



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Home Department

Chris Stephens (SNP): ... [The Minister] will be aware that there has been a 335% increase in Islamophobic hate cases in the UK since 7 October, and a 589% rise in antisemitic incidents compared with 2022. That is affecting our most marginalised and vulnerable groups. What steps is the Minister taking to protect worshippers and faith schools and to reduce unprecedented levels of hate across these islands?

Tom Tugendhat: Over the past year this Government have increased the funding to the Community Security Trust by around £3 million, taking the total to around £18 million. We have spent a similar amount on other places of worship—only last week I approved spending on security measures to mosques and churches around the country, exactly to counter the kind of hate crimes that the hon. Member described. We have engaged with not just the Community Security Trust but organisations such as Tell MAMA, which do a fantastic job of engaging with us on anti-Muslim hatred. It is extremely important that we all work together, not just to support and protect every religion and community in our country but to ensure that we lower the tension so that we can all be free to express our views.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-803BC42C-D1DE-44E9-A41F-0DECDD3614AB>

Topical Questions: Home Department

Yvette Cooper (Labour): Last week, Tell MAMA reported that anti-Muslim hate incidents have trebled. That follows recent reports that antisemitic incidents have hit a record high. We all must challenge all forms of threat, prejudice, racism and hate. Having heard the words from the former deputy chair of the Conservative party of a Muslim Mayor, who said that his “mates” are Islamist extremists and that he has been taken over by “Islamists”, is any Home Office Minister now prepared to stand up and say not only that those words about the London Mayor are wrong, but that they believe they were Islamophobic and should be condemned as such?

Tom Tugendhat: Within 24 hours of those words being used, this Prime Minister took immediate action by removing the Whip from that individual. If only all leaders of every political party were as quick to remove the Whip from those who spread hatred in our community. As Rochdale sadly demonstrates, they are not.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7E871E98-23BF-41A6-A5E9-5BFECDE6DC9E>

The report of anti-Muslim hate incidents referred to above can be read at
<https://tellmamauk.org/greatest-rise-in-reported-anti-muslim-hate-cases-to-tell-mama-since-oct-7th/>

The report of antisemitic incidents referred to above can be read at
https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.pdf

The comments from the former deputy chair of the Conservative party (Lee Anderson), referred to above, can be heard at
<https://twitter.com/leeandersonmp/status/1761118637589500224>

Topical Questions: Home Department

Michael Ellis (Conservative): In respect of the projection of an antisemitic, terrorist-originating slogan on to the Big Ben tower last week, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner claims that he is powerless. That is utter nonsense. Among other options, the police could use section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986, which refers to the use of “threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour” with “intent to cause...harassment, alarm or distress”.

It was behaviour, and it was insulting to Jews and many others. The police could also have reasonably feared a breach of the peace, ordered the removal of the projection machine, and, if there was non-compliance, arrested the individual for obstructing a constable under the Police Act 1996. I have personally prosecuted people for these offences. Police who fail to do their duty can be disciplined for neglect of that duty. Will the Minister act?

Chris Philp: I am sure that all Members were horrified when those political statements, one of which, by implication, called for the destruction of Israel, were beamed on to the Big Ben tower. It was totally unacceptable, and, incidentally, it was also a breach of planning law. I do expect the police to take action; my right hon. and learned Friend, a former Attorney General, has set out a number of grounds on which it could have been taken, and he can rest assured that I have forcefully communicated that to the commissioner already.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-D0156312-7BA3-45CC-A2EF-1CC13A8F9421>

The slogan referred to above was “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”

Topical Questions: Home Department

Rachel Maclean (Conservative): The slogan that was projected on to Big Ben last Wednesday was extreme and antisemitic. To many, it calls for the destruction of Israel and

is seen as a genocidal statement. Decent people around the country—not just Jews—find that appalling. Does the Minister agree that there are criminal offences that could be used for prosecutions, and will he reiterate his calls for the police to prosecute those responsible?

Chris Philp: I share my hon. Friend's view. As the former Attorney General my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Northampton North (Sir Michael Ellis) pointed out a few minutes ago, there were a number of bases on which the police could have acted to prevent that projection. Big Ben is not a canvas for political campaigning, particularly where the slogans are deeply offensive in nature, and that is a view I have made very clear to the commissioner.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-5DB89C1F-1F65-423B-A473-6436D483B704>

The slogan referred to above was "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"

House of Commons Point of Order

Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... Members from across the Chamber probably do not need reminding of events last week. On SNP Opposition day, we brought forward a motion seeking to ensure that this House spoke with one voice in favour of ensuring the release of the hostages currently under the control of Hamas, and to ensure that an immediate ceasefire took place to protect civilian life in Gaza. That SNP Opposition day turned into a Labour Opposition day. In that regard, Mr Speaker, you apologised to the SNP and this House. You said: "I made a mistake: we do make mistakes and I own up to mine. We can have an SO24 to get an immediate debate because the debate is so important to the House."—[[Official Report, 22 February 2024; Vol. 745, c. 872.](#)]

Those were your words, Mr Speaker.

