoken to Israelis who have lost family members, and I've spoken to Palestinians who have lost family members, and I see the same pain in those eyes. ... What happened on 7 October cannot simply be seen as a single instant in a cycle of violence; it was an attack on Israel in a way that hasn't been witnessed for many decades. More Israelis died last month on a single day than died since the Holocaust. You can't walk away from that. ...

440 Let me say this: if I believed for a moment that a ceasefire today would create peace tomorrow, I'd vote for it. Good God, I'd vote for it. Of course I would. Do you think that, as a parent, I don't see the same images that you see? Do you think I don't see my children in those faces? Do you think that I don't go to bed with those faces in my mind? And don't you think that all of us don't share that same sense of humanity? But I'll tell you one more thing. In my life, I've witnessed genocide and I've seen the reality of these things with my own eyes. You talk about the images you see on your tv; I can tell you what it smells like. The one thing you don't see on the tv and you don't hear on the tv is the sheer noise around you. You can't smell what it's like after an attack or after people have been killed. And when you see the images of bodies on the ground, it stays with you. I saw some of these things 30 years ago and I can still see them today. ...

441 My God, I want to see peace, but I want to see real peace, and that means that we have to support the people of Israel in taking away the infrastructure of Hamas. There will be no peace with Hamas in Gaza. The people of Gaza will have no peace. Hamas knew what would happen when they attacked Israel on 7 October. They knew that there would be deaths in Gaza. They knew there would be a retaliation. They knew what would happen, but they did it nevertheless, and then they use the people of Gaza as a human shield. ... You cannot create a ceasefire with people who want to eradicate not just the state you happen to live in, but the people that you actually are. ...

442 Let's ensure that, over the coming days, weeks and months, humanitarian supplies are able to reach the people of Gaza. Let's ensure that we can keep safe the civilians and the innocents of Gaza. Let's also ensure that we are able to minimise the casualties over the coming weeks and months. But let's also make sure that what we do is to deliver and play our part in delivering a peace that isn't a peace based on the barrel of a gun, but a peace that is based on the co-existence of people living in peace together.

443 **Delyth Jewell (Plaid Cymru):** ... This is a conflict we cannot understand without the perspective of history, that long history of two peoples wronged by the world, sharing the same small stretch of desert land, where peace has never bloomed. Deep and ugly wrongs have been perpetrated throughout their histories ... When did 'ceasefire' become a tainted word? When did it become controversial to call for an end to killings? ...

444 A ceasefire is needed and a space cleared amidst the rubble for that fragile seed of peace to be planted and to bloom at last ...

446 **John Griffiths (Labour):** ... On Monday, a joint statement of major United Nations bodies made a united call for a humanitarian ceasefire, saying

447 'An entire population is besieged and under attack, denied access to the essentials for survival, bombed in their homes, shelters, hospitals and places of worship. ...'

451 Llywydd, the madness, carnage and inhumanity in Gaza and Israel has to stop. The daily bombardment of Gaza causing the deaths of over 10,000 people, including over 4,000 children, must end. And so too the destruction of homes and the blockade of life-saving supplies. The hostages must be released. ...

452 **Adam Price (Plaid Cymru):** ... The inevitable outcome is further civilian deaths, probably in the many thousands, because there is little sign so far that Israel is prepared to obey international law in terms of either necessity or proportionality. The second probable outcome is a regional escalation ... The third probable outcome is the military occupation of Gaza by Israel and its eventual withdrawal, leaving a power vacuum that will be likely filled by the return of Hamas or even something worse. ... A ceasefire allows us the chance to de-escalate and to begin the process of negotiation ...

453 Difficult? Yes. Impossible? No. We've done it before. In 1948, the UN created the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization ... It was they that persuaded the PLO actually to leave Palestine—all the fighters—in 1982. ...

456 **Hefin David (Labour):** ... I'm old enough to remember Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat at the White House shaking hands. I remember the Oslo accords. And I also remember the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin and the Israeli Governments that followed, that paved the way to the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu ... And also I remember the tragedy of the international community turning their eyes away as these things happened. ...

457 But we should try and remember the hope that we felt then, the hope that we felt when we saw those handshakes on the White House lawn. ...

