



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Islamophobia

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [19699] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2024 to Question 10238 on Islamophobia, whether the Government has provided funding to organisations other than Tell MAMA to provide support to the victims of anti-Muslim hatred.

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [19700] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2024 to Question 10238 on Islamophobia, whether his Department defines anti-Muslim hatred as a manifestation of (a) racial, (b) religious or (c) other discrimination as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Religious Hatred

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [19701] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which (a) domestic and (b) international (i) leaders and (ii) experts his Department has sought views from on how religious hatred is experienced by British communities; and what views and perspectives they have shared.

Lee Rowley: I refer the Hon Member to the Secretary of State's oral statement made on 14 March 2024 ([Official Report, HC, Volume 747, Column 452](#)).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19699>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19700>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19701>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10238>

Muslims: Safety

Sarah Owen (Labour) [19480] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to his Department's news story of 11 March 2024 entitled Government commits more funding to protect UK Muslims, what the eligibility criteria for applications for that funding will be; how bids for funding will be (a) assessed and (b) decided upon; and which Government department will be responsible for providing that funding.

Tom Tugendhat: In light of increased reports of anti-Muslim hatred following the start of the Israel/Hamas conflict, an additional £4.9 million was made available in October for protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools, bringing total funding available for 2023/24 to £29.4 million. The Government has confirmed that this level of funding will now be maintained annually through to 2027/28.

Mosques and Muslim faith community centres can register for protective security measures through the Home Office's Protective Security for Mosques Scheme on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). The scheme provides physical protective security measures, such as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing. Due diligence checks are carried out by the Home Office; for example, to confirm that applicants are eligible registered charities. Following approval, applicants receive a site survey to assess the most suitable security measures for their site, which are funded by the Home Office and installed by the Department's delivery partner. Security officer services will also become available through the scheme later this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/19480>

The news story referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-commits-more-funding-to-protect-uk-muslims>

House of Lords Written Answer

Schools: Bullying

Baroness Sherlock (Labour) [HL3183] To ask His Majesty's Government what data they collect on the religious identity of children who are bullied in schools.

Baroness Barran: The department does not hold information on the religious identity of children that are bullied in schools.

The 'National behaviour survey' publishes data on a number of behaviour related topics, including bullying. The latest report, based on data from 2021/22, stated that 3% of those surveyed, who said they had been bullied, said it was due to their religion or belief. The 'National behaviour survey' can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64809defb32b9e0012a963ce/National Behaviour Survey academic year 2021 to 22 report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64809defb32b9e0012a963ce/National_Behaviour_Survey_academic_year_2021_to_22_report.pdf)

The department is providing over £3 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. This includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate-related bullying.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-11/hl3183>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Khan Review: Threats to Social Cohesion And Democratic Resilience: A New Strategic Approach

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fdbfd265ca2ffef17da79c/The_Khan_review.pdf

Rapid Evidence Review on Harassment and Censorship

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd7b5565ca2f001b7da8c5/Rapid_Evidence_Review_on_Harassment_and_Censorship.pdf

Rapid Review: Measuring Social Cohesion

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd7230f1d3a0001132adc4/Rapid_Review_Measuring_Social_Cohesion.pdf

Shared Social Values: Rapid Evidence Assessment prepared for Dame Sara Khan's Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience, acting through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd731ef1d3a0001d32ade2/Shared_Social_Values.pdf

What works in Social Cohesion and Overcoming Tensions: Rapid Evidence Assessment prepared for Dame Sara Khan's Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience, acting through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd740165ca2f00117da8ad/What_Works_in_Social_Cohesion_and_Overcoming_Tensions.pdf

Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience: Analysis of the Call for Evidence

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd791c65ca2f00117da8b6/Independent_review_of_social_cohesion_and_resilience_-_Analysis_of_the_call_for_evidence.pdf

Freedom Restricting Harassment Research Report

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fd7647f1d3a0001132add5/Freedom-restricting_Harassment_Omnibus_Research_Report.pdf

FRH omnibus poll: freedom-restricting harassment survey tables

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fdb53365ca2ffef17da790/FRH_Omnibus_Poll_-_Freedom-restricting_harassment_Survey_Tables.xlsx

TOP

Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Kirsten Oswald (SNP) [563] 90th anniversary of the Wiener Holocaust Library – That this House commends the brilliant work and resources of the Wiener Holocaust Library, located on Russell Square, London; notes the Library is one of the world's foremost and extensive archives on the Holocaust, Nazi era, and genocide; understands the Library was founded in 1934 by Dr Alfred Wiener, a prominent campaigner against Nazism in the 1920s and 30s, after he fled Nazi Germany for Amsterdam where he set up the Jewish Central

Information Office (JCIO) at the request of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association to collect information about the Nazis and the treatment of Jews; recognises that the Library moved to the UK following the pogrom of 1938 and that the JCIO was increasingly referred to as Dr Wiener's Library during the war, leading to its eventual renaming; further notes the Library contains some of the earliest accounts produced by survivors of the Holocaust, that it holds the UK's digital copy of the International Tracing Service Archive, which it puts at the service of survivors, descendants of victims, and academics and that the Library serves to be a living memorial to the evils of the past, engaging with people of all backgrounds and ages in understanding the Holocaust; highlights that the Library marked its 90th anniversary in February 2024; further commends the Library's ongoing efforts opposing antisemitism and other forms of intolerance; and wishes everyone involved with the Wiener Holocaust Library all the very best as they continue their vital work.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/62060>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

David Simmonds (Conservative) [902170] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Will Quince (Conservative) [902179] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Judith Cummins (Labour) [902180] What steps [the Minister] is taking with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs to increase the number of aid shipments to the middle east.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps): There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. The UK, including the Ministry of Defence, is working collectively with allies, partners and international organisations to deliver desperately needed aid to the Gazan population.

David Simmonds: My constituents are rightly proud of the work that our armed forces are doing to facilitate the delivery of aid, to prevent a colossal humanitarian catastrophe. What further steps can be taken to ensure that British aid finds its way to civilians in need, rather than into the hands of Hamas fighters?

Grant Shapps: That is one of the greatest challenges in the current situation. We are working with the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme, the Egyptian Red Crescent and others to ensure that aid gets to the right places. That is extremely challenging, and has slowed down aid delivery.

Will Quince: The Israeli Government have said that they want to "flood" Gaza with aid. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that we will work with our partners globally to get more aid into the hands of civilians in Gaza, and will assist the Israelis to deliver on that pledge as soon as possible?

Grant Shapps: I inform my hon. Friend that we have already delivered 74 tonnes of humanitarian aid via the RAF, and 87 tonnes through the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. In addition, we are pursuing land, air and maritime routes.

Judith Cummins: With half of Gaza already starving and the rest teetering on the edge of famine, and the UN Security Council voting for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, access to humanitarian aid is crucial. This month, the Foreign Secretary stated that the UK would support the building of a temporary pier in Gaza to allow hundreds of extra daily truckloads

of aid into the strip. Will the Secretary of State outline what steps he is taking, along with the Foreign Secretary, to ensure that the pier is constructed as quickly as possible?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Lady will be pleased to hear that I have sent teams both to Tampa to work with US Central Command and to the region to help with planning and constructing that pier. In addition, right at the beginning of the conflict, I ensured that we did hydrographic research, to aid in exactly this kind of situation, when the conditions were right to get a pier built. This is not a trivial endeavour, but we are working to deliver the pier as quickly as possible; there is the potential to get 2.5 million meals a day to Gaza.