In good faith, my colleagues and I sought to bring forward an SO24 debate, which, among other things, would have sought to end the sale of arms to Israel and call on the Government to use their voice at the United Nations to exercise our view in favour of an immediate ceasefire. It is my understanding that that SO24 application has not been accepted. Can you please advise me on when it will be accepted?

Mr Speaker: ... The Standing Order says that I should not give the reasons for any decision regarding a Standing Order No. 24 application.

In determining whether a matter is proper to be discussed under the Standing Order, I must have regard to two criteria. The first is the extent to which it concerns the administrative responsibilities of Ministers of the Crown or could come within the scope of ministerial action. I am satisfied that the matter does relate to areas of ministerial responsibility and falls within the scope of ministerial action. Secondly, in determining whether a matter is urgent, I must have regard to the probability of the matter being brought before the House in time by other means. The House came to a resolution on this matter on Wednesday last week. Further, I understand that the Government are ready to make a relevant statement tomorrow, so there is a very imminent opportunity for this important matter to come before the House.

That is why I decided that the application for an emergency debate should not proceed. That decision of course does not mean that Members cannot apply for a debate at a later stage, when circumstances might have changed. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/2F677F16-5CC3-40CE-9756-930E183B06EA/PointOfOrder>

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Universities: Judaism

Bridget Phillipson (Labour) [14034] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of (a) the Jewish chaplain and (b) Jewish staff and students at the University of Leeds.

Bridget Phillipson (Labour) [14035] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of Jewish chaplains at universities in England.

Robert Halfon: Antisemitism, intimidation and threats of violence must never be tolerated on university campuses. University Jewish Chaplains play a vital role in supporting Jewish students and staff across the country. The disgraceful abuse targeted at the Chaplain in Leeds is appalling and extremely disturbing. The government has worked closely with West Yorkshire Police to ensure robust action is taken in relation to these matters. As the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, I have visited Leeds University, spoken to the Vice Chancellor to seek reassurances that the University is taking appropriate action in the wake of these appalling incidents and have met with the Chaplain and his wife. The department remains in regular contact with the University Jewish Chaplaincy, the Community Security Trust and West Yorkshire Police and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the devastating increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned about the growth in antisemitic incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. That is why, on 22 November 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Autumn Statement an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education. The department has issued an invitation for interested organisations to tender for contracts to deliver a comprehensive package of measures across schools, colleges and universities and aim to have suppliers in place for the start of the new financial year. A link to the report by the Community Security Trust can be found here:

[https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%202023.1707834969.pdf)

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all schools, colleges, and universities on 11 October 2023, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. The department wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November 2023, further emphasising the use of disciplinary measures and the importance of police engagement, as well as the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national. This was one of the key actions set out in the five point plan for tackling antisemitism in higher education, which was published on 5 November 2023. The plan involves:

- Calling for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred.
- Writing to Vice Chancellors emphasising the use of disciplinary measures, the importance of police engagement, and the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national (sent on 16 November 2023).
- Liaising with the Office for Students on its role in reviewing incidents and any potential actions.
- Continuing to make it clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal should be referred to the police.
- Establishing an antisemitism quality seal, which universities will be invited

to sign up to demonstrate a commitment to tackling antisemitism. This is a key element of the invitation to tender published on 6 February 2024. More information on the five point plan can be found here:

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

The department will not hesitate to take further action across the education estate to stamp out antisemitism and harassment of Jewish pupils, students and staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14034>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14035>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

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

The 11 October letter referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/GillianKeegan/status/1712461243267829960>

The 16 November letter referred to above is not available online.

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Protests causing unsustainable pressure on policing resources – Home Affairs Committee warns

The emergence of deliberately disruptive protest tactics has created additional challenges in balancing the right to protest with preventing disorder. Recent protests have placed severe pressures on police forces and officers, particularly in London. The size and frequency of protests over the conflict in Gaza have strained resources. ...

The Committee is deeply concerned by the rise in hate crime following events in Israel and Gaza. However, the hate crime action plan expired in 2020 and has not yet been updated. Government commissioned reports intended to inform and develop policy also remain unanswered. Urgent action needs to be taken to set out the Government's strategy for dealing with hate crime.

In the context of the policing of the Israel-Gaza protests, as well as the policing of the King's Coronation protests, police forces have generally maintained the balance between the right to protest with the right of others to go about their lives without disruption, although individual incidents inevitably tested that balance. However, it is too early to assess whether new powers provided to police in the Public Order Act 2023 to deal with disruptive protests are effective. ...