458 I fully support the First Minister's words in his letter of 30 October to the Muslim Council of Wales in which he said,

459 'actions need to happen, including the immediate restoration of aid, electricity, fuel, food and water to Gaza, but that cannot happen while hostilities continue ... In the urgency of today's desperate circumstances, I believe that the quickest and most effective way to assist those in overwhelming need is to join others in the international community by calling for an immediate pause. ...

461 On 7 October, says the motion, there was an attack on Israeli civilians. My argument is that it was in fact an attack on the state of Israel itself, with the violence and terror of Hamas ultimately aiming to wipe out, wipe out the state of Israel. And again, as said by my colleagues earlier, Hamas do not care how many Palestinians are killed in achieving that aim.

462 I believe that the amendment makes these distinctions clear and puts a duty on everyone ... to work towards a peace settlement ...

464 I and other Members of this Parliament have received abuse for not supporting the Plaid motion. One post by an organisation calling themselves 'the Welsh underground network'—these are real Welsh people, although they cowardly hide behind social media accounts—have said that they call for the removal of Zionists from the Senedd. They do not believe that those who support the Jewish people's right to self-determination have a place in a national parliament. This antisemitism is not really directed towards me and others in this Chamber, in fact, it is directed towards our Jewish communities. It's for this reason that I think we have to be absolutely clear that any criticisms of the actions of the Israeli Government—and there are many—are not a criticism of the state of Israel. ...

465 ... we must condemn all those seeking to use the awful situation as a proxy to stoke anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiment. ...

468 **Jane Dodds (Liberal Democrat):** ... The abduction and degradation of over 200 hostages including children is appalling. We stand in solidarity with the Jewish community around the world, who feel and face such fear and grief. Palestinian and Israeli civilians face unimaginable horrors of war. ...

471 A temporary pause, to me, simply does not make sense. Such a pause would not offer

the time and security needed to meet even basic civilian needs in Gaza, and would be, in my view, rendered pointless once the hostilities resumed and infrastructure was again destroyed. Civilians would be left scrambling for survival almost immediately.

472 We must not accept either reverting to the status quo. The United Kingdom, especially, must spearhead the pursuit of lasting peace. This peace must provide statehood to the millions of Palestinians currently deprived of it and guarantee safe, secure borders for Israelis. ...

474 **Carolyn Thomas (Labour):** ... I'm turning on the news halfway through, because I can't face it all myself, at the moment. ... Millions of people living in constant fear that the residential building in which they live or the school, hospital, mosque, church or refugee camp in which they are sheltering could be bombed by an air strike at any moment. ...

475 When Israel has bombed hospitals and refugee camps, they have done so under the claim that it is proportionate because Hamas are using these places to shield their commanders. If it is the case that Hamas use hospitals and refugee camps to shield military personnel and equipment, then why would they not also do so to weaponise humanitarian corridors in the same way? And if that does indeed happen, it will provide a green light for the bombing of humanitarian corridors, rendering them useless. ...

477 For those lucky enough to survive, a life of trauma awaits. ...

478 The answer to this conflict does not lie in yet more violence, war and inhumanity. ... I'm told that the Israeli Government won't support a ceasefire, so I understand why some Members think a humanitarian pause may open up the conditions to consider a ceasefire in the longer term. But, ultimately, anything but a long-term ceasefire means more death and destruction. ...

480 **Mabon ap Gwynfor (Plaid Cymru):** Whatever the question that's being asked, killing and the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people, children and vulnerable people, is not the answer. When Israelis go to bed living in fear that a missile will hit their homes, then, clearly, something is wrong. When parents in Gaza feel that they must write the names of their children on their bodies so that they can be identified after air strikes, then it's clear that there is something amiss in the world. ...

481 Rabin saw the need to build peace and to do so by collaborating with Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Arafat at that time. Who would have thought in naming these individuals that we, today, would desire to see statesmen such as them today? ... But the dark shadow of the murder of Yitzhak Rabin is cast over us today, and we must not let that coward who murdered him win. ...

482 I know that there has been some discussion on the word 'ceasefire' and that a pause is what is needed, as we have heard this afternoon, but all a pause would do is to enable people to start killing each other again after a set period of time. That isn't, and cannot be, a solution. ... The desire for revenge is understandable, but it doesn't solve anything. ...

