



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Art Works: Security

Lord Lexden (Conservative) [HL3465] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have issued guidance to public institutions and universities concerning security arrangements for the protection of historic portraits of past statesmen.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The vandalism against the portrait of A.J. Balfour at Trinity College, Cambridge, last month is rightly being investigated as a criminal act by Cambridgeshire Police. The shoddy sense of history by those who perpetrated and promoted it is also a reminder of the importance of historic portraits in improving our awareness and understanding of the past.

The famous declaration made by Balfour as Foreign Secretary in November 1917 made clear that 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'. At the time Balfour issued it, the man who had painted his portrait three years earlier, Philip de László, was (despite having become a British citizen, with the former Prime Minister as one of his sponsors) interned, having been arrested on suspicion of treason on account of letters he had written to family members in Austria. As the historian Giles MacDonogh [has noted](#), it appears 'the fact that de László was born of Jewish parents had some bearing on the case'; his interrogation by Special Branch dwelt on his Jewish ancestry, and an unsympathetic biography included in the

recommendation from MI5 to the Home Secretary that he be interned noted that de László was the 'son of a Jew tailor'. In May 1919, his case was raised in [a debate in Your Lordships' House](#); the following month, it was brought before the Certificates of Naturalisation (Revocation) Committee, which took just fifteen minutes to throw it out and exonerate him.

It is thanks to portraits like this that such fascinating insights into our past can be gleaned.

I have spoken to the Vice-Master of Trinity College following the attack, and hope that this magnificent portrait can be swiftly repaired and shared with students and visitors to the college for many years to come.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/hl3465>

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[Israel](#)

See also Lords written answer HL3465 “Art Works: Security” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

Downing Street

PM statement on six-month anniversary of the October 7th attacks

Today marks six months since the terrorist outrage of 7th October – the most appalling attack in Israel’s history, the worst loss of Jewish life since the Second World War.

Six months later, Israeli wounds are still unhealed. Families still mourn and hostages are still held by Hamas.

And after six months of war in Gaza, the toll on civilians continues to grow – hunger, desperation, loss of life on an awful scale.

We continue to stand by Israel’s right to defeat the threat from Hamas terrorists and defend their security.

But the whole of the UK is shocked by the bloodshed, and appalled by the killing of brave British heroes who were bringing food to those in need.

This terrible conflict must end. The hostages must be released. The aid – which we have been straining every sinew to deliver by land, air and sea – must be flooded in.

The children of Gaza need a humanitarian pause immediately, leading to a long-term sustainable ceasefire. That is the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in, and to stop the fighting and loss of life.

For the good of both Israelis and Palestinians - who all deserve to live in peace, dignity and security - that is what we will keep working to achieve.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-statement-on-six-month-anniversary-of-the-october-7th-attacks>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Six months since the brutal attacks by Hamas on October 7: article [in the Sunday Times] by the Foreign Secretary

The tragic and avoidable killing of the World Central Kitchen aid workers was a terrible reminder of the cost of the Gaza conflict. Citizens from five different countries lost their lives, three of them from the UK.

On this occasion, there is no doubt where the blame lies: Israel’s inquiry has already

enumerated the inadequate processes and the unacceptable conduct of the IDF personnel involved. This must never happen again.

Sunday marks another grim milestone: six months since the brutal attacks by Hamas on October 7. We must not forget how this conflict started — with the Jewish people suffering the worst and most murderous pogrom since the Holocaust.

Throughout the crisis, the UK has followed four vital principles.

First, support for the hostages and their families. ... That innocent people have been captured and held is a perpetual reminder of the monstrous organisation we are dealing with.

Second, to push as hard as we can on getting aid to Palestinian civilians.

That is why for months the prime minister and I have been calling for Israel to allow more aid into Gaza, setting out in detail the bottlenecks they need to address. ...

This week our calls were justified when what we were told was previously impossible suddenly became possible. Ashdod port and Erez crossing will soon reopen. Water will be turned back on. And more aid will flow through Kerem Shalom. ...

We must see the flood of aid that the Israelis themselves have spoken of. ...

