



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions

Keir Starmer (Labour): The Prime Minister's predecessor, the right hon. Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss) ... remained silent as Tommy Robinson, that right-wing thug, was described as a hero. Why is the Prime Minister allowing her to stand as a Tory MP at the next election?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that a single Member of this House supports Tommy Robinson, but if the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to talk about former leaders and predecessors, the whole country knows his record: he sat there while antisemitism ran rife in his party; and he backed not once but twice a man who called Hamas "friends". ...

Keir Starmer: I have changed my party for the better ...

The Prime Minister: ... when I learnt of something that I did not agree with, I suspended one of my MPs straightaway. When he learnt of vile antisemitic remarks made by a Labour candidate, what did he do? He instructed his team to defend him, he sent a shadow Cabinet Minister to campaign for him, and he personally backed him for days. ...

In our party, we have a proud tradition of diversity and accepting everyone from every background—indeed, it is a proud record that puts Labour to shame. This is the party that delivered the first Jewish Prime Minister, the first female Prime Minister, the first black Chancellor and the first Muslim Home Secretary, and it is

now led by the first British-Asian Prime Minister. ...

Keir Starmer: So this diverse Tory party does welcome Nigel Farage. ... That is the same Nigel Farage who said he agreed with the basic premise of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of blood" speech and bemoaned the influence of the Jewish lobby. ...

The Prime Minister: ... tomorrow in Rochdale the people will have a choice of three former Labour candidates, two of whom are antisemites. The truth is, his party is so mired in hate that despite three ex-Labour candidates standing, he cannot back a single one of them. We expel antisemites—he makes them Labour candidates.

Keir Starmer: ... The Prime Minister has lost control of his party ... When will he ever stand up to them and end the pathetic spectacle of a Tory party that used to try to beat Nigel Farage now giving up and dancing to his tune instead?

The Prime Minister: That is utterly shameless from someone who stood by while antisemitism ran rife in his party, oversaw the appalling situation in Rochdale and twice backed the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-28/debates/B0D02324-11C1-4617-B00D-72FDD676BD03/Engagements#contribution-5343B51B-2E66-4C42-8D67-F531087E4C89>

House of Commons Written Answers

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: Higher Education

Matthew Offord (Conservative) 14842] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the number of higher education institutions that have not adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Robert Halfon: Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the unprecedented increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. All antisemitism is abhorrent and universities should have robust systems in place to deal with incidents of support for unlawful antisemitic abuse and harassment. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned about the growth in incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. This is completely unacceptable. The department will not tolerate unlawful harassment or the glorification of terrorism. A link to the report 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)

The government has formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The department is pleased to see that as of 21 February 2024, 245 providers in England have adopted the definition, including the vast majority of universities. While adoption of the IHRA definition is not compulsory for universities, as they are autonomous, the department continues to strongly encourage providers to adopt the definition for universal clarity on what constitutes antisemitic behaviour. However, the department recognises that the IHRA definition alone is not enough. That's why the department is working to introduce the tackling antisemitism quality seal. This is a framework of measures that will allow universities to demonstrate support for Jewish students and staff. This quality seal is part of the package resulting from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announcement of an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education.

The Quality Seal is an award for universities demonstrating exemplary standards in addressing antisemitism. It encompasses policies related to communication with Jewish students, training programs, and robust complaint processes. The department has invited bids from capable organisations to implement this initiative.

The deadline for bids is 7 March 2024 and the department aims to appoint a contractor in April 2024. A Tackling Antisemitism Champion, respected by both the Jewish community and higher education sector, will be appointed to help universities meet these standards and strengthen universities' ability to deal with the rising levels of antisemitism on campuses. Additionally, funding allocated for combating antisemitism in education will support universities in achieving the required benchmarks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14842>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

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

The following two questions both received the same answer

Hate Crime: Criminal Records

John Hayes (Conservative) [14798] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will hold discussions with police forces on removing non-crime hate incidents from people's records.

John Hayes (Conservative) [14799] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of non-crime hate incidents have been recorded by police forces since the new code of practice was announced in March 2023.

Chris Philp: As provided for in the Police, Crime, and Sentencing Act 2022, in 2023 the Government introduced the statutory Non-Crime Hate Incidents Code of Practice on the Recording and Retention of Personal Data in order to make the processes surrounding the recording and retention of personal data more transparent and subject to stronger safeguards. The new code came into effect on 3 June 2023 and applies to police forces across England and Wales.

Whilst recognising the operational importance of NCHI recording for the police in protecting vulnerable people and communities from harm, the code clarifies that the police should only record NCHIs when it is necessary and proportionate to do so and not simply because someone is offended.

The College of Policing also updated its operational guidance for the police, known as 'Authorised Professional Practice' (APP), to ensure that its guidance on NCHI recording aligns with the code.

Prior to the code and updated APP coming into effect, the College communicated with forces about the changes introduced by the code and revised APP. The College also developed an e-briefing pack on NCHIs which is available to forces. It is for individual police forces to ensure that they comply with the law and must have regard to the statutory code of practice and all the relevant operational guidance.

The Home Office does not collect data from forces on the number of NCHIs recorded by the police. The data collected from the police balances policy needs and the burden on forces.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14798>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14799>

The Code of Practise referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-crime-hate-incidents-code-of-practice/non-crime-hate-incidents-code-of-practice-on-the-recording-and-retention-of-personal-data-accessible>

The Authorised Professional Practice referred to above can be read at

<https://www.college.police.uk/app>

House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee

MPs publish report on Assisted Dying/Assisted Suicide

... The report covers Parliament and the current law, the Government's role in the debate, international examples of jurisdictions where AD/AS is available in some form, the involvement of physicians and assessments of eligibility and capacity to give informed consent, and palliative and end-of-life care. ...

AD/AS is currently being considered in both Jersey and the Isle of Man, and the Committee concludes that the Government should be “actively involved in discussions” on how to approach possible divergence in legislation between jurisdictions. ...

Despite the UK being a world leader in palliative and end-of-life care, the report concludes that access and provision of such care is patchy.