While the right to protest must be respected, no one, including elected representatives, their families and their staff, should be made to feel unsafe by protest activity outside their home and no one should be intimidated when they are coming and going from their place of work. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/200100/protests-causing-unsustainable-pressure-on-policing-resources-home-affairs-committee-warns/>

Report: Policing of protests

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43477/documents/216201/default/>

UK Parliament Early Day Motions

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [428] Islamophobia – That this House condemns the recent rise in Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents across the UK; regrets that leading charity TellMAMA recorded more than 2,000 anti-Muslim hate cases since Hamas's terror attacks on 7 October 2023; notes with concern that this represents a 335% increase on the same period last year; further notes with the concern the gendered aspect of these attacks, as women were the target of 65% of these cases; acknowledges that there have been similarly concerning increases in anti-Semitism across the UK in the same time period; condemns the Government's decision not to bring forward an official definition of Islamophobia; emphasises the importance of standing up to religious hatred in all its forms; and urges the Government to appoint an independent adviser on Islamophobia to help tackle anti-Muslim prejudice in our communities.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61923>

Dawn Butler (Labour) [431] Conduct of the hon. Member for Ashfield and the Rt hon. Members for Fareham and South West Norfolk – That this House is shocked and appalled by the recent conduct of certain Members in respect of their remarks relating to Muslims; believes that the recent remarks made by the hon. Member for Ashfield and the Rt hon. Members for Fareham and South West Norfolk are Islamophobic and constitute a breach of the Nolan Principles of Leadership; condemns the reported 365% rise in reports of Islamophobia; notes with concern the Prime Minister's reluctance to use the word Islamophobia in the House of Commons; calls for the Prime Minister to withdraw the Whip from the aforementioned Members and any other found to use anti-Muslim remarks; and further calls for increased effort and funding towards tackling the scourge of Islamophobia including the appointment of an independent adviser.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61926>

The MP for Ashfield is Lee Anderson (formerly Conservative, now Independent); the MP for Fareham is Suella Braverman (Conservative); and the MP for South West Norfolk is Elizabeth Truss Conservative).

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [430] Conduct of the hon. Member for Ashfield – That this House censures the hon. Member for Ashfield for his comments on 23 February 2024 regarding the Mayor of London, which were Islamophobic, damaging, divisive and risk bringing the House collectively into disrepute; and calls on the hon. Member for Ashfield to come to the House and apologise for these remarks.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61925>

The MP for Ashfield is Lee Anderson (formerly Conservative, now Independent).

House of Commons Library Briefing

The Government's role in upholding the impartiality of BBC news coverage

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2024-0039/CDP-2024-0039.pdf>

Welsh Senedd Debate

Legislative Consent Motion on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

195 Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans) ... I have a number of concerns regarding the implications of the Economic Activities of Public Bodies

(Overseas Matters) Bill, firstly, because it alters the executive competence of the Welsh Ministers by stopping them from making their own judgments and procurement decisions based on the conduct of foreign states, and, secondly, because of the unpredictability of Henry VIII powers, which afford the opportunity for the Secretary of State to make future regulations that could have profound implications for Wales and future legislation passed by this Senedd. Thirdly, the Bill encroaches on article 10 of the European convention on human rights, which sets out the right to freedom of expression.

196 We cannot consent to a Bill that seeks to lawfully prevent our public bodies and democratic institutions from expressing an opinion on overseas matters. The Welsh Government strongly opposes what is essentially a gagging order, which can only be seen as harmful to democracy. Furthermore, I believe the Bill is completely unnecessary, as we already have protections in place within the World Trade Organization agreement on Government procurement, and enshrined in the 2015 public contracts regulations, which require fair and equal treatment of overseas bidders where a relevant trade agreement applies.

197 The UK can already set sanctions for trade without the need for this legislation ... I want to be clear that the Welsh Government, in rejecting this Bill, does so entirely for the reason that we do not agree with the significant impact it would have on the freedom of public bodies and democratic institutions across the whole of Wales—a freedom to decide not to purchase from, or procure from, or invest in, organisations involved in human rights abuse, abuse of workers' rights, the destruction of our planet, or any other harmful and illegal acts.

198 We must remember that we're here today also to discuss this Bill's implication for devolution, specifically the executive competence of the Welsh Ministers. I call upon all Members of this Senedd to withhold their consent to this encroachment upon the responsibilities of this Senedd and the functions of Welsh Ministers with respect to devolved areas of responsibility. UK Ministers are not democratically accountable for the freedoms our public bodies currently enjoy, or for their economic and political influence. We cannot, and should not, consent to this, not when many of our devolved public services and democratic institutions are captured by this Bill. ...

201 Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee (Huw Irranca-Davies, Labour Co-op): ... the Bill intends to prevent public bodies, when making decisions about procurement and investments, from considering a country or territory of origin or other territorial considerations in a way that indicates political or moral disapproval of a foreign state.

202 We came to three conclusions ... Firstly, we agreed with the Welsh Government's assessment that all the clauses and Schedules listed in the memorandum fall within a purpose within the legislative competence of the Senedd ... and, therefore, they do require the consent of the Senedd.

203 Our second and third conclusions express concern in relation to the Bill's compatibility with the European convention on human rights, and with international law, and they highlight the potential constitutional implications of this for the Senedd. ... In the memorandum, [the Minister] has referred to widespread criticism of this Bill amongst the legal and academic community, in relation to the way it has been drafted and how it is intended to operate in practice. ... as a committee share the concerns of the Minister about the compatibility of this Bill with convention rights and with international law.

