



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

## Contents

Home Affairs  
Israel

Relevant Legislation  
Consultations  
Back issues

SCoJeC is incurring significant extra costs as a result of the war in Israel and Gaza, including producing expanded issues of this digest. Please help us maintain these resources by donating at

[www.scojec.org/donate.html](http://www.scojec.org/donate.html)

Thank you very much for your support.



## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Antisemitism

**John Hayes (Conservative)** [10974] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of antisemitism incidents there have been on higher education campuses since 7 October 2023.

**Robert Halfon:** Departmental officials have assessed evidence of antisemitism and racial hatred linked to incidents at English universities. Where concerns have arisen, officials have reached out to relevant universities to understand what actions they have taken, including reporting issues to the police where appropriate. The department also continually reminds providers of their obligations under the Prevent duty, where they should be working to prevent people from being drawn into or supporting terrorism. There is an online "Reporting Extremism" form where members of the public can raise concerns to the department directly.

The department also regularly meets with the Community Security Trust (CST), which monitors and reports on antisemitism in the UK. CST's latest report indicates that there were 154 antisemitic incidents in higher education (HE) between 7 October 2023 and 13 December 2023.

This unprecedented level of antisemitism on campus is deeply concerning. On 5 November 2023, the department published a five-point plan detailing concerted action to protect Jewish students in HE. The plan involves:

- Calling for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred.

- Liaising with the Office for Students on its role in reviewing antisemitic incidents.
- Continuing to make it clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal should be referred to the police.
- Communicating with Vice Chancellors to emphasise the use of robust disciplinary measures and the importance of police engagement.
- Establishing an antisemitism quality seal in HE, which will enable universities to demonstrate a tangible commitment to tackling antisemitism.

In the 22 November 2023 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an additional £7 million of funding over three years for a comprehensive package of measures to tackle antisemitism in schools, colleges and universities. The department will issue an invitation to tender shortly for organisations interested in delivering this package.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-23/10974>

The online reporting form referred to above can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

TOP

## Israel

**See also Commons written answer 10974 “Antisemitism” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.**

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Prime Minister’s Questions

**Michael Ellis (Conservative):** Having visited recently, I know that Israel remains in shock following the rape, murder and butchery carried out by Hamas. All of us want to see a peaceful and demilitarised Palestinian state. However, Hamas remain in control in large parts of Gaza, support for them is growing in the west bank, polls show that nearly two thirds of Palestinians reject co-existence with Israel and the Palestinian Authority has continued to promote hatred of Jews. Does my right hon. Friend agree that any recognition of a Palestinian state must address these issues and can come about only as part of a negotiated settlement between Israel and the Palestinians?

**The Prime Minister:** The Government’s position is clear. My right hon. and learned Friend is right that steps and conditions need to be put in place on this journey: first and foremost, the removal of Hamas from Gaza; a Palestinian-led Government in Gaza and the west bank; a concrete plan to reform and support the Palestinian Authority; a reconstruction plan for Gaza; and a two-state solution, which we have long supported. Let me be clear: we stand with Israel. The terrorist threat it faces must be eliminated and Israel’s lasting security must be guaranteed.

**Neale Hanvey (Alba) [901301]** On 15 November last year, I appealed to the Prime Minister to choose de-escalation and peace over violence, death and destruction, but he called me “naive”. So far, over 26,000 souls have perished in Gaza. In a powerful and moving open letter in Monday’s *New York Times*, the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council cited Deuteronomy—“I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life”—and accused President Biden of choosing death. If the Prime Minister will not listen to me

or the International Court of Justice, will he listen to the Rabbinical Council, or will he call it “naive” too?

**The Prime Minister:** I have been clear multiple times that we are deeply concerned about the impact on the civilian population of the fighting in Gaza. Too many people have lost their lives and there is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support in Gaza. I will not go over all the debates we have had about the conditions that are necessary for an immediate pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, but I assure the House that we are doing everything we can to get more aid into the region as quickly as possible.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-31/debates/FB2712E7-763B-4DF4-8158-AC8CDA3DBE78/Engagements#contribution-650F4C5B-EAED-44F0-86DF-CE27FB7C081E>

## House of Commons Points of Order

**Richard Drax (Conservative):** ... At the start of Prime Minister’s questions, the Speaker reminded the House about the use of language. The debate on Gaza is getting far more emotive, and the language used has been questionable in one or two cases, as I am sure you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker. One of the SNP Members asked a question about Gaza and, after the question was answered, a member of the SNP—I cannot identify them—accused the Prime Minister of being Pontius Pilate, which we on these Benches heard very clearly. That kind of language is extremely unpleasant because, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Pontius Pilate washed his hands and handed Jesus over to a murderous death. That is not what the Prime Minister is doing. He has an impeccable record on this topic, and is leading with great courage and conviction in a war in Gaza that is, indeed, highly emotive.

