



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Transplant Surgery: Racial Discrimination

Jackie Doyle-Price (Conservative) [11773] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help tackle racial inequalities in levels of organ transplantation.

Andrea Leadsom: Generally, patients from ethnic minority backgrounds on the transplant waiting list, wait longer than white patients for a transplant. For example, black patients wait six months longer for a kidney transplant than white patients. The best chance of a match is from an ethnically matched donor. Therefore, NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is focussed on sharing the benefits of transplantation more equally and increasing consent levels for organ donation amongst ethnic minority communities.

NHSBT raises awareness throughout the year, including during Organ Donation Week every September, with targeted social media, and press engagement. It also works with charities, community partners, celebrities, and influencers to amplify the need for donors from ethnic minority backgrounds. Since April 2023, NHSBT has invested £700,000 into 304 initiatives through the Community Grants Programme, targeting South Asian and black heritage communities, to align with clinical need. NHSBT is looking at systems as well as training and diversifying the network of Specialist Nurses and implementing national organ offering schemes, which play a key role in targeting inequalities. But more progress is needed, and everyone can

help by signing up to the Organ Donor Register.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/11773>

Meat: Labelling

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [12604] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to undertake a consultation on the labelling of non-stun slaughter meat.

Mark Spencer: There are no Regulations that require the labelling of non-stun slaughter meat, but where any information of this nature is provided it must be accurate and must not be misleading to the consumer. The Government respects religious freedoms and expects the industry, whether food producer or food outlet, to provide consumers with all the information they need to make informed choices. As recently announced by the Secretary of State, we will soon be launching a consultation on clearer food labelling. This will include proposals to improve and extend current mandatory method of production labelling, including options for the production standards behind them. Our proposed standards initially focus on the period of time the animal spends on farm. We will seek views through consultation on these standards, including the period of life which they should cover.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-01/12604>

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Three women convicted of displaying paraglider stickers at London protest

Three women who displayed images of paragliders during a protest in central London have been found guilty of supporting a proscribed terrorist organisation.

Paragliders were used by Hamas to breach the Gaza/Israel border during the terror attacks on 7 October where a large number of civilians were killed, and others were taken hostage. Pauline Ankunda, 26, Heba Alhayek, 29, were seen on footage of a large demonstration on 14 October last year with images of paragliders attached to their backs.

A third woman, Noimotu Taiwo, 27, was also seen with the pair carrying a sign with an image of a paraglider affixed to it. ...

The first images of the trio were captured in the Piccadilly Circus area, before the march continued into Whitehall where they remained together and were seen on further footage of the protest.

Some of the footage of the trio was uploaded to 'X' (formerly Twitter) and the Metropolitan Police then made a public appeal for information to identify them.

Following the media appeal, Ankunda and Alhayek gave themselves in at Croydon police station on 30 October, while Taiwo was arrested on 8 November.

In their prepared statements upon charge, Ankunda and Alhayek accepted they had placed the images on their backs while Taiwo acknowledged that she had taken possession of the sign and had seen an image attached to it.

By displaying these images, a week after attacks had been carried out involving the use of paragliders, the prosecution said there would be a reasonable suspicion that the women were celebrating the action taken by Hamas, and therefore supporting that proscribed organisation.

During the trial, the prosecution was able to prove that the three women were acting deliberately, and knew they were wearing or displaying the images at the protest.

Today at Westminster Magistrates' Court, all three women were found guilty of carrying or displaying an article in a public place in such a way as to arouse reasonable suspicion that they were supporting Hamas.

They were each handed a 12-month conditional discharge on the same day.

Nick Price, head of the CPS Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, said: "... The

fact that these images were being displayed in the context of a protest opposing the Israeli response to the Hamas attacks demonstrates a glorification of the actions taken by the group.

“Displaying these images could be viewed as celebrating the use of paragliders as a tactic to breach the Gaza/Israel border, and creates a risk of encouraging others to support Hamas.

“When people break the law – whether by hateful speech, supporting proscribed organisations or by threatening public order – we prosecute swiftly and independently.

“We have already prosecuted a string of offences linked to events in the Middle East and we are working closely with the police and community leaders to make sure our approach commands public confidence.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/three-women-convicted-displaying-paraglider-stickers-london-protest>

Leeds University

University statement – Antisemitic attacks on Hillel House and Rabbi Deutsch

The University of Leeds is deeply shocked and saddened by the events of Friday 9 February during which Rabbi Zecharia Deutsch received threats to his safety and that of his family and Hillel House was attacked. We understand and share the sentiment that has been expressed within and beyond our community, that antisemitism is a hatred that has no place on campus.