485 **Ken Skates (Labour):** ... from what I've been able to ascertain from organisations such as the International Crisis Group, the pathway to peace will most likely begin with a humanitarian pause leading to a ceasefire. ... if a ceasefire was the most likely and viable first step to be agreed by both sides, then I think every single one of us would support the call for it to happen immediately. But many experts see this as unrealistic and identify a humanitarian pause as bringing about the necessary first stage in the peace process as fast as possible. ...

490 **The Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt:** ... this Senedd is united in our horror at the events that have unfolded in Israel and Gaza over recent weeks. The appalling attack by Hamas on innocent civilians in Israel and their capture of civilian hostages has shocked us all. It's left a nation in mourning and families desperate for the safe return of their loved ones—rightly condemned around the world and again here today. The unimaginable suffering of so many innocent civilians we are now witnessing in Gaza and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe are an affront to our common humanity. Every

human life is of equal value and the number of lives being lost in Gaza every day, with thousands of children among them, as has been said, is utterly heartbreaking.

491 We are clear about the horror of this humanitarian disaster, but I believe that we're also clear about the urgent need to ensure that aid can reach the people who desperately need it, including the restoration of electricity, fuel, food and water to Gaza. And that's why the First Minister has joined with calls for an immediate humanitarian pause as the quickest and most effective way to allow this to happen, but also, crucially, as the most realistic route and platform for reaching a full ceasefire as soon as possible.

492 We are clear that finding a way to end the violence, suffering and death is absolutely essential and it must remain the focus, above all else, to find that pathway to peace. ... And we believe that this can only be achieved through political agreement based on a two-state solution, where people in Israel live in security and the Palestinian people realise the independent statehood to which they have long aspired. ...

493 We also endorse ... the widespread calls for international law to be respected by everyone in order to give every possible protection to civilian lives and facilities. ...

494 The First Minister and I have been engaging over recent weeks with representatives of Muslim and Jewish communities here in Wales. I've been grateful to meet with representatives of our faith communities forum and also to have the opportunity to visit places of worship to hear directly from members of affected communities about the deep, deep pain being felt by many people here in Wales. ...

495 We have also heard very clearly as we've reached out and engaged and talked to people who have been affected about the rising fear of prejudice and hate. We must be absolutely clear there is no place for hate in Wales, and we must all play our part in standing against prejudice. Education has a crucial role, and the Minister for education and I have been engaged in discussions with faith leaders about how we can do more to promote understanding and tackle antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of faith-based hate in our education settings. ...

496 Although we're not currently seeing evidence of a spike in religious hate crime through these channels, there are concerns that incidents are not being reported. ... The Welsh Government's community cohesion programme is an important part of our response to emerging and unforeseen issues impacting communities in Wales, and the programme ... employs cohesion teams, working across all our local authorities in Wales, delivering a range of activities, including monitoring community tensions, both online and offline, collaborating with partners such as police to mitigate them. This has recently included teams connecting with faith leaders in the community as issues have arisen, providing support and reassurance where needed.

498 Finally, Llywydd, I want to reflect on two visits I made last week to a mosque and a synagogue. People told me very clearly about their fears and concerns, their anger and distress, but also about the importance of faith for many in the darkest of times. The message from these visits was to have faith in hope and humanity, not despair. ...

500 Rhun ap Iorwerth: ... Some of course will be asking why we tabled this debate—what right, even, we have to table such a debate; why we are discussing the horrors 3,000 miles away in a Parliament that has no direct responsibility for foreign affairs. Well, the answer for me is clear ... The Wales that I know is that Wales that has taken a stance time and time again for peace and for human rights.

501 There's another reason too: the suffering in Israel and Gaza is being felt in communities across Wales. I know that all of us in the Senedd today will stand with the Jewish and Muslim communities who are experiencing what hatred can mean, and we in this Senedd will stand against hatred in every way. ...

507 ... Darren Millar said that Hamas doesn't care about Palestinian civilians. Well, we can show that we do care about Palestinian civilians. We've heard expressions about how difficult, impossible, it may feel to achieve that ceasefire that we aspire to achieving. But we can't afford to turn our backs on any chance to promote peace. ...