**Owen Thompson (SNP):** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Just for the record, I seek your guidance on how to make it very clear that it was not a member of the SNP who said any such thing—I can be absolutely certain about that. I think Members might want to be very clear about which parties are saying things before making such accusations. How can I put that on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Eleanor Laing):** ... It is very sad if somebody did make the comment that the hon. Member for South Dorset has described. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Owen Thompson) that if a remark was made about Pontius Pilate, it was not made by an SNP Member, but actually, as far as the Chair is concerned, I do not care who made such a remark. It is wrong to try to whip up bad feeling in this House or anywhere else about the tragedy unfolding in Israel and Palestine. I urge all hon. Members, who have different points of view on this emotive subject, to be very careful about what they say in public and in private, but especially in this Chamber.

**Richard Drax:** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to think I am an honourable Gentleman, and if indeed I got it wrong, I withdraw the point that the comment was made by an SNP Member. It came from that part of the House, but if it was not an SNP Member, I withdraw that point.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for withdrawing that accusation, because it lets us at least take that part out of this specific issue. It may be that somebody made that comment, but I really do not care what they said or how they said it. They should not be saying anything at all while seated when someone else is asking a question or the Prime Minister is answering it. Everyone in this House ought to bear in mind that what is said and done in here has a much wider audience, and we ought to be setting an example of being reasonable and careful in the way that we use words and phrases, and never being inflammatory.

**Dawn Butler (Labour):** ... My point of order also relates to Israel and Gaza. ITV News recently broadcast a video showing the killing of an unarmed civilian in Gaza who was waving a white flag—the international symbol of peace. It is not the first time unarmed people have been killed in Gaza while raising white flags; in fact, three Israeli hostages were brutally killed while topless and waving a white flag. This is deeply concerning to me, as I am sure it is to many people in this House. An Israel Defence Forces commander has indicated that the IDF was responsible, saying, “There are mistakes, it is war.”

This incident could potentially constitute a war crime. How can we ensure that the Government come to this House to assure us that this incident will be properly investigated and that UK-supplied weapons were not used, and to set out the steps being taken to ensure that Israel follows the ruling from the International Court of Justice?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady, and the point she makes is not a point of order for the Chair—not at all. She is making a very serious point about a tragic incident among many thousands of tragic incidents that have occurred over the past few months, but it is not a point of order for the Chair. The hon. Lady is raising a point that she wants to raise with Ministers. The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), was recently at the Dispatch Box making a statement on Gaza, and I anticipate it is very likely that a Foreign Office Minister or a Minister from the Ministry of Defence will be here again within a few days to make a further statement. If not, Opposition Front Benchers and others have been most assiduous in asking urgent questions to ensure that Ministers come to the House to answer these important questions.

The hon. Lady is not asking a question that I can deal with from the Chair; she is asking a question that she wants to ask of a Minister. If she wants to ask a question of a Minister, there are various ways she can do that: she can put down an urgent question; she can ask for an Adjournment debate; she can speak to Members on her own Front Bench about having an extended debate in Opposition time—I will not list them all. There are many, many ways in which the hon. Lady can do that, but I cannot answer her question from the Chair. It is not a point of order.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-31/debates/C6276110-E65C-4BAF-B5F6-E3E2F6F6459B/PointsOfOrder>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Middle East: Armed Conflict

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [11185] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent steps he has taken to help prevent an escalation of conflict in the Middle East.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We are concerned by the situation on Israel's northern border, and by the ongoing and imminent threat from the Houthis to vessels in the Red Sea. UK Ministers are conducting extensive diplomatic efforts to deter escalation. As the Foreign Secretary has told the Iranian Foreign Minister, including on 17 January, Iran must use its influence to curb attacks and de-escalate regional tensions. Lord Ahmad spoke to the Lebanese Foreign Minister on 23 January to discuss UK support for the full implementation of UNSCR 1701.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-23/11185>

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

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

### Gaza: Genocide

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [11643] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and

Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Court of Justice's decision on the request for provisional measures in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel).

