



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Scottish Parliament Motion

**Foyso Choudhury (Labour) [S6M-12711] Eid Mubarak** –That the Parliament notes the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, beginning on the evening of 9 April 2024 depending on the sighting of the moon; understands that Eid al-Fitr comes at the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan, a month of prayer and reflection throughout which Muslims worldwide engage in fasting during the hours of daylight; recognises the Muslim focus on charity and giving throughout Ramadan, with acts of charity, known as Zakat, performed before prayer on Eid al-Fitr; understands that the holiday is celebrated with friends and family, involving the preparation of special food and the giving of gifts; expresses its hope that Muslims worldwide are able to celebrate Eid al-Fitr in peace and security, and wishes the Muslim community in Scotland, and around the world, Eid Mubarak.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-12711>

TOP

## Israel

See also *“Updated Guidance: The UK and international humanitarian law”* that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

## House of Commons Written Answer

### West Bank: Violence

**Mary Kelly Foy (Labour)** [20107] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of alleged settler violence in the village of Um al-Khair in the southern West Bank.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UK continues to take a strong stance against settler violence. Extremist settlers, by targeting and attacking Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians.

On 12 February, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions against four extremist Israeli settlers who have violently attacked Palestinians in the West Bank. These measures are part of wider UK efforts to support a more stable West Bank, which is vital for the peace and security of both Palestinians and Israelis.

We continue to urge Israel to take stronger action to stop settler violence and hold the perpetrators accountable. We will consider additional actions, including further sanctions, as necessary. The UK continues to work with allies and partners, including across the region, to find a path towards a sustainable ceasefire and permanent peace.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-22/20107>

*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

### Arms Trade

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark** [HL3329] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that weapons manufactured in the UK and sold under export licences are not being used to commit or facilitate violations of international human law in Gaza and in contravention of the Arms Trade Treaty ratified by the UK on 2 April 2014.

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

The Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework and the Export Control Joint Unit will not issue an export licence to any destination where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria.

The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel and Gaza. We can and do respond quickly and flexibly to changing international circumstances. All licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard. We are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences and refuse new licence applications as circumstances require.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3329>

*The Criteria referred to above can be read at*

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

*The Treaty referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e0036ed915d74e33ef66e/WEB\\_TS\\_1.2015\\_Arms\\_Cm\\_8993.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e0036ed915d74e33ef66e/WEB_TS_1.2015_Arms_Cm_8993.pdf)

*Information about the UK ratification of the Treaty referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/arms-trade-treaty-enters-into-force>

### **Arms Trade: Israel**

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark** [HL3330] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will undertake a review of existing and pending licences of arm sales to Israel.

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel and Gaza. The Government can and does respond quickly and flexibly to changing international circumstances.

All export licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard. We are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences and refuse new licence applications as circumstances require.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3330>

### **Hamas: Hostage Taking**

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark** [HL3331] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken, together with allies, to persuade those holding Israeli citizens hostage in Gaza to release them without delay.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government has been working with partners across the region to secure the release of hostages. The Foreign Secretary met with hostage families on 18 March, reaffirming the UK's commitment to see the release of all hostages.

We have been clear that the release of all hostages is one of the vital elements for a lasting peace. The Government continues to call for an immediate humanitarian pause to allow for the release of hostages.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3331>

### **Gaza: Israel**

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark** [HL3333] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reported allegations by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East of widespread abuse of Gazans detained by Israel during the war with Hamas.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have expressed our grave concern about the shocking reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli military detention. The UK Government is clear that administrative detention should only be used when it is justified in accordance with international law. Those under detention should either be charged or released. We ask Israel to secure improvements in its detention practices.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3333>

### **Gaza: Israel**

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark** [HL3334] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the government of Israel is depriving the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including by inhibiting of relief supplies.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As an occupying power in Gaza, Israel has a responsibility to ensure aid is made available for civilians.