Emma Hardy (Labour): The UK Government's ability to deliver humanitarian aid depends on the UK's relationship with its middle eastern partners. What impact does the Secretary of State think that recent events and UK Government foreign policy decisions have had on that crucial relationship with those middle eastern partners?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Lady will be pleased to hear that the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and I have been very proactive in speaking to and making multiple visits to the region. I have visited the majority of countries in the middle east and Gulf region to discuss exactly the points that she has raised. There is now a large-scale programme of using a pier to get food in, in addition to the many other efforts made. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince) pointed out, the issue is not just getting the aid there, but then distributing it; that is a great concern. ...

Dave Doogan (SNP): When will the Government make a further public determination on Israel's commitment to international humanitarian law, given the man-made famine unfolding in northern Gaza, which is compounded by Israeli moves to obstruct access to aid? If the UK finds, as the UN Secretary-General, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International did, that the Israeli Government and the Israel Defence Forces have violated international law, what steps will the UK Government take to prohibit further arms sales to Israel, pending a resolution of the situation? Given that the Security Council has just called for a ceasefire, what steps will the Government take through the defence sector to accelerate all available aid for civilians in Gaza?

Grant Shapps: It is a pity to ask all those questions without referencing the 100-plus hostages who are still being held by Hamas, who brutally slaughtered the population deliberately rather than as a by-product of war. The hon. Gentleman asks a number of questions. I can tell him that on arms exports to Israel, an issue for which I am responsible, it is, to put it in proportion—I think, from the top of my head—just £48 million for the past year. The numbers are actually very small indeed. He will know that his latter question is one for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-25/debates/956BB60B-5896-463E-9BCD-698E826EF9E4/GazaHumanitarianAid>

Topical Questions: Defence

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [902190] The Government have previously refused to confirm or deny whether Israeli F-35s have been using RAF airbases or, indeed, other military co-operation between the UK and Israel. Given the decision of the International Court of Justice, and now the decision of the UN Security Council to call for an immediate ceasefire, what are the operational or policy reasons that deny UK citizens the right to know whether their Government have been complicit in Israeli genocide in Gaza?

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heappey): We do not comment on operational matters of that sort.

Greg Smith (Conservative) [902189] Qatar hosts Hamas's most senior leaders in Doha, and should have been applying far more pressure on the terror group to release the Israeli hostages and to surrender. Does my right hon. Friend agree that Qatar's malign activities

bolster our adversaries and therefore weaken our own defence?

James Heapey: I am not entirely sure that I do agree. I will leave the Foreign Office to talk about the diplomatic angles that it is pursuing, but in my experience, Qatar has been an incredibly helpful partner across a whole load of things over the past few years. We enjoy the opportunity to strengthen that partnership, both through the sale of UK-built defence capabilities and through increasingly operating together in areas of mutual concern. It is a relationship on which the UK can build further, and has great potential.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-25/debates/CC7DEA99-4265-4FCB-8FF0-C7C2C25BA9E2/TopicalQuestions#contribution-35989FB6-DAB5-415D-A099-DD707431FE6E>

Topical Questions: Defence

Paul Howell (Conservative): Like many colleagues across the House, I attended the all-party parliamentary group for UK-Israel and Friends of Israel event. We were joined by two released hostages and a delegation consisting of young siblings, sons, daughters, grandchildren and cousins of those being held hostage in Gaza. It is now five months since the hostages were taken, so will the Secretary of State ensure that those victims remain right at the front of his mind in all decisions that are taken on the middle east?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend can absolutely have that assurance. It is shocking to see what is happening in the region, but it is too often forgotten—including in this House today by some Opposition Members—that this all began with the taking of those hostages. We will never forget.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-25/debates/CC7DEA99-4265-4FCB-8FF0-C7C2C25BA9E2/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EB7FA33C-DDDB-4878-8DA0-6CA5AF48E6DE>

Topical Questions: Defence

Jessica Morden (Labour) [902194] Tens of thousands of pregnant women in Gaza are suffering from malnutrition and are at serious risk of delivering their babies unsafely and without healthcare. Will the Secretary of State outline what steps he is taking, along with the Foreign Secretary, to support the delivery of food and medical supplies to those particularly vulnerable women?

Grant Shapps: We are working to try to bring supplies to all the citizens of Gaza. I did not run through the list of provisions, but it does include provisions for those in medical need, particularly women who may be pregnant. As I mentioned, we are working on plans with the Americans in particular, but also with the Jordanians, to provide vastly greater amounts of aid into Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-25/debates/CC7DEA99-4265-4FCB-8FF0-C7C2C25BA9E2/TopicalQuestions>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Travel Information

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [18874] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make it his policy to change the travel advisory guidance on Israel so that areas not directly affected by the Gaza conflict are no longer classified as essential travel only.

Andrew Mitchell: Travel advice is constantly under review and regularly updated. How the FCDO determines travel advice can be found at the dedicated gov.uk site:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-foreign-commonwealth-development-office-travel-advice#how-we-compile-travel-advice>

Specific advice for travelling to Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories can be found at the dedicated Gov.uk site:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-15/18874>

Middle East: International Assistance

Paul Howell (Conservative) [902173] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on helping to ensure stability in the Middle East.

Grant Shapps: The UK is working tirelessly to preserve stability in the Middle East and as such I have regular discussions with regional partners and our international allies including with NATO. These discussions cover a range of topics, including the conflict in Gaza and requirement for humanitarian assistance to our work with partners on protecting and deterring Houthi attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/902173>

Gaza: Ramadan

Emma Hardy (Labour) [18772] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to help support (a) civilians and (b) faith groups observe Ramadan in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK is a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and calls for places of worship to be respected. We want Israel to use all possible measures to protect the sanctity of holy sites. We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets.

Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We are working with partners to help get aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air. We also continue to call 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/2024-03-14/18772>

Gaza: Humanitarian Pauses

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [19262] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the prospect of an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We engage closely with the US on both this and wider aspects of the conflict. On 13 March, the UK, US, and regional partners took part in ministerial consultations to advance a maritime corridor to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza. On 7 March the Foreign Secretary spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock about the situation in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary also met and raised this with Foreign Ministers of international partner countries, including the US, at the Munich Security Conference in February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-12/18262>

UNRWA: Finance

Steve McCabe (Labour) [18833] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what funds his Department contributed to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in each of the last five years.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK provided the following funding to UNRWA in each of the last five financial years:

FY 2019 - 20: £65.5 million

FY 2020 - 21: £65 million

FY 2021 - 22: £11 million

FY 2022 - 23: £18.7 million

FY 2023 - 24: £35 million

The UK provided £35 million to UNRWA this financial year, including an uplift of £16 million for the Gaza humanitarian response, all of which was disbursed before the recent allegations came to light. No more British funding is due this financial year. We are pausing any future funding of UNRWA.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-15/18833>

Hammas: UNRWA

Alan Brown (SNP) [19634] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2024 to Question 15935 on Hammas: UNRWA, whether he received evidence from (a) the Israeli government, (b) other governments and (c) third parties that workers for the UN Relief and Works Agency were (i) complicit and (ii) participants in the Hammas terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: The UN Secretary-General has commissioned two independent investigations; one by the Office for Internal Oversight Services, and one on UNRWA neutrality policies and systems, which is being led by Catherine Colonna. We are following these investigations closely. We continue to urge Israel and all parties with relevant information to cooperate fully.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19634>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/15935>

Gaza: Ports

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [18211] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on visa controls at the US temporary sea port into Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: I have not discussed the specific issue of visa controls at the planned temporary pier with my US counterpart. The UK Government is in regular contact with partners, including Cyprus, the US, UAE and others, about a range of operational matters with regard to the proposed maritime corridor, including planning efforts to establish the temporary pier.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-12/18211>

Gaza: Health Services

Emma Hardy (Labour) [18771] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure the safety of health workers in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister have underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza, and to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities.

