



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Antisemitism in the UK

col 500 **The Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp):** ... Last week, the Community Security Trust published its latest report on antisemitic incidents. It made for deeply disturbing reading. It showed that there were 4,103 instances of anti-Jewish racist hatred recorded across the UK in 2023. That is the highest annual total ever reported to the Community Security Trust. It is a 147% rise from the 1,662 antisemitic incidents the previous year, and 81% higher than the previous yearly record of 2,261 incidents, reported in 2021. Most shockingly, more than two thirds of the incidents reported last year occurred on or after 7 October, when Hamas perpetrated its barbaric terrorist attack on Israel. The report also indicates that antisemitism began spiking before Israel's military response had begun: the week immediately following 7 October saw 416 antisemitic incidents reported to the CST, which is higher than any subsequent week.

The CST's findings, which tally with increases in offending reported by the police, are nothing short of a disgrace and an outrage. Examples highlighted in the report are shocking and reprehensible. ... The only reasonable conclusion to draw is that members of Britain's Jewish community are suffering a level of hatred and abuse which is frankly shameful.

There is no excuse for the behaviour outlined in the CST report or seen in some of the

shocking incidents that have occurred recently. The situation in the middle east does not and will never give anyone the right to harass or intimidate others. ... This Government will not stand for antisemitism of any kind. It is important to note that the police have comprehensive powers to deal with abhorrent conduct of this nature. For example, in the case of public order offences, where there is proof of racial or religious hostility on the part of the offender, offenders will be charged with racially or religiously aggravated versions of those offences, which will result in an uplift to their sentence. Furthermore, inciting racial hatred is an offence under the Public Order Act 1986 ...

We have been clear both before and since the 7 October attacks that we will do whatever it takes to keep Britain's Jewish community safe. We have taken strong steps to confront the poison of antisemitism head on. We have increased funding to bolster security at Jewish schools, synagogues and other sites. ...

The Community Security Trust is an essential partner in our efforts to keep the Jewish community safe, and I pay tribute to it for the brilliant work that it does. The Home Office meets regularly with CST staff and co-operates closely with them. We keep dialogue open constantly, and both the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister have regular meetings with them. ...

col 501 We are working closely with the police to ensure that hate crime and expressions of support for terrorist organisations are met with the full force of the law. The idea that anyone could celebrate or valorise Hamas for the appalling terrorist atrocities that it perpetrated on 7 October is beyond comprehension. It goes completely against the values of this country. Last month, we proscribed Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that actively promotes and encourages terrorism and is responsible for spreading antisemitism. Hamas itself, of course, is already a proscribed organisation. ...

The right to protest is of course a fundamental part of our democracy, but that right cannot be exercised in a way that intimidates others or invokes fear in them. ... Where further powers are needed, we will not hesitate to act, which is why we recently announced a new package of measures to crack down on dangerous disorder—in particular, that committed at protests.

The CST's findings on incidents within the sphere of higher education were especially disturbing. No one should be subject to antisemitic abuse while at university. Every effort must be taken to prevent hatred from flourishing in schools, universities and colleges. That is why we announced a further £7 million of funding to help to tackle antisemitism in education.

We are equally unwavering in our stance towards hatred and abuse directed at British Muslims. The Government have been in regular contact with representatives of the Muslim community, and we are aware of an increased number of reports of anti-Muslim hatred as well. That is of course unacceptable, and we have made additional funding available for protective security measures at mosques and Muslim faith schools.

Last month, we marked Holocaust Memorial Day. Just as we remember the horrors of the past, we must remain alert to present-day dangers. Antisemitism is an ancient hatred, which has reared its ugly head in the most abhorrent and evil ways throughout history. ... To the antisemites, we say this: "You will not win. You will be shown up for the despicable racists you are." To our Jewish friends and colleagues, I say this: "We stand with you. We understand your fears and we share your pain. We will protect you—today, tomorrow and always." ...

col 502 Yvette Cooper (Labour): ... The appalling and intolerable rise in antisemitism in Britain in recent months, as set out in the report of the Community Security Trust last week, is a stain on our society. ...

The more than 4,000 incidents in 2023 alone are an urgent reminder of the responsibility that we all have to stamp out the scourge of antisemitism wherever it is found. I join the Minister in thanking the CST for the remarkable and tireless work that it does each day, alongside the police, to keep our Jewish community safe. ...

We welcome and support the Government's commitment of additional funding for the CST. The incidents that it reports include a violent, abusive attack on a Jewish man on his way home from synagogue, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and a 200% increase in antisemitic incidents at universities. ... For the years they are studying, universities are students' homes. No one should ever feel unsafe in their home, or wherever they are. Everybody has the right to live in freedom from fear.

The CST's report also found the number of online incidents of antisemitism rising by 257%—an ancient hatred being resuscitated through modern means, to proliferate and promote extremism. I agree with the Minister that it is unconscionable that one of the steepest surges in antisemitism came in the week following Hamas's barbaric terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October—the deadliest day for Jews since the holocaust—with individuals in this country celebrating those scenes of unimaginable horror. There must be zero tolerance for the glorification of proscribed terrorist groups on Britain's streets. We support the proscribing of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and ensuring that those who commit antisemitic hate crimes always face the full force of the law.

In the weeks following 7 October, I met the CST together with Tell MAMA, which monitors Islamophobia and has also identified a huge increase in Islamophobic incidents and hate. They were united in their call for an end to hatred and prejudice, to antisemitism, and to Islamophobia. We must never allow the terrible events and conflicts in the middle east, which cause deep distress across our communities, to lead to increased tension, hatred, prejudice, abuse or crimes in our communities at home. I welcome the points that the Minister made about ensuring that extremist incidents on marches are also addressed with the full force of the law, but I press him to go further in a few key areas.

col 503 First, the counter-extremism strategy is now eight years out of date. ... The Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Government's own experts have warned that there is a gap in the law around hateful extremism that is allowing toxic antisemitic views and conspiracy theories to be spread, and making it harder to police them. ...

Will the Government also urgently look again at the decision that Ministers took around a year ago to downgrade the reporting of non-crime hate incidents, particularly around Islamophobia and antisemitism, to ensure that those who engage in vile and vitriolic religious hatred can always be properly monitored and identified by the police?

Finally, I ask particularly about online antisemitism ... We have seen a huge increase on X, formerly Twitter, at the same time as some of its monitoring and standards have been downgraded. Have the Government raised that directly with Elon Musk and X? ...

Chris Philp: ... I agree that it is completely unacceptable for people to seek to intimidate others, to incite racial hatred or to glorify terrorism. In fact, it is illegal. The police have made 600 arrests at protests since 7 October, and we in Government are urging the police to use all their powers to ensure that hatred is not incited in the course of the marches that have happened. ...