We have set out the action that must be taken to allow more aid into Gaza, including: an immediate humanitarian pause and stop in fighting to get more aid in and the hostages out; increased capacity for aid distribution inside Gaza; increased access for aid through land routes and a fully open Ashdod Port; an expansion of the types of humanitarian assistance allowed into Gaza, such as shelter and items critical for infrastructure repair; and the provision of electricity, water and telecommunications.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3334>

## House of Commons Library Briefing

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

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

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**David Cameron** We are doing everything we can to get more aid to civilians in Gaza as quickly as possible by land, sea and air. We need more road crossings and Ashdod Port open for humanitarian aid. Working with Jordan, @RoyalAirForce has air dropped more food supplies to reach those in need. [plus video]

[https://twitter.com/David\\_Cameron/status/1775879364074201278](https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1775879364074201278)

## Scottish Government

### Call for ban on arms sales to Israel: First Minister letter to Prime Minister

... In my letter to you of 23 February, I called upon the UK Government to ban the license of arms exports from the UK to Israel, given the risk of increasing bloodshed caused by Israel's threat to carry out a ground offensive into Rafah. I note that I have yet to receive a response and you have taken no such action, despite the death-toll continuing to increase. The latest tragedy, which saw three British aid workers killed amongst others by an Israeli air strike against a World Central Kitchen convoy, has caused global outrage. I note your public statement calling for an immediate investigation, however over 190 humanitarian workers have died in Gaza since the beginning of the conflict, with no end in sight, no accountability, and little or no sign of Israel paying heed to the International Court of Justice's ruling or the recent United Nations Security Council Resolution.

In spite of this, the UK Government continue to allow British-based companies to arm Israel despite the fact that Israel has killed children, women, aid workers and bombed hospitals, schools and refugee camps. I have said repeatedly that Israel has the right to defend itself and called for hostages to be released. I believe, however, that Israel's actions have long since gone beyond a legitimate response. Enough is enough. The Israeli Government must be held to account.

I therefore write again to demand an immediate end to arms sales to Israel from the United Kingdom. The civilian death toll is intolerable, as is the killing of humanitarian workers who deliver vital aid to Palestinians facing starvation and violence at the hands of this Israeli government. By not stopping arms sales to Israel, the UK is in danger of being complicit in the killing of innocent civilians.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/call-ban-arms-sales-israel-letter-prime-minister/>

*The First Minister announced on X on 25 February that he had written to the Prime Minister about arms sales to Israel, but the letter is not currently available online*

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1761746073293402391>

*The International Court of Justice ruling (Order) referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240328-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

*The United Nations Security Council Resolution referred to above, can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728\(2024\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728(2024))

### **Human Security Approaches ‘Can Highlight Blind Spots, Gaps in Understanding Today’s Interconnected Crises’, Secretary-General Tells General Assembly**

... When I hear the words “human security”, I think about the 2 million humans in Gaza who have no security at all, desperately seeking protection from hunger, disease and relentless Israeli bombardment.

And I think about Israelis who feel a terrible absence of human security, deeply traumatized by the terror attacks of 7 October and subjected to indiscriminate Hamas rockets.

Nothing can ever justify those attacks. But nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The devastating Israeli air strikes that killed World Central Kitchen personnel yesterday bring the number of aid workers killed in this conflict to 196 — including more than 175 members of our own UN staff.

This is unconscionable — but it is an inevitable result of the way the war is being conducted. It demonstrates yet again the urgent need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages, and the expansion of humanitarian aid into Gaza — as the Security Council demanded in its resolution last week. The resolution must be implemented without delay. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22182.doc.htm>

*The resolution referred to above, can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728\(2024\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728(2024))

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### **‘Shocking Increase’ in Denial of Access to Life-Saving Humanitarian Aid for Children in Conflict Zones Worldwide, Security Council Hears, as Delegates Discuss Solutions**

... **Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**, underscored that while the Council condemned the denial of humanitarian access to children as one of the six grave violations, parties to conflict continue to impede it. According to the last Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN verified 3,941 cases of denying humanitarian access — making it one of the highest verified violations in 2022. Data for the forthcoming 2024 report shows “we are on target to witness a shocking increase” in the denial of access globally, she said. In 2022, the highest figures were verified in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Yemen, Afghanistan and Mali. ...

She said cases of denial of humanitarian access — linked to restrictions of humanitarian activities and movements; interference with aid operations and discrimination of recipients; direct and indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure; disinformation and detention, violence against and killing of humanitarian personnel; and looting — occur in rural and urban battlegrounds as well as internally displaced persons camps. This denial has long-lasting effects on children’s well-being and development and may lead to violating their fundamental human rights, including the right to life, education and the highest attainable standard of health. ...

She further observed that the denial is gendered. Restrictions to girls’ movement challenge their access to aid in areas where it may be distributed, including in internally displaced persons camps. Teenage boys could be perceived as associated with an opposing party and, therefore, denied that access. ...