We totally condemn the antisemitic abuse and threats directed towards the chaplain and his family – such attacks on any individual are unacceptable and will not be tolerated from members of the public or our University community.

The University is supporting West Yorkshire Police in their investigations and will continue to work with his employer, the University Jewish Chaplaincy, to ensure Rabbi Deutsch can provide the support that is so valued by Jewish students at Leeds and the other universities he serves in the Yorkshire region.

We are appalled that our Jewish student community was also targeted by a criminal act at Hillel House and share the concerns expressed for their safety and wellbeing. The University is actively supporting West Yorkshire Police and the Union of Jewish Students as the property owners as they investigate this incident as a hate crime.

The University has detailed measures in place to safeguard our students and is further stepping up activity relating to both security and wellbeing. Our campus Security team and West Yorkshire Police are increasing foot and vehicle patrols of the area, and we continue to strengthen our partnership with police and the Community Security Trust (CST), to ensure our community feels safe.

The Interim Vice-Chancellor and President is seeking meetings with universities in the region as well as our key partners across the city and local politicians, to identify what more we can do together to address issues being experienced by communities in the city and wider region.

If any student experiences or witnesses harassment or abuse on- or off-campus, we urge them to report incidents via our [Report and Support portal](#) for prompt investigation and action. Students are also encouraged to use our [SafeZone app](#) which is linked directly to the University’s Security team who are on call to respond 24 hours a day. The Security team can also be contacted in an emergency on 0113 343 5494. We also promote the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) welfare hotline – 020 7424 3288 – should students prefer to report an incident to external community-led organisations.

The University is committed, and indeed has a legal duty, to support free speech within the law. Whilst there have been many peaceful expressions of solidarity, we regularly remind

everyone in our community of the legal limits of free speech – the University does not support any views or actions which seek to exclude or make any community feel unwelcome on campus.

More broadly, we are working extremely hard to support and maintain our collective student and staff community. This has included regular meetings with student societies, faith groups and relevant regional and national representatives, to listen, discuss and respond as we identify what more we can do to respond to student concerns.

Our [University counselling and wellbeing services](#) and [Leeds University Union](#) continue to offer students help, advice, and a safe space to talk about any concerns and issues. Any students experiencing anxiety or wellbeing issues that adversely impacts their studies are encouraged to contact their School to discuss support or mitigating circumstances to support them.

In response to these specific and abhorrent instances of antisemitism, the University of Leeds is determined to protect members of our Jewish community and all those who play such a valuable role in supporting them.

Further information about antisemitism is available on the [CST website](#).

<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/news-statements/news/article/5510/university-statement-antisemitic-attacks-on-hillel-house-and-rabbi-deutsch>

University Jewish Chaplaincy

University Jewish Chaplaincy We are pleased to see that the @UniversityLeeds has stated its unequivocal condemnation of the attacks on the Leeds Jewish student community and the Leeds Chaplains. A safe campus needs to be re-established for all Jewish students.

We are pleased to see that Professor Hai-Sui Yu, interim Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Leeds, has stated his clear and unequivocal condemnation of the antisemitism, anti-Jewish vandalism and despicable intimidation of the Jewish students and Chaplains, Rabbi Zecharia and Nava Deutsch, on his campus.

We wholeheartedly support his commitment to root out antisemitism on campus and look forward to working with him to re-establish a safe and welcoming environment for all Jewish students at Leeds under the leadership of the Deutschs.

<https://twitter.com/JewishChaplain/status/1757372301098545188>

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Israel

See also the CPS press release “Three women convicted of displaying paraglider stickers at London protest”, and statements from the University of Leeds, and University Jewish Chaplaincy that are included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

Military Bases

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [12864] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review the practice of routinely authorising requests from allies and partners to access UK air bases following the interim ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel).

James Heapey: All flights by foreign military-registered aircraft, and civil aircraft

operating under government status, are required to apply to the Ministry of Defence for Diplomatic Flight Clearance whenever they wish to enter UK airspace or use a UK air base. The Diplomatic Flight Clearance policy is a longstanding and robust practice. The basis on which a foreign partner may, or may not, be granted permission to utilise UK air bases is dependent on the nature and purpose of their activity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-02/12864>

The ICJ interim ruling (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>

Military Bases

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [12865] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that authorisation of requests from allies and partners for access to UK air bases is compatible with the UK's international legal obligations.