We are engaging with online platforms on a regular basis ...

The right hon. Lady asked about non-crime hate incidents. The changes to the guidance were designed to ensure that minor spats between neighbours, or expressions of essentially legitimate political views, do not end up wasting police time by getting recorded. Where things do not meet the criminal threshold but might be useful in pursuing a criminal investigation later, they will still be recorded. ... Those things meet the criminal threshold and are therefore not affected by any change to non-crime hate incident recording rules in any event.

col 504 ... just a week or two ago we announced various changes for which we intend to legislate via Government amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill ... Those measures will tighten up a number of areas relating to protest, including removing the "reasonable and lawful excuse" defence to various public order offences, making it easier for the police to have a blanket prohibition on face coverings, which are often menacing but also make it difficult to identify people

committing criminal offences at protests. We will make it an offence to climb on key war memorials, which is grossly disrespectful ...

Suella Braverman (Conservative): ... The reality is that the Jewish community has been demonised and targeted, is scared and has been let down by the authorities. The Jewish community needs its champions and friends to speak in its defence without fear or favour. Lord Ian Austin, who sits in the other place, is one such courageous advocate who has campaigned for decades against antisemitism and Islamism. Does my right hon. Friend share my deep concern about organisations such as Midland Heart, which has suspended Lord Austin as its chair merely for his speaking against Islamism, terrorism and antisemitism?

Chris Philp: ... I agree with what she said about Lord Austin. I have read the tweets that he sent, and it strikes me that there is nothing unreasonable about them. He was criticising Islamism, which is a form of extremism. That is obviously not the same as the Muslim community more widely ... I do not think that the actions proposed by Midland Heart are in the slightest bit reasonable. ...

col 505 **Ronnie Cowan (SNP):** ... The sharp rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia in the UK is extremely concerning ...

In today's statement, I see references to "funding to bolster security", "caught and punished", "the full force of the law", and "a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine", none of which I disagree with in any way, shape or form. We need to implement the law robustly. However, I am a bit concerned that there is only one line in the statement that talks about education. It says that £7 million of funding will be delivered "in education", but I would like it to say "through education", because surely we can eradicate antisemitism through education. ... We value Scotland's Jewish communities and other faith and belief communities. We recognise the important role that they play in making Scotland a safer, stronger and more inclusive society in which everyone can live in peace and work to realise their potential. In June 2017, the Scottish Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. ...

The Scottish Government's recently published hate crime strategy sets out their strategic priorities for tackling hate crime, including antisemitism. ... It makes a number of commitments, including ensuring improved support for victims, improving data and evidence, and developing effective approaches to preventing hate crime. ...

Chris Philp: ... the Government announced a further £7 million of funding to help tackle antisemitism in education and ensure that support is in place for schools and colleges. In addition to that ... on 5 November the Department for Education announced a five-point plan to protect Jewish students on university campuses, which included a call for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred, asking vice-chancellors to act decisively against staff and students involved in antisemitism, and meeting the Office for Students, the independent regulator, to find out what more it can do to make it clear that antisemitism and racial hatred incited on campuses should be referred to the police, and to explore an antisemitism charter in higher education. ...

col 506 **Michael Ellis (Conservative):** ... I am concerned about reports of a magistrates court judge liking an antisemitic post on social media, having passed an extremely lenient sentence on protesters convicted of terrorism offences. This judge apparently trains junior members of the judiciary and is involved in judicial appointments of other judges. Should that not result in a full, deep investigation, with a past docket of cases being checked for bias and a potential suspension, pending the interim report?

Chris Philp: ... the judiciary is of course independent. Matters of judicial conduct are subject to investigation by the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office. From the account of the incident that I have heard, and which my right hon. and learned Friend gave, that is the kind of thing that I would expect the JCIO to investigate. ...

col 507 **Diana Johnson (Labour):** ... the Home Affairs Committee ... have been particularly appalled to hear evidence of the huge increase in incidents of antisemitism perpetrated in the wake of the 7 October terrorist attacks. The CST has recorded that 43% of antisemitism incidents last year explicitly referenced the Israel-Palestine 7 October attacks and the conflict in Gaza. Attacks on Jewish and Muslim communities here in Britain in response to overseas conflicts are never acceptable. What more can be done to stop the exploitation of such overseas conflicts and the effect that it has on community cohesion in this country?

Chris Philp: ... It disturbs me deeply ... to see conflict occurring elsewhere in the world playing out on our own streets and leading to tension ... often hatred ...

We have values here of tolerance and mutual respect; we abhor terrorism, violence and intimidation. ... no one—no matter how strongly they feel about what is happening in Gaza—should behave in a way that is intimidating or incites racial hatred. ...

Andrew Percy (Conservative): When British Jews woke up on 7 October to the pogroms and the associated rapes, butchery of children and hostage-taking, we expected sympathy from people on the streets of Britain. Instead, we have seen people attacked for speaking Hebrew, Jewish businesses attacked, Jews assaulted, and hate marches on our streets. As we saw again this weekend, the fellow holding the sign to remind marchers that Hamas are a terrorist organisation was the one who was dragged off and had his collar felt by the police, while people continue to march through the streets with cries for jihad and intifadas and in support of the Houthis.

What everyone says in this place is all fine, but the reality is that the demonisation of the world's only Jewish state is playing out in the demonisation of Jews in this country. In our universities, the embedding of antizionism—in and of itself pure Jew hate in many cases—is being wrought on Jewish students. So although the measures that have been outlined are fine, there is a deeper problem in our society: Jews do not feel safe in this country. More must be done to tackle the real root cause of Jew hate.

Chris Philp: I was as appalled as my hon. Friend when some people ... reacted to what happened on 7 October with a deeply disturbing jubilation. That is sick, it is unacceptable and, depending on how it is expressed, it is frankly illegal ...

col 508 ... 600 arrests have been made at the various protests that have followed 7 October. We have repeatedly met police ... to urge them to use the full extent of the law and to show zero tolerance to people who break the law and incite racial hatred. ...

... I will ask for an account of the incident that my hon. Friend referred to. He is absolutely right to say that no member of the Jewish community, whether on the streets of central London, at university or at school, should suffer fear and intimidation. The truth is that, in the past few months in particular, they have suffered fear and intimidation ...

Theresa Villiers (Conservative): Does the Minister agree that the attack on the constituency office of ... Mike Freer, was an utterly unacceptable attack on democracy? It is a matter of great sadness that this Parliament will lose a fantastic MP because of the intimidation associated with his being prepared to stand up for his Jewish constituents and for Israel.