Accordingly, she called on all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely, and unimpeded humanitarian access and refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals. ...

**Ted Chaiban, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund**



**(UNICEF)**, said that “the denial of humanitarian access is a particularly pervasive, multifaceted, and complex grave violation”. It can mean parties arbitrarily restricting access, including through the suspension of essential services, restrictions of civilians’ movements to reach assistance and protection, and bureaucratic and administrative impediments. It can also mean outright attacks on facilities providing life-sustaining services, including water and sanitation installations, attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel, and besiegement tactics. “These actions have devastating humanitarian consequences for children,” he warned.

In Gaza, widespread destruction of logistical infrastructure, a quasi-blockade on the north of the Strip, repeated denials for or delays in granting access for humanitarian convoys, fuel shortages, and electricity and telecommunications blackouts have been devastating for children, he said. Due to various constraints, children cannot access age-appropriate nutritious food or medical services and have less than two to three litres of water per day. In March, one in three children under two years of age in northern Gaza suffered from acute malnutrition, a figure that more than doubled in the last two months. Dozens of children there have reportedly died from malnutrition and dehydration in recent weeks. ...

**The representative of Malta** paid tribute to the World Central Kitchen staff members killed by an Israeli strike yesterday in Gaza, recalling that humanitarian personnel should always be protected under international humanitarian law. ... “In Gaza, the continued conflict and near-complete lack of humanitarian access have been catastrophic for children,” she stressed, adding that without an immediate and permanent ceasefire, “the denial of essentials such as food, medicine, and clean water is accelerating acute malnutrition and mortality”. As well, she expressed alarm over the denial of access to children who have been detained, abducted or subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment. ...

**The representative of Mozambique** said that “denying much-needed humanitarian access to children, as a war tactic, is unacceptable and violates children’s rights under international human rights and international humanitarian law,” ...

**The representative of the United States** underscored that “any threat to peace and security is a threat to children”. Children in conflict zones everywhere — such as Sudan, the Sahel, Ukraine and Israel — require the essentials of life. In Gaza, where thousands of children have been injured and often killed in the last few months, doctors have spoken of treating children suffering war wounds and watching children die from acute malnutrition. “Humanitarian assistance is desperately needed now, and it must be facilitated to mitigate the impact of an impending famine,” she said. ...

**The representative of France** stressed that “children are the first civilian victims of armed conflicts” ... In Gaza, the humanitarian situation is catastrophic, with the imminent risk of famine, he cautioned, calling for an immediate and lasting ceasefire.

**The representative of China** highlighted that children in Gaza are experiencing a catastrophe. Some have been forced to move from one place to another under fire, “never to find a safe haven”. He said this questions the conscience of the international community and such a situation should not continue. Council resolution 2728 (2024) should be fully implemented. The blockade of Gaza should be lifted immediately so that humanitarian agencies like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) can deliver aid, especially to children. International justice must be upheld and violators of children’s rights must be held accountable. ...

**The representative of the United Kingdom** ...[said] Almost half of all verified incidents of denial of humanitarian access in 2022 occurred in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory ... “Palestinian children are facing unfathomable suffering.” He sounded the alarm over the killing of seven members of World Central Kitchen staff on 1 April and reports that Israel continues to block UNRWA’s access to Northern Gaza where children are “on the brink of starvation”. “Children are never responsible for wars, but they suffer disproportionately from their impacts,” he said ...

**The representative of Algeria** said he is “astonished” that in her briefing, Ms. Gamba did not say “a single word” on the dire situation of the children in Gaza. The Israeli occupying Power in Palestine has for months deliberately denied humanitarian access, causing children to die from malnutrition, dehydration and the lack of health care. Those who will survive will be scarred for life, he said, noting that “their dreams have been shattered”. Detailing the horrific situation in Gaza, he said that more than 600,000 children are trapped in Rafah, with nowhere safe to go. According to UNRWA, more children have been killed in recent months than in four years of conflict worldwide. ...

**The representative of the Russian Federation** said that Israel’s blockade has already resulted in large-scale hunger, with children in northern Gaza already dying of starvation, condemning Israel’s decision to ban entry of UNRWA humanitarian convoys with food into that part of the Strip. If the overall situation remains unchanged, a similar fate awaits children in the entire Strip. The current humanitarian delivery volumes, including by air and by sea, are not sufficient and have not improved the harrowing situation. More than 13,000 children have already died and schools and hospitals have been razed to the ground since October 2023. “Not a single child in Gaza has access to education,” he pointed out, urging the Special Representative to prioritize a visit to the Strip to assess grave violations against children. In this regard, she called on Israel to immediately provide the Special Representative access to the region.

