



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

Crown Prosecution Service

Man sentenced for shouting antisemitic abuse

A man has been sentenced to 10 weeks' imprisonment for shouting antisemitic and other racist slurs in public before making violent threats toward a police officer.

Police were called to Seven Kings station in Ilford, London, on 11 November 2023, to reports of a man threatening members of the public.

When they arrived and searched Diljan Akhtar, 51, he shouted antisemitic slurs, linked to the Israel/Hamas conflict.

A member of the public also reported to the police that he was subjected to a separate racist slur by Akhtar outside a nearby restaurant.

Akhtar admitted four offences and his sentence was increased when he appeared at Stratford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday, January 2, to take into account the racist words he said. ...

Beata Murphy, the CPS prosecutor for this case, said: "There is no place for hate of any kind on the streets of London.

"We will continue to support victims and witnesses who come forward to report examples of any hate crime they have experienced, prosecuting perpetrators whenever our legal test is met."

Jaswant Narwal, London hate crime lead and Chief Crown Prosecutor for London North,

said: “The CPS continues to take tackling antisemitic hate crime extremely seriously as we know these offences have a devastating impact on victims, families and communities. “We are working closely with the police and communities to explore further how to combat these crimes and mitigate the corrosive effects of these racist actions.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/london-north/news/man-sentenced-shouting-antisemitic-abuse>

Northern Ireland Department of Education

Report on the Outcome of Public Consultation on legislation which provides for a parent to request to have their child excused from age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/education/Consultation%20Response%20Report.pdf>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answers

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Victoria Tower Gardens Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL1264] To ask His Majesty's Government what response they made to the request by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee that the plan to build a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens on the Westminster World Heritage site be abandoned; and what discussions they had with the World Heritage Committee at its meeting in 2023 about that matter.

Baroness Scott of bybrook: The Government noted that the independent planning inspector concluded, following an extensive public inquiry in 2020, that “... the proposed UKHMLC would not result in compromise to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site because it does not harm it or its setting, thus conserving it”. DCMS, acting as State Party to the World Heritage Convention, will continue to keep UNESCO updated.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/hl1264>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Victoria Tower Gardens Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL1265] To ask His Majesty's Government for what reasons the planned construction of a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens has not resulted in the gardens and the Buxton Memorial being placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register; and whether they will request that they be so placed.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Heritage assets may be added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register for a variety of reasons, such as poor condition, disuse, and, in some cases, the quantifiable risks of development. Historic England has not made an assessment of the potential risks to Victoria Tower Gardens since the Holocaust Memorial Bill is still under consideration. It will continue to monitor the situation and keep its position under regular review.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/hl1265>

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Israel

See also the CPS press release “Man sentenced for shouting antisemitic abuse” that is included in the Home Affairs section above, and Lords written answers HL1324 “Red Sea: Shipping” and HL1325 “Yemen: Guided Weapons” that are included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Lords Written Answer

Gaza: Development Aid

Lord Marlesford (Conservative) [HL1285] To ask His Majesty's Government what public funds have been made available, through the aid budget, to the Gaza Strip in each of the last three years; what safeguards they have put in place to ensure that such funds were not diverted to military purposes by Hamas; and whether such safeguards were applied.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: FCDO delivers its aid in Gaza through trusted partners with a proven record of delivery. Thorough due diligence assessment of all aid donations is carried out and the FCDO ensures partners have procedures in place to manage the main risks of aid diversion from activities it funds, including specific controls to ensure that cash/food assistance goes direct to the intended beneficiaries. Additionally, FCDO humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories operates with an enhanced sensitivity and existing additional safeguards to protect against any possibility of aid diversion. These safeguards include measures on verification and mapping of downstream partners, non-payment of local taxes and enhanced due diligence processes. The Actual Spend for Occupied Palestinian Territories for the last three financial years:

2020/2021 - £79.7 million

2021/2022 - £29.8 million

2022/2023 - £25.7 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/hl1285>

UK Parliament House of Commons Library Briefing

2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UK and international response

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9874/CBP-9874.pdf>

Scottish Government

First Minister urges UK to hold the Government of Israel to account

... First Minister Humza Yousaf has urged the UK Government to use its position as a trusted ally of the Government of Israel to demand an end to “indiscriminate attacks” that have seen thousands of children in Gaza killed. He has made it clear that those responsible for killing civilians must be held accountable.

Ten weeks since Israel's invasion of Gaza the First Minister said the UK Government's refusal to call for an immediate ceasefire is “shameful”.

The First Minister's latest call comes as the United Nations has expressed concern up to 1.9 million internally displaced people are moving into smaller and smaller pockets in the Gaza Strip. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) for Palestinian Refugees has warned that 40% of the population of Gaza is now at risk of famine due to “catastrophic hunger”, and the latest Integrated food security Phase Classification (IPC) brief shows Gaza is experiencing a food security emergency driven by ongoing hostilities.

Responding to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the region, the First Minister said diplomatic approaches have so far failed to bring about any change and an immediate ceasefire was needed.