It recommends the Government ensures universal coverage of palliative and end-of-life services, including hospice care at home, and more specialists in palliative care and end-of-life pain relief. ...

The report also calls for new guidance from the GMC and the BMA to provide clarity to doctors on responding to requests for medical reports for applicants seeking AD/AS abroad. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/news/200140/mps-publish-report-on-assisted-dyingassisted-suicide/>

Report: Assisted Dying/ Assisted Suicide

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43582/documents/216484/default/>

Downing Street

PM speech at the CST annual dinner: 28 February 2024

... It is shocking, and wrong, the prejudice, the racism we have seen in recent months.

That Hamas attack of October 7th was the most abhorrent act of terrorism against Israel that any of us have ever known.

And it's been followed by record levels of antisemitism in this country that are utterly, utterly sickening.

Don't let anyone try and tell you this is just a reaction to the response of the Israeli government as unacceptable as that would be.

The highest weekly total of antisemitic incidents came before Israel responded –

It is hatred pure and simple.

An assault on the Jewish people – here in this country, in this century and I tell you tonight: we will fight this antisemitism with everything we've got.

When Jewish children are hiding their school uniforms Jewish students are facing harassment on campuses the birth certificates of Jewish children are being defaced and Jewish families feel unable to enter the centre of our capital city at the weekend the whole fabric of our nation is under threat.

When I went to Kinloss Synagogue in the immediate aftermath of October 7th I said I would stand with you today, tomorrow, and always.

And I truly meant it. ...

One of the things I most remember about that vigil in Finchley was walking out of the synagogue at this heightened moment of grief and fear in the community and seeing CST volunteers working with the police to keep us safe.

Just as they are doing here today. Just as they do every day.

They are some of the bravest volunteers in this country and on behalf not just of the Jewish community – but the whole nation I want to say a huge and heartfelt thank you.

In October we announced an additional £3 million for CST taking our total support to £18 million for this financial year.

And I can confirm we'll commit a further £18 million next financial year.

But that's not enough.

For years you've been asked to bid for funding one year at a time as if there might not be the same threat to deal with next year.

Sadly, we know CST is going to be needed for many years to come.

So tonight, I am changing the way CST is funded to help you plan for the long-term.

I'm not just committing £18 million for next year.

I'm committing a minimum of £18 million every year for the next four years. ...

Of course, it's not just the Jewish community that has been targeted.

It's also those who represent you.

Members of Parliament - like Mike Freer, here tonight. ...

As Prime Minister, I'm not prepared to stand by, and watch MPs forced out of public service because of fears for their safety. ...

So today I met senior police leaders in Downing Street to discuss how they will use the powers they have to defend our democracy and our values from those that seek to hijack them.

This included agreeing today a new Defending Democracy Protocol with additional patrols on MPs' homes and constituency offices and new guidance to make clear to officers how they should protect surgeries, fundraisers, and protests all underpinned by £30 million of new funding for protective security – with every MP, councillor and candidate having a named police contact. ...

But it's not enough merely to strengthen our physical security we must also be far bolder and more assertive in defending our British values.

We've got to end this passive tolerance of words and actions that go against what we stand for.

Yes, you can march and protest with passion; you can demand the protection of civilian life but no, you cannot call for Jihad there is no "context" in which its acceptable to beam antisemitic tropes onto Big Ben and there's no cause you can use to justify the support of proscribed terrorist groups, like Hamas.

And yes, you can freely criticise the actions of this government, the Israeli government or indeed any government.

But no, you cannot use that as an excuse to call for the eradication of a State – or any kind of hatred or antisemitism.

These statements are fundamental to the liberal democratic values that define Britain. ...

Within days of October 7th CST joined Ministers and police chiefs around the cabinet table in Downing Street to discuss the policing of protests.

And since then we've taken decisive measures to stop a small and aggressive minority of protestors carrying out antisemitic and intimidating actions.

Under our proposed laws:

The possession of flares and other pyrotechnics at protests – illegal.

Purposefully concealing your identity – illegal.

Climbing on our war memorials – illegal.

Treating protest as an excuse to engage in disruptive acts like criminal damage, blocking highways or ignoring police instructions – we're ending that too.

And when Hizb ut-Tahrir celebrated that October 7th attack this government drew a line in sand and proscribed it.

But we need to go further – especially in our universities.

What is happening right now on campuses is simply not acceptable.

Jewish students are being targeted, threatened, and assaulted simply for being Jewish.

The Chaplain at the University of Leeds having to take his family into hiding after death threats because he's an IDF reservist.

Iranian generals – let me say that again – Iranian generals - giving antisemitic speeches as people abuse the right to freedom of speech as a cover for hate speech.

This cannot go on.

Where people break the law on our campuses they will be met with the full consequences. And where they create a culture of intimidation we will hold the university leadership to account.

University leaders must take personal responsibility for protecting Jewish students in their institutions.

I want you to know that we are calling in the Vice Chancellors of the country's leading universities to meet in Downing Street to discuss exactly how they will do that.

And this goes to my third point.

Because we cannot just litigate our way to defeating antisemitism and extremism.

We've also got to change the culture in our country.

Where is the willingness to speak out and challenge hateful narratives?

Where is the ability to disagree with each other while retaining respect for one another? ...

We'll invest in interfaith work to build greater community cohesion and understanding between others tackling anti-Muslim hatred as well as antisemitism, with the help of brilliant organisations like Tell Mama.

But we won't fund those who risk undermining that effort.

So when the Inter Faith Network charity appointed a trustee from the Muslim Council of Britain whose previous leaders have taken positions that contradict our fundamental values we ended their funding.

We will continue to use all our diplomatic efforts to free the hostages through an immediate humanitarian pause.

Earlier this month I met the families of Emily Damari, Nadav Popplewell, Eli Sharabi and Oded Lifschitz.

Their harrowing ordeal is beyond heartbreaking.

We have to bring them home.

And we must work towards the long-term future we all want to see, of a safe and secure Israel with Palestinians living in dignity on a pathway to a viable Palestinian State.