James Heapey: All flights by foreign military-registered aircraft and civil aircraft operating under Government status are required to apply to the Ministry of Defence for Diplomatic Flight Clearance whenever they wish to use a UK air base. The basis on which a foreign partner may or may not be granted permission to utilise UK air bases is dependent on the nature and purpose of their activity and reflects the UK's international legal obligations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-02/12865>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Genocide Convention

Alan Brown (SNP) [12356] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will take steps to help ensure the Israeli government's compliance with the provisional measures set forth by the International Court of Justice 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).

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [12406] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterparts on compliance with the provisional measures set forth by the International Court of Justice 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: FCDO Ministers hold regular meetings with their counterparts, including the Foreign Secretary's meetings with the Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister during his visit to Israel on 24 January.

We respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ's ruling is binding. 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 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.

The court's call for the immediate release of hostages and the need to get more aid into Gaza is a position we have long advocated.

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/2024-01-31/12356>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-31/12406>

The ICJ provisional measures (Order) referred to above can be read at

Gaza: Israel

John McDonnell (Labour) [12741] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will place sanctions on Israeli (a) ministers and (b) members of parliament who participated in the conference entitled Settlement Brings Security on 28 January 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: We were alarmed by the conference in Jerusalem calling for the resettlement of Gaza, and the fact that Israeli ministers participated. The UK's position is clear: Gaza is occupied Palestinian territory and will be part of the future Palestinian state. Settlements are illegal. No Palestinian should be threatened with forcible displacement or relocation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-02/12741>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [12710] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will increase UK aid to Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. The Foreign Secretary discussed the urgency of getting significantly more aid into Gaza to alleviate the desperate situation there with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 24 January. He reiterated the need for Israel to open more crossing points into Gaza, for Nitzana and Kerem Shalom to be open for longer, and for Israel to support the UN to distribute aid effectively across the whole of Gaza. An immediate pause is now necessary to get aid in and hostages out.

Israel must take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

We have trebled our aid commitment for this financial year and are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to increase access. We have supported the United Nations World Food Programme to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza. 750 tonnes of life-saving food aid arrived in the first delivery and 315 tonnes in the second delivery. The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson, is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-01/12710>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Christian Wakeford (Labour) [12213] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) on the findings of the report published by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education entitled UNRWA Education: Textbooks and Terror, published in November 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We have discussed issues relating to the curriculum and textbooks with counterparts in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and the Palestinian Authority. This specific report has not been discussed with the Commissioner-General, however we are aware of the findings. We take any allegation of the promotion of racism and discrimination extremely seriously. Any allegations of breaches of UN staff regulations and rules, including neutrality breaches, are reported to FCDO and investigated. We continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12213>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Education-Textbooks-and-Terror-Nov-2023.pdf>

House of Lords Written Answers

Jerusalem: Cultural Heritage

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL2004] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have met with representatives of Save the ArQ in Jerusalem; and what support, if any, they are providing to the campaign.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: British officials met Armenian Community leader Hagop Djernazian in January 2024. The UK is monitoring the situation and are clear on the need to avoid any further rise in tensions. The UK's position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. The UK is a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and an advocate for the integrity of cultural important areas to be respected. The UK continues to take a strong stance against settler violence and urges Israel to take stronger action to stop settler violence and hold the perpetrators accountable.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/hl2004>

Gaza: Genocide Convention

Baroness Helic (Conservative) [HL1957] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the International Court of Justice handing down its ruling in South Africa's case against Israel, what measures they will put in place to meet their international obligations under the Genocide Convention.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As a party to the Genocide Convention, the UK is fully committed to the prevention and punishment of genocide as appropriate under the Convention. We of course 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 (IHL), 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. We have long advocated for the release of hostages and the need to get more aid in. 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/hl1957>

The ICJ ruling (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>

The Genocide Convention, referred to above, can be read at

https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf

Gaza: Genocide Convention

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL2008] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to

their statement on 27 January that they have "considerable concerns" about the International Court of Justice ruling on 26 January regarding the case of genocide against Israel, what assessment they have made of that ruling; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning compliance with it.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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. We have long advocated for the release of hostages and the need to get more aid. 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/2024-01-29/hl2008>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-the-interim-icj-ruling-in-south-africa-vs-israel>