The First Minister said: “The time has come for the UK Government to speak out forcefully and make it clear that Israeli action has gone way beyond a legitimate response to the appalling Hamas attack of 7 October.

“Hearing comments from an Israeli Government Minister urging displacement of Palestinians from Gaza is deeply disturbing and should be universally condemned. Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and will be part of a future Palestinian state - Gazans should not be subject to forcible displacement or relocation from Gaza.

“The UK Government must make clear that Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israeli Ministers and military commanders will be held accountable for the killing of thousands of innocent civilians and the deaths of tens of thousands more from starvation and disease if Israel does not immediately cease indiscriminate attacks and allow aid to enter Gaza on the scale needed to avert a humanitarian disaster. Hamas leaders must also be held accountable for the appalling attacks against Israeli civilians on 7 October.

“Talk of a sustainable ceasefire from the UK Government has made no difference on the ground, as the situation has worsened for the people of Gaza. The UK Government must use its voice and influence to stop the killing – directly with the Israeli government, and indirectly with the US.”

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.scot/news/first-minister-urges-uk-to-hold-the-government-of-israel-to-account/>

The IPC Brief referred to above can be read at

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Nov2023_Feb2024.pdf

The Israeli Government Ministers’ comments referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/itamarbengvir/status/1741821404515848688>

and

<https://twitter.com/bezaleism/status/1742465988778483763>

and

<https://twitter.com/bezaleism/status/1742465990422573109>

First Minister First Minister @HumzaYousaf has called on the UK Government to hold the Government of Israel to account for killing thousands of innocent civilians including children. He said the international community is failing Gaza, and there must be an immediate ceasefire.

[*plus photo with statement:* “The UK Government must make clear that Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israeli Ministers and military commanders will be held accountable for the killing of thousands of innocent civilians and the deaths of tens of thousands more from starvation and disease if Israel does not immediately cease indiscriminate attacks and allow aid to enter Gaza on the scale needed to avert a humanitarian disaster. Hamas leaders must also be held accountable for the appalling attacks against Israeli civilians on 7 October.”]

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1743271631374389478>

Humza Yousaf In the last few weeks we've heard statements from senior Ministers in the Israeli Government calling for the resettlement of the population of Gaza, and for Israeli settlements to be established in Gaza. That is the textbook definition of ethnic cleansing and must be called out. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1743314833070547224>

Intensifying conflict, malnutrition and disease in the Gaza Strip creates a deadly cycle that threatens over 1.1 million children

Children in the Gaza Strip face a deadly triple threat to their lives, as cases of diseases rise, nutrition plummets and the escalation in hostilities approaches its fourteenth week.

Thousands of children have already died from the violence, while living conditions for children continue to rapidly deteriorate, with increasing cases of diarrhea and rising food poverty among children, raising the risk of mounting child deaths. ...

Cases of diarrhea in children under five years of age rose from 48,000 to 71,000 in just one week starting 17 December, equivalent to 3,200 new cases of diarrhea per day. The significant increase in cases in such a short timeframe is a strong indication that child health in the Gaza Strip is fast deteriorating. Before the escalation in hostilities, an average of 2,000 cases of diarrhea in children under five were recorded per month. ...

Since the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification warned of the risk of famine](#) in the Gaza Strip in late December, UNICEF has found that an increasing number of children are not getting their basic nutrition needs met. About 90 per cent of children under two years of age are consuming two or fewer food groups, according to a UNICEF survey conducted on December 26. This is up from 80 per cent of children compared to the same survey conducted two weeks earlier. ...

The deteriorating situation is raising concerns about acute malnutrition and mortality breaching famine thresholds. UNICEF is particularly worried about the nutrition of over 155,000 pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, as well as more than 135,000 children under two, given their specific nutrition needs and vulnerability.

When combined and left untreated, malnutrition and disease create a deadly cycle. Evidence has shown that children with poor health and nutrition are more vulnerable to serious infections ...

The conflict has damaged or destroyed essential water, sanitation and health systems in the Gaza Strip, and has limited the ability to treat severe malnutrition. In addition, displaced children and their families are unable to maintain the necessary hygiene levels needed to prevent disease, given the alarming lack of safe water and sanitation, with many resorting to open defecation. Meanwhile, the very few functioning hospitals are so focused on responding to the high number of patients injured in the conflict that they are unable to adequately treat disease outbreaks. ...

UNICEF is calling for the resumption of commercial traffic so the shelves of shops can be restocked, and for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to help save civilian lives and alleviate suffering. ...

To read the full press release

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/intensifying-conflict-malnutrition-and-disease-gaza-strip-creates-deadly-cycle>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Red Sea: Shipping

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL1324] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with international partners about taking action against the Houthi war capability in the Red Sea.

Yemen: Guided Weapons

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL1325] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with international partners about taking action against Houthi missile sites in Yemen.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK strongly condemns the illegal and unjustified attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi militants. We continue to engage with our international partners, particularly in the region, to explore ways to strengthen maritime security and prevent further attacks. The UK has joined with key international allies in Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN to help safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-19/hl1324>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-19/hl1325>

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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 4 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 5 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 5 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