



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

SCoJeC is incurring significant extra costs as a result of the war in Israel and Gaza, including producing expanded issues of this digest. Please help us maintain these resources by donating at

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Home Affairs

Scottish Government

First Minister This Eid-al-Fitr, First Minister @HumzaYousaf is sending his very best wishes to Muslims celebrating across the world — and reflecting on what we can do to help those who are experiencing hardship, grief and struggle. #EidMubarak [plus video]
<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1777622513800908835>

Welsh Senedd Written Answer

Far-Right Extremism

Adam Price (Plaid Cymru) [WQ92374] What is the Welsh Government doing to monitor and combat far-right extremism in Wales?

The Counsel General: The Welsh Government continues to work closely with and support Policing partners who monitor and combat all forms of extremism in Wales. The Police response to extremist behaviour is reserved to the UK Government and not the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

<https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/92374>

TOP

House of Lords Written Answers

Hamas

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL3332] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to impede Hamas acquiring or retaining the resources to make war.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As we have said, removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel and Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza are among the vital elements for a lasting peace.

The UK has already imposed sanctions on key figures in Hamas' leadership, disrupting the terrorist group's financial networks which sustain their operation, including from Iran. A third tranche of sanctions was announced by FCDO in January. On 27 March the UK announced further sanctions on individuals linked to a Hamas-supporting media network. The UK continues to work closely with our partners to identify further opportunities to disrupt Hamas' financial networks, including cutting off access to funding being used to carry out atrocities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-18/hl3332>

The announcements referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-us-sanction-key-figures-in-hamass-financial-network>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-sanctions-on-persons-linked-to-hamas-supporting-media-network>

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL3525] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, March 2024, published on 18 March, what steps they are taking to prevent famine in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis.

On 20 March, the Foreign Secretary announced the UK has funded WFP to provide 2000 tons of food aid, enough to feed 275,000 people in Gaza.

On 25 March, the Royal Air Force airdropped 10 tonnes of food aid - including water, rice and baby food - directly to civilians in Gaza.

We have 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 continue to call for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-21/hl3525>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf

The announcement referred to above can be read at

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

Gaza and Sudan: Famine

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) [HL3481] To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) funding, and (2) other assistance, they will provide along with international partners to prevent famine and starvation in (a) Gaza, and (b) Sudan.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. On 20 March, the Foreign Secretary announced the UK has funded WFP to provide 2000 tons of food aid, enough to feed 275,000 people in Gaza. On 25 March, the Royal Air Force airdropped 10 tonnes of food aid - including water, rice and baby food - directly to civilians in Gaza.

We continue to call for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

We have 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.

With regard to Sudan, the UK has provided £42.6 million in humanitarian aid, including food security and nutrition assistance, to support people in Sudan in 2023-2024. UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the country will increase to £89 million for the year ahead.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/hl3481>

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>

House of Commons Library Briefing

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Parliamentary reading list (2020-24)

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9873/CBP-9873.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We need to focus on the vital elements for a lasting peace in Gaza: UK statement at the UN General Assembly

President, Sunday marked six months since Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history. Six months that over 100 innocent hostages continue to be held by Hamas in Gaza. The UK condemns the October 7th attacks unequivocally and calls for the unconditional and immediate release of all the hostages.

Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in line with international humanitarian law, as we have said from the outset.

President, over 200 aid workers have died, over 33,000 Palestinian civilians, including 12,000 children have died. Civilians in Gaza are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. There must be a reduction in civilian casualties.

President, I wish to make three points:

First, we need to see an immediate humanitarian pause, leading to a sustainable ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. This is the fastest way to get the hostages out, and much needed aid in. Security Council resolution 2728 called for that, and we call on all parties to implement its provisions urgently. We welcome the ongoing negotiations led by Qatar, Egypt, and the US to this end.

Second, more must be done to ensure significantly more live-saving aid reaches people in need in Gaza. We have reiterated the need for Israel to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately and urgently scale up humanitarian access.

Israel has committed to significant steps to increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza, including allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Port of Ashdod and the Erez checkpoint. For a long time, the UK has urged Israel to take these steps and they are welcome.

We also need to see an improvement in the operating environment within Gaza, so that as

more aid gets in, it can be distributed quickly and effectively. We are calling on Israel to make progress on the UN's minimal operating requirements, including more visas and driver approvals and more trucks permitted to cross into Gaza.

For our part, the UK has trebled our aid commitment this financial year. We will keep doing everything we can to get more aid in by land, sea, and air to reach people in desperate need in Gaza.

Thirdly, finally, we need to focus on the vital elements for a lasting peace. These include the release of all hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; and a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-need-to-focus-on-the-vital-elements-for-a-lasting-peace-in-gaza-uk-statement-at-the-un-general-assembly--4>

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))

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

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

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Northern Ireland Assembly Oral Answer

USA Visit, March 2024

... **Justin McNulty (SDLP):** With the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people, what representations did you make to the powers that be in the United States to call for a ceasefire and for humanitarian aid for the impoverished people of Palestine, who are being slaughtered?