The ICJ ruling (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>

Palestinian Authority: Taxation

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL2005] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning tax receipt funds to the Palestinian Authority; and what assessment they have made of the future viability of the Palestinian Authority if such funds are not released.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As we have stated, we support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority (PA) has an important long-term role to play. We must work with our allies to provide serious, practical and enduring support needed to bolster the Palestinian Authority; we already provide technical and practical support and are ready to do more. The Palestinian Authority must take much needed steps on reform, including setting out a pathway to democratic progress, and just as the PA must act, so must Israel. The Foreign Secretary has raised this with his Israeli counterpart, most recently in his visit to Israel on 24 January. This means releasing frozen funds, halting settlement expansion and holding to account those responsible for extremist settler violence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/hl2005>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Helic (Conservative) [HL1959] To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to supporting the temporary medical evacuation of severely injured children from Israel and Palestine to the UK in order to receive short-term, life-saving, specialist medical treatment.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are currently supporting NGO and UN partners to deliver medical aid and care in the Gaza Strip. This includes support for primary healthcare, trauma and emergency care services, disease surveillance and outbreak response, and deployment of Emergency Medical Teams. We are also exploring further options to help meet the medical needs of Palestinians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-26/hl1959>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Lord Sedwill (Crossbench) [HL2000] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of Iran regarding ceasing their support for militias attacking western forces in the Middle East.

Red Sea: Piracy

Lord Sedwill (Crossbench) [HL2001] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of Iran regarding Houthi attacks on international shipping.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has long condemned Iran's political, financial, and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including the Houthis and Iranian-aligned militia groups in Iraq and Syria. The current and former Foreign Secretaries have directly raised Iran's support for these groups with the Iranian Foreign Minister three times since 7 October 2023. They made clear in all their conversations that Iran must use its influence with groups in the region to prevent escalation and that the regime bore responsibility for the actions of groups they had supported over many years.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/hl2000>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/hl2001>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Middle East Minister embarks on Gulf visit

... The UK Minister for the Middle East will travel to the Middle East as the UK seeks to build momentum towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire in Gaza and lasting stability and security in the region. ...

The minister will discuss how to ease the desperate humanitarian situation in Gaza, including through an immediate humanitarian pause in fighting leading to a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

He will also outline the UK's efforts to counter Houthi attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea and make clear that illegal attacks by the Houthis are completely unacceptable.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Middle East, said: We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible, and it is clear that wider escalation and instability in the region is in nobody's interests. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/middle-east-minister-embarks-on-gulf-visit>

UK sanctions extremist settlers in the West Bank

... The Foreign Secretary has announced sanctions on 4 extremist Israeli settlers who have committed human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

There have been unprecedented levels of violence by extremist settlers in the West Bank over the past year. Some residents of illegal Israeli settlements and outposts have used harassment, intimidation and violence to put pressure on Palestinian communities to leave their land.

Two of the individuals designated today – Moshe Sharvit and Yinon Levy – have in recent months used physical aggression, threatened families at gunpoint, and destroyed property as part of a targeted and calculated effort to displace Palestinian communities. One illegal outpost, set up by Zvi Bar Yosef, has been described by local Palestinian residents as a

“source of systematic intimidation and violence.”

Today’s measures put strict financial and travel restrictions on those who commit these acts. These sanctions follow the announcement by the Foreign Secretary in December that the UK plans to ban those responsible for settler violence from entering the UK to make sure our country cannot be a home for people who commit these unacceptable acts. Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron said: Today’s sanctions place restrictions on those involved in some of the most egregious abuses of human rights. We should be clear about what is happening here. Extremist Israeli settlers are threatening Palestinians, often at gunpoint, and forcing them off land that is rightfully theirs. This behaviour is illegal and unacceptable. Israel must also take stronger action and put a stop to settler violence. Too often, we see commitments made and undertakings given, but not followed through. Extremist settlers, by targeting and attacking Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Those now subject to a UK asset freeze, travel and visa ban include:

- Moshe Sharvit: an extremist settler who has threatened, harassed and assaulted Palestinian shepherds and their families in the Jordan Valley. In October 2023, one community of 20 families fled after Sharvit attacked the residents and told them they had 5 hours to leave
- Yinon Levy: leader of the ‘Meitarim Farm’ outpost, founded in 2021, whose settlers have used physical violence and the destruction of property to displace Palestinian communities including Zanuta in October 2023
- Zvi Bar Yosef: a settler leader who, since setting up the ‘Zvi’s Farm’ outpost in 2018, has used intimidation and violence against local Palestinians, including twice threatening at gunpoint young families having a picnic
- Ely Federman: involved in multiple incidents against Palestinian shepherds in the South Hebron Hills

Violence in the West Bank [reached record levels in 2023 \(United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs\)](#). Israel’s failure to act has led to an environment of near total impunity for settler extremists in the West Bank.