We are also announcing details of our support for the maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza, deploying a Royal Navy ship, alongside UK aid and British logistical expertise and equipment, to maximise aid delivery.

But aid will not make a difference unless it can be properly distributed. Guaranteed deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work is essential. ...

Our third principle has been to exercise leadership in the region and at the United Nations. Calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire are easy to make but, alongside US and other allies, we are clear that unless you deal with the cause of the conflict — the rule of Hamas over Gaza and the presence of those responsible for October 7 — no ceasefire would last. Israel cannot be expected to live next to an organisation that carried out such brutal attacks and has declared that, if possible, it would do the same all over again.

But a temporary cessation of fighting — such as the Ramadan pause we supported at the UN — is a different matter. That could be used to get aid in and the hostages out. And, crucially, it could be used to put the conditions in place to stop the fighting permanently and start a process of building a lasting peace. Two of the conditions we set out were for Hamas leaders to leave Gaza and for the infrastructure of terror in Gaza to be dismantled. In other words, we would be ending the war by political rather than military means. This remains the right approach.

We have also led calls for a new Palestinian Authority government and for a political horizon for the Palestinian people that should include — at the right time — the recognition of a Palestinian state as part of our long-held support for a two-state solution. ...

Our fourth principle — and it remains foundational — is that Israel has a right to self-defence that we should support. Of course our backing is not unconditional: we expect such a proud and successful democracy to abide by international humanitarian law, even when challenged in this way.

Israel has been prepared to make a deal with Hamas for a pause in the fighting, with some of the hostages being freed in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners charged with serious acts of terrorism. None of us sitting comfortably in peaceful Western democracies should underestimate what a difficult thing this is for people in Israel to contemplate.

But so far Hamas has said no.

We all want to see an end to the fighting, but we must face up to the difficult question: what should we do if Hamas refuses a deal and if the conflict continues?

We cannot stand by with our head in our hands, wishing for an end to the fighting that may well not come — and that means ensuring the protection of people in all of Gaza including Rafah.

As an occupying power, Israel has a responsibility to the people of Gaza. But it also means

that the international community must work with Israel on humanitarian efforts to keep people safe and provide them with what they need. ...

The US have said that they can only support a Rafah operation if there is a proper plan to protect people — and that must be right.

I desperately want this conflict to end, and for the people of Israel and the people of Gaza to be able to live their lives in peace and security. We must all continue to work towards this aim, but I believe that failing to prepare for continued conflict will lead to further suffering and avoidable loss of innocent lives. The UK stands ready to play its part.

To read the full article see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/six-months-since-the-brutal-attacks-by-hamas-on-october-7-article-by-the-foreign-secretary>

Aid workers should never be targeted. More needs to be done to protect them in Gaza: UK statement at the UN Security Council

The UK is appalled by the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, including three of our British nationals, in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza on 1 April; bringing the total number of humanitarian staff killed so far to over two hundred. I share our sincere condolences with their families, and with all those who have lost loved ones during this war.

Our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary spoke immediately with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli Foreign Minister Katz to ask for a transparent investigation and welcome the communication of the initial findings from the Israeli government, and the commitments Israel has since made on humanitarian operations.

President, aid workers should never be targeted. Over two hundred have been killed in this conflict. Israel must do much more to protect them and to ensure their safety so they can deliver urgently needed lifesaving humanitarian assistance. For this to happen, we call for three major changes:

First, Israel must make significant, concrete changes to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately. It is imperative that those doing life-saving work are properly protected and allowed full, unhindered access to conduct their work safely.

Second, we welcome the steps Israel has now taken and call on it to do everything necessary to allow effective humanitarian relief. We welcome the assurances that Israel has given to UN agencies and others that it will now open Ashdod Port, more land crossings into Gaza, increase quantities and types of aid allowed to enter by land, and improve water supplies. The amount of aid getting in has until now been insufficient. Full, unhindered access, as well as an enabling operating environment for distribution, is necessary to meet humanitarian needs and avoid famine.

