



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

Scottish Parliament Motion

Pam Gosal (Conservative) [S6M-12705] Celebrating Eid ul-Fitr 2024 – That the Parliament extends its warm wishes to all those celebrating the festival of Eid ul-Fitr in Scotland, the UK, and across the world; understands that the joyous occasion follows 30 days of Ramadan, during which fasting occurs from dawn until dusk; further understands that it is a time to reflect on the values of Islam, emphasising family bonds and acts of charity; believes that, in a world where many face the impacts of war and adversity, these values hold even greater significance; recognises what it sees as the contributions of Muslims across Scotland, which span civic society, healthcare, including the NHS, education, business and politics; appreciates what it considers to be the efforts of Muslim communities to enrich Scottish culture and weave a stronger social fabric for Scotland; wishes for this Eid to bring joy, unity and compassion to all, and further wishes Eid Mubarak to all.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-12705>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Emma Hardy (Labour) [19942] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 403 on Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of aid supplies to the Gaza strip; and what recent steps he has taken to support (a) Islamic Relief, (b) the Egyptian Red Crescent and (c) other aid agencies to deliver aid.

Andrew Mitchell: Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

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

We are also calling on Israel to increase access for aid through land routes and fully open Ashdod Port, scale up the Jordan corridor to the 500 trucks a week with a streamlined screening and delivery process, open a crossing in northern Gaza (Karni, Erez or a new crossing point), and increase screening capacity at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana to seven days a week and extended hours.

In addition, we want to see an expansion of the types of aid allowed into Gaza and Israel authorise at least 200,000 litres of fuel per day, as well as the provision of electricity, water and telecommunications, to both the north and the south of Gaza. On 13 March the Foreign Secretary announced an additional £10 million to bring UK support to more than £100million this financial year. UK funding has supported the work of partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF and Egyptian Red Crescent Society. On 20 March the Foreign Secretary also announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid will be distributed by the World Food Programme. This will be the largest UK aid delivery so far and will support 275,000 people.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-21/19942>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-07/403>

The announcements referred to above can be read at

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

and

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

Gaza: Israel

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [19710] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart on immediately rehabilitating (a) horticulture, (b) livestock farming, (c) fishing and (d) other food production systems in Gaza.

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

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/2024-03-20/19710>

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>

Downing Street

PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel

The Prime Minister ... said he was appalled by the killing of aid workers, including three British nationals, in an airstrike in Gaza yesterday and demanded a thorough and transparent independent investigation into what happened.

The Prime Minister said far too many aid workers and ordinary civilians have lost their lives in Gaza and the situation is increasingly intolerable. The UK expects to see immediate action by Israel to end restrictions on humanitarian aid, deconflict with the UN and aid agencies, protect civilians and repair vital infrastructure like hospitals and water networks. The Prime Minister reiterated that Israel's rightful aim of defeating Hamas would not be achieved by allowing a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-2-april-2024>

Rishi Sunak All our thoughts are with the families of those killed in this shocking strike, including three British aid workers. Israel must explain how this tragic incident happened and take immediate steps to protect aid workers and facilitate vital humanitarian operations in Gaza.

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1775186563707662634>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK is deeply concerned about the potential for escalation in the Middle East and calls on all parties to reduce tensions: Statement by Ambassador James Kariuki at the UN Security Council meeting on the strike in Damascus.

... We underline the importance of respect for the inviolability of diplomatic premises and protection of diplomatic and consular staff for the proper conduct of diplomatic relations. The safety and security of diplomatic premises and staff is a fundamental principle guiding diplomatic relations.

President, we are clear that Iran's role in destabilising the region, through its military, financial and political support to groups which have been conducting and threatening attacks, is unacceptable.

Amongst the groups which Iran has continued to support are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis. As well as attacking Israel, these groups have been responsible for the attacks against international shipping, including the deaths of innocent mariners and attacks against international forces in Iraq and Syria.

Our Foreign Secretary has raised repeatedly with his Iranian counterpart the need for this support to cease and for Iran to use its influence over the groups to prevent their attacks. President, the UK is deeply concerned about the potential for escalation in the region and calls on all parties to reduce tensions.