But we don't achieve anything by calling for a permanent ceasefire without those hostages being returned and Hamas being removed from Gaza.

A permanent ceasefire without those things isn't a ceasefire at all.

It's a victory for Hamas.

And this government won't stand for it.

The biggest step we can take in changing our culture is education. ...

That's why we're investing another £7 million to tackle antisemitism in our schools and universities.

And it's why the Learning Centre is such an important part of the Holocaust Memorial. ...

Now my own personal story is different from yours.

Despite the assertion in the Jewish Chronicle that and I quote – "Rishi Sunak is a nice Jewish boy" I've still not found any Jewish ancestry in my family tree.

But I do know something of what it is like to be seen as different from others and even to experience hatred directed towards your community because of who you are.

I know something of what it is like to be part of a community that is both proud of its own heritage and proud of its Britishness too.

I know something of what it is like to be part of a community that integrates with others from all backgrounds in society and that makes such an extraordinary contribution to our proud multi-faith, multi-ethnic democracy.

That's why supporting Britain's Jewish community feels so personal to me.

You represent who we are and what we stand for in the world.

And that's not just something to be defended.

It's something to be cherished and celebrated.

And that is what I will always do. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-cst-annual-dinner-28-february-2024>

Home Office

Record funding will protect Jewish communities from harm

At the Community Security Trust's (CST) annual dinner last night (Wednesday 28th February), Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged to give the organisation, which was established to protect Jewish community sites, more than £70 million over the next 4 years, as part of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant. The funding will increase security at a range of Jewish buildings across the country, including schools, synagogues and other facilities used by the Jewish community.

The £54 million of new funding announced today is the biggest single financial commitment any government has made to protect Jewish communities. It comes on top of the £18 million already given to CST for 2024 to 2025 and will mean the organisation's crucial work is funded until 2028. ... By guaranteeing this level of funding for the next 4 years, the government is providing Jewish communities with reassurance and certainty in the face of increased antisemitic incidents. ...

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: It is shocking, and wrong, the prejudice, the racism we have seen in recent months.

It is hatred, pure and simple. An assault on the Jewish people. We will fight this antisemitism with everything we've got.

As Prime Minister I will lead this government in a long-term effort to strengthen your security, defend our liberal democratic values and change our culture so we tackle the root causes of this hatred.

We know CST is going to be needed for many years to come. So tonight, I am changing the way CST is funded to help you plan for the long-term... with the biggest financial commitment that any government has ever made.

Home Secretary James Cleverly said: The rise in antisemitic hatred and abuse we have seen in the UK in recent months is absolutely sickening.

It is crucial that Jewish adults and children are free to go about their daily lives without fear of intimidation, abuse or harm – and importantly, feel safe to do so.

Committing this largest ever funding for security to protect Jewish communities will give people the certainty and confidence they will be kept safer for the foreseeable future. We are also working with the police to ensure that hate crime and expressions of support for the terrorist organisation Hamas are met with the full force of the law.

Security Minister Tom Tugendhat said: Since the October 7 attacks, we've seen a shameful rise in antisemitism across the world, including in the UK.

We won't hesitate to take action to keep British Jews safe. That's why today's package of support is the largest ever made by the government to tackle antisemitism, and to ensure their protection and safety. ...

This announcement follows today's confirmation that £31 million will be made available to protect democratic processes and institutions in response to growing threats.

The government also condemns the recent rise in reported anti-Muslim hatred. We expect the police to fully investigate all hate crimes and work with the CPS to make sure the cowards who commit these appalling offences feel the full force of the law.

An additional £4.9 million was also made available in October for protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools. This brought total funding for 2023 to 2024 to £29.4 million, which the government confirmed will also be maintained in 2024 to 2025.

The new [Protective Security for Mosques Scheme](#) provides physical security measures, such

as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing, to mosques and associated Muslim faith community centres. Protective security measures are also available to Muslim faith schools.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-funding-will-protect-jewish-communities-from-harm>

Correspondence: Jewish Community Protective Security Grant: ministerial direction

Letter from the Permanent Secretary to the Home Secretary: Jewish Community Protective Security Grant

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e079f43f69450011035fcb/20240228+-+Letter+from+HO+Permanent+Secretary+to+the+Home+Secretary.pdf>

Letter from the Home Secretary to the Permanent Secretary: Jewish Community Protective Security Grant

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e07a167bc3290011b8c191/20240228+-+Letter+from+Home+Secretary+to+HO+Permanent+Secretary.pdf>

The Prince of Wales

The Prince of Wales visits London Synagogue

The Prince of Wales visited the Western Marble Arch Synagogue where he took part in conversations about the deeply troubling rise in antisemitism in the UK, and some of the invaluable work that is being carried out to combat this. ...

The Prince then met with Holocaust survivor Renee Salt, who is a living example of the tragic consequences of antisemitism being allowed to go unchecked, to hear more about her experiences.

During his visit to the Synagogue, The Prince also met a number of young ambassadors from all backgrounds and faiths who have taken part in the Holocaust Educational Trust's flagship 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project. ... Having seen where antisemitism can lead, they are powerful advocates for ensuring that hatred is called out, wherever it is found. ... The Prince also heard from students and young people who have themselves experienced antisemitism. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.royal.uk/news-and-activity/2024-02-29/the-prince-of-wales-visits-london-synagogue>

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Update to 31st December 2023

<https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2024--02/564512698/Hate%20Motivations%20Bulletin%20Period%20ending%2031st%20December%202023.pdf>

Hate Motivations Tables Period Ending 31st December 2023

<https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2024-02/1062721986/Hate%20Motivations%20Tables%20Period%20Ending%2031st%20December%202023.xlsx>

TOP

See also “PM speech at the CST annual dinner” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister’s Questions

Stephen Flynn (SNP): Some 30,000 people dead; 70,000 injured; 1.5 million sheltering in Rafah; 300,000 living in feral conditions in northern Gaza; and, of course, 100 hostages still tragically held by Hamas. The horror of those numbers demands that this House have its say, just as it shows that this House should demand an immediate ceasefire. President Biden has indicated that the ceasefire may take place from Monday. Does the Prime Minister share his confidence?