Chris Philp: I am pleased to report to the House that arrests have been made in relation to the appalling attack on the office of my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green ... It is a tragedy that someone with his exemplary track record of public service feels that he is unable to stand for Parliament again, partly as a result of the intimidation that he has suffered ...

col 509 **Margaret Hodge (Labour):** ... We have had attacks on Jews in theatres in London; we have had attacks on Jews in campuses, particularly in Leeds and Birmingham ... a judge has failed to penalise three people for glorifying terrorism in London. People in all

sorts of sectors, locations and areas across our country are worried that antisemitism is spreading. ...

Chris Philp: I share the right hon. Lady's horror at the various events highlighted in the Community Security Trust's report, including an incident at a theatre where a Jewish man was essentially hounded out ... She mentioned the case that the former Attorney General ... (Sir Michael Ellis), raised. I spoke to the current Attorney General earlier today, and I understand that the Crown Prosecution Service is reviewing that case as well; it deeply concerns me ...

Munira Wilson (Liberal Democrat): Sadly, we have seen a trebling of antisemitic incidents on university campuses between 2022 and 2023: the CST recorded 67 incidents on campuses in the month following the horrendous attacks of 7 October, compared with just 12 in the same period the previous year ... That is why my Liberal Democrat colleagues and I very much welcomed the £7 million to tackle antisemitism in schools and universities that the Government announced in November, which the Minister has referred to. However, since then, we have had no update on how many applications have been made to that fund and how the money has been allocated. ...

col 510 **Chris Philp:** I would be very happy to come back ... with an update on that question. ... It is particularly concerning when universities—the training grounds for the next generation—appear to have been hijacked in some places by antisemites: when Jewish students are being intimidated and harassed and Jewish societies have their meetings picketed, with people standing outside shouting abuse and worse. ...

Andrew Jones (Conservative): ... the most senior Liberal Democrat councillor in Harrogate and Knaresborough has been exposed for tweeting horrendous antisemitic comments for the past five weeks. She had hundreds of followers, including many senior local Liberal Democrats; she tweeted over 500 times on the subject, and those tweets were read over 10,000 times, so it beggars belief that no Liberal Democrat knew what she was saying. ...

In our politics, we have seen antisemitism in meetings; we have seen it online; we have seen it in Rochdale; and now we have seen it in Harrogate. Does my right hon. Friend agree that political leaders ... must act immediately if they encounter antisemitism in their midst, not wait to see whether anyone notices?

Chris Philp: Yes. ... it is incumbent on political leaders, from whom many other members of the community take their lead, to act immediately, not just when antisemitism gets exposed in the media or when pressure builds, and not because it is convenient but because it is right. ...

Christian Wakeford (Labour): Jewish people in my Greater Manchester constituency have had to endure a 163% increase in antisemitic hate crime, as detailed in the CST's annual incidents report. Some of that is blatant targeting of Jews; in other cases, it is much more sinister, targeting Zionists. When we see a banner saying "Zionists not welcome", we know what it means: "Jews not welcome". Let us call it out for what it is: anti-Zionism is antisemitism. ...

col 511 **Chris Philp:** I completely agree ... Very often, anti-Zionism is nothing more than anti-Jewish sentiment; it is antisemitism, and we should call it out where it happens ...

The extra money for the Community Security Trust will apply in the current financial year; it will be a £3 million increase to £18 million in total. It will also apply next year, in financial year 2024-25, and it will be kept under review thereafter.

James Daly (Conservative): ... how political parties deal with antisemitism within their ranks is crucial and sends an important signal to the country about how this Parliament treats the issue. Does my right hon. Friend share, therefore, my genuine disappointment about the weak, flip-flopping and changing position of the Labour leader ... concerning the remarks of Labour's now ex-candidate for the Rochdale by-election? Martin Forde KC,

who compiled a report for the Labour party on bullying, sexism and racism within its ranks, has described those remarks as “clearly antisemitic”.

Chris Philp: ... it is incumbent on political leaders ... to act quickly and from principle. ...

Debbie Abrahams (Labour): The figures from the CST are absolutely horrific. Antisemitism is absolutely unacceptable; hate crime, including Islamophobia, is absolutely unacceptable; but does the Minister think there is sufficient capacity within the police to investigate the full range of issues that are being raised? What is the role of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in preventing the discrimination that can contribute to this hate?

Chris Philp: I think there is enough resource in policing. ... The police are prioritising this issue, and of course, they can work with the EHRC to take criminal action where the EHRC identifies examples of antisemitism.

Julian Lewis (Conservative): Following the battle of Cable Street against Mosley’s blackshirts, the Public Order Act 1936 introduced measures that severely restricted the ability of Nazi-type movements to march in predominantly Jewish areas. Is the Minister satisfied that the police of today are sufficiently aware of the powers they have to stop marches taking routes that go through areas that are predominantly associated with a threatened community?

col 512 **Chris Philp:** Yes, I am, and the police do it. For example, on Saturday, a convoy was planned from the north of England to north London, many parts of which have Jewish communities. The police stopped that convoy because they were concerned that it would inflame tensions and that the convoy would engage in intimidatory behaviour. ...

The marchers originally planned to go right up to the Israeli embassy in Kensington, but conditions were imposed to prevent their getting within undue proximity of that embassy. ...

Barry Gardiner (Labour): ... only last month a student was physically attacked by a group of youths outside [JFS], and those youths goaded the student about the situation in Palestine. Would the Minister agree that nothing can justify such an attack on an innocent schoolchild, and does he accept that, whatever one believes about the actions of the Israeli Government, racism and anti-Jewish hatred must not be allowed to hide behind any political mask?

Chris Philp: ... The events in Gaza, or indeed anywhere else in the world, provide no basis, reason or excuse at all to inflict racist abuse on citizens in this country. There is no justification whatsoever for antisemitic attacks on Jewish people in this country because of what is happening elsewhere in the world. ...

Matthew Offord (Conservative): I pay tribute to the Community Security Trust ... for the work it does—not only the full-time staff, but the volunteers. ... The continued protests on the streets of London are simply normalising antisemitism in the United Kingdom, but what bothers me the most are offences on university campuses; and more and more of my constituents are telling me that their children will not be going to university as a result. Some 245 universities have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, but others continue to refuse to do so. Does the Minister agree that there is no logical reason why any vice-chancellor would not do so?

col 513 **Chris Philp:** I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the work of the Community Security Trust, as well as to Mark Gardner—its chief executive—and all its staff and volunteers, and the people who fundraise for it. The trust’s work has never been more important than it is now. ...

I can see no reason at all why every vice-chancellor and every university should not adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and I call on them today to do so. ...

Charlotte Nichols (Labour): This weekend, my heart broke to see some 20 officers and multiple police vans stationed outside my synagogue, and that this was deemed necessary

for our protection. The conflict in the middle east is being used to radicalise people against British Jews online, in our schools and universities, and on our streets. Additional security funding is welcome, as is the funding for education settings, but what financial support and resource will be provided to local authorities for projects working across our faith and community settings at a local grassroots level to bring communities together, rather than allow them to be driven further apart?