We need a humanitarian pause now to allow humanitarian actors and Gazans to operate and move safely, and enable hostages to be released.

We need Israel to ensure effective systems to guarantee the safety of aid convoys, humanitarian operations and IDP returns, and facilitate access.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-14/18771>

Gaza: Food Supply

Dan Carden (Labour) [19695] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report entitled Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, published in March 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the analysis in that report on the likelihood of imminent famine in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. The UK and our partners are stepping up our efforts to get aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

Israel must take action to allow more aid into Gaza, including scaling up the Jordan corridor, opening a crossing in northern Gaza (Karni, Erez or a new crossing point), fully opening Ashdod Port for aid delivery and increasing screening capacity at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana to seven days a week and extended hours.

The UK is doing all it can to get as much food into Gaza as possible. We recently announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid are being distributed by the World Food Programme on the ground. This is our largest delivery of aid to Gaza in this crisis. This follows 750 tonnes of UK funded food aid arriving in Gaza in December, delivered through the World Food Programme, followed by a second delivery of 315 tonnes in January. Last month the UK and Jordan also air-dropped life-saving food and medicines directly to the Tal Al-Hawa hospital in northern Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19695>

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report referred to above can be read at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-uk-aid-delivery-enters-gaza-to-feed-275000-people>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Alan Brown (SNP) [19633] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on Israel's (a) policy on determining what aid is allowed into Gaza and (b) compliance with international humanitarian law on the entry of goods for the civilian population in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have pressed the urgency of getting significantly more aid into Gaza to alleviate the desperate situation with Israeli counterparts.

We are calling on Israel to increase access for aid through land routes, scale up the Jordan corridor with a streamlined screening and delivery process, open a crossing in northern Gaza (Karni, Erez or a new crossing point), fully open Ashdod Port for aid delivery and increase screening capacity at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana to seven days a week and extended hours.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/19633>

Middle East: Humanitarian Aid

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [18935] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs to increase the number of aid shipments to the Middle East.

James Heapey: Defence works very closely with and to support the FCDO, who lead on humanitarian support, to make sure that aid shipments are delivered as rapidly, efficiently and safely as possible. We have supported the delivery of hundreds of tonnes of life-saving aid for Gaza, including by air, land and maritime routes. We are doing everything we can to get far more aid in, exploring new routes and pressing Israel to open more crossings and lift restrictions. The Secretaries of

State regularly engage on this matter.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-15/18935>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Israel

Richard Burgon (Labour) [19408] 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 investigation by the UN into an Israeli military airstrike on a residential compound in Al Mawasi in Gaza on 18 January 2024.

Richard Burgon (Labour) [19409] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has investigated whether UK arms were used in the Israeli military airstrike on a residential compound in Al Mawasi in Gaza on 18 January 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary has underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza, and ensure effective systems to guarantee the safety of humanitarian operations. It must take all possible measures to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities.

We continue to raise this with Israel at the highest levels.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/19408>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/19409>

The findings of the investigation referred to above are not currently available online.

Israel: West Bank

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [18265] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help de-escalate tensions in the West Bank; and whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in Israel on their (a) withholding of work permits and (b) blocking of travel by Palestinians from the West Bank.

Andrew Mitchell: The Government maintains a regular dialogue with Israeli counterparts and partners on a range of issues relating to the conflict, including steps Israel must take to deescalate tensions in the West Bank. This includes halting settlement expansion, holding to account those responsible for extremist settler violence and releasing frozen funds.

On 12 February, the UK announced new sanctions against extremist Israeli settlers who have violently attacked Palestinians in the West Bank. These sanctions follow the announcement by the Foreign Secretary in December that the UK plans to ban those responsible for settler violence from entering the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-12/18265>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

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

House of Lords Written Answers

UNRWA

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) [HL3122] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton on 5 March (HL Deb col 1544), whether they have received the interim report of the UN concerning allegations surrounding UNRWA staff members' involvement in the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel; whether they have any plans to reinstate funding to UNRWA; and what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of UNRWA in delivering aid in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware that the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services has released an interim report to the UN Secretary-General. We are pressing Catherine Colonna to produce a rapid interim report on the investigation into UNRWA's neutrality.

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, and the wider region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/hl3122>

The remarks referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-05/debates/118562C7-2918-4CEB-94AF-9A30F8F31558/ForeignAffairs#contribution-8DB16C07-B265-4B63-AF83-C09C9AA698E7>

Hamis: UNRWA

The Earl of Sandwich (Crossbench) [HL3126] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the continuing role of the UNRWA in aid distribution in Gaza following allegations against some of the staff.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK provided £35 million to UNRWA this financial year, including an uplift of £16 million for the Gaza humanitarian response, all of which was disbursed before the recent allegations came to light. No more British funding is due this financial year and we are pausing any future funding of UNRWA. Our decision to pause future funding to UNRWA has had no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response. Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands and we are supporting 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/2024-03-07/hl3126>

UNRWA: Finance

The Earl of Sandwich (Crossbench) [HL3127] To ask His Majesty's Government what impact the UK's suspension of funding for UNRWA had on its performance in delivering aid to Gaza in the last financial year; and what is their forecast of funding in 2024.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK provided £35 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) this financial year, including an uplift of £16 million for the Gaza humanitarian response, all of which was disbursed before the recent allegations came to light. No more British funding is due this financial year and we are pausing any future funding of UNRWA.

Our decision to pause future funding has no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response. We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to people in Gaza who desperately need it, including through other UN agencies and British charities. On 13 March, the Government announced a further £10 million in aid funding to bring UK support to more than £100 million this financial year. UK funding has supported the work of partners including the British Red Cross, World Food Programme, UNICEF and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to deliver vital supplies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/hl3127>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-humanitarian-push-as-150-tonnes-of-uk-aid-enters-gaza>

The following four questions all received the same answer

Norwegian Refugee Council: Finance

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3148] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they fund directly any local partner organisations of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3149] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any role in selecting and overseeing those local partner organisations of the Norwegian Refugee Council that receive money donated by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; and, if so, what procedures are used.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3150] To ask His Majesty's Government whether, before making donations to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), they carry out counter-terrorism vetting of the NRC and its local partner organisations; and whether they are aware of any counter-terrorism vetting by the NRC itself of its local partner organisations.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3151] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are aware of any funds donated by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to the Norwegian Refugee Council being transferred to local partner organisations that have been designated as terrorist organisations by the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is a leading international NGO and a trusted aid partner to the FCDO providing life-saving support to vulnerable populations around the world. The FCDO has a longstanding relationship with NRC, which is headquartered and registered in Oslo. NRC has a UK presence and was registered as a UK charity in December 2023.

FCDO funds go directly to NRC, which in turn may provide funds to its local partner organisations. The exact selection process and any HMG involvement will vary according to the programme and context. The FCDO carries out due diligence assessments of partners it funds directly, including the NRC. The FCDO's Programme Operating Framework and associated guidance enables staff to ensure that FCDO partners in receipt of aid funds are operating in compliance with sanctions and counter-terrorism legislation. The FCDO due diligence process should consider whether partners have procedures in place to manage the risk of aid diversion in their delivery chains, such as the risk of support to sanctioned entities or proscribed terrorist groups.