We are committed to de-escalation in the Middle East. We have long been calling for an

immediate humanitarian pause in Gaza 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. This Council sent a clear signal on this just last week when it passed resolution 2728. We stand ready to work with all members of this Council and the international community to promote and protect international peace and security in the region and throughout the world.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-is-deeply-concerned-about-the-potential-for-escalation-in-the-middle-east-and-calls-on-all-parties-to-reduce-tensions-uk-statement-at-the-un-s>

David Cameron Speaking with the new PM of the Palestinian Authority Mohammad Mustafa, I offered the UK's support as his government implements much-needed reforms. An effective PA is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1775259979932373022

David Cameron I spoke with Israeli FM @Israel_Katz to underline that the deaths of @WCKitchen aid workers in Gaza, including three British Nationals, are completely unacceptable. Israel must urgently explain how this happened & make major changes to ensure safety of aid workers on the ground.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1775179302016885038

Scottish Government

FoI Release: Public funds to Palestine, Gaza or Hamas

Information requested

1. How much money had been sent to Gaza;
2. How much money had been sent to Gaza for the release of hostages;
3. Who authorised such funding?

Response

The answers to your questions are:

1. On 14 October 2023, the Scottish Government announced that it would provide £500,000 towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) flash appeal in response to the ongoing escalation in the Gaza Strip. On 2 November 2023, a further £250,000 was pledged to the same appeal. No funding has been given to Hamas by the Scottish Government. All of the information you have requested is available from:
 - [Humanitarian aid funding](#)
 - [Humanitarian aid for Gaza](#) ...
2. There has been no funding provided for the release of hostages.
3. The funding detailed in answer 1 was approved by the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202300391016/>

Scottish National Party (SNP)

Letter from Stephen Flynn, Westminster Leader of the SNP, to the Prime Minister, Leader of the Labour Party, and Speaker of the House of Commons

I am writing to you to demand an immediate recall of the UK Parliament over the deaths of three UK citizens killed in an Israeli strike on aid workers in Gaza.

As you know, the SNP has been calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Israel

since October last year. We have repeatedly urged the UK government to do more to secure an immediate ceasefire, including by ending arms sales to Israel.

Our call to end arms sales to Israel has been repeatedly rejected by the UK government and the Labour Party, despite the overwhelming evidence that Israel is breaching international law through its indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza and its collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

This is an unforgivable decision. To date, more than 100,000 Palestinian children, women and men have been killed or injured. Huge swathes of Gaza have been obliterated, including hospitals, refugee camps and family homes. Around two million Palestinians have been displaced and many are on the brink of starvation.

With three UK citizens among those killed in the Israeli strike on World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid workers, it is essential that the UK Parliament is recalled immediately. This situation demands that the Prime Minister comes to parliament without further delay to outline the UK government's response to the killing of UK citizens by Israel, to enable MPs to scrutinise the UK government's response, and so that Parliament can finally debate and vote on ending arms sales to Israel.

There can be no question that the killing of UK citizens requires Parliament to be recalled now. ...

<https://twitter.com/AvaSantina/status/1775507644972662982/photo/1>

United Nations

Security Council Hears Briefing on Situation Following Attack against Iranian Diplomatic Premises in Syria

Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, noted that Iran transmitted a letter to the Secretary-General and the Security Council stating that Israel has attacked its diplomatic premises in Damascus by missile strikes, killing at least five Iranian personnel, including senior military advisors and injuring others. According to media reports, the death toll has risen to 13 — seven Iranian personnel and six Syrian citizens. Reiterating the Secretary-General's condemnation of the attack, he declared that the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel must be respected in all cases and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States must be respected under international law. ...

Lethal attacks on Iran-linked targets in Syria have been increasingly attributed to Israel, especially since the current conflict with Hamas in Gaza began on 7 October. While Israel has rarely claimed responsibility for any of these incidents, its officials have repeatedly acknowledged its military operations in Syria and have suggested that more such operations will occur in the future. ...

The representative of the Russian Federation condemned the incessant missile and bomb attacks by the Israeli Defense Forces targeting various sides in Syria, against the backdrop of the unprecedented scale of casualties brought about by the military operation in Gaza. He also sounded alarm over the blatant disregard of the Council's legally binding decisions by the Israeli authorities, with Washington, D.C.,'s connivance. On 1 April, the Israeli air forces struck Iran's consulate in Damascus, levelling the building to the ground. Any attack on diplomatic and consular premises violates the 1961 and 1963 Vienna Convention, he asserted, drawing particular attention to the fact that "this is not the first attack carried out by Israel in the densely populated area of Damascus". In the past few months alone, Israeli aircraft have attacked the international airports in Damascus and Aleppo — the main gateways for the entry of humanitarian aid into Syria — several times. He further condemned the ongoing raids on the sovereign territory of Syria, noting that such aggressive actions are designed to further fuel the conflict and might have

extremely dangerous consequences for the entire region. ...

