



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answer

Radicalism

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green) [HL2084] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 23 January (HL1524), under what circumstances (1) a human rights, social justice, or environmental activist, and (2) an individual expressing socialist views, crosses the threshold for Prevent referrals as 'left wing extremist'; and whether such an individual needs to be planning, involved in or threatening acts of violence in order to be so considered.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Frontline professionals, when deciding whether to make a referral, should consider whether they believe the person they are concerned about may be on a pathway that could lead to terrorism. In determining whether a concern meets the threshold for referral to Prevent, it is important to consider the harm posed to the person, as well as whether accessing support through Prevent might stop potential wider societal harm committed by the person. A risk-based approach should always be followed, using professional judgement and curiosity. There is no single model of a person's radicalisation journey or single profile of a radicalised person. There may be times when the precise ideological driver is not clear. Yet, like any safeguarding mechanism, it is far better to receive referrals which turn out not to be of concern than for someone who genuinely needs support to be missed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-31/hl2084>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-11/hl1524>

Department for Education

Explaining Prevent to staff and students in higher education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/explaining-prevent-to-staff-and-students-in-higher-education/explaining-prevent-to-staff-and-students-in-higher-education>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan

... The leaders discussed the crisis in Gaza and agreed it was critical as a first step to secure an immediate humanitarian pause, to get hostages out and considerably more aid in. The UK ultimately wanted to see a sustainable ceasefire – which would require Hamas to no longer be in charge in Gaza and Israel's security to be assured.

The Prime Minister welcomed Jordan's innovative efforts to deliver life-saving aid to Gaza by land and air, and he set out the UK's work to unblock aid access and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. The UK was deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of any offensive on civilians sheltering in Rafah.

They also discussed the importance of de-escalating tensions in the West Bank and bolstering the role of the Palestinian Authority to deliver security and prosperity. The Prime Minister highlighted steps the UK has taken to support stability in the West Bank, including sanctioning extremist settlers.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-of-jordan-15-february-2024>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Our UK-Qatar joint aid consignment has arrived in Rafah. The family-sized tents, distributed by @UNICEF , are providing vital shelter to those in desperate need. Israel must take steps to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza. [plus photos]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1758432266470969523>

United Nations

Despite myriad challenges, UNRWA continues lifesaving work in Gaza

... Since the war began, more than 150 UNRWA employees have been killed and dozens of the agency's headquarters and warehouses destroyed in various parts of the Gaza Strip. The main arm of humanitarian efforts in Gaza, the agency runs shelters housing more than one million people, providing them with necessary humanitarian relief and primary healthcare.

No other entity has the capacity to provide assistance on the scale necessary to meet the

needs of 2.2 million people in the Strip, UNRWA said. ...

A number of donors suspended their funding to UNRWA last month following Israel's allegations of the involvement of 12 agency employees in the 7 October attacks on Israel. UNRWA quickly fired nine employees due to the seriousness of the allegations and is currently investigating the matter. The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services – the highest investigative body in the organization – is also investigating the allegations. ... If funding for UNRWA is not resumed, the agency said it will be forced to cease its operations across the region – including Gaza – by the end of February. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/02/1146597>

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN Human Rights concerned by pattern of Israeli raids on Gaza medical facilities

We are deeply worried by the reports that Israeli forces have today raided the Nasser Medical Complex in the south of the occupied Gaza Strip, less than a week after they raided Al Amal Hospital in western Khan Younis.

The raid comes after a week-long siege which cut off medical, food and fuel supplies.

Israeli forces reportedly ordered the transfer of all patients, including those in intensive care and nursery units, to a different building, exposing patients to grave risks, including the risk of death for the most vulnerable. There are unconfirmed reports of detention as well as targeting of those trying to leave the hospital.

The raid appears to be part of a pattern of attacks by Israeli forces striking essential life-saving civilian infrastructure in Gaza, especially hospitals. Our Office has documented similar raids in Gaza City, North Gaza, Middle Gaza and in Khan Younis, with serious consequences for the safety of patients, medical and other staff, as well as civilians sheltering in these facilities.

With nearly 70,000 people reportedly injured during this conflict, and a nearly collapsed health system due to attacks on facilities and restrictions on essential humanitarian supplies, the impact on civilians is appalling.