We are not aware of any funds provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to the Norwegian Refugee Council being transferred to local partner organisations that have been designated as terrorist organisations by the government of Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-08/hl3148>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-08/hl3149>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-08/hl3150>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-08/hl3151>

UK Parliament Petition

UNRWA Funding

Martyn Day (SNP) [P002942] I rise to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Linlithgow and East Falkirk in relation to United Nations Relief and Works Agency funding. My constituents have been deeply troubled by the scenes emerging from Gaza, where unprecedented levels of human suffering have been witnessed. Tens of thousands of innocent women, children and civilians have already been killed, and a quarter of Gazans are at risk of death from starvation and destitution. Humanitarian aid is now beyond critical.

I think it worth pointing out that the petition was prepared prior to Israel's refusal to allow UNRWA aid into the north—effectively a death sentence for many.

The petition states: “The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the UK Government to help protect the rights and lives of those affected by the War in Gaza by reallocating funds to the UNRWA to ensure the immediate deliverance of humanitarian assistance to address the adverse threat to life of Palestinians.

And the petitioners remain, etc.”

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk,

Declares that the crisis in Gaza has already resulted in thousands of deaths and shows no sign of a resolution; further declares that UNRWA has warned that not enough aid is entering the besieged Gaza strip, and that a quarter of the Gazan population has been determined as an IPC Stage 5 crisis, which means that they are under immediate threat of death from starvation and destitution; notes that whilst the allegations against the 12 employees of the UNRWA are serious and must be investigated thoroughly, the UNRWA operates in the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan as well as Gaza, and the UK government punishing civilians in these places by pausing funding will have significant humanitarian repercussions.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the UK Government to help protect the rights and lives of those affected by the War in Gaza by reallocating funds to the UNRWA to ensure the immediate deliverance of humanitarian assistance to address the adverse threat to life of Palestinians.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-25/debates/3D2562B5-0FA9-4BE6-AAAA-13D0CF222D52/UNRWAFunding>

House of Commons Library Briefing

UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9900/CBP-9900.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We need to begin to focus on how we chart the way towards a sustainable peace, without a return to fighting: UK statement at the UN Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East Peace Process.

... Israel continues to deal with the brutal horror and the aftermath of the October 7th attacks and Hamas continues to hold innocent hostages continue in Gaza. The UK condemns these attacks unequivocally. Israel has a right to defend itself and ensure such an attack can never happen again.

At the same time, innocent Palestinians are facing unfathomable human suffering in Gaza. The latest IPC report stated that there is an imminent risk of famine. Disease is on the rise. A devastating humanitarian crisis is worsening day by day. The UK agrees with the recommendations in the IPC report.

President, I wish to make three points:

First, the UK has long been calling for an immediate humanitarian pause in fighting, to get aid in and hostages out, leading to a sustainable ceasefire. Yesterday's adoption of Resolution 2728 delivered just that, we now need to see its full implementation. ...

Second, Israel needs to do more to ensure significantly more live-saving aid can reach those in need in Gaza. This includes opening Ashdod Port and Kerem Shalom in full and

to their maximum operating capacity, issuing visas to UN workers and aid agencies. And ensuring effective deconfliction to guarantee the safety of aid convoys. ...

We are also deeply concerned to hear reports that Israel has blocked UNRWA's access to Northern Gaza. We call on Israel to ensure urgently the UN can deliver food aid immediately to those living in the North, many of whom are at greatest risk of starvation.

Third, we are alarmed by the continued expansion of settlements and unprecedented levels of settler violence in the West Bank, including the most recent Israeli announcement of the denomination of 1,976 acres of land in the Jordan Valley as state land. We are clear; settlements are a violation of international law, and we must continue to take further steps to hold those to account who undermine the steps to peace in the West Bank.

Finally, we need to begin to focus on how we chart the way towards a sustainable peace without a return to fighting.

That means:

- Removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel.
- Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza.
- The formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package.
- And a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in security and peace. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-need-to-begin-to-focus-on-how-we-chart-the-way-towards-a-sustainable-peace-without-a-return-to-fighting-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

The UK has long called for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in: UK statement at the UN Security Council

... President, the United Kingdom has long been calling for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life, as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in.

That is what this resolution calls for and why the United Kingdom voted yes on this text.

President, Israel continues to reckon with the brutal horror of the October 7 attacks, and innocent hostages continue to be held by Hamas in Gaza. Israel has a right to defend itself and ensure such an attack can never happen again.

We regret that this resolution has not condemned the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on the 7th of October. The UK condemns these attacks unequivocally.

This resolution sets out the urgent demand for the unconditional release of all hostages. And we welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to this end.

The intense suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza shows no sign of abating and a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes.

The resolution sends a clear and united message on the need for International Humanitarian Law to be upheld, and for aid to be scaled up urgently including the lifting of all barriers impeding its delivery.

President, the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister have reiterated these messages in our contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders in recent weeks. We call for this resolution to be implemented immediately.

President, we need to focus on how we chart the way from an immediate humanitarian pause to a lasting, sustainable peace without a return to fighting.

That means the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza,

accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas' 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 of Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side, in security and peace.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-has-long-called-for-an-immediate-humanitarian-pause-leading-to-a-sustainable-ceasefire-as-the-fastest-way-to-get-hostages-out-and-aid-in-uk-s>

David Cameron The UK has long been calling for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life, as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in. The @UN Security Council has just voted to advance that goal.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1772315525395226691

David Cameron This follows the EU leaders last week at the EU Council calling for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1772315902064624092

David Cameron So now we need to focus on how we chart the way from an immediate humanitarian pause towards a lasting, sustainable peace without a return to fighting. We need to focus on how we chart the way from an immediate humanitarian pause towards a lasting, sustainable peace without a return to fighting. That means:

- Removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel.
- Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza.
- The formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package.
- And a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in security and peace.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1772316423630590081

UK Science & Innovation Network Country Summary: Israel

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66028668f1d3a06c5532addb/SIN_Israel_snapshot.pdf

Ministry of Defence

UK Forces airdrop over 10 tonnes of food supplies to civilians in Gaza

The Royal Air Force airdropped over 10 tonnes of food supplies into Gaza for the first time ... as part of international efforts to provide life-saving assistance to civilians. The aid, which consists of water, rice, cooking oil, flour, tinned goods and baby formula, will support the people of Gaza.

The Defence Secretary authorised the airdrop following an assessed reduction in threat to the military mission and risk to civilians. ...

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: The UK has already tripled our aid budget to Gaza, but we want to go further in order to reduce human suffering. Today's airdrop has provided a further way to deliver humanitarian support ...

The hell that was unleashed by the October 7th Hamas attack has led to wide-scale

innocent loss of life. The UK's goal is to use every route possible to deliver life-saving aid, whether that is by road, air or new routes via the sea.

We also continue to call on Israel to provide port access and open more land crossings in order to increase incoming aid deliveries to Gaza. ...

This airdrop is part of ongoing UK efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and follows recent land deliveries of 2,000 tonnes of UK food aid to feed more than 275,000 people and thousands of UK-funded blankets, tents and other relief items, as well as the establishment of a full UK-funded field hospital in Gaza run by British charity UK-Med. The UK remains committed to ensuring aid reaches those who need it most, as Palestinians continue to face a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-forces-airdrop-over-10-tonnes-of-food-supplies-to-civilians-in-gaza>

Northern Ireland Assembly Written Answers

Armaments Manufacture: Israeli Defence Forces

Patsy McGlone (SDLP) [AQW 8281/22-27] To ask the Minister for the Economy to detail any support Invest NI has provided to companies involved in the manufacture of armaments for use by the Israeli Defence Forces in each of the last five years.