204 ... the devolution settlement requires Welsh Ministers to comply with both international obligations and convention rights. The Welsh Government's ministerial code also places specific duties on the Welsh Ministers to comply with international law and treaty obligations. In light of the widespread concern regarding the Bill's compatibility with those convention rights and with international law ... a decision by the Senedd to consent to this Bill could contribute to a breach of international law and would mean the Senedd acting incompatibly with international obligations. ...

205 Peredur Owen Griffiths (Plaid Cymru): The economic activity of public bodies Bill, which obliges public bodies to comply with the foreign policy outlook of the UK Government and imposes legal restrictions on the ability to make ethical investments abroad is an affront to the basic democratic right to freedom of speech. ... if these powers had been available to the UK Government of the day back in the 1980s, public institutions would have been barred from protesting against the Governments of apartheid South Africa ... Moreover, the fact that the motivation for introducing this Bill is purely to clamp down on the activities of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign sets a dangerous precedent of the law being bent to suit a particular ideological agenda.

206 ... Regardless of the UK Government's attempt to stifle public debate on this issue, we will continue our solidarity with the innocent population of Gaza, who are being brutalised daily by the actions of the far-right Netanyahu administration. We of course also extend our sympathy to all groups around the world currently facing injustice, discrimination and persecution. Diolch yn fawr.

208 Rebecca Evans: ... It's not clear what the UK Government was even intending to do by seeking to make those restrictions.

209 The particular restrictions on freedom of speech are a huge concern. It's difficult to see how the UK Government could think this is a good thing—not just for public bodies, but also for the individuals who would be found to be personally responsible for any breaches. This also brings the Bill's compliance with international law into question. ... The devolution settlement requires Welsh Ministers to comply with both international obligations and the rights contained in the European convention on human rights. Also, as we've heard, the Welsh Government's own ministerial code places specific duties on Welsh Ministers to comply with international law and treaty obligations.

210 Our partners in the trade union movement are also very strongly opposed to the Bill ...

211... we should also remember that issues happening abroad also have repercussions for us here in Wales. The freedom to choose how and where a Welsh public contracting authority engages in procurement is positive, and ensures that we are being globally responsible, which is a key goal set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

212 To conclude, we can't consent to this Bill. It's ill-conceived, with no evidence for its necessity. It does present a threat to freedom of expression and the ability of public bodies and democratic institutions to spend, invest and trade ethically, in line with international law and human rights. I ask Members to withhold consent to the Bill. ...

NDM8490 Rebecca Evans: To propose that the Senedd, in accordance with Standing Order 29.6, agrees that provisions in the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, in so far as they fall within the legislative competence of the Senedd, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

For: 14; Against: 33; Abstain: 0

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13714#A85865>

The Welsh Government Legislative Consent Memorandum can be read at

<https://senedd.wales/media/s4ipp1xv/lcm-ld16016-e.pdf>

Welsh Senedd Written Answers

People of Jewish ancestry: BRCA gene screening

Helen Fychan (Plaid Cymru) [WQ91425] Will the Minister outline what support is available in Wales for people of Jewish ancestry to be screened for faults in their BRCA genes?

Minister for Health and Social Services: The increased risk related to Jewish

ancestry is already included in professional guidelines for assessing familial risk of breast cancer. People in Wales with Jewish ancestry who have an increased risk (such as a first or second degree relative with a diagnosis of breast cancer) of developing cancers associated with a BRCA gene mutation can seek genetic testing and counselling from the All-Wales Medical Genomics Service by contacting their GP.

<https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/91425>

BRCA testing

Andrew RT Davies (Conservative) [WQ91419] Does the Minister have any plans to roll out a Jewish BRCA testing programme in Wales as has been introduced by NHS England?

Minister for Health and Social Services: The increased risk related to Jewish ancestry is already included in professional guidelines for assessing familial risk of breast cancer. People in Wales with Jewish ancestry who have an increased risk (such as a first or second degree relative with a diagnosis of breast cancer) of developing cancers associated with a BRCA gene mutation can already seek genetic testing and counselling from the All-Wales Medical Genomics Service by contacting their GP. Therefore, the Welsh Government does not intend to introduce a targeted testing programme specifically for people with Jewish ancestry.

<https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/91419>

TOP

Israel

See also the Commons Point of Order, Commons written answers 14034 and 14035 “Universities: Judaism”, the Home Affairs Committee report on “Policing of Protests”, and the Commons Library Briefing that are included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Situation in the Red Sea

col 24 **The Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):** ... Thirty years ago, the United Nations convention on the law of the sea came into force. That agreement was ratified by 168 nations and it states explicitly in article 17 that “ships of all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea”.