**Andrew Mitchell:** We respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, we have stated that we have considerable concerns about this case, which is not helpful in the goal of achieving a sustainable ceasefire. Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in line with International Humanitarian Law, as we have said from the outset. Our view is that Israel's actions in Gaza cannot be described as a genocide, which is why we thought South Africa's decision to bring the case was wrong and provocative. However, we welcome the Court's call for the immediate release of hostages and the need to get more aid into Gaza. We are clear that an immediate pause is necessary to get aid in and hostages out, and then we want to build towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to the fighting.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-26/11643>

*The decision (Order) referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Neale Hanvey (Alba) [345] Letter from American rabbis to President Biden** – That this House welcomes the powerful and moving open letter entitled Sorrow and fury: a letter from American rabbis to President Biden, which was sent by the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council; recognises the importance of the voice of moderate Jewish people across the world in opposing the actions of the Israeli Government; expresses concern that such voices are largely being ignored by the mainstream media to balance the narrative set by the Israeli Government, the UK Government and the US administration; reaffirms its sorrow over the more than 26,000 lives lost in Gaza; notes the mounting case that war crimes are being perpetrated in Gaza, as set out in the recent ICJ ruling; expresses its concern over risks to the UK Government of culpability with regard to acts of war crime, facilitating or enabling acts of war crime, and omissions to intervene to prevent the execution of war crimes; and further notes the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council's call to end U.S. complicity in Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people and their assertion that, for the words never again to have any meaning, they must mean never again for anyone.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61833>

*The letter referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/2024/01/26/rabbiletter/>

## UK Parliament Petition

### Sale of Arms to Israel

**Martyn Day (SNP) [P002909]** I rise to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Linlithgow and East Falkirk relating to the sale of arms to Israel. It is fair to say that my correspondence has never included as many representations from constituents on the issue of Gaza and Palestine and expressing their outrage as it has over the past few months. I share their outrage and concern about the humanitarian crisis that we seeing unfold. Many believe that we should stop exporting arms to Israel, and I agree with them. It is worth noting that the petition was prepared prior to the International Court of Justice's

ruling suggesting that there may be plausible evidence of genocidal acts committed by Israel in Palestine. The petition states:

“The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to suspend all arms transfers to Israel including weapons, arms, munition and ammunition, parts and components and other equipment that pose a substantial risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law in this conflict.

And the petitioners remain, etc.”

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of Linlithgow and East Falkirk,*

*Declares that the Government’s sale of arms to Israel is unacceptable, as there is substantial evidence that these arms are being used to kill innocent civilians in Gaza; further declares that this is in direct breach of the UK arms export policy, which states that the licenses cannot be granted if there is a “clear risk” the arms might be used in a serious violation of international humanitarian law.*

*The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to suspend all arms transfers to Israel including weapons, arms, munition and ammunition, parts and components and other equipment that pose a substantial risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law in this conflict.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-31/debates/9169070D-664B-4EB9-A052-D5498E8175AF/SaleOfArmsToIsrael>

## Downing Street

### **PM call with the Sultan of Oman: 1 February 2024**

... The leaders discussed the ongoing Houthi attacks against commercial shipping in the Red Sea, agreeing that it was vital for international security and stability to deescalate tensions in the region.

The Prime Minister stressed that military action was a last resort in the face of intolerable threats to global shipping, and followed consistent international warnings. The UK continued to urge the Houthis to end their reckless attacks.

The Prime Minister also raised the UK’s position on the devastating conflict in Gaza. He said the immediate priority was agreeing a humanitarian pause to allow more aid to be delivered across Gaza and to secure the release of all hostages.

The UK was pushing for more routes to be opened to bring far greater quantities of aid into the suffering civilian population, including maritime routes.