Minister for the Economy: Invest NI has not provided any support to companies involved in the manufacture of armaments for use by the Israeli Defence Forces within the last 5 years.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=392520>

Gaza: Refugees

Justin McNulty (SDLP) [AQW 7763/22-27] To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have lobbied the UK government to introduce a scheme to facilitate the reception of humanitarian refugees displaced by the war in Gaza.

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Immigration policy is not devolved and therefore the remit to establish schemes for people seeking refuge here remains with the Home Office.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=391152>

United Nations

Tor Wennesland: Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, Report of the Secretary-General on The Implementation of UNSCR 2334

... The resolution [2334] calls on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" and to "fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard." Nevertheless, settlement activities have continued and intensified.

In total some 4,780 housing units were advanced or approved in settlements in Area C in the occupied West Bank and in East Jerusalem. ...

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities demolished, seized, or forced people to demolish 300 structures, displacing 314 people, including 137 children. Sixteen structures were donor funded.

In a continuing trend, 35 Palestinians, including 17 children, left their West Bank

communities citing violence and harassment by settlers and shrinking grazing land. ...

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction.” Unfortunately, the devastating conflict in Gaza has continued, alongside daily violence in the occupied West Bank. ...

In Gaza, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health (MOH), from 8 December to 18 March, at least 14,550 Palestinians were killed, including approximately 4,200 women and 6,000 children, and at least 27,800 were injured. This brings the total reported by the MOH, since 7 October, to more than 31,790 Palestinians killed, a majority of whom are reportedly women and children.

According to Israeli sources 134 hostages are still being held captive, of some 250 taken hostage. Israeli sources also report over 1,461 Israelis and foreign nationals killed by Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups, including at least 338 women, 37 children and 633 members of the security forces, since 7 October, inclusive.

Hostilities remained intense across Gaza, with Israel conducting strikes from air, land and sea, resulting in tens of thousands of casualties, massive displacement of civilians and widespread destruction, including of civilian infrastructure. Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups continued to hold civilians hostage, launch attacks at Israeli forces and fire indiscriminate rockets towards Israel. ...

The IDF stated that its operations are targeting Hamas fighters and equipment, as well as tunnel networks and other facilities used for military purposes, including in or under civilian infrastructure.

Law and order are rapidly breaking down in Gaza as desperation grows. ...

Repeated attacks on health-care facilities have been reported in Gaza, resulting in the deaths of health-care workers, patients and internally displaced people sheltering in those locations.

On 15 March, the Prime Minister’s Office announced approval of plans for an Israeli military operation in Rafah, including steps to evacuate civilians from combat zones. ...

Meanwhile, violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued at alarming levels.

159 Palestinians, including two women and 43 children, were killed by Israeli security forces (ISF) during search-and-arrest operations, armed exchanges, airstrikes, demonstrations and other incidents. One Palestinian was killed by Israeli settlers, and another was killed either by Israeli forces or by settlers. A total of 1,150 Palestinians were injured, including 240 by tear gas inhalation and 394 by live ammunition.

According to Israeli sources, ten Israelis, including two women, one child and three security forces personnel, were killed and another 74 were injured by Palestinians in shooting, stabbing and ramming attacks and in rock- and Molotov cocktail-throwing and other incidents.

Israeli security forces carried out 1,937 search-and-arrest operations in the occupied West Bank, resulting in 2,119 Palestinians detained including at least 72 children. Israel currently holds at least 3,558 Palestinians in administrative detention. ...

Violence against Israelis by Palestinians also continued in shooting attacks in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem and in Israel. ...

Despite some restrictions, on 15 March, thousands of Muslim worshipers participated in Friday Ramadan prayers in Jerusalem’s Old City, with minimal confrontations. ...

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Nevertheless, such acts continued.

Marking 100 days since its 7 October attack, a senior Hamas official celebrated and vowed to repeat the event, calling it “a scaled-down model of the final war of liberation.” Ahead of the start of Ramadan, Hamas also called on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to escalate confrontations with Israel.

A number of Israeli officials called for the “voluntary migration” of Palestinians from Gaza

and the reestablishment of settlements there, with a minister posting on social media that Israel “should compel them until they say they want it. Continue to pressure them, using force, starvation, [and] difficult conditions.” An Israeli Member of Knesset called on Israel “To occupy, to annex, to destroy all the houses [in Gaza], to build large and spacious neighborhoods, large settlements.” ...

In Gaza, the humanitarian impact of the hostilities has been cataclysmic and is worsening daily. ...

The levels of humanitarian access and safety of humanitarian workers remain alarming, negatively impacting the humanitarian response, alongside operational constraints and pipeline limitations. Near daily Israeli denials and delays of coordinated movement including detentions of humanitarian workers and ineffective deconfliction mechanisms and the lack of approval for adequate communications equipment and armored vehicles make humanitarian work extremely dangerous. Aid convoys continue to face attacks, damaged roads and unruly mobs, amid a security vacuum. ...

On 29 December 2023, the Republic of South Africa instituted proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice concerning alleged violations in the Gaza Strip of Israel’s obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. On 26 January, the ICJ indicated provisional measures in the case.

On 29 January, Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh announced a Government reform program centered on improving accountability, reducing deficits, enhancing revenue and upgrading services. ...

During the reporting period, Israel provided information alleging 12 UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attacks. The employment contracts of the active staff members were terminated and the Secretary-General immediately activated an internal investigation, which has delivered an interim report. He also appointed an independent review group, which visited Israel and Palestine in March, to assess whether the Agency is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and to respond to allegations of serious breaches. ...

On 4 March, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict released findings that there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred in multiple locations during the 7 October attacks in Israel and that there was clear and convincing information that sexual violence has been committed against hostages and reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing against those still in captivity. ...

In closing, allow me to share the Secretary-General’s observations on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016).

1. I once again condemn the horrific armed attacks by Hamas and other groups on 7 October. ... The remaining hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. While in captivity, hostages must be treated humanely and allowed to receive visits and assistance from the Red Cross. ...
2. I am appalled by the immense scale of death, destruction, and human suffering wrought by Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, with civilian killings at a rate that is unprecedented. I condemn the killing of the thousands of civilians in Gaza, a majority of whom are reportedly women, children, and protected personnel.
3. Nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. I am concerned over what may be violations of international humanitarian law, including possible non-compliance with the requirements of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack. ... The entry of humanitarian supplies has been far below what is required. Hospitals must be respected and protected by all parties and should never become battlegrounds. ...
4. The life-threatening conditions facing the more than 1.7 million internally displaced persons within an ever-diminishing space in Gaza must be addressed immediately. I am extremely concerned by the possible nightmare of more than 1 million people