**The representative of Switzerland** said thousands of children worldwide are suffering the consequences of restrictions on humanitarian access. In Gaza, the first children have died from acute malnutrition. Sudan is also being pushed towards famine. “In both Gaza and Sudan, we call on the parties to implement the resolutions of this Council calling for an immediate ceasefire,” he said, adding that “aid deliveries and other humanitarian services must be ensured without further delay — through all possible crossing points and routes”. All parties must respect international law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights in all circumstances. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15651.doc.htm>

*UNSCR 2728, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728\(2024\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728(2024))

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### **Millions of dollars needed to make Gaza safe from unexploded bombs**

... Charles Birch, known as Mungo, was working with his team in Gaza long before the 7 October conflict, clearing unexploded munitions from the occupied territory. He told Conor Lennon from UN News that all of their earlier work has been undone by the bombardments that have rained down on Gaza over the last six months. ...

**Mungo Birch** UNMAS has been in Gaza for about ten years. Before 7 October our primary operations were based in Gaza, and we also had smaller operations in the West Bank. In Gaza, what we primarily did, in terms of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) work was clearing deeply buried aircraft bombs, and conducting explosive threats assessments of UN facilities after there was an escalation. ...

**UN News** Prior to 7 October, how many unexploded ordnance bombs would you expect to find?

**Mungo Birch** We would clear about one deep buried aircraft bomb per month. Since the 2021 war between Hamas and Israel 21 deep buried aircraft bombs had been reported to us, and we had almost completed that work. Obviously that work will have been completely undone by the conflict since October 7<sup>th</sup>, and the scale of the contamination will be such that it's unlikely we'll start looking into deep buried ordnance for some time. Most of our work will be focused on surface level ordnance.

**UN News** The eventual reconstruction of Gaza will be a monumental task. How important will ordnance removal be to that process?

**Mungo Birch** We work off the rule of thumb that 10 per cent of ordnance doesn't function as designed. There's now more rubble in Gaza than there is in Ukraine and as part of the rubble removal process, a huge task in itself, explosive ordnance clearance needs to be taken into account. This means years and years of work. It will be an unprecedented operation.

**UN News** What did October 7 mean for you and your team?

**Mungo Birch** I was the only international staff member in Gaza at that time, and I was with nine national staff members. The first week of the war I was in northern Gaza, in the UNRWA (UN Agency for Palestine refugees) compound. The bombardment was incredibly intense. Large, airdropped munitions and missiles, and barrages of Hamas rockets going out from Gaza. The bombardment was like nothing I've ever experienced. The UN compound was never directly hit, but it was severely damaged by blasts. ...

At the moment there are four international staff in Gaza, who are providing support to UN convoys to the north: because of the political issues only international staff accompany the humanitarian convoys. They allow the convoys to get through unhindered by unexploded ordnance. ...

**UN News** Looking ahead to the reconstruction, is there a big gap between what you need and the funds available?

**Mungo Birch** There's a huge gap. We estimate that, to begin the clearance of Gaza, we need around \$45 million. So far, we have \$5.5 million in the pipeline. ...

**To watch the full interview see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148021>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Israel/Gaza: UN experts deplore attacks on Al-Shifa Hospital, urge States to stop the massacre**

We are appalled by the massacre of civilians by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip. The world is witnessing the first genocide shown in real time to the world by its victims and unfathomably justified by Israel as compliant with the laws of war.

In the wake of the two-week siege and destruction of Al-Shifa Hospital, in which health workers and patients were among those reportedly killed, we urge UN Member States to implement all possible diplomatic, political and economic measures, and legal processes, to stop this horror. The extent of the atrocity is still unable to be fully documented due to its scale and gravity – and clearly represents the most horrific assault on Gaza's hospitals. The besieging and destruction of a hospital and the killing of health workers, the sick and wounded, and the people who protect them, is prohibited by international law. Allowing this violence to take place has sent a clear message to the world and the international community that the people of Gaza do not have the right to health and critical determinants of health adequate for their existence.

Al-Shifa Hospital was the largest single provider of health care in Gaza and its destruction was described by the World Health Organization as having “ripped the heart out of the health system”. By destroying it, Israel is denying access to health care to those most in need.