Since 19 October the Houthis, aided and abetted by Iran, have launched a ruthless and reckless campaign of attacks against commercial shipping. These attacks are not solely limited to commerce; our military vessels are also in the Houthi crosshairs. The Royal Navy, the US Navy and most recently the French Navy have also been targets. Vessels owned by Chinese and Bulgarian companies and crews from India, Sri Lanka and Syria have been targeted indiscriminately, making a mockery of Houthi claims that this is all about Israel. ...

Freedom of navigation underpins not only our security but our prosperity. ... That is why the UK was one of the first members to join the US-led taskforce, Operation Prosperity Guardian ... to help protect commercial shipping. It is why we are working in tandem with the US and other allies to reduce the Houthis’ capacity to harm our security and economic interest, to limit their impact on the flow of humanitarian aid, to prevent further regional escalation, and to show Iran in no uncertain terms that we will push back against its destabilising behaviour.

... Since 11 January, we have conducted a number of precision strikes against Houthi targets. ...

Although we have eroded the Houthis' capacity, their intent to prosecute indiscriminate attacks against innocent vessels remains undiminished. ...

col/ 25 On Saturday night, a Royal Air Force package of four Typhoons, supported by two Voyager tankers, joined US forces in a deliberate strike against Houthi military facilities in Yemen that have been conducting missile and drone attacks on commercial shipping and coalition naval forces in the Bab al-Mandab strait, the southern Red sea and the gulf of Aden. ...

Intelligence analysis indicates that the strikes were successful, and that the sites we attacked were being used by the long-range drones that the Houthis use for both reconnaissance and attack missions, including at a former surface-to-air missile battery site several miles north-east of Sana'a. ...

col/ 26 Despite the best efforts of the Houthis, we also continue to provide humanitarian help to people in the middle east. This year, we will send some £88 million of humanitarian support to Yemen, which will feed 100,000 Yemenis every month. The UK has recently worked closely with our Jordanian partners to airdrop life-saving supplies directly to the Tal al-Hawa Hospital in northern Gaza. ...

The Houthis could stop this barbaric behaviour any time they want. Instead, they callously choose to continue their reckless acts of aggression, causing harm not just to innocents, but to their own people in Yemen. ...

John Healey (Labour): ... We accept that the weekend's airstrikes were legal, limited, and targeted to minimise the risk of civilian casualties. ... The UK and US Navies have been forced to shoot down drones in self-defence. ...

col/ 27 We accept that the military action over the weekend was justified, but was it effective? ...

Any military action against the Houthis must be reinforced by a diplomatic drive in the region aimed at stopping the flow of Iranian weapons, cutting off Houthi finances and settling the civil war in Yemen. ...

Finally, I totally reject Houthi claims that firing missiles and drones at ships from around the world is somehow linked to the conflict in Gaza. Those attacks do absolutely nothing for the Palestinians, whose agonies are extreme. Last week, Parliament passed Labour's motion calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We all want: an end to the fighting, now; no ground offensive in Rafah; all hostages released; and aid to Gaza ramped up greatly. Let us come together this week to work for a ceasefire that is observed by all sides, and that can build into the political process that is needed if we are to secure lasting peace, through a two-state solution, for both Palestine and Israel.

Grant Shapps: ... we believe that this set of attacks was effective, and early reconnaissance shows as much ...

We very much intend our attacks on Houthi infrastructure to be a deterrent. The Houthis think that they can continue their actions; our strikes will ensure that they understand the consequences of those actions and the price to pay for them, but perhaps other people, controlling other waterways, will also understand that the world will not simply stand back and allow those actions to take place. ...

col/ 28 The shadow Defence Secretary is quite right to say that this sits within a much wider diplomatic context. ...

Jeremy Quin (Conservative): Open source information suggests that the strikes are diminishing the capability of the Houthis to attack international shipping. ... but does that also include on the interdiction of weapons being smuggled from Iran into Yemen?

Grant Shapps: My right hon. Friend is right that we are degrading—atrrited, as they say in military terms—that capability. However, it is still the case that the Houthis are capable of launching attacks. ...

On interdictions: yes, we will certainly continue to try to ensure that Iran is not resupplying. The single best message to go out from this House is that Iran should stop that activity. ...

Martin Docherty-Hughes (SNP): ... we would give it our tentative support. ...

col 29 The Secretary of State and I will disagree on the issue of Gaza. If we had secured a real vote last week, we would probably have seen that recorded formally in the House. Gerald M. Feierstein, the former US diplomat, has said that “the Houthis’ effort to insert themselves into the Gaza conflict” is aimed at “strengthening their support base in the country and cementing their movement more firmly in the... ‘axis of resistance””.

I wonder whether, like me, the Secretary of State is concerned that we are not only strengthening that axis of resistance but, with illicit Chinese and Russian support, now broadening it in the Red sea.

Grant Shapps: ... I hope he feels reassured by the concept that we have waited longer, in part because the Houthis’ capabilities have been damaged, so that there is a longer gap and we do not see this thing speeding up. ...

We would welcome China being more vocal about the situation. As I mentioned in my comments, a Chinese vessel has been attacked, so this is of direct concern to the country. I call on China and, of course, Russia—for what it is worth—to be more vocal on these issues.