Medical facilities are protected infrastructure under international humanitarian law. They are entitled to special protection and must not be the object of attack nor be used outside their humanitarian function for acts harmful to the enemy. Even if Israel contends that a medical facility has lost its protection as a result of being used for acts harmful to the Israeli forces, it must nevertheless comply with the principles of precautions and proportionality. Furthermore, Israel, as the occupying power, has the duty to ensure and maintain medical facilities and services in all of the occupied territory, including the Gaza Strip.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/02/un-human-rights-concerned-pattern-israeli-raids-gaza-medical-facilities>

Israel's symbolic "ban" must not distract from atrocity crimes in Gaza: UN expert

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, said today that Israel's decision to symbolically ban her entry is a distraction from atrocities being committed in Gaza. ...

"Since Israel's 2008 detention and deportation of then UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk, the State of Israel has prevented the entry of all UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Israel's recent announcement to 'officially ban' my entry is therefore symbolic and misleading.

Israel's announcement must not serve as a diversion from the situation in Gaza, which Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Martin Griffiths has qualified as ‘an assault that is unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope’ and that the International Court of Justice has said plausibly constitutes genocide. In just over four months, the Israeli army has killed over 28,500 Palestinians in Gaza, 70% of them women and children, while some 10,000 people are missing, presumed dead under the rubble. Nearly 70,000 are injured, many maimed for life, and some 1.7 million people—75% of the population—have been displaced, while the entire civilian population is at risk of starvation. Daily, relentless massacres, the latest ones inflicted in the non-existent “safe zones” in Rafah, where over 1.4 million Palestinians are struggling to survive, are being committed in flagrant defiance of the [provisional measures](#) ordered by the International Court of Justice.

Israel claims that the ban follows my comments concerning the context in which Hamas’ attacks on 7 October took place. My comments were prompted by the French President’s description of the attacks as ‘the largest anti-Semitic massacre of our century’. I have strongly and consistently condemned these heinous attacks as war crimes, which cannot be justified in any way, and for the fear and distress they have spread among Israelis. I continue to express my sorrow and solidarity with the victims, including the hostages still held captive, and with Jewish communities worldwide. I also call for accountability for these crimes.

While my condemnation of the attacks is unequivocal, I also felt compelled to challenge a persistent misinterpretation of the root causes of the 7 October attacks, particularly in Western countries: that the attacks were primarily motivated by anti-Semitism. As prominent Holocaust and anti-Semitism scholars have [warned](#), this assumption is both false and dangerous as it evades the critical underpinnings of the conflict and disavows the role of Israel in fuelling it. These scholars have recently argued that ‘appealing to the memory of the Holocaust obscures our understanding of the antisemitism Jews face today, and dangerously misrepresents the causes of violence in Israel-Palestine.’ So, while anti-Semitism could have played a role in the attacks at an individual level for some, their main determinants are to be found elsewhere.

Context does matter. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated: ‘It is important to also recognise the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation’.

Fundamentally, no crime ever justifies another crime. There is no justification for the horrific attacks of 7 October. However, the ‘56 years of suffocating occupation’ referred to by the Secretary-General is the very context that fuels the hatred and violence that endangers Israelis and Palestinians alike. This context is obscured by the framing of 7 October as primarily driven by anti-Semitism.

In line with the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate Holders, since the early days of my mandate, I have sought to establish formal relations with the State of Israel that would enable me to fulfil the task entrusted to me by the Human Rights Council. Unfortunately, Israel has responded with hostility and slander that is often amplified by politically aligned organisations and media.

As a Member State of the United Nations, Israel is obligated to respect international law and uphold the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter, which enshrine rights and freedoms for all human beings. Regrettably, the Israeli government consistently undermines the leading promoters and defenders of the rule of law, humanitarian protection and human rights, including the UN Secretary-General, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and independent experts, UNRWA, OCHA and the International Court of Justice.

The primacy of the rule of law forms the foundation of the United Nations’ existence and mission—and Israel, like any other State, is called upon to abide by these standards. This includes the facilitation of my access to the territory it has occupied for 56 years.

Although a long and challenging endeavour, respecting international law and ending the system of apartheid that Israel imposes on the Palestinians is the only way to achieve

lasting peace, human security and regional stability—for no one can be safe until everyone is safe.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/israels-symbolic-ban-must-not-distract-atrocity-crimes-gaza-un-expert>

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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