At this point, we are no longer discussing availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health care received in dignity, but the annihilation of any infrastructure capable of providing basic first aid. The deliberate destruction of health infrastructure in Gaza has created conditions calculated to destroy the distressed and traumatized population.

Patients in the Al-Shifa hospital complex included people with acute and chronic medical



conditions, as well as those wounded by various military arsenals, creating a complex medical situation and an inability to manage subsequent and devastating complications of crushing tissue or organ injuries, repairing fractures or dislocations, or controlling bleeding. Lack of timely and appropriate care has led to a complete inability to provide the necessary medical care, with many suffering shock, disability and ultimately succumbing to their injuries.

At this unprecedented and tragic time, we call on Member States to take immediate action to protect, promote and respect the right to life, health, and dignity of those affected by loss and trauma, through effective access to humanitarian assistance, protection of remaining health infrastructure and health workers. There is an urgent need for food, water, shelter, fuel, emergency health care, psychosocial support and psychological first aid. The strategies adopted by world leaders and Member States have failed to bring an end to this continuing egregious and grotesque violence.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/israelgaza-un-experts-deplore-attacks-al-shifa-hospital-urge-states>

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**Civil society and civilians must be protected in “harrowing” Gaza conflict: Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner at opening of the 2024 Conference of civil society organisations working on the question of Palestine**

... The killing of seven aid workers of World Central Kitchen from multiple Israeli airstrikes on Monday evening was not an isolated incident. As of 20 March, at least 196 humanitarians, including at least 175 UN workers, had been killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since October 2023. This is nearly three times the death toll recorded in any single conflict in a full year ... As a result of attacks on hospitals and medical personnel and the sustained interference with humanitarian assistance, Palestinians in Gaza are dying of disease and hunger, if they are not killed by bombs.

Almost half a year has passed since the violent attacks of 7 and 8 October by Al-Qassam and other Palestinian armed groups, including horrific attacks on civilians, which resulted in the killing of nearly 1,200 Israeli and foreign citizens, injuries to over 5,000 others, with reports of torture and sexual violence, and the abduction of over 230 hostages into Gaza, of which around 130 hostages remain captive to date. These violations amount to crimes under international law.

The Israeli military response in Gaza has been brutal, and there is growing evidence of the systematic violation of international humanitarian law, including the commission of war crimes and possibly other atrocity crimes. Indeed, Israel’s choices of methods and means of conducting hostilities has led to a horrific human toll, with over 100,000 Palestinians killed or wounded in Gaza – a staggering five percent of the whole population, in majority women and children. At least 17,000 children are orphaned or separated from their families, and all the child survivors in Gaza will carry life-long scars of physical and emotional trauma.

Israel’s bombardment has flattened entire residential areas and the large-scale destruction of critical civilian infrastructure has rendered many parts of Gaza effectively uninhabitable. Around 1.7 million persons have been displaced, many times over, as they move with the elusive hope of finding a safe place. Many civilian infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, places of worship, all protected under international law, have been completely destroyed. The two-week siege on Al Shifa that recently ended has reportedly caused massive destruction, killings, and injuries. Hundreds have been allegedly detained. OHCHR OPT is in the process of gathering more information on this. ...

But in Gaza, no place is safe anymore – everywhere, civilians risk dying, from air, sea or ground attacks, from disease or from starvation. The collective punishment of the Palestinian people by Israel is unacceptable and is strictly prohibited under international

law. As the High Commissioner said recently, there is a "plausible" case that Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. ...

Israel, as the occupying power, is obligated under international humanitarian law to provide, or protect and facilitate the safe distribution of humanitarian aid to the civilian population. ...

The High Commissioner has also repeatedly called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and for the thousands of Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel to be released. In the interim, all must be treated humanely and allowed to receive visits and assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

While Gaza is destroyed, tensions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remain high. The drastic acceleration in Israeli settlements and record high settler and State violence including extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, are worsening long-standing patterns of violence, oppression, discrimination and debilitating movement restrictions, leading to the forcible displacement of Palestinian communities, amid a continuing dire fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority.

As stated by the United Nations Secretary-General, the 7 October attacks "did not happen in a vacuum" but took place after "56 years of suffocating occupation." ...

Throughout the occupation, Palestinian and Israeli civil society have played a crucial role in documenting and highlighting egregious human rights violations, calling for justice and accountability. ... The designation by Israel of six NGOs as terrorist organisations, threats to impose heavy taxes on Israeli NGOs working on OPT and receiving foreign funds and other such measures have severely hampered the ability of these NGOs to operate independently and to their full potential.

