



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Radicalism: Northern Ireland

Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP) [HL3431] To ask His Majesty's Government why Northern Ireland has been excluded from the Community Engagement Principles for countering extremism.

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Engagement undertaken in Northern Ireland is exempt from the engagement principles to reflect the unique political and historical circumstances in that country. The engagement principles do not apply to the engagement undertaken by the devolved administrations themselves.

The UK Government is in regular contact with the administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/hl3431>

Downing Street

Rishi Sunak Eid Mubarak to Muslims celebrating across the UK [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1777773102622994797>

Scottish Parliament Petition

PE2092: Change the law and prevent children aged 5 to 17 from drinking alcohol in their home or other private premises

<https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2092>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Public Consultation

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3552] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 20 March (HL3102), what has been the nature of the consultation with representatives of subsequent genocides which will be included in the UK Holocaust Memorial Learning Centre; and what was the outcome of those consultations.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3552] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 20 March (HL3105), on what dates and in which locations or websites the consultations on a UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre took place; and whether there is a record of the responses.

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission issued a Call for Evidence which received almost 2,500 responses. The Commission's conclusions, together with a list of organisations providing formal responses, was published in the Commission's report Britain's Promise to Remember (2015). Comments were invited on the 10 shortlisted designs for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, details of which were published online and exhibited at sites in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff in 2017. Two public exhibitions of the chosen design were held in 2018.

Full consultation on the planning application opened in January 2019. Around 4,500 comments were submitted online, ahead of the planning inquiry at which 69 people made oral representations. The independent Planning Inspector provided a summary of written representations and a detailed appendix of oral representations in his report recommending that planning consent should be awarded.

The scope and content of the Learning Centre exhibition will be developed by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, drawing on a wide range of external advice and expertise. That process has not concluded and the noble Baroness is welcome to make any suggestions or views known to the foundation directly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-22/hl3552>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-22/hl3553>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/hl3102>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/hl3105>

The call for evidence referred to above can be read at

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cb03ee5274a2f304ef7ca/Call-for-Evidence-PM-Holocaust-Commission.pdf>

Britain's Promise to Remember, referred to above, can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e51c1e5274a2e8ab47401/Holocaust Commission Report Britains promise to remember.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e51c1e5274a2e8ab47401/Holocaust_Commission_Report_Britains_promise_to_remember.pdf)

The invitation to comment on shortlisted designs, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-holocaust-memorial-design-competition-tell-us-what-you-think>

The independent Planning Inspector's report, referred to above, can be read at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6102679e8fa8f50428d10083/Combined DL IR R to C Victoria Tower Gardens.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6102679e8fa8f50428d10083/Combined_DL_IR_R_to_C_Victoria_Tower_Gardens.pdf)

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3381] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of support among Arab residents of Jerusalem for Israeli control of the city; and to what extent this is a consideration for their policy towards Israel and Palestine.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made a specific assessment of this. We support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. A political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution is one of the vital elements for a lasting peace, with Jerusalem as shared capital of both Israel and Palestine.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/hl3381>

Israel: Hamas

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) [HL3480] To ask His Majesty's Government what further steps they will take, along with international partners, to secure a ceasefire in the Israel–Hamas war.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has long been calling 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. The UK welcomed the UN Security Council Resolution 2728 on 25 March, which reflects international consensus behind the UK's position.

Vital elements for a lasting peace 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.

The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister have reiterated these messages in their contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, as well as leaders in Qatar, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia Lebanon, Egypt, and the UAE in recent weeks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-20/hl3480>

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))

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

The Lord Bishop of Worcester [HL3439] To ask His Majesty's Government what barriers exist to the unfettered flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and what steps they are taking to remove those barriers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have set out five steps that Israel needs to take, including:

- an immediate humanitarian pause to get aid in and hostages out;
- increased capacity for aid distribution inside Gaza;
- increased access for aid through land routes and a fully open Ashdod Port for aid delivery;
- an expansion of the types of humanitarian assistance allowed into Gaza;
- and the provision of electricity, water and telecommunications.