The representative of China described an airstrike on the Iranian diplomatic premises in Syria as “a grave violation of the UN Charter and international law” and “a breach of the sovereignty of both Syria and Iran”. ...

The representative of France said ... Since the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October, Iran and its regional partners have borne heavy responsibility for this escalation. ...

The representative of Japan said that, although facts on the ground are yet to be confirmed, her country is monitoring with deep concern the situation following the reported air strikes against Iranian diplomatic premises in Damascus that allegedly killed at least seven people, including Iranian officials. The current volatile situation in the Middle East, in which any additional conflicts could lead to a wider escalation and confrontation, is worrisome ...

The representative of the United Kingdom underlined the importance of respect for the inviolability of diplomatic premises and protection of diplomatic and consular staff for the proper conduct of diplomatic relations. Iran’s role in destabilizing the region is unacceptable. Among the groups which Iran has continued to support are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, militias in Syria and Iraq and the Houthis. In addition to attacking Israel, these groups have been responsible for the attacks against international shipping, including the deaths of innocent mariners, and attacks against international forces in Iraq and Syria. ... [\[click here to read this speech in greater detail\]](#)

The representative of the United States said that his country had no involvement in the reported strike in Syria, nor did it know about it ahead of time. However, one thing is clear: Iran and its proxy and partner groups need to avoid escalating tensions in the region. Indeed, since the 7 October terrorist attack on Israel, the United States has repeatedly warned Iran not to take advantage of the situation to escalate its longstanding proxy war against Israel and other actors. Iran has ignored that warning. ... Turning to reports of an Israeli airstrike on the World Central Kitchen Convoy, he said that Israel needs to do much more to protect humanitarian personnel and facilities in Gaza. “It is unacceptable and inexplicable that nearly six months into this conflict, Israeli military deconfliction mechanisms are not functioning appropriately,” he said. ...

The representative of Iran reported that seven missile airstrikes from the occupied Golan Heights intentionally targeted the diplomatic premises of Iran, including the consular section building and the Ambassador’s residence. Tragically, these heinous attacks resulted in the martyrdom of seven Iranian personnel, including senior military advisers, and some others were injured. Alongside the complete destruction of the consular building, the Embassy’s administrative parts also suffered significant damage due to the explosions. The final and accurate death toll remains uncertain.

He went on to say that the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom once again tried to deny their responsibility for the current situation in Syria and the broader region by falsely blaming Iran. Tehran has never sought to contribute to the spillover of the conflict in the region nor does it seek to escalate or spread the tension to the entire region. The United States is responsible for all crimes committed by the Israeli regime, he stressed. The savage and genocidal acts in Gaza could not have happened without explicit consent, and comprehensive political, financial, and military support from the United States. The United Kingdom should face up to its mistakes and rectify its detrimental policies that have adversely affected the region’s people, he said, adding that the longstanding suffering of the Palestinian people, persisting for over seven decades, can be traced back directly to that country’s colonial policies.

The representative of Syria said that, in a string of Israeli attacks against his country, yesterday, in broad daylight, the Israeli occupation forces launched a barbaric rocket aggression from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan. This led to the destruction of the entire premises and injury of all those inside, including Syrians and Iranians. The targeted Iranian consulate building — located in a densely populated area, full of civilians

— is just a few meters away from the headquarters of foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations, including the World Food Programme (WFP). “This vital area is crossed by thousands of civilians daily,” he said, noting that some suffered injuries. ... Over the past few days, Israel’s “hysterical” attacks have also affected civilian buildings and installations in rural Damascus, resulting in injuries of civilians and military personnel, he continued. The Israeli attacks coincided with attacks carried out by Da’esh in the eastern part of the country. This reaffirms “the ongoing coordination between Israel and its terrorist proxies”, he asserted. He further pointed out that the Israeli occupation authorities would not have carried out this aggression against protected diplomatic headquarters had it not been for Washington, D.C.,’s blind support. Against this backdrop, he called on the UN to shoulder its primary responsibility to condemn repeated Israeli attacks, prevent their recurrence, and hold their perpetrators accountable.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15650.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

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

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

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

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

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

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

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

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