The Prime Minister: We have consistently called for an immediate humanitarian pause, which would allow for the safe release of hostages—including British nationals—and more aid to Gaza. We welcome progress on a deal. As the hon. Gentleman said, there has been progress, and we urge everyone on all sides to seize the opportunity. I have been clear that we must seize the momentum from this terrible tragedy to find a lasting resolution to this conflict that delivers on the promise of a two-state solution, and ensures that Israelis and Palestinians can live in dignity and security.

Stephen Flynn: We are approaching five months since this conflict began. In that time, this House has equivocated and, on three occasions at the United Nations, this Government have abstained when they could have voted for a ceasefire. Abstentionism is not leadership. Should this matter now come before the United Nations, with a ceasefire potentially in sight, will the Prime Minister use his Government’s vote to deliver that ceasefire?

The Prime Minister: We support the United States’ draft resolution that was discussed with colleagues at the United Nations last week. But just calling for an immediate, full ceasefire now, which collapses back into fighting within days or weeks and does not include the release of hostages, including British ones, is not in anyone’s interests. We must work towards a permanent ceasefire. That starts with an immediate humanitarian pause, to get aid in and hostages out. I agree about the suffering of the people in Gaza; in this country we should be proud of everything we are doing to help them and to provide them with the lifesaving aid they deserve.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-28/debates/B0D02324-11C1-4617-B00D-72FDD676BD03/Engagements#contribution-1C9A611C-5448-4B09-AA63-E7E89EF2B6D1>

Prime Minister’s Questions

Alyn Smith (SNP) [901700] One of the few good things to come out of Wednesday’s stamash last week was that the House united around a call for an immediate ceasefire. Now, I welcome that—that is progress. The Prime Minister was just given an opportunity by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn) to commit to the UK’s representatives in the United Nations and elsewhere articulating that position of this House. If they are not going to do that, what will he say to those of us who say this place really is just a sick pantomime?

The Prime Minister: As I outlined previously, it is not right to call for an immediate ceasefire that would collapse instantly into more fighting and not do anything to get more aid into Gaza to alleviate the suffering that people are experiencing, or to make sure that we can safely remove hostages, including British hostages. That has been our consistent position. We have been calling for an immediate

humanitarian ceasefire which will provide the conditions for a lasting and sustainable peace, but just calling for something that will collapse back into fighting is not in anyone's interests. All our diplomatic efforts, at the United Nations and elsewhere, are targeted at bringing that about. I am pleased that in recent days progress has been made. We should keep pressure on all parties to come to a resolution.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-28/debates/B0D02324-11C1-4617-B00D-72FDD676BD03/Engagements#contribution-52951D73-1B93-4C7F-ADAA-4DFBF221A6AA>

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Development Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [15374] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 February 2024 to Question 13839 on Gaza: Development Aid, how much and what proportion of the Overseas Development Aid for the Occupied Palestinian Territories was spent in Gaza in each year since 2012.

Andrew Mitchell: I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 20 February 2024 to Question 13839, the answer can be found on the Q&A web pages <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13839>

Since 2012, the UK has provided £805 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including work in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Key programmes such as humanitarian relief, support to economic development and employment, and essential services delivery for Palestinian refugees have worked in all parts of the OPTs and operate flexibly between different areas in order to have the most impact. We are therefore unable to provide a firm breakdown of spend between the different parts of the OPTs.

We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in and open more crossings. 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 to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-22/15374>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Military Aircraft

Patrick Grady (SNP) [13372] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason Israeli military planes have used UK airports on each occasion since 7 October 2023.

Israel: Air Force

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [13623] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2024 to Question 12729 on Israel: Air Force, on what dates those flights (a) arrived and (b) departed British territory; where those flights landed; and what those flights were carrying.

James Heapey: It is standard practice for the Ministry of Defence to routinely authorise requests for limited numbers of allies and partners to overfly the UK and use UK air bases. For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the MOD does not offer comment or information relating to foreign nations' military aircraft movements or operations.

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

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-07/13623>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-01/12729>

Military Bases: Aviation

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [14190] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2024 to Question 12864 on Military Bases, what (a) information and (b) assurances his Department requests from international partners on (i) military-registered and (ii) civil aircraft under the diplomatic flight clearance policy.

James Heapey: The Diplomatic Flight Clearance policy, which applies to all state-operated flights, is a robust process. The UK is clear that the nature and purpose of this activity must be set out, whereupon the UK will decide whether or not to grant permission to utilise UK air bases.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14190>

The answer referred to above can be read at

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

Palestinians: Internally Displaced People

Dan Carden (Labour) [14920] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he is taking diplomatic steps to help prevent the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The Government firmly rejects any suggestion of the resettlement of Palestinians outside of Gaza.

Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and will be part of a future Palestinian state. We support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

We want the fighting to stop now. 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/2024-02-20/14920>

Gaza: Israel

Dan Carden (Labour) [14371] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of civilian infrastructure that has been destroyed in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. We continue to press these points in engagements with Israeli counterparts and international partners, including during the Prime Minister's call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 15 February.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) operations on the civilian population in Gaza.

As the occupying power in Gaza, Israel has to make sure that humanitarian aid, including food, water and shelter, is available to people in Gaza.

As we have said, we want to see 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.

The international community will need to make a massive effort to deliver a reconstruction plan for Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14371>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Tobias Ellwood (Conservative) [14822] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help provide humanitarian support at the Rafah crossing.

Andrew Mitchell: There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. Our focus must be on practical solutions that save lives. We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in and open more crossings. Israel must take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the urgency of getting significantly more aid into Gaza to alleviate the desperate situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu last week. We have reiterated the need for Israel to open more crossing points into Gaza, for Nitzana and Kerem Shalom to be open for longer, and for Israel to support the UN to distribute aid effectively across the whole of Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has also appointed a Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, who is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching 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/2024-02-20/14822>

Gaza: Children

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [14718] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has held discussions with his counterparts in the Middle East on the potential merits of temporarily evacuating children with urgent medical needs in Gaza to provide those children with emergency medical treatment.