- being displaced again if Israel proceeds with its planned ground operation in Rafah. The world's leading experts on food insecurity also clearly document that famine in the northern part of Gaza is imminent. ... I call on Israel to fulfill its obligations under international law, including allowing and facilitating the rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access into and throughout Gaza. ...
5. I welcome the opening of a maritime corridor to deliver much-needed additional humanitarian assistance by sea, but reiterate that for aid delivery at scale there is no meaningful substitute to delivery by land.
 6. I reiterate my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire ...
 7. I am deeply concerned by continued high levels of violence and casualties in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. ... I call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law, including with regard to the proportional use of force, and ensure thorough, independent and prompt investigations into all instances of possible excessive use of force, holding those responsible to account.
 8. I am alarmed by attacks carried out by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, including in the proximity of Israeli Security Forces. I urge Israel, as the Occupying Power, to take immediate steps to abide by its obligations under international law to protect the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence. ...
 9. In the spirit of this Holy month of Ramadan, I reiterate the utmost need to uphold the status quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, taking into account the special and historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as custodian of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. ...
 10. I remain deeply troubled by the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. ...
 11. The demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures, including internationally funded humanitarian projects, entail numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. I call upon the Government of Israel to end this practice, in line with its international obligations ...
 12. I am disturbed by the multiple instances in which officials have engaged in dangerous provocations, incitement and inflammatory language ...
 13. I am encouraged by steps taken by the Palestinian Authority demonstrating its readiness to reform and welcome the implementation of the arrangement facilitated by Norway and agreed to by Israel and the PA that enables revenue transfer to the PA. ...
 14. I was appalled by the allegations that 12 UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attacks. These are being thoroughly and independently investigated, while a review on UNRWA's neutrality is also ongoing. I underscore that UNRWA remains the backbone of the UN humanitarian response in Gaza. The Agency remains indispensable and irreplaceable ...
 15. ... We must urgently address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. I regret that, despite intensive diplomatic efforts, we have not seen an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of hostages.
 16. It is also important to support efforts to strengthen the PA to enable it to effectively govern across the whole of the OPT. ... It is imperative to set the conditions for an agreed political framework that outlines tangible, irreversible steps towards ending the occupation and establishing a two-State solution – Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-report-secretary-general-implementation-un-scr-1>

UNSCR 2334, referred to above, can be read at

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334(2016))

Security Council Demands Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza for Month of Ramadan, Adopting Resolution 2728 (2024) with 14 Members Voting in Favour, United States Abstaining

After 171 days of war in Gaza, the Security Council ... adopted a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, while many speakers underscored that this is only the first step towards a permanent ceasefire.

Introducing the draft on behalf of the 10 elected Council members, the representative of Mozambique stressed the need to end the catastrophe in Gaza, which is “a clear threat to international peace and security”. The Council has been consistently unanimous in its agreement on the parties’ obligations to respect international law. While the adopted text is an important step the Council can build upon to address the situation in Gaza, he emphasized that it is essential to work towards a comprehensive ceasefire and a lasting peace in the region.

The speaker for the Russian Federation said that the fact his delegation learned of a proposal to replace the word “permanent” — in relation to a ceasefire in operative paragraph 1 — with weaker wording approximately an hour before today’s meeting was “unacceptable”. Also noting that the remaining text is too subject to interpretation, he said this could allow Israel to resume military operations in Gaza at any moment following the expiry of the ceasefire ... He, therefore, proposed an oral amendment to return the word “permanent” to operative paragraph 1.

By a vote of 3 in favour ... to 1 against ... with 11 abstentions, the Council rejected the amendment ...

The Council then adopted the resolution 2728 (2024) ... by a vote of 14 in favour to none against, with one abstention (United States). By its terms, it demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access to address their medical and other humanitarian needs.

By other terms, the Council emphasized the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance and reinforce the protection of civilians in Gaza...

“Finally, the Security Council is shouldering its responsibility,” said **Algeria’s delegate**, welcoming the adoption of this long-awaited resolution. ...

The United States’s representative said that while her delegation did not agree with everything in the resolution — and therefore was unable to vote in favour — it supports “some of the critical objectives in this non-binding resolution” and that the Council must make clear that the release of all hostages accompany any ceasefire. ...

France’s delegate said it was “high time” for the Council to establish a ceasefire, demand the release of hostages and call for comprehensive humanitarian assistance. “The Security Council’s silence on Gaza was becoming deafening,” he said. ...

“This vote should mark a return to greater humanity in the Middle East conflict,” said his counterpart from **Switzerland**, noting that it demonstrates the weight that elected members can have when the Council’s blockages disrupt the fulfilment of its mandate. “An immediate ceasefire is a priority step, but it is only the first step, given the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza,” she said. For the resolution to be effectively implemented, the immediate ceasefire must lead without delay to a durable, sustainable ceasefire. Similarly, given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that a large-scale operation in Rafah would have on the civilian population and humanitarian operations, such an operation must be avoided, she asserted. ...

The speaker for the United Kingdom said that her country has long called for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in ... nevertheless expressing regret that the text did not condemn the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October. Calling for the resolution’s

immediate implementation, she urged the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; the removal of Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel and its overseeing of Gaza; and the establishment of a political horizon providing a credible, irreversible path towards a two-State solution. [\[click here to read this speech in greater detail\]](#)

China's delegate ... said the current text is "unequivocal and correct" in its demand for an immediate ceasefire ... While "today's resolution comes too late", he said that it could still "bring long-awaited hope" if it is fully implemented.

For the first time, the Council is demanding the observance of an immediate ceasefire, even if limited for the month of Ramadan, noted **the speaker for the Russian Federation**. "Unfortunately, what happens after that ends remains unclear," he cautioned, noting that the word "lasting" could be interpreted in "various different ways". "We want to believe that this wording will be used in the interest of peace rather than advancing the inhumane Israeli operation against the Palestinians," he stressed, noting the wording "permanent" would be more precise. ...

The representative of Yemen, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, stated: "We should consider this resolution as a first step, leading to a binding resolution that stipulates the immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to compel Israel to immediately and without any preconditions cease the war." ...

"This resolution reaffirms that Israeli occupation forces do not have free reign in perpetrating massacres against women and children," he continued, warning that Israel's plans to launch a ground offensive against Rafah "will cause an unacceptable humanitarian catastrophe". Stressing that Israel must be held accountable for its crimes, he urged the imposition of strict sanctions on settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and on those who are inciting violence or perpetrating acts of violence against Palestinians.

The speaker for Israel, while noting that the Council was quick to condemn the recent terror attack in Moscow, pointed out that the organ still refuses to condemn "the most widespread and barbaric massacre suffered by the Jewish people since the Holocaust". Asking why the Council discriminates between Russians murdered at a concert and Israelis murdered at a music festival, he said: " Hamas has converted every inch of Gaza into a terror war machine right under the UN's nose — maybe with the help of some of the UN's agencies, like UNRWA." Turning to today's resolution, he said that — while the text denounces the taking of hostages — the Council has not taken a single step towards this end apart from symbolic words. He also pointed out that, so long as Hamas refuses to release the hostages as a result of diplomatic efforts, there is no way to secure their return other than through a military operation.

Thus, the Council's demand for a ceasefire — without conditioning such a measure on the release of hostages — undermines efforts to secure their release, he stressed. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine said: "It has taken 6 months, over 100,000 Palestinians killed and maimed, 2 million displaced, and famine for this Council to finally demand an immediate ceasefire." Today's adoption is "a vote for humanity and life to prevail". The Palestinians in Gaza pleaded and appealed, shouted, cried, cursed, prayed, and yet, continue to face death, destruction, deprivation, disease and famine. They are being killed in their homes, in the streets, hospitals, UN shelters and tents. "Their ordeal must come to an immediate end now," he declared, adding that, "there is no home sheltering them, no table to gather around and no food to eat". While such atrocities are being committed in broad daylight against defenceless civilians, Palestinian families cannot mourn or heal.