And all parties must fully comply with international humanitarian law and work with USG Kaag to scale up assistance and implement resolution 2720 without delay.

Finally, we need to see major and immediate changes in the conduct of Israel's military campaign to protect civilians. I reiterate the UK's call for the immediate implementation of resolution 2728.

This weekend, it will be six months since Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history. Throughout this crisis, the UK has been unequivocal in our condemnation of Hamas and demand for the unconditional release of the hostages. We must see an immediate cessation of hostilities to get aid in and hostages out, leading to progress towards a sustainable ceasefire.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/aid-workers-should-never-be-targeted-more-needs-to-be-done-to-protect-them-in-gaza-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Parents, children and loved ones. Students and festival goers. Construction workers. Six months on from Hamas's horrific attack on the Israeli people, @David_Cameron renews our call to send all of the hostages home. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1776867738683691229>

Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office "I've never wanted the two blue ticks to appear on a WhatsApp message more. But that message remains unread." Families of those killed or taken hostage by Hamas 6 months ago share their thoughts on this sombre anniversary. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1776890193099862349>

David Cameron We are carefully reviewing the initial findings of Israel's investigations into the killing of WCK aid workers and welcome the suspension of two officers as a first step. These findings must be published in full and followed up with a wholly independent review to ensure the utmost transparency and accountability.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1776269496333860963

David Cameron Lessons must be learnt from today's initial findings from the IDF. It's clear major reform of Israel's deconfliction mechanism is badly needed to ensure the safety of aid workers. The deaths of these brave heroes are a tragedy, and this must never happen again.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1776269739171410248

David Cameron The opening of Erez and the Port of Ashdod to aid for Gaza is hugely welcome and something the UK has long been calling for. Israel has also agreed to increase the number of trucks entering Gaza to 500 a day and extend the opening hours of Kerem Shalom.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1776277330308088073

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon 6 months since Hamas' terror attacks of 7 October, we remember all civilians, Israeli & Palestinian, who have been killed in this shocking conflict; the grief and suffering is heartbreaking.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1776897820726870340>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon The fighting must stop now, in order to get the hostages home and also for unhindered, live saving aid to get into Gaza. A crucial first step on the #PathwayToPeace.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1776897822069023106>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence

UK to boost aid support for Gaza by sea

The UK Government is ... announcing a package of military and civilian support to set up a maritime aid corridor to Gaza, including the deployment of a Royal Navy ship to join the life-saving mission in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The ship, alongside new UK aid and British expertise, will support the establishment of an international humanitarian maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza, supported by many of our partner governments and the UN, and is expected to be operational in early May.

As well as the Royal Navy ship from the Ministry of Defence, the FCDO is also committing up to £9.7 million for aid deliveries; logistical expertise and equipment support to the

corridor, such as forklift trucks and storage units; and expertise, to maximise the levels of aid reaching those people who desperately need it.

Today marks six months since the devastating October 7 terrorist attacks, and almost a week since British aid workers were killed trying to get life-saving food to those in need. The UK continues to call for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, as the fastest way to get hostages safely home and more aid in. ... A full UK field hospital run by UK-Med is also now fully operational in Gaza and providing life-saving care. It has already treated more than 3,000 people, almost half of them children.

Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, said: "The situation in Gaza is dire and the prospect of famine is real. We remain committed to getting aid to those who so desperately need it. Along with the US, Cyprus and other partners, we are setting up a new temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to get aid in as quickly and securely as possible.

"Land access remains crucial to deliver aid at the scale now required. The opening of Erez and the Port of Ashdod is hugely welcome and something the UK has long been calling for. Israel has also agreed to increase the number of aid trucks entering Gaza to a minimum of 500 a day. But we need to continue to explore all options, including by sea and air, to ease the desperate plight of some of the world's most vulnerable people."

Gazans are facing a devastating humanitarian crisis and there needs to be a significant increase in the volume of vital supplies entering the territory by all routes, as well as changes to ensure aid can safely be delivered on the ground.

Following the killing of World Central Kitchen aid workers last week, the UK government continues to call for urgent reform of deconfliction mechanisms, alongside assurances that guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers, who work tirelessly on the ground to ensure vital aid supplies reach those who need it most. ...