Michelle O'Neill (First Minister): I absolutely concur with the Member about what is happening to the people of Palestine. The genocide must end, and it must end now. Six months on, it is harrowing to watch the scenes. The people in that region need support, an urgent ceasefire, humanitarian aid and a political solution. I, personally, took the opportunity, on two occasions, to say that directly to the President of the United States. We know that the United States has been a firm friend to the Irish peace process and helped us to achieve everything that we achieved 25 years ago. I asked that the same approach be applied to the Middle East to achieve an immediate ceasefire. I took two opportunities; it was a platform not to be missed to call for an immediate ceasefire on behalf of the people of Palestine. I took every opportunity that I had to do that.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024-04-08&docID=395014#AQO%20206/22-27>

Northern Ireland Assembly Members Statements

War in Gaza

Eóin Tennyson (Alliance): The killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers last

week in Gaza is another horrifying milestone in the conflict. Those men and women were heroes, putting themselves at risk to support those most in need, and their deaths are a sadly inevitable consequence of the callous manner in which war is being waged by the far-right Israeli Government.

Like others, I have watched on in despair and distress at the escalating violence, murder, destruction and mass starvation that has been orchestrated over the past six months. To be clear, I stand in full solidarity with the victims of the abhorrent Hamas attacks on 7 October and commend the families who are campaigning with dignity for the safe return of their loved ones who have been taken hostage. However, those vile attacks can be no justification for the illegal collective punishment and slaughter of Palestinian civilians that has followed.

Defeat of Hamas will not be achieved through famine and humanitarian crisis, nor will the foundations for lasting peace and security be laid on the graves of thousands of innocent women and children. I am always reluctant to draw glib comparisons between international conflicts; however, the one lesson that we can export from our experience in Northern Ireland is that progress cannot be made until the killing stops. There is no military solution here. That is why there must be an immediate permanent ceasefire, release of hostages without further delay and a recommitment from international leaders to diplomatic efforts towards a two-state solution.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have all said that Israel is engaged in grave violations of international law, and the International Criminal Court has said that there is a plausible case that Israel's actions are a breach of the genocide convention. In that context and with the Israeli Government showing no intention of heeding their allies, the international community can no longer shirk its responsibilities. The UK Government must now comply with their own moral and domestic and international legal obligations and immediately move to suspend arms sales to Israel.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/04/08&docID=395014#4290091>

Gaza War

Gerard Carroll (People Before Profits Alliance): What kind of horror will it take for the Executive to condemn Israel's genocidal actions in Gaza? Over 33,000 people are dead, with eight being killed every hour. Generations upon generations of Palestinian families have been wiped out, and their memories, cultures, hopes and dreams are gone. Israel is systematically starving some two million Palestinians, forcing them to live on 245 calories per day. We have seen children deliberately targeted by Israeli snipers and aid workers and medical workers murdered, all without accountability. The list goes on and on.

Yet this Executive, a supposed bastion of peace and peacebuilding, have not uttered a single word about the evil that is unfolding. Where is the Executive's call for a ceasefire? Where are the joint statements of condemnation? This Government, which, patronisingly, hold up our flawed peace process as an example to the world, cannot even bring themselves to criticise a raft of bloodthirsty war criminals who are committing a genocide in daylight. Northern exceptionalism should not be an excuse to ignore a genocide. If the DUP and Sinn Féin can present a united front to schmooze with genocide backer Joe Biden, then they should, surely, be able to criticise an apartheid state that has massacred people with impunity.

In the past six months alone, Israel has bombed Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, Iran and Yemen. Not only have the British and US Governments continued to fund the slaughter and arm the Israeli state to the hilt, they have joined in on the bombing of places such as Yemen. Despite the horror that we have seen, the liberal media and western Governments, supposed defenders of democracy, continue to gobble up and spew out Israel's base propaganda. The state, which some months ago denied that it would ever

attack a hospital, has launched 48 attacks on healthcare facilities in the Gaza Strip, including the now decimated Al-Shifa hospital.

What kind of Executive cannot collectively condemn the barbarity that we have seen? We have seen babies lying dead and decomposing on beds in hospitals that people were forced to flee to due to Israeli bombs and bullets, with not a word from this Executive. We have heard about pregnant women going through C-sections without any anaesthetic but not a word from the Stormont Executive. People have been found bulldozed and buried in the rubble of hospitals but there has not been a single word about it.

Palestine is the litmus test of our humanity and the ruling parties here and across the world are failing that test every single day. Therefore, it is up to ordinary people to challenge them. People need to keep pushing for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, not just to punish the genocide but to help dismantle the savage occupation and apartheid system that has been imposed on the Palestinian people for 75-plus years.

We must redouble our efforts to turn Ireland into an anti-apartheid island, North and South. We need to keep marching to expel the Israeli ambassador ... and bring BDS into our workplaces.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/04/08&docID=395014#4290118>

United Nations

Security Council Refers Renewed Consideration of State of Palestine Application for United Nations Membership to Committee on Admissions

... The representative of Malta, President of the Security Council for April, noted that in a 2 April 2024 letter addressed to Secretary-General António Guterres, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine referred to the application for membership in the United Nations (document [S/2011/592](#)) dated 23 September 2011, and requested that the renewed consideration be given to that application ...

Citing the provisions of rule 59 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, and in the absence of any proposal to the contrary, she then referred the request to the Committee for consideration.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15655.doc.htm>

International Court of Justice

Proceedings instituted by Nicaragua against Germany concerning alleged violations by Germany of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, “intransgressible principles of international humanitarian law” and other norms of general international law in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the Gaza Strip.

Nicaragua argues that by providing political, financial and military support to Israel and by defunding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), “Germany is facilitating the commission of genocide and, in any case has failed in its obligation to do everything possible to prevent the commission of genocide”.

Presentation of the case by Nicaragua

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/193/193-20240408-ora-01-00-bi.pdf>

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>

TOP

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

TOP

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