Andrew Mitchell: 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.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it.

Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands. 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 to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-19/14718>

Gaza: Hospitals

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [14716] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a field hospital in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: 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.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it.

Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands. 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 to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-19/14716>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UN Human Rights Council 55: Statement on Occupied Palestinian Territories: Statement for the Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner – oral update on: Occupied Palestinian Territories. Delivered by UK Human Rights Ambassador Rita French

... On 7 October, Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history at the hands of Hamas. In Gaza, Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian catastrophe.

We need to avert this. We need the fighting to stop now.

That is why we are calling for an immediate cessation - to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire with no return to fighting.

There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support.

We have trebled humanitarian aid in Gaza to over 60 million pounds sterling including a further £4.25 million support for vulnerable women and girls.

As the occupying power, Israel has to make sure that humanitarian aid—including food, water and shelter—is available to civilians in Gaza.

The impact of IDF operations on the civilian population is deeply concerning. Already, too many civilians have been killed. International Humanitarian Law must be respected by all parties and civilians must be protected.

Mr President, we are committed to improving the lives of all Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The United Kingdom continues to work intensively in support of a two-state solution that guarantees: security and stability for Israeli and Palestinian people; and two secure and sovereign states - Israel and Palestine. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-55-statement-on-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Carol Mochan (Labour) [S6M-12340] Protecting Mothers in Palestine on International Women's Day – That the Parliament notes that International Women's Day will be marked this year on 8 March 2024, at a time when women and children across the globe are being impacted by conflict; recognises reports that of around 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza, 40% of those pregnancies have been classed as high risk; acknowledges what it sees as the significant toll that the conflict has taken on expectant and new mothers in Palestine; understands that, according to UN Women, two mothers are killed every hour in Gaza, and that as many as one in six children are acutely malnourished, according to the World Food Programme; further understands that the reported serious malnutrition and limited access to water for all people in the Gaza Strip makes it almost impossible to feed and care for a baby properly, and calls, therefore, on humanitarian aid channels to be opened to ensure that food, water and medical aid can reach expectant and new mothers, babies and children, who, it considers, are all in urgent and desperate need of aid.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-12340>

Scottish Government

Humza Yousaf In an interview with @MiddleEastEye, I was asked what my message is to the people of Gaza. It's simple, I am so sorry we, the world, have let you down. We couldn't stop children from being killed in their thousands. A permanent stain on our collective conscience. #CeasefireNOW [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1763120498597130462>

European Parliament Debate

War in the Gaza Strip and the need to reach a ceasefire, including recent developments in the region

... **Janez Lenarčič (Member of the Commission, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy):** ...

A recent health report from Johns Hopkins and the University of London predicts that more than 60 000 civilians will die unless there is a ceasefire and a massive surge in aid very soon. After almost five months of war and destruction, our focus must be on achieving an agreement for an immediate end to fighting to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe, save lives and free the remaining 130 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza. ... In unison with most of the international community, we have urged Israel not to advance on Rafah. It would have humanitarian consequences of incredible proportions. ...

Under these circumstances, the work of the United Nations, including UNRWA, remains crucial. UN Secretary-General Guterres and Commissioner General Lazzarini are taking the Israeli allegations against UNRWA's staff very seriously and have taken immediate, decisive measures.

We must recognise the high-risk environment UNRWA operates in, and cannot resort to collective punishment or contribute to the further humanitarian collapse in Gaza, considering UNRWA's literally vital role for the people in Gaza.

But UNRWA is also essential for the stability in the region – Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and in the West Bank – in line with EU values. And while we are working constructively with UNRWA on the reinforcement of their internal controls, an audit carried by EU-appointed experts and the vetting system for their staff, it remains of crucial importance to provide UNRWA with adequate funding. A funding gap would have catastrophic consequences. ... The situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is equally concerning; demolitions, settlement construction, restrictions on movement and access, as well as settler violence have all surged since 7 October.

On the adoption of sanctions on violent Israeli settlers, we have an agreement at 26. But as you know, we need unanimity to adopt EU restrictive measures similar to those imposed by the United States months ago. Some Member States have introduced national entry bans. We will continue to work towards a coordinated approach on this issue. ...

We have also urged both Hezbollah and Israel to contain the dangerously spiralling violence across the Israeli-Lebanese border. ...

Meanwhile, the current escalation has been a political windfall for extremists across the region who thrive on polarisation and misery. All Iranian backed militias are active from Yemen to Lebanon. ...

But we must move beyond treating symptoms to treating the cause. Israelis, Palestinians and all peoples of the region deserve to live in security, dignity and a stable neighbourhood. But we all know that there is only one viable and sustainable way to achieve all these objectives: a safe and secure Palestinian State next to a safe and secure State of Israel. ...

Evin Incir (on behalf of the S&D Group): ... Time is running out and innocent Palestinians are losing their lives – 30 000 people! It is not just a number, but real

individuals of flesh and blood. Yes, Israel has the right to protect itself against the terrorist activities of Hamas. However, taking the lives of innocent individuals is not a form of self-defence. More than 70 % of the victims are children and women. ...

At this moment in Gaza, newborn babies are being punished simply for being Palestinian. They don't even have the chance to open their eyes before they are tragically deprived their lives by the Israeli bombings. ...

I consistently advocate for Israeli safety and security every day during the whole year. I also always stand up for the safety and security for the Palestinians. ...

Colleagues, as ordered by the International Court of Justice, we in the S&D Group urge Israel to refrain from acts under the Genocide Convention, and to prevent and punish direct and public incitement to genocide. We are also grateful for the incredible work UNRWA is doing through ensuring humanitarian aid to civilians. The EU and our Member States must continue supporting UNRWA.

Finally, we need an immediate and unconditional ceasefire right now to save lives. ...

Jordi Solé (on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group): ... How many more lives need to be destroyed until this bloodshed finally ends? I say it again: the atrocities committed by Hamas do not justify the massacre of civilians in Gaza, nor the collective punishment to which, as a matter of fact, its population is being subjected. And things can only get worse if Israel carries out the ground invasion operation in Rafah, where a million Palestinians are crammed with nowhere else to go. ...