There can be no justification for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, he continued. Accepting any justification for such crimes is "renouncing our humanity and destroying the rule of international law beyond repair". The International Court of Justice ordered Israel to undertake immediate measures in relation to its mass and indiscriminate

killings of Palestinians. Instead of implementing this order, Israel has doubled down in the commission of its crimes. By using starvation as a weapon of war, it is responsible for the famine under way in Gaza. Further, Israel attacked civilians in the very places it asked them to hide. “It killed them if they stayed and killed them if they left.” Now it continues to threaten a ground operation in Rafah where it has pushed and confined Palestinians at the very edge of the Gaza Strip in yet another attempt to forcibly displace them. Despite its atrocities, Israel has been afforded impunity as countries continue to treat it as an ally, he pointed out. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15641.doc.htm>

UNSCR 2728, referred to above, is not yet available online but will shortly be published at [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728\(2024\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728(2024))

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

States must adhere to obligations under Genocide Convention to prevent further loss of life in Gaza, says Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese

Israel has destroyed Gaza during five months of military operations, the Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory, Francesca Albanese said today.

“The harrowing number of deaths, the irreparable harm done to those who survive, the systematic destruction of every aspect necessary to sustain life in Gaza – from hospitals to schools, from homes to arable land – and the particular harm to hundreds of thousands of children, and to pregnant and young mothers – this can only be interpreted as constituting prima facie evidence of an intention to systematically destroy the Palestinians as a group,” said Albanese in a report to the UN Human Rights Council today.

Following an analysis of Israel’s actions and patterns of violence in its onslaught on Gaza, underpinned by dehumanising rhetoric by high-ranking Israeli officials and often reflected in soldiers’ actions on the ground, the Special Rapporteur’s report found that the threshold indicating Israel’s commission of genocide had been met.

Since 7 October, Israel has killed over 32,333 Palestinians, including more than 13,000 children. Over 12,000 are presumed dead under the rubble and 74,694 wounded, many with life-changing injuries. Seventy percent of residential areas have been destroyed. Eighty percent of the entire population has been forcibly displaced. Thousands of families have lost loved ones or been wiped out entirely. Many could not bury and mourn their relatives and were forced instead to leave their bodies decomposing in homes, in the street or under the rubble. Thousands of Palestinians have been detained and systematically subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. Two million have been forced into hunger and starvation.

“The incalculable collective trauma will be experienced for generations to come,” the Special Rapporteur said.

The vehement anti-Palestinian discourse, which frames the entire Palestinian people in Gaza as enemies to be eradicated and forcibly removed has been pervasive across all segments of Israeli society, the expert said.

“Calls for violent annihilation from Israeli high-ranking officials with command authority aimed at soldiers on duty on the ground serve as compelling evidence of explicit and public encouragement to commit genocide,” Albanese said.

One of the key findings of Albanese’s report is that Israel’s executive and military leadership and soldiers have intentionally distorted foundational rules of international humanitarian law - distinction, proportionality and precaution - in an attempt to legitimise genocidal violence against the Palestinian people.

“By deliberately redefining the categories of human shields, evacuation orders, safe zones, collateral damage and medical protection, Israel has used their protective functions as

'humanitarian camouflage' to conceal its genocidal campaign," she said.

"Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza is an escalatory stage of a long-standing settler colonial process of erasure," said Albanese.

"For over 70 years, this process has suffocated the Palestinians as a people – demographically, culturally, economically and politically – crushing their inalienable right to self-determination in an attempt to displace them and expropriate and control their lands," she said.

"The ongoing Nakba must be stopped and remedied once and for all."

Albanese said her report was a call to the world to ensure that Israel and third states adhere to their non-derogable obligations under the Genocide Convention, to prevent further loss of life, help survivors rebuild their lives, and ensure full accountability under both individual criminal and State responsibility.

"This is an imperative owed to the victims of this highly preventable tragedy, and to future generations in Palestine," the Special Rapporteur said.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/states-must-adhere-obligations-under-genocide-convention-prevent-further>

Anatomy of a Genocide: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/HRC/55/73)

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session55/advance-versions/a-hrc-55-73-auv.pdf>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Debate

Christians: Persecution

col 542 **Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee (Non-affiliated):** ... In January, along with many other MPs and Peers, I attended the launch of the 2024 Open Doors World Watch List ... Every year, this organisation compiles a report which sets out the 50 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian. This year, the research found that more than 365 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith—around one in seven Christians worldwide.

For those of us living in the United Kingdom, it can often feel as if our faith is not respected and indeed is often belittled, even though we have an established Church here in England and Wales.

col 543 Back at Christmas in 2018, the then Bishop of Truro, now the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Winchester, was asked by the then Foreign Secretary ... to carry out a review into the global persecution of Christians; to map the extent and the nature of the persecution; to assess the quality of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office response; and finally to recommend changes in policy and practice to deal with the issue. The comprehensive final report, which was published in June 2019, noted that the problem was indeed a global phenomenon. ...

Religious persecution occurs to a third of the world's population in some form, with Christians being the most persecuted group, even though freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental human right. To make things worse, global persecution of Christians is underreported and therefore is not highlighted and responded to in an adequate way. ...

As we come to celebrate Easter in the Christian calendar and all the events that took place in Jerusalem in that Holy Week, we should pay more attention and do something about the fact that Christianity now faces being wiped out in parts of the Middle East, where its

roots go back the furthest. In the birthplace of Christ, Christian numbers are at 1.5% of the population. Understandably we have heard much about the plight of our Jewish friends in the region, and indeed the plight of all those living in the region, but rarely do we hear about the tiny Christian minority who are struggling to be heard, let alone helped. In Iraq, the population of Christians has plummeted from 1.5 million to now just over 100,000. Christianity, which has provided much-needed plurality in the region, is disappearing, and apart from the tragedy which that is for those Christian communities, it has a destabilising impact on the Middle East. ...

col 544 A subsection, if I may describe it as such, of the persecution of Christians is the treatment of Christian women. Put simply, they are more likely to be the victims of discrimination and persecution than their male counterparts. ...

Freedom of religion is almost a passport to securing other human rights, such as freedom from fear, the right to family life and the right to privacy. If freedom of religion is not protected, other rights will be overlooked and ignored as well. ...

col 545 Lord Moylan (Conservative): ... When I was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, I felt that we had reached a point where religious persecution had come to an end. On the whole, there was no persecution of Christian belief, certainly in the West, so I and a lot of others were rather surprised that, when John Paul II was elected Pope in 1978, he quite quickly expressed the worldview that he saw the Church as still being subject to persecution. It took some time to think that through. ... If you saw the persecution of the Church by Nazis and later under communism, you would have a very different view. ...

The persecution that John Paul II was familiar with growing up abated considerably as a result of the fall of the Iron Curtain, but that does not mean it has gone away. In fact, it is present in Europe in a new and virulent form ... We now see a very large number of attacks on churches in western Europe, prodigiously in France but also in Germany and Spain. We have even seen priests murdered in their churches in France and Spain in the last few years. In Europe, 852 hate crimes were identified in 2022 by the Vienna-based Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians, with attacks on places of worship, symbols and institutions. That represented a 44% increase. Arson attacks against churches in Europe were up by 75% in 2022. ...

col 546 It is important to think about where these attacks are coming from. In France and possibly other parts of Europe, they appear to be associated with Muslims, often illegal immigrants or people in a state of uncertainty who are not settled in that local society. In Canada, they appear to be associated with stories about mass graves of native children. In the United States ... they appear to be correlated with arguments about abortion ...

col 547 Lord Carey of Clifton (Crossbench): ... It is manifestly clear that some Christian groups are unfairly treated, abused, murdered and discriminated against in many parts of the world. ...

I do not think we can properly pursue this question without considering another question alongside it ... namely, does the United Kingdom value its foundational faith any longer? We seem to go out of our way to avoid the use of the word Christian and to speak of "British" values, as if they are a group of virtues standing alone. ...