The Foreign Secretary has appointed a Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson. He is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-19/hl3439>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office On the ground at the Jordan land corridor into Gaza. The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs @mbrysonr has seen first-hand how UK-funded aid is making its way through Jordan's humanitarian land corridor from Amman and on to Gaza @UkinJordan [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1777992508473053408>

Northern Ireland Assembly Members Statement

Gaza War

Pat Sheehan (Sinn Féin): Today marks the end of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims the world over observe a month of fasting, prayer and reflection. After Ramadan comes Eid al-Fitr, the celebration of the breaking of the fast. I have talked to Muslims in Belfast over the past few days, particularly to Palestinians, who feel that they are not in a position to discuss any sort of celebration in the current context of witnessing malnourished children in Gaza starving to death as a result of the policies of a brutal Israeli Government who have bombarded Gaza and slaughtered more than 33,000 people, almost 14,000 of them children and many others being women, the elderly and the infirm.

We saw last week the killing of aid workers. That was not the first time, but, maybe for the first time in Gaza, they were foreign aid workers. Over 200 aid workers have been killed during the ongoing genocide in Palestine, and we have seen levels of destruction that we have never seen before. It is time to end that genocide, and maybe the Western powers are beginning to realise that they helped to create a monster in Benjamin Netanyahu.

It is time to stop supplying him with the weapons of war that are being used for genocide and to kill innocent women, children and elderly people.

Of course, we in Ireland have experience of building peace and of peace processes. It is now time for a ceasefire in Palestine. It is time to ensure that adequate aid gets into Gaza, that there is an end to the apartheid and occupation and that an independent and sovereign Palestinian state is established.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/04/09&docID=395015#4294152>

Meeting Two Weeks after Russian Federation, China Veto Security Council Resolution on Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza, General Assembly Debates Ramifications

The Security Council failed to speak on a matter of grave importance as it remained paralyzed for months as the crisis in Gaza continued and vetoes proliferated, speakers told the General Assembly today, in a meeting triggered by vetoes cast by the Russian Federation and China on 22 March to reject the adoption of a Council resolution submitted by the United States on the conflict in Gaza.

In April 2022, the Assembly adopted a resolution titled “Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council” (document [A/RES/76/262](#)), which has come to be described as the “veto initiative”. Under this initiative, the General Assembly has a standing mandate to convene within 10 working days of a veto being cast in the Council.

... **Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly** ... Noting that the conflict in Gaza “rages into its sixth bloody month” as divisions in the Council persist, he underscored that the international community’s demands have been clear.

Presenting them, he called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire; for all parties to comply with their international-law obligations; for the immediate, unconditional release of all hostages; and for unhindered, unconditional humanitarian aid. While he welcomed Council resolution 2728 (2024) — which demanded an immediate ceasefire during Ramadan — he recalled recent examples of human suffering in Gaza and said: “It cannot be the case that we normalize around these shameful disconnects.”

He therefore urged Council members to use their power to support an immediate and lasting ceasefire, adding: “We have enough stories of death and division to fill the history books for generations.”

The representative of the Russian Federation then took the floor, recalling that the veto initiative was envisaged as a unique means to draw attention to alleged abuse by a permanent Council member. He stressed that the vetoes in question today, however, prevented the adoption of a draft resolution that not only did not aim to end hostilities in Gaza, but also “gave Israel carte blanche to continue its inhumane operations”. The United States’ draft did not contain a demand or call for a ceasefire, he added — instead, it provided Israel with unique license to continue killing Palestinians.

Building on that, the representative of China pointed out that the United States — a country with significant influence over the parties concerned — has “repeatedly obstructed the Council’s voice” by vetoing the organ’s efforts to promote an immediate ceasefire on four occasions. ...

The representative of the United States, meanwhile, said that his delegation put forth a draft on 22 March in good faith after consulting all Council members and “accommodating significant edits”. However, the Russian Federation and China — rather than supporting diplomacy to release the hostages and secure a ceasefire — attacked the United States. ... Underscoring that his country supports a ceasefire, he said that negotiations to achieve that are ongoing with the help of Egypt and Qatar.

For her part, **Qatar’s representative** said that today’s meeting emphasizes the Council’s paralysis “in the context of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in this century”. Urging the organ to shoulder its responsibility and halt Israel’s aggression, she underlined the need for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. ...

Egypt’s representative similarly condemned Israel’s bloody war against the defenceless Palestinian people and warned against the regional repercussions of the crisis. Israel has disregarded all resolutions adopted on Gaza; even more, it now fights the UN, having killed 179 UN staff members. ...

