



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### HM Prison and Probation Service

**Updated: Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655b3737544aea000dfb3018/psi-05-2016-faith-pastoral-care-prisoners.pdf>

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## Israel

### Scottish Parliament Motion

*Due to be taken in the Chamber on Tuesday, 21 November 2023*

**Humza Yousaf (SNP, First Minister) [S6M-11342] The Situation in the Middle East** – That the Parliament unequivocally condemns in the strongest possible terms Hamas’s barbaric and unjustifiable terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens on 7 October 2023, and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages; agrees that all human life is equal, abhors the loss of innocent lives, and affirms the right of all Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security; further agrees that the killing of innocent civilians in Gaza, including women and children who have been besieged by Israeli forces, must stop; associates itself with the United Nations Secretary-General’s statements that there must be an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow civilians to escape harm, for hostages to be released, for humanitarian aid to reach those in need, and affirming that international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, must be upheld; reiterates its solidarity with Scotland’s Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities and condemns antisemitism, Islamophobia or any other form of hatred; welcomes the Scottish Government’s contribution of £750,000 towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East’s flash appeal for Gaza, and the humanitarian assistance announced by the UK Government; reaffirms that a credible, lasting and sustainable peace can only be based on the two-state solution

through reinvigorated diplomatic and political efforts in the Middle East Peace Process, and agrees with many in the international community that all parties must agree to an immediate ceasefire.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-11342>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Horrendous Gaza violence must stop: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk**

The horrendous events of the past 48 hours in Gaza beggar belief.

The killing of so many people at schools turned shelters, hundreds fleeing for their lives from Al-Shifa Hospital, amid continuing displacement of hundreds of thousands in southern Gaza, are actions which fly in the face of the basic protections civilians must be afforded under international law.

Images purportedly taken in the aftermath of the reported Israeli strike on Al Fakhoura school are horrifying, clearly showing large numbers of women, children and men severely wounded or killed. At least three other schools hosting displaced Palestinians have also been attacked in the past 48 hours.

Israeli military operations have been continuing inside and around Al Shifa hospital. UN colleagues visited the site yesterday, and witnessed first-hand what they described as a [‘death zone’](#). Medical personnel, patients, and civilians have fled the hospital, ordered to do so by the Israeli military. Hundreds were seen making their way south on foot, at great risk to their lives, health and safety. And to where? Nowhere is safe in Gaza.

In Khan Younis, the Israeli Defense Forces are dropping leaflets demanding residents go to unspecified “recognized shelters”, even as strikes take place across Gaza. Already displaced Palestinians - deprived by extreme restrictions on life-saving assistance - are struggling to meet their basic needs, forced into ever-diminishing, over-crowded, unsanitary unsafe spaces. Irrespective of warnings, Israel is obliged to protect civilians wherever they are.

Rules of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in carrying out the attacks must be strictly adhered to. Failure to adhere to these rules may constitute war crimes.

The pain, dread, and fear etched on the faces of children, women and men is too much to bear. How much more violence, bloodshed and misery will it take before people come to their senses? How many more civilians will be killed?

This must stop.

Humanity must come first. A ceasefire - on humanitarian and human rights grounds - is desperately needed. Now.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/11/horrendous-gaza-violence-must-stop>

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### **End the killing of children in armed conflict, UN committee urges**

... the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ... issued the following statement:

“World Children’s Day has generally been regarded as a day to celebrate the gains made since the United Nations adopted the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 1989. Thirty-four years later today, it, however, has become a day for mourning for the many children who have recently died in armed conflict. More than 4,600 children have been killed in Gaza in only five weeks. This war has claimed the lives of more children in a shorter time and with a level of brutality that we have not witnessed in recent decades.

The Committee has previously urged for a ceasefire. Unfortunately, the UN Security Council has not put its weight behind that call. While the 15 November 2023 resolution of

the Security Council calling for humanitarian pauses and corridors is a positive step by the international community, it does not end the war that is waging on children – it simply makes it possible for children to be saved from being killed on some days, but not on other days. ...

The Committee recognises World Children’s Day in a sombre mood. In the face of wars affecting children around the globe, we call again for ceasefires, for a return to the basics of humanitarian law, and for thorough investigations by competent authorities of all grave violations against children in the context of armed conflict.”

**To read the full statement see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/11/end-killing-children-armed-conflict-un-committee-urges>

*The Security Council Resolution referred to above can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2712\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2712(2023))

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### **Women bearing the brunt of Israel-Gaza conflict: UN expert**

Women and children have disproportionately borne the brunt of the conflict in Israel and Gaza, a UN expert said today.

“While these atrocities affect both women and men, their impact is gendered and disproportionately affects women,” said **Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences**.

“Women and girls of all ages are among those held hostage and killed by Hamas, as well as those injured and killed by Israel’s indiscriminate bombardment of the Gaza Strip,” Alsalem said.

She noted that for decades, the Israeli occupation and the denial of self-determination have subjected Palestinian women to an onslaught of multiple layers of egregious and systematic discrimination and violence.

“Since 7 October, the assault on Palestinian women’s dignity and rights has taken on new and terrifying dimensions, as thousands have become victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and an unfolding genocide,” the expert said. ...