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps commented: ... "The Armed Forces are playing a central role in delivering aid, with the Royal Air Force recently completing five airdrops of food supplies for the people of Gaza. We are now going further, working with international partners to set up a humanitarian maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza. A new temporary pier on the coast of Gaza will be critical to supporting these efforts, by hosting cargo ships to deliver aid by sea. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-boost-aid-support-for-gaza-by-sea>

Northern Ireland Assembly Written Answer

Meetings with the Israeli Government

Gerry Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance) [AQW 9119/22-27] To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they met with any representatives of the Israeli government during their St Patrick's Day visit to Washington DC.

First Minister and deputy First Minister: During our recent visit to Washington D.C. we did not meet with any representatives of the Israeli Government.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=394667>

United Nations

Speakers in Security Council Condemn Deadly Israeli Airstrikes on Aid Workers in Gaza, Urge Immediate Action to End Violations of International Humanitarian Law Voicing Concern Over Imminent Famine, UN Relief Chief, Delegates Urge Safe, Unimpeded Humanitarian Access for All Civilians in Occupied Territory

... **Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination, United Nations Office for the**

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said Sunday will mark “six months since the outbreak of this horrific chapter in the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory” and “six months that calls our collective humanity, and priorities, into question”. In Gaza, according to the Ministry of Health, more than 32,000 people have been killed and over 75,000 injured; thousands more are missing, many of them buried beneath the rubble. He said 17,000 children are now unaccompanied or separated from their parents or families and 1.7 million people — 75 per cent of the population — have been forcibly displaced. “It is clear there is no protection of civilians in Gaza,” he stressed, adding that some Palestinians in Gaza have already left through Egypt, and more are trying.

“The events of the last week alone are evidence of the unconscionable brutality of this conflict,” he continued ... On 1 April, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the besieged Al Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City revealed a hospital and many buildings in the surrounding residential area, almost entirely destroyed. The UN and partners only reached the facility today, after repeated requests were denied, to help triage remaining patients and assess needs on the ground. Al Shifa was the largest hospital in Gaza, formerly serving over 250,000 people. On the same day, seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, who had informed the Israeli army of their movements and had just unloaded more than 100 tons of much-needed lifesaving humanitarian supplies from the second World Central Kitchen maritime aid shipment to a warehouse in Deir al Balah, were killed in multiple Israeli airstrikes on their convoy.

“They join more than 220 of our humanitarian colleagues who have been killed, 179 of them UN personnel,” he said, stressing that: “Allegations of serious violations must be investigated, and the suspects prosecuted.” ... Detailing the dire situation of Gazans who are relying on woefully inadequate food assistance to survive, he urged immediate concerted action, stressing that “waiting for a retrospective famine classification is entirely indefensible”.

“Despite the dangers, aid workers continue efforts to deliver assistance to people across Gaza through all available means,” he said. Last week the UN and its partners reached a daily average of 550,000 people with food assistance. However, they were only able to get 4 per cent of this to Gaza City and the north of the Strip, where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) — the backbone of the humanitarian response — has not been allowed to operate. ... “There is simply no replacement for the services UNRWA provides.” Pointing to the ongoing death and destruction in Gaza despite the international community’s efforts to date, he stressed: “This tragedy cannot be allowed to continue. All hostages must be immediately released and treated humanely until they are released. Likewise, the people of Gaza need full compliance with international humanitarian law and with the ICJ’s [International Court of Justice] orders. They need compliance with the decisions of this Council, and they most of all need this devastating war to end.”

Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children USA, said that, to date, 203 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza — the highest number of humanitarian casualties in modern times, adding: “They died serving their communities in, perhaps, the worst conditions of their lives, of their careers.” ... More children have been killed in this conflict than in all armed conflicts globally over the past four years, she added, noting that after months of deliberate humanitarian access denial, children are dying from malnutrition and dehydration. “Almost 350,000 children under the age of 5 are at risk of starvation as we speak,” she said, stressing that severe malnutrition is not a “quiet or painless death”.