Lastly, I just do not accept this Gaza-Houthi connection. I remind the House that the Houthis were against Hamas until 2015, and now they arrive on the scene and pretend to support them. They are opportunist thugs taking advantage of the situation and of people’s lives and misery—not just in Gaza but in Yemen—and they should stop and desist immediately.

Julian Lewis (Conservative): ... Given that the route from what is happening in Ukraine to what is happening in the middle east is via Russia and Iran, is he satisfied that there is no inconsistency between the tough line being taken by the Ministry of Defence against the Houthis and the soft line being taken by the Foreign Office against their Iranian sponsors?

Grant Shapps: I somewhat reject that characterisation. To be absolutely clear, we are very much of the view that Iran is responsible; it funds, trains and provides equipment to the Houthis and many other Iranian-sponsored proxies in the region. It is also the case that it has probably lost control of some of them. It is important that we deliver those messages in many different ways to the Iranians. ...

col 30 **Derek Twigg (Labour):** ... of course we want a diplomatic solution—any ramping up of a military solution has its consequences—but for how many more months are the Secretary of State and the Government going to allow this to continue? Do the Government and the allies have a plan B?

Grant Shapps: Of course, the whole world is working on the overall context of the middle east. I know the hon. Gentleman will have seen the reports over the weekend about the discussions taking place in relation to the hostages. We want a comprehensive settlement; the Government’s policy is, of course, a two-state solution. The middle east could be normalised in many ways, including through Saudi normalisation with Israel, as part of that broader package; the Government are working proactively on this. ...

col 34 **Alexander Stafford (Conservative):** Al-Jazeera has reported that, according to its numbers, 37,000 Houthis have been recruited since the start of the airstrikes, and they are using the airstrikes as a recruiting tool. ...

Grant Shapps: ... the Houthis are made up of a ragtag of people who are often quite desperate and those who are led into a particular way of life with the Houthis. We want to dismantle that, and the best way to do it is through the peace deal that has been agreed, but that cannot be enacted by the UN until they stop firing on commercial shipping. ...

Patrick Grady (SNP): On 6 February —20 days ago—I tabled written question 13372, asking “for what reason Israeli military planes have used UK airports on each occasion since 7 October 2023.”

That may or may not be relevant to this statement, but I do not know, because I have not yet received an answer. Can the Secretary of State either answer the question now, or tell me when I will receive a written answer?

Grant Shapps: I will certainly look into that for the hon. Member, but I would have thought that Israel uses UK airports for the purposes of flying El Al and other airlines to this country. ...

col/ 35 Patrick Grady: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The written question I referred to was about Israeli military aircraft—I think the Secretary of State might have misunderstood, or I might not have spoken clearly. I would appreciate an answer to that written question as soon as he can give it. ...

Grant Shapps: I shall ensure that that answer is forthcoming.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/68DF463D-D047-418A-A1C1-93B6D6BC0208/SituationInTheRedSea>

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, referred to above, can be read at

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

Written question 13372, referred to above, can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-06/13372>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Armed Forces

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [14153] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2024 to Question 12736 on Israel: Armed Forces, which courses Israeli personnel took part in; when those courses took place; and how many Israeli personnel participated in those courses.

James Heapey: This information is being withheld in order to protect personal information and to avoid prejudicing relations between the United Kingdom and another State.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14153>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-01/12736>

Israel: Arms Trade

Dan Carden (Labour) [14373] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many arms export licences to Israel have been reviewed against the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria since the International Court of Justice's order relating to the case of the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel), published on 26 January 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

The Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework, and the Export Control Joint Unit will not issue an export licence to any destination where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria, including where there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law.

All our export licences are kept under careful review, and we are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences, as well as refuse new licence applications, where they are inconsistent with the Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14373>

The Criteria referred to above can be read at

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

The International Court of Justice 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>

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [13795] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what diplomatic steps he is taking at the UN to secure the future recognition of the state of Palestine.

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, and it needs to be irreversible. This is not entirely in our gift. However, we and our partners can help by confirming our commitment and vision. Crucially, we must state our clear intention to grant 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.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has an important long-term role to play. We already provide technical and practical support to the PA, and will work with our allies to continue this, and do more. The PA must also take much needed steps on reform, including setting out a pathway to democratic progress. Just as the PA must act, so must Israel, which means releasing frozen funds, halting settlement expansion and holding to account those responsible for extremist settler violence.

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/2024-02-08/13795>

Gaza: Israel

Dan Carden (Labour) [14356] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the statement by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, published on 8 February 2024, whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to help prevent the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We acknowledge this statement. As we have said, there must be a reduction in civilian casualties and all parties must act within International Humanitarian Law. We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. These are points the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have consistently made and reinforced with Prime Minister Netanyahu when he and the Prime Minister spoke on 15 February.