The UK government has continued to call for Israel to take action against those responsible for settler violence, release frozen funds to the Palestinian Authority and halt settlement expansion. The Prime Minister has raised this with Prime Minister Netanyahu on a number of occasions, and in December, the [UK and 13 partners released a statement](#) calling on Israel to take immediate and concrete steps to tackle record high settler violence in the occupied West Bank.

The measures taken today are part of wider UK efforts to support a more stable West Bank, which is vital for the peace and security of both Palestinians and Israelis. The UK will consider additional actions, including further sanctions, as necessary.

The UK continues to work with allies and partners, including across the region, to find a path towards a sustainable ceasefire and permanent peace.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-settlers-in-the-west-bank>

Scottish Government

Humza Yousaf Keir Starmer & Sunak’s unwillingness to call for an immediate ceasefire will never be forgotten, nor forgiven. The UK Government & Labour Opposition should hang their heads in shame as we witness a massacre that is killing thousands of women & children in front of our very eyes. [plus link to an STV news report]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1757028836993061213>

Northern Ireland Assembly Members Statements

Israel-Palestine War: Situation in Gaza

Declan Kearney (Sinn Féin): This is the 130th day of Israel's war in Gaza: 37,000 Palestinians are now dead or lying lifeless under the rubble of Gaza, and 1% of all Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip have been killed. In the space of one month, the equivalent of two Hiroshima bombs have been dropped on the Gaza Strip. Currently, 1.5 million Palestinians, who have been forcibly displaced from their homes in Gaza, are being pushed into Rafah — a place that is normally home to just 250,000.

This is an existential atrocity taking place in real time. I appeal to political and community leaders across our society to support the demand for an end to the war, to support an immediate and permanent ceasefire, to ensure that the medical and humanitarian relief being denied to the Palestinian people is provided and to demand that Israeli forces are withdrawn immediately from Gaza and the West Bank. It is time to end the war and to end Israel's illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. It is time finally to enforce international law, not simply to speak about it, and it is time finally to recognise the state of Palestine.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/02/13&docID=387395#4203381>

Israel-Palestine War: Situation in Gaza

Kate Nicholl (Alliance): ... I also wish to speak about Palestine and what is happening in Gaza. As a South Belfast MLA, I do a lot of work with refugees and asylum seekers. I am helping two Palestinians whose family members are in Gaza. I watch how they are in despair at what is happening. We can acknowledge and recognise that the Hamas terrorist attack and its unspeakable cruelty on 7 October must be condemned. That is true, but we must also say that what is happening in Palestine now is unspeakable cruelty.

As someone whose focus is on children and the next generation, I feel that the fact that more than 12,000 children have died is not a proportionate response. It is devastation. Every one of those children had a name, a family and a life, and they have gone. I keep thinking about Hind Rajab, who was six years old — not much older than my son — and the fear that she must have experienced. The silence around those lives is deafening. Their lives matter. Every single person matters; every person is important; every life matters. What is happening in Palestine is wrong. The least that we should say is that it is wrong and that the UK and the USA have to be unambiguous about the need for a ceasefire.

Last year, during the Good Friday Agreement 25th anniversary celebrations, I met Palestinian and Israeli film-makers. They kept asking me specific questions about how we worked together, how we appointed Chairs and how our governance worked. The idea of working together was so far-fetched for them. I keep thinking about the people I met, who had come here with such hope before October, before the situation spiralled and their family members died, and before they were living in complete fear. I sent a message to one of the film-makers to say, "I want you to know that we are rooting for you". What else do you say? He came back to say that their imaginations are so filled with fear, hate and death that the only thing giving them hope is their time in Northern Ireland, and that their hope is to come back and spend time with the politicians here. All I can say is that we can honour that hope by making our politics work, but we have to be unambiguous on the need to speak out and say that what is happening is wrong.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/02/13&docID=387395#4203386>

Israel-Palestine War: Situation in Gaza

Gerard Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance): Sometimes, things are so barbaric and

horrific to watch that we do not even know how to begin to speak about them — but speak out we must. I refer to what has been happening in Rafah and Gaza, particularly in the past few days. Nobody can deny that what is happening is the attempted annihilation of the people of the Gaza Strip. Israel has prepared a new genocidal assault on a civilian population of 1.5 million people who are already living under constant bombardment and are denied food, water and medical aid. They were told to go to Rafah to be safe; they are now being slaughtered and killed.