The risk of genocide is plausible if these large-scale operations do not stop, and if access to humanitarian aid continues to be hindered. ...

Speaking of aid, to all those governments who have decided to suspend funding to UNRWA, I asked them: what exactly is the viable alternative to immediately replace on UNRWA's operational capacity? They know the answer as well as I do: none. ... Let all the necessary controls be carried out. Let all the necessary measures be taken. But don't asphyxiate UNRWA, because this will have immediate and further tremendous consequences on the population. ...

Lukas Mandl (PPE): ... Israel, our strong partner, the only democratic rule of law based in the region, defending itself, defending also us against terrorism and terrorist threats all over the world, confronting the Mullah regime in Tehran of Iran, which is threatening all the world. ...

Abir Al-Sahlani (Renew): ... You said that Israel was the only rule of law state in the MENA region, thus making it clear that Israel has to follow international regulation and international law.

Where is it, your breaking point? How many more Palestinians have to be killed? What other atrocities can Israel do? Where is your personal breaking point to see that what is going on is not any more self-defence? It is something else. What is your breaking point, Mr Mandl? How many more Palestinians have to die?

Lukas Mandl: ... After dismantling Hamas, which is taking hostage not only Israeli citizens but the people of the Gaza Strip – the Palestinians themselves – there must be demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip observed by Israel, but not only by Israel, by others.

We then need civil society. We need education there. We need to fight anti-semitism. We need an economy which will be capable to help itself, and not be dependent on all the world's aid all the time. This is what will be needed in the area, or in other words ...

Abir Al-Sahlani: *(The speaker covered her mouth with her right hand and raised her left hand, coloured pink)* Mr President, there are no more words to speak about what is going on in Gaza. There are no more laws to break. There are no more appeals that we can do to what's going on. The hypocrisy is obvious. Our collective humane has failed. We said that we won't fail, but we are failing again. Human rights have a skin colour, and the darker you are, the less human rights you have. We have been tried to be silenced. They have tried to make us look like anti-Semites. They have tried to make us look like we don't care

about the safety of the Israeli people. All of that still to make it possible to kill more Palestinians, unfortunately. ...

David Lega (PPE): ... Yesterday in Geneva, I met the mother of a young Israeli man murdered by Hamas on 7 October, a young man whose corpse was then taken hostage to Gaza by an UNRWA employee in an UNRWA car. This isn't just her mother's story. It's all on video. I saw it yesterday, and I will never forget it. When it comes to UNRWA, how could the EU even consider business as usual? You, Mr Borrell, criticised President von der Leyen for visiting Israel after the attacks. You've said you fully trust your own leadership to get to the bottom of alleged UNRWA complicity in Hamas terrorism, and you've said that major donors who have suspended funds to UNRWA, including my own country, Sweden, have fallen prey to emotions. What will it take for you to understand that your trust is frankly irrelevant if UNRWA loses the trust of parties involved, and that whether you like it or not, donor countries are parties involved and so is Israel?

UNRWA's failed to keep the trust of all its partners, and no organisation is irreplaceable. EU aid to Gaza can and must go to more responsible, more neutral, more trusted partners who have shown their capacity by serving millions elsewhere. And honestly, Palestinians in Gaza deserve better. ...

Evin Incir (S&D): ... We need to talk about the Israeli hostages as we need to talk about all the 30 000 innocent Palestinian children, women, people that have been deprived of their lives. ...

But where are your evidence when it comes to the accusations toward UNRWA, for example – the 12 UNRWA staff? There are no evidence along with the accusation against the UNRWA staff. Where is the understanding that, for example, the tunnels under the UNRWA headquarters ...

Sophia in 't Veld (Renew): ... every person has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – Palestinian people no less than Israelis. ...

Europe is an ally of Israel, but that does not mean unconditional support to a far-right government, because what we see today is not self-defence, but vengeance – and for some, even the stated objective of ethnic cleansing.

Removing aid from the Palestinian people at this point is a certain and horrible death. Funds for UNRWA have been withdrawn on the basis of allegations which have not been proven. But even if they were, punishing innocent people cannot possibly be just. Thousands of children killed, maimed, traumatised – how can that be just and proportional? An allegation of atrocities committed by Israeli forces has not led to withdrawal of support to Israel, including the continued arms supply.

Resuming funding for UNRWA, immediate and permanent ceasefire, the return of the hostages, and a two-state solution are the only way out of this horror. The only way. ...

Karen Melchior (Renew): ... We've spoken a lot of words about this conflict for years. Now we must stop just speaking and actually show some action. Ahmad al-Ghuferi lost 103 family members in a military attack hitting two of his family's houses. Hind Rajab, a six-year-old girl, was killed when she was trying to shelter in a car being attacked by Israeli military.

We need to stop this conflict. We need a ceasefire right this moment in order to save human lives. This is a humanitarian crisis that is caused by war, which is why the ceasefire is so urgent.

But once we have the ceasefire, we need to apply the necessary pressure to Netanyahu. Netanyahu, I am afraid, will try and continue this conflict in order to stay out of prison, because as long as he's prime minister, he can stay out of prison, and we may not allow this to happen. We must have a two-state solution as soon as possible. ...

Billy Kelleher (Renew): ... there's calls in this house for funding to be suspended from UNRWA, and there is proof that maybe up to five people were some way complicit with the attacks on 7 October. Yet, the Israeli Defence Forces and its government are in Gaza

at the moment, pillaging and plundering and murdering people, according to the International Court of Justice, according to international law and according to humanitarian law and just a basic human decency. And yet we have people in this House calling for funding to be cut from UNRWA, which is supporting and maintaining the lives of ordinary citizens in Gaza. And at the same time, we have a trade association with Israel with favourable conditions and nobody – nobody – is questioning whether or not we should maintain that link.

It is shameful that this House cannot even condemn what is happening! And then we go along and with spite call for the withdrawal of funding from UNRWA. ...