Chris Philp: ... The £7 million I referred to earlier is part of that, and organisations such as the CST, which the Government substantially fund or provide with quite a lot of money—£18 million a year—do good work in this area as well. ...

Chris Clarkson (Conservative): I cannot have been the only one, the weekend before last, to have watched with a mixture of horror and incredulity as several Labour Front Benchers were sent out to justify retaining their Rochdale candidate, only for their leader to reverse his position 48 hours later ... Then they had to suspend their candidate for Hyndburn for comments at the same meeting. If the ... Leader of the Opposition is serious about having changed his party ... does my right hon. Friend agree that he should publish a full list of the attendees of that meeting and a full transcript of what was said by whom ...

Chris Philp: ... I agree ... It should not have taken 48 hours to suspend a candidate who had said obviously antisemitic things. ...

col 514 **Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat):** ... Antisemitism is vile and disgusting, and it infects every area of society—including, sadly, politics—and where we see it, we need to root it out and remove people from the process. ... I have written to the Minister for Women and Equalities ... asking if we can have a cross-party discussion about how we deal with the problem in politics —because we cannot pretend that it does not exist ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... Does [the Minister] agree that even more alarming than the sheer number of antisemitic incidents now being reported on a daily basis is creeping tolerance across so much of our national life and so many of our institutions ... of an acceptable level of antisemitism, so long as it is dressed up in a bit of Israel hatred? ...

Chris Philp: Yes ... We need to show zero tolerance to all forms of antisemitism. It is incumbent on everybody ... to call out antisemitism when they see it, and indeed any racism when they see it; unless people are willing to do that, there is a danger that it creeps in ...

Lillian Greenwood (Labour): ... The Union of Jewish Students has warned repeatedly about a climate of fear for Jewish students on campus, and the incidents in recent weeks will only have deepened that fear. ...

col 515 **Chris Philp:** ... the Department for Education has a five-point plan, which it set out just a few weeks ago and which includes withdrawing visas from international students who are inciting racial hatred. Anyone who is not a British citizen who incites racial hatred or commits criminal offences in this area should be removed from the United Kingdom. ...

We want vice-chancellors to do more and have written to them asking them to do so. We have had meetings with the Office for Students—the regulator—to make sure it is doing more to clean up what is happening on campuses; we are doing more to make sure that criminal referrals—from universities to the police—are made when antisemitism happens; and, as I have said, I think and the Department for Education thinks that every single university should sign up to the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Jonathan Djanogly (Conservative): Does my right hon. Friend know that synagogues in the west end of London are being targeted by these so-called protesters, and that this has happened not only once or twice but now on multiple occasions—to the extent that they are even looking to see what time the services finish so that old people, the young, parents and so forth are being terrorised? This is not supporting Palestine; this is antisemitism—this is attacking Jewish people. ...

Chris Philp: ... Gathering outside a synagogue with the purpose of intimidating people coming out is completely unacceptable. That is not protest; it is deliberate intimidation, and it has no place on our streets whatsoever. The police have substantial powers to act in this area ...

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... Have discussions taken place with the devolved Administrations, in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, regarding a support fund for those who feel unsafe in their current homes and need help to move to a safe place, bearing in mind that we are now in a scenario where Jewish families are staying indoors—afraid to go out unless it is essential—due to so-called peace protesters who are making our streets feel unsafe for a section of our community?

col 516 **Chris Philp:** There is nothing peaceful about deliberately intimidating Jewish people going to synagogues ... I would be happy to look into the question of the funding available for devolved Administrations to do work in this area.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): The shocking rise in antisemitic attacks reported by the CST is bad enough, but the trouble is that that was last year and the escalation has continued into this year. People in London suffer the hate marches literally every Saturday—with banned organisations displaying their flags, placards that are clearly antisemitic and vile slogans uttered—and after those so-called peaceful protests disperse, some protestors go and intimidate people in the restaurants, bars and theatres throughout London, so much so now that my Jewish constituents are afraid to go into central London on a Saturday for fear of what they will suffer. There is a solution to this, and that is that anyone who is breaking the law should be arrested by the police. We did that in 2011, when there were the problems of the riots. Those people should be arrested, put through courts—overnight if necessary—with clear police evidence, and then jailed for their crimes. It is not acceptable that such intimidation can take place on our streets, when our people feel unsafe.

Chris Philp: ... members of the Jewish community do feel intimidated going into central London, particularly when the marches are happening, and that is not right and is not acceptable. No one should feel that intimidation when simply coming into the centre of our capital city. He is quite right in what he says about applying the law. There are numerous relevant laws. He mentioned displaying banners of proscribed organisations such as Hamas and now Hizb ut-Tahrir. Displaying those flags and emblems is a criminal offence and we expect the police to make arrests. Inciting racial hatred is a criminal offence. Causing someone to suffer harassment, alarm or intimidation through threatening or abusive language is a criminal offence. Causing someone to fear violence is a criminal offence. We expect the police to apply those laws not sometimes but always. ...

Andrew Bridgen (Independent): Let us be clear: antisemitism, like other forms of racism, has no place in the UK or elsewhere and the perpetrators of antisemitism should face the full force of the law. Does the Minister agree that, because an accusation of antisemitism is so serious, it must not be made either lightly or casually? We must have cool heads and not label groups or communities as antisemitic, because that merely causes more division and more problems. We have to be very careful how we use this word if we want to maintain the public's trust that people are not being falsely accused of antisemitism.

col 517 **Chris Philp:** No one today in this House, on either side, has labelled any group collectively as antisemitic. This is about individuals and their behaviour, and where individuals harass or intimidate members of the Jewish community, where they engage in antisemitism and where anyone engages in racism, we will call it out, and where it is illegal, the police will make arrests and prosecute it. ... No one is tarring an entire community at all ...

Richard Drax (Conservative): There is a growing and deeply unpleasant trend of personalising protests. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) has been subjected to that recently ... 80 or so protesters were screaming right

outside his door, with a police car between them and his house, for over two hours. The police did nothing. ... It was not a lawful protest in my view. ...

Chris Philp: What happened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) at his house was completely unacceptable. It was intimidation; it was an attempt, I would suggest, to coerce a Member of Parliament and inhibit him from doing his democratically elected duty. ...

Various legal powers are relevant, including section 42 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, which gives the police the power to direct people outside a person's house to move if they are behaving in a way that causes harassment, alarm or distress. ...

col 518 Antony Higginbotham (Conservative): ... Every week we see protests and people marching through London with placards with antisemitic, conspiratorial tropes—the same things we saw in October, November, December and January. We know that antisemitism is still running rife on university campuses, in schools and in our communities. I urge my right hon. Friend to look not just at how we deal with prosecutions and crime, but at how we tackle the root causes and how we get into our schools, educate people and try to rid society of this evil scourge once and for all.