Of course, it is important to recognise that we do not limit our concern to Christians only. We should care for everybody. However, the clear evidence is that the name of Christianity is a label of discrimination and suffering. ...

col 548 The Lord Bishop of Oxford: ... it is extremely sobering and moving to reflect that, according to Open Doors, 365 million Christians face some sort of persecution worldwide—about one in seven of the global Christian population. ...

However, this debate has a broader significance, because freedom of religion or belief, and violations against anyone, can be important indicators of the state of human rights in any context globally. As the former UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, said: "Freedom of religion or belief rightly has been termed a 'gateway'

to other freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association”. ...

... singling out Christians inevitably others them, increasing their vulnerability. It is also antithetical to the Christian faith itself to favour Christians over other faiths. Christianity puts no limit on its definitions of who is our neighbour, so it is wrong to argue theologically for special treatment of persecuted Christians. ...

We need to note and acknowledge in this debate that we have seen a regrettable increase in Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom since the terrible 7 October attacks and the devastating conflict in Gaza. The work of faith leaders building bridges, strong relationships and understanding locally has been a vital part of the local response to events in Israel and Gaza in my own city and county and across the country. ...

col 549 Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench): ... Some 80% of the world has a religious faith, and people of all faiths are persecuted ... this is a great week for Christianity, with Easter; but it is a great week for all monotheistic religions, with Jews having just celebrated Purim and Muslims celebrating Ramadan. But what singles out Christians is that 350 million of them—one in seven in 144 countries—are persecuted in every country where Article 18 is breached, and 13 Christians are killed each and every day because of their faith. ... Jonathan Sacks once said: “The persecution of Christians ... is one of the crimes against humanity of our time and I am appalled at the lack of protest it has evoked”. ...

col 551 The Earl of Sandwich (Crossbench): ... I have not taken much interest in persecuted Christians until now, because I have always assumed that Christianity had distinct advantages over other religions. There are stronger examples of the persecution of Muslims and Jews. I know this is a shamefully Eurocentric view, but I believe it reflects a widely held, if inaccurate, assumption of public opinion. ...

col 553 Lord Curry of Kirkharle (Crossbench): ... the data suggests that more Christians are being persecuted today than at any time in our history, and the number is increasing daily. ...

col 554 The freedom of Christians to worship and express their faith is being more and more constrained, and many are at risk of persecution and death. ... It is particularly concerning, when the world’s attention is diverted to Gaza and Ukraine or whatever the most recent high-profile tragedy happens to be, that many of these cases of Christian persecution go almost unnoticed. ...

col 558 Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): ... There is long-standing anxiety about political Islam, and many communities over centuries have been worried about political Christianity too. We in this country need to have a degree of self-awareness that established Churches have all too often been used by repressive or reactionary political leaders to deny rights rather than to give them. ...

col 559 ... given the context of the Middle East and what is happening in Gaza and Israel, this is a personal comment from my friend, Layla Moran, whose mother is a Christian Arab from Jerusalem and who has family members seeking shelter in the Holy Family Church in Gaza. She said: “I am on the side of basic humanity ... I am on the side of the Israeli community, the Palestinian community and the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities”.—[[Official Report, Commons, 25/10/23; col. 913.](#)]

Protecting people’s ability to practise their faith should be an element of basic humanity. ...

col 561 Baroness Sherlock (Labour): ... Pew research found that Christians and Muslims face harassment in a larger number of countries than any other group, but that is a measure of scale rather than specifically depth of persecution. Other religious minorities are facing persecution at a frightening rate across the world; and I agree that we should not conclude without acknowledging the position of the non-religious, since the right not to practise a religion, or to abandon or change one’s religion, is just as fundamental and absolutely central to Article 18. We should be championing freedom of religion or belief for all around the world. ...

History has shown us that violations of freedom of religion or belief do not happen in isolation. Countries that fail to respect religious freedom or the right to no belief invariably fail to respect other basic human rights also. The UK must continue to call out human rights violations and abuses wherever they are to be found if we are to play our part in ensuring a free world where all can flourish. It is a reminder to us of the paramount importance of tackling persecution around the world but also of tackling hate incidents in our own place. This includes tackling anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and, above all, working together to be the kind of country where people of all faiths and none can live well together, respect one another and build a world in which, as I said, all of us can flourish. ...

col 562 The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): ... Whether you are a practising Christian, Muslim or from any faith in our incredible country, the real test of your own faith is not just defending your own but standing up for the rights and beliefs of those of other faiths or, indeed, no faith. It is an incumbent and fundamental human right.

Across the world, the abuse and violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief is deeply concerning. ... Sometimes it is the unsaid that needs to be said, and Christian persecution is reflective of exactly what needs to be said. ...

Persecution can happen any time, anywhere, and we need to remain vigilant, whether it is in the east, west or anywhere across the globe. The UK Government are firm in our position that no one should be persecuted, abused or intimidated because of their faith, religion or belief. ...

col 563 We demonstrated the depth of our commitment two years ago, when, together with the Prime Minister's special envoy for freedom of religion or belief, I hosted an international ministerial conference. At that conference, we brought together over 800 faith and belief leaders and human rights actors, and 100 government delegations, to agree on a plan to promote and protect FoRB. Since the conference, we have taken several actions to build on the momentum. ...

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Oxford talked about essential human rights and reflecting on our own country and the rising tide of attacks on different faiths, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. As was rightly coined, we should be intolerant of religious intolerance. ...

col 564 ... we do not shy away from challenging those not meeting their obligations. ... I am reminded that I have raised in my interactions with Israeli interlocutors the importance of Jerusalem to the three Abrahamic faiths. During the current crisis, I have been in regular touch, including with imams and the Archbishop of Jerusalem. I pay tribute to his work. ...

col 565 I assure all noble Lords that the reports from the Bishop of Truro have been embedded; 22 recommendations were made some years ago, after an independent review of our work. Implementing the recommendations has been largely positive; it was assessed that most recommendations were at an advanced stage of delivery or in the process of being delivered. ...

I assure noble Lords that we remain committed to the key priorities of raising the issues of Christian persecution. ... Freedom of religion or belief must remain on the international agenda, and we continue to work with our international partners to forge a united approach to protecting and promoting not only freedom of religion but all human rights. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-25/debates/CB6143EE-0EAF-4202-9167-7F1D96B4F5E9/ChristiansPersecution>

The 2024 Open Doors World Watch List, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>

The Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at

<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

The Pew research referred to above can be read at

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/03/05/harassment-of-religious-groups-returned-to-peak-level-in-2021/>

The assessment of the implementation of recommendations of Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bishop-of-truros-independent-review-of-fcdo-support-for-persecuted-christians-assessment-of-recommendations-implementation/assessment-of-the-implementation-of-recommendations-of-bishop-of-truros-independent-review-of-fcdo-support-for-persecuted-christians>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

**** Criminal Justice Bill**

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

Amendment Paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0155/amend/criminal_rm_rep_0326.pdf

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

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

**** Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill**

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

Select Committee on the Constitution Report

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43319/documents/215686/default/>

Letter from Baroness Neville-Rolfe to Baroness Drake regarding her response to the Constitution Committee report on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill: freedom of expression, higher education providers, procedural fairness, financial penalties, devolution

<https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2024-0330/Constitution.pdf>

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

European Commission: 1st progress report of the EU antisemitism strategy

(closing date 19 April 2024)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14204-1st-progress-report-of-the-EU-antisemitism-strategy_en

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