He reiterated the UK’s support for progress towards a viable two state solution, where Palestinians and Israelis can live in dignity and security. That would require Israel’s security to be guaranteed, Hamas no longer in charge in Gaza, and a bolstered Palestinian Authority. The leaders agreed on the importance of international cooperation to reach a sustainable long-term settlement to the crisis. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-the-sultan-of-oman-1-february-2024>

**Humanitarian Response in Gaza ‘Completely Dependent’ on Palestine Refugee Agency, Relief Chief Tells Security Council, Urging Countries to Restore Funding**  
**Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator**, said “each day that passes only deepens the misery and suffering of people in Gaza”. The number of people killed in Gaza has reportedly now surpassed 26,000, and the number of injured more than 65,000, according to Gaza’s Ministry of Health. Most are women and children. Just 14 of the 36 hospitals in Gaza are functional, and those only partially, he cautioned ... Across Gaza, over 60 per cent of housing units are reportedly destroyed or damaged, with some 75 per cent of the total population displaced.

Painting a grim picture of Gazans’ abominable living conditions, he said heavy rains are flooding the makeshift tent camps, forcing children, parents and the elderly to sleep in the mud. Food insecurity continues to mount and clean water is almost completely inaccessible. With little public health support available, preventable diseases are rife, and will continue to spread. The further spread of hostilities southwards — along with the increasing deprivation and desperation of people there — can only be expected to increase the pressure for mass displacement into neighbouring countries. ... Meantime, there are also seriously injured or sick patients unable to receive care in Gaza, and for whom medical evacuations should be swiftly facilitated. He emphasized that any persons displaced from Gaza must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return. ...

Despite the hazardous conditions on the ground, his Office is distributing food items to shelters and supporting the remaining bakeries, delivering medicines and medical supplies and helping to relocate patients, as well as delivering water, hygiene kits and cleaning kits, tents, tarpaulin sheets and blankets. But the quantities are far from adequate, he said, stressing that, “if the people of Gaza are to receive anything approaching the amount of humanitarian assistance they need and deserve, urgent steps must be taken”. ...

However, “we continue to face the frequent rejection for entry of much needed items into Gaza by Israel, for unclear, inconsistent and often unspecified reasons”. At present, his Office’s access to Khan Younis, the Middle Area and North Gaza is largely absent. ... “The beating heart of all this is UNRWA,” he said, adding that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has provided shelter, food, water and medical assistance. “All this, even as its own staff are being killed, injured and displaced.”

On the appalling allegations that some UNRWA employees were allegedly involved in the attack in Israel on 7 October, he underlined that they are being addressed transparently. UNRWA has taken swift action, and an investigation is under way. Nevertheless, he emphasized that “UNRWA’s lifesaving services to over three quarters of Gaza’s residents should not be jeopardized by the alleged actions of a few individuals”. Likewise, UNRWA’s support for Palestinians in need in the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, must also be safeguarded. ...

**The representative of the United States** voiced concern over the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, underlining the need to expediate unhindered humanitarian access. Some argued that the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice are a reason to change course; however, the Court’s order is consistent with the United States’ view that Israel has the right to take action to ensure that the terrorist attacks of 7 October cannot be repeated. “Of course, how Israel defends itself matters,” she stressed, noting that the Court echoed repeated calls by Washington, D.C., for Israel to take all possible steps to minimize harm to civilians and humanitarian workers, increase the flow of humanitarian assistance and address dehumanizing rhetoric. Nevertheless, “we must be honest what the Court did not order: specifically, it has not ordered an immediate ceasefire, it has not made any findings that this preliminary phase of the

proceedings that Israel committed genocide or otherwise violated the Genocide Convention”, she asserted, citing these allegations as “unfounded”. ...

Hamas has a choice: “it can continue to dig tunnels, plan for its next attacks (...) or lay down its weapons and accept the proposal on the table to release every hostage”, she said. On the disturbing allegation that 11 UNRWA employees were involved in the 7 October attack, she said it has shaken confidence in the Agency. Calling for swift and credible investigation, she said UNRWA provides life-saving services under incredibly challenging circumstances in Gaza, contributing to regional stability. It is vital that the UN take quick and decisive action, strengthen oversight of UNRWA operations and began to restore donor’s confidence. ...