Chris Philp: ... Where the law is broken, whether that is inciting racial hatred, intimidation or harassment, the police must act and make arrests, and they have arrested 600 people already. ... but he is right that we need to tackle the ideology at source. We need to make sure that schools are teaching young people the right thing and explaining what British values of tolerance actually mean. ... We need to make clear to every member of our society that antisemitism and anti-Jewish racist hatred have no place in these islands of ours. We must eradicate it wherever we find it.

Tom Hunt (Conservative): This report from the Community Security Trust is deeply troubling and depressing, as I think in some respects are aspects of our politics. There is the fact that today a well respected Member of this place is leaving because of anti-Jewish hatred. At the same time, we have a by-election that has effectively become a competition for who can be the biggest antisemite. That is deeply chilling. ...

Chris Philp: ... Political leaders in particular have a special responsibility to act quickly, to act decisively, and to act not when it is expedient but when it is right. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-19/debates/788C5AA8-47E6-4D42-916C-E569D0B260A5/AntisemitismInTheUK>

The Community Security Trust report referred to above can be read at

https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.pdf

Information about the new measures relating to protests referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-08/debates/71E44C6F-BD00-48EE-B0CA-42A8FD45C4B7/ProtestMeasures>

Information about Midland Heart's suspension of Lord Austin, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-68326831>

The Scottish Government Hate Crime Strategy, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-scotland/>

The five point plan to protect Jewish students on campus, referred to above, can be read at

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>

House of Commons Point of Order

Point of Order

Michael Ellis (Conservative): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, in the past hour or so, the charity Campaign Against Antisemitism has reported that a member of the public sent off a birth certificate application to the Home Office for his six-month-old baby girl and today the certificate was returned ripped, with the word "Israel" as the place of birth scribbled out. The Home Office is responsible for the security of the Jewish community, and the pointers are that this would have been done by a Home Office employee. How can I alert the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the permanent secretary to this appalling incident?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Roger Gale): First, the right hon. and learned Member will appreciate that that is not a point of order for the Chair. However, if he has something he wishes to raise directly with the Home Office, he should most certainly do so. He has already placed his case on the record in the presence of the Home Secretary.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-19/debates/8F9DF324-CAD8-420A-8B88-5B956C22CC47/PointsOfOrder#contribution-1750CDB9-A08E-4518-8AFA-E02E37632BF0>

House of Commons Written Answer

Coroners: Birmingham and Solihull

Tahir Ali (Labour) [13612] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on how many occasions a body was released more than seven days after the coroner's office was notified in (a) Birmingham and (b) Solihull in each of the last 12 months; and whether the coroner (i) collects information on someone's religion and (ii) takes into account the timeframe for religious beliefs and practices relating to death and dying.

Mike Freer: Information is not held centrally on the release by coroners of the bodies of the deceased whose deaths are reported to them.

Coroners are judges and, as such, are independent in the decisions they make in conducting their investigations. They exercise their judicial discretion in accordance with the relevant statutory and regulatory framework.

The Chief Coroner has issued a suite of Guidance to assist coroners with the law and their legal duties, and to provide advice on policy and practice. His [Guidance No.28](#) on Decision Making and Expedited Decisions is intended to be a practical guide to assist coroners in situations where a bereaved family has made a request to the coroner for urgent consideration of the death of a loved one and/or early release of their body; or where the coroner or coroner's officers otherwise become aware of features of a particular death which may justify treating it as especially urgent.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-07/13612>

Home Office

Prevent programme strengthened a year on from independent review

A year on from the Independent Review of Prevent, the government has already implemented the vast majority of recommendations. ...

A report published today demonstrates the significant progress made to deliver a stronger, more transparent and proportionate approach to stopping people from being radicalised into terrorism.

Thirty of the 34 recommendations made by Independent Reviewer William Shawcross have already been delivered and progress has been made against each of the remaining recommendations. ...

In the 12 months since the publication of the independent review, the Home Office has built on the recommendations made by leading a cross-government change programme which directs activity to where it will have the most impact tackling radicalisation and dangerous ideologies. ...

The Home Secretary James Cleverley said: ... The conflict in Israel and Gaza has brought the importance of Prevent into sharp focus. Prevent is a key part of our plan to tackle radicalisation and I am confident that it is more capable than ever at meeting that challenge.

The Security Minister Tom Tugendhat said: Protecting the British public isn't just about waiting for the next threat, we must confront the ideas that drive radicalisation and violence. Prevent is key to our defence.

This past year we've brought Prevent back to its core mission - tackling the ideological causes of terrorism.

The conflict in the Middle East has demonstrated why that mission has never been more important. We will continue to adapt our approach to keep pace with the evolving threat. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prevent-programme-strengthened-a-year-on-from-independent-review>

The Independent Review of Prevent, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e26968d3bf7f17385a3421/Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf

Independent Review of Prevent One year on progress report

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf93a5e1bdec001a322281/14.419_HO_Independent+Review+of+Prevent_v6_Web160224.pdf

TOP

Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Kirsten Oswald (SNP) [395] 100th birthday of Holocaust survivor Henry Wuga – That this House congratulates Holocaust survivor, Giffnock resident, Henry Wuga on his 100th birthday; notes that Henry was born in Nuremberg on 23 February 1924 and arrived on the Kindertransport in 1939; understands he was sent to Glasgow, then Perth following the outbreak of war; recognises Henry met his wife, Ingrid Wolff, who also arrived on the Kindertransport, at the German and Austrian refugee centre in Glasgow; further notes Henry and Ingrid married on 27 December 1944 and ran a kosher catering business; further understands they spent considerable time sharing their testimony and educating others about the Holocaust; acknowledges Henry and Ingrid devoted 20 years of their lives to fundraising for the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice; further notes Henry worked as a ski instructor with the British Limbless Ex-Serviceman's Association; further recognises Henry was awarded an MBE in 1999 for services to sport for disabled people and Ingrid received a British Empire Medal in 2019 for services to Holocaust education; further acknowledges Henry is a great admirer of Robert Burns, his writings on themes of liberty and freedom meaning a great deal to him with Burns Night celebrated just two days before Holocaust Memorial Day annually; understands Ingrid sadly passed away in

October 2020 but the couple celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary in 2019; recognises Henry and Ingrid have two children, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren; and reflects that on reaching his 100th birthday, Henry is a truly remarkable individual and offers warm wishes to him.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61888>

TOP

Israel

See also the Commons debate “Antisemitism in the UK”, the Point of Order, and the Home Office press release “Prevent programme strengthened a year on from independent review” that are included in the Home Affairs section above, and Lords written answer HL2002 “Middle East: Armed Conflict” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below

House of Commons Oral Answers

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Jack Brereton (Conservative) [901516] What steps [the Minister’s] Department is taking to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps): The Ministry of Defence continues to stand ready to support the effort, led by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, to pursue land, air and maritime routes to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid.