The genocide has reached new, depraved depths. It is unacceptable for this place to stay quiet about it. In recent days alone, we have seen ambulances targeted, health workers slaughtered in daylight, and the summary execution of six-year-old Hind Rajab, who was killed just after her mother and father were slaughtered. She was pleading for help. We have seen a mutilated child hanging from a building in Gaza. It is sickening, depraved stuff. Those are war crimes, paid for and funded by the West. It has never been about Hamas. World leaders are funding, supporting and arming — they are complicit in what is happening. They should never be forgiven for supporting those crimes against humanity and against Palestinian people: let us say their names.

Last week, when we first sat, I urged MLAs to collectively call for a ceasefire and submitted a motion to that effect. That motion needs to be brought to the Assembly as a matter of urgency for us to discuss the issue and make it clear that we cannot operate as normal. We cannot continue as normal while genocide goes on in plain sight.

There should be no diplomatic ties with Israel. It should be boycotted. The Israeli ambassador should be expelled from this island. I make a sincere plea for people to boycott the White House this St Patrick's Day. People who I have stood with at protests should not give cover to "Genocide Joe", a man who is up to his neck in the slaughter of Palestinians and is jointly responsible for 30,000 Palestinians being killed. It is his money — finance from the US — that has allowed that slaughter to happen, so parties should not give cover to "Genocide Joe" this St Patrick's Day. Parties should not pose for pictures with him, and they should not give him a bowl of shamrocks while he is up to his neck in the slaughter. They should stand up for the people of Palestine. Free Palestine.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/02/13&docID=387395#4203389>

European Union

Informal Foreign Affairs Council (Development): Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the press conference

... alarming news are coming about the foreseen attack of the Israeli army against the South part of Gaza, where a lot of people ... hundreds of thousands of people – are being pushed against the Egyptian border.

We had an exchange with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, and we agreed – I think that we agreed – on the absolute need to contribute to the work of UNRWA on protecting civilians.

Protecting civilians has been the work of UNRWA for many years, since 1949, when it was created to support the Palestinian refugees. Unhappily, many years later UNRWA has still to take care of millions of Palestinian refugees. Not only in Gaza, but in many other countries: in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, in the West Bank itself. ...

The Ministers have welcomed the swift and decisive measures taken by [the] Commissioner-General and by the United Nations Secretary-General ... to the allegations. I am saying “allegations”, and allegations have to be proven. But immediately, you took decisions about some members – 12 out of 30,000 - staff allegedly being involved in the 7th of October terrorist attacks. ...

To discontinue the support to UNRWA would mean the interruption of vital services to

millions of people in need, and a greater humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, which has to be avoided. Not only because it is a humanitarian imperative, but also because it would have dangerous repercussions on regional stability, and [it] would affect the Europeans too. ...

If this agency disappears, this will have a devastating effect on 5.6 million people. They are stateless, because there is no Palestinian state. And we could agree that the existence of UNRWA, 75 years after it was created, is something deplorable, but it is the responsibility of the international community, not the UNRWA workers.

There is only one way in which this agency can be dissolved. The agency should be dissolved when there is no more Palestinian refugee problem. If you cancel UNRWA, the refugee problem will still be there, but still worse. ...

Certainly, there are different approaches. Some Member States have decided – very few – to suspend the support to UNRWA. But others, on the contrary, not only they have not decided to suspend it, but they have decided to increase it. ...

Question: ... we know there are divisions among Member States. It seems there are divisions within the Commission. Perhaps, Minister, you could tell us who are the countries that are making the biggest objection to moving forward on these funds that, we all agree, are quite desperately needed.

You said this morning, when talking about the US President Biden being worried about that Rafah operation, that maybe more than words are needed, and you talked about weapons. Could you maybe clarify? It is very timely because the Dutch government made a decision this morning about F-35 exports. ...