**The representative of the United Kingdom** called for an immediate suspension of fighting to get vital aid in and hostages out that progresses towards a permanent, sustainable ceasefire. Her Government again pressed Israel to allow unhindered humanitarian access, while supporting the World Food Programme (WFP) to deliver a humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza. Welcoming the call of the International Court of Justice for the immediate release of hostages and the need to get more aid into Gaza, she emphasized that “it is for the Court, not countries, to determine genocide”. Nevertheless, “we were troubled by the way in which this action has been taken”, she added. [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

**The representative of Switzerland**, pointing to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza — a population under siege, subject to bombardments, repeated displacements, famine and epidemics — said “this cannot continue”. She called for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire, as well as the immediate, unconditional release of all hostages. Israel must comply with the International Court of Justice’s provisional measures, especially by taking necessary steps to prevent any act of genocide and any incitement to commit it, she said, while describing as “unacceptable” settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank. She expressed deep concern about “the very serious allegations” against UNRWA employees suspected of involvement in the 7 October attacks, underscoring her country’s “zero tolerance for any support for terrorism”. ...

**The representative of Japan**, underscoring the legally binding nature of the Court’s provisional measures, urged seizing the momentum to create a tangible impact on the ground. All the parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip are bound by international humanitarian law, he stressed, deploring “the barbaric acts of terror by Hamas” and calling on Israel to comply with international law in exercising its right to self-defence. ...

**The representative of the Russian Federation** highlighted the situation at the moment in Khan Younis, where the hospitals are under siege amidst large-scale devastation of civilian infrastructure. Also pointing to the deadly threats of hunger and the epidemic of communicable diseases looming over Gaza, he reiterated the call for an immediate ceasefire. Israel’s actions will make it impossible to release the hostages and rekindle the process of Palestinian-Israeli settlement, he cautioned. Noting that the attack against Israel on 7 October warrants the strongest condemnation, he said it should not be used to justify the collective punishment of millions of Palestinians. Calling for a transparent investigation into the allegations against UNRWA staff members, he said it is important to consider information not just from Israel. Further, this situation must not be used as a pretext for the collective punishment of millions of Palestinians in need, he said also highlighting the provocative rhetoric from a number of representatives of the Israeli leadership, as well as the staggering levels of violence by the Israeli army and Jewish settlers on the West Bank. ...

**The representative of France** ... underscoring that the Council must be able to condemn the terrorist attacks of 7 October, drew attention to the sanctions regime against Hamas established by the European Union. The information on the participation of UNRWA employees in the attacks of 7 October is exceptionally serious and the investigations launched in recent days must shed light on past events and be accompanied by concrete



measures, she stressed. ...

**The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine** said that the International Court of Justice has offered “a resounding rebuke” to those who claimed that the case of genocide against Israel was “meritless and baseless”. The Court also dismissed the premise that “somehow Israel by its very nature would be above the law and could not be accused of committing the crime of genocide”. The Court found that the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide, attempted genocide, incitement to commit genocide, complicity in genocide and conspiracy to commit genocide are plausible. ...

The Council and the Court have called for protection of civilians; instead, Israel is targeting them, orchestrating famine and creating the conditions for the spread of dehydration and epidemic diseases, he said. Twelve ministers of Benjamin Netanyahu’s Government took part in a conference to recolonize Gaza and to get rid of the Palestinians there, he said, as part of “a long-standing policy of displacement and replacement of the Palestinian people”. At least 15,500 children, including those still under the rubble, have been killed; 26,000 Palestinians have been killed in terrifying circumstances. “2.3 million people have gone through hell every single day for 120 days, and this hell will haunt them long after this assault ends,” he said ...

With the risk of genocide recognized by the Court, it would be criminal not to act to put an end to this war of atrocities, he emphasized. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: “no one will stop us — not The Hague, not the axis of evil and not anybody else”. To that, he declared: “Spoken like a true war criminal! His genocidal words quoted by the Court are evil. His genocidal acts are evil. And when the ICC finally decides to uphold its mandate, he should find his place in a jail in The Hague, not in power in Israel.” ...

On Israel’s allegations against some UNRWA staff, he said “one should never lose sight of these realities and of Israel’s stated goal, for years now, of dismantling UNRWA”. He underscored that “there is no reason to pre-empt the outcome of the investigation or to take measures that effectively amount to the collective punishment of 30,000 UNRWA staff and millions of refugees beneficiaries of UNRWA services”, calling on those who decided to suspend their funding to revise their decision. ...