“From well before the establishment of the UN or the State of Israel, the Palestinians’ goal has been clear — the annihilation of the Jews,” said **Israel’s representative**. While the UN was established in the wake of the Second World War to prevent atrocities like the Holocaust, he stated that the same genocidal ideology is still prevalent among Palestinians.

“Yet the UN, founded to prevent Nazi ideology from spreading, has committed itself to reinforcing modern-day Nazi jihadists,” he emphasized, adding: “If Hitler was alive today, he would be singing the UN’s praises.” ...

“How is it that the party colonizing and committing genocide can be a full member of the United Nations and the party committed to the rule of international law and just and lasting peace cannot?” asked the **observer for the State of Palestine**. Israel has besieged, bombed and starved an entire population and, if it thought it would be held accountable, it would never have killed more than 33,000 Palestinians — including 14,000 children — alongside journalists, UN staff, aid workers and medical personnel.

He further asked: “When will the victims finally receive protection and support, rather than the perpetrators?” Adding that an overwhelming majority of Member States have repeatedly supported Palestine’s full UN membership, he declared: “Stop the genocide, ensure accountability, recognize Palestine and support its membership at the UN ...

Winston Peters, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, observed that, since the start of the current crisis in Gaza, the veto has been used five times to prevent the Council from acting decisively. ... he stressed: “Palestinian civilians must not be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas.” ...

... **the representative of the European Union**, in its capacity as observer, stressed that Council resolutions are binding and called for their immediate implementation. However, Canada’s representative — also speaking for Australia and New Zealand — recalled that a much-needed humanitarian ceasefire has not yet taken hold on the ground despite the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024). ...

“Nobody can claim ignorance about what is happening in Gaza because, unlike in Rwanda in 1994, these atrocities are being televised, written about, tweeted and live-streamed,” said the **representative of South Africa**. These catastrophic acts prompted South Africa to approach the International Court of Justice to request further measures to protect civilians, she recalled, expressing concern that Israel continues with its plausible genocidal acts in complete disregard of them.

Each day, the whole world wakes up to “a new barbaric crime perpetrated by the Israeli regime”, said **Iran’s representative**. Genocide in Gaza could not have happened without the United States’ political, financial and military support, he added ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12591.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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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

OSCE calls for enhanced interfaith and intercultural dialogue to address rising anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination

Marking two decades since the historic 2004 Berlin Declaration, the 2024 Conference on Anti-Semitism in the OSCE region reviewed the advancements in countering anti-

Semitism and discussed how persisting challenges can be effectively addressed. ...

Representatives from OSCE participating States recognized the evolving nature of anti-Semitism and its threat to security and stability across the OSCE region. It was widely acknowledged that despite progress, acts of violence, harassment, and discrimination remain prevalent, including online and offline hate speech, property damage, and threats against Jewish individuals and communities. ...

With hate crime data from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reporting an increase of more than 40% in anti-Semitic acts from 2021 to 2022, the conference focused on the need to address under-reporting of hate crimes and to adapt existing strategies to tackle the challenges posed by online hate, including the proliferation of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories across digital platforms.

“History reminds us of the horrific consequences when anti-Semitic prejudice and hatred spread or are actively promoted,” said ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci. “We must work harder together to form tolerant, open and inclusive societies, to give us all and particularly the younger generation hope for a future without hate.”

Participants highlighted the impact of the renewed escalation of violence in the Middle East following the attacks of 7 October, on Jewish and Muslim communities across the OSCE region. In light of these challenges, the Maltese Chairpersonship emphasised the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue in increasing tolerance and understanding. ...

Rabbi Andrew Baker, the Personal Representative of the Chair-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism stated that “When OSCE participating States met in Berlin twenty years ago, they were facing a resurgence of antisemitism which only some governments recognized and fewer still had the means to combat. Today we have considerable tools and guidelines accompanied by significant OSCE commitments. And yet, rather than celebrating this success, we are forced to acknowledge that this stubbornly persistent age-old hatred has reached unprecedented levels, especially in the months since 7 October. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/566404>

The Berlin Declaration, referred to above, can be read at pp25-26 at

<https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2002-berlin/declaration-13/220-2002-berlin-declaration-eng/file>

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Addressing Racism in Policing

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-addressing-racism-in-policing_en.pdf

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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

**** closes in 9 days**

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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