She said she had visited a number of humanitarian programmes in Gaza, where the absence of sanitation or toilet systems in communities has caused communicable diseases to run rampant. “One community I visited had one toilet for 600 people,” she said. Furthermore, 80 per cent of education facilities and equipment have been destroyed

or burned by civilians trying to stay warm. Also spotlighting the need for mental health and psychological support, she added: “One mother told me she needed mental health support more than food.” ...

“Member States must stop fuelling the crisis with the weapons they’re selling to the parties of conflict.” Stressing that more aid must be allowed to come in, she underscored that States must have a plan to finance and rebuild critical infrastructure in Gaza. ...

The representative of Algeria said a killing machine is acting with total impunity in Gaza. The crime perpetrated against World Central Kitchen’s personnel is not an exception, he said, citing chef Jose Andres, founder of that organization, who said it was an attack that targeted them “systematically, car by car”. Why do these seven deaths get apologies from the highest occupying authorities but not the thousands of innocent Palestinians massacred during these six months? he asked. The answer is the dehumanization of Palestinians. ...

The representative of Switzerland, expressing the utmost respect for all the humanitarian aid workers who are risking their lives to bring relief, said that the Gaza Strip has become the most dangerous place in the world for them. Insecurity and restrictions on movement are forcing humanitarian organizations to suspend their operations. As a result, the entire aid system is in danger of collapsing and the continuation of the maritime aid corridor from Cyprus is in jeopardy. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom said her country is “appalled” by the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, including three British nationals, in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza. Her Prime Minister has asked Israel’s authorities for a transparent investigation ... “Israel must do much more to protect them,” she said, adding that the country must make significant concrete changes to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately. ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of the Russian Federation stressed that to prevent a humanitarian apocalypse and mass hunger in Gaza, a genuine ceasefire and Israel’s respect for international humanitarian law are urgently needed. Further, the Council must agree on measures vis-à-vis West Jerusalem and those measures could include an arms embargo or other types of sanctions. “Now is not the time for humanitarian PR, which is being used as a cover for the unwillingness or the inability to take measures to end the bloodshed and to ensure the safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance,” he underscored. Pointing out that Israel has not submitted information confirming allegations it leveled against UNRWA staff, he urged Council members to not play along with Israel. ...

The representative of Japan said ... The killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers by multiple Israeli strikes caused some other humanitarian organizations to suspend their operations, which will have a catastrophic impact on the lives of people in Gaza, he reported, urging Israel to prevent recurrence of such incidents. Although Tokyo has resumed funding of UNRWA, if attacks on humanitarian workers continue, they cannot carry out their work, he said ...

The representative of China said that the tragedy of Gaza tests the conscience of humanity and the Council’s credibility. ... Emphasizing that Rafah and all land crossings must be fully opened to allow for the entry of humanitarian supplies, he called on Israel to cease its attacks on humanitarian institutions and personnel. He underscored the importance of the two-State solution, adding that as a first step “we need to support Palestinian full membership at the UN”. ...

The representative of France condemned Israel’s strike on World Central Kitchen workers and called for an in-depth investigation. Their deaths come on top of the deaths of 177 UNRWA staff, the highest death toll of UN staff since the inception of the Organization. ... “We’re not seeing a natural disaster,” he pointed out, underscoring that the humanitarian catastrophe is the result of war — therefore, the best humanitarian response is for the war to end. ...

The representative of the United States said his country is “outraged and heartbroken”

at the deaths of the World Central Kitchen aid workers, adding: “We all know, moreover, this was not a standalone incident.” Expressing deep concern that Israel has not done enough to protect humanitarian aid workers or civilians, he said President Joseph Biden has conveyed that Israel must announce and implement a series of measurable steps to address civilian harm and the safety of aid workers. Expressing support for the ongoing investigations into UNRWA while noting its indispensable role, he said that “we must not ignore how Hamas's actions have put humanitarian personnel at risk”. Tunneling under and storing weapons in hospitals is a violation of the laws of war, he said, adding that his country will continue to do all it can to help deliver humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians in Gaza through all available means. ...