Jack Brereton: Many of my constituents in Stoke-on-Trent South are extremely concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and want to see much more aid getting into Gaza. It is vital for the innocent civilian population there. Will the Secretary of State update us on what more is being done to ensure additional routes, and particularly a sea route, into Gaza for humanitarian aid to innocent civilians?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that I have been to the region on a number of occasions—I have visited Israel and Cyprus twice, as well as visiting Egypt and Saudi Arabia—with the specific intention of trying to resolve the problem that he describes. We have already delivered 150 tonnes of aid, but the problem is getting that aid into Gaza. Although we have persuaded the Israelis to open Kerem Shalom, we desperately need Ashdod to be opened, too. As we have discussed with the Cypriots, we could then create a humanitarian aid route from Cyprus direct to Ashdod and straight into Gaza via Kerem Shalom.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-19/debates/8A8FC816-9A99-4787-A2AA-18D8EB11CBF1/GazaHumanitarianAid>

Topical Questions: Defence

John Healey (Labour): The agonies of the Palestinian people are extreme. We all want the fighting to stop now, for hostages to be returned now, for aid to be ramped up now, and a ceasefire that lasts permanently. What is the Defence Secretary doing to help his Israeli counterpart to accept that their threatened offensive against Rafah just cannot happen?

Grant Shapps: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the seriousness of the situation. As he has just heard, I visited Israel before the new year and had those conversations directly. I believe that it is in Israel’s interest, obviously in Gaza’s interest, and in the world’s interest to see that immediate cessation followed by a

permanent ceasefire. We are doing everything we can to persuade the Israelis of that necessity and to put pressure on Hamas, who still hold hostages—if they were to release them, this thing could finish very quickly. We are also helping by ensuring that we work on plans for what happens in the north of the country and in southern Lebanon.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-19/debates/2BBDE63D-0E87-4763-A0E5-3CD4CB789630/TopicalQuestions#contribution-B6397213-6484-405D-8CCC-1FE6F37453DB>

Topical Questions: Defence

Clive Betts (Labour) [901547] So far, Israel has ignored international appeals to not indiscriminately attack civilians and not take steps that are basically razing Gaza to the ground. It now looks as though it is going to ignore international opinion about entering Rafah, so has the time not now come for us to consider not selling to Israel arms that can be used in those totally unacceptable ways? (901547)

Grant Shapps: Arms deals and export licences are dealt with in the normal way, but the hon. Member will be interested to hear that actually, not many arms sales take place in the direction of Israel at all. Off the top of my head, I think it was just £42 million last year, and that was mostly for protective equipment.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-19/debates/2BBDE63D-0E87-4763-A0E5-3CD4CB789630/TopicalQuestions#contribution-62DF13B6-99B1-427E-832E-E36BC1D95CD7>

House of Commons Written Answers

Rafael Advanced Defense Systems: Arms Trade

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [13796] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has received legal advice on the operations of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd at sites in the UK; and if she will conduct a review to ensure that imports and exports of arms and components are not being used in violations of international law.

Greg Hands: All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against our Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including with regard to international humanitarian law.

All licences are kept under careful and continual review and the Government is able to amend, suspend, refuse or revoke licences as circumstances require.

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade receives legal advice as appropriate, on all matters related to import and export licensing, as part of advice from officials.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13796>

Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd, referred to above, is an Israeli company

The Criteria referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

Gaza: Israel

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [13375] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to paragraph 30 of the summary grounds of the Secretary of State in the case of *The King (on the application of Al-Haq) v. Secretary of State for Business and Trade*, whether an assessment of Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law in its military engagement in Gaza has been made under his Department's international humanitarian law compliance assessment process since 29 December 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and

commitment to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and act in accordance with that advice. We continue to call for IHL to be respected and civilians to be protected. We continue to urge Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-06/13375>

The summary grounds referred to above are not currently available online

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [13350] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions his international counterparts on taking steps to recognise Palestine as a state.

Andrew Mitchell: We support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

We must give the people of the West Bank and Gaza the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future, which needs to be irreversible. This is not entirely in our gift. But Britain and our partners can help by confirming our commitment to a sovereign, viable Palestinian state, and our vision for its composition. Crucially, we must state our clear intention to grant it recognition, including at the United Nations. That can't come at the start of the process. But it doesn't have to be the very end of the process. Our long-standing position has been that we will recognise a Palestinian State at a time that is most conducive to the peace process.

We need to generate momentum now towards a permanent peace. That is why we are pressing for a Contact Group, bringing together the key players, to be set up at once.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-06/13350>

UNRWA: Finance

Caroline Lucas (Green) [13322] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he held with (a) his international counterparts and (b) United Nations organisations before deciding to pause funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Andrew Mitchell: We are appalled by allegations that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel, a heinous act of terrorism that the UK Government has repeatedly condemned. We are pausing any future funding of UNRWA whilst we review these concerning allegations. The US, Germany, Australia, Italy, Canada, Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands have also all temporarily paused funding.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it, including through other UN agencies such as the UN World Food Programme, and UNICEF. We engage regularly with our international and UN partners, including UNRWA, on a wide range of issues relating to the humanitarian situation and the delivery of aid to Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-06/13322>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Genocide Convention

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL2079] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to monitor Israel's compliance with the interim ruling of the International Court of Justice regarding its conduct in the conflict in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We respect the role and independence of the

International Court of Justice (ICJ). Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in line with International Humanitarian Law, as we have said from the outset. 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/2024-01-31/hl2079>

The International Court of Justice 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>

Israel: Arms Trade

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL2080] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will review their policy regarding the export of arms to Israel in light of the International Court of Justice's interim ruling regarding the conflict in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and commitment to International Humanitarian Law, and act in accordance with that advice, for example when considering export licences. We support Israel's legitimate right to defend itself and take action against terrorism, within the bounds of International Humanitarian Law.