Josep Borrell: Look, my job is to try to unite Member States. My job is not to 'blame and shame' and say: "Ah, someone said, others agree. Who is on the right side and who is on the wrong side." ... Some Member States - I will not name them – said, "I will increase my support." And others say, "I cancel my support." And others say, "I will not cancel it, but I will not launch new [support] until the investigation is done." So, I have to manage these polycentric approaches among Member States. But if I have to take the common ground, if I have to look at the majority feeling, I think that the majority is clearly understanding the fact that there is no alternative to support the Palestinian people than what we have in place – and that has been in place for 70 years or more, with Hamas and without Hamas. ...

On the other hand, it is true that the Israeli government does not hide its will of cancelling the work of UNRWA - it is not a secret. It is not a secret. What I am saying is that allegations are allegations. In the first year of the law school, you are being taught that if someone is making an accusation, it is up to him to prove it - not the accused but the accuser. And for the time being, I have not received any proof of these allegations. ... Well, I think I am not going to be accused of antisemitism for doing that but that is evident. And in spite of that, UNRWA has taken tough measures. But if Palestinian lives matter – and it certainly matters –, then we have to provide assistance. ...

Look, I do not pretend to be in charge of the foreign policy of the United States ... But let's be logical: how many times have you heard the most prominent leaders and the foreign ministers around the world saying, "Too many people are being killed"? President ... Biden said ... this is too much on the top, it is not proportional. Well, if you believe that too many people are being killed, maybe you should provide less arms in order to prevent so many people [from] being killed. Isn't it logical? In 2006, during the war against Lebanon, the United States already took this decision. They already took the decision to pause the supply of arms to Israel, because Israel did not want to stop the war. Exactly the same thing that happens today. Everyone goes to Tel-Aviv, begging: "Please, do not do that, protect civilians, do not kill so many."

How many is too many? What is the standard? But ... Netanyahu does not listen to anyone. "They are going to evacuate." Where? To the moon? Where are they going to evacuate these people? So, if the international community believes that this is a slaughter, that too

many people are being killed, maybe they have to think about the provision of arms. And by the way, today a Court in the Netherlands has ordered the government ... to stop exporting the spare parts of the F-35 fighter [jets] to Israel in order to be sure that the International Court of Justice's rule is being implemented. ...

To read the full transcript see

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/informal-foreign-affairs-council-development-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-press_en

International Criminal Court

Karim A. A. Khan KC I am deeply concerned by the reported bombardment and potential ground incursion by Israeli forces in Rafah.

My Office has an ongoing and active investigation into the situation in the State of Palestine. This is being taken forward as a matter of the utmost urgency, with a view to bringing to justice those responsible for Rome Statute crimes.

All wars have rules and the laws applicable to armed conflict cannot be interpreted so as to render them hollow or devoid of meaning. This has been my consistent message, including from Ramallah last year. Since that time, I have not seen any discernible change in conduct by Israel. As I have repeatedly emphasised, those who do not comply with the law should not complain later when my Office takes action pursuant to its mandate.

To all those involved: my Office is actively investigating any crimes allegedly committed. Those who are in breach of the law will be held accountable.

I also continue to call for the immediate release of all hostages. This also represents an important focus of our investigations.

<https://twitter.com/KarimKhanQC/status/1757081372680700206?s=20>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk on Israeli operation into Rafah

A potential full-fledged military incursion into Rafah – where some 1.5 million Palestinians are packed against the Egyptian border with nowhere further to flee – is terrifying, given the prospect that an extremely high number of civilians, again mostly children and women, will likely be killed and injured.

Not so long ago, I had flagged the unimaginable suffering faced by Palestinians in Gaza. Today, sadly, given the carnage wrought so far in Gaza it is wholly imaginable what would lie ahead in Rafah. Beyond the pain and suffering of the bombs and bullets, this incursion into Rafah may also mean the end of the meager humanitarian aid that has been entering and distributed with huge implications for all of Gaza, including the hundreds of thousands at grave risk of starvation and famine in the north. My Office has repeatedly warned against actions that violate the laws of war. The prospect of such an operation into Rafah, as circumstances stand, risks further atrocity crimes.

Israel must comply with the legally binding orders issued by the International Court of Justice, and with the full span of international humanitarian law. Those who defy international law have been put on notice. Accountability must follow.