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine said that while Council members have been speaking about the terrifying assault against life in Gaza for 180 days, Israel has killed “those who heal, those who rescue, those who provide aid and relief, those who feed, those who report”. The killing of the World Central Kitchen aid workers is not an isolated incident. For Israel, the entire civilian population and civilian infrastructure are legitimate targets. It has “baselessly” argued that the problem is UNRWA, which is delivering lifesaving humanitarian assistance. Israel, while killing over 32,000 Palestinians and maiming over 72,000, “has also made sure to create a man-made famine, the worst of its kind”, he said, asking: “Who can still speak of shared values with Israel that is committing such crimes without being devoured by shame?” Facing outrage over its attack on foreign nationals, Israel dismissed two senior officers and reprimanded three others. “That is the punishment for the commission of war crimes? ...

The representative of Israel said the incident that claimed the lives of World Central Kitchen workers “was a tragic mistake”, adding that his country “never targets civilians deliberately, never, let alone aid workers carrying out crucial work”. This incident has been investigated and the findings show that the strike happened due to a misidentification at night, he said. The findings have been presented to Israeli leadership and World Central Kitchen, he said, adding that two senior military officers have been dismissed. Israel has coordinated aid distribution with international organizations thousands of times since the start of this war, he said, adding that while the military’s standard operating procedure was violated, this tragic mistake was due to “Hamas's cynical *modus operandi* to exploit civilian infrastructure and vehicles.” His country will learn from this investigation so that such a tragedy is not repeated, he said.

Continuing, he said that Israel is in “a defensive war”, fought in unprecedented conditions against an enemy that fights from underground tunnels and hospitals. “We did not start this war and we did not want this war,” he said, adding that every country that fought a war in dense urban conditions understands that tragic mistakes can happen. “IDF soldiers — our soldiers — have fallen from friendly fire,” he said, adding also that Israeli hostages have been mistakenly killed by Israeli soldiers. His country dropped 7 million flyers warning civilians to evacuate, he said, adding: “I don't know of any other military that meets these standards.” ...

The representative of Saudi Arabia, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said the recent attack against World Central Kitchen aid workers is simply more evidence to the occupying Power’s record of violations against humanitarian aid workers. “Starvation and hunger are being used as a weapon in this crisis,” he stressed, pointing to Israel’s continued closure of crossings and preventing of the entry of food, water, medicine and fuel. This massacre is further damning evidence of the genocide that Israel is pursuing in its military operations in Gaza ...

The representative of Australia said he was horrified by the trajectory of the conflict and catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. Recalling that throughout the conflict, his Government has called for restraint and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, he noted that more than a million of Palestinians are on the brink of famine, and over 30,000 civilians and 190 humanitarian workers have been killed. ... While acknowledging

the opening of additional border crossings by Israel, he repeated his demands for an immediate ceasefire, release of hostages and protection of civilians. "Aid must flow," he stressed.

The representative of Poland noted ... the strike happened along the road used to transit aid through Gaza, which was supposed to be a "deconflicted" area. Despite notifying the Israeli army about the transport, the convoy was hit three times by the Israel Defense Forces. Condemning the Hamas attack of 7 October and reaffirming support for Israel's right to defend itself, he said self-defence must not cause suffering and death of innocent civilians and aid workers. He called on Israel to conduct a swift, full and transparent investigation and hold those responsible fully to account.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15653.doc.htm>

The International Court of Justice Orders referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

and

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

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council Adopts Five Resolutions, including a Text Calling for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza, Urging States to Prevent the Continued Forcible Transfer of Palestinians Within or From Gaza, and Calling on States to Cease the Sale or Transfer of Arms to Israel