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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-31/hl2080>

The International Court of Justice 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>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Conservative) [HL2073] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that four UK medical staff were injured in a bombing of the facilities of International Rescue Committee and Medical Aid for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Conservative) [HL2075] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel regarding the safety of UK and international non-governmental organisations delivering humanitarian aid and medical help in safe zones in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The safety of humanitarian personnel and healthcare workers in Gaza is critical to enable aid to reach those who need it most. We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to be respected. Too many civilians have been killed and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. The Foreign Secretary underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza and to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities during his visit to Israel on 24 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-31/hl2073>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-31/hl2075>

House of Commons Library Briefings

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

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

UK arms exports to Israel

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9964/CBP-9964.pdf>

Downing Street

PM call with EU Commission President Von der Leyen

The Prime Minister spoke to European Commission President, Ursula Von der Leyen ... The Prime Minister updated President Von der Leyen on his recent conversations with the Israeli Prime Minister and the King of Jordan about the situation in Israel and Gaza. The Prime Minister and President Von der Leyen agreed on the paramount importance of significantly more aid reaching people who desperately need it in Gaza, and expressed their deep concern about the loss of civilian life occurring there.

The leaders also agreed on the importance of freedom of navigation and condemned the Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea. They welcomed efforts such as Prosperity Guardian and Operation Aspides to restore stability and keep people safe. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-eu-commission-president-von-der-leyen-18-february-2024>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK is calling for an immediate suspension in fighting to get aid in and hostages out of Gaza: UK statement at the UN Security Council

... we want to see the fighting in Gaza end as soon as possible in a way that never again allows Hamas to carry out the appalling terrorist attacks against Israel we saw on the 7th of October last year.

Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating humanitarian crisis. We are particularly worried about the situation in Rafah, where a military operation could have appalling consequences for civilians sheltering there with nowhere else to go. Ongoing negotiations are critical to secure the release of the hostages held in Gaza.

We are calling for an immediate suspension in fighting to get aid in and hostages out, leading to a permanent, sustainable ceasefire.

That means the release of all hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer in charge of Gaza; and, a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

President, we welcome the efforts of our Algerian colleagues on this resolution, and we regret that some of our proposals were not taken on board.

Simply calling for a ceasefire as this resolution does, will not make it happen. Indeed, as it could endanger the hostage negotiations, it could actually make a ceasefire less likely.

The way to stop the fighting, and potentially stop it from restarting, is to begin with a pause to get hostages out and aid in, that is what we are calling for. It could end the fighting now.

We will continue to work to stop fighting. A humanitarian response at scale. The release of all hostages. And the delivery of the two sovereign states of Israel and Palestine that ensures peace, security and justice for both nations.

Welsh Senedd Oral Answer

Statement by the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip: Anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and Nation of Sanctuary update [Gaza]

Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru): ... The contrast of the international response to the war in Ukraine to the ongoing attack of the Israeli Government on Gaza is one that must be highlighted in this context, because you've said, Minister, that Wales as a nation of sanctuary must support all of those needing sanctuary, fleeing war. Therefore, do you agree that the state of the United Kingdom, of which we're a part, should not be selective in its support or solidarity for victims of war and displaced people? Because Palestine has the longest unsettled refugee crisis in recent history, a crisis that is almost now beyond horrific adjectives. As the Ukrainian people do, they want nothing more than to return to their houses, their classrooms, their businesses, much of which have been obliterated by the bombs of an aggressor. The people of Gaza have not in the main had the same ability to flee the bombs and the bullets and the degradation inflicted upon them, and even if they could have found their way out of what the United Nations Secretary General has called a humanitarian nightmare, they would not have been granted a specific legal immigration route to get here.

Plaid Cymru's leader Rhun ap Iorwerth and Westminster leader Liz Saville-Roberts have both pressed on the UK Government to reinstate funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which has provided crucial support to millions of Palestinian refugees, calling the suspension of support by the UK Government a moral and strategic error. Does the Welsh Government support this call? What conversations have you been having with the UK Government on ensuring support for those displaced by the war in Gaza and facing this humanitarian catastrophe? And now that it seems your Labour colleagues in Westminster are finally beginning to understand that a pause in the fighting is not sufficient, will you as a Government make the call for an immediate ceasefire yourselves, given your righteous condemnation of the actions of Putin and the plight of the people of Ukraine? ...

Jane Hutt (Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip): ... The fact is, it's a humanitarian crisis that we see in Gaza. Too many civilians, including women and children, losing their lives. And we must get greater aid into Gaza—and, most importantly, the safe return of hostages and supporting British nationals. So, I mean, this is something, where—. Again, this links us not just to the nation of sanctuary, but to community cohesion; and we have stood with and met with Jewish and Muslim communities since the conflict began and we continue to speak with Muslim and Jewish communities to see what assistance that we can provide. ...

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13712#C566231>

Northern Ireland Assembly Oral Answers

Topical Questions: October 7 Attacks: Condemnation

Keith Buchanan (DUP) [AQT 8/22-27] asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the First Minister condemns the attacks on 7 October in Israel, which started a chain of events that we all witness each night on our televisions.

Michelle O'Neill (First Minister): I have done so previously.

Keith Buchanan: Do you defend Israel's right to defend itself, or is there no alternative?

Michelle O'Neill: This is far too serious for petty games. It is far, far too serious for petty games. What is happening in Palestine and the Middle East requires a

ceasefire, requires dialogue and requires all of us to lift our voice to call for an end to it. All sides — everybody in the Middle East — need it to stop. The bombardment every day of the people in Gaza — the Palestinian people — is horrendous and heartbreaking to watch, so we should all be very conscious of using our voice to call for peace and dialogue. To use our own example, we need to continue to have dialogue if we are to get to a peaceful solution, which is what we all want to see for the people in the Middle East.

There is no direct link to this exchange but it can be read two questions above “Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs” at

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/02/19&docID=388359#4215993>

International Court of Justice

Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (Request for an Advisory Opinion)

Hearing schedule, 19-26 February 2024

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240209-pre-01-00-en.pdf>

Hearing of 19 February 2024: State of Palestine

verbatim transcript

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240219-ora-01-00-bi.pdf>

video recording

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k13/k13rkfn015>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/oPt: UN experts appalled by reported human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls

UN experts ... expressed alarm over credible allegations of egregious human rights violations to which Palestinian women and girls continue to be subjected in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Palestinian women and girls have reportedly been arbitrarily executed in Gaza, often together with family members, including their children, according to information received. “We are shocked by reports of the deliberate targeting and extrajudicial killing of Palestinian women and children in places where they sought refuge, or while fleeing. Some of them were reportedly holding white pieces of cloth when they were killed by the Israeli army or affiliated forces,” the experts said.

The experts expressed serious concern about the arbitrary detention of hundreds of Palestinian women and girls, including human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers, in Gaza and the West Bank since 7 October. Many have reportedly been subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, denied menstruation pads, food and medicine, and severely beaten. On at least one occasion, Palestinian women detained in Gaza were allegedly kept in a cage in the rain and cold, without food.

“We are particularly distressed by reports that Palestinian women and girls in detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers. At least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped while others were reportedly threatened with rape and sexual violence,” the experts said. They also noted that photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances were also reportedly taken by the Israeli army and uploaded online.