The world must not allow this to happen. Those with influence must restrain rather than enable. There must be an immediate ceasefire. All remaining hostages must be released. And there must be renewed collective resolve to reach a political solution.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/02/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-israeli-operation>

World Health Organisation

WHO Director-General's speech at the World Governments Summit

... the [Dubai WHO Global Logistics] hub is currently playing a vital role in our response to several emergencies around the world, including the ongoing crisis in Gaza.

So far, we have delivered 447 metric tons of medical supplies to Gaza, but it's a drop in the ocean of need, which continues to grow every day.

Only 15 out of 36 hospitals are still partially or minimally functional in Gaza.

Health workers are doing their best in impossible circumstances.

I am especially concerned by the recent attacks on Rafah, where the majority of Gaza's population has fled from the destruction to the north.

WHO continues to call for safe access for humanitarian personnel and supplies;

We continue to call for hostages held by Hamas to be released;

And we continue to call for a ceasefire. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-speech-at-the-world-governments-summit---12-february-2024>

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Other Relevant Information

European Court of Human Rights

Ban on ritual slaughter of animals without prior stunning in Flemish and Walloon Regions does not breach Convention

... The applicants complained before the Court that their right to freedom of religion had been violated on account of the ban on the ritual slaughter of animals without prior stunning under the relevant decrees in the Flemish and Walloon Regions. They argued that it would be hard, if not impossible, for Jewish and Muslim believers to slaughter animals in accordance with the precepts of their religion or to obtain meat from such animals. ...

Relying on Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), the applicants complained that the ban in question constituted an unjustified interference with their right to respect for their freedom of religion.

Relying on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) taken together with Article 9, they complained that they had been discriminated against in terms of their freedom of religion. ...

The Court found that there had been an interference with the applicants' freedom of religion and that this was prescribed by legislation, namely the Flemish and Walloon decrees.

As to whether the interference pursued a legitimate aim, the Court observed that this was the first time that it had had to rule on the question whether the protection of animal welfare could be linked to one of the aims referred to in Article 9 of the Convention.

Article 9 of the Convention did not contain an explicit reference to the protection of animal welfare in the exhaustive list of legitimate aims that might justify an interference with the freedom to manifest one's religion.

However, the Court considered that the protection of public morals, to which Article 9 of the Convention referred, could not be understood as being intended solely to protect human dignity in the sphere of inter-personal relations. ... Accordingly, the Convention could not be interpreted as promoting the absolute upholding of the rights and freedoms it enshrined without regard to animal suffering. ...

The Court noted that both decrees were based on a scientific consensus that prior stunning

was the optimum means of reducing the animal's suffering at the time of slaughter. It saw no serious reason to call this finding into question.

The Court further observed that the Flemish and Walloon legislatures had sought a proportionate alternative to the obligation of prior stunning, as the decrees provided that, if the animals were slaughtered according to special methods required by religious rites, the stunning process used would be reversible, without causing the animal's death. On the basis of scientific studies and extensive consultation with interested parties, the parliamentary work concluded that no less radical measure could sufficiently achieve the objective of reducing the harm to animal welfare at the time of slaughter.

It considered that the authorities concerned had thereby endeavoured to weigh up the rights and interests at stake and to strike a fair balance between them ...

... the Court noted that the Flemish and Walloon Regions did not prohibit the consumption of meat from other regions or countries in which stunning prior to the killing of the animals was not a legal requirement and that the applicants had not shown that access to such meat had become more difficult.

The Court concluded that, in adopting the decrees which had had the effect of prohibiting the slaughter of animals without prior stunning in the Flemish and Walloon Regions, while prescribing reversible stunning for ritual slaughter, the national authorities had not exceeded the margin of appreciation afforded to them in the present case. They had taken a measure which was justified in principle and which could be considered proportionate to the aim pursued, namely the protection of animal welfare as an aspect of "public morals". There had therefore been no violation of Article 9 of the Convention. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-7874911-10945982&filename=Judgment%20Executief%20van%20de%20Moslims%20van%20Belgi%C3%AB%20and%20Others%20v.%20Belgium%20-%20Ban%20on%20ritual%20slaughter%20of%20animals%20without%20prior%2>

The full judgement, only available in French, can be read at

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-230858%22%7D>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3511>

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

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>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill - Standard Tier (closing date 18 March 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/martyns-law-standard-tier-consultation>

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