... In a resolution (A/HRC/55/L.30) on the Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice ... the Council demands that Israel, the occupying power, end its occupation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem; also demands that Israel immediately lift its blockade on the Gaza Strip and all other forms of collective punishment; calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, for immediate emergency humanitarian access and assistance, and for the urgent restoration of basic necessities to the Palestinian population in Gaza; calls upon all States to take immediate action to prevent the continued forcible transfer of Palestinians within or from Gaza; calls upon all States to cease the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel; urges all States to continue to provide emergency assistance to the Palestinian people and calls upon all States to ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East receives predictable sustained and sufficient funding to fulfil its mandate; invites the General Assembly to recommend that the Government of Switzerland promptly convene the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; requests the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel to report on both the direct and indirect transfer or sale of arms, munitions, parts, components and dual use items to Israel, the occupying power, and to analyse the legal consequences of these transfers, and to present its report to the Council at its fifty-ninth session; requests the Secretary-General to ensure the availability of all additional resources, including through voluntary resources, necessary to enable the Commission of Inquiry to carry out its mandate; requests the Office of the High Commissioner to deploy the additional necessary personnel, expertise and logistics to the occupied Palestinian territory country office to document and pursue accountability for violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem ...

In a resolution (A/HRC/55/L.13) on the Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

... the Council calls upon Israel, the occupying power, to immediately end its occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to reverse and redress any impediments to the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Palestine, and reaffirms its support for the solution of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security; calls upon all States to ensure their obligations of non-recognition, non-aid or assistance with regard to the serious breaches of peremptory norms of international law by Israel in order to ensure the exercise of the right to self-determination, and also calls upon them to cooperate further to bring, through lawful means, an end to these serious breaches and a reversal of the illegal policies and practices of Israel; urges all States to adopt measures as required to promote the realisation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and to render assistance to the United Nations in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter regarding the implementation of this right; and decides to remain seized of the matter. ...

In a resolution (A/HRC/55/L.14) on Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan, adopted by a vote of 29 in favour, 14 against and 4 abstentions, the Council calls upon Israel, the occupying power, to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council ... demands that Israel immediately cease all settlement-related plans and activities in the occupied Syrian Golan; determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that seek to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void ...

In a resolution (A/HRC/55/L.28) on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan ... the Council calls upon Israel to comply with all its obligations under international law and to cease immediately all actions causing the alteration of the character, status and demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, and to end without delay its occupation of the territories occupied since 1967; urges all States and international organizations to ensure that they are not taking actions that recognise, aid or assist the expansion of settlements or the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; requests the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel to prepare a report on the identities of settlers, as well as settler groups and their members, that have engaged in or continue to engage in acts of terror, violence or intimidation against Palestinian civilians and the actions taken by Israel and by third States ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/le-conseil-adopte-cinq-resolutions-dont-celle-demandant-quun-cessez-le-feu>

Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice (A/HRC/55/L.30)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/55/L.30>

Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (A/HRC/55/L.13)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/55/L.13>

Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/55/L.14)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/55/L.14>

Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/55/L.28)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/55/L.28>

World Health Organisation

Six months of war leave Al-Shifa hospital in ruins, WHO mission reports

A WHO-led multi-agency mission accessed Al-Shifa Hospital in north Gaza on 5 April to conduct a preliminary assessment of the extent of destruction and identify needs to guide future efforts to restore the facility. ...

Prior to the mission, WHO's efforts to reach the hospital to medically evacuate patients and staff and conduct an assessment were denied, delayed or impeded 6 times between 25 March and 1 April.

Like the majority of the north, Al-Shifa Hospital – once the largest and most important referral hospital in Gaza – is now an empty shell after the latest siege. No patients remain at the facility. Most of the buildings are extensively damaged or destroyed and the majority of equipment is unusable or reduced to ashes. The WHO team said that the scale of devastation has left the facility completely non-functional, further reducing access to life-saving health care in Gaza. Restoring even minimal functionality in the short term seems implausible and will require substantial efforts to assess and clear the grounds for unexploded ordnance to ensure safety and accessibility for partners to bring in equipment and supplies.

The hospital's emergency department, surgical, and maternity ward buildings are extensively damaged due to explosives and fire. The western wall of the emergency department and northern wall of the neonatal intensive care department (NICU) have been torn down. At least 115 beds in what once was the emergency department have been burnt and 14 incubators in the NICU destroyed, among other assets. ...