The Special Rapporteur expressed alarm at the genocidal and dehumanising rhetoric about the Palestinian people, including women and children, by top Israeli Government officials and public figures calling them “children of darkness”. Palestinians as a whole have reportedly been described “human animals” and calls have been made to inflict on them a second *Nakba*. “Such statements make the Israeli Government’s intention to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, absolutely and consistently clear,” ...

Alsalem warned that the reproductive violence inflicted by Israel on Palestinian women, newborn babies, infants, and children could be qualified as violations of the human right to life under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and as acts of genocide under Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide, several articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, including “imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group”. “States must prevent and punish such acts in accordance with their responsibilities under the Genocide Convention,” she said. ...

The Special Rapporteur expressed concern about reports of sexual violence that may have occurred since 7 October committed by State and non-State actors against Israelis and Palestinians. “Reports of sexual violence must be verified, thoroughly investigated and those responsible must be held accountable. Incitements to commit such violence must also stop,” she said. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/women-bearing-brunt-israel-gaza-conflict-un-expert>

*The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>*

*The Convention on the Prevention of Genocide, referred to above, can be read at [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf)*

*The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>*

*The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>*

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**Gaza: UN expert demands unconditional humanitarian access and relief for people with disabilities**

A UN expert today reiterated growing calls for unconditional and unrestricted humanitarian aid access to the people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

The expert emphasised the importance of ensuring aid reaches all civilians and especially those with disabilities who may need assistive tools in addition to food, medicine, and other essential services such as water and sanitation, electricity and healthcare.

“This region has increasing disability rates among the population because of exposure to repeated armed conflicts in addition to the current bombardment of the Gaza strip, and all relief teams and international bodies must take this into account,” said **Heba Hagrass** ...

**UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.**

“People with disabilities have difficulty accessing safe places, and the denial of vital services such as electricity, water, and food exposes people with disabilities to heightened risks including the risk of loss of life,” Hagrass said. ...

“People with disabilities must not be “left behind” because their families and relief teams are unable to give them the necessary support,” Hagrass added.

She warned that the way military operations are being conducted has catastrophic consequences for all civilians, including people with disabilities, violates the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities -Article 11-, and goes against Security Council Resolution No. 2475 (2019) on protecting persons with disabilities during armed conflicts. ...

The Special Rapporteur also underscored the need to ensure the unconditional release of all hostages and arbitrarily detained individuals, especially persons with disabilities.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/gaza-un-expert-demands-unconditional-humanitarian-access-and-relief-people>

*The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>*

*UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019), referred to above, can be read at [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2475\(2019\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2475(2019))*

## **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Opens One Hundred and Eleventh Session in Geneva, Committee Experts Address the Conflict in the Gaza Strip**

... **Yury Boychenko, Chief of the Anti-Racial Discrimination Section, Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division**, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Representative of the Secretary-General ... said ... Racism was among the first challenges brought to the newly created United Nations ... [but] Seventy-five years on, millions of persons still faced difficulties, obstacles, and pushbacks in exercising their rights due to racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. Systemic racism and structural racial discrimination persisted ... Casual racist hate speech and racist and xenophobic attitudes persisted. ...

**Noureddin Amir, Committee Expert**, said that one State continued to take a stand against the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Six million Jews died in the Holocaust while Europe looked on. Today, there was a new holocaust and it was the Palestinian people who were paying the price. The United Nations had been unable to firmly condemn this attack and prevent violations of international law. ... The Palestinians were again being chased from their land. Until when would all remain silent. Enough was enough. Children, youth, women and the elderly were being killed before the international community. Hospitals and ambulances were being destroyed. Until when would this be allowed. People had taken to the street to protest across the world. The Expert called on American society and the entire international community to protest the massacres and called on the international community to implement effective resolutions. Israel was a true terrorist State. There needed to be an end to this mass killing of the human race. The International Criminal Court had been seized of the matter, but the State in question did not recognise the court. This was truly a holocaust, and the international community needed to put an end to it.

**Gay McDougall, Committee Expert**, said ... there was a serious gap between the work being done in the United Nations and the situation on the ground in regions of conflict, particularly the Middle East. The Committee had issued a very important [statement on the situation in the Middle East](#) in the early days of the current conflict ... It had formed a commission for consultation with the two States parties in question to seek a resolution to the issue, but it had achieved no results as one of the States parties had refused to cooperate. ...

**Yury Boychenko** ... said that he shared the sentiments and anger expressed by the Committee members. ... He expressed his personal view that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was being violated. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/11/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-opens-one-hundred-and-eleventh-session>

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

### **UK Parliament**

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

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

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

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

## Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

## Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

## Scottish Parliament

### Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 4 days**

**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>

**Super-complaints: eligible entity criteria and procedural requirements** (closing date 11 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/super-complaints-eligible-entity-criteria-and-procedural-requirements>

**Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028: proposed principles of approach and objectives [Welsh Government]** (closing date 12 February 2024)

<https://www.gov.wales/strategic-equality-plan-2024-2028-proposed-principles-approach-and-objectives>

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