**The representative of Israel** voiced concern over the lack of attention or condemnation by the Council of “an actual genocidal terrorist organization”, Hamas, that continues attacks on his country and holds hostages in brutal conditions. “We witness an obscene inversion of reality,” where a country — a victim of Hamas — is being charged with genocide. Distorting reality is a matter of routine for the Council, but that does not make it morally acceptable, he said, warning that “a lie told 1,000 times is not less of a lie”. Underscoring his country’s commitment to upholding the law and demonstrating humanity, he noted that due to Hamas’ utter inhumanity towards Palestinian and Israeli civilians, his country is faced with “the agonizing reality and the dilemmas” that Israel faces of seeking “to minimize civilian harm against a lawless terrorist organization that seeks to maximize it”.

Turning to the South Africa’s case against Israel in the International Court of Justice, he described the charge of genocide as an attempt “to distort the law and the unique force of the Genocide Convention”, effectively transforming it into a tool exploited by terrorists with total disdain for life and the law. Likewise, he said an attempt to ascribe blame to Israel even before the arguments on the merits of the case have been heard is “abusive and politicized”. ...

Expressing confidence that South Africa’s accusations against Israel — widely denounced by numerous States’ commitment to the rule of law — are likely to be rejected by the Court in subsequent proceedings, he stressed that at this early stage “the Court is not required to ascertain whether any violations of Israel’s obligations under the Genocide Convention have occurred”. ... “Israel remains committed to mitigating civilian harm and to facilitating access to humanitarian aid according to the law,” he added, highlighting his country’s commitment to preventing incitement. ...

On the alleged involvement of UNRWA's staff in the 7 October events, he welcomed the countries for suspending funding to the Agency, called for an in-depth, transparent and independent investigation into the Agency's conduct in Gaza, both regarding involvement in the 7 October attacks, as well as the employment of mass operatives and involvement of terrorists in its activities. ...

**The representative of South Africa** said: "the international community cannot proclaim the importance of international law and the importance of the UN Charter in some situations and not in others as if the rule of law only applies to a select few". On 26 January, the International Court of Justice, acting on her country's request, delivered an order for provisional measures, which include that Israel shall take all measures to prevent all acts of genocide, and provide urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance. Israel is required to provide a report to the Court on said measures within one month. "There is clearly no credible basis for Israel to continue to claim that its military actions are in full compliance with international law, including the Genocide Convention, having regard to the Court's ruling," she said. This necessarily imposes an obligation on all States to cease funding and facilitating Israel's military actions, which are plausibly genocidal, she pointed out. ...

South Africa will continue to do everything within its power to preserve the existence of the Palestinian people as a group, end all acts of apartheid and genocide against them and "walk with them towards the realization of their right to self-determination", she said. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15575.doc.htm>

*Information about the ICJ court case referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

-----

### **International Community Must Not Waver in Its Commitment to Two-State Solution, Secretary-General Tells Palestinian Rights Committee**

... The death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss and grief in Gaza over the past 120 days are a scar on our shared humanity and conscience. And I once again condemn the horrifying attacks by Hamas and other groups that claimed the lives of over 1,200 Israelis and others — and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

There is no justification for the intentional killing, injuring, torture or kidnapping of civilians, using sexual violence against them, or launching rockets towards civilian targets. But at the same time, nothing can justify the collective punishment of the people in Gaza.

The ongoing conflict and relentless bombardment by Israeli forces across Gaza have resulted in killings of civilians and destruction at a pace and scale unlike anything we have witnessed in recent years. I am horrified by incessant military strikes that have killed and maimed civilians and protected personnel, and that have damaged or destroyed civilian infrastructure.

Over 26,750 Palestinians have reportedly been killed in Gaza alone — more than two thirds women and children. Over 70 per cent of civilian infrastructure — including homes, hospitals, schools, water and sanitation facilities in Gaza — have been destroyed or severely damaged. 1.7 million people have been displaced, and not knowing if they will have homes to return to.

No party to an armed conflict is above international law. International humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack, must be upheld at all times. And the binding decisions of the International Court of Justice must be complied with.

I also want to add that the United Nations immediately acted following the very serious allegations against United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff members. I was personally horrified by these accusations. ...

UNRWA is the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza. I appeal to all Member States to guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's life-saving work. ...