The hospital's oxygen plant has been destroyed, leaving Kamal Adwan Hospital as the only source of medical oxygen production in the north. ... The current situation has left north Gaza without CT scanning capabilities and significantly diminished laboratory capacity, severely compromising effective diagnosis, which will increase avoidable deaths.

Numerous shallow graves have been dug just outside the emergency department, and the administrative and surgical buildings. In the same area, many dead bodies were partially buried with their limbs visible. During the visit, WHO staff witnessed at least 5 bodies lying partially covered on the ground, exposed to the heat. The team reported a pungent smell of decomposing bodies engulfing the hospital compound. Safeguarding dignity, even in death, is an indispensable act of humanity.

According to the acting Hospital Director, patients were held in abysmal conditions during the siege. They endured severe lack of food, water, health care, hygiene and sanitation, and were forced to relocate between buildings at gun point. At least 20 patients have reportedly died due to the lack of access to care and limited movement authorized for health personnel.

Despite deconfliction, yesterday's mission faced significant delays at the military checkpoint en route to Al-Shifa Hospital. On the same day, another WHO-led mission bound for Al-Awda and Kamal Adwan hospitals in northern Gaza – to deliver medical supplies, fuel, deploy emergency medical teams, and support referral of critical patients – encountered unnecessary delays, including the detention of a supply truck driver who was part of the convoy. ...

Between mid-October and end March, over half of all WHO missions have been denied, delayed, impeded or postponed. As health needs soar, the lack of a functional deconfliction system is a major obstacle in delivering humanitarian aid – including medical supplies, fuel, food and water to hospitals – anywhere close to the scale needed.

Six months – half a year – into the war, the destruction of Al-Shifa Hospital and Nasser Medical Complex has broken the backbone of the already ailing health system. Prior to the latest siege, WHO and partners had supported the revival of basic services at Al-Shifa Hospital, and Nasser Medical Complex was regularly supplied to continue serving as the

main hospital in south Gaza. These efforts are now lost. ...

Of the 36 main hospitals that used to serve over 2 million Gazans, only 10 remain somewhat functional, with severe limitations on the types of services they can deliver. The proposed military incursion into Rafah can only result in further diminution of access to health care and would have unimaginable health consequences. The systematic dismantling of health care must end. ...

Hospitals must not be militarized, misused, or attacked. WHO demands an effective, transparent and workable deconfliction mechanism, and safety guarantees, ensuring that the movement of aid within Gaza, including through checkpoints, is safe, predictable and expedited. WHO calls for additional land crossings to allow access into and across Gaza more safely and directly. As famine looms, disease outbreaks spread, and traumatic injuries increase, WHO calls for unimpeded access of humanitarian aid into and across the Gaza Strip, and a lasting ceasefire.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.who.int/news/item/06-04-2024-six-months-of-war-leave-al-shifa-hospital-in-ruins--who-mission-reports>

World Central Kitchen

World Central Kitchen's statement about the IDF preliminary investigation

The IDF has acknowledged its responsibility and its fatal errors in the deadly attack on our convoy in Gaza. It is also taking disciplinary action against those in command and committed to other reforms. These are important steps forward.

However it is also clear from their preliminary investigation that the IDF has deployed deadly force without regard to its own protocols, chain of command and rules of engagement. The IDF has acknowledged that our teams followed all proper communications procedures. The IDF's own video fails to show any cause to fire on our personnel convoy, which carried no weapons and posed no threat.

Without systemic change, there will be more military failures, more apologies and more grieving families.

The root cause of the unjustified rocket fire on our convoy is the severe lack of food in Gaza. Israel needs to dramatically increase the volume of food and medicine traveling by land if it is serious about supporting humanitarian aid. ...

We demand the creation of an independent commission to investigate the killings of our WCK colleagues. The IDF cannot credibly investigate its own failure in Gaza. ...

"Their apologies for the outrageous killing of our colleagues represent cold comfort," said WCK CEO Erin Gore. "It's cold comfort for the victims' families and WCK's global family. ...

To read the full press release see

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

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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