Mick Wallace (The Left): ... over 12 000 Gazan children murdered in a few months. UNICEF warns that the Gaza Strip is about to see an explosion in preventable child deaths that will compound the already unbearable level of child deaths in Gaza. We have been warning for weeks that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a nutrition crisis. Food deliveries are drastically inadequate.

UN experts said last week that Palestinian women and girls continue to be raped, tortured and executed by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Women and children are being arbitrarily executed by the IDF. The Israelis are brazenly ignoring the binding ICJ court orders to halt the threat of genocide against the people of Gaza. Israel is failing to comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention and yesterday the EPP won a vote to take the reference to the ICJ ruling off the agenda.

The European Parliament is engaging in genocidal denial. We are watching the total destruction of place, designed to obliterate past, present and future for Palestinians. This is pure evil and a genocide. ...

Clare Daly (The Left): ... The legal obligations on EU Member States are very clear. The genocide conventions require states to avoid complicity, the EU common position on arms exports bans exporting arms where there's a clear risk they'll be used to violate international law, and the UN has warned that such transfers must cease. Yet, France dissembles, hiding behind secrecy and Israeli assurances, while Germany has increased its exports tenfold last year, 90% since 7 October. Ireland doesn't even ask Butcher Biden what's coming through Shannon Airport from the US on the way to the Middle East. What sort of people are ye? ...

Janez Lenarčič: ... After the ICJ – International Court of Justice – issued its orders back on 26 January, the European Commission and the High Representative issued immediately a joint statement, stating that – I quote – 'Orders of the ICJ are binding on the parties and they must comply with them and the EU expects their full, immediate and effective implementation'. I think it cannot get any clearer than that.

Now let's look at those orders – but let's say one of them, just for illustration. There was this order that was already mentioned by some of the Members: 'Order to Israel to take immediate and effective measures' – immediate and effective measures – 'to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip'. End of quote.

Well, if anything, now, today, one month later, these adverse conditions of life are even more adverse than they were at the time of these orders. Pockets of famine have appeared in Gaza. Hunger is so prevalent, and people are so desperate, that orderly distribution of humanitarian aid in northern Gaza, for instance, is no longer possible. And some of our partners already stopped the provision of food to northern Gaza.

Attacks on United Nations and on humanitarian workers in general continue. There have been so far 161 UN staff killed since 7 October. There have been 378 attacks on healthcare, including 98 attacks on ambulances. ...

The EU is not sitting on its hands. It is doing all it can. The EU has allocated more than EUR 200 million for humanitarian aid since 7 October, and we are now in the process of rolling out our EUR 125 million heavy humanitarian funding for this year, for Gaza and

occupied Palestinian territories in general. ...

We have been all along in touch with our Israeli counterparts advocating the respect for international humanitarian law, calling for protection of civilians, calling for respect of some of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law ...

My next point is about UNRWA. No, we have not received any evidence supporting the allegations by Israel that UNRWA's staff were involved in the terrible events on 7 October, and to our knowledge, none of the donors – other donors – have received any evidence. But at any rate, at any rate, as I said in my introduction, there has to be, at the end of the day, individual accountability for any violation of the principle of neutrality of UNRWA. And there must not be collective punishment. This is not the answer.

Yes, UNRWA is irreplaceable. Who's saying that? Let me tell you who is saying that. All other UN agencies, active and present in the Gaza Strip are saying that to us. ...

Certainly, we support the investigation that has been launched by the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services. We support the launch of the Independent Review Group, led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna. ... But let me recall again our statement – the Commission statement of the 29 January – in which we stated very clearly: the EU humanitarian aid will continue unabated. ...

To read the full transcript see

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2024-02-27-ITM-012_EN.html

Please note that only speeches in English have been abstracted.

The report referred to above by Janez Lenarčič can be read at

https://gaza-projections.org/gaza_projections_report.pdf

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>

The EU Commission statement referred to above by Janez Lenarčič can be read at

https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/european-commission-statement-unrwa-2024-01-29_en

European Parliament One-minute Speeches on Matters of Political Importance

Mick Wallace (The Left): Mr President, international law is in trouble these days. The US and its allies, they seldom actually talk about the UN Charter anymore. They prefer to refer to the international rules-based order, which they make up as they go along, which makes it easier for them to actually facilitate the genocide that is taken place in Gaza.

Likewise, if we look at organisations like the ICC, we had a woman from Ghana, Fatou Bensouda, and she had the audacity to threaten to investigate the US for war crimes in Afghanistan and also to investigate the possibility of Israeli war crimes in the occupied territories. So that didn't go down very well and the US threatened her. She soon lost her job and she was replaced by Karim Khan, who is very amenable to the US interest. He recently went to Israel and he met the victims of the Hamas attack, but refused to meet the Palestinian victims. This man cannot possibly be trusted to implement justice at the ICC. It's an absolute joke that he still has the job and he should be removed if he's of any interest in the future of the ICC. ...

Clare Daly (The Left): Mr President, last week, people from across Dublin gathered on Sandymount beach to fly flags, kites and read this poem from Refaat Alareer, Palestinian writer and teacher: 'If I must die / you must live / to tell my story / to sell my things / to buy a piece of cloth / and some strings, / (make it white with a long tail) / so that a child, somewhere in Gaza / while looking heaven in the eye / awaiting his dad who left in a blaze – / and bid no one farewell / not even to his flesh / not even to himself – / sees the kite, my

kite you made, flying up / above / and thinks for a moment an angel is there / bringing back love / If I must die / let it bring hope / let it be a tale'.

Well, he shouldn't have died or been murdered. Neither should any of the others. But millions will tell their tale and not just hope, but organise for justice and peace for Palestine and Gaza.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2024-02-26-ITM-022_EN.html

United Nations

Palestinian Rights Committee Bureau Calls for Solidarity, Support to Sustain UNRWA amidst Smear Campaign, Funding Suspensions, Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

... The Bureau of the UN General Assembly's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reaffirms its unwavering support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its indispensable mission, in accordance with its General Assembly mandate to ensure the well-being, protection and development of the Palestine refugees pending a just solution to their plight ...