I am extremely concerned by the inhumane conditions faced by Gaza's 2.2 million people, as they struggle to survive without any of the basics. Everyone in Gaza is hungry, while half a million grapple with catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

I call for a rapid, safe, unhindered, expanded and sustained humanitarian access throughout Gaza. This is particularly crucial in the north, where most missions have been denied access by Israel, amid continued insecurity and fighting. We also need more crossing points into Gaza to reduce congestion and avoid chokepoints. ...

As we seek to address mounting needs in Gaza, we also remain focused on the deteriorating situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

I am extremely alarmed by the high levels of settler violence in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian attacks against Israelis also continue. All of this violence must stop, and the perpetrators held accountable.

Intensive Israeli operations go on, including in Area A of the occupied West Bank, leading to deadly armed exchanges. Dozens of Palestinians have been arrested, with many detained without charge, including children.

The violence has not been limited to the occupied territory. Rising hostilities across the Blue Line and attacks in Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea risk triggering a broader escalation risking regional stability. I call for urgent steps to de-escalate the situation and spare the region from more violence before it is too late.

The conflict must end with tangible progress towards a two-State solution — an end to the occupation and the establishment of a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, of which Gaza is an integral part.

Only the two-State solution — based on the 1967 lines, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, in line with UN resolutions, international law and prior agreements — can ensure the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as well as a just and lasting peace and stability in the region.

The international community must not waver in its commitment. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22122.doc.htm>

## UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Gaza: UN experts condemn killing and silencing of journalists**

Israel's military operation in Gaza, in the aftermath of the heinous 7 October attack by Hamas, has become the deadliest, most dangerous conflict for journalists in recent history, UN experts said today.

"We are alarmed at the extraordinarily high numbers of journalists and media workers who have been killed, attacked, injured and detained in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, in recent months blatantly disregarding international law," the experts said.

"We condemn all killings, threats and attacks on journalists and call on all parties to the conflict to protect them," they said.

According to UN reports, since 7 October, over 122 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza, and many have been injured. In addition, three journalists in Lebanon were killed as a result of Israeli shelling near the border of Lebanon. Four Israeli journalists were killed by Hamas in the 7 October attacks. Dozens of Palestinian journalists have been detained by Israeli forces in both Gaza and in the West Bank where harassment, intimidation and attacks on journalists have increased since the 7 October attacks. ...

"Rarely have journalists paid such a heavy price for just doing their job as those in Gaza

now,” the experts said. They highlighted the case of Al-Jazeera journalist, Wael al-Dahdouh, who lost his wife, two children and a grandson as a result of Israeli bombing on 25 October 2023, endured a drone attack himself that killed his cameraman in late December and lost another son, also an Al-Jazeera journalist, along with another journalist, killed by Israeli drone strike targeting their car on 7 January 2024.

“We have received disturbing reports that, despite being clearly identifiable in jackets and helmets marked “press” or travelling in well-marked press vehicles, journalists have come under attack, which would seem to indicate that the killings, injury, and detention are a deliberate strategy by Israeli forces to obstruct the media and silence critical reporting,” the UN experts said.

“In times of conflict, the right to information is a ‘survival right’ on which the very lives of civilians depend, and journalists play an indispensable role as a vital source of information, and as human rights defenders and witnesses to atrocities, reporting on violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights.”

“Journalists are entitled to protection as civilians under international humanitarian law. Targeted attacks and killings of journalists are war crimes,” the experts warned.

They expressed grave concern that Israel has refused to let media from outside Gaza enter and report unless they are embedded with the Israeli forces. “The attacks on media in Gaza and restrictions on other journalists from accessing Gaza, combined with severe disruptions of the Internet, are major impediments to the right of information of the people of Gaza as well as the outside world,” the experts said. ...

“We further urge the parties to the conflict to allow for and ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations into every killing of journalists in accordance with international standards, in particular the *United Nations Minnesota Protocol on the investigation of potentially unlawful death*,” the experts added. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/gaza-un-experts-condemn-killing-and-silencing-journalists>

*The Minnesota Protocol, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol.pdf>

TOP

## **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>

TOP

## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

### 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>

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Enhanced Dataset [England] (closing date 5 March 2024)

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/clinical-audits-and-registries/female-genital-mutilation-datasets/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-enhanced-dataset-overview-of-2024-consultation>

TOP

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