We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. This remains the focus of all our diplomatic effort.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14356>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/widespread-destruction-israeli-defence-forces-civilian-infrastructure-gaza>

Gaza: Israel

Caroline Lucas (Green) [13981] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies

of the press notice by Amnesty International entitled Israel/OPT: New evidence of unlawful Israeli attacks in Gaza causing mass civilian casualties amid real risk of genocide, published on 14 February 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We are currently reviewing our assessment. Those assessments are supported by a detailed evidence base. 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/13981>

The press notice referred to above can be read at

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-opt-new-evidence-of-unlawful-israeli-attacks-in-gaza-causing-mass-civilian-casualties-amid-real-risk-of-genocide>

Gaza: Israel

Dan Carden (Labour) [14379] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the report by Amnesty International entitled New evidence of unlawful Israeli attacks in Gaza causing mass civilian casualties amid real risk of genocide, published on February 12 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with IHL. We are currently reviewing our assessment. Those assessments are supported by a detailed evidence base. 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14379>

The press notice referred to above can be read at

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-opt-new-evidence-of-unlawful-israeli-attacks-in-gaza-causing-mass-civilian-casualties-amid-real-risk-of-genocide>

Gaza: Humanitarian Pauses

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [13793] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent progress he has made towards securing a further humanitarian pause in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Andrew Mitchell: We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

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

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary continue to reiterate these steps in their contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, including during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 24 January, as well as with leaders in Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon in recent weeks.

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/2024-02-08/13793>

Gaza: Ceasefires

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [13797] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the conditions set out to achieve a ceasefire between Gaza and Israel by the respective parties.

Andrew Mitchell: We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

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

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary continue to reiterate these steps in their contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, including during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 24 January, as well as with leaders in Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon in recent weeks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13797>

Israel and Occupied Territories: Casualties

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [13794] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he is taking steps to monitor trends in the number of casualties and fatalities in (a) Gaza, (b) the West Bank and (c) Israel; and if he will publish the latest data available for 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: We are closely monitoring the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Too many civilians have been killed. There must be a reduction in civilian casualties. All parties must act within International Humanitarian Law.

We want Israel to take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. The Prime Minister has made this clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu repeatedly and has been in close contact throughout.

We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13794>

UNRWA: Staff

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [15024] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2023 to Question 13364 on UNRWA: Finance, what progress his Department has made on its review into the allegations concerning the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Andrew Mitchell: We are pressing the UN Office of Internal Oversight and Catherine Colonna to produce a rapid interim report. We want UNRWA to give detailed undertakings about changes in personnel, policy and precedents to ensure this can never happen again.

We are working with allies to try to bring this situation to a rapid conclusion - not least because UNRWA have a vital role to play in providing aid and services in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/15024>

The answer referred to above can be read at

Gaza: Food

Neil Hudson (Conservative) [14233] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made a recent assessment of the scale of food shortages in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK is increasingly concerned over the growing food insecurity in Gaza. Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it. The UK is providing £60 million in humanitarian assistance to support partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the WFP and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza. We will continue to support and have supported the WFP to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza. 750 tonnes of life-saving food aid arrived in the first delivery and a second delivery of 315 tonnes has been made.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14233>

Gaza: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [13791] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people in Gaza can be vaccinated.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (PHRST) has deployed experts through the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). These experts are supporting the UN to strengthen disease surveillance and coordination of public health services in Gaza.

The UK is providing £60 million in humanitarian assistance to support partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to respond to health and other critical needs in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13791>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Ahmad Manasra

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [14288] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with international human rights organisations on the case of Ahmad Manasra.

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [14290] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether the Government has made representations to the Government of Israel on the (a) treatment and (b) appeal for early release on medical grounds of Ahmad Manasra.

Andrew Mitchell: The Government maintains regular engagements with many international partners, including the Government of Israel and other organisations, over issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children in detention. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention.

The Government continues to call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law, most recently in the Prime Minister's call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 15 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14288>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14290>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Helic (Conservative) [HL1958] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the number of children injured in Israel and Palestine since 7 October 2023, and (2) the level of medical support available for children in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are supporting NGO and UN partners to deliver medical aid and care in the Gaza Strip. This includes support for primary healthcare, trauma and emergency care services, disease surveillance and outbreak response, and deployment of Emergency Medical Teams. We have targeted support for children through our £5.75 million contribution to UNICEF. We are also exploring further options to help meet the medical needs of Palestinians.

The early work we have done shows there is much we can do in the region, for example helping in the field hospitals that have been established, helping to send medical teams to referral hospitals in the region and supporting organisations such as Medical Aid for Palestinians.

A shocking number of civilians including children, have been injured and killed in Gaza. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-26/hl1958>

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 of 26 February 2024: Türkiye, Zambia, League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, African Union, Spain, Fiji, Maldives

verbatim transcript

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240226-ora-02-00-bi.pdf>

video recording: Türkiye, Zambia, League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and African Union,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_8OsVszzXI&list=PLwoDFQJEq_0ZqM1E-CRfvXfPZtxNtgb8f9&index=2

and Spain, Fiji, and Maldives

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVFyNst6Fq8&list=PLwoDFQJEq_0ZqM1E-CRfvXfPZtxNtgb8f9&index=2

Please note that video recordings of all hearings both of this case, and the case of “Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)” have been removed from the ICJ

website. They are, however, still available on the ICJ youtube channel.