Most civil society organisations in Gaza have lost their physical infrastructure, with their staff either dead, injured, or detained, while others have fled seeking security. ...

Tragically, killings of journalists have continued. The Committee to Protect Journalists' preliminary investigations indicate that at least 95 journalists and media workers have been killed ... Also smear campaigns against artists, peace activists and human rights defenders, in and outside of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory have intensified, including the targeting of mandated independent experts of the human rights mechanisms, portraying free speech as incitement to violence, terrorism or antisemitism, while incitement to violence and hatred continues against Palestinians with impunity. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/civil-society-and-civilians-must-be-protected-harrowing-gaza>

## World Health Organisation (WHO)

### **WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing**

... WHO is horrified by the killing of seven humanitarian workers from World Central Kitchen in Gaza on Monday.

The work they were doing was saving lives, providing food to thousands of starving people. Their cars were clearly marked and should never have been attacked.

Delivering humanitarian aid in Gaza is already difficult and dangerous.

Hungry people will go unfed because World Central Kitchen has quite understandably paused its operations. ...

WHO has been working with World Central Kitchen in Gaza to deliver food to health workers and patients in hospitals.

This horrific incident highlights the extreme danger under which WHO colleagues and our partners are working – and will continue to work.

But we can only do so with safe access. This means an effective and transparent mechanism for deconfliction must be put in place to ensure humanitarian convoys can

move safely.

We need more entry points, including in northern Gaza, cleared roads, and predictable and expedited passage through checkpoints.

Delays and denials of humanitarian missions not only prevent us from reaching those in need, but also impact other operations and deliveries by diverting scarce resources.

In addition to the attack on the World Central Kitchen convoy, we are likewise appalled that Al-Shifa hospital has been put out of action, and that much of it has been badly damaged or destroyed.

Over the last few days, WHO's team in Gaza has been seeking permission to access what is left of the hospital, to speak with staff and to see what can be saved.

But at the moment, the situation looks disastrous. Al-Shifa was the largest hospital and main referral centre in the Gaza Strip, with 750 beds, 26 operating rooms, 32 intensive care rooms, a dialysis department and a central laboratory.

I repeat: hospitals must be respected and protected; they must not be used as battlefields. Since the conflict began, WHO has verified 906 attacks on health care in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and Lebanon, resulting in 736 deaths and 1014 injuries.

Only 10 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still able to function even partially. WHO will continue to support those hospitals to deliver services as best they can.

More than 33,000 people have now been killed in Gaza, and almost 80,000 injured.

We are seeing a very high burden of respiratory and skin infections and diarrheal illness.

This Sunday marks six months since the conflict began.

WHO welcomes last week's UN Security Council resolution demanding a ceasefire, and we call for its immediate implementation.

Once again, we call for all hostages to be released, and for lasting peace. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing---3-april-2024>

## World Central Kitchen

### **World Central Kitchen calls for independent investigation into IDF strikes**

On April 1, 2024, the Israeli Defense Forces killed seven humanitarian aid workers employed by World Central Kitchen (WCK), an internationally recognized humanitarian organization. The aid workers killed were nationals of Australia, Canada/US (dual citizen), Gaza, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Israel has admitted to the killings but called it a "a tragic event in which our forces unintentionally harmed non-combatants," and something that "happens in war."

This was a military attack that involved multiple strikes and targeted three WCK vehicles. All three vehicles were carrying civilians; they were marked as WCK vehicles; and their movements were in full compliance with Israeli authorities, who were aware of their itinerary, route, and humanitarian mission.

We have asked the governments of Australia, Canada, the United States of America, Poland, and the United Kingdom to join us in demanding an independent, third-party investigation into these attacks, including whether they were carried out intentionally or otherwise violated international law. Yesterday, to ensure the integrity of the investigation, we asked the Israeli government to immediately preserve all documents, communications, video and/or audio recordings, and any other materials potentially relevant to the April 1 strikes. An independent investigation is the only way to determine the truth of what happened, ensure transparency and accountability for those responsible, and prevent future attacks on humanitarian aid workers.

<https://wck.org/news/idf-investigation>

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## Foreign Affairs

### Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Updated Guidance: The UK and international humanitarian law**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-humanitarian-law-and-the-uk-government/uk-and-international-humanitarian-law-2018>

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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](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