The Bureau recognizes UNRWA's role as a lifeline for Palestine refugees for the past 75 years, offering not just essential services but a sense of hope and stability amidst protracted crisis and injustice. Throughout nearly five months of Israel's war on Gaza, UNRWA has stood as the humanitarian entity with the capacity for large-scale aid delivery to the more than 1.9 million Palestinians displaced, the majority of whom are sheltering at its own facilities, and to facilitate also the work of other humanitarian entities. ...

The Bureau, therefore, strongly appeals to donors who have suspended funding to UNRWA to reverse such decisions, which severely jeopardize the Agency's humanitarian and stabilizing efforts across the region, particularly in the war-torn Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Bureau supports the Secretary-General's decision to task an independent investigation into allegations that some UNRWA may have been involved in the attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023 and expects Israel's full cooperation with the UN Office for Internal Oversight's (OIOS) investigation.

The demonization of the Agency must stop. The Agency's role extends beyond humanitarian efforts - it symbolizes the international community's commitment to justice, human rights, peace and refugee rights. Supporting UNRWA means standing with the Palestinian people until the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in accordance with UN resolutions and international law. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/gapal1462.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Türk calls for end to "carnage" in Gaza

There appear to be no bounds to – no words to capture – the horrors that are unfolding before our eyes in Gaza.

Since early October, over 100,000 people have been killed or wounded. Let me repeat that: about one in every 20 children, women, and men, are now dead or wounded.

At least 17,000 children are orphaned or separated from their families, while many more will carry the scars of physical and emotional trauma life-long. ...

The attacks on Israeli civilians on 7 and 8 October were shocking. Profoundly traumatising. And totally unjustifiable. The killing of civilians, reports of torture and sexual violence inflicted by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, and the holding of hostages since

that time, are appalling and entirely wrong. And so is the brutality of the Israeli response; the unprecedented level of killing and maiming of civilians in Gaza, including UN staff and journalists; the catastrophic humanitarian crisis caused by restrictions on humanitarian aid; the displacement of at least three-quarters of the population, often multiple times; the massive destruction of hospitals and other civilian infrastructure – and in many cases, systematic demolition of entire neighbourhoods, rendering Gaza largely unliveable.

The war in Gaza must end. Clear violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws, including war crimes and possibly other crimes under international law, have been committed by all parties. ...

In 56 years of Israeli occupation, profoundly discriminatory systems of control were imposed on Palestinians to restrict their rights, including the right to movement, with major impact on their equality, housing, health, work, education and family life. A 16 year-long blockade of the Gaza Strip kept most of its 2.2 million people effectively in captivity, and destroyed the local economy. The lives of generations of Palestinians in the West Bank were punctuated by harassment, control, arbitrariness – including arbitrary arrests and detentions – and increasing Israeli military and settler violence. Meanwhile, illegal settlements continued to grow, leading *de facto* to increased annexation of Palestinians' lands. Imagine the endless humiliation and suppression endured.

Today, this situation is incomparably worse.

Report [A/HRC/55/28](#), which is before you, makes for very painful reading. Thousands of tonnes of munitions have been dropped by Israel on Gaza, including repeated use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects. These weapons send out a massive blast wave of high pressure that may rupture internal organs, as well as fragmentation projectiles, and heat so intense that it causes deep burns – and they have been used in densely populated residential neighbourhoods. ...

Under Article 1, common to the four Geneva Conventions, all States must respect and – crucially – *ensure* respect for international humanitarian law set out in those Conventions. This responsibility comes alive when there is a real risk that arms transferred to a party to a conflict may be used in violation of this law. Any such enabling of violations of international humanitarian law must cease at once. ...

Over the past five months of warfare, the Office has recorded many incidents that may amount to war crimes by Israeli forces, as well as indications that Israeli forces have engaged in indiscriminate or disproportionate targeting that violates international humanitarian law.

The launching by Palestinian armed groups of indiscriminate projectiles across southern Israel, and as far as Tel Aviv, also violates international humanitarian law, as does the continued holding of hostages. ...

Between 8 and 21 October 2023, Israel imposed a complete ban on all supply of aid, food, fuel and electricity to Gaza. Since then, Israel has continued to hinder humanitarian assistance. All people in Gaza are at imminent risk of famine. Almost all are drinking salty and contaminated water. Healthcare across the territory is barely functioning. ...

The blockade and siege imposed on Gaza amount to collective punishment, and may also amount to the use of starvation as a method of war – both of which, committed intentionally, are war crimes.

In addition, almost all the population of Gaza has been forcibly displaced, and thousands of people have been detained, many of them incommunicado, in conditions that may amount to enforced disappearance. ...

The prospect of an Israeli ground assault on Rafah would take the nightmare being inflicted on people in Gaza into a new dimension. ...

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces' use of airstrikes, attack helicopters, anti-tank missiles, shoulder-fired explosive projectiles and other weapons of war, has continued to increase, with lethal results, including killings of children. The report also notes a growing pattern of Israeli forces preventing paramedics

from reaching Palestinians, including children, who have been injured ...

From 1 January to 6 October, last year had already seen the highest levels of violence by Israeli military personnel and settlers against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since United Nations records began in 2005. From 7 October last year to 23 February this year, at least 401 Palestinians in the West Bank were killed, 102 of them children. The vast majority of cases that the Office has monitored raise concerns of unlawful killings, including extra-judicial killings. ...

The goal is to achieve a safer, more peaceful future for all, and the war in Gaza is taking Palestinians and Israelis further from that goal every day. ...

Accountability must be served on all sides. A raft of measures to re-establish human rights, equality, accountability and justice must be adopted across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. ...

Keeping Palestinians and their rights walled off – "out of sight, out of mind" – has not worked in 56 years, and it can never, ever work. The core challenge of building peace is for all to see and fully grasp the humanity of the other, overcoming mindsets that have been deeply engraved by generations of harm and rage, and which conceal the truth: that people – Palestinian and Israeli *people* – are being cruelly harmed. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/02/turk-calls-end-carnage-gaza>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3539>

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

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

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

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

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 5 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/martyns-law-standard-tier-consultation>

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