



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

See also the FCDO press release “Foreign Secretary call with US Secretary of State Blinken” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

First UK maritime shipment of lifesaving aid for Gaza arrives in Egypt

... The first UK maritime shipment of aid for Gaza has arrived in Egypt, carrying almost 90 tonnes of thermal blankets and other essential items.

The lifesaving shipment was delivered from Cyprus by Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Lyme Bay, carrying thermal blankets, shelter packs and medical supplies provided by the UK and the Republic of Cyprus. From Port Said, the aid will be received by the Egyptian Red Crescent and will make its way to Al Arish and then through Rafah and into Gaza for distribution by UNRWA. ...

The Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary have made clear that Israel must increase the flow of aid into Gaza and facilitate the delivery of relief on the ground, including through negotiated humanitarian pauses. The UK will continue to explore other routes for aid deliveries, including the Cypriot initiative for a maritime corridor between Cyprus and Israel/OPTs and supporting United Nations World Food Programme through the humanitarian land corridor from Jordan through Kerem Shalom.

Foreign Secretary David Cameron said: The UK is committed to supporting the people of Gaza. We have already trebled our aid commitment to Palestinians this year and today’s aid delivery – the first UK maritime shipment of aid for Gaza – via Port Said in Egypt contains almost 90 tonnes of vital supplies.

Significantly more aid needs to reach Gaza to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. The UK will continue to work with our partners in the region to open more aid routes into Gaza, including through the proposed maritime corridor between Cyprus and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: I recently visited the region to find the best way to get aid into Gaza and support those in desperate need. Today’s maritime aid delivery, the first of its kind, is a significant milestone. ...

The UK has so far announced it will spend almost £60 million in additional humanitarian

funding in Gaza this financial year, trebling our existing annual budget to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The most recent package of [£30 million funding, announced by the Foreign Secretary on his last visit to the region](#), has been allocated to trusted partners on the ground including UNRWA, UNICEF, WFP, the OCHA Pooled Fund and the British Red Cross to support the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescent Societies.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-uk-maritime-shipment-of-lifesaving-aid-for-gaza-arrives-in-egypt>

United Nations

Press Conference by Security Council President on Programme of Work for January

... Asked about France's position on a ceasefire in Gaza, [Nicolas de Rivière (France) — whose country currently holds the 15-nation organ's rotating presidency for January] underscored the need to keep in mind "the monstrous attack by Hamas". Hamas' agenda to eradicate Israel is "unacceptable", but "disproportionate response is not allowed" under international law, he emphasized. According to the Geneva Conventions, civilians should not be targeted. While recognizing Israel's right to self-defence, he called for a sustainable cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian relief to the people in Gaza.

He went on to stress that, while "attacking terrorists is ok, bombing civilians is not" ...

The key rationale behind the bombing of civilians in Gaza is that Hamas is using civilians as human shields. However, whenever in doubt, "you should not bomb a school", he asserted. Further, he strongly opposed forced displacement of Palestinians and recolonization of Gaza.

Asked if the situation in Gaza qualifies to be examined by the International Court of Justice, he detailed violations of international humanitarian law from both parties, noting that France is a strong supporter of international justice.

On a question about Israel's targeting of the Hamas office in Beirut, he recognized Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity as "vital" and underlined the need to restore calm. ...

On the situation in the Red Sea, where the navies of the United States, United Kingdom and France have each shot down Houthi-launched drones and missiles, he said that the Council will meet on the issue as soon as 3 January, adding that "the situation is bad" and action is needed. ...

To read the full press release see

https://press.un.org/en/2024/240102_sc.doc.htm

World Health Organisation

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus I deplore today's strikes on the @PalestineRCS-run Al-Amal hospital in the southern #Gaza city of Khan Younis, which severely damaged the Palestine Red Crescent Society training centre located within the hospital complex. ...

The attacks, according to the PRCS, killed at least five civilians, including a 5-day old infant. 14,000 people were sheltering at the hospital in the besieged southern #Gaza city of Khan Younis. Many of them have now left, and those remaining are extremely fearful for their safety and planning to leave a place they had turned to for refuge and protection. Hospitals, ambulances, health workers, and people seeking care must be protected, at all times, under international humanitarian law. Today's bombardments are unconscionable. ...

I join international calls for an immediate ceasefire, including urgent action to ensure the

accelerated and unimpeded flow of food, medical supplies, water and other essential items to millions of civilians forced to live in unspeakable conditions of hunger, disease spread, and lack of hygiene and sanitation. ...

This on top of widespread deaths, suffering and decimation of homes, roads and other infrastructure across this tiny coastal strip of land. If the conditions for a cease-fire in hostilities have not been met by now, I do not know what it will take. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://twitter.com/DrTedros/status/1742297186614816836>

oPt Emergency Situation Update

[https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/Sitrep - issue 19.pdf?ua=1](https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/Sitrep_-_issue_19.pdf?ua=1)

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Red Sea: Shipping

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative) [HL1191] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The United Kingdom condemns in the strongest terms attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi militants. These actions gravely threaten the safety and welfare of seafarers, and the security of international trade and freedom of navigation. The UK has joined with key international allies in Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN. HMS DIAMOND has deployed to the area and has already shot down a unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) as part of this endeavour.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-13/hl1191>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign Secretary call with US Secretary of State Blinken

... The Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State discussed the international community's shared condemnation of the illegal and unjustified attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi militants. They made clear that the UK and US will work with our partners to hold the Houthis accountable for these unlawful seizures and attacks.

The Foreign Secretary raised worsening food insecurity in Gaza and the urgent need for significantly more aid to reach civilians, through as many routes as possible. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-call-with-us-secretary-of-state-blinken-january-2024>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3567>

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3539>

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>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3535>

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3521>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3564>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3596>

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**

Super-complaints: eligible entity criteria and procedural requirements [Online Safety Act] (closing date 11 January 2024)

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

**** closes in 9 days**

Death certification reform and the introduction of medical examiners [England] (closing date 12 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-certification-reform-and-the-introduction-of-medical-examiners>

**** closes in 9 days**

Changes to medical certification of cause of death and the role of medical examiners

[Wales] (closing date 12 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.wales/death-certification-reform>

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