514 **The Llywydd:** ... I call for a vote on the motion without amendment, tabled in the name of Rhun ap Iorwerth. ... In favour 24, 13 abstentions and 19 against, and therefore the motion is agreed, and therefore there will be no further voting. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13557#A83152>

The UN joint statement referred to above can be read at

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/statement-principals-inter-agency-standing-committee-situation-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territory-we-need-immediate-humanitarian-ceasefire>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Remarks at media briefing by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk following visit to Rafah, Egypt

... I have just returned from the Rafah crossing — the symbolic lifeline for the last month for the 2.3 million people in Gaza.

The lifeline has been unjustly, outrageously thin.

In Rafah I have witnessed the gates to a living nightmare.

A nightmare, where people have been suffocating, under persistent bombardment, mourning their families, struggling for water, for food, for electricity and fuel. ...

Gaza has already been described as the world's biggest open-air prison before 7 October, under a 56-year occupation and a 16-year blockade by Israel.

The atrocities perpetrated by Palestinian armed groups on 7 October were heinous, brutal and shocking, they were war crimes - as is the continued holding of hostages.

The collective punishment by Israel of Palestinian civilians amounts also to a war crime, as does the unlawful forcible evacuation of civilians. The massive bombardments by Israel have killed, maimed and injured in particular women and children. ...

We have fallen off a precipice. This cannot continue.

Even in the context of a 56-year-old occupation, the current situation is the most dangerous in decades, faced by people in Gaza, in Israel, in the West Bank but also regionally. ...

Let me be clear - the world cannot afford double standards. We must instead insist upon the universal standards against which we must assess this situation - international human rights laws and international humanitarian laws.

And those standards are clear: parties to the conflict have the obligation to take constant care to spare the civilian population and civilian objects, which remains applicable throughout the attacks. The actions of one party do not absolve the other party of its obligations under international humanitarian law. Attacks against medical facilities, medical personnel and the wounded and sick are prohibited.

And aid needs to be delivered to all those in need. ...

People remain deeply vulnerable in all parts of Gaza. There is an urgent humanitarian imperative to reach the population increasingly isolated, including in the North and Middle Areas of Gaza, cut off from the very limited aid that is entering Gaza. ...

In the last one month, Gaza has also experienced complete communication blackouts at least three times, cutting Palestinians in Gaza from their families inside the strip as well as the outside world. Blackouts have serious consequences on rescue workers struggling to find and rescue the victims of strikes, families trying to find out the status of their loved ones and to access emergency medical care, and for the situation on the ground to be monitored and documented.

Journalists trying to document and report on the situation in Gaza have been paying the price with their lives. ...

What the extremists want us to do is to look at the world in black-and-white, with no perspective of the pain on the other side. We cannot let ourselves be led into this

monochrome view of the world.

I feel, in my innermost being, the pain, the immense suffering of every person whose loved one has been killed - in a kibbutz, in a Palestinian refugee camp, hiding in a building or as they were fleeing, seeking elusive safety. We all must feel this shared pain, and end this nightmare.

I call – as a matter of urgency - for the parties now to agree a ceasefire on the basis of three critical human rights imperatives:

We need urgent delivery of massive levels of humanitarian aid, throughout Gaza.

We need all hostages held since 7 October to be released without conditions and immediately.

And, crucially, we need to enable the political space to implement a durable end to the occupation, based on the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis to self-determination and their legitimate security interests.

It is no longer enough simply to say the 56-year occupation must end. The international community needs to be part of finding a just and equitable future for the Palestinian and Israeli people.

They are each other's only hopes for peace.

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/11/un-human-rights-chief-visits-rafah-border-crossing-gaza>

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Other Relevant Information

Council of Europe

Study on preventing and combating hate speech in times of crisis

<https://rm.coe.int/-study-on-preventing-and-combating-hate-speech-in-times-of-crisis/1680ad393b>

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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>

Bill as introduced in the new parliamentary session

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0005/230005.pdf>

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

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

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

Bill as introduced in the new parliamentary session

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0007/230007.pdf>

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 8 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 8 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 8 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