The experts expressed concern that an unknown number of Palestinian women and children, including girls, have reportedly gone missing after contact with the Israeli army in Gaza. “There are disturbing reports of at least one female infant forcibly transferred by the Israeli army into Israel, and of children being separated from their parents, whose whereabouts remain unknown,” they said.

“We remind the Government of Israel of its obligation to uphold the right to life, safety, health, and dignity of Palestinian women and girls and to ensure that no one is subjected to violence, torture, ill-treatment or degrading treatment, including sexual violence,” the experts said.

They called for an independent, impartial, prompt, thorough and effective investigation into the allegations and for Israel to cooperate with such investigations.

“Taken together, these alleged acts may constitute grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and amount to serious crimes under international criminal law that could be prosecuted under the Rome Statute,” the experts said. “Those responsible for these apparent crimes must be held accountable and victims and their families are entitled to full redress and justice,” they added.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/israelopt-un-experts-appalled-reported-human-rights-violations-against>

UNICEF

Children’s lives threatened by rising malnutrition in the Gaza Strip

... As the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip enters its 20th week, food and safe water have become incredibly scarce and diseases are rife, compromising women and children’s nutrition and immunity and resulting in a surge of acute malnutrition.

The report – *Nutrition Vulnerability and Situation Analysis / Gaza* – finds that the situation is particularly extreme in the Northern Gaza Strip, which has been almost completely cut off from aid for weeks. Nutrition screenings conducted at shelters and health centres in the north found that 15.6 per cent - or 1 in 6 children under 2 years of age - are acutely malnourished. Of these, almost 3 per cent suffer from severe wasting, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition, which puts young children at highest risk of medical complications and death unless they receive urgent treatment. As the data were collected in January, the situation is likely to be even graver today.

Similar screenings in the Southern Gaza Strip, in Rafah, where aid has been more available, found 5 per cent of children under 2 years are acutely malnourished. ...

Before the recent months’ hostilities, wasting in the Gaza Strip was rare with just 0.8 per cent of children under 5 years of age acutely malnourished. The rate of 15.6 percent of wasting among children under 2 in Northern Gaza suggests a serious and rapid decline. Such a decline in a population’s nutritional status in three months is unprecedented globally.

There is a high risk that malnutrition will continue to rise across the Gaza Strip due to the alarming lack of food, water and health and nutrition services:

- 90 per cent of children under the age of 2 and 95 per cent of pregnant and breastfeeding women face severe food poverty – meaning they have consumed two or less food groups in the previous day - and the food they do have access to is of the lowest nutritional value.
- 95 per cent of households are limiting meals and portion sizes, with 64 per cent of households eating only one meal a day.
- Over 95 per cent of households said they had restricted the amount of food adults received in order to ensure small children had food to eat.

“The steep rise in malnutrition that we are seeing in Gaza is dangerous and entirely preventable”, said WFP Assistant Executive Director for Programme Operations, Valerie

Guarnieri. ...

Inadequate safe drinking water, as well as insufficient water for cooking and hygiene purposes, are compounding poor nutrition. On average, households surveyed had access to less than one litre of safe water per person per day. According to humanitarian standards, the minimum amount of safe water needed in an emergency is three litres per person per day, while the overall standard is 15 litres per person, which includes sufficient quantities for drinking, washing and cooking. ...

The report finds at least 90 per cent of children under 5 are affected by one or more infectious disease. Seventy per cent had diarrhoea in the past two weeks, a 23-fold increase compared with the 2022 baseline. ...

UNICEF, WFP and WHO call for safe, unimpeded and sustained access to urgently deliver multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance throughout the Gaza Strip. This includes nutritious foods, nutrition supplies and essential services for malnourished and at-risk children and women to safely access health and nutrition care and treatment services, particularly infants and young children under 5. Hospitals and health workers must be protected from attack so they can safely provide critical treatment and care. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire continues to provide the best chance to save lives and end suffering.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/childrens-lives-threatened-rising-malnutrition-gaza-strip>

Nutrition Vulnerability and Situation Analysis / Gaza

<https://www.nutritioncluster.net/sites/nutritioncluster.com/files/2024-02/GAZA-Nutrition-vulnerability-and-SitAn-v7.pdf>

World Food Programme

UN Food Agency pauses deliveries to the North of Gaza

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is pausing deliveries of life-saving food aid to northern Gaza until conditions are in place that allow for safe distributions.

The decision to pause deliveries to the north of the Gaza Strip has not been taken lightly, as we know it means the situation there will deteriorate further and more people risk dying of hunger. WFP is deeply committed to urgently reaching desperate people across Gaza but the safety and security to deliver critical food aid - and for the people receiving it - must be ensured.

Deliveries resumed on Sunday after a three-week suspension following the strike on an UNRWA truck and due to the absence of a functioning humanitarian notification system. ...

On Sunday, as WFP started the route towards Gaza City, the convoy was surrounded by crowds of hungry people close to the Wadi Gaza checkpoint. First fending off multiple attempts by people trying to climb aboard our trucks, then facing gunfire once we entered Gaza City, our team was able to distribute a small quantity of the food along the way. On Monday, the second convoy's journey north faced complete chaos and violence due to the collapse of civil order. Several trucks were looted between Khan Younes and Deir al Balah and a truck driver was beaten. The remaining flour was spontaneously distributed off the trucks in Gaza city, amidst high tension and explosive anger. ...

In these past two days our teams witnessed unprecedented levels of desperation.

The latest reports confirm Gaza's precipitous slide into hunger and disease. Food and safe water have become incredibly scarce and diseases are rife, compromising women and children's nutrition and immunity and resulting in a surge of acute malnutrition. People are already dying from hunger-related causes. ...

WFP will seek ways to resume deliveries in a responsible manner as soon as possible. A

large-scale expansion of the flow of assistance to northern Gaza is urgently needed to avoid disaster. ...

Gaza is hanging by a thread and WFP must be enabled to reverse the path towards famine for thousands of desperately hungry people.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.wfp.org/news/un-food-agency-pauses-deliveries-north-gaza>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Lord Sedwill (Crossbench) [HL2002] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the governments of (1) India, or (2) China, regarding Iran's support for militias attacking western forces and international shipping in the Middle East.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Defence Secretary raised Iran backed Houthi rebels attacking international shipping in the Middle East with his Indian counterpart in January. India is contributing to international naval efforts to help secure shipping in the region. We also raised this with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, urging them to use their relationship with Iran to convey that Iran should pressure the Houthis in line with China's call for the cessation of attacks and harassment against civilian ships.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/hl2002>

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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>

Amendment paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0155/amend/criminal_rm_rep_0220.pdf

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