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

22 February 2024: Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, and Mauritius
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4XJFOIPL10&list=PLwoDFQJEq_0ZqM1ECRfvXfPZtxNtgb8f9&index=6

23 February 2024: Namibia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Qatar,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFRpTc7HCw4&list=PLwoDFQJEq_0ZqM1ECRfvXfPZtxNtgb8f9&index=5

and United Kingdom, Slovenia, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, and Tunisia
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKpgqhUEHIA&list=PLwoDFQJEq_0ZqM1ECRfvXfPZtxNtgb8f9&index=4

United Nations

'Bedrock of Peace' Under Attack, Secretary-General Warns Human Rights Council

... From Ukraine to Sudan to Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gaza, parties to conflict are turning a blind eye to international law, the Geneva Conventions and even the United Nations Charter. The Security Council is often deadlocked, unable to act on the most significant peace and security issues of our time. The Council's lack of unity on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and on Israel's military operations in Gaza following the horrific terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October, has severely — perhaps fatally — undermined its authority. The Council needs serious reform to its composition and working methods.

Nothing can justify [Hamas's] deliberate killing, injuring, torturing and kidnapping of civilians, the use of sexual violence — or the indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israel. But nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. I invoked Article 99 for the first time in my mandate to put the greatest possible pressure on the Council to do everything in its power to end the bloodshed in Gaza and prevent escalation. But it was not enough.

International Humanitarian Law remains under attack. Tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, have been killed in Gaza. Humanitarian aid is still completely insufficient. Rafah is the core of the humanitarian aid operation, and UNRWA is the backbone of that effort.

An all-out Israeli offensive on the city would not only be terrifying for more than a million Palestinian civilians sheltering there; it would put the final nail in the coffin of our aid programmes. I repeat my call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22137.doc.htm>

UNRWA

Philippe Lazzarini February registered a 50% reduction of humanitarian aid entering #Gaza compared to January. Aid was supposed to increase not decrease to address the huge needs of 2 million Palestinians in desperate living conditions. Among the obstacles: lack of political will, regular closing of the crossing points & lack of security due to military operations + collapse of civil order. Cease fire + lifting the siege to allow meaningful

lifesaving aid + commercial supplies are long overdue.
<https://twitter.com/UNLazzarini/status/1762065832417325441>

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

New incident with medical evacuation at Al Amal hospital marks unacceptable security conditions for humanitarian aid delivery

On 25 February, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the United Nations evacuated 24 patients from Al Amal hospital in Khan Younis, including one pregnant woman and one mother and newborn. Al Amal hospital has been at the epicentre of military operations in Khan Younis for over a month. Forty attacks at the hospital from 22 January to 22 February, killing at least 25, have left it incapacitated.

Despite prior coordination for all staff members and vehicles with the Israeli side, the Israeli forces blocked the WHO-led convoy for many hours the moment it left the hospital. The Israeli military forced patients and staff out of ambulances and stripped all paramedics of their clothes. Three PRCS paramedics were subsequently detained, although their personal details had been shared with the Israeli forces in advance, while the rest of the convoy stayed in place for over seven hours. ...

This is not an isolated incident. Aid convoys have come under fire and are systematically denied access to people in need. Humanitarian workers have been harassed, intimidated or detained by Israeli forces, and humanitarian infrastructure has been hit....

The inadequate facilitation for the delivery of aid throughout Gaza means that humanitarian workers are subject to unacceptable and preventable risk of being detained, injured or worse; leaving us and our partners unable to safely reach northern Gaza and increasingly parts of southern Gaza.

The UN and partners have consistently communicated the requirements for meaningful facilitation of relief efforts across Gaza to the Israeli authorities. The bare minimum is this: acknowledging notification of a humanitarian mission in advance comes with the responsibility of facilitating safe, smooth and rapid passage on the ground. We will continue our engagement with the Israeli forces for those requirements to be met, so that the critically needed humanitarian response is enabled. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/new-incident-medical-evacuation-al-amal-hospital-marks-unacceptable-security-conditions-humanitarian-aid>

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Other Relevant Information

Antisemitism Policy Trust

Online Antisemitism and the Risks of Artificial Intelligence

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/7112-APT-Ai-and-Anitsemitem-v4.pdf>

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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>

Amendment Paper

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/54390/documents/4477>

Welsh Senedd debate: Legislative Consent Motion

NDM8490 Rebecca Evans: To propose that the Senedd, in accordance with Standing Order 29.6, agrees that provisions in the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, in so far as they fall within the legislative competence of the Senedd, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

For: 14; Against: 33; Abstain: 0

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13714#A85865>

The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3535>

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3521>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3564>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3596>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 7 days**

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/martyrs-law